CUNY Youth Studies Intergenerational Change Initiative Needs Assessment:

A Community Impact Study of COVID-19 on DYCD-Funded Programs across NYC

August 2021

About CUNY SPS Youth Studies & Intergenerational Change Initiative

The **CUNY School of Professional Studies Youth Studies Program** aims to play a prominent role in shaping the programs, organizations, systems and research that impact young people's lives by providing a learning community for youth service staff, researchers, advocates and policy makers. By offering high quality coursework, a robust research agenda and experiential opportunities that are shaped through a participatory, critical and interdisciplinary lens, the Youth Studies Program seeks to equip students with the knowledge and skills they need to design, run, research, advocate for and work in youth settings and other institutions and programs that impact young people's lives.

The **MA in Youth Studies** degree, the first stand-alone program of its kind in New York, equips students with the knowledge and skills needed to design, run, research, and work in youth settings. The program provides a sound theoretical grounding and highly applicable skills to its students by integrating crucial areas of study, such as adolescent psychology; delinquency research and gang theory; legal construction of adolescence; social work; cross-cultural studies; representation of youth in pop culture; and health and sexuality issues. Additionally, the program applies a participatory approach through which students are taught to incorporate young people in shaping the programs, institutions, and policies that impact their lives.

The **Intergenerational Change Initiative** (ICI) is an organization housed at Youth Studies that practices youth participatory action research to help amplify youth voices, in order to make New York City a better place for all youth. ICI is comprised of various groups of young people and university researchers committed to positive social change for youth, their families and the communities that they come from across NYC.

About New York City Department of Youth & Community Development

The **New York City Department of Youth and Community Development** (DYCD) invests in a network of community-based organizations and programs to alleviate the effects of poverty and to provide opportunities for New Yorkers and communities to flourish.DYCD supports New York City youth and their families by funding a wide range of high-quality youth and community development programs, including:

- After School
- Community Development
- Family Support
- Literacy Services
- Youth Services
- Youth Workforce Development

In 2020, DYCD modified services and programs in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Initiatives such as Learning Labs, SYEP Summer Bridge and DYCD at Home were built from the ground up to keep services flowing. Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY), COMPASS, Beacon and Cornerstone programs became lifelines by providing food as well as Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs), and DYCD continued to address the needs of New Yorkers through literacy, immigrant services, anti-poverty and discretionary programs.

The agency prioritized civil engagement to promote voter registration and the 2020 Census. Youth from DYCD-funded NDA Opportunity Youth, Train & Earn and Learn & Earn programs worked tirelessly from mid-April through mid-August to help spread the word about the Census and to make sure everyone was counted. In all, they made hundreds of thousands of calls to New Yorkers, and staff reached out to providers and community members, especially in areas that had the lowest response rates.
DYCD implemented new approaches to external and internal communications in terms of content, frequency and delivery, and continued to invest in professional development opportunities and the streamlining and modernizing of our systems, including discoverDYCD and DYCD Connect.

About the Primary Investigators

Dr. Sarah Zeller-Berkman (PI) is the Academic Director of the Youth Studies Program at the CUNY School of Professional Studies and Director of the Intergenerational Change Initiative. At CUNY SPS, she oversees the MA and Advanced Certificate in Youth Studies programs and directs the Intergenerational Change Initiative (ICI), a youth participatory action research project involving mobile tech and participatory policy making. Dr. Zeller-Berkman has spent the last two decades as a practitioner, researcher, evaluator, and capacity-builder in the field of youth and community development. Trained in Social-Personality Psychology, she has worked in partnership with young people on participatory action research projects about issues that impact their lives such as sexual harassment in schools, incarceration, parental incarceration, and high-stakes testing. Her publications include articles and chapters in the *Journal of Community, Youth and Environments*, *The Handbook of Qualitative Research*, *AfterSchool Matters*, *New Directions for Evaluation*, *Globalizing Cultural Studies*, and *Children of Incarcerated Parents*. She is committed to using participatory design principles, youth-adult partnerships, critical participatory action research approaches, and latest technical tools part of larger movements altering the status quo with/for youth.

Dr. Elizabeth Bishop (Co-PI) is an educator, researcher and youth advocate who has served in teaching and leadership roles across K-12, higher education and community-based organizations. She serves as Director of Strategic Initiatives for CUNY SPS Youth Studies program where she teaches on the faculty. She also teaches on the faculty of Urban Education at CUNY Grad Center where she is the Editor of the *Theory, Research and Action in Urban Education* journal. Bishop is the author of two books, *Becoming Activist: Critical Literacy and Youth Organizing* (2015) and *Embodying Theory: Epistemology Aesthetics and Resistance* (2018) and has been published widely including in *The English Record, Altheia Journal, Childhood Education, Esteem Journal, Theory in Action, Journal of Curriculum Theorizing, Journal of Interactive Technology & Pedagogy, International Journal of Critical Pedagogy* and *International Studies in Education.* She has been featured in articles on youth voters in Good Morning America Digital, PBS NewsHour, Business Insider and PolitiFact. Find her @DrBishopDigital

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 crisis has tremendous implications for young people that will reverberate long past this moment (Arnold & Rennekamp, 2020). In addition to creating new challenges, the pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated existing inequities. In March 2020, 12% of young people aged 16 to 24 were neither enrolled in school nor working (Pew Research Center, 2020). By June of 2020, 28% or 3 in 10 young people were disengaged from school and work. With schools facing unprecedented financial and logistic challenges (Gordon & Reber, 2020), the shrinking job market (Inanc, 2020), neighborhoods that have historically been marginalized in even greater disarray, and younger Americans being at the bottom of the CDC's vaccine rollout priority list (Centers for Disease Control, 2020), young people's recovery from the crisis is likely to be delayed. Even in more prosperous times, young people are at the bottom of the resource distribution hierarchy in the United States due to perceived low-power status (Zeller-Berkman, 2010). Youth services are often first on the chopping block and Youth Workers are considered both essential and disposable. Yet CUNY SPS Youth Studies Programs and DYDC believe that youth and Youth Workers are powerful allies in the quest to imagine a new way forward.

This needs assessment study of COVID-19's impact on DYCD funded programs was conducted in the final months of the 2020-2021 academic year by a research team built out of the Intergenerational Change Initiative at the CUNY School of Professional Studies Youth Studies program. This needs assessment study was conducted as a participatory process that engaged 5 MA graduate student-level "Youth Worker" researchers who work with DYCD funded sites as well as 10 "Youth Researchers" from DYCD funded sites. The 10 young people invited to the study all had pre-existing relationships to the Youth Worker researchers and were invited to the team by them to cultivate youth-adult partnership. The team at CUNY was rounded out by faculty and staff that have experience with DYCD. That team included Youth Studies faculty Primary Investigator Sarah Zeller-Berkman and Co-Primary Investigator Elizabeth Bishop, Project Coordinator Natisha Romain (YS Alumni 2018), Research Associate Samuel Finesurrey of CUNY Guttman College, CUNY SPS Data Science faculty Jason Bryer

and Doctoral Student Research Associate Andrea Juarez Mendoza from CUNY Grad Center.

This report is being submitted Summer 2021 after broad vaccination efforts in Spring 2021 contributed to initial vast decline in COVID-19 in NYC. The Research Team was activated with a three month window to run the study between April 2021-June 2021 so the findings that follow are limited by those time constraints. Conducting research at the end of a full year of pandemic programming meant engaging with a range of NYC Youth Workers who felt extreme burn out by the end of the academic calendar. At the time of submission of this report, July 2021, Delta Variant cases of COVID-19 were on the rise in NYC, with roughly 23% of new cases in the city identified as the variant (Closson, 2021). Thus the findings within this report sit at a critical juncture at a moment when NYC seeks to further reopen its economy, its schools and services.

This study was conducted in partnership with the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD). As stated in their research partner materials, "DYCD supports New York City youth and their families by funding a wide range of high-quality youth and community development programs, including: afterschool programs, educational services, housing support, family support, jobs & internships, Community Services & Immigrant Services." Under their guidance, we identified communities hardest hit by COVID-19 from which we sampled staff and constituents to understand their experiences during this pandemic. DYCD sought to assess the economic, health and social-emotional impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on DYCD-funded programs, participants and their communities. CUNY SPS Youth Studies partnered with key members of the DYCD Planning and Evaluation unit to identify and examine a diverse set of programs and target populations, including youth, adults and families and programs in afterschool, workforce and community development centers.

In what follows, we outline pertinent literature that sits at the intersection of this research where we studied the conclusion of the initial impact of the pandemic in real-time with a short-term historical analysis evaluating 15 months from March 2020-June 2021 in NYC. This short-term qualitative critical study identified major implications for policy and

practice implementation. Findings from the study are offered to help determine service delivery and programming needs resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings will inform future program planning development efforts aiming to provide new resources, solutions and support to address complex needs resultant of the pandemic. As articulated below, major findings for organizations and participants needs include:

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE
(1) Youth Workers have a **strong desire to make an impact on youth** they service, particularly from communities where they grew up and this should be further cultivated;
(2) There is a need for further attention to program operations with a commitment to **transparency in a racialized analysis of pay, hierarchy and risk** across the field in order to address concerns around Youth Worker quality of life, burnout and turnover;
(3) The fiscal health of programs is related to the need for general operating costs and higher Youth Worker pay to **ensure solvency and address staff retention dilemmas**, which further influences worker motivation and consistent youth-adult relationships.

