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Abstract

This paper discusses a youth asset mapping project, the Engaging and Empowering Youth Project (E2Y), conducted by a group of African American youth. The youth mappers investigated local assets available for teens and created a map using digital media tools in order to develop and share information; as part of this project they engaged in a wide variety of activities, including canvassing, interviews, making videos, and public presentations. These activities helped the youth mappers to cultivate positive perceptions of the community, as well as develop social skills and digital literacy skills. The work conducted by the youth mappers also addressed practical community needs and challenged the deficit view of the community. This paper describes how the project took place, what the experience of the youth mappers was like, and the legacy of this project. I use community inquiry as the overarching contextualizing framework to help illuminate the nature and significance of this project.

Community Asset Mapping as Community Inquiry

Community Inquiry

Community inquiry is a social and educational practice that connects learning with lived experiences in various everyday social contexts (Bishop & Bruce, 2008). The term "community inquiry" is not associated exclusively with one particular field but is widely used in many disciplines and with varying traditions of usage. The notion of community inquiry in this paper has its origins in progressive education. Progressivists such as John Dewey and Jane Addams highlighted the connection between learning and lived experience. They maintained that students should be connected with real life situations interwoven with community, work, social norms, culture, and other parts of lived experience. In view of this, it is important that students understand the world as a whole and learn to handle complexities, which can help them grow into engaged and critical citizens who participate in a collective effort to serve a public good (Bishop & Bruce, 2008).

Hull House was a good example of how community inquiry could produce critical and engaged intelligence. The people of Hull House actively participated in collective efforts to address issues of health, education, childcare, labor, and other critical matters in the community (Addams, 1999; Bruce, 2008; Longo, 2007). Their communal/social practice enabled them to acquire local, historical, and political knowledge, governance skills, critical perspectives, and democratic values in a holistic manner. As such, it was as Addams noted "a protest against a restricted view of education" (Addams, 1999, p. 253).

Community inquiry is also reflected in the various of community-based learning that highlight the connection between learning and the ordinary experiences of community life. Benson, Harkavy, and Puckett (2007) underline the importance of partnerships between universities, public schools, and a broad range of community organizations in envisioning community schools. Teachers and students in community schools often 1) use resources, people, and places in their community as the focus of courses, 2) open school programming to all community members, and 3) connect schools closely to the community. These things help realize Dewey's recommendation that school should be the center of educational life in the community. Ritzo, Nam, and Bruce (2009) shed light on the role of public libraries as another key agency in the creation of meaningful university-community partnerships that allow people to educate and empower one another. Art is another important way community inquiry takes place: In discussing a community-based art project intertwining the history of social movements and art, Kim and Miyamoto (2013) stress the importance of community-based arts for engaged learning that connects arts to the common and ordinary experiences in the community. Using the arts, individuals make sense of their experiences of everyday life, express themselves creatively, produce local knowledge, and empower each other. Technology also has an integral role in shaping the ways people communicate, think, make sense of experience, and act in the world. Bishop and Bruce (2008) examined deep connections among literacy, learning, technology,

and community as fundamental to the idea of community inquiry. They discuss how individuals appropriate tools and technologies into various literate activities arising out of lived experiences in the community, including dimensions of social justice and morality. Similarly, in Bruce and Lin (2009), young immigrant students created audiovisual podcasts that reflected their cultural backgrounds and presented important community issues. This inquiry-based learning using digital technology inspired not only students' personal growth in media skills and inquiry skills, but also demonstrated the potential of community action.

In brief, although there are different approaches (art, technology, community-university partnerships) in exploring community inquiry, the common ground—connection with lived experience, concrete activities for inquiry and action, and respect for the values and perspectives of various groups and people of the community—remains the same across those differences.

The Inquiry Cycle

Dewey (1938) defines inquiry as "the controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation" (p. 104). Indeterminate situations are those that expose the gap between current needs and realities, and are characterized as troubled, ambiguous, confused, full of conflicting tendencies and the like. Inquiry begins with a desire to resolve these issues of indeterminate situations, a desire which is a natural feature of human cognition.

