Youthtopias: Towards a New Paradigm of Critical Youth Studies

A.A. Akom, S. Ginwright, and J. Cammarota

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Introduction

Social science research on Black and Latina/o youth has been dominated by studies that focus on "problem" adolescent behavior.[1] These studies are largely related to public policy concerns about crime and safety in poor urban communities. Typically, they explain youth crime, delinquency, and violence as individual pathological behavior,[2] or from cultural adaptations that stem from social disorganization in poor urban communities.[3] The social disorganization thesis explains how gross disinvestments in urban communities ultimately lead to the erosion of community and family values and to behaviors that create and sustain poverty[4]. Scholars argue that urban youth learn "ghetto related" behaviors, including disrespect for authority, indifference toward educational achievement, and lack of work ethic from other urban residents who have given up on legitimate means for economic security.[5]

The social disorganization thesis has had a profound impact on conceptualizations of social capital in poor urban communities.[6] When theorizing about the persistence of poverty in urban communities, researchers often argue that the lack of vibrant social capital in urban communities contributes to sustained poverty.[7] Similar to the social disorganization thesis, the lack of social capital putatively results in maladaptive behaviors among youth. These highly racialized and deeply classed formulations of social capital suffer from two key problems. First, the social capital perspective employs a static view of urban youth behavior and conceptualizes young people's choices as maladaptive responses to social, economic, or cultural decay in poor

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[1] Best, 2007.
[2] Sullivan, 1989.
[3] Wilson, 1996; Anderson, 1999.
[4] Wilson, 1996; 1999.
[5] Anderson, 1990; Newman, 1999; Ogbu, 1990; Wilson, 1987, 1996.
[6] Coleman, 1998; Putnam, Portes, 1995; Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2001; Small, 2004; Akom, 2007a.
[7] Sullivan, 1989; Wilson, 1996; Anderson, 1999.

communities.[8] As a result, ethnographic research has largely been confined to studying problems, prevention, and pathology (i.e. negative or oppositional attitudes) among urban youth rather than assets, agencies, and aspirations.[9] Second, traditional conceptualizations of social capital are overly deterministic and tend to disregard the relevance of youth agency—young people's ability to analyze and respond to problems impeding their social and economic advancement. A rigid cause (lack of social capital) and effect (problem behaviors) framework obscures the fact that youth in poor communities in the United States and abroad, utilize agency and self-determination to make healthy choices and participate in civic engagement and sometimes radical and revolutionary change).[10]

The importance of critical youth studies[11] as a field of academic inquiry is that it goes beyond traditional pathological approaches to assert that young people have the ability to analyze their social context, to collectively engage in critical research, and resist repressive state and ideological institutions.[12] "However, another step is needed to further distance critical youth studies from essentialized perspectives by acknowledging that resistance can be attained through formal processes in "real" settings, through multi-generational collectives, and sometimes among youth alone."[13] The belief that youth need new kinds of spaces where resistance and resiliency can be developed through formal (and informal) processes, pedagogical structures, and youth cultural practices is gaining currency in the field of critical youth studies and is vital towards creating a movement of social justice and equity.

In this article, we present a theoretical framework for developing pedagogical spaces of resistance and resiliency.[14] To accomplish this goal, we reflect on our own pedagogical approaches and examine the linkages between three foundational frameworks in the field— Critical Race Theory (CRT), youth participatory action research (YPAR), and critical media literacy. The reasons for merging these frameworks into a new paradigm are twofold. The first is

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Anderson, 1990; Bourgois, 1995; Newman, 1999; Ogbu, 1990; Akom, 2008b.

[10] Cammarota and Fine, 2008; Ginwright, Noguera, and Cammarota, 2006; Coryat, 2009.

[11] We refer to "critical consciousness" through Smith-Maddox and Solorzano's (2002) conceptualization of the term as "a person who (a) holds a critique of the racilized social structures and other axis of social difference that impact the negotiation of public and private space; and (b) "is willing to engage in social action to effect change" (p.81).

[12] Cammarota and Fine, 2008, p. 4.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Selected parts of this article were adapted from Ginwright, S. & Cammarota, J. (2007). Youth activism in the urban community: learning critical civic praxis within community organizations. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 20*9 (6, November-December), 693-710.

to present an alternative approach to raising the critical consciousness of young people in traditional and non-traditional educational settings by facilitating the creation of what we are calling—*Youthtopias*. We define Youthtopias as traditional and non-traditional educational spaces (like Leadership Excellence in Oakland, Ca, Youth Radio in Oakland, Ca, Youth Speaks in San Francisco, Ca, ME JODA in Colombia, South America, The Biko Institute in Bahia, Brazil, or a cipher on the Block) where young people depend on one another's skills, perspectives, and experiential knowledge, to generate original, multi-textual, youth-driven cultural products that embody a critique of oppression, a desire for social justice, and ultimately lay the foundation for community empowerment and social change.[15] The second is to discuss the importance of challenging issues of race and racism as they intersect with other forms of oppression for young people in the emerging field of critical youth studies. This discussion will offer an analysis of CRT, YPAR, and critical media literacy in education. We will then highlight two case studies to show how this methodological and pedagogical approach can be used to merge these frameworks in the youth media justice field.

Towards an Alternative Framework: Merging CRT and YPAR

Under-pinning the methodology of this article is the view that race is a social construction, a function of how particular racial groups are valued or devalued by society. A serious danger lies in treating race inside and outside of schools as a thing of the past or believing we are living in a colorblind society.[16] In order to avoid this ideological trap, we use Critical Race Theory (CRT) as both an epistemological and methodological tool in evaluating racism in education in terms of those young people included in the dominant paradigm and those who are not. Specifically, CRT offers important ways to analyze the formation of an ideology that supports and reproduces the current racial structure in the United States and the persistence of social injustices and inequalities for youth of color in education and beyond.[17] A key assumption of CRT is that since different racial groups receive substantially different social rewards, they each develop different material and conflicting interests. Particularly important is an understanding of the frames through which those in power can rationalize social inequality and implement seemingly "race—

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[15] Solorzano and Delgado-Bernal, 2001.
[16] Lewis, 2003.
[17] Ladson-Billings, 1999; Tate, 1997; Lewis, et., al 2007.

neutral" or "color-blind" policies of increased accountability and standards in education.[18] These policies are part of a "racial ideology" that sustains white privilege "through subtle, institutional and apparently non-racial means."[19] Informed by a commitment to social justice, CRT challenges a dominant ideology and educational practices that are used to subordinate low-income minority students.[20]

