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Since 2010, The California Endowment (TCE) has invested in youth leadership and youth-led organizing groups as a key component of its Building Healthy Communities (BHC) initiative. These youth groups have sought to support the healthy development of their members while engaging them in organizing, advocacy, and other efforts to advance their community's well-being. As part of a longitudinal evaluation, this report focuses on BHC-affiliated youth organizations in South Sacramento.¹ Located in Sacramento County, South Sacramento is one of the fourteen BHC sites in California.

This report draws on survey data collected from core members of six organizations that engage their members in grassroots organizing and advocacy, media production and the cultural arts, practices that promote healing and well-being, and/or other activities. These groups include: (1) Access Sacramento, (2) Always Knocking, (3) La Familia Counseling Center, (4) People Reaching Out, (5) Sacramento Chinese Community Service Center, and (6) Sol Collective. Two of these groups, People Reaching Out and La Familia Counseling Center, participated in a 2014 report on BHC-affiliated youth programs in South Sacramento.²

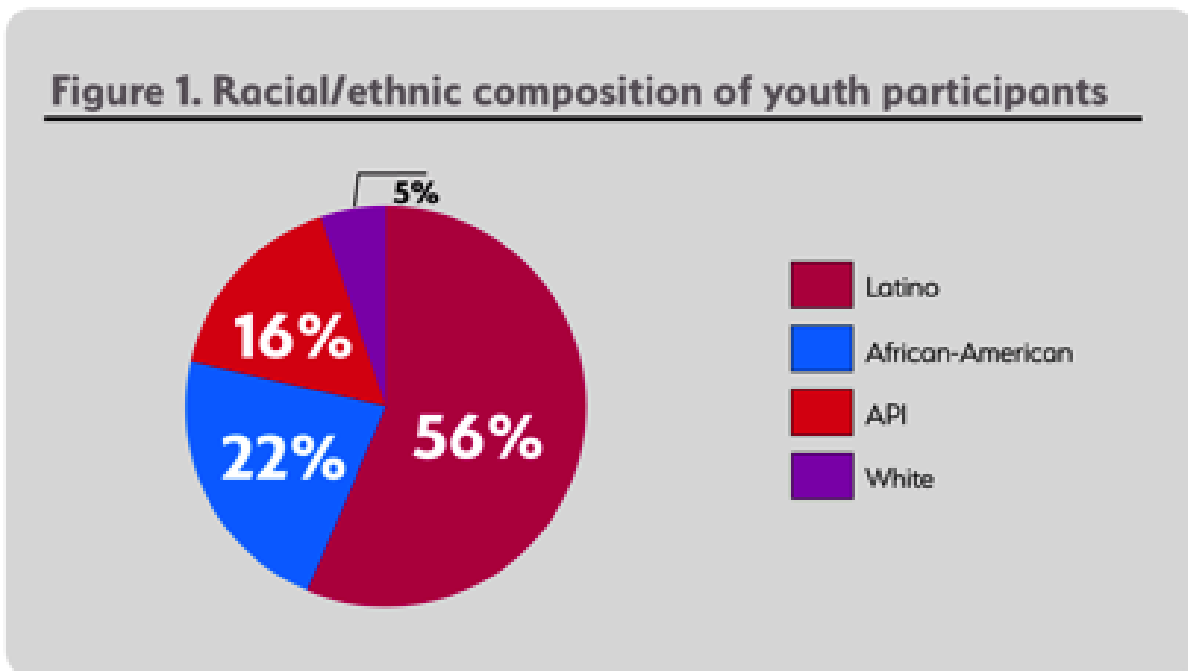
This report contains four main sections. First, we begin by providing a demographic profile of core youth leaders in BHC-affiliated groups. Second, we describe why and how youth came to participate in their BHC group. Building on earlier evidence from this evaluation, we then present self-reports of how youth acquire a range of civic and educational skills and experiences, while also enhancing their own well-being. Lastly, we conclude by briefly summarizing interviews with key stakeholders to show how BHC-affiliated youth organizations have collectively engaged their youth members in addressing health, safety, educational, and

other school and community concerns. In sum, this report provides further documentation of youth leadership efforts just past the midpoint of the 10-year BHC initiative.

