Evaluation of Youth Leadership Academy Pilot Program
January 2005 – June 2005

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Executive Summary

Initiated by Community Advocates, the Youth Leadership Academy (Youth LA) program LA is a multi-year program that offers high school students off-site, after-school leadership activities, sustained exposure to peers and near-peers who are college-bound, and counseling and enrichment opportunities. Its mission is to promote civic engagement, decrease tensions among groups that are divided and isolated by ethnic, religious, and socio-economic differences, and offer counseling and enrichment. It is designed to stimulate ally-building and to reduce the achievement gap.

Beginning with an introductory dinner in December 2004, an initial group of program participants (called peer leaders) met on a monthly basis at various cultural sites in the Los Angeles area and, using what they learned in the program, facilitated presentations to their near-peers on issues of culture, discrimination, and civic engagement. Some also participated in a planning committee meeting at which they discussed the direction of the program. Through observation of the peer leaders and review of their written reflections, it became evident that the program made progress towards its intermediate program goals. Namely, the peer leaders ended their cultural isolation (e.g. empathized with and became allies of peers from different cultures, better understood issues of prejudice and discrimination); expanded their leadership skills (e.g. co-facilitation of near-peer presentations, public speaking); and began to understand how youth can be effective leaders and change agents (e.g. saw examples of youth-led projects, had their opinions considered at planning committee meeting). In the coming year, Youth LA will focus on increasing the peer leaders' civic engagement skills and networking opportunities.

Between January and May, a culture of respectful interaction developed among the peer leaders. This existing culture enabled a new group of students recruited in May (called new Youth LA leaders) to quickly integrate with the peer leaders and participate actively during their first meeting. The program expects to expand its reach to additional high school students in the Fall.

Participants (see p. 3) and program activities (see p. 47)
- Peer leaders: First group of 17 10th-12th grade high school students recruited for the program attend public, private, and parochial schools of diverse socio-economic, ethnic, and religious backgrounds in the Los Angeles area. Most exhibited some cultural awareness, leadership skills, and interest in attending college. Beginning with an evening reception at the Japanese American National Museum in December and a two-day retreat in January, Youth LA organized monthly gatherings for the peer leaders from February to June 2005 at cultural sites throughout Los Angeles. Activities focused on understanding cultural identity, ally-building, discrimination awareness and intervention, team-based group

presentation, youth empowerment, and civic engagement. Peer leaders led presentations on these issues to their near-peers at LA-area high schools, and were encouraged to participate in Youth LA planning committee meetings.

- Schools and teachers: Program worked primarily with five public, private, and parochial Los Angeles area schools from inner-city and suburban settings. Participating teachers received professional development training on teaching Youth LA's culture and civic engagement lessons. After peer leaders presented to their classes, teachers were asked to recommend a group of their students who ranged in academic abilities to the program. In actuality, some students were targeted and encouraged to apply, but most self-nominated by submitting applications to their teachers.

- New Youth LA leaders: Students were recruited primarily from classes who received Youth LA lessons and peer leader presentations. In May, 31 of 46 ninth and tenth grade students who applied were accepted to the program. At least 18 said they would join, but only eleven were able to attend the May and/or June meetings.

Evaluation purpose and methods (see p. 4)

- Purpose: The evaluation had two primary purposes: (1) provide formative feedback to Youth LA's staff and Planning Committee and (2) gain insight into the effectiveness of the pilot phase of the program.

- Methods: The evaluator and Education Director developed a program theory of action that articulated the program's expectations and guided the development of questionnaires and journal questions as well as the quantitative and qualitative analyses. The evaluator observed and participated in monthly meetings, collected journal responses from peer leaders, and collected baseline and follow-up questionnaires from high school students who received Youth LA lessons.

Progress towards intermediate outcomes with peer leaders (see p. 7)

- Cultural understanding: The peer leaders made progress in the following areas: bonding with and acting as allies for each other, ending their cultural isolation, accurately using program-relevant vocabulary, such as stereotyping and prejudice, becoming comfortable discussing their own cultures, empathizing with those of different cultures, and knowing how to effectively intervene in instances of prejudice and injustice.

- Leadership skills: The peer leaders improved in the following areas: public speaking, and leading peers in discussion of cultural identity, prejudice, discrimination, and youth civic engagement.

- Civic engagement: The peer leaders began to understand how youth can be effective change agents in their communities.