Growing out of our concern for developing pedagogical spaces of resistance and resiliency is the examination of specific ways that race is lived inside and outside of schools, how students think about their identities, and the hidden ways that hierarchies of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation are reproduced through hidden curriculums.[21] It has become a common practice to think of race as a social construction so that racially explicit experiences and practices are recoded as cultural or social with little or no attention to the role of institutionalized racism in the construction of social inequality.[22] However, posing the problem this way may lead us into falsely believing that race is the only causal factor in establishing social hierarchies, when, as Darder, Baltodano, and Torres point out, the use of the term "race" can potentially "conceal the particular set of social conditions experienced by racialized groups that are determined by an interplay of complex social processes, one of which is premised on the articulation of racism to effect legitimate exclusion."[23]

Given our concern for transforming youth cultural practices, we focus on the kinds of teaching and learning that will increase the life chances of students to become life long learners and critical participants in our civic democracy.[24] To accomplish this goal we examine the linkages between CRT, YPAR, and critical media literacy to address the challenges facing researchers and teachers who attempt to systematically develop pedagogical spaces of resistance, resiliency, hope, and healing.

Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) is defined as a research methodology in which young people study their own social contexts to understand how to improve conditions and bring about greater equity. Because of its commitment to social justice and action as part of

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[18] Lewis, et., al, 2007.
[19] Bonilla-Silva, 2001, p. 12.
[20] Lewis, et. al 2007.
[21] Bourdieu, 1977.
[22] Pierre, 2004; Akom, 2006; Akom, 2008a.
[23] Darder, Baltodano, and Torres, 2000, p. 167.
[24] Cammarota and Fine, 2008; Best, 2007.

the research process, YPAR represents a research methodology that is highly consistent with the principles of CRT.[25] As a collaborative approach that breaks down the barriers between the researcher and the researched, and values community members as equitable partners in the research enterprise, YPAR also underscores the liberatory principles of agency, equity, and self-determination.

Although differing in some of their goals and strategies, CRT and YPAR approaches may be "seen to share a set of core values and principles and have as their centerpiece three interrelated elements: "participation, research, and action."[26] Building and extending the work of Smith-Maddox, Solorzano, Fals Borda, Minkler, Cammarota, Fine, Ginwright, Noguera[27] and others, below we outline the essential elements of combining CRT with YPAR as a way to build a resistance and resiliency into the curriculum inside and outside of educational space. Our goal is to inform the field of critical youth studies with a fresh innovative approach that avoids the pitfalls of cultural deficit models. The fundamental elements of this combined approach are:

- participatory and youth driven
- cooperative, engaging youth and adults in a joint research process in which each contributes equitably
- foregrounds race, racism, gender, and other axes of social difference in research design, data collection, and analysis
- challenges traditional paradigms, methods, and texts
- committed to co-learning, co-facilitating, and a "pedagogy of collegiality"[28]
- trans-disciplinary, drawing on Black/Africana studies, Raza Studies, Ethnic Studies, Critical Media Literacy, and Women's studies, to name a few
- involves local capacity building
- an empowering process through which all participants can increase control of their lives
- seeks a balance between critical thinking, reflection, analysis, and action
- emphasizes a union of mind, body, and spirit rather than a separation of these elements

Educators need to find ways to identify the resources and strengths of youth of color and place them in the center of their research, curriculum, and teaching practicum's.[29] Indeed, by

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[25] Minkler, 2004, p. 684.
[26] Minkler, 2004, p. 685.
[27] Smith-Maddox & Solorzano, 2002; Fals Borda, 1987; Minkler, 2004; Cammarota and Fine, 2008; Ginwright, Noguera, and Cammarota, 2006.
[28] Chavez and Soep, 2005.
[29] Smith-Maddox and Solorzano, 2002, p. 71.

combining CRT with YPAR, a pedagogical space of resiliency and resistance can be developed, which challenges the dominant mind set, increases academic engagement and achievement, and builds new understandings of the strength and assets of youth of color and the communities from which they come from.

Methodology

Following in the footsteps of the important work conducted by the Participatory Action Research Collective pioneered by Michelle Fine and Maria Torre[30] at CUNY, we believe that YPAR is more than a research methodology; rather it is simultaneously: a methodology, pedagogy, and a theory of action for creating social justice and social change. In that vein, our entry into studying youth in their communities was as much about learning from young people about their own pedagogies of love, hope, and healing as it was a traditional research project examining how young people collectively respond to neighborhood problems and improve conditions for their families, schools, and communities. Collectively we have spent decades working with urban and suburban youth in California—Oakland, Richmond, and Berkeley—as well as Tucson, Arizona. After years of observing the educational and organizational processes and practices that promote youth agency, we wanted to better document, understand, and codify what today's young people (and adults who work with young people) are dreaming about, both inside and outside of educational spaces. We know what folks are fighting against, but as Robin Kelley says, "What are they fighting for?"[31]

Our goal was to begin to conceptualize and theorize the often invisible or barely audible dreams that young people have about how to transform our society, gain greater political and economic power and independence, create new relationships—new ways of thinking, living, loving, surviving, thriving, interacting—new ways of using technology, and building communities. Given the vibrant role that young people played in recent political protests for immigrant rights, anti-globalization, environmental justice, civil rights, and movements of Black and Brown power, the dreams, desires, and aspirations of young people today prompted us to reconsider the ways that youth—particularly youth of color—are traditionally framed as disconnected from political life by academic researchers and the political pundits.

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[30] Fine and Torre, 2003.
[31] Kelley, 2002, p. 7.

In this sense, we asked ourselves, is it possible that the mainstream media may be simply asking the wrong questions regarding civic and political behavior amongst urban and suburban youth of color? "Rather than drawing conclusions from narrow conceptualizations of civic behavior such as volunteering and specific knowledge of the branches of government, we decided to develop a more nuanced understanding" about what constitutes civic behavior for Black, Brown, and other youth of color in urban and suburban communities[32]. Central to our new framework is the desire to better understand, for example, how non-traditional educational spaces inside and outside of schools—what Soja[33] refers to as third spaces—shape the contours of academic engagement, and how factors of race, class, gender, immigration and environmental racism influence the formation of political consciousness amongst urban and suburban youth[34]. This is an under-theorized section of existing literature, but one that is vital for developing a new model of critical youth studies.

Akom's data was collected over a three-year period (2005 to 2008) and largely consisted of participant observation and interviews of three Black youth from his research project Youth as Public Intellectuals (YPI). Currently in its third year, YPI is a three-tiered collaboration between San Francisco State University, selected schools in the Berkeley Unified School District, and KPFA radio station that trains young people in youth media justice and youth participatory action research. The project starts in the junior year, with cohorts ranging from 25-50 students, and requires students to create youth commentaries, documentaries, bloc-u-mentaries, poetry, blogs, and music, for local and national broadcast in film festivals, on radio, and through web outlets. Recent YPI commentaries have explored environmental racism, gentrification, green technology, education, development, and gang/gun violence, to name a few.