PARTICIPANT NEEDS
(1) **Economic conditions are dire** for many participants and their families in ways that fundamentally call for wrap-around service delivery across community spaces;
(2) There is a need for deep attention to the **social-emotional and mental health** needs of participants and families to support any meaningful recovery efforts;
(3) There is a **lack of equitable access to the internet** which has drastically impacted outcomes for program participants and must be solved in order to create long-term strategies for internet access for educational, extracurricular and workforce priorities.

EXTERNAL FACTORS
(1) In relation to the labor market, is a need to create **jobs available to youth to support their economic security and mobility** as well as trajectories of their families;
(2) In relation to education, there is a need to invest in school-based and afterschool social-emotional and mental health in the short and long-term for youth and Youth Workers alike to create the conditions for deep content engagement and skill learning;

(3) In relation to governance, there is a need to support wrap-around community services to ensure youth and families have their basic needs met in order to set the conditions to thrive in NYC's full reopening of schools, afterschool and the economy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This brief literature review highlights some of the most timely publications that point to the contemporary crises of COVID-19 in ways that are fundamentally tied to longstanding divisions, inequities, segregations and unbalanced approaches to wrap-around municipal service support. Across the literature below, our Research Team sought to highlight the policy, theory, practice and experiential reports from this pandemic shift to elevate ideas that will build up communities.

Across the world, the COVID-19 pandemic created severe impacts for young people in economic and social arenas. A 2020 United Nations policy brief from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs discussed the need to protect and mobilize youth for educational attainment and economic well being (United Nations, 2020). Summary findings from that brief discuss both the educational impacts for youth disrupted from schooling to the threat to the livelihoods of many youth whose forms of informal and formal work deeply impact their families financial situation.

Zoom into New York City, where the NYC Department of Education (NYCDOE) is the largest school district in the country serving and DYCD sits at a vital nexus as the largest municipal youth funder in the country. This major footprint of these entities servicing youth in NYC speak to the potential large-scale impacts of interventions that are informed by youth themselves, Youth Workers who service them and members of the communities from which they come.   DYCD programs were drastically impacted by COVID-19 and particular populations have remained central to the municipal strategic response - particularly in consideration of vulnerable groups including families that need food pantry access and childcare during remote learning, as well as the specific needs of Runaway and Homeless Youth in this destabilizing crisis (NYC Department of Youth and Community Development, 2021).

There are three large buckets across the data that prove useful in discussing the spheres in which the lives of constituents and workers have been impacted by COVID-19. These interconnected arenas include: (1) health; (2) economy and (3) education and digital equity. Across all of these arenas there is a need for an extensive analysis of racialized capitalism, historical and contemporary disinvestment, settler colonialism and the institutionalized operations of systemic racism across educational, public health and workforce environments. While it is far beyond the scope of this literature review to disaggregate the racial, cultural and socioeconomic impacts of such disinvestment and purpose exclusion across communities of color in NYC, this Youth Studies Research Team builds its analysis with an awareness of the function of anti-Black racism, gender discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of oppression that have impacted health, economic and educational outcomes of vulnerable New Yorkers.

Health

Researchers from the Sorenson Impact Center's Data, Policy and Performance Innovation team at the University of Utah's School of Business conducted a public health emergency analysis to highlight the racial disparities in COVID-19 mortality rates amongst essential workers across the United States (Rogers et al, 2020). Their 2020 report drew from the American Community Survey and Current Population Survey to examine correlations between COVID-19 deaths and occupational differences across demographic and geographic groups. That research highlighted that non-Hispanic (NH) Black Americans experienced significantly higher mortality from COVID-19 due to disproportionately holding essential-worker positions that put them at the front line of the crisis, exposing them to COVID-19. The structural inequities that shape these racial disparities are discussed and the researchers call for policy mandates to further disaggregation of state-level data by race and ethnicity for equitable response and recovery efforts.

In New York City at the time of writing this report, 54% of the city population is fully vaccinated from the COVID-19 coronavirus that emerged in the United States in March 2020 (with a range of vaccination rates across boroughs from a high of 66% of Manhattan residents to a low of 45% of Bronx residents) (NYC DOHMH, 2021).

Disaggregating this citywide data from the Citywide Immunization Registry (CIR), it is evident that Black New Yorkers have the lowest vaccination rate with 34% reporting 1 dose received and 31% reporting full vaccination status. As noted by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene in its reporting on current vaccination status, health inequities in the data are evident as "differences in health outcomes and vaccination coverage among racial and ethnic groups are due to long-term structural racism, not biological or personal traits" (NYC DOHMH, 2021). For further information on the 2020 overview of NYC's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's (DOHMH) COVID-19 Equity Action Plan, which aimed to engage health care providers, community partners and community members themselves, read the DOHMH Equity Action Plan.

Economy

Research into economic conditions across the United States and locally in New York City demonstrated the disproportionate impact that COVID-19 had on workers of color and their families (Rogers et. al). The Federal Reserve Bank of NY conducted an analysis in which workers have been hit harder than others over the first 12 months of the pandemic. In their Economic Inequality Policy Series, economic researchers from the FRBNY found that lower-wage workers and those without a college degree had been hit hardest by unemployment and job loss due to COVID-19 with women, communities of color and younger workers experiencing larger losses at the start which continue to ripple through the economic conditions they face during Summer 2021 (Abel, J. R., & Deitz, R., 2021). Lower-wage workers were least likely to work remotely and the remaining shortfalls subsequent to initial job losses have disproportionately impacted Black and Hispanic communities as well as those without a college degree. Economics professor and chief economist to the AFL-CIO William E. Spriggs warned of continued disparities in the fall as economies and schools seek to reopen. He wrote in his Barron's commentary "The Delta Variant is a Dark Cloud over the Recovery" published July 2021, "We have this dark cloud because we failed to understand that COVID is not free. Hospitalizations, lost working hours and deaths have real costs. Costs to the psyche of decimated families are real" (Spriggs, 2021).

In New York City at the time of writing this report, there is much evidence that it will take time for the five boroughs to recover from the effects of COVID-19. As highlighted in the New York State Comptroller's office report on the "Recent Trends and Impact of COVID-19 in the Bronx" areas of the city that are predominantly communities of color are also the same communities that had a disproportionate number of essential workers who had to work in face-to-face industries (Office of the State Deputy Comptroller for the City of New York, 2021). Even in areas of the city such as the Bronx which did not have the highest rate of COVID-19 cases, outcomes in the Bronx were most severe with the highest hospitalization and death rates. The economic impact of the pandemic across the city was massive, with unemployment in the Bronx peakin at 24.6 percent in May 2020 as the pandemic ravaged New York City. While there has been some recovery and unemployment in that particular borough has declined by nearly 10 percent, there is still a serious need for workforce intervention to right the economic trajectories for the most vulnerable populations across the city.

Education & Digital Equity

Across the global pandemic, there has been considerable interruption to the educational trajectories of millions of children (Chaturvedi, Vishwakarma & Singh 2021). Research out of the National Institute of Health discussed implications for "learning loss" due to school closures (Engzell, Frey & Verhagen 2021). While these discussions as it relates to the progress (or lack thereof) or learning for youth is important, an overreliance on for-profit high-stakes testing mechanisms distort the discourse space and take away from vital data on youth and families beyond neoliberal testing results. In NYC, schools with high Black and Hispanic populations had low student engagement during the pandemic (NYC Council, 2020) and efforts should be made to reengaging student populations through culturally responsive, trauma-informed practice.

In relation to digital (in)equity, there are major implications for youth in both school-based and out-of-school environments. As has been reported widely, there are significant disparities as relates to digital access, digital fluency and an understanding of digital footprints and data privacy (Beaunoyer, Dupéré & Guitton 2020). This vital discussion about equity as it relates to digital access and capacity is key with implications for families and communities. During COVID-19, inequitable access as well

as lack of functional hardware and software meant that youth and adults in vulnerable populations struggled to get online for school, afterschool, remote work and public health actions.

Similarly, there are implications for organizations and workers as it relates to digital equity. In many organizational spaces, Youth Workers were asked to do remote work without sufficient equipment provided by the workplace. As the study herein uncovered, Youth Workers were frequently using personal devices not provided by their employer, using their own data and mobile devices to access systems. Some specific software requirements from employers and funders were unrealistic as the size and complexity of running the software was greater than many of the devices used. Combine this with a lack of mobile ready systems for program management and a lack of education around data security workforce training and major gaps remain around digital health.

While it is beyond the scope of this study, much more can be said about these major categories as it relates to the lives of young people, their families and communities. Although there has been much work across municipal entities, institutions of higher education and organizations to consider the impacts of COVID-19, none have undertaken a substantive approach to Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) to uncover significant findings within communities. In what follows, the YPAR study conducted by the Intergenerational Change Initiative (ICI) is outlined in detail.

RESEARCH METHODS

CPAR Study Design

This research was designed and enacted as a critical participatory action research (CPAR) (Torre et.al, 2012) project that engaged Youth Studies alumni and Youth Studies current students who then identified youth leaders in their communities of practice that they wanted to invite to the project. Amongst the various approaches to CPAR, this cultivation of a youth-adult partnership model from the very start created conditions for the team to operate with autonomy when it came to design and analysis which was particularly helpful in relationship to the shifting timeline of the data collection process.

In best practice, intergenerational CPAR is proposed in the first instance by youth themselves in response to the conditions around them they seek to understand and change. In this instance, DYCD and CUNY SPS Youth Studies developed a working model for the research to specify buckets of information to be collected, knowledge to be gained and insights to undercover in order to best service youth, families and the communities where they live.

