

CHAPTER

1

AN INTRODUCTION TO YOUTH PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION

When you have finished reading this chapter, you will know more about the following:

- The history of youth participatory evaluation (YPE) and how it has emerged out of the philosophies and tenets of both positive youth development and participatory evaluation
- What YPE is
- How other professionals have been thinking about youth participation in evaluation and research
- How YPE supports youth, adult, program, and community development
- How YPE can and should support development in evaluation

4 Youth Participatory Evaluation

Youth participatory evaluation involves young people in the process of evaluating the programs, organizations, agencies, and systems that have been designed to serve them. The YPE process can be completely youth-driven, or it can be conducted in partnership with adults. In either case, the youth in YPE projects are provided with support to perform as evaluators. They are not merely respondents of methods created by adults, nor are they consultants on adult-led evaluations. Instead, they are the creators of knowledge, shaping their own evaluation questions, developing their own unique methods, analyzing and interpreting the data gathered, and reporting their findings.

I began my search for youth participatory evaluation in 1995. At the time I was a graduate student working at the Children's Environments Research Group (CERG). My colleagues and I were studying children's participation in research, environmental planning, and social change. Because of our group's expertise in the field of children's participation, we were asked to become part of a California Wellness Foundation initiative to improve children's environments throughout California. I was asked to find examples of youth involvement in program evaluations. This seemed easy enough. After all, we were living in very exciting times for the field of youth and child participation. Many research projects were examining the impacts of youth participation in decision making, governance, research, planning, and design. Theorists were writing about the effects of participation on youth development, and social and political theorists were positing the benefits of youth participation on community and social development.

A catalyst for all of this activity was the signing and ratification of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, which in Articles 12 through 15 recognizes children's participation as a fundamental right. This understanding of children as full citizens with rights and responsibilities led many countries to experiment with youth participation in local government (such as town councils), urban planning, environmental education and justice, and program development.

These practices were built on new research findings that highlighted the importance of positive youth development. At this time social scientists were discovering that while preventing high-risk behaviors was surely a good thing, it was not necessarily developmental for youth. In other words, even those adolescents who attended school, obeyed laws, and avoided drugs were not necessarily equipped to meet the difficult demands of adulthood (Sabo, 1999). This body of research emphasized the need to move from a preventive mind-set toward a developmental

one—from thinking that *youth problems are the principal barrier to youth development* to *valuing youth development as the most effective strategy for the prevention of youth problems* (Pittman & Wright, 1991). Youth began to be viewed as assets and resources in communities rather than as delinquents who were feared and whose behaviors needed to be modified or prevented. This new understanding of young people fostered experimentation with a variety of new strategies and methodologies that developed youth leadership and agency (Camino & Zeldin, 1999), related to youth as community builders (Checkoway & Finn, 1992), and empowered youth to become social change agents, community organizers, and activists (Camino, 1992; James & McGillicuddy, 2001).

It was in this rich climate of experimentation and change that I found myself searching for models of youth participation in evaluation. I soon discovered an emerging field called participatory evaluation. Participatory evaluation is a type of evaluation that calls for the inclusion of stakeholders, that is, anyone with a vested interest in the evaluation process. However, I found that both the type and level of stakeholder involvement varied greatly from project to project, depending on the needs of the client and the philosophical perspective of the evaluation consultant.

Participatory evaluation grew out of two distinct streams of thought and practice. The first, practical participatory evaluation (P-PE), has the goal of making evaluation findings more useful to the programs being evaluated. From this perspective, the participation of stakeholders in the evaluation process is thought to enhance the relevance and ownership of findings, which in turn makes it more likely that evaluation results will be used to support programmatic development (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998). The second stream, transformative participatory evaluation (T-PE), grew out of a desire to support the transformation and empowerment of individuals and groups through the process of constructing and respecting their own knowledge.