As a teacher and director of YPI, Akom's observations occurred largely during their weekly political education and video production classes. Additionally, Akom's process involved collecting extensive field notes and observations of young people in community spaces, local street corners, and occasionally, in their homes. These notes comprised several notebooks that were reviewed and analyzed for themes, interesting patterns, and unanticipated surprises. There were generally two types of observations—(1) descriptions of what Akom had witnessed and (2)

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[32] Cohen, 2006, p. 1.
[33] Soja, 2000.
[34] Ginwright, 2006; Nakai, 2008.

details of what Akom found interesting and/or surprising. These notes were coded for theme and analysis using techniques by Emerson and Fretz, et.al.[35]

During Akom's participation and observations in many of the meetings and discussions, he was not a distant, objective observer. In fact, he was instrumental in founding YPI and co-designing the content of its curriculum. Additionally, he developed relationships with a number of community residents, Berkeley, Oakland, and Richmond Unified School District officials, and youth service providers in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Cammarota's data was collected over a five-year period (2003 to 2008) and largely consisted of participant observation and interviews from the Social Justice Education Project (SJEP), which he founded along with Augustine Romero in 2003. SJEP is a two-year student-led social research program that works with three selected high schools in the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD). The project starts in the junior year and requires students to learn social research in conjunction with American history. During their senior year, SJEP exists in an American Government course and involves a critical analysis of research conducted the previous year. The project concludes with the creation of newsletters, video documentaries, and presentations based on the social inequalities experienced by people of color and the poor working class in Tucson.

At SJEP sites, Cammarota observed weekly how his youth-led media justice efforts created different opportunities for youth civic and academic engagement inside and outside of the classroom. He accompanied youth and youth leaders on several activities within the local community and then documented these observations in extensive field notes. Cammarota also interviewed twenty youth between the ages of 16 and 21 about their experiences at SJEP. In this article, Cammarota focuses on two Latina youth, Erica and Nyeli, who were recent high school graduates at the time of the research, and youth leaders employed by the SJEP. They had been participants in the SJEP programs since they were 15-years-old, and in their late adolescence, the SJEP placed them in leadership roles to work with younger teens (15-17 years of age). Their experiences as youth leaders for the SJEP demonstrates how young people learn from, and then partake in, civic engagement.

The methodology for this study is also shaped by numerous informal conversations we encountered with both youth and community residents about life in the San Francisco Bay Area

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[35] *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes.*

and Tucson, Arizona. During this period of time, we collected data on homicide rates as well as environmental racism and social toxins many young people are exposed to on a daily basis. One hundred percent of the young people we spoke to were suffering in some way, shape, or form, from environmental racism, community violence, or other social toxins (such as lack of access to fresh produce or an over abundance of liquor stores in their neighborhood). Despite less than favorable environmental conditions, these young people expressed the ability to constantly create Youthtopias—spaces to hope, heal, repair, and transform their personal pain as well as larger social inequalities.[36] Both of the case studies in this article provided a space for youth to reflect and develop skills to respond to less than favorable neighborhood conditions.

The following questions frame our analysis of the relationship between youth agency and the transformation of public and private space: How can the production of youth media foster young people's engagement in social justice efforts? How can the production and distribution of youth-driven media promote agency, knowledge, and transformation of young people that is visibly linked to concrete structural outcomes and community capacity building?[37] How can youth media be transformational across generations and different kinds of community engagements from school screenings to dialogues in action?[38] How can teachers integrate critical media pedagogy into the secondary classroom? And finally, what is the role of youth media in sparking, sustaining, and supporting social justice movements?

Conceptualizing Youthtopias in Theory and Praxis

The concept of Youthtopias is important because it is an alternative way to conceptualize the production and distribution of social and cultural capital among all youth, particularly low-income youth of color. As it stands now, too many urban poverty theorists want to know what's wrong rather than what's really going on in Black and Brown urban communities.[39] In their search for violence, anger, nihilism, and emotional instability, they miss genuine love, humor, academic achievement, nontraditional families, positive relationships towards men, women, and children, and all kinds of social and cultural capital that is alive, well, and thriving in Black and

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[36] Duncan-Andrade, 2007.
[37] McDermott et. al, 2007.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Kelley, 1994.

Brown urban communities that is presently flying under the radar.[40] Because Youthtopias' are created, constructed, and designed by young people themselves, sometimes in collaboration with adults (and sometimes not), these social spaces provide opportunities for young people to connect with peers, adults, ideas, experiences, and activities that address pressing social and community problems ignored by social scientists and mainstream media outlets. In this vein, Youthtopias might be an important missing link in improving our understanding of the role of youth agency in the production and consumptions of forms of social and cultural capital and as well as deepening our understanding of the innovative ways young people are forming social critiques and envisioning new democratic possibilities.

Sampson argues that social capital for poor communities must be understood as closely linked to collective efficacy, and calls for "the linkage of mutual trust and the shared willingness to intervene for the common good."[41] Sampson, Morenoff, and Earls argue that, "collective efficacy for children is produced by the shared beliefs…the notion of collective efficacy emphasizes residents' sense of active engagement."[42] This view of social capital acknowledges structural constraints in communities, but also attends to strategies for young people to develop a value for defining the purpose of social relationships through actions promoting justice within neighborhoods, churches, and youth programs in low-income urban communities, all of which serve as vital sources for the production of social capital for Black and Latina/o youth and their communities. This understanding of the vital role that young people play, not just in the consumption of social capital, but in the production of social and cultural capital, is important precisely because it highlights the importance of critical consciousness, youth agency, and youth activism in the development of effective social networks and neighborhood change.