Bishop and Bruce (2008) broke down inquiry into the following five steps: Ask, Investigate, Create, Discuss, and Reflect. In the Ask stage, people facing an indeterminate situation raise questions and identify problems. In the Investigate stage the inquirer engages in a variety of activities, searching out new factual conditions. This involves opportunities for people to learn diverse, authentic, and challenging materials and problems. The Investigate stage typically requires people to interact with other people, encounter new social environments, communicate, and negotiate. New factual conditions or ideas obtained from investigation are then represented in concrete ways. In the Create stage, people produce specific observable and unobservable products. The Discuss stage is where participants listen to others' opinions, examine the new ideas, and articulate their understandings. In this way, personal learning experiences become a social enterprise. The Reflect stage involves a meaning-

making process that includes judging whether the original indeterminate situation has really been transformed into a determinate and unified whole. In this stage people look back at the initial question, the investigation path, and the products and conclusions, as a whole. This reflection process may initiate new questions, leading to continuing inquiry.

These steps of inquiry overlap with each other, do not have sharp boundaries, and do not necessarily occur in order. In practice, inquiry entails multiple cycles without definitive end points, and involves embodied action to transform situations beyond merely thinking and intellectual play (Bruce, 2009; Bruce & Bishop, 2002). Finally, it is important to recognize that inquiry-based learning is not a method or an option to consider for teaching and learning; instead, it is what actually happens when people do learn (Bishop & Bruce, 2008).

Community inquiry expands the agency of inquiry from an individual to groups of people, organizations, and the community at large. Everyone who has knowledge of the situation should, ideally, participate in the communal effort to solve the problem. People from diverse backgrounds must be able to express their thoughts and ideas without any fear of judgment or prejudice. Their perspectives should be equally respected, and fair communication and negotiation processes should always be encouraged. This participatory dimension supports a democratic approach to knowledge production in community inquiry (Bruce & Bloch, 2013).

Community Asset Mapping

Community asset mapping exemplifies community inquiry. This activity, which begins with discovering the existing resources and strengths of a community rather than its deficits, is rooted in the asset-based community development model (ABCD) (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, 1996). It aims at achieving sustainable community development from the inside out, and is an effective strategy for the visualization and sharing of information with the members of the community. The map creation process entails active participation of community members in raising questions and collaborative investigation, echoing the participatory knowledge production of community inquiry.

Many disciplines, including community development, public health, youth development, K–12 education, and teacher education, use the

asset-mapping approach for community-driven development. In Aronson, Wallis, O'Camp, and Schafer (2007), the members of the community contributed to a map about a community-based urban infant mortality prevention program, in collaboration with researchers. This work identified neighborhood conditions and resources related to issues of interest to the community residents and encouraged them to seek resources available near to them. This information could be an important tool for program staff and policy makers as they decide where and how to focus and improve resources and effort. In Ordonez-Jasis and Myck-Wayne (2012), teacher candidates uncovered resources and assets for young children and their families, including children with disabilities, and reported that they became more knowledgeable about the rich educational resources of the area. At the same time, they began to look critically at the lack of equal access available to children at risk or with disabilities, which prompted them to broaden their practices beyond the classroom and to consider collaboration with families and other educators.

Youth participation in community-asset mapping is receiving increasing attention. In Santilli, Carroll-Scott, Wong, and Ickovics (2011), urban youth working as community health workers collected geocoding data of access to nutritious foods and green spaces in the neighborhoods, which formed part of a chronic disease prevention initiative. In Handy, Rodgers and Schwieterman (2011), youth were partnered with adults and investigated available resources that promote positive youth development. This research underlined positive adult-youth partnership as a key factor for the youth's successful participation. In K–12 education, community-asset mapping is also being used as a helpful pedagogical tool for engaged and inquiry-based learning. Students and teachers utilized geographic information systems (GIS) and global positioning systems (GPS) in order to investigate various topics of the community (Andersen, 2011). Students in social studies class were also encouraged to think critically about the unequal distribution of resources with regards to the historical, cultural, and political aspects of the community (Munoz, 2003). These examples among others reveal that community-asset mapping is gaining ground as a powerful tool for encouraging youth to take part in addressing the real issues in the community and cultivating critical understanding of resource distribution, as well as learning positive facts about the community.

Although the studies discussed above did not use the term "community inquiry," the ways they looked at the community—from a positive rather than a deficit point of view—and the involvement of individuals and community groups working together to address important community issues clearly reflect the key ideas of community inquiry.