The collaboration between CUNY SPS Youth Studies and DYCD drove the arc of the agenda for the research results uncovered herein. The CUNY faculty leads met with the team from DYCD at the launch of the study and held weekly sessions thereafter to recalibrate the work and the timeline in response to outreach, interest and fiscal year close-out constraints as FY21 drew to a close. The CUNY team proposed research with 20 program sites. The partnership with DYCD provided opportunities for access to a range of potential research sites from across many hundreds of options but due to conflicting end-of-year evaluations running around the same time, there were limitations on who the CUNY Research Team could engage. 20 sites were identified for low and high saturation research to conduct this needs analysis but capacity at organizations was so constrained that engagement came from individuals across a range of DYCD-funded sites rather than from cohorts of staff from a narrow selection of sites.

As a Research Team, With a quick turnaround after getting approval to start the project, the five (5) Youth Workers each recruited two (2) Youth Researchers to work together in their teams of three for the remainder of the project. This staffing plan model allowed for strong youth-adult partnership relationships to be built as well as a strengthening of partnership between Youth Studies faculty with current students and alumni. Together, this 20 person Research Team (inclusive of faculty leads and other key CUNY partners) articulated an affirmative vision of their full participation in the study as a condensed CPAR study. An intensive 2-week training began to gain an understanding of CPAR, the research study context, the operation of qualitative interviews and focus groups, and the roles and responsibilities each member would take on as the data was being collected. The team focused on cultivating honesty and autonomy in regards to the creation of

research tools, allowing for Youth Researchers and Youth Workers to highlight their particular investment in healing-centered practices of accountability across the field.

The youngest member of the team was in 8th grade at the time of data collection and the range of participants across high school, post-secondary and Youth Worker labor contexts provided rich insights into the day-to-day reality of youth and youth workers in NYC as we designed our team's approach and tools for data collection and analysis. The Youth Workers and Youth Researchers formed teams who were responsible for data collection in terms of interviews and focus groups which were conducted over video software due to ongoing COVID-19 concerns. These researchers spent time cultivating their social science skills and formed teams:

> Team A: TEAM 3 Avenger Amigas
> Team B: TEAM JAM
> Team C: TEAM BGC Girls
> Team D: TEAM Optimize Brain
> Team E: TEAM Wanderlust Ladies

With CPAR as the backdrop and driving mechanism for this work, it is important to foreground the core principle of practice at CUNY SPS Youth Studies and the Intergenerational Change Initiative that contends that issues facing youth in our city are worth of study by those youth themselves. This intergenerational CPAR model allowed the Youth Researchers to purposefully negotiate the role of "expert researcher" to be repositioned as key leaders in knowledge building in partnership with Youth Workers with immediate local impact in communities where they live and study.

Data Collection Design

This study was proposed in continuity with the broader vision of the Intergenerational Change Initiative (ICI) which is situated in the CUNY SPS Youth Studies Research Labs to practice intergenerational participatory action research to help amplify youth expertise, in order to make New York City a better place for all youth (ICI 2021). This work thus builds on components that are happening simultaneously via the Youth Studies Research Labs (namely the census and mapping) and has some new

components that are important to build out to better understand how both the Youth Studies program and DYCD can better support the field (namely a series of focus groups and oral history testimonials collected toward the creation of a youth-worker archive). All proposed data was designed to inform DYCD to support their grantees moving into next program year.

The goals of this data collection were three-fold. The first aim of this study was to identify technical assistance, resources and support needed to help DYCD-funded programs in community-based organizations to address new challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. The second aim of this study was to identify needs and challenges of participants in DYCD-funded programming resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The first and final aim of the study was to identify external factors that may impact DYCD-funded services and ability to respond directly to participants' needs. Under each research aim, research questions followed:

AIMS	Aim 1: To identify technical assistance, resources and supports needed to help DYCD-funded programs in community-based organizations address new challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.	Aim 2: To identify the needs and challenges of participants in DYCD-funded programming resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.	Aim 3: To identify external factors that may impact DYCD-funded services and ability to respond directly to participants' needs.
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	How has the COVID-19 pandemic changed the staffing, operations, and fiscal health of DYCD-funded programs? What organizational changes have been precipitated by COVID-19?	How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the health, social/emotional & economic well-being of participants in DYCD-funded programs? (e.g., trauma endured, physical illness, social isolation, skill losses/ gains, impact on household income/ employment status, etc)	What are the external factors that DYCD should take into consideration when modifying/developing programs and resources (e.g., trends, challenges opportunities in labor markets, educational institutions, political or legislative arena)?

Tools of Data Collection

In the initial design of this study, the Research Team aimed to conduct four categories of data collection to study the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth programming. The initial design included the following: (1) oral histories in the form of testimonial interviews with Youth Workers; (2) focus groups with staff and constituents; (3) survey data in the form of the Youth Ask Youth Census; and (4) a citizen science potential mapping in the form of Future Mapping. External sources of data were also analyzed alongside raw primary data to contextualize original findings in relationship to wider meso- and macro-level trends across New York City. Below we detail the specifics of each of these data collection tools and the instrumentation that was implemented to collect relevant data for the project. See the table below for further details.

Data Collection Method	Description of Data Collection Method and Tools
Oral Histories	An oral history project was designed by youth workers, youth researchers and CUNY faculty to gather testimonies that help explain COVID-19's impact on the field and activism in youth work. The testimonies gathered for this project will be the founding donation to an archive of testimonies to be housed at SPS.
Youth Ask Youth Census	Survey data about youth experience during COVID 19 was collected via the Youth Ask Youth census that has questions dedicated to COVID-19 and its impact on food security, physical and mental health.
Focus Groups	Focus groups were designed for staff and constituents about their experience working with youth and running programming during COVID 19. These were design to ask about needs for supports, TA and resources but also have to imagine how the city could build back better, how the field of Youth Development will or should change, and how their role as Youth Workers may shift.
Future Mapping	A participatory mapping initiative was developed to co-construct a NYC Future Map in partnership with local youth leaders.

Data Collection Timeline

The initial plan for the study was designed to activate on April 1 and conclude on June 30 of 2021. The PI, Co-PI and Project Coordinator at CUNY SPS established a three month timeline to get the full YPAR team in place, to train that team in conducting social science research with human subjects and to begin processes of outreach, recruitment, data collection, data analysis and representation of findings via multimodal report writing. The proposed timeline had the team trained up to begin data collection by the first week of May, to commence data analysis by the beginning of June in order to draft our initial findings by the conclusion of the fiscal year. As the research team was halfway into May and data collection hadn't started, there were concerns around a series of limitations related to IRB approval, DYCD-approved site selection, outreach and communication with potential sites, as well as lack of interest due to time of year and the burnout of residual exhaustion of nearly 1.5 years into pandemic triage programming, the actual timeline for data collection was considerably condensed.

Outreach and communications from DYCD to research sites began right before Memorial Day weekend at the end of May once sites were approved by the city. This late launch during program year closeup created challenges and prompted the Research Team to conduct additional outreach to other research sites in hopes of a swift turnaround of communication regarding confirmed participation from the field. Due to this timing, responsiveness about participating was delayed with data collection starting the first full week of June 2021 and data analysis happening simultaneously throughout the month. As such, the findings are a view into a condensed window of time that would benefit from opportunities to further extend this research without the same constraints and limitations of time and capacity. Nonetheless, the team was able to uncover important insights from stakeholders across DYCD-funded programs. The overrepresentation of workers over constituents is seen as a strength to the extent that those youth workers who volunteered have much to say about the populations they serve and their role in service delivery in alignment with their DYCD contracts.

Sampling Strategy

The CUNY SPS Research Team worked with DYCD to identify programs that are located in the hardest hit areas by COVID 19 looking for geographic and programmatic diversity across DYCD's varied portfolio. To do so, we used the list of 33 neighborhoods identified at the end of January 2021 by the NYC Mayor and the Taskforce on Racial Inclusion and Equity. At that time, these neighborhoods were identified to "to broaden its outreach and education to address vaccine hesitancy, prioritize appointments, add new vaccine sites, and improve the scheduling website to ensure the pace of vaccination is consistent throughout the city" in 11 spoken languages including English, Arabic, Urdu, Bengali, French, Haitian-Creole, Korean, Polish, Russian, Spanish, and Simplified Chinese. (link) The list of 33, broadened from an initial 27, "were added based on a range of factors including high COVID-19 mortality and case rates, high prevalence of chronic illness, presence of overcrowded housing, the number of individuals experiencing poverty, and other preexisting health disparities." The neighborhoods identified by the Task Force included the following, delineated further by zip code:

Brooklyn	Bronx	Manhattan	Queens	Staten Island
Bedford Stuyvesant Bushwick East New York Starrett City Sunset Park Coney Island Flatbush Midwood Brownsville East Flatbush Flatlands Canarsie	Mott Haven Melrose Hunts Point Longwood Morrisania Crotona Highbridge Concourse Fordham University Hts Belmont East Tremont Kingbridge Parkchester Soundview Williamsbridge Baychester Edenwald	LES Chinatown Morningside Hts Hamilton Hts Central Harlem East Harlem Washington Hts Inwood	Queensbridge Astoria Jackson Heights Elmhurst Corona Briarwood Flushing South Kew Gardens Woodhaven Richmond Hill So. Ozone Park Jamaica & Hollis Queens Village Rockaway Broad Channel	St. George Stapleton Port Richmond

From within these communities, the Research Team identified organizations based on suggestions from DYCD, organizations that expressed interest, Youth Studies alumni connections to DYCD funded organizations, and the team members' perspective on organizations within COVID-19 hardest communities in an effort to have the widest reach for data collection under an extremely limited timeline. Within those organizations individual participants received gift cards as incentive for their participation efforts.