Youthtopias can provide critical knowledge to community members and offer them ways to respond to neighborhood and community problems. In many ways, Youthtopias create opportunities for young people to engage in what Freire[43] calls "praxis"—critical reflection and action. Through engagement in real world issues that shape their daily lives such as environmental racism, police brutality, school safety, school closure, tracking, and racial profiling, youth learn to move past victimization and confront unjust social and economic

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[40] Sullivan, 1997; Akom, 2006.
[41] Sampson, 2001, p. 95.
[42] Sampson, Morenoff, and Earls, 1999, p. 635.
[43] Freire, 1970.

conditions. More often than not, a Youthtopian framework facilitates a process that develops critical consciousness and builds the capacity for young people to respond and change oppressive conditions in their environment. In other words, Youthtopias are simultaneously individual and organizational processes that promote civic engagement among youth and elevate their critical consciousness and capacities for social justice and community activism. We refer to "critical consciousness" through Smith-Maddox and Solorzano's conceptualization of the term as "a person who (a) holds a critique of the racialized social structures and other axes of social difference that impact the negotiation of public and private space; and (b) "is willing to engage in social action to effect change[44]." Once critical consciousness is attained, the individual's subjectivity transforms to foster new possibilities and capacities to see and act differently, proactively in the world—perceptions and actions geared toward promoting justice. Through individual and organizational processes, young people create Youthtopias and thus comprehend the full, humanistic potential of their agency—*the ability to create social change*. This notion marks a significant departure from the standard social capital frameworks used in critical youth studies that often fail to recognize both individual and collective agency, or how social networks ultimately foster critical consciousness.

Building further on Soja's work in *Postmetropolis,*[45] we suggest that there are at least three dimensions to Youthtopias that can be studied in three different but interrelated ways. First, Youthtopias can be thought of as mental maps, ideational fields, or imagined communities. Whether in the heart of the prison industrial complex, homeless on a make shift bed, or confined to a small piece of earth, the vision for revolutionary change and participatory democracy can be conceived anywhere at anytime. A second dimension of Youthtopias is the actual physical infrastructure of buildings, schools, neighborhoods and other sets of materialized spatial practices where young people hang out, have fun, and work together to produce youth driven cultural products for social change.[46] This second dimension of Youthtopias is in line with Wilson's[47] call for a more contextual analysis of inequality by integrating spatial theories of inequality into the field of education and beyond. The third dimension of 'Youthtopias" combines the first two perspectives while emphasizing the domain of 'lived experience,' youth

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[44] Smith-Maddox and Solorzano, 2002, p. 81.
[45] Soja, 2000.
[46] Soja, 2000, p.11.
[47] Wilson, 1998.

cultural production, and the experiential knowledge of students, in particular, marginalized students of color. Soja describes this dimension as "a simultaneously real-and-imagined, actual-and virtual, locus of structured individual and collective experience and agency."[48]

Overall, what distinguishes Youthtopias from other theories and methods in critical youth studies and beyond are the following five elements to form its basic core:
1) An explicit commitment to understand how race intersects with other forms of social oppression such as class, gender, religion, nationality, sexuality, phenotype, accent, immigration status, and special needs;[49] 2) Challenging traditional paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of students of color; 3) Fore-grounding the experiential knowledge of students so that young people and adults are "co-constructing" the learning environment[50] 4) A commitment to developing critical consciousness; and finally, 5) A commitment to social justice.[51] Although none of these elements are new in and of themselves, collectively they represent a challenge to existing modes of scholarship in the field of critical youth studies.[52]

Some of the Limits of a Youthtopian Framework

To be sure, students, youth media advocates, teachers, activists, and other practitioners need to be careful about the obvious connotations of Youthtopias, precisely because the term has the potential to romanticize "the ways young people's multiple and varied voices are shaped by the daily interactions, institutional sites, and social histories they share with adults," even within programs like YPI or SJEP, "which aim to foster and broadcast youth narratives."[53] As suggested in Cammarota and Fine's important book *Revolutionizing Education*, the tendency to frame youth participatory action research projects as efforts to "give voice," or "empower youth" often masks important power differentials in terms of editorial and distribution power, research design and methodology. We agree that putting a camera in the hands of young people or putting them in a recording studio to project their story to the world does not, in and of itself, constitute the making of a Youthtopia. Thus, not all youth media organizations that are social justice oriented are in fact, Youthtopias. Nor are Youthtopias places where students' worldviews are not

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[48] Soja, 2000, p.11.
[49] Hill-Collins, 2000; Akom, 2008a.
[50] Chavez and Soep, 2005, p. 10.
[51] Solorzano and Delgado-Bernal, 2001, p. 312-315.
[52] Yosso and Solorzano, 2002, p. 27.
[53] Chavez and Soep, 2005, p. 4.

challenged in dialogue with others and through action. Rather, in order to form a Youthtopia, youth media organizations or individuals must at minimum operationalize the five core elements mentioned in the preceding section as well as develop important skills sets and pedagogies in and outside of the classroom including but not limited to the following:

- Project-based inquiry
- Collaborative learning
- Creative story-telling
- Authentic assessments
- Academic, critical, civic, digital, and new media literacies
- Inter-textuality
- Evidenced based argumentation
- Culturally relevant content and practice (See Youth Radio's Media Production Techniques)

In the following section, we discuss two youth media case studies which operationalize what we identify as the essential features of Youthtopias: youth-led inquiry, a commitment to understand how race intersects with other forms of social oppression, challenging traditional theories and text; fore-grounding experiential knowledge, the development of critical consciousness; and a commitment to social justice. The first case study, Youth as Public Intellectuals, highlights youth-led inquiry, and the development of critical consciousness through critical medial literacy and YPAR. The second case study, The Social Justice Education Project, focusing on the development of critical media literacy, students' experiential knowledge, and challenging traditional theories and text used to explain the experiences of students of color.

Although we present these two case studies as examples, there are a variety of other ways to create Youthtopias—developing youth development agencies, community capacity building projects, developing marketable skills for urban and suburban youth, civic engagement, personal expression, and aesthetic innovation, to name a few. The individual and institutional process of creating Youthtopias must constantly be connected to larger social, psychological, spiritual, and political projects of promoting social change and social justice. In this sense Youthtopias, because of their explicit commitments to social justice, always include advocacy components— sometimes through the use of radio, print, TV, internet, electronic media, guerilla or underground resources such as stickering or campaigning—to influence public opinion and shed light on forms of youth media justice that are currently alive, well, and thriving for youth of color but

flying underneath the radar.[54] Below we briefly discuss our attempts to increase the supply of social and cultural capital for urban and suburban youth by sharing our experiences participating in the creation of Youthtopias.'

Case Study I: Youth as Public Intellectuals (YPI)

In the San Francisco Bay Area, there is a toxic triangle that runs from the city of Richmond, through the city of Berkeley to Oakland, and across the bay bridge to Bay View Hunters Point. Within this triangle, industrialization, decentralization, residential and school segregation are keys to understanding the ways that racism structures educational outcomes even in one of the most liberal regions of the United States.[55] Because race is highly correlated with industrial pollution in the Bay Area and beyond, youth of color are far more likely than whites to live in neighborhoods where industrial pollution is suspected of posing the greatest health danger.