Community asset mapping entails many different types of activities, such as walk-through, data collection, interviews, and map creation. Some studies applied traditional methods; others used new methods and tools, such as geospatial technology (GIS and GPS). Youth partnerships varied across situations where the projects were taking place. The youth had different levels of involvement in map-making as well. In some cases, they participated in the data collection stage, but did not participate in the actual map creation; adult researchers and partners used professional software and presented the data in visual form.

These differences in the activities and media practices, youth-adult partnerships, and the social context involved in the project play a key role in constructing youth experience. There is still little research in this area, however, especially concerning the usage of youth-friendly media tools and approaches. In the following sections, I discuss how E2Y youth mappers employed traditional methods and digital media tools, what their participation was like, how it has changed their view of the community and of themselves, and what the implications are for future youth community engagement projects.

The Engaging and Empowering Youth Project

E2Y arose from the desire to challenge the historical town and gown separation in a university town and, in particular, deficit views of the community. This community, northern Champaign, IL, has historically been populated by working-class African Americans, and, despite its proximity to the university, it has remained socially and culturally separated from it. Patricia Avery, who was the director of Champaign-Urbana Area Project (CUAP) and had worked for youth and their families in the community for 40 years, noted African American youth from lower income families in northern Champaign felt the university was "gated" to them and did not dare to cross a certain geographic boundary.

Recognizing this gap in the fall of 2008, the Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS) at the University of Illinois formed a collaboration with three community

organizations: CUAP, Peer Ambassadors, and Illinois Public Media. The aim of this campus-community partnership was to provide youth who lived in the communities north of the university with an opportunity to cross the imaginary border and investigate resources and assets available for them locally, such as job opportunities for teens, youth programs, recreation centers, and more. It was expected that the new project would encourage youth to actively engage in the community and empower them to see the community from a positive perspective, in the face of any negative views of African American youth and communities. The project title, "Engaging and Empowering Youth (E2Y)," originated from this goal. Most of the youth participants were recruited through the Empowering Black Youth Network established by Illinois Public Media in Northern Champaign.

Methods

This study took a qualitative approach. I played a dual role in this project: one as an adult partner who worked with youth, and one as a participant observer. Data were collected from observations, interviews, informal conversations, and artifacts. From January 2009 through February 2010, I observed youth participating in trainings, interviews, lab sessions, presentations, and other activities. The first youth interviews were video-recorded by Illinois Public Media. Each of these first interviews lasted 10 minutes and covered the youth's motivation for participation and their purpose in the project. I later conducted two group interviews with the five youth mappers in October 2009 and January 2010 respectively, and one interview with the adult community partners (December 2009). The interviews lasted about 50 minutes each, and the questions concerned the youth mappers' backgrounds and personal involvement in the mapping project, reflections on the products of the project (such as the E2Y map, data directory entries, interview video clips), challenges, and rewards.

An insufficient number of interviews with youth mappers was one of the major limitations of this study. However, as I worked closely with the youth mappers throughout the project, I was able to obtain many informal opportunities to talk with them about their experience in the project. The important quotations and issues from the conversation were documented in my observation notes. The notes also included information on the youth activities and accomplishment, and

reflection on project activities: preliminary training, canvassing, lab sessions, youth interviews, group discussion sessions, public presentations and talks. Some of the presentations and talks were audio or video recorded.

Artifacts included the E2Y map containing the data directory entries that the youth created; the interview videos; the Youthworks curriculum; a press release; and the project website (http://illinoisyouthmedia.org/projects/e2y). For the analysis, the initial focus was on social skills, new media skills, and positive perceptions of the community. As the project progressed, consistent themes emerged from the notes, informal conversations, and formal interviews, for example, varied interests and learning capacities among the youth, passion for interviews, positive perception of the community, self-confidence, collaborative learning, and challenges in learning technical tasks.

Participants
Youth Participants

Five youth mappers–Raisha, Clorisa, Christina, Dave, and Ian, all high school students–completed E2Y, which lasted from the beginning of 2009 to the spring of 2010. Raisha and Christina, both 16, and Clorisa, Raisha's younger sister, had been close friends for a long time, and had previously conducted a multimedia project with the Youth Community Informatics Project (YCI) of GSLIS. The two boys, Dave and Ian, were 15 and were new to YCI and GSLIS. These youth were recruited through the Empowering Black Youth Network or by personal recommendation.