While reviewing this literature to find examples of how young people had been involved as stakeholders in these participatory evaluations, I came across a study that had surveyed all members of the American Evaluation Association about their participatory evaluation practices (Cousins, Donohue, & Bloom, 1996). This study identified over five hundred practitioners using some type of participatory process in their evaluation work. Thrilled to find such a comprehensive overview of the field, I called Dr. Cousins, the lead researcher, to ask how many of these

6 Youth Participatory Evaluation

projects had been conducted in youth programs, after-school programs, or schools. My assumption was that if participatory evaluations had taken place in these environments, youth would most certainly have been regarded as stakeholders with a vested interest in the growth of the project. Dr. Cousins was extremely helpful and made time to talk with me about his study. After determining that many of the programs in his study served children or youth, I asked Dr. Cousins which evaluations had involved youth in the process. After a long pause he asked, “Do you mean as evaluators?” I said yes. He then told me that not one of the programs had included young people in the process. After an awkward silence, I explained that I thought all stakeholders were supposed to be involved in participatory evaluation. He agreed but couldn’t think of any person in the United States or Canada who was actually engaging the largest constituent group—children and youth—in their evaluation projects. I think that he was also a bit shocked by this discovery. He told me that to date, most of the participatory evaluation studies had focused on including staff in the process rather than clients.

I couldn’t believe this. I had a million questions: How could it be possible to conduct a participatory evaluation process that included “all stakeholders” without engaging the very people who attended the program? How could we possibly move forward to create programs to meet the needs of young people if we weren’t engaging them in the development and evaluation of their programs? If we were to take seriously the tenets of youth development, how could we not engage youth in authentic leadership roles and activities in the programs that served them? And finally, following the tenets of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, how were we to engage youth as citizens if we were not serious about including them in basic, local-level decision making and knowledge production? I was struck by the incongruence of data before me. My perplexity and outrage led to what has now become a more than decadelong journey to discover what it means to engage youth fully in evaluation and knowledge production processes.

WHAT IS YOUTH PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION?

I eventually discovered that I was not the only person asking these questions. After an intensive two-year search in which I reviewed every electronic mailing list, database, Web site, book, magazine, and foundation report that had anything to do with child and youth participation, I found a handful of like-minded colleagues who were doing amazing work engaging children and youth in evaluation processes. Five of these

trailblazers allowed me to conduct a study of their programs and projects. Their efforts and the efforts of the young people in these programs became the topic of my doctoral dissertation. What developed out of this research was very important—we became less alone in the world, and we began developing a field of study and practice that became known as youth participatory evaluation.

Over the past seven years, leaders of this emerging field have held three significant meetings at which we collectively explored youth participation and delineated the field for researchers and evaluators. The first meeting, “Children’s Participation in Community Settings,” took place in 1999 and was sponsored by Childwatch International Research Network and the Growing Up in Cities project of the MOST Programme of UNESCO. In 2000 the second meeting, “Youth Participation in Community Research and Evaluation,” was hosted by the Social Work and Urban Planning Department of the School of Social Work at the University of Michigan and supported by the Kellogg Foundation. During the third meeting, a much larger conference with the same name held in Wingspread, Wisconsin, specific strategies for advancing youth participatory evaluation as a new field of practice were discussed. Other significant advances in the field included a *New Directions for Evaluation* volume, *Youth Participatory Evaluation: A Field in the Making*, which marked the first publication devoted entirely to this topic (Sabo, 2003a), and a *CYD Journal: Community Youth Development* edition titled “Youth Participation in Community Evaluation and Research” (Checkoway, Dobbie, & Richards-Schuster, 2003). In addition, *Evaluation Exchange*, the newsletter of the prestigious Harvard Family Research Project, began featuring reports on projects using YPE. These were all significant triumphs for our small but emerging field.

One of the major accomplishments of the 2002 meeting on Youth Participation in Community Research and Evaluation was that participants were able to develop a working definition for the field and a core set of principles to guide our practices (see Exhibit 1.1). The definition created at this meeting states:

Youth Participation in community evaluation research involves young people in knowledge development at the community level. The process includes efforts by adults to involve young people in the research or evaluation of public agencies and private institutions; by young people to organize their own research or evaluation projects; and by youth and adults to work together in intergenerational relationships [Checkoway et al., 2003].

EXHIBIT 1.1. Wingspread Declaration of Principles for Youth Participation in Community Research and Evaluation.

