Seminar Description

This seminar examines strategies for involving young people in organizations and communities. It considers the changing context and core concepts of youth participation, models and methods of age-appropriate and culturally-competent practice, roles of youth and adults as citizens and collaborators, and perspectives on the future of youth and community in a diverse democracy. It examines youth-led, adult-led, and intergenerational initiatives, including youth civic engagement in policy formation, community-based evaluation research, and racial equity and intergroup relations. Special emphasis will be placed on increasing involvement of underrepresented youth groups in economically disinvested areas, and on work in psychology, sociology, anthropology, social work, public health, education, and related disciplines and fields.

Seminar Objectives

1. Understand the changing context and core concepts of youth participation in a diverse democracy;

2. Analyze major models and methods of age-appropriate and culturally-competent practice;

3. Develop knowledge from empirically-based efforts by young people to create community change;

4. Assess alternative forms of research as a form of social intervention; and

5. Identify problems and issues of underrepresented youth groups in economically disinvested areas.

Seminar Design

Responsibilities include readings, participation in discussions, written assignments, and other learning activities related to course objectives. Assignments are due on scheduled dates unless arranged in advance.
### Weekly Calendar

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Reading List

Participation Perspectives I


Participation Perspectives II


Youth Participation in Community Agencies


**Steps in the Process**


**Adults as Allies**


**Youth Organizing for Civil Rights in Mississippi**


Youth Organizing for School Reform in California


Youth Participation, Racial Justice, and Intergroup Relations


Young People as Change Agents and Community Builders


Youth Participation in Neighborhood Development


**Strengthening Civic Engagement in Diverse Democracy**


**Youth Participation in Research and Evaluation**


**Education for Diverse Democracy**


Assignments

Four Papers

Write four papers in which you critically discuss a theme from the major topics of the seminar.

The assignment is to synthesize and refer to specific readings, organize your thoughts, and make a specific point about that topic. The guiding questions might or might not help in the formulation of your thoughts.

Each paper should be no more than 5 double-spaced typewritten pages, and is due at the final session scheduled for that topic: September 22, October 13, November 10, and December 10. (20 percent each)

The first paper should address the following: What is your definition of youth participation? What criteria would you use to assess it, and why?

Term Paper Option

Instead of the second, third, and fourth short paper, you may choose to prepare a term paper on a topic related to the course. The term paper should be 18-20 double-spaced typewritten pages and is due December 10.

This option is conditional upon approval of a 1-2 page proposal, including a tentative title, purpose, methodology, significance, references, and relevance to the course. The proposal is due October 13.

Weekly Questions

What is a question or issue arising from the readings which you’d have us discuss? As a way to contribute to our collective learning, jot down a question or issue and a few sentences, and send this with your name to other class members by Wednesday morning of the week in which the readings are assigned.
Learning Groups

Learning groups will be formed early in the semester. Each group will take responsibility for at least one 15-minute discussion that synthesizes a theme, raises additional questions, and strengthens our mutual learning of the major seminar topics, scheduled at the final session for that topic.

Paper Revision Policy

You may revise and resubmit any paper for reevaluation until the last session of the seminar. Papers are due on assigned dates unless prearranged with the instructor. Late papers will be penalized.

Class Participation

Class participation contributes to individual and group learning. It might include involvement in discussions, volunteering, cocurricular activities, or other activities. It requires presence at all sessions unless excused in advance (20 percent).

Participation Strategies

Working in small groups, formulate and propose a specific strategy for strengthening youth participation for community change in the final session on December 10. The strategy should draw upon knowledge represented in one or more readings.

On November 10 we will brainstorm a list of potential strategies, set priorities, and form groups around selected ones.
Guiding Questions

Opening and Orientation

- Why is it that in some of the world’s most disinvested areas, there are young people creating community change?
- What are some specific strategies for involving young people in the institutions and decisions that affect their lives?
- What would happen if society viewed young people as positive resources or competent citizens rather than as social problems or service recipients?
- How can we strengthen research and teaching that simultaneously develop knowledge, engage young people, and create community change?

Participation Perspectives

- How would you assess the case study as an example of youth participation? What were the youth trying to accomplish, and how well did they do?
- How would you assess this as an example of research? Can you visualize a way in which the research itself might have strengthened participation?
- Who are young people today, and what difference does it make how we think of their role in society? What difference does it make how we construct them in our minds?
- What picture do Kozol and the other authors paint of young people? Where do their pictures lead?
- According to Finn, what is the portrayal of young people in mass media, social science, or professional practice? What explains this portrayal?

- What is youth participation? Is it presence or power? Is it youth-led, adult-led, or intergenerational?
- What do Hart and the other authors mean by youth participation? What are the similarities and differences in their definitions?
- What difference does it make if we think of youth participation as a right?
What are the primary purposes of youth participation? Why should we, or others, want to promote participation of young people?

What are some activities that exemplify youth participation? How would you assess the ways in which the authors group them? How would you yourself group them?

What criteria should be used for assessing youth participation, and why? What is the difference between the scope and quality of participation?