Adult Partners

Seven to twelve adult partners from community organizations and the university participated in the project. They worked with youth in various stages of the project, and with different levels of involvement. The adult partners included staff members, community members, graduate students, and formal representatives of each institution, including Kimberlie Kranich, Patricia Avery, and Ann Bishop, representing Illinois Public Media, CUAP, and GSLIS, respectively. The primary focus of this section will be on the youth experience with the project, although the adult partners also played an important role.

Youth Activities in Mapping

Below is the description of how E2Y progressed in following the inquiry cycle

introduced above: Ask, Investigate, Create, Discuss, and Reflect. As mentioned earlier, the boundaries between steps in the cycle are fuzzy, and so framing the project with these steps may over-simplify the activities that were in actuality performed in more complicated ways.

Ask

E2Y grew out of a concern about the deficit view of the community and the local youth who lived in northern Champaign. Part of the assumption was that not enough information existed about resources available for youth in the area, including locations, contact information, kinds of services, and more. E2Y intended to counteract the deficit view by creating an asset-map actively addressing this indeterminate situation. Among the main questions were: What resources are available to youth in our community? How do we effectively support youth community engagement and learning? And, more broadly, How can we contribute to a better understanding between African American youth and Champaign-Urbana residents? These questions were initially shaped by adult partners who initiated the campus-community partnership, and they guided the youth mappers to explore the next steps of inquiry.

Investigate

In the next stage, the youth mappers engaged in many different activities in order to discover the local assets. These activities included door-to-door canvassing, interviews, and trainings. These were planned by adult partners, and this stage represented the most intensive fieldwork of the project.

Prior to the fieldwork, the youth mappers underwent training where they acquired the knowledge and skills needed for fieldwork. For the basic learning module of the project, E2Y adapted Youthworks (2007), which was a curriculum about youth mapping previously developed by the university's Illinois Rural Families program. E2Y brought Youthworks into the digital era, as we customized its guidelines to fit our purposes and relied on computers, GPS, digital cameras, and the Internet in designing interviews, creating entry standards for each organization profiled, processing the data gathered, and disseminating what was learned.

Canvassing. During the summer of 2009, the project conducted preliminary canvassing in northern Champaign in order to cast a wide net for new information about local youth assets. The canvassing consisted of passing out flyers to inform people about E2Y and requests for information on local assets people knew of. In canvassing, the youth mappers and adult partners distributed a thousand flyers informing residents of the purpose of the project in northern Champaign. Incorporating inputs of the members of the neighborhoods, the project team created a new list of youth serving agencies. At this stage, the youth mappers' participation in decision-making was slight, but as the project went on, the youth mappers voiced their thoughts on the project and made good suggestions for improvement.

Interviews. The youth mappers began interviewing the youth-serving agencies listed in the newly created directory at the end of August 2009. This was the part of the project that interested the youth mappers the most. Prior to the actual interviews, the youth mappers conducted mock interviews with adult partners, learning what is expected in a real interview and how they could effectively deliver their messages. They practiced each component of the interview, including greetings and introductions, asking questions, writing down answers, and taking video. A professional staff member of Illinois Public Media (one of the adult partners) helped the youth with operating the cameras and maintaining good camera angles. The adult partners provided constructive feedback on all aspects of the interview process.

For the interviews, the adult partners prepared templates of an organizational profile and an interview questionnaire. Adopted from Youthworks, the templates were customized to E2Y based on feedback from both the adult partners and the youth mappers. The organizational profile was a simple form displaying brief information about the agency, and the interview questionnaires included more in-depth questions. Through the interview, the youth mappers were able to apply in the real world the skills and knowledge they had learned. They visited different places and organizations in the community for the interviews. The youth mappers said the interviews taught them much about their community and community programs they had not known before. The community agencies that the youth mappers interviewed included the Champaign-Urbana Park District, Parkland Community College, Girl Scouts, Housing Authority of Champaign County, National Council of African American Men, Urbana Neighborhood Connection Center,

Freedom School, the Champaign-Urbana Area Project, and more.

Create

The Create stage focused on the questions How do we share new information about local assets with others? and What are the effective ways to do so? Digital technology was integral to the way E2Y gathered and presented the data. The youth's keen interest in digital technology–apparent throughout the project–was the major motivation for their participation in the project, and the effort to support youth motivation naturally led E2Y to utilize youth-friendly media tools that would potentially also be easily available for the general public. For this purpose, Google Maps was chosen.