Data Analysis Strategies

As a CPAR initiative, members of the CUNY SPS Youth Studies Research Team came together throughout the conclusion of June 2021 to analyze the collected data across tools. Heavy emphasis was placed on the findings from the qualitative interviews that were conducted as oral history testimonials as part of the Youth Worker Archive buildout. There were limitations to the other touch points of data due to the extreme time crunch. Focus groups were scaled back from the initial design of 10 distinct sites to create open windows where individuals or groups could choose to sign up to participate. The Future Mapping project was designed for facilitated or self-guided interaction with youth constituents who the team found were the most difficult to schedule with due to the program calendar year's conclusion where most youth participants had exited the academic year activities and were not yet enrolled in summer programs offered by organizations from which the team sampled. Similarly, although the Youth Ask Youth Census was distributed broadly by other channels and will be discussed in the findings, it was also not enacted live with program participants as was originally designed for before the delayed study launch. Nonetheless, substantial insights were garnered from the existing data which included: 11 testimonials, 2 focus groups, more than 1000 responses to the Youth Ask Youth (YAY) Census and 100+ Future Mapping entries.

The research team enacted a categorical analysis first into organizational categories and substantive categories related to organizational impact, participant experience and reference to external factors. Once time slots were confirmed with participants, members of the research team conducted testimonial interviews and focus group facilitation, digitally recording audio files of the data for purposes of transcription and then disposing of the digital data once analyzed. The bulk of the work the larger team

did was related to the analysis of the Youth Worker testimonials. Youth workers and youth researchers were trained in oral history before collaborating in designing a project based on their own experiences.

The team of youth workers and youth researchers curated questions, developed consent protocols, conducted interviews with fellow youth workers and organized the data resulting from the testimonies they gathered. Collectively, the team of youth researchers, youth workers and CUNY faculty explored transcripts produced by Memria to identify patterns reflected from across the range of participant responses. In addition to the extensive analysis of the interview testimonials, the YPAR expert from the CUNY Graduate Center brought the team together to participate in practices of focus group analysis. Due to the limitations of timing, focus groups were extremely scaled-down and thus those findings informed a broader analysis versus contributing to their own robust portrait of the state of current programs. A smaller team drawn from the larger research team volunteered to complete the final analysis and populate the writing up of findings and the representation of what was learned in the form of this report as well as interactive infographics. A final meeting with the whole research team will be held before we present findings more broadly to the general public.

There were an array of limitations that prevented this study from reaching more broadly. Due to the limitations of time for outreach, sampling, scheduling and data collection, information that was ascertained was not geographically nor demographically representative of the diversity of communities hardest hit by COVID-19. The existent time limitations meant that the team had a shorter available window to double down on their holistic analysis and thus a core group of team members saw the analysis, writing and representation through to their conclusion. Fewer collected artifacts within that time limit meant that the study could risk overrepresentation of the perspectives of those who chose to participate. Collectively, the Research Team at CUNY Youth Studies takes the perspective that those closest to the problem remain closest to the solution and therefore the emphasis on Youth Worker testimonials and the Youth Ask Youth Census across the remaining pages adds vital insight from two groups that are often not included in such studies to recommend changes in policy and practice. While it was

beyond the scope of this study due to the limitations of time, the Youth Studies Research Team strongly emphasizes the importance of collecting the insights of front-line and management across the five boroughs.

In the pages below, the Research Team outlines major findings from the collected data. The initial conversation focuses on insights garnered from Youth Worker testimonials and focus groups, followed by the Youth Ask Youth Census and Future Mapping.

FINDINGS

In what follows, the Youth Studies Research Team discusses the findings from the collected data during this abbreviated community needs assessment. The next pages focus specifically on Aims 1 and 2 as they significantly emphasize organization operations and participant needs.

──────────

AIM 1

To identify technical assistance, resources and supports needed to help DYCD-funded programs in community-based organizations address new challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. How has the COVID-19 pandemic changed the staffing, operations, and fiscal health of DYCD-funded programs? What organizational changes have been precipitated by COVID-19?

──────────

EMERGENT THEMES

In analyzing the data with attention to organizational change around staff, operations and the fiscal impacts of COVID-19, the Youth Studies Research Team uncovered three major findings: (1) Youth Workers as a staff have a strong desire to make an impact on youth from the communities they grew up in; (2) there is a need for further attention to program operations with a commitment to transparency in a racialized analysis of pay, hierarchy and risk across the field; and (3) the fiscal health (or lack thereof) of programs is related to the need for general operating costs and higher Youth Worker pay to

ensure solvency and address staff retention dilemmas, which further impacts motivation and consistent relationship development within communities.

Staffing: Desire to Make an Impact

While this should come as no surprise to anyone familiar with the field of youth development in NYC, one major finding across this research was that "Youth Workers" as a staff population are deeply motivated by a desire to make an impact on young people across New York City through their work. Across the data collected, Youth Workers and Executive Leadership across a range of community-based organizations demonstrated a commitment to "being there" for their youth constituents, being able to "interact with youth on a range of current topics" and guide young people to develop their skills, "guiding them to be better young adults." As a sector, youth workers understood that they served a vital role in filling the gaps of what public schools and other social services do not provide.

Much of this has to do with supporting constituents in positive decision-making in regards to both their academic and non-academic needs, as well as the critical thinking skills necessary to progress through high school graduation and the cultivation of post-secondary pathways for personal, professional and familial prosperity and economic mobility. When asked why the work is so vital, one site-based Executive Director of a major multi-million dollar non-profit in the city who has come up through the ranks as a front-line Youth Worker first said it is about "the ability to be there for young people in various different stages throughout their life and support them socially, emotionally, their educational needs, their physical needs as well as see them develop and grow through time."

Another significant component of this finding which has been long-known by practitioners and leaders in the field is that Youth Workers have frequently grown up in the communities where they serve and their personal trajectories impact their desire to give back to their own communities with a high level of engagement. Across the data, practitioners highlighted their connections to local neighborhoods, to knowing the schools and surrounding areas where youth grow up. As one Youth Worker said "I

understand what's happening in that community because it's my community too." In particular, one mentor highlighted that the role of the youth worker is grounded in a form of ethical leadership, spending time within communities and "trying to be a good person" as a role model in the lives of local youth. In these spaces, Youth Workers who stay at agencies over over multiple years get to see the evolution of youth as they develop into young adult leaders.

Operations: Racialized Analysis of Pay, Hierarchy & Risk

Many research participants offered a racialized analysis about pay, hierarchy and who was put at risk during COVID-19. This discussion was both about the chaotic nature of attempting to manage DYCD contracts as was done pre-pandemic. Front line staff and executives alike reported experiencing certain expectations from funders as a stressor when certain statistical thresholds such as rates of participation (ROP) during COVID were far lower than expected. One Youth Worker expressed frustration about what she saw as "the political part of it all" where programs were more focused on data for funders "instead of focusing on the needs of the kids."

Internal to community-based organizations, there was evidenced a lack of communication and trust between staff and management which left room for a great deal of confusion and resentment. Many youth workers expressed a level of resentment that there is a lack of communication to front line staff even when those staff are paid the lowest wages but put at the greatest risks. Particularly during the early response to COVID-19, many part-time and entry level Youth Workers went in-person to work in order to fulfill contract mandates while middle management and executive leadership were able to work remotely or from lower-risk offices.

One of the major reasons that Youth Workers stay in their job is that they feel a sense of creativity and autonomy when designing programs that provide new information and opportunities for youth. This came up repeatedly - when youth workers felt like they had some creative control over their work with young people, the conversations they had,

they felt emboldened in their professional capacities to respond to youth. This was particularly important in the context of discussions about pay. Across all collected data from Youth Workers, there was a recurring discussion of not being paid enough before COVID-19 hit, not being paid adequately to be on the front lines at REC Centers and as schools reopened, and a sense that their labor is being exploited - that "you don't make that much money unless you're way up the ladder." Such discussions of hierarchy, opaque practices and pay disparities were prominent across the data.

Fiscal View: Retention, Motivation & Long-Term Health

When it came to discussing the fiscal health of organizations and DYCD-funded programs, it is worth noting that the Research Team spoke with a range of Youth Worker professionals including front line staff and management. Therefore, the discussion was less about the operational budgets and organizational-wide fiscal analysis as a whole as it was uncovering the challenges related to staff understanding core funding mechanisms, funder expectations, board relationships and the execution of organizational missions in ways that align with contracts. One Youth Worker highlighted the "Race Committee" at his workplace where he serves as a mentor. He challenged the organization and organizations across the city to reflect on their immediate strategic priorities and actions instead of being comfortable with rhetoric alone:

> "What are we about to do here? We're a race committee in the sense that we wanted to raise awareness about issues and stuff like that, but now something has really happened. Something has really happened and we need to know what are we doing here? What does this mean as an agency? What does this all mean?... I really began to engage our Board of Directors who are white. And I called them telling them, "Yo, you are working with us and we're a minority. What are you here for? Are you here because you just want to make yourself feel good because you're like, I helped the poor people? I helped the Black and Hispanic people? Or are you really here? Because if you're really here and investing with us, then I need you to understand that what has just happened, we're not going to not go back to a moment now where we're not going to talk about racism, and we're not going to talk about Black and Brown issues."