- Youth participation in community research and evaluation transforms its participants. It transforms our ways of knowing, the strategies we devise, the methods we employ, and our program of work.
- Youth participation promotes youth empowerment. It recognizes the experience and expertise of all young people and respects their leadership capacities and potential contributions.
- Youth participation builds mutually liberatory partnerships. It values the assets of all ages and fosters supportive and respectful youth-youth and youth-adult working relationships.
- Youth participation equalizes power relationships between youth and adults. It establishes a level playing field, clarifying for participants the purpose of the process and the power in balances between groups. It structures environments that respect the involvement of young people and trains adults in supporting genuine youth decision making and leadership development.
- Youth participation is an inclusive process that recognizes all forms of democratic leadership, young and old. It involves diverse populations and perspectives, especially those who are traditionally underserved and underrepresented.
- Youth participation involves young people in meaningful ways. Young people participate in all stages of the process, from defining the problem to gathering and analyzing the information to making decisions and taking action.
- Youth participation is an ongoing process, not a one-time event. Participants continuously clarify and reflect upon its purpose and content. Research and evaluation are viewed as an integral part of knowledge development, program planning, and community improvement.

Checkoway et al. (2003)

These principles highlight our collective understanding of youth participation in community research and evaluation as transformative and developmental for individuals, programs, organizations, communities, society, and modes of knowing. YPE is defined as inclusive, engaging

young people in all levels of the evaluation effort. Beyond that it seeks to build and strengthen relationships among all stakeholders. Finally, it is ongoing and integral to the work of programs.

THE BENEFITS OF YOUTH PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION

For me, it seems that kids really need to own something. Kids don't own anything. They don't have any say about what their families do; they basically don't have very much control over their lives. The way that I look at it is that it would really make me happy if I knew that at least one kid felt as though he or she had some sort of say in this place and had some sort of ownership over what happened in this place because kids, I think, are very alienated from what is happening in their lives, you know? And they are really powerless. That is why I think it is important to participate in the evaluation process.

Beth, age 17, participant in a youth-led drug prevention program in Canada

As the field has grown, so has the literature documenting the impacts of youth participation projects. Specific studies have focused on youth participation in research, governance, and decision making at the programmatic, local community, national, and international policy levels. While this book focuses specifically on youth participation in evaluation, the insights gleaned from these other closely aligned fields are very useful both in theory and in practice.

Numerous recent studies and reports show that youth participation has multiple benefits for young people, adult facilitators, programs, communities, society, and the field of evaluation itself. Although these benefits are interrelated and dynamic, I will first discuss each separately and then explore their connections to one another in the next chapter, “Performance, Play, and Development.”

Benefits to Youth

We grew a lot; we experienced a lot. We hung out with our friend and adults and other kids. I think I wouldn't be who I am now if I hadn't worked in this program.

Bob, age 17, member of a YPE team conducted in a youth shelter in Canada

10 Youth Participatory Evaluation

You develop more mature relationships with adults. I wasn't getting that before I got involved with this project. Where would you get it?

Karen, age 15, participant in a youth-led prevention program in Canada

In the past five years a wide variety of publications have examined how young people benefit from their involvement in research or evaluation or both (Calvert, Zeldin, & Weisenbach, 2002; Camino, 2001, 2005; Golombek, 2002; Horsch, Little, Chase Smith, Goodyear, & Harris, 2002; Larson et al., 2003; Lewis-Charp, Yu, & Soukamneuth, 2006; London, 2000; Sabo, 1999; Sommers, 2001; Zeldin, Larson, Camino, & O'Connor, 2005; Youth in Focus (2002); Zimmerman & London (2003). While each of these authors has a unique perspective on the issue, London et al. (2005) do an excellent job of summarizing the range of benefits to youth that can be expected:

- Social competencies: Youth learn to interact and handle new situations and develop empathy for other perspectives. Youth participation builds teamwork and a sense of responsibility.
- Civic competencies: Youth learn social, political, and cultural conditions and increased social responsibility and civic leadership in areas such as communication, outreach, and advocacy.
- Self-confidence: Youth learn skills in public speaking, talking with others, and interviewing and gain confidence that they have knowledge and insight.
- Social capital: Youth build new relationships with peers and adults in the community. These new connections can help with future opportunities such as programs and employment.
- Identity exploration: Youth take on new roles as researchers, evaluators, and action planners, broadening their perspectives and sense of empowerment.

Other researchers have identified additional impacts, including these:

- Youth learn about knowledge production (Lewis-Charp et al., 2006).