DESCRIPTION OF BHC YOUTH PROGRAM REGULAR PARTICIPANTS

This study draws on 55 surveys collected from young people who regularly participated in BHC youth programs in South Sacramento. Survey participants represent 89% of core youth members in organizations that participated in the study. The average age of these members at the time of the survey was 17.5, but they ranged in age from 13 to 29 years of age. Young men outnumbered young women, representing 55% of participants. Participants were generally representative of the racial/ethnic composition of the South Sacramento community. As shown in Figure 1, approximately 56% identified as Latino/a, 22% as African-American, and 16% as Asian-Pacific Islander. The remaining identified as White.

Most youth came from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, as 71% were eligible for free and reduced lunch in high school. Only 7% were raised by a parent with a bachelor's degree.



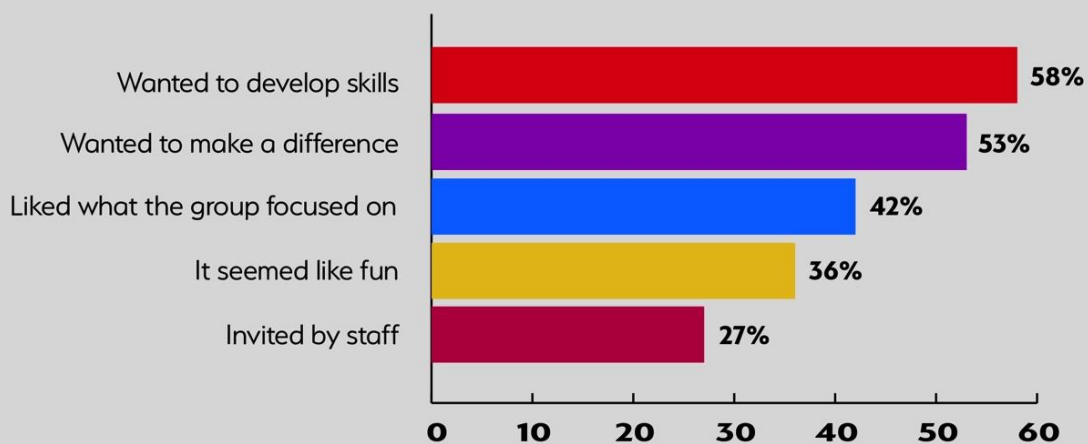
MEMBERS' INVOLVEMENT

Youth in South Sacramento vary in how long they had been involved in their organizations. Quite notably, 31% of study participants had been involved in their BHC-affiliated organization for at least a year. This suggests that overall, BHC organizations retained many of their participants, offering them extended opportunities to develop their leadership capacity over time. Of the remaining youth, 31% have been involved for 6-11 months, 22% were involved for

less than 6 months, and some did not specify how long they have been involved in their organization.

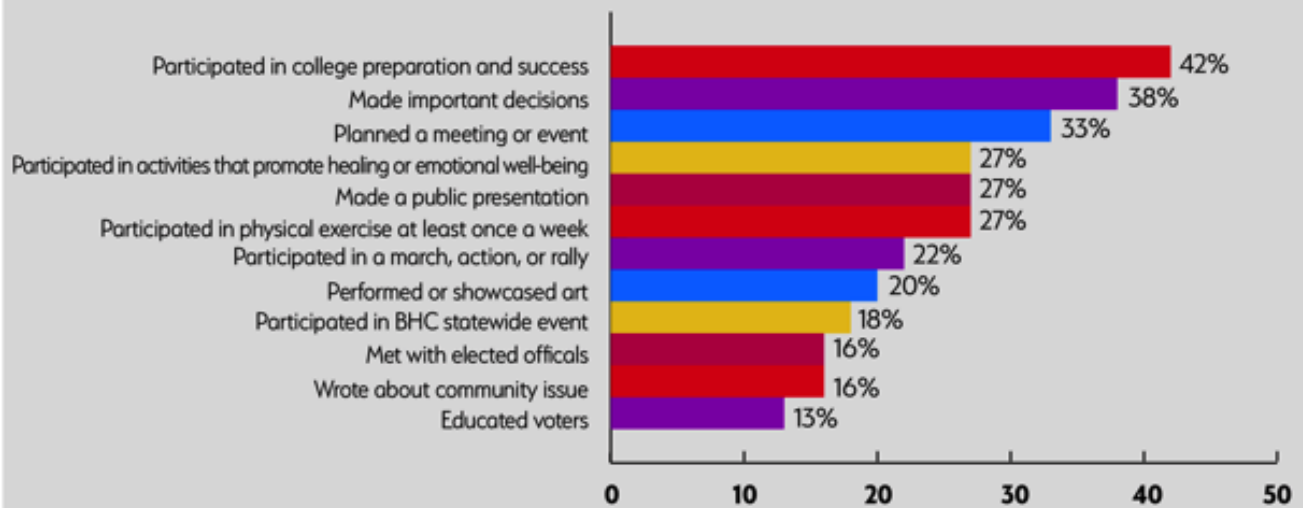
Youth were asked to list up to three reasons why they joined their BHC-affiliated organization. Figure 2 lists the top reasons for joining. In South Sacramento, the most common reason given was wanting to develop skills (58%), suggesting youth often joined their organizations expecting personal or professional growth from their involvement. A majority (53%) also joined to make a difference, indicating that youth sought to contribute to their community. Other key reasons for joining included liking what the organization focused on (42%) and because it seemed like fun (36%).

