

Lessons Learned from Facilitating Youth Directed, Participatory Action Research in a State-Wide Study of Child Welfare Services



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Council on Social Work Education Annual Program Meeting

November 19th, 2020



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Meet the Authors

Acknowledgements

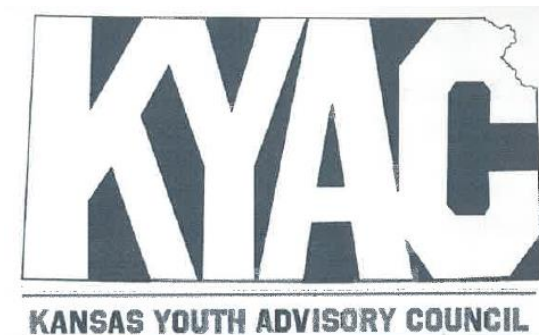
This study was part of the Kansas Strong for Children and Families project, which is funded by the Children's Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, under grant number 90-CO-1139. The presentation's contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Children's Bureau.

Acknowledgements

- We would like to especially thank our community collaborators:
 - The Kansas Department for Children and Families
 - Kansas Youth Advisory Council
 - KVC
 - St. Francis Ministries
 - DCCCA
 - TFI
 - Cornerstones of Care
 - Kansas Family Advisory Network
 - Kansas Office of Judicial Administration
 - Kansas Court Improvement Program
 - Kansas Supreme Court Task Force on Permanency Planning

Study Context

- This study was led by the Kansas Strong for Children and Families research team and the Kansas Youth Advisory Council (KYAC)
- Kansas Strong is a 5-year state-wide, child welfare research initiative funded by the Children's Bureau
- Collaborative project with over 45 stakeholders sitting on the steering committee including parent partners
- Several strategies aimed at improving practice in child welfare agencies and court and legal systems
- KYAC unites youth in care and enables them to speak directly about their experiences while obtaining life and leadership skills
- Together we are implementing the Youth Voices in Foster Care project



Sharing what we are learning from the process of engaging in this project...

- Meeting the requirements of our funder and engaging in an arts-based, PAR project
- Shifting focus to include both outcome and process
- Utilizing trauma-informed strategies to be sensitive to the youth
- COVID-19: Barriers and bridges





Meeting funding requirements and engaging in an arts-based, PAR project...

- Initial submission of implementation plan and encouragement to include youth participants (Children's Bureau, 2019)
- Connections with stakeholders working directly with youth who were in or had recently transitioned out of foster care
- Building upon previous KYAC projects and strategic plan
- Consulting with experts



Youth Voices from Foster Care

A youth-led initiative with the Kansas Youth Advisory Council

Arts-Based Research Methods

- Art as knowledge; seeing it as a part of the scientific process (Leavy, 2018)
- Encourages multiple ways of knowing and sharing knowledge (Leavy, 2018; Kara, 2013)

Participatory Action Research

- Knowledge building process is democratic and emergent (Aragon and Castillo-Burguete, 2015)
- Feedback loops encourage change
- Youth participatory evaluation (YPE) (Richards-Schuster and Elliott, 2019)

Shifting focus from the outcome to the process...

- Using methods that encouraged a shift in how we view and value knowledge building
- Arts-based methods: underlying assumptions regarding art as knowledge and truth (Kara, 2013)
- YPE: Centering youth as partners in the research process (Richards-Schuster and Elliott, 2019)
- Managing ambiguity and leveraging the potential of the project



Partnering with
KYAC and agency
leaders

Student
employee
support

Prompts
developed by
KYAC

Digital art
projects and
focus groups



What has this project
looked like?



Utilizing trauma-sensitive strategies...

- Components of methods that supported a trauma-sensitive approach:
 - Partnering rather than directing
 - Self-led projects
 - Art as expression and truth
 - Voluntary involvement with option to stop participating at any time
- Ongoing support and check-ins
- Anonymity

COVID-19: Barriers and Bridges...

- Moving to virtual planning and data collection
- Art supplies
- Connecting with youth
- Benefits of using technology to connect



DESKTOP

Dissemination and the Future of the Project



Where I Land

Something I'm always asked is

"What supports do I need to thrive?"

Things take time, hold your head up high

It's usually followed up with

"How long were you in care?"