- Youth become more reflective about themselves and their contexts (Hart, 1997).
- Youth develop job readiness skills (London, Zimmerman, & Erbstein, 2003; Sabo, 1999).
- Youth feel personal satisfaction and enjoyment (Sabo, 1999).

Youth participatory evaluation and research projects are conducted in particular types of organizations with varying management and decision-making structures. These projects are facilitated by a diverse array of adults who bring their own sets of values, beliefs, and practices to the work, and they engage a wide range of young people of different ages and capabilities from different social, political, and cultural backgrounds. These contexts can either support or limit certain levels of participation or political involvement. For example, some projects might offer opportunities for young people to be involved in higher-level programmatic, organizational, community, or national decision making.

BECOMING A YOUTH EVALUATOR In 2001

I was fortunate to work with a terrific youth-led organization based in Chicago. One of the young leaders of this program came to love evaluation and made it her mission to learn all she could about the process. Not only did she run training sessions for other young people in her program, but she also helped other young people become evaluators in their own programs. When I asked her how she thought she had benefited by participating in evaluation processes, she said, “The whole process was very intimidating at first. This was on a totally different level of learning than what you do at school—there you learn information. With this you identify important information and effectively put it into use. It has been challenging, but I feel so much more prepared for my future in the working world because of the skills I have gained. You feel a great sense of accomplishment.”



Benefits to Adults

A growing body of research mentions the importance of adult development through adult-youth partnerships (Calvert et al., 2002; Camino, 2001, 2005; London, 2000, 2002). In one study on youth participation in governance (Zeldin, 2004), the author found that the majority of adults who were involved in these projects received benefits from partnering with youth in organizational decision making. She found that these partnerships enhanced adults' sense of personal efficacy and belonging. The process of working with youth made adults feel as if they could "better understand the concerns, language and perspectives of contemporary youth, and as a result, they felt that they were making better decisions as well as making them with increased confidence" (p. 86). Sharing successes with youth exhilarated most of the adults, reinforced collective purposes, and led to increased feelings of organizational membership and commitment. The study also noted that adults acted more responsibly with youth at the table.

Others have argued that adult development is needed as a precursor to adult-youth partnerships and should be a focus of professional development (London, 2002). Adult development in this sense implies increasing facilitative leadership skills in which adults are trained to let go of authority while still offering young people the support they need to succeed. Building adults' capacity to help means teaching them skills in active listening, cultural competency, community knowledge, and recognizing varying youth skills (London, 2002).

Benefits to Programs and Organizations That Serve Youth

The juvenile justice system needs to change. Kids go and get locked up and they get back out and they go right back again. It is like a setup to me. It doesn't need to be like that. They need to be helping these youth to get skills so that they can go and get jobs, so they don't have to go back, so they don't have to go back on the streets, to put themselves at risk. So that is why I was interested in this evaluation, 'cause I know a lot of people that have been [harmed] in the juvenile justice system and I'd rather see a change.

Monica, age 17, working on a YPE project that evaluated the juvenile justice system in San Francisco

Even though all of the young women here have been in the same situations, we are different now. We are employed; we are linked to systems of care. We're disconnected from those youth on the street now. I'm separated; no matter how much I go out onto the streets, it is not the same. So getting information, not just by word of mouth but on paper from the young women who we are serving, is critical so we can improve our program.

Shaniqua, age 19, working in a youth-run prevention program in California

One of the primary advantages of youth participation in evaluation is to gain their perspectives in order to develop and improve the programs serving them. When young people are involved in the process of evaluation, they can use the data to change their programs according to their needs. The impact of adult-youth partnerships in evaluation and research can reverberate to transform the cultures of entire programs and organizations (Horsch et al., 2002; Kirshner, O'Donoghue, & McLaughlin, 2002; London, 2002; Senge, 1990; Wheeler, 2000; Zeldin, 2004; Zeldin et al., 2005). According to Sommers (2001), if youth are "left out of the process of evaluating the implementations and outcomes of programs that have an impact on their lives, attempts to empower youth may be overshadowed or undermined by the very activities that are meant to empower them" (p. 31). Thus the activity of engaging youth in the evaluation process is more than a means of improving the quality of the data or ensuring that particular constituencies are heard; it is a process that both mirrors and supports the tenets of positive youth development and leads to stronger and more appropriate programming.