Adding to this toxic stew are ongoing tensions between the police and Black and Latina/o youth. For years, Black and Latino youth in the Bay Area have voiced concern about the mistreatment they received from the police.[56] In fact, in 2002 several members of the Oakland Police Department were formally charged with willful misconduct and were removed from their posts.[57] Instances of environmental racism and police harassment are all too familiar among Black and Latina/o youth in the San Francisco Bay Area. These patterns contribute to wide mistrust of the police, the media, the educational system, and the criminal justice system on the part of Black and Latina/o youth.

YPI often finds itself at the epicenter of contentious battles between gentrification, environmental racism, the police, and Black and Latina/o youth. As a youth-led organization, YPI actively contests the "predatory Black and Latina/o youth" image and recasts the image of Black and Brown youth as important community actors. In this sense, YPI exemplifies the potential for non-traditional educational organizations "to cultivate and sustain what Melucci called 'submerged networks' of everyday political life where actors produce and practice alternative frameworks of meaning, social relations, and collective identity below the horizon of

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[54] Akom, 2006; Sullivan, 1997.
[55] Akom, 2008a.
[56] MacDonald, 2004.
[57] Lee, 2004.

established or officially recognized institutions."[58]

One important aspect of the YPI is how critical consciousness is created, developed, and sustained among Black and Latina/o youth. YPI fosters and sustains critical consciousness through a two-year youth media justice and youth participatory action research program, which works in four phases. The first phase involves exploring structures of oppression and domination with students in 'critical inquiry groups' (CIGs). CIGs are important because they amplify the voice of young people who have seldom been allowed to speak for themselves. The CIGs are designed to train youth to frame how power is being used and misused in their lives and in their communities. Guided by C. Wright Mills, "Sociological Imagination" which connects personal issues to public policy, young people and adults examine, analyze, and take action to solve pressing problems in their everyday lives. For example, one year we examined the dilapidated conditions of local schools, and our culminating action was to fly to Washington, D.C. to lobby the Black and Hispanic Congressional Caucus to implement a national Youth Bill of Rights. On a daily basis, we focused on mundane personal issues that required political solutions. Through role-playing, workshops, videos and other activities, our discussion about the connection between personal and political power mitigated the sense of nihilism and fatalism commonly described in the lives of Black and Latina/o youth.[59] These activities and discussions served as the foundation for building critical consciousness. Through the discussion of relevant neighborhood issues and connecting these issues to structural realities (such as the economy) and personal choices (such as selling drugs), YPI participants succeeded in developing a rich political understanding of how their environment is structured by race, class, gender, immigration, and sexual orientation.

Phase II builds upon phase I by encouraging young people to make personal choices that they believed would contribute to a healthier community. Through group discussions, political education, and activities, youth developed an understanding of environmental racism, juvenile justice, health inequalities, educational equity, homophobia, misogyny, poverty and how these social issues shape their lives and communities. Phase II not only facilitated greater knowledge about social issues, but also contributed to a consciousness that encourages new types of behavior. One young female CIG leader named Burkina responded to our question "what would

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[58] Gregory 1998, p.135, quoting Melucci, 1989.
[59] Poussaint and Alexander, 2000.

make a Youthtopia?" with the following excerpted answer:

> I can't get engaged in any of my classes because I don't feel like I can relate to any of the teachers. Even in the MAS (Media, Arts, and Sciences), which is supposed to be so progressive and liberal, there are barely any teachers of color. The few that there are teach us the same boring, European-centered stuff as any other class. That's why I don't go, 'cause I don't feel like I'm learning anything useful. I'm wasting my time. I come to this class because I feel like I have a voice here. I can speak about my experiences as a Black female, and no one tells me to sit down and be quiet. No one ignores me or tells me that I'm loud or angry. We talk about real stuff in this class, like how racism is in every institution affecting us everyday, and how it's important to challenge what they teach us, and get a real education so that we don't become statistics and stereotypes. If all my classes taught me real stuff that I could use, I'd be there all the time! That's why I call this class a Youthtopia because it is one of the few places where adults really care about us [and] really take the time to listen to us. Let us lead [and] help us be more critical, conscious [and] self-aware. To me a Youthtopia is a place where students are both leaders and followers where students can both talk and be talked to—places where students are respected and come up with ideas and plans to make a difference in our communities, kinda like the Black Panthers. To me the Black Panther Party was like a Youthtopia.

In-conjunction with Burkina, fellow youth leaders Jasmine, Athena, and Russell also led a CIG that focused on educational equity. The educational equity CIG discussed how the lack of opportunities for youth to voice their concerns is partly responsible for built-up frustrations and anxieties that push young people out of school and into the streets. Jasmine explains how the YPI pedagogical approach differs from the silencing that students of color often endure in Berkeley Public schools:

> Whenever Burkina and I try to speak up in class and tell our teachers that we don't like the curriculum, or we ask why we can't learn any Black history, or something relevant to us, everyone looks at us like 'there go the loud, angry Black girls complaining again,' and the teacher tells us to sit down and be quiet, or we get thrown outta class! None of the White kids ever speak up for us—even though some of them agree that we only learn about History from a white perspective. But when it comes time to stand up with us, they don't say anything, and we just look like troublemakers. I feel good here, because I can speak my mind, and people listen. No one makes me feel like my feelings are wrong. In this class, they *want* us to talk about our lives, our experiences. Plus, we all learn from each other. We're learning about people of color in this class, and as a Black female, I can teach people a lot about what it's like to be Black. Like, I used to have a lot of issues with internalized racism… I was always getting into fights with light-skinned girls because I felt bad about being dark-skinned. It's better now, 'cause this class taught me there's a word for it, and that helps me to figure out what's bothering me…Now I'm

happy to be a dark-skinned woman, but even now, I wear a weave in my hair because I don't like it natural, so I'm still affected by it. The white students don't understand what it's like, but they can learn something from my story.

The underlying pedagogical stance of YPI requires students to institute dialogues in action so that young people can participate, speak out, and develop their "voices." Next in the pedagogical process of developing critical consciousness, Jasmine, Athena, Burkina, and Russell asked the other seven students in their CIG to state the reasons for the achievement gap in Berkeley Public Schools. Russell walked over to a large piece of paper taped to the wall and waited patiently with marker pen in hand. After several minutes had elapsed, the youth started to articulate some of their reasons for the so-called achievement gap: "teachers that don't care," "drugs," "drinking," "gangs," "tagging/vandalizing," "dropping out," "fights," and "not caring about anything." Then the CIG leaders disclosed that the goal of this activity was for students to recognize the "deeper reasons for educational disparities." They told the students that social and economic pressures stemming from poverty, discrimination, and oppression were responsible for conditions that promote what we call an "opportunity gap rather than an achievement gap." When re-framing the question to ask "what leads to the opportunity gap?" the student's responses were inclusive of an analysis of structural inequality rather than solely focusing on victim-blaming. For example, students mentioned "a racist curriculum," "racial profiling," "police occupation," "no access to resources in the community," "poor role models," "growing up in single or no parent homes," "historically being denied an equal education," "dilapidated school conditions," "poor quality books or none at all," and "unequal access to resources and technology in schools."