The youth mappers gathered at the Saturday lab sessions from August through mid-November of 2009. During the lab sessions, chiefly run by me, the youth mappers edited their interview videos, uploaded them to YouTube, and typed their interview answers and organizational profiles in Google Documents. After finishing these preliminary tasks, the youth mappers created the E2Y map via Google Maps, and edited the info windows for the location markers of the youth-serving agencies they had interviewed. These info windows allowed the youth mappers to include hyperlinks to the interview questions and to the agencies' organizational profiles; videos of the interviews; and brief descriptions of the agencies. Although the youth mappers found editing the info windows to be very challenging due to the complicated process involved, they were very proud of their final product. The complete E2Y map displayed metadata of the local assets, as it offered information on multiple aspects of the youth-serving agencies in the community. This map was accessible through both the official E2Y website (http://illinoisyouthmedia.org/e2y), hosted by Illinois Public Media, and the YCI website.

Discuss and Reflect

In principle, Discuss and Reflect are separate stages, but in the project, the two seemed inseparable from each other, and, to some extent, inseparable from the other stages as well. As they became engaged in the main part of project, the youth mappers began to more actively express their thoughts about the project and experience. Closely working with the youth mappers, I had many chances to have conversations about the project and tried to turn these conversations into meaningful reflection. The topics covered in these

conversations included what they learned, what challenged or interested them the most, what other effective ways to advertise the map might be, and so on. Moreover, youth mappers became outspoken about certain setbacks in the project (e.g., the delayed schedule) and made suggestions for improvement.

In mid-October, the whole E2Y team, including both the youth mappers and the adult partners, held a group reflection session to listen more carefully to the voices of the youth mappers. Both adult partners and youth mappers reflected on where they were, what the youth mappers had learned so far, and what improvements were needed. The three girls, Christina, Raisha, and Clorisa, made good suggestions for improving the project. These suggestions included having a concrete contract with the youth mappers about hours and responsibilities, additional staff recruitment, effective canvassing, training time reduction, youth-led fundraising, and more. These insightful voices from the youth mappers taught the adult partners important lessons on the project, which they otherwise would have missed.

Among the important reflective activities was a public presentation. Upon completion of the E2Y map, the youth mappers began presenting it. The first presentation took place at the closing ceremony of E2Y held at Illinois Public Media in December 2009. Before their parents and the adult partners, youth mappers presented their favorite "balloons" (the info windows of the community agencies they interviewed) on the E2Y map. They talked about why they liked these specific balloons, what the agency was about, and what they had learned from the project. This presentation experience prepared the youth mappers for the upcoming public presentations.

On February 3, 2010, the youth mappers gave a talk at the YCI workshop sessions of the fifth annual iConference. At this conference, they presented the E2Y map, shared their experiences with the conference participants, and led a small lab session to teach others how to edit Google Maps. Afterwards, some of the youth mappers (Christina, Raisha, and Clorisa) were also invited to graduate courses of GSLIS and to several meetings to talk about their experiences with E2Y. As they gave more talks, the youth mappers became more eloquent and confident in their presentation. It appeared that many questions they were asked helped them reflect on their practice from multiple perspectives.

The reflection stage also prompted the

participants (both youth mappers and adult partners) to think about how E2Y would make a difference in the community. Or, in Dewey's terminology, it raised the issue of how the project would contribute to transformation of the initial "indeterminate situation" (the lack of information on local resources available for teens) into the improved determinate situation. This led to reflections on the project from a broader perspective, not only centering on the final project and its potential impact but also reflections on the nature of the community inquiry practice as a whole. This process brought about new questions and suggestions for future projects, which could initiate a new inquiry in turn. I discuss this issue further after reviewing what youth learned from the project in the next section.

Youth Learning Outcomes

Learning about the Community: "We really didn't know that our community had such resources."