Many of the staff members and young people I have worked with over the years have used the YPE process as a starting point for overall programmatic reform. They found that engaging youth in evaluation processes have actually bolstered the level of youth participation in their programs and helped initiate youth participation in ongoing programmatic decision making. When the principles and practices of YPE became embedded and sustained in the organizational structures, programs became more democratic and inclusive of young people's views, perspectives, and power. To make this radical move, programs flattened their hierarchical structures and developed systems that support true participation, reflection, and feedback.



INCREASING PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH USING YPE

In 2001 as a part of a U.S. Diana Princess of Wales initiative, I was asked to lead a YPE team to help conduct an evaluation of a youth theater program. The young people in this program were very much involved in mounting a variety of performances every year, helping with the writing of scripts, acting, singing, dancing, directing, and participating in other ways. However, when it came to actual organizational decision making, only one or two key young people were included.

When the YPE team began our evaluation process, we met with a wide range of youth participants. During our meetings we explored the many questions they had about their program. We were particularly

The Impact of YPE on Communities and Society

The longer you stick with it, the greater the public awareness. I've definitely noticed a difference, and it may just be that I'm getting older, but I think that it is also that as you become involved in your community, you are seen in a different light. Like business owners being nicer. I remember one week going into a store and being asked to leave for not being eighteen—and I hadn't done anything. I came back a week later and the owner was like "Oh, hi, sweetheart, I saw your picture in the paper."

Mary, age 18, working in a youth-run program in a rural town in Canada

In the past several decades, young people have been involved in using community-based action research and evaluation for activism and advocacy. While not every youth participatory evaluation or research project results in community or societal change, many do support young people to develop bodies of knowledge that can be used to bring about changes in communities—schools, families, towns. Research demonstrates that when youth are encouraged and supported to become actively involved in changing issues, programs, and institutions that affect their lives, they have the potential to alter societal structures (Ginwright & James, 2002; Heath, 2000).

The impact of YPE on society comes at the intersection of youth development, youth research, and youth civic engagement. Through

interested in how they, as youth participants, felt about a program that was led by adults. After conducting multiple interviews and focus groups, the YPE team discovered that most of the young people wanted and felt it necessary to become more involved in programmatic decision making. Using our evaluation process as an example of the type of participation they desired, the young people began advocating for greater youth involvement. By the end of our work together, several youth committees had been formed and the adult staff members had started experimenting with a variety of ways to bring more young people into the program as paid staff and members of the board of directors.

participatory evaluation and research projects, young people often have opportunities to become civically involved. This type of engagement often differs from more traditional “civic engagement” and “civic leadership” projects in that young people are immediately involved as full citizens—collecting data, advocating, rallying, organizing peers, holding public hearings, meeting officials, and conducting press conferences. In other words, youth research and evaluation engages youth in civic development through direct action (Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002; Youniss et al. 2002). YPE is in many ways an answer to the call by civic scholars for youth to be given “not just knowledge but also opportunities for participation and practice” (Sherrod et al., 2002, p. 269).

YPE has also been seen as one way to deal with the adult-youth power differential because knowledge production is a form of power (James, 2001). Giving youth the opportunities to produce knowledge reshapes these power dynamics. The activity of empowering young people to have a voice in society can ultimately transform society, creating new roles for both young people and adults.

YPE'S EFFECT ON CITYWIDE POLICY REFORM

Early in my search for evaluation projects that involved young people, I found the work of Coleman Advocates and their youth program Y-MAC (Youth Making a Change), located in San Francisco. At that time, Y-MAC had just completed an intensive evaluation of all



city-funded agencies serving youth in the Bay Area. Their objective was to understand the extent to which these agencies were actually meeting the needs of young people. Together, Coleman staff and Y-MAC youth developed a “report card” that listed multiple indicators of success. Young people were trained to use the report card as an assessment tool and were sent into each of the programs as undercover evaluators. To develop report cards for each of the agencies, the young people brought the data together to analyze. Once they were certain of their findings, they called each of the agencies and told them about the project. Y-MAC undercover youth evaluators then invited each agency to meet with them to discuss their program assessments from the youth participants’ perspective. The young people assured the program directors that their efforts were conducted for the sole purpose of improving the programs. This project was used to advocate for young people to be on the city planning and evaluation committee for all youth-supported programs in San Francisco. In this way, youth were able to transform not only their individual programs but also the means by which the city planned and evaluated the success of all youth programs.