At that point, after providing the larger context for the activity, Russell, Jasmine, Burkina, and Athena led the young participants through the most critical stage of CIG's, noting that framing it as an "achievement gap" tends to make life worse for young people because it ignores the impact of structural inequality on young people's everyday lives. They asserted that school administrators often use their frustration of young people to justify negative treatment and punitive measures. For example, Burkina shared how in response to her truancy, instead of asking her what was responsible for her lack of academic engagement, school administrators sent her to the school psychologist. Responses like this from well-meaning adults (including adults of color) often exacerbate young people's frustrations, contributing to self-destructive actions and

confirming negative public perceptions that add more fuel to the fire—particularly for marginalized youth of color. The participating youth concluded that the public tendency to view young people's destructive behavior as evidence of malfeasance rather than reasonable reactions to micro-aggressive and structural forms of racism, wrongly contributes to measures that bring additional oppression and pressure into their lives. The social and economic problems that promote youth under-achievement remain under-addressed while the authoritarian approach of police, security, increased psychiatric care, and restrictive policies compound, rather than solve, problems.

In an effort to address the social and economic forces that promote youth achievement instead of under-achievement, our third and fourth phases are action-oriented where students (and adults) stress the importance of using media as a mode of self-expression, a tool for social justice, and a form of community activism. In our third phase young people investigate and denaturalize the conditions of their everyday lives by exploring various research and pedagogical tools such as participatory surveys, participant observation, photo-voice, focus groups, web research, identity maps, individual interviews, archival research, oral histories, and policy analyses. Phase three activities include conducting interviews, writing scripts, and producing stories with Conscious Youth Media Crew (one of our collaborators); the end products regularly air on public radio shows or shown in local and national film festivals.[60] Adult producers and co-facilitators work with our students to prepare interview questions, frame pieces, and develop outlines in order to strengthen youth commentaries and participatory videos.[61]

Having completed the introductory and advanced phases of our program the fourth phase involves: 1) Completing our film projects for local and national distribution in film festivals; and 2) Studio time at KPFA radio station where students meet twice a week to further develop their media skills and produce stories that will air on public radio. During this final stage, students work with sound engineers to frame pieces for radio broadcast as well as work with their CIGs to edit material, raise questions, and problem solve on especially difficult projects.[62]

As a result of YPI activities, participating youth exemplify how critical consciousness involves both reflection and action about relevant social issues. For example, during one class, youth were asked how they could encourage more Black and Latina/o youth to participate in

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[60] Torres and Fine, 2007.
[61] Kellner and Share, 2005.
[62] Chavez and Soep, 2005, p. 4.

organizing activities around Jena 6. Most of the youth organizing activities in the Bay area had been dominated by white and Asian youth groups, while large groups of Black and Latina/o youth were clearly missing from the Bay Area youth organizing landscape. When faced with the challenge of reaching out to more Black and Latina/o youth, many of the young people acknowledged that organizing groups don't typically come to the "block"—the neighborhoods and parks where large numbers of Black and Latina/o youth congregate. Furthermore, they discussed how many young people do not read newspapers or even if you pass them a flyer because it is an "old" way of organizing and therefore, not real to them.

After discussing several outreach strategies to more Black and Latina/o youth, the youth planned an event called, "Town hall on Community Activism: A Dialogue between the Hip Hop generation and the Civil Rights generation on Activism and Social Justice" that would attract large numbers of Black and Latina/o youth from neighborhoods all over the Bay largely overlooked by other youth groups. The event sought to encourage their participation to address micro and macro forms of racism locally and nationally. On a Thursday evening, the youth joined forces with M-1 from Dead Prez, Bakari Kitwana, author of *The Hip Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis of African American Culture* (as well as several other books), Rosa Clemente, vice presidential candidate of the 2008 Green Party, presidential candidate Cynthia McKinney (and one of the founders of the National Hip Hop Political Convention), Shamako Noble, co-founder of the Hip Hop Congress, Angela Woodson, political advisor for the Ohio Governors Office of Faith-based initiatives, and Christopher Muhammad, minister at NOI Mosque 26 and leader of the environmental justice movement in Bay View Hunters Point area of San Francisco. With well over 250 people in attendance recorded for broadcast on KPFA radio station, the young people were able to communicate the urgency of their political participation, building a base of support for the Black youth.

Overall, YPI developed Youthtopias through community dialogues, youth-led media justice efforts, and youth activism about relevant issues and political explanations about personal challenges. This type of youth media justice, pedagogy, and praxis, provides space for youth to come up with their own solutions to problems that impede their educational, economic, and social development, building on the power of collective agency in urban schools and communities—creating, Youthtopias.

Case Study II: The Social Justice Education Project (SJEP)

Similar to YPI, the Social Justice Education Project (SJEP) provides curriculum and activities centered around critical media literacy and YPAR where young people can learn to recognize relationships between political consciousness and personal and family issues. Critical consciousness is developed through engagement with political ideas and supported by discussion about the role of race, class, immigration status, violence, and sexual orientation. In particular, the project starts in the junior year and requires students to learn social research in conjunction with American history. During their senior year, SJEP exists in an American Government course and involves a critical analysis of research conducted the previous year. The project concludes with the creation of newsletters, video documentaries, and presentations based on social inequalities that people of color and/or poor working class experience in Tucson.

The first SJEP cohort of seventeen students at Cholla High School consisted of working-class Latina/os from the southwest area of Tucson. These students learned research methodologies for assessing and addressing the everyday injustices limiting their own and their peers' potential. They learned how to conduct field observations of different sites on campus, including other classrooms, main office, and cafeteria. Students wrote up observations in weekly field notes. They also documented their observations through photographs. They learned how to conduct taped-interviews of their peers at school.

The SJEP students developed research topics from self-selected themes, which they felt needed urgent attention. For instance, some students selected the topic of border and immigration policies because family members had died crossing the desert. Others addressed discrimination against Latinas because they see how schools, workplaces, and governments unfairly treat women in their families. The young people spent the latter part of their second year analyzing poems, notes, photos, and interviews, using Chicano studies concepts and Critical Race Theory as their analytical lenses. Their analyses became written reports, presentations, and videos. The students presented research products to teachers, principal, district superintendent, school board members, and federal, state, and local officials—with their voices being the focal point of their action strategy. Through YPAR, students gain the confidence to challenge social and economic conditions impeding their life opportunities.