What is community change? What happens to community change when its primary participants are young people? Which forms of community change have the most potential for empowering young people?

What is meant by “community” in “community change”? What happens to “community change” when community is defined as “monocultural,” “segregated,” or “multicultural”? What happens when it is defined as “neighborhood”?

What do we know about youth participation? What are some general propositions that are substantiated by research or work in the field?

What are some unanswered questions that remain for future work?

**Youth Participation in Community Agencies**

- How would you assess community agencies as an approach to youth participation?
- What are some ways of involving young people in community agencies? What can adults do to increase their participation, and what can youth themselves do?
- How would you assess the initiatives in the readings as examples of youth participation, and of research?
- According to Driskell, what are some steps in the process? Are his steps age-appropriate and, if so, by what criteria?
- Are there participation methods that are age appropriate and, if so, what are they? Is there adolescent thinking? Are there adolescent methods?
- If a community agency were to make a serious systematic commitment to youth participation methods that were both age appropriate and culturally competent, what would they be?
- What are some ways of assuring that young people are at the table? What can adults do to strengthen their representation? What can youth themselves do?
- What are the obstacles to youth representation on boards, and some ways of addressing them?
- How would assess the initiatives in the readings as examples of youth participation, and of research? What are the lessons learned?
**Adults as Allies**

- Who are the adults that work well with young people? What are their characteristics, and what do they do?
- What are the characteristics of the adult allies described in the readings? What are their similarities and differences?
- What are the roles of adults as allies in increasing youth participation? How can adults mentor young leaders?

- If you were asked to train a group of adults for roles as allies, what would it be?
- Is there an approach to youth participation that is intergenerational and, if so, what is it?

**Youth Organizing for Civil Rights in Mississippi**

- What can young people themselves do to organize for community change? What are the various forms of youth organizing, and which ones have the most potential for empowerment?
- How would you assess the Mississippi readings in terms of youth participation, and of research?
- What are some methods of youth organizing that are anti-racist?

**Youth Organizing for School Reform in California**

- How would you assess the initiatives in the California readings as examples of youth participation, and of research?
- What is happening with youth participation in the San Francisco Bay Area? What are the causes and consequences of what is happening there?
- Why do some areas emerge as more participatory than others? If you wanted to create an area that were more participatory, what would it be?

**Youth Participation, Racial Justice, and Intergroup Relations**

- What are structural racism and racial justice? How does a racial justice lens widen opportunities for youth participation, and vice versa?
- What are some ways to promote youth participation in a society that is becoming both racially segregated and also more multicultural? What are some specific strategies and steps in the process?
- Assuming that diversity will characterize society in the future, how will youth participation look different from a more racially just and multicultural perspective?
- What are the elements of multicultural youth participation, and how does it differ from approaches that are monocultural or pluralist?
- Are there methods of youth organizing that are multicultural and, if so, what are they? How would you assess the California work in this way?
- What are some ways to promote youth organizing in a democratic society that values diversity as an asset?
**Young People as Change Agents**

- What are the roles and responsibilities of young people in increasing participation? How can youth work with adults in nonadultist ways?
- Who are the young people that step forward as change agents? What are their characteristics, and what do they do?
- What are the characteristics of the young people described in the readings? What are their similarities and differences?
- If you were asked to train a group of young people for these roles, what would it be?
- Does community change differ when the participants are young people and, if so, how?

**Neighborhood Development**

- What is the rationale for the neighborhood as a unit of solution? Is it conducive to youth participation and, if so, why?
- How would you assess neighborhood development as an approach to youth participation? What are the strengths and weaknesses of a neighborhood approach?
- How would you assess the readings as examples of this approach?
- What can youth and adults do to strengthen youth participation at the neighborhood level?

**Strengthening Youth Civic Engagement**

- What is democracy? What are some core concepts?
- How would you assess the present level of youth civic engagement in democracy? Is there a problem? If so, what explains it, and what is to be done?
- Do you agree with Putnam’s analysis of the problem and proposed solution?
- What strategies and structures have potential to strengthen youth civic engagement? What forces limit and facilitate such strategies, and what lessons can be learned from them?
- What are some ways to promote youth civic engagement in a democratic society that values diversity as an asset?

**Participatory Evaluation**

- What is meant by participatory evaluation or research? Why is it important, and for whom?
- What are some ways for increasing youth participation in knowledge development?
- Is there a young peoples’ way of knowing or epistemology and, if so, what is it?
- How does this approach to evaluation or research compare to the one usually taught in graduate school?
Education for Diverse Democracy

• What is education for diverse democracy? What competencies are needed, and why?
• What are some ways to prepare young people for participation in a democratic society that values diversity as an asset?
• Assuming that diversity will characterize society in the future, how will education for democracy look different from a more multicultural perspective?
• What are the elements of education for diverse democracy? What are the similarities and differences in the approaches taken by Gay and Parker?
• If you were asked to design a workshop for this purpose, what would it be?
• What can be done by schools, whether through curricular or cocurricular activities?
• What can be done by afterschool activities, whether through grassroots groups, social clubs, sports teams, community centers, or other activities?