Figure 2. Reason for joining BHC group



Youth were asked to report the types of activities that they engaged in as part of their BHC group. The list was based on common activities reported by BHC staff in an earlier survey.³ As shown in Figure 3, many youth (42%) participated in college preparation and success activities. Youth also commonly made important decisions (38%) and planned a meeting or event (33%). Over a quarter (27%) engaged in activities that promote healing or emotional well-being, made a public presentation, or participated in physical exercise at least once a week. Additionally, 22% participated in a march, action, or rally; 20% performed or showcased artwork; and 18% participated in statewide or regional BHC event. These findings suggest that BHC organizations in South Sacramento offer youth a range of leadership and development opportunities.

Figure 3. How youth participated in their BHC group



HOW YOUTH BENEFIT FROM THEIR INVOLVEMENT

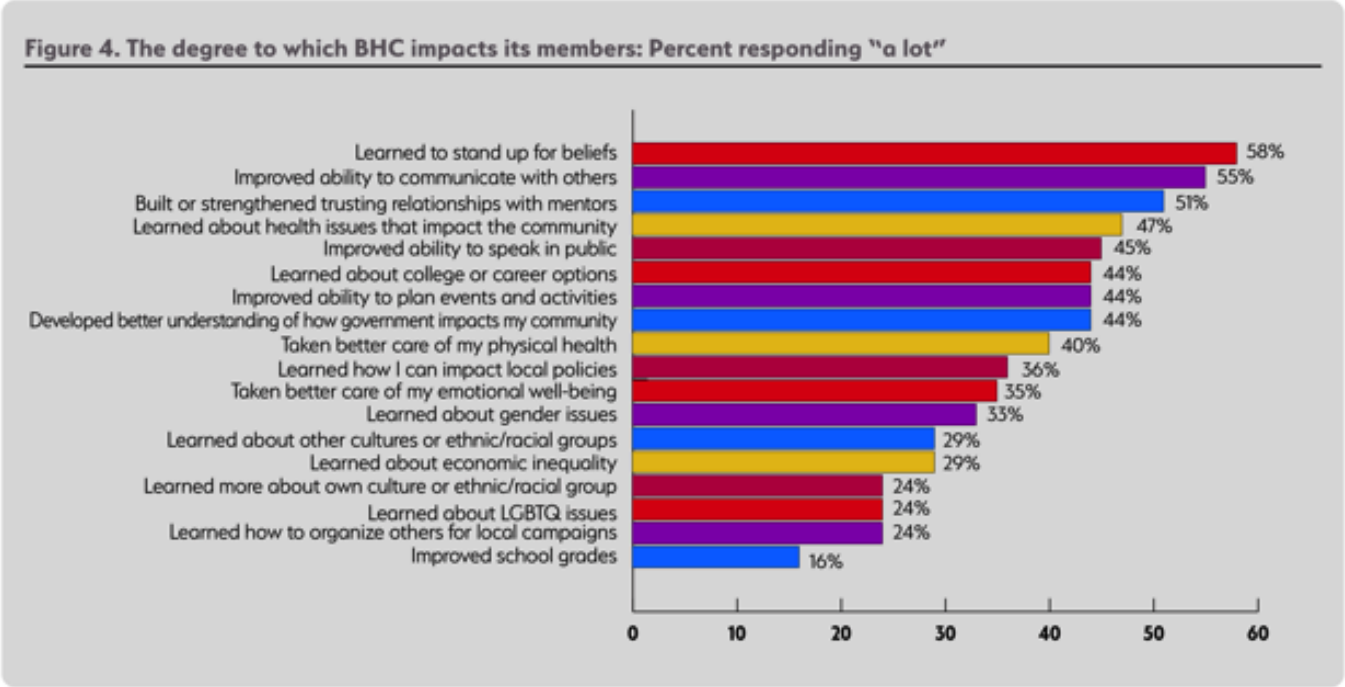
As demonstrated in earlier phases of the BHC youth program evaluation, BHC youth organizations contribute to their members' healthy development in a variety of ways and to different degrees.⁴ In the survey, we asked members to rate the degree to which their group involvement impacted different aspects of their personal development—did it have *no impact*, *very little impact*, *some impact*, or *a lot of impact*? Figure 4 shows the percentage of respondents who reported that their organizational involvement had “a lot” of impact on each of the areas of personal development included in the survey.

