Lesson Plan: Community Mapping

INVESTIGATE: MAPPING: COMMUNITY MAPPING

By Stanford University's Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning (YELL) Curriculum – 95 minutes

OBJECTIVES

- To define what community means
- To understand the interdependency of the people and places within a community
- To begin to map the resources and needs in the community
- To identify the diverse perspectives that group members bring to the community

MATERIALS

- Butcher paper/flip chart paper/whiteboard/chalkboard
- Markers/dry erase markers/chalk
- Tape
- Paper
- Pens or pencils
- Clipboards
- Large map of your city or town (hand drawn or printed)
- Push pins
- Labels
- String/yarn
- "Community Web – Example" handout (1 per participant)
- Index cards (optional)

PREPARE BEFORE

Place a large map of your city or town on the wall. Label pushpins with youths' names. Prior to session, review the "Community Web – Example" handout.

WEB	EMail
yparhub.berkeley.edu	yparhub@gmail.com

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WARM UP

STEP 1: Checking In

Have participants answer the following question: what is one word you would use to describe your neighborhood? If time permits, hand out pens and index cards so that participants can write their word before sharing out. This will allow more variety in answers.

STEP 2: Mapping Our Community

Using a large map of your city or town, mark your school or program location with a large pushpin. Ask participants to come up one at a time and put a pin where they live and then connect a piece of colored string from their home to the meeting place. After everyone is done, ask participants if they see a pattern. Hint: Label the pins with their names so they can know which pin is theirs in relation to the others in the group.

EXPERIENCE

PART 1: COMMUNITY MAP

STEP 1: Think, Pair, Share. Ask each participant to consider their definition of community. They should think (or write) for at least one minute. Then divide participants into pairs to discuss their definitions, compare ideas, and create a definition of community that incorporates both sets of ideas. Have each pair share their definition with the full group. Have one of the participants or facilitators write the definitions on chart paper or the board. In the center of the definitions, write the word "community."

STEP 2: On the butcher paper/flip chart paper/whiteboard/chalkboard, draw one large circle around both the word "community" and the participants' definitions. Ask participants to name specific places and people that make up a community and write these on the perimeter of the circle. Connect these to the center circle, making a web. See the "Community Web-Example" worksheet for category ideas.

PART 2: CREATE A MAP

STEP 1: Create small groups of 3-4 people. Preferably, participants should be divided according to their neighborhoods, the places with which they most identify, or where they spend the most time. You can also have participants do this as an individual activity or take-home task.

STEP 2: Ask participants to draw a picture of their community according to the criteria below:

- What are the boundaries of your neighborhood – where does it begin and end? What markers tell you when you are entering or leaving this neighborhood?

- Draw this area to the best of your memory. Add in streets, particular houses, stores, businesses, parks, restaurants, landscapes, and other physical features.

- Include areas that offer resources or are of interest to youth (positive and negative). Where do they hang out?

- On or near your map, list four adjectives that describe this area.

STEP 3: Have each group share their map with the larger group. Note differences and similarities between the maps and the neighborhoods. Ask what participants think might account for the differences and similarities in what the different groups included.

STEP 4: As a group, create a Community Web of your community, based on the small group maps.

REFLECT

Take what you've done today to connect to issues and solutions. Facilitate a discussion with these reflection questions:

- What kinds of positive resources are there for youth in your community?

- Do you think youth use these resources or go to these places? Why or why not?

- Have you used these resources? Do you know who has?

- What do youth need that doesn't currently exist?

- What happens when there is a problem within the community? Who does it affect?

- What about when something positive happens?

- Who is responsible for making change?

SUMMARIZE

Think about what might have been omitted from the Community Web. Discuss how the Community Web shows the connectedness of the community. Demonstrate how a problem in a neighborhood could affect many other people and places in the community. Discuss how communities are interdependent on the people and places within them.