Many participants highlighted a sense of mission-drift, that they were expected to be focused on a particular organizational theme (STEM, art, civics), but they felt pulled in multiple directions by contract stipulations. Youth Workers expressed concerns that they were being deprofessionalized in their daily operations because the broad range of requirements from contracts interrupted their ability to engage in more informal community-building activities that were important for mental health during COVID-19. Staff need training in healing-centered approaches that uplift the communities they serve and that simultaneously serve to center healing in the lives of Youth Workers.

──────────

AIM 2

To identify the needs and challenges of participants in DYCD-funded programming resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the health, social/emotional and economic well-being of participants in DYCD-funded programs?

──────────

EMERGENT THEMES

COVID-19 deeply impacted the economy overall with youth in DYCD programs and their families feeling the brunt of the economic downturn. In analyzing the data with attention to the needs and challenges in the lives of participants, the Youth Studies Research Team uncovered three major findings: (1) Economic conditions are dire in the lives of many participants and their families; (2) there is a need for deep attention to the social-emotional and mental health needs of participants; and (3) a lack of equitable access to the internet drastically impacted outcomes for participants. Below follows a brief analysis of each of these emergent themes.

Economic Needs of Participants and their Families

As a result of COVID-19, people have lost job opportunities because of the limitation of hours businesses are allowed to operate and capacity. AmeriCorps Assistant Director explained, "People have lost money due to the pandemic because of less hours, and people are now picking up extra shifts and even other jobs." A senior front-line staff

Youth Worker concurred, "I do know that students are always looking for work, and they're always looking for a job at Foot Locker or a job at McDonald's or something like that. And I think with the pandemic that limits their opportunities at finding some employment."

This report is being produced at the same time that the federal moratorium on evictions is slated to be lifted - potentially sending vulnerable families into the streets or into the shelter system. As will be discussed further in regards to external factors, partnering with other city government, public or private entities to address unemployment, evictions and benefits gaps will be vital. Although the economic needs of participants was not discussed in great detail in all collected data, further information below in this report highlights relevant Youth Ask Youth Census findings that speak to the economic, workforce and wellbeing needs of participants and families.

Social-Emotional and Mental Health Needs of Participants

Youth Workers observed concerning trends amongst the city's youth who were emotionally traumatized as COVID-19 devastated NYC's most vulnerable communities, isolating young people at a time in their lives when social interaction is a key feature of their development. As one Assistant Director at a non-profit explained "The pandemic has not only affected them physically... but I think mentally it's been taxing. I feel like they've been given more work from the data we've collected in our workshops. I feel like the rise of stress has increased...but somehow [they're] still motivated." This discussion of mental health was prominent across all collected data. Another senior Youth Worker spoke to the breakdown of the social experience at an age when human-to-human interactions are fundamental to functional youth development: "You have students who went from seeing each other every day to not seeing each other at all. I think they're not able to build those socio-emotional skills…to just connect and build relationships with each other in the same way."

This lack of social interaction has distressed many young people in NYC as a Transition Specialist from one major non-profit organization explains, "based on what parents have

told me, I've heard, a lot of their kids are struggling with anxiety and isolation…. they've been in the house for an entire year without that social interaction with other kids in school." The ramifications of the last year will take time to fully understand, but from those engaging directly with the city's youth, a picture of struggle is beginning to emerge. This understanding must be central to all strategies moving forward into the further "re-opening" of the city in the fall as the academic and program year commences. As one front-line Youth Worker said, "I hope that DYCD would take a moment and just look at the SEL side of things and just allow people a moment of bereavement because as society, we're all going through a grieving period. We've all lost. We've lost time that we can't get back."

Digital Equity Needs Across Participants' Communities

One important but underemphasized component of this needs assessment research was the clear divide between those young people who had access to consistent and reliable high speed internet in the form of broadband, WiFi and hot spots. Across the data, practitioners discussed the challenges of trying to conduct youth program services delivery online in a remote environment with youth who were not able to access reliable internet or high quality hardware to log-in and participate in interactive sessions. As one middle manager said:

> "I think that what I could have received more of, what I think would have been helpful is if there could have been more resources as far as Wi-Fi, around [the] internet..... And I'll give a perfect example. Making sure that if there was a broadband with capacities in the community centers, making them hubs where they can provide Wi-Fi or even access to Wi-Fi even to the constituents within the community, right… And so, I think that that's where it could have been those types of things where connections could have been made… If you would have given us the Wi-Fi, if you need the numbers, give us the Wi-Fi. Because guess what, if you're telling people you're giving free internet, families will be like, "Oh, snap." They're going to tell their kids, "Join that program."… if the DOE can figure out a way to get iPads and stuff like that, why can't you? You have access to

some of the same people, why can't you? Why can't you get Google to get some Chromebooks or something?"

The combination of screen fatigue and lack of access contributed to lower rates of participation for constituents across a wide range of organizations. Strategic priorities must be identified and acted upon in order to equip youth, families and communities with reliable, high-speed internet to increase participation in DYCD-funded programming - particularly when the Delta variant suggests that remote options may be needed.

One Youth Worker summed up the complexity of having challenges with program online and mandates for certain rates of participation, adding: "And then in your remote activities because your contract states that you have to meet certain requirements or else you won't be funded...And so, then it leads to a whole lot of incentivizing. Having to incentivize. Can we give you Amazon Gift Cards to come in and join? It just became... I felt like I went from becoming a youth worker during the pandemic to becoming a marketing and salesman, and almost having to figure out how do we make youth services go virtual?"

––––––––––

AIM 3
To identify external factors that may impact DYCD-funded services and ability to respond directly to participants' needs. What are the external factors that DYCD should take into consideration when modifying and developing programs and resources?

––––––––––

The condensed discussion below aligns broader findings regarding external factors as it relates to labor, education and government to DYCD's focal areas surrounding: afterschool, education, housing, family, jobs, community and immigrant services.

Labor: Securing Economic Stability

There are two major arenas to consider as it relates to labor: jobs available to youth to support their economic security and mobility as well as implications for their families in the labor market. There is a need for workforce development efforts for youth to support job creation that aids in their development into young adults invested in their local economies and communities. There is a further need to support wrap-around workforce development and career pathways work in ways that are intergenerational such that families holistically are empowered in their recovery.

Education: School and Afterschool

There are two major arenas to consider as it relates to education: school and afterschool. The opening of the upcoming academic and program year will require a commitment to understanding both the academic and non-academic needs of young people. There is a need to invest in social-emotional and mental health in the short and long-term for youth and Youth Workers alike in order to create the conditions for deep content engagement and skill learning.

Government: Housing, Community and Immigrant Services

There are three major arenas to consider as it relates to government: housing, community services and immigrant services. The current state of the city and the most vulnerable populations are facing housing evictions to begin again in a moment when the Delta variant threatens public health gains. There is a need to support wrap-around community services, including in immigrant communities where the need is greatest, to ensure youth and families have their basic needs met in order to set the conditions to thrive in NYC's full re-opening.

Youth Ask Youth (YAY) Census Preliminary Results

The Youth Ask Youth (YAY) Census is a survey that was developed by over 300 young people over the course of five years. The resulting 80 item survey covers issues related to learning, community, economics, health and relationships, policing, and COVID-19 specific items. With DYCD's support, The Intergenerational Change Initiative deployed

the YAY via our gamified and incentivized survey tool [Amplify](#) in 2020 and in 2021. 416 NYC youth took the YAY census in 2020 and 1110 and counting have taken the YAY at the writing of this report.

In this report we will share both 2020 and preliminary 2021 results that relate to COVID-19 as well as findings that will support DYCD to identify issues of importance to youth in relation to their communities and their proposed solutions. In this way we can imagine a way of building back that reflects young people's wisdom and vision.

COVID-19 Specific Results

According to the YAY, and not surprisingly, Covid-19 has impacted many facets of young people's lives. Young people are doing less physical activity (See figure 1). Covid-19 has decreased young people's ability to do school work (see figure 2) with most people identifying distractions at home as the primary reason that it feels more difficult (see figure 3). The data reveals that most young people taking the YAY in 2021 are still doing remote school (see figure 4).