Survey findings suggest that members felt their ability to stand up for their beliefs developed “a lot”, as 58% reported this was the case. A majority (55%) also reported that participation had a lot of impact on their ability to communicate with others. Involvement also helped most build or strengthen relationships with mentors (51%). Youth also commonly reported an increased understanding of health or other community issues (47%), and an improved ability to speak in public (45%). Some youth significantly developed their capacity to impact policy change (36%), and/or learned a lot about how to organize others to participate in campaigns that benefit their communities (24%).

Participation also had implications for members' health and educational outcomes. Notably, 35% of youth reported taking a lot better care of their emotional well-being and 40% claimed to have taken a lot better care of their physical health. At the same time, 44% learned a lot about college and career options, and 16% significantly improved their grades in school.

Some youth learned about their own cultural and racial backgrounds and the diversity of

the California population. As results show, 29% learned a lot about other ethnic/racial groups, and 24% reported learning a lot about their own culture or ethnic/racial group. Additionally, 29% learned about economic inequality, and 24% reported learning about LGBTQ issues.



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN SOUTH SACRAMENTO

In addition to supporting the healthy development of members, some BHC-affiliated organizations have sought to engage youth in civic affairs. Their efforts addressed the following issues:

- **Youth Engagement in the 2016 Mayoral Race.** During Spring 2016, Sacramento youth sponsored two youth-led meet and greet events, during which youth had the opportunity to host and engage with mayoral candidates Darrel Steinberg and Tony Lopez. Attended by over 100 youth, these events offered young people the opportunity to ask questions to each of the candidates and share their concerns.
- **Increasing city-funded programming for children and youth.** Youth and their allies sought to promote Measure Y, which directs business operations tax revenues from marijuana cultivation and manufacturing businesses into a separate city fund for programming for children and youth. In Spring 2016, youth and their allies sponsored a Measure Y kickoff event and educated community members about the measure's

potential benefits. Importantly, young people incorporated spoken word and youth culture in their community outreach efforts. While Measure Y was not approved by voters in June 2016, youth gained exposure to the political process and how they might be able to influence local policy in the future.

EXPANDING THE CAPACITY FOR YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Since the inception of the BHC initiative in 2010, affiliated youth BHC organizations have expanded meaningful opportunities for their young leaders to advance their community's health. As programming evolves, BHC-affiliated organizations in South Sacramento may potentially have a lasting impact on the lives of participants and community well-being.

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¹ For a list of publications related to the BHC youth program evaluation visit: <https://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/bhc-youth-leadership/>

² Bekele, Dawit and Veronica Terriquez. 2014. "Building Healthy Communities through Youth Programming in Sacramento." Los Angeles, USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity. Available at [https://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/242/docs/South Sacramento July2014 V6.pdf](https://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/242/docs/South_Sacramento_July2014_V6.pdf)

³ Terriquez, Veronica and Abdiel Lopez. 2016. "BHC Youth Program Inventory Survey: Key Findings." Los Angeles, USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity. Available at: [https://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/242/docs/VT BHC Youth Program Staff Inventory Report.2016.pdf](https://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/242/docs/VT_BHC_Youth_Program_Staff_Inventory_Report.2016.pdf)

⁴ Terriquez, Veronica and Gabriela Dominguez. 2014. "Building Healthy Communities Through Youth Leadership." Los Angeles, USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity. Available at: <http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/BHC-youth-leadership/>