Benefits of YPE on Evaluation

Youth participatory evaluation holds the potential to be a launching point of democratic dialogue. At a time when expert, technical knowledge predominates over knowledge derived from everyday experience and active citizenship, new strategies are needed to allow traditionally underrepresented groups to develop their knowledge resources as part of the broader movement for democratization. This has the potential to break the monopoly of knowledge development and enable young people to gain knowledge and skills for active participation in a democratic society (Checkoway et al., 2003).

Researchers and practitioners have discussed the wonderfully rich and creative methods youth develop when they are involved in evaluation efforts. They have noted that youth are often more capable of obtaining relevant data from other youth than adults are. But few have examined the fundamental shift that evaluation needs to take when it engages young people. Some challenge the field of evaluation to truly engage both young people and all of humanity in the process of continuously creating evaluation, not just by following the methodological rules set

forth by the academy but by engaging in critical dialogue that challenges the tenets of the field.

I have long suggested that the merger of youth development and evaluation requires a significant paradigm shift (see Sabo, 2003b). Such a shift has the potential to revise the very nature of what it means to “evaluate”:

Youth development theorists and practitioners are not concerned with the empirical production of knowledge in the same way that evaluation practitioners are. Instead, they are interested in creating leaders, citizens, social-change agents, community organizers, and healthy youth. The fundamental paradigm shift that development brings to bear on evaluation moves the field away from the question of “how do we engage youth in knowledge production?” to “how do we produce environments that support ongoing growth and change? [p. 8].

TYPE: CHANGING THE WAY EVALUATION IS DONE

In 2001 I was asked to work with a youth-run organization that served young people with disabilities. This group had already hired and fired several exceptionally worthy consultants whom I respected for their ability to facilitate high levels of quality youth participation. I was terrified to work with these young people! During one of our first conference calls, the young people told me that the previous consultants had not really taken their specific needs into consideration when delivering assistance and training. These consultants, I was told, just “didn’t understand them.” I took this to mean that the previous consultants weren’t making an effort to learn more about this group and its unique set of needs. I doubted I could do better, but I remained on the phone and listened. At the end of our first conversation, the young people asked me, “So what do you need from us?” I responded as openly and candidly as I could so that they could come to know me and my own fears and anxieties. “I want you not to fire me,” I said. We all laughed, and then I added, “No, really, I’m serious. I want to do whatever it takes for you not to fire me, and I think I’m going to need your help.” This moment became the basis for the rest of our work together, work that required all of our honesty, trust, and commitment to the process.

On a freezing-cold day in Chicago I finally met with a key group of the leaders from the program. This meeting preceded an evaluation training



18 Youth Participatory Evaluation

session I was to conduct with all of the youth board members. I was eager to learn everything I could about the young people so that I could better conduct the training. About three hours into the meeting it became painfully clear to me that all of the techniques I typically use with youth just wouldn't work with this group. Due to a variety of physical disabilities, many of the young people couldn't move around the room; some couldn't even raise their hand. Many others, I was told, wouldn't be able to understand the materials I had brought with me. Out of frustration, I finally said, "It would be easier for you to learn everything I know about evaluation than it would for me to learn everything you know about the youth in your program." At first we all laughed, but it quickly became clear that this was indeed a better approach. The depth of knowledge it would take to fully understand the range of disabilities represented in the group would take me years to understand. On the other hand, these youth were experts at negotiating all the physical and mental needs of the group, and they were certainly capable of learning evaluation strategies.

We stayed up most of that night preparing. The young people asked me again and again for clarification of particular definitions of terms such as *inputs*, *activities*, *outcomes*, and *indicators*. After defining each term, one young person said, "Why don't you just say what you mean? Why do you have to use those words?" I thought about it and realized how right she was. Why was I using those words? Had my academic training taken over completely? Had I become so narrow in my thinking that I was actually unable to see there were other much simpler ways of talking about and practicing evaluation? In the end *inputs* became "what you need," *activities* became "what you do," *outcomes* became "what happens," and *indicators* became "what you see."

The next morning these young people held the most dynamic and successful evaluation training I had ever seen. As I watched them transform my understanding of evaluation into something else, something unique, something actually understandable, it made me question all of my practices, whether with young people or adults. To this day, I bring the experience of working with this group with me wherever I go.