Figure 1 Covid-19 and physical activity, Health and Relationships section 2021
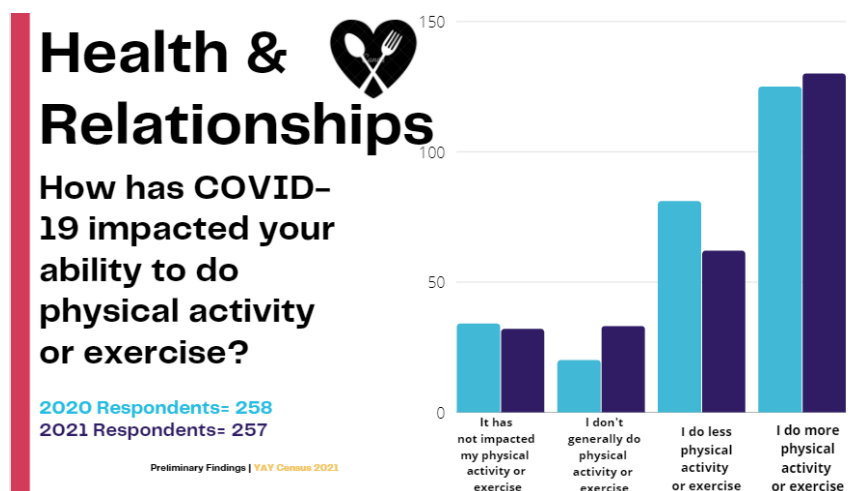
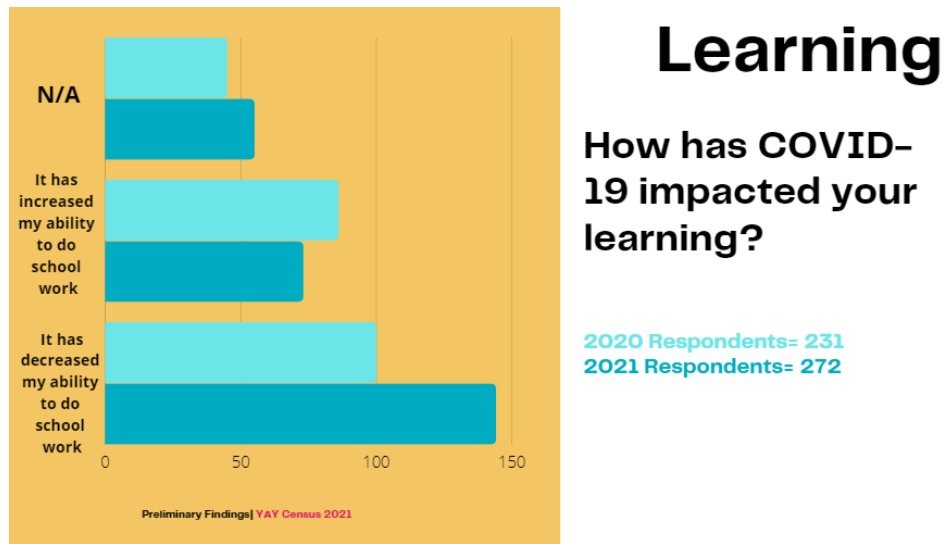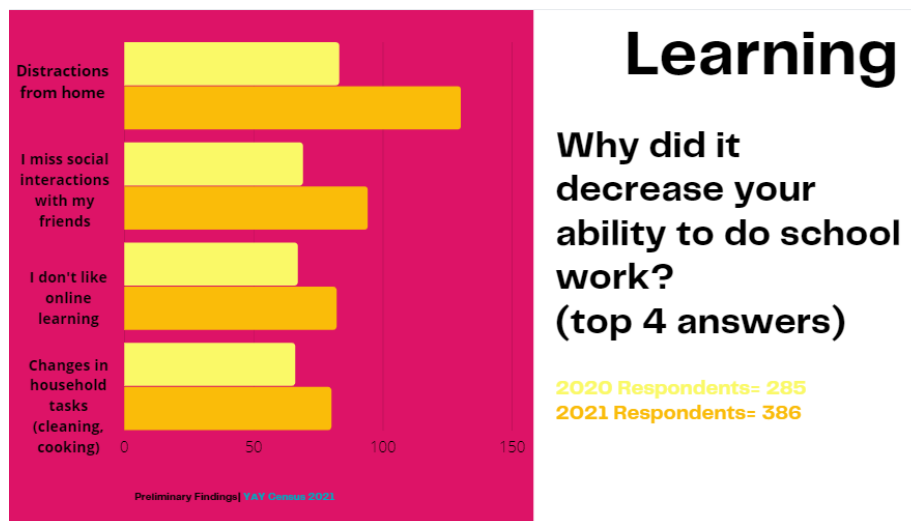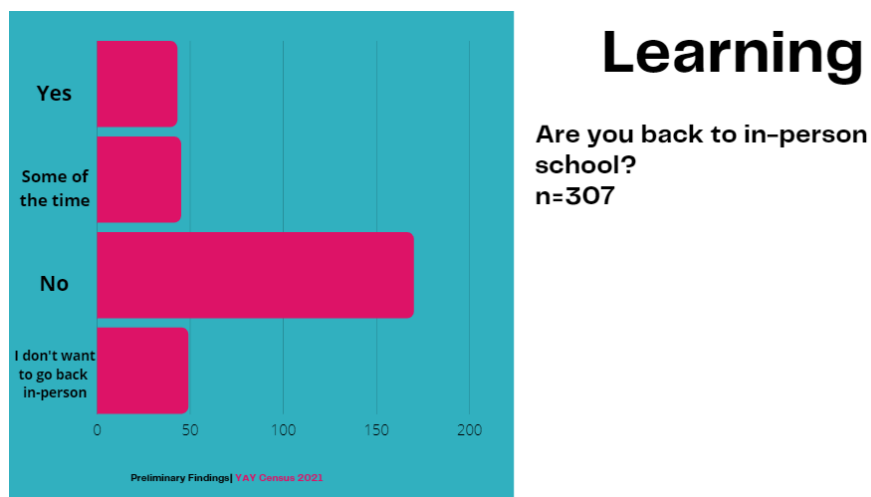**Figure 2: COVID 19 and learning, Learning section 2020 and 2021**

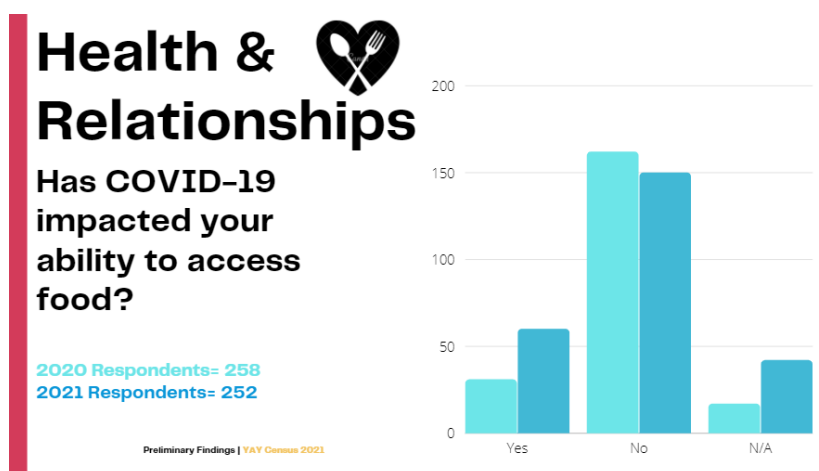**Figure 3: COVID 19 and learning-why did it decrease?, Learning section 2020 and 2021**

Figure 4: Back to in person school, Learning section 2021

Learning

Are you back to in-person school?
n=307

Preliminary Findings| YAY Census 2021

There are many positive developments as we look at year to year trends. 92% of young people who took the YAY in 2021 report having access to a computer and 98% have access to the internet[1]. YAY respondents do not report having less food access as a result of COVID-19 (see figure 5) and the alarming rates of food insecurity seen in 2020 seems to be trending downward in 2021 (see figure 6). Mental health issues reported by YAY participants are also trending downward from the height of the pandemic last year yet remain alarmingly high (see figure 7) with respondents having an average of 4.85 symptoms each.

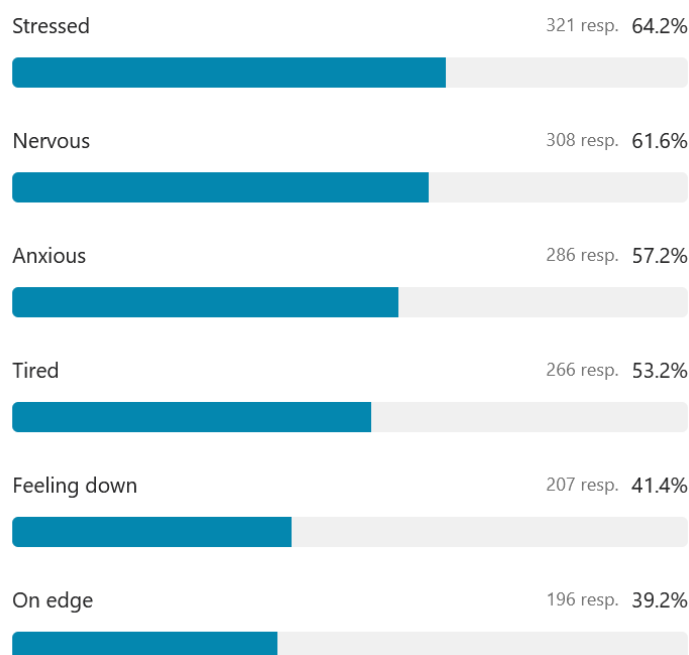**Figure 5: Has COVID-19 impacted your ability to access food, health and relationships section 2021**

Health & Relationships

Has COVID-19 impacted your ability to access food?

2020 Respondents= 258
2021 Respondents= 252

Preliminary Findings | YAY Census 2021

---

[1] This finding may not be representative of young people in the city as a whole given that the YAY is accessed via the internet and so more of the youth who responded would naturally have greater access.

Figure 6: Food insecurity, health and relationships section 2021

Figure 7: Mental health symptoms, health and relationships section 2021

Stressed — 321 resp. **64.2%**

Nervous — 308 resp. **61.6%**

Anxious — 286 resp. **57.2%**

Tired — 266 resp. **53.2%**

Feeling down — 207 resp. **41.4%**

On edge — 196 resp. **39.2%**

Over half of the young people taking the YAY report being vaccinated, however 34.1% are not vaccinated. Probing further with those who reported not being vaccinated on why they did not receive the vaccine, it seems there is relatively little vaccine hesitancy at 5.6%. 20.8% report not having access and 9.5% dont know while 64.1% report "other" resulting in little clarity as to why.

