

CLEVELAND YPAR

*Newsletter for Cleveland Youth Participatory Action
Research Projects*



YOUTH LENS: CENTRAL YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON THEIR HEALTH & WELL-BEING

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This newsletter discusses findings from the Youth Lens YPAR study, which included youth participatory action research (YPAR) in two phases with youth (ages 9-18) in Cleveland, Ohio. This research was funded by the Center for Reducing Health Disparities, a recipient of funds from the National Institute on Minority Health and Disparities. While the broader study uses a youth participatory action research (YPAR) model to investigate neighborhood effects on youth health and well-being throughout Cleveland, this report discusses the subset of findings related to youth from the Central Neighborhood. We wanted to highlight these important and timely findings to share information from the youth's perspective and underscore potential ways to address any challenges or concerns within our city.

BACKGROUND: CHILDREN'S SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND HEALTH INEQUITIES

When it comes to understanding child health disparities, defined as inequitable differences in health based on demographic characteristics (i.e. race, age, SES) of persons under the age of 18, the environment matters. The **Social Determinants of Health** framework captures the complexity of health to be “the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age.” These conditions include physical infrastructure (e.g. playgrounds, parks, housing), institutions/ organizations (e.g. hospitals, schools, community centers), policies and social interactions. They also include distributions of power and resources, including those which contribute to various forms of racism, classism, ageism, sexism and other forms of inequity. All of these features combined have an impact on child health outcomes – both in the short-term as well as over their life course.

For example, unequal exposure of children from lower socio-economic backgrounds to adverse childhood experiences such as abuse, neglect, economic hardship, discrimination, and victimization has been identified as an important contributor to the health disparities affecting urban communities throughout the United States [1-4].

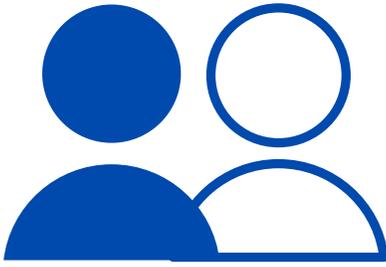


THE YOUTH LENS RESEARCH PROJECT

The aim of Youth Lens was to create a safe space for youth to come together to explore the impact of the neighborhood on health and well-being.

Within those aims, we developed more specific research topics in partnership with the youth participant-partners. Our collaborative research was characterized by long-term community engagement with existing youth groups, research priorities driven by the youth related to the broad umbrella of “health and well-being,” and an action agenda defined and driven by the youth. Youth Lens was developed by researchers and youth partners over a 2 year period between 2019 and 2021. Our approach included a combination of several methods, including photovoice, focus group discussions and interviews. This newsletter discusses findings from the most recent phase, with youth ages 9-13 from the Central Neighborhood in Cleveland.