The youth mappers said that E2Y helped them learn much about their community in multiple ways. Despite the physical challenge of canvassing, the youth mappers regarded it as worthwhile in improving their geographical knowledge of their neighborhoods, calling their attention to street names, signs, and the locations of community organizations. It was also through canvassing that they first gained attention from classmates in school. Some classmates of the three girls recognized them on the E2Y flyer, bringing it to school to ask about the project and their roles in it. Clorisa talked about this experience in the second interview:

> I learned about the different areas in the neighborhoods, know what streets I am on, pay attention to signs… . I met people who have done good in the community and other youth will be interested in. Some of our friends saw us in the newspaper about E2Y. It was really cool.

Most importantly, the youth mappers were surprised at the rich resources for teens their community offered, which they had not known of before. It is certain that interviews with community agencies provided the youth mappers with a vital community learning experience. For instance, Christina emphasized how much she enjoyed the two-and-a-half-hour interview with Mr. Cordell of the National Council of African American Men. Christina said that the actual interview was done within a half hour; Mr. Cordell talked about his personal history and the history of African Americans in Champaign for the rest of the time. She reported that his story was not boring at all, but that rather she had learned a lot about the community. An interview with a community organization for kids with Down syndrome was another favorite of hers. She said that the interview had made her aware of Down syndrome and the social prejudices faced by people with the condition.

The interview experiences played a pivotal role in helping the youth get to know the community better and recognize its positive aspects. It is important to note that in addition to the interviews, a wide range of interactions with various groups of people in the local media center, community organizations, and the university contributed to the youth mappers' positive learning experiences about their community as well. For these youth mappers, this project was one of the few opportunities to interact with adults from different backgrounds who cared for the community, respected youth's voice, and appreciated their dedication to this project.

Interviewing and Social Skills

The youth mappers gained interview and communication skills, as well as social confidence. They learned how to interview people, how to avoid being shy, and how to be polite to people even when confronted with rudeness during the canvassing and interviews. The youth mappers said that they were very nervous in their first interviews, but as they conducted more interviews, they became more relaxed and learned to enjoy them. For instance, in Christina's final interview, she made a smooth transition from one question to another (having memorized all the interview questions) and maintained healthy eye contact, as well as creating her own questions to probe further into issues. On the way home from that interview, Christina said, "I just wanted to know more about the program and its services. That was really important to other youth."

Raisha reported learning social skills: "I learned how to interview people, how to talk to people, how not to be scared when I hand out flyers." She added, "I learned how to be more respectful to people and even if they be rude to you, but just be respectful and say, 'Thanks.'"

Ian also testified that he had improved both his ability to interact with others and his ability to explain a project to adults through this mapping

project. Ian was usually quiet and shy during the project, but his presentation at the iConference was full of wit and humor, eliciting laughter. Further, the three girls connected their acquired interview skills to their future job interview preparations. Raisha said,:

> I want to be a nurse in the future. When I get an interview, I know what to say, since I used to be an interviewer and I know how to interview. I know how to say something back positive. I know how to, like…[Clorisa turned as if to whisper to Raisha], have a good conversation with a person.

Learning New Media Skills

New technology skills constituted a big chunk of the youth mappers' learning outcome (see Figure 1). Given their own Flip Video cameras, the youth mappers were also passionate about playing with cameras and making videos throughout the whole project. They learned from Illinois Public Media professional staff members important basic film skills such as setting up tripods, getting good camera angles, and avoiding backlight, in addition to video editing skills.

Youth mappers also learned skills using video editing software and various online tools such as Google Maps, YouTube, Google Docs, Flickr, and more. They achieved different levels of mastery and interest in these technological skills according to individual differences in interest in and aptitude for technology. Dave had a particular interest in learning new technology skills, and Ian impressed the team with his consistent passion for learning new skills and sharing his experiences. Christina and Clorisa, who were relatively quick to grasp new skills, took the role of interns among the team and taught their peers to finish their tasks successfully. I respected the youth mappers' own pace for learning, and emphasized collaboration and mutual support during the lab sessions. Ian talked about his achievement at the iConference: "I was too far away from the computer at first…but we actually posted something on the Web. I learned to type better now and find stuff on Google. At first, it was very hard." Ian had a low level of technological skill in the beginning, but he kept pushing himself to learn about the new technology at his own pace.

Taken together, E2Y was not just about mapping, but about holistic community learning and action for change. Their work addressed a practical need of the community: producing informa-

tion about local resources available for teens. The youth mappers crossed the invisible gate and participated in campus-community activities; they learned to work with other adult and youth partners, communicate with members of the community, and inquire into important local issues using vari-

Figure 1. Students Learn Technology Skills As Part of E2Y Experience.

ous tools and methods. The interviews the youth conducted with youth-serving agencies, as well as their work with adult partners and other support networks for E2Y helped foster in them a positive view of their community (and vice versa) and themselves.