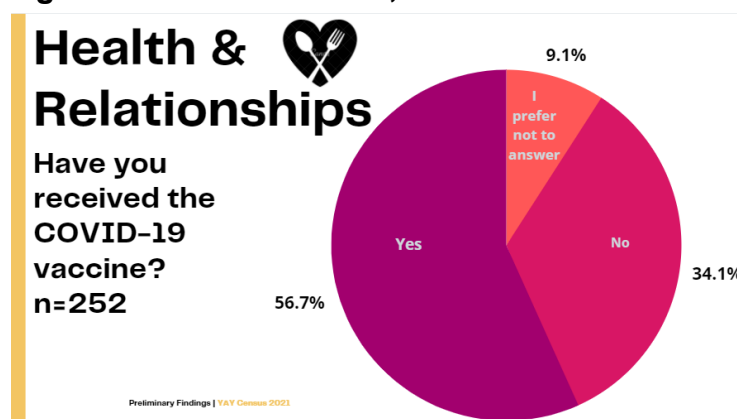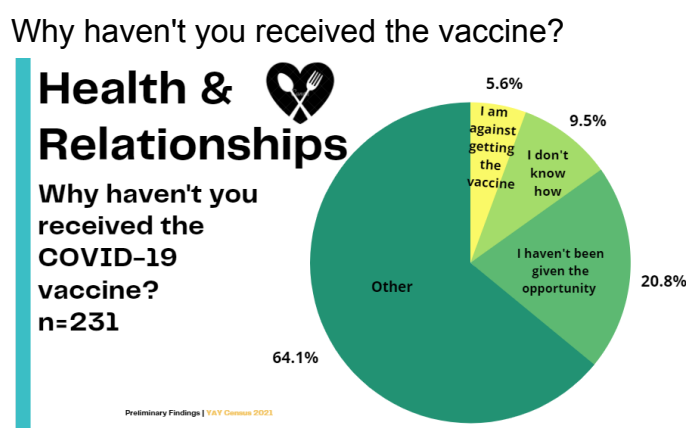**Figure 8: COVID Vaccine, health and relationships section 2021**

Figure 9: COVID Vaccine-Why?, health and relationships section 2021

Why haven't you received the vaccine?

Building Back Better: Implications from the YAY Census

Youth taking the YAY Census identified issues that are problematic in their communities, as well as potential solutions which are spaces of promise for DYCD and the organizations they fund to develop targeted intergenerational action plans.

In both 2020 and 2021, the highest ranking issue for young people in their communities is how dirty it is. Adequate sanitation has consistently been on the list of community demands from NYC youth organizers as far back as the Black Panthers and the Young Lords[2], and it seems our city has not yet been able to tackle this problem. There is

---

[2] https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/11/nyregion/young-lords-nyc-garbage-offensive.html

potential for DYCD programs to collaborate with the Department of Sanitation to organize regular community clean ups as part of the important work that young people are doing in their communities via DYCD programming[3]. Having young people that are paid for their time would be ideal, but there are many programs throughout DYCD's portfolio that focus on service, so those could also be leveraged to help make communities cleaner.

Another trend that is evident in the census data from year to year is that affordable housing and gentrification are huge issues in young people's lives. The deep relationships of DYCD program staff to those in the communities in which they are embedded can activate youth, parents and other community members to organize around affordable housing which would have an incredibly stabilizing impact. DYCD could also help build the capacity of the non-profits it funds to develop community land trusts or limited equity cooperatives or use a Banana Kelly[4] like model to create affordable housing via workshops or training institutes.

Violence and drug addiction are also in young people's top five issues for two years in a row, but in 2021 violence advanced to being the third to the second biggest issue. As we look at both 2020 and 2021 data related to YAY respondents proposed solutions to these pressing issues, it seems like having more youth programs is key. Young people are effectively proposing an expansion of DYCD's youth services across the city. Youth taking the YAY are recommending a tangible shift to the material conditions of people in their communities through jobs and housing as well as spaces for communities to come together and experience joy and healing through community events, public art, and more green spaces (see figures and). DYCD can play a clear role in promoting all of these proposed solutions.
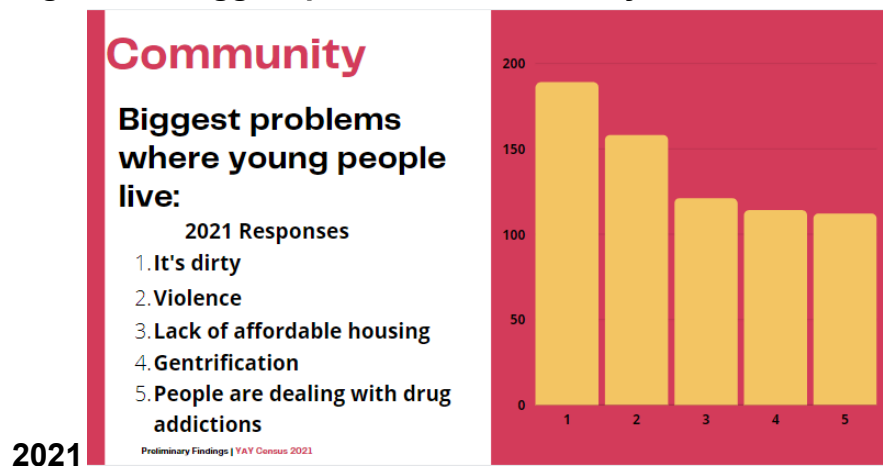
---

[3] The city should also ensure timely garbage collection and adequate funding for sanitation workers, but this is not in DYCD's purview.
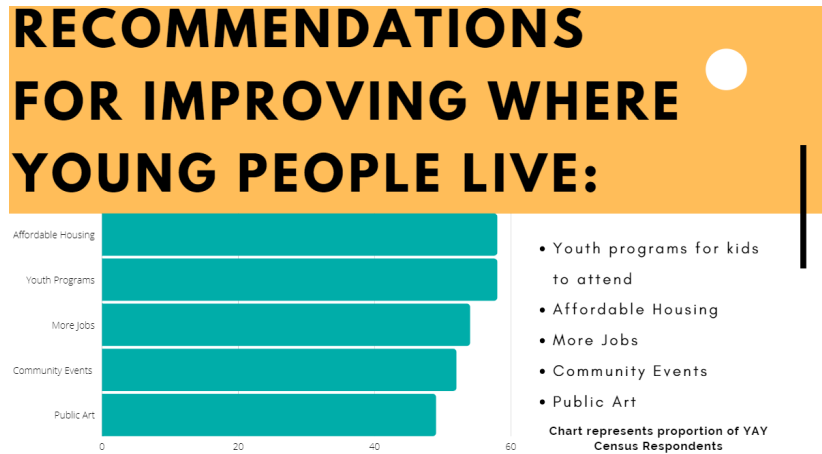[4] https://www.bkcianyc.org/apply-for-affordable-housing/#.YQNW3EwpDb0

Figure 10. Biggest problems, Community Section Youth Ask Youth (YAY) Census
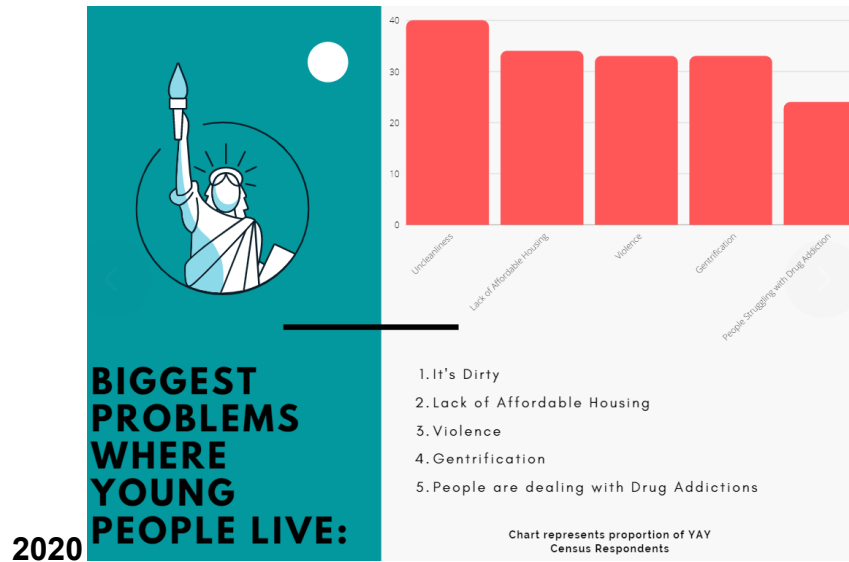
Figure 11. Biggest problems, Community Section Youth Ask Youth (YAY) Census
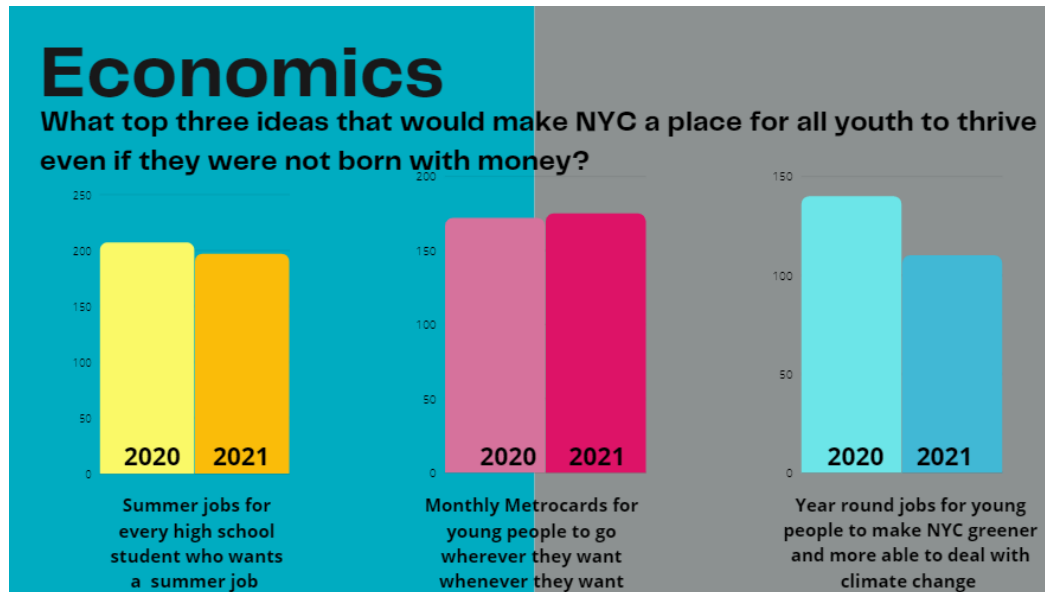
Figure 12: Recommendations, Community Section Youth Ask Youth (YAY) Census 2020