KEY FINDINGS ON CENTRAL YOUTH WELL-BEING

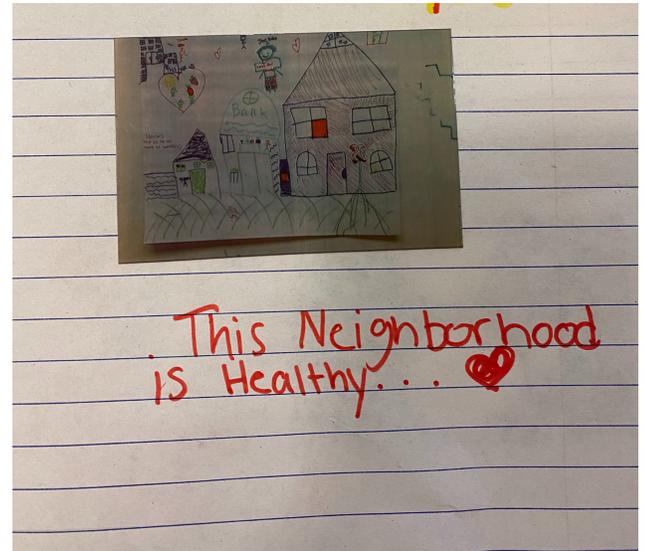
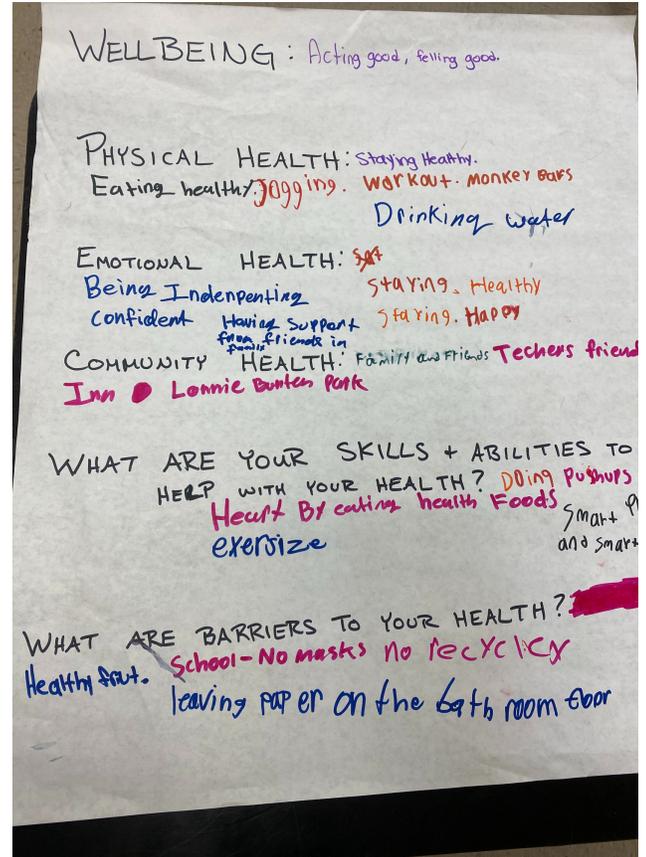
Central Youth (ages 9-12) in the most recent phase of research overall reported a number of aspects related to their overall health and well-being.

Physical health. Physical health centered around eating healthy, drinking water, playing and exercising. Barriers to physical health included lack of recycling/trash, not having access to healthy foods. The pandemic limited opportunities for physical activity and spaces to be active with friends, including the closures of schools, parks and recreation centers. Mask wearing at school and after-school spaces was described to protect their health while also making it hard to breath and to communicate with others.

Mental & Emotional Health. The youth described mental and emotional health as being happy, healthy, independent, confident, and feeling safe. This was supported by family and friends, teachers, being at school or an after school program, reading books, and through learning new skills that are challenging (such as riding a hover board or doing a front flip).

Safety & Bullying. The participants spoke about safety in connection to trusted others, especially parents, siblings, and teachers. Family is a key support that creates a safe environment. Many of the youth feel safe and home and in certain school spaces. Bullying was described as one of the biggest barriers for feeling safe. The media, especially in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic and racial and police violence made youth feel unsafe.

Self-identity. The youth talked about bullying at schools and how this affected the way they think and feel about themselves. However, youth discussed their families and friends as positive support systems that helped to boost their self-worth and self-esteem.



UPCOMING YPAR ACTIVITIES & WAYS TO GET INVOLVED!

We are currently looking for Cleveland youth ages 9-13 to participate in our Youth Lens Project!

If you are interested in joining the project please reach out to Elizabeth Benninger at (330) 441-7418, email: elizabeth.benninger@case.edu. Your voice matters!

YOUTH FOR YOUTH YPAR WITH CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED PARENTS



We are looking for youth ages 10-18 who have had an incarcerated parent (a parent in prison or jail at some point in their life) to participate in a youth participatory action research study looking at how the neighborhood makes children and youth think and feel and how this influences their health and well-being. As a part of this study, we want to understand the unique experiences of youth who have had an incarcerated parent and how this experience presents unique needs and challenges for youth health and well-being. We also want to learn more about how these needs can be better supported through programs and policies.

If you are interested in participating, please contact Elizabeth Benninger through email Elizabeth.benninger@case.edu or call/text (330) 441-7418

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