The SJEP students' first video, "Questions for Answers" demonstrates how the south-end portion of their high school is structurally inferior to the northern, white student dominated

section. Most students at Cholla are working-class Latina/o; a demographic that comprises 63% of the student population. Caucasians are the next largest group at 19% followed by Native American and African American student populations at 12% and 6% respectively. Students of color represent the overwhelming majority at Cerro. Although white students are the "minority," they constitute more than 50% of the students enrolled in the Advanced Placement courses. Every year students at this school receive close to one million dollars in college scholarships, but the racial distribution of this money is appalling. Eighty percent of the scholarship money is awarded to white students. It appears to many students at Cholla that there is a school within a school: a better one on the north side for whites and an inferior southern one for students of color.

The video shows the southern section, the space in which the SJEP students and most students of color inhabit, with broken bathrooms, non-functioning water fountains, pipes sticking out of walls, and empty library shelves. In contrast, the video documents the northern section where floors and walls are immaculate, the law library is fully stocked, appliances function, and computers abound. The SJEP students' videotaped an interview with a fellow Latino student, Juan Rodriguez who states that the specialized Law Magnet and Advanced Placement programs housed in the northern part of the school "seem like a school within a school. And that seems wrong because most of the students from the neighborhood don't get to go to the Magnet program, and most students in the Magnet program are white and not from the local neighborhoods."

The video concludes with one of the many poems created from the students' ethnographic observations. The Poem, entitled "Top Ten" describes the frustration of Latina/o students who attempt to succeed academically but encounter impediments to advancement by the system of white privilege and "greed." The following poem by Erica Baez serves to illustrate this point:

> I see the ignorant with their faces of greed and envy. They look as if they've never had any struggle. Working parents always providing the best. I watch their mouths moving cruelly and unjustly. They appear to be the ruling class. The ones with high G.P.A.s and top ten spots. I hear their greedy comments and how they eat away their tongues. They talk about a "little Mexican" that rose as young. She didn't sit in a corner wasting away. She thought well I could do it too! I could be top ten and I too could have a high G.P.A. I listen to their negativity and how they kill human beings with their words. They express with hatred "send her back let's deport her!" I think this place is ruled by the superiority. Meanwhile we are left to be the minority until some rise and take their places. They

imagine we are stupid, lazy, and dumb but what they don't know is that a grade doesn't mean a thing and standardize tests don't determine your wise-ness. I believe we are capable to get good grades and that we are not stupid, lazy, or dumb. We know there's a lot of hate, and sometimes it's not the hate that numbs the pain.

Based on observations and interviews, Erica documented the experiences of her classmate, Nyeli Torres—the "little Mexican" referred to in her poem. According to Erica, Nyeli immigrated to Tucson from Nogales, Sonora—sharing her parents' hope of high achievement in US public schools. Struggling with English in middle school, Nyeli could not achieve grades higher than above average. However, when she was a freshman in high school, Nyeli became a straight "A" student. In her junior year in high school, Nyeli became bored with the average-level material and lobbied her counselor to enroll her in Advanced Placement (AP) courses. After arguing her case several times to her counselor, she received her wish—she was enrolled in AP History. Nyeli lived up to her expectations and received an "A" in the course. Because of Nyeli's success, her counselor had no other choice but to place her in AP Government and English for her senior year. The Government class was a breeze, but the true challenge for Nyeli was the English class. She entered the US public school system knowing only a few words of English, but when she walked through the door of her AP English class she believed that she had mastered the language.

However, some of her classmates and teacher for the AP English class thought differently. Nyeli learned from friends that some of her classmates spoke with the teacher and said that if Nyeli received an "A" in the course, she would become the Valedictorian of the school. These students reportedly complained, "Nyeli wasn't born in the US and only came to this country a few years back. Therefore, it wouldn't be 'right' for her to receive an "A" in English and become Valedictorian!" The teacher gave Nyeli a "B" in the course, which prevented her from becoming the first Mexican valedictorian in the school's history. This political move by students and their teacher to limit Nyeli's success demonstrates how racist and sexist discourses encourage individuals to reinforce a hierarchical order of success. Because Nyeli was a young Mexican immigrant female, being "top ten" was simply out of the question.

The poem reminds the viewer that some Cholla students face direct oppression and that their lack of success is the result of injustices within the school system. After watching the video, one is supposed to sense that the problem of racial disparity is not the fault of students but the

racism that privileges whites over students of color. Most important, systematic transformation is necessary to engender new and better educational experiences and outcomes.

One important aspect of the SJEP is how critical consciousness is created and sustained through critical media literacy. The SJEP fosters and sustains critical consciousness through intergenerational networks of caring adults and exposure to relevant political ideas. Through curriculum, student work, videotaped classroom practice, and student interviews, this course operationalizes what Freire[63] termed *conscientização*—by suggesting that transformative education for the poor and disempowered begins with the creation of pedagogic spaces where marginalized youth are enabled to gain a consciousness of how their own experiences have been shaped by larger social institutions. Through a counter-hegemonic curricula that focuses on youth culture and resistance,[64] racial identity and social reproduction[65] and counter narratives,[66] students of color are able to provide alternate explanations of school inequality as well as gain a critical perspective of their world.

As youth researchers,[67] SJEP students analyze a diverse set of data: field notes, video footage, artifacts of popular culture, interviews and surveys. Epistemologically, youth then turn their sociological gaze back by applying their findings towards extending social theory.[68] One of the primary objectives of utilizing methodological and pedagogical process is to demonstrate the ways in which "youth-driven research simultaneously supports students' long-term academic trajectories, both because of the academic rigor of research, as well as because of the socialization of critical intellectual identities."[69] Through reading the world, young people are able to meaningfully develop strategies for pursuing social justice, increasingly public roles in advocating, organizing, educating, and successfully educated by our communities in an effort to create positive social change. They become what Gramsci[70] termed "organic intellectuals."

Youthtopias: Towards a New Paradigm of Critical Youth Studies

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[63] Freire, 1970.
[64] Giroux, 1983; Solorzano, 1998; Morrell and Duncan-Andrade, 2002.
[65] Akom, 2006.
[66] Akom, 2003; Solorzano and Delgado-Bernal 2001.
[67] Akom, 2009; Cammarota and Fine, 2008.
[68] Burawoy, 1998; Yang, 2006.
[69] Akom, 2009; Cammarota and Fine, 2008, Yang, 2006 p. 1.
[70] Gramsci, 1975.

