

IDENTIFY ISSUES AND ASSETS

Session 2

90 minutes

OBJECTIVES:

Youth will define what community means to them and understand the interdependency of the people and places within their community. Youth will begin to map the resources and needs they see in their community and identify the diverse perspectives that group members bring to the community.

MATERIALS AND PREPARATION:

- Butcher paper, tape, and markers.
- Paper, pens, and clipboards.
- Prior to session, refer to the *Community Web* example (Master Copy 3.2a).
- Map of your city or town (hand drawn or large wall map).
- Push pins and string.
- Optional: *Neighborhood Mapping Assignment* (Master Copy 3.2b).

I. OPENING: ATTENDANCE, SNACKS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AGENDA OVERVIEW (10 MINUTES)

Opening Circle Statement (Around the World): What one word would you use to describe your neighborhood? If you have time, hand out pens and index cards so that youth can write their word before sharing out. This will allow more variety in answers.

II. WARM UP: MAPPING YOUR HOME (15 MINUTES)

Using a large map of your city or town, mark your school or program location with a large push pin. Ask youth to come up one at a time and put a pin where they live and

Facilitation Tip:

This session youth will explore the benefits and challenges of living in their community and think critically about causes of important issues that impact them. This process positions youth to select a topic for research.

If you assigned the take-home task in the previous session, have participants share their thinking from the assignment during the debrief section. Write all of the student ideas on easel paper or the board.

Community Webs and Maps

then connect a piece of colored string from their home to the meeting place. After everyone is done, ask youth 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.

III. COMMUNITY WEB (15 MINUTES)

Step 1: Think, Pair, Share. Ask each youth 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 youth or adult leaders 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 or board, draw one large circle around both the word "community" and the youth's 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 for category ideas.

IV. CREATE A MAP (40 MINUTES)

Step 1: Create small groups of three to four people. Preferably, youth 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 youth do this as an individual activity or take-home task.

Step 2: Ask youth 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.

IDENTIFY ISSUES AND ASSETS

Session 2

90 minutes

- 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 youth 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, and think about what might have been omitted. 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.

V. DEBRIEF: CONNECTING TO ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS (10 MINUTES)

Sample 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?

VI. CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Closing Circle Statement (Around the World): If I could change any one thing about my neighborhood...

Example from Practice:

Some YELL participants had difficulty remembering specific street names and the details of entire sections of their neighborhoods.

Their experience of their community was defined less by conventional boundaries like streets and more by patterns of movement and particular structures that have local significance (like the subway station or the corner store). We learned that it helps to encourage youth to draw what is important to them, not what is usually on a map.

Optional Take-Home Assignment: Neighborhood Mapping

*Give each youth the **Neighborhood Mapping** activity handout (Master Copy 3.2b) and ask them to complete the assignment by the next session. If possible, provide each youth with a labeled, disposable camera to use for this assignment.*