Figure 13: Recommendations, Community Section Youth Ask Youth (YAY) Census 2021

Figure 14: Top three ideas that would make NYC a place for all youth to thrive even if they were not born with money, economics section 2020 and 2021

Our goal is to make the YAY census data accessible to all, so with DYCD's support, we worked with our data scientist to develop a searchable database. The dashboard can be accessed via our website https://www.amplifyapp.org/en/results or at https://amplifydata.org/. Policy-makers, youth-serving programs or any interested parties can now explore the data for their borough or neighborhood, choose a particular demographic lens through which they can analyze any question, and toggle back and forth between 2020 and 2021 results.

With DYCD's support, we would like to get the word out to DYCD programs that the dashboard is a great way to use youth-generated data to inform programming or local civic action. We further hope to create a virtuous cycle (Zeller-Berkman, Munoz-Proto,Torre, 2015) where people see that DYCD is using the YAY data, they can learn valuable insights from youth people and they may therefore be more inclined to have the young people with whom they work take the census in subsequent years.

NYC Future Mapping: Preliminary Results

The Intergenerational Change Initiative developed a tool by which young people and adult allies around NYC can map assets and potential in their neighborhoods. Our Future mapping project which can be found on the Amplify site or at https://futuremapping.org/ has a way for anyone to contribute pins to our map that indicates something that they feel is an existing asset in their neighborhood as well as identify abandoned buildings or lots that have the potential to be something else that young people have identified as important to improving their communities such as affordable housing or a youth program or a community garden.

We have added multiple layers that can be viewed in addition to the future mapping pins and the Youth Ask Youth Census data. For this DYCD project we added a layer that indicates DYCD afterschool programs, community services, educational services, family support, housing support, immigrant services, jobs and internships and regional enrichment centers. In addition, we have added a layer that relates to COVID-19 deaths and hospitalizations. This map can be used by DYCD and other policy makers to map the impact of COVID-19 in particular neighborhoods, the existing DYCD assets in that neighborhood, the YAY census reponses for that neighborhood, and young people's vision of where there is potential to build back better post pandemic.

To date we have almost 100 entries around the city, however, this is another area where a partnership between ICI and DYCD to activate DYCD funded sites about this citizen science initiative would make this tool even more useful. Through the funding provided this spring, we developed a curriculum which can be used by youth-workers to involve their participants in mapping a two block radius near their program or homes (see attached appendix). With support, we hope to continue to build upon the Future Mapping project for years to come.

DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

DYCD's Vision Statement states that the agency "strives to improve the quality of life of New Yorkers by collaborating with local organizations and investing in the talents and assets of our communities to help them develop, grow, and thrive." Across this report many implications have been raised for policies, practices and principles that must shift in order to help organizations and communities grow. There is much further to learn about how people experienced the pandemic in ways that are deeply impacted by structural racism and systemic inequity. While it is beyond the scope of this abbreviated study to talk in depth about the ways that race, ethnicity, culture and socioeconomic status influenced the day-to-day experiences of the participants and their families across the hardest hit areas, it is clear that is a need for a further critique of racialized capital that has positioned Black and Brown youth and Youth Workers in marginal locations in relationship to supporting their economic, physical and mental wellbeing.

Organizational development requires inputs in the form of resources, workplace and institutional capacity building in order to strategically work amongst internal and external networks to operate high quality program and formally function to produce outputs at the individual level of each constituent, the institutional level of each organization and the systemic level where communities are situated. This study uncovered a perceived lack of being listened to from Youth Workers who are asked to be the social-emotional backbone of the youth services sector and cultivate positive youth development practices in workplace conditions that can be toxic to them. There is a concomitant loss to the field on this point as it relates to staff retention, turnover and the lack of stability for youth who need consistent adult allies in their development trajectory.

In identifying future directions and offering recommendations, the YPAR Research Team identified arenas they considered vital for DYCD to uplift based on the data, including:

- Increase public financing to support relevant youth programs 365 days per year
- Increase Youth Worker pay to support workforce cultivation and longevity
- Address loss of crucial social time in designing post-pandemic contracts for FY21
- Support online access and identify tools for remote youth engagement hereafter
- Support Youth Worker trainings to prepare workers to support digital learning
- Build flexible contract parameters that respond to needs of program sites reopening
- Support rational mandates for group size that align with public health best practices
- Emphasize social-emotional learning and mental health over other program metrics
- Support near peer engagement that pays older youth for working with younger youth
- Build program evaluation tools that allow for contextual, responsive work with youth
- Fund mandates around research, evaluation and data to upskill the field in analytics

There is much more that could be written about the need to support young people and their families in their communities to begin to repair from the catastrophic damage of COVID-19. There is further much more to be written about the need to support Youth Workers as key gatekeepers and stakeholders in the delivery of the vital services that youth and their families need. DYCD's continued investment in youth and communities across NYC will require a deeper investment in Youth Workers in order to ensure continuity and quality in delivery of services in this moment of building back.

WORKS CITED

Abel, J. R., & Deitz, R. (2021). *Some Workers Have Been Hit Much Harder than Others by the Pandemic* (No. 20210209a). Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

Beaunoyer, E., Dupéré, S., & Guitton, M. J. (2020). COVID-19 and digital inequalities: Reciprocal impacts and mitigation strategies. *Computers in human behavior*, *111*, 106424. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2020.106424

Chaturvedi, K., Vishwakarma, D. K., & Singh, N. (2021). COVID-19 and its impact on education, social life and mental health of students: A survey. *Children and youth services review*, *121*, 105866.

Closson, T. (2021, June 30). *Delta variant In NYC: What to know*. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/30/nyregion/delta-variant-new-york.html.

Engzell, P., Frey, A., & Verhagen, M. D. (2021). From the Cover: Learning loss due to school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, *118*(17).

NYC Department of Youth and Community Development. (2021). *For youth, Adults, families & Seniors*. https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dycd/services/DYCD-funded-programs.page.

NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. (2021). COVID-19: Data on Vaccines. https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-data-vaccines.page

Office of the State Deputy Comptroller for the City of New York. (2021). *Recent trends and impact of COVID-19 in the Bronx*. Office of the New York State Comptroller. https://www.osc.state.ny.us/reports/osdc/recent-trends-and-impact-covid-19-bronx

Rogers, T. N., Rogers, C. R., VanSant-Webb, E., Gu, L. Y., Yan, B., & Qeadan, F. (2020). *Racial disparities in COVID-19 mortality among essential workers in the United States*. World medical & health policy, *12*(3), 311-327.

Spriggs, W. E. (2021). *The delta variant is a dark cloud over the recovery. Will a Delta Virus Third Wave Cause a Recession?* | Barron's. https://www-barrons-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/www.barrons.com/amp/articles/delta-variant-putting-economic-recovery-at-risk-51626894321

Torre, M. E., Fine, M., Stoudt, B. G., & Fox, M. (2012). Critical participatory action research as public science. In H. Cooper, P. M. Camic, D. L. Long, A. T. Panter, D. Rindskopf, & K. J. Sher (Eds.), *APA handbook of research methods in psychology, Vol. 2. Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative,*

neuropsychological, and biological (pp. 171–184). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/13620-011

United Nations. (2020). *Protecting and MOBILIZING youth IN COVID-19 RESPONSES | Department of economic and social affairs*.

https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/un-desa-policy-brief-67-protecting-and-mobilizing-youth-in-covid-19-responses/.

Zeller-Berkman, 2010. *Critical development? Using a critical theory lens to examine the current role of evaluation in the youth-development field.* Volume2010, Issue127 Special Issue: Critical Social Theory and Evaluation Practice, Autumn (Fall) 2010 Pages 35-4*4*

Zeller-Berkman, S., Muñoz-Proto, C., & Torre, M. (2015). A Youth Development Approach to Evaluation: Critical Participatory Action Research. *Afterschool Matters*.