The examples of YPI, SJEP, or other programs which we have not had the time and space to discuss, such as Global Action Project, Youth Radio, and Leadership Excellence (to name a few), show how development or educational processes can influence young people's consciousness about their own existence and environments. For urban and suburban youth, although not an exhaustive list, some of the essential features of Youthtopias are created when the following conditions and commitments are met:

- Understanding how race intersects with other forms of social oppression such as class, gender, religion, nationality, sexuality, phenotype, accent, immigration status, and special needs;[71]
- Challenging traditional paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of students of color;
- Fore-grounding the experiential knowledge of students so that young people and adults are "co-constructing" the learning environment;[72]
- Developing critical consciousness; and finally,
- Committing to social justice.[73]

Although none of these elements are new in and of themselves, collectively they represent a challenge to existing modes of scholarship in the field of critical youth studies and beyond.[74]

Moreover, a critical consciousness that recognizes the oppressive forces impeding healthy development will answer key questions around the importance of social relationships among peers, older youth, and adults, thereby placing young people on the path toward acquiring valuable forms of social and cultural capital. As demonstrated by participants in YPI and SJEP, the development of critical consciousness helps young people understand how they can help make the kinds of changes necessary for improving community conditions. A critical consciousness will provide the knowledge of people with power and influence who could collaborate to initiate community changes. The young people in our studies have learned that actions of change require their own personal development; that effective community activism involves continuous education and the engendering of knowledge that enhances critical consciousness. Finally, the act of attaining a critical consciousness is facilitated by a praxis-based education, which in and of itself is a social relationship. Young people, therefore, attain their critical consciousness through learning processes initiated by individuals, either youth or

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[71] Hill-Collins, 2000; Akom, 2008a.
[72] Chavez and Soep, 2005, p. 10.
[73] Solorzano and Bernal, 2001, p. 312-315.
[74] Yosso and Solorzano, 2002, p. 27.

adults, working within organizational contexts. This interaction between youth and organizations promotes effective social relationships (i.e. social capital), exposing the many young people and adults engaged in improving the quality of life within their communities that demonstrate how young people can make positive community and personal changes.

Conclusion

In recent years, social science research about urban youth has focused almost entirely on understanding causes of problem behavior such as violence, school failure, substance abuse and crime. As a result, scholars in the field of critical youth studies who are bound to the legacy of social disorganization thesis, have under-theorized the role of youth agency and the capacity of urban and suburban youth to respond to community social problems. This study challenges the standard conceptualization of social capital by first, attending to the ways that young people themselves invest in and foster constructive collective action; and second, presenting a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which new kinds of pedagogical spaces can produce important forms of social capital whereby resistance and resiliency are systematically developed through formal (and informal) processes, pedagogical structures, and youth cultural practices.

In this article we term the processes of creating systematic, formal and informal, traditional and non-traditional educational spaces that produce pedagogies of love, resistance, resiliency, hope and healing—*Youthtopias*. Perhaps the most important contribution of this framework is that it attempts to get at deeply rooted ideologies by introducing a framework for young people to unlearn their stereotypical knowledge of race and other social oppressions, while analyzing, problem solving, and theorizing what it means to work for social justice within oneself, locally, and globally. Embedded within this framework is a pedagogical approach that uses CRT, YPAR, and critical media literacy to help young people identify and name the societal problems, analyze the cause, and find solutions.[75] The theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical approach that we have outlined in the preceding pages are not new in and of themselves; however, collectively they offer promising strategies for the field of critical youth studies. As Thich Nhat Hanh suggests: "Communities of resistance should be places where people can return to themselves more easily, where the conditions are such that they can heal

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[75] Smith-Maddox and Solorzano, 2002; p. 80

themselves and recover their wholeness."[76] Prominence of such an approach will lead to healthy development, the ability to act upon and overcome oppressive social conditions, and a greater understanding that young people (and adults) always have the ability to shape and reshape the goals and outcomes of their lives. Failure to do so will impede liberation and positive healthy development. We are hopeful that young people and adults all over the world will continue to systematically and earnestly construct Youthtopias, as an alternative asset-based approach for confronting the challenges of teaching and learning for social justice in the twenty-first century.

A.A. Akom is an Assistant Professor of Urban Sociology and Africana Studies and Co-Director of Educational Equity at the Cesar Chavez Institute at San Francisco State University. Akom's scholarship focuses on race, education, and youth cultural production for popular and academic audience. In 2002, Akom co-founded Academic Pathways, an innovative youth development and educational intervention program designed to assist and empower African American, Latino, and under-resourced high school students to excel academically, enter meaningful professions, and experience the American Dream of upward mobility that's associated with high quality education. Akom received his B.A. from the University of California at Berkeley, an M.A. in Education and Teaching credential from Stanford University, and his Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Pennsylvania. He has published extensively on issues related to race and education in journals such as Sociology of Education, Anthropology and Education, Race and Ethnicity in Education, International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, Blaze and the Nation magazine to name a few. Currently he is the director of the Youth as Public Intellectuals and Green Metropolis projects in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Julio Cammarota is an assistant professor in the Mexican-American Studies and Research Center at the University of Arizona. His research focuses on participatory action research with Latina/o youth, institutional factors in academic achievement, and liberatory pedagogy. He has published articles on family, work, and education among Latinas/os and on the relationship between culture and academic achievement. He is the author of Sueños Americanos: Barrio Youth Negotiate Social and Cultural Identities (The University of Arizona Press, 2008). He is also the co-editor of Beyond Resistance! Youth Activism and Community Change: New Democratic Possibilities for Practice and Policy for America's Youth (RoutledgeFalmer Press 2006). Cammarota's work has been instrumental with advancing social justice in education and youth development. Currently, he is the co-director of the Social Justice Education Project in Tucson, Arizona.

Shawn Ginwright is an Associate Professor of Education in the Africana Studies Department and Senior Research Associate for the Cesar Chavez Institute for Public Policy at San Francisco State University. In 1989, Dr. Ginwright founded Leadership Excellence Inc. an innovative youth development agency located in Oakland, California that trains African American youth to

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[76] King, 2001, p. 94

address pressing social and community problems. In 1999, he received his Ph.D. from the University of California Berkeley. His research examines the ways in which youth in urban communities navigate through the constraints of poverty and struggle to create equality and justice in their schools and communities. He is the author of "Black in School- Afrocentric Reform, Black Youth and the Promise of Hip-Hop Culture" and co-editor of Beyond Resistance!: Youth Resistance and Community Change: New Democratic Possibilities for Practice and Policy for America's Youth.

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