Discussion and Implications

In this section I examine the project from the perspective of the participatory dimension of the community inquiry, and discuss its limitations and implications for future studies. E2Y did not come out of a vacuum, but originated from the participatory culture and long-standing commitment to social justice among the partner organizations of the project. Illinois Pubic Media has made many efforts to reach out to the community and invited local youth to their youth media workshops. CUAP, as introduced earlier, has strived to improve the welfare of families and youth in need of help and support in the area. Since 1993, GSLIS has worked with the surrounding community through community information network projects to promote equity of access to digital resources and teach the skills necessary to access and use these resources. From this background, the partner organizations brought their own expertise and experience in community engagement into E2Y. Several other community organizations also constituted the collaborative nexus for community inquiry of this project by providing interviews, curriculum resources and guidelines, and personnel and financial support, among other things. This collaborative effort to form a space for community inquiry (Ritzo et al., 2009) became a solid foundation for this project and should not be overlooked.

Toward the end of the project, new questions emerged about the potential impact of the project to the community, in particular regarding accessibility and availability of the map among the community members. These questions included: Can people who live in northern Champaign have access to this information? Where would they be able to get information on things such as homes, libraries, schools, community organizations? What are the other effective ways to increase the availability of the map? What types of maps, other than online-based maps, would be useful to audiences without immediate access to the Internet? Among the most important issues related to these questions is the choice of representation tools for E2Y. In order to use the E2Y map, which is online-based, access to the Internet and adequate digital literacy skills are required. However, the decision in favor of online-based information distribution may have inadvertently prevented youth and their families who did not have the relevant digital resources and skills from using the E2Y map. This may have even exacerbated existing digital divide problems in the community.

This experience helps us to understand how to strengthen the participatory dimension. In knowledge production, it is important that people with different backgrounds bring diverse perspectives and enagage in conversation and negotiation in order to develop solutions that are more effective and equitable. Encouraging groups of community members to discuss what type of representation would best work for them is therefore essential, and this discussion will inevetiably initiate additional inquires and encourage concrete action toward that goal in the community.

Lastly, I want to draw attention to the issue of the authenticity of youth engagement. The youth mappers in E2Y were not fully included in the decision-making process; instead, adult partners took the lead. Although this was not intentional, the insufficient inclusion of youth mappers' voices in the project may have kept the project from reaching the goal of authentic youth engagement. Toward the later stages of the project, however, the youth mappers developed a critical understanding, and offered good critiques and suggestions that would improve the project performance and contribute to youth ownership of the project.

The definition and practice of "authenticity" in youth engagement varies according to context. It does not necessarily require the exclusion of adult partner guidance; adult partners can in fact still play a critical role in helping youth learn to share ownership, and then gradually fade away from the power position. With a focus on youth-adult relationship dynamics, future projects need to pay more attention to developing models to improve youth ownership based on active and interdependent relationships between youth and adults in their own contexts.

These unexplored and newly emerged issues rendered E2Y an open-ended social experiment. People could exercise their own creativity in performing community inquiry according to their own needs and social contexts. There are many other ways of conducting asset mapping projects. In addition to the topics introduced here, there are many others available: cultural-, historical-, political-, public health-, and eco-friendly-assets, and also resources for senior citizens and young children. Identifying effective tools and technologies, particularly including free, open-source maps that suit the needs of the audience, is essential, especially in the face of the digital divide. Based on lessons learned from the challenges and limitations other projects will be able to develop valuable models and practices that would become instrumental in the long-term community development.

Concluding Remarks

Through their participation in this project, the youth mappers were able to cultivate positive perceptions of the community, as well as develop social skills and digital literacy skills. In addition the work addressed practical community needs and challenged the deficit view of the community. E2Y was thus not just about mapping, but also holistic community learning and action, making the community a better place to live, work, and play. Although there were limitations, they provided important lessons and ideas for improving future projects. The concept of community inquiry proved to be a powerful framework for understanding community engagement, and additional exploratory applications of this "lens" could improve the sophistication of the theory as well as its usefulness and range.

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