DEMONSTRATE

Have students respond to the following prompt:

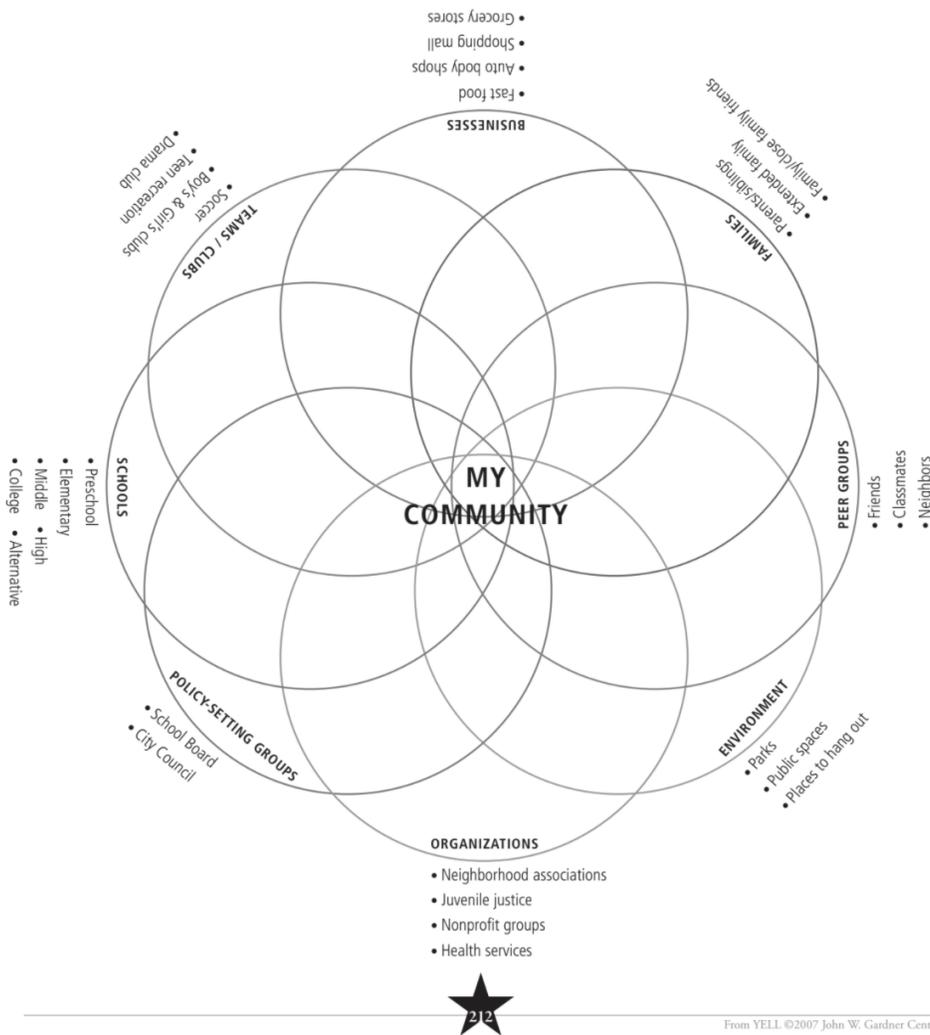If I could change any one thing about my neighborhood, I would _____.

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Community Web - Example

MY COMMUNITY

BUSINESSES
• Fast food
• Auto body shops
• Shopping mall
• Grocery stores

FAMILIES
• Parents/siblings
• Extended family
• Family/close family friends

TEAMS / CLUBS
• Soccer
• Boy's & Girl's clubs
• Teen recreation
• Drama club

PEER GROUPS
• Friends
• Classmates
• Neighbors

SCHOOLS
• Preschool
• Elementary
• Middle   • High
• College • Alternative

ENVIRONMENT
• Parks
• Public spaces
• Places to hang out

POLICY-SETTING GROUPS
• School Board
• City Council

ORGANIZATIONS
• Neighborhood associations
• Juvenile justice
• Nonprofit groups
• Health services

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