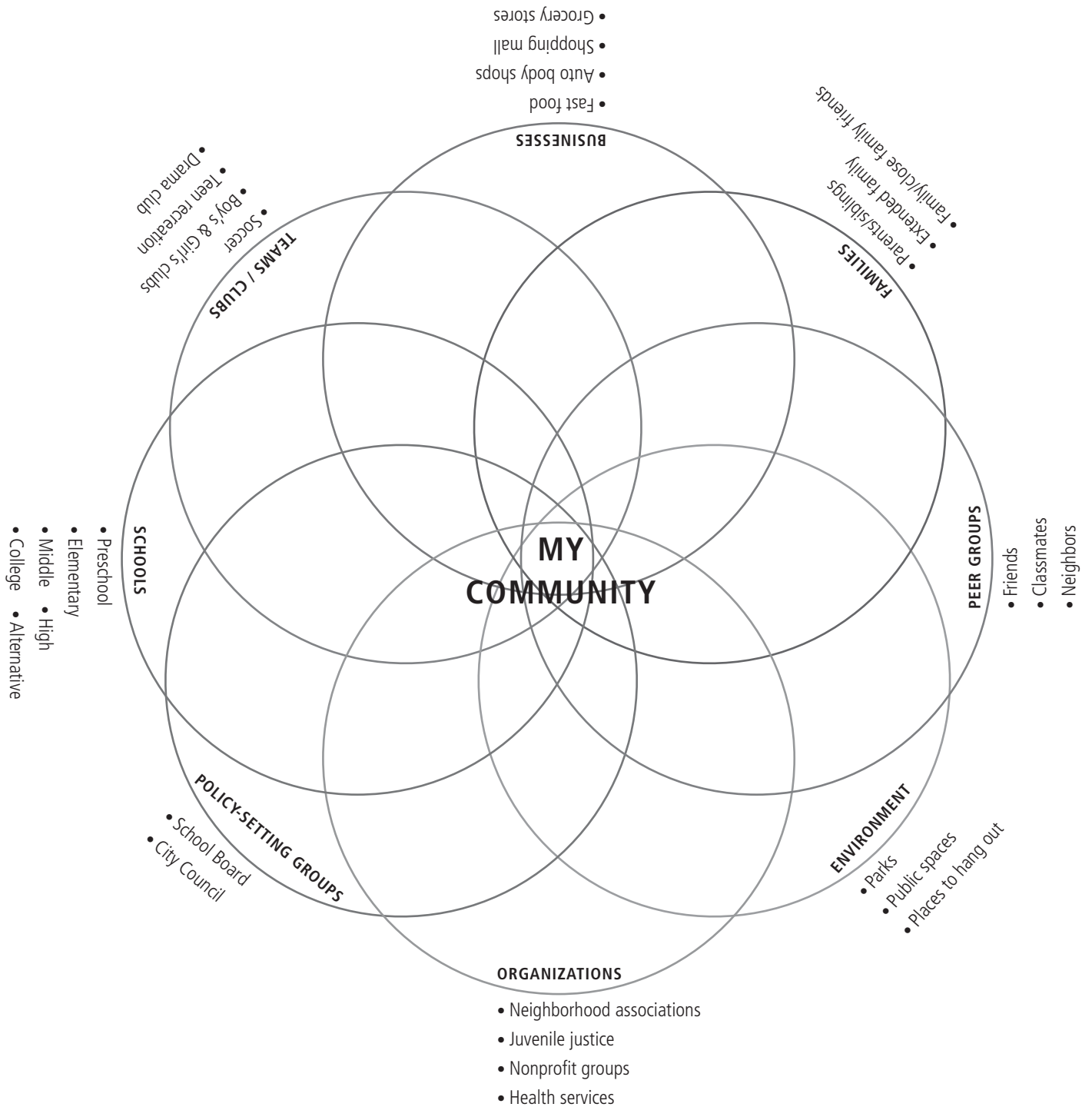
In the next session, build in time to debrief the activity and have youth do a group collage.

Ask the youth to get in groups with others who live in their neighborhood. Use magazine pictures and any photos that the youth took of their neighborhoods to create collages on poster board. (These can be used as display boards during presentations.)

Have youth discuss the following for each collage:

- *Where were the pictures taken? (What neighborhood?)*
- *If there are people in the photographs, how are they related to the youth researcher? (Are they friends, family, or perhaps just random people?)*
- *What grabs your attention? What is the most interesting thing to you about the photographs or the collage?*
- *What did you LEARN from looking at this collage? What would someone who has never been to this area see based on the collage?*

Community Web - Example



Neighborhood Mapping

1. Pick a two-by-two block area in your neighborhood.
2. With something to write on and pencils, slowly walk around the area drawing the major structures on these blocks (e.g., churches, stores).
3. Walk the area again, this time looking for (and adding to your map) less obvious things:

Some examples: One well-kept yard on a street of concrete, a community garden, a row of trees on one street, a vacant lot, litter, billboards, graffiti.
4. As you observe this time, write down not only what you see but also what you hear, feel, and smell.
5. Once you get home, write about what it FELT like to walk here.
 - What does it feel like to live here?
 - Does it feel safe?
 - Is it quiet and peaceful, or is there loud construction, people yelling, sirens blaring?
 - What kind of people do you see?
 - Do you know them?
 - Do you feel "connected" to them?
6. After writing, neatly copy your map onto a large piece of plain paper. You can use symbols and pictures to represent what you saw.
7. If you have a digital or film camera, take photos of your neighborhood.