Stay strong and I always respond "five"

What I needed was structure

A place I could reside to have a relationship with my sister
and brothers

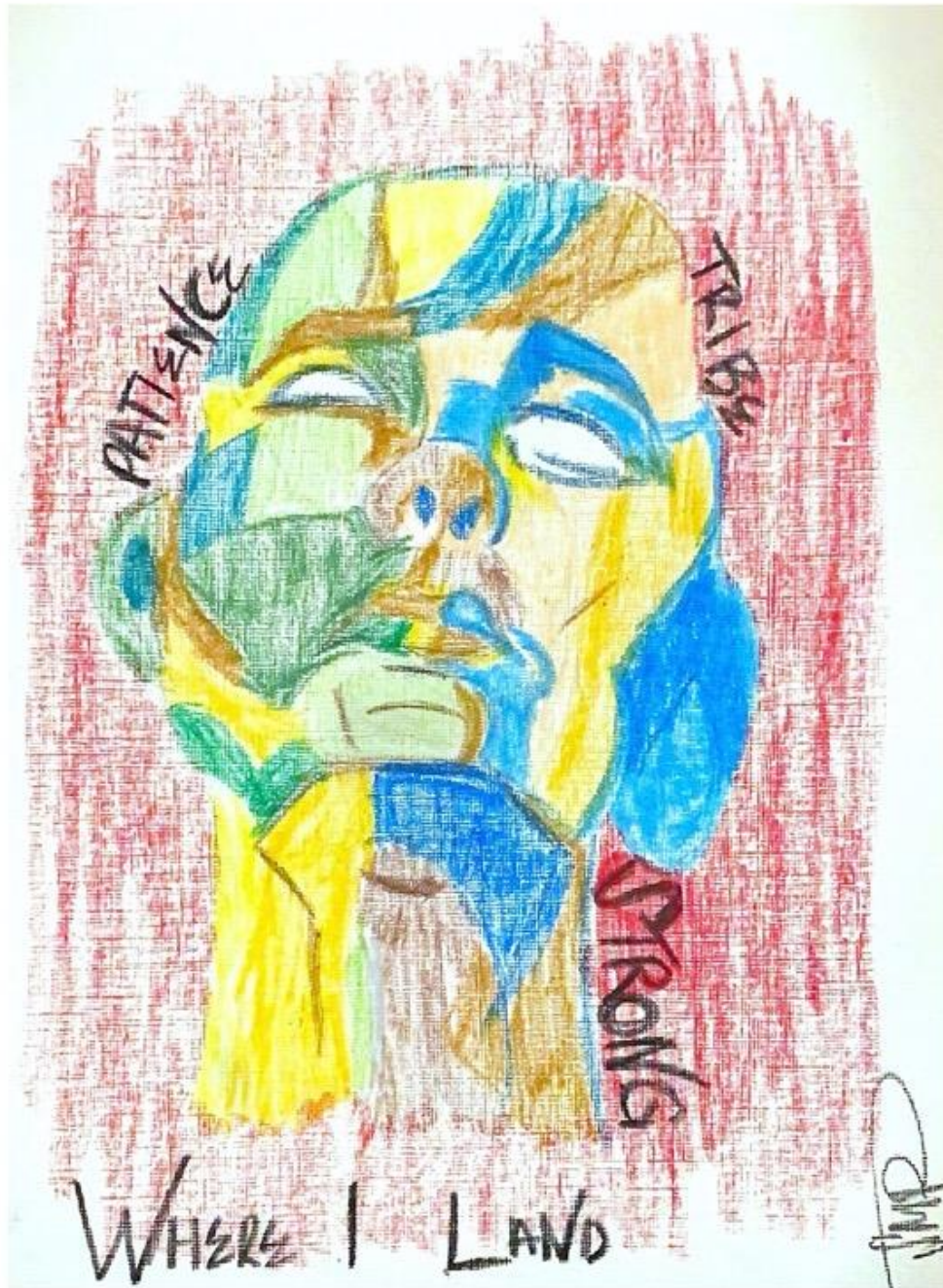
Patience, always have patience

A mentor to vent to that shows they truly care

And a TRIBE of people

who understand that life sometimes isn't fair

And never jump to the worse case



Questions?

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