Preliminary data on students who received in-class Youth LA lessons (see p. 26)

- Baseline data: Before participating teachers taught Youth LA's culture and civic engagement lessons in their classes, their students were asked to complete a questionnaire to assess the students' attitudes and beliefs in the following areas: cultural awareness and empathy towards others, experience with discrimination, participation in extra-curricular activities, feelings of self-efficacy, and post-high school plans. In general, the students held a wide range of beliefs. Some of the differences in students'

opinions were attributable to the school they attend, including experiences with discrimination, level of extra-curricular activity, feelings of self-efficacy, and post-high school plans. In all but one way the students who applied for the program did not differ from those who did not apply. Those who applied tended to participate more frequently in theater, dance, or musical activities than those who did not apply.

- Responses before and after receiving Youth LA lessons: After receiving the lessons and a presentation made by Youth LA peer leaders, the students were asked to answer the same questions again on a follow-up questionnaire. On a school by school basis, the students demonstrated few significant changes in their responses after receiving the Youth LA lessons. They did change their opinions about the types of discrimination they experienced, specifically racial- and gender-based discrimination and name-calling. One school's students indicated participating in name calling more frequently on the follow-up questionnaire. The changes in responses, however, may be more attributable to an increased understanding of discrimination and less likely an actual increase in the number or type of discrimination experienced. The overall consistency in the students' responses supports the program's belief that occasional lessons alone will not illicit attitudinal and behavioral changes concerning cultural awareness, empathy for others, self-efficacy, civic engagement, or attitudes towards college.

- Course-taking patterns: An additional question on the follow-up questionnaire asked students to list the courses they were taking at the time and the courses they intended to take in the Fall. There were marked differences in the amount of courses students were taking or planning to take depending on the school they attended.

Future evaluation endeavors (see p. 39)

- Longitudinal study: While the scope and time for this evaluation was limited, the program would benefit from longer-term tracking and evaluation. A longitudinal study of the peer leaders and new Youth LA leaders would help determine whether there is a long-term impact on beliefs and attitudes towards others, community activism, college attendance, workforce participation, etc.

- Classroom practice: It is important for the program to understand how participating teachers implement the Youth LA classroom lessons and the ways in which the lessons and/or implementation of the lessons may be honed to meet the program's goal of preparing and recruiting future groups of student participants.

Lessons learned (see p. 40)

- Reflections from Education Director: In conducting an evaluation of a pilot program, it is essential to record the lessons learned by those who know the program most intimately, the program leaders and staff. The Education Director describes what she realized over the course of the pilot program and this evaluation, reflecting on issues concerning recruitment, establishing a supportive climate with the peer leaders, civic engagement, and narrowing the achievement gap. These "lessons learned" will likely inform the immediate direction of the program.

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Program purpose and goals

Organization and leadership

Youth Leadership Academy (Youth LA) is a program initiated by Community Advocates, a non-profit organization focused on issues of human relations and civil rights. Community Advocates was founded in 2002 with David Lehrer, former regional director of the Anti-Defamation League, as president, and Joe Hicks, former director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, as vice-president.

Youth LA is currently in its initial year of implementation. Initial seed money was received from the Ahmanson Foundation ($25,000), the Riordan Foundation ($25,000), Carmen Warschaw ($25,000), and individual donors ($3,000). Marjorie Green is the Education Director for Community Advocates. Melissa Morgan served as Youth Services Coordinator for Youth LA until a full-time program director, Michael Nobleza, was hired in June 2005. Other supporting staff includes Jan Lebow, part-time administrative assistant, and a grant writing consultant, Janet Wertman. Youth LA has a governing board that is currently chaired by Juan S. Munoz, Ph.D. Associate Professor, Bilingual Education & Diversity Studies, College of Education, Texas Tech University. The initial Planning Committee meeting for Youth LA took place on January 8, 2004 (see attached Timeline of Youth LA Activities). Its members include a cross-section of educational leaders and practitioners in Los Angeles, including Nancy Coonis, Superintendent of the Secondary Schools of the LA Archdiocese; Dr. Gil Graff, Director of the Bureau of Jewish Education; Linda Guthrie, Secondary Vice President, UTLA; Bud Jacobs, Director of High School Programs, LAUSD; Jennifer Lee, representing LA Board of Education President Jose Huizar; Shelah Lehrer-Graiwer, President, Barnsdall Friends of the Junior Arts Center; and Gregorio Medina, Program Director, Constitutional Rights Foundation. Board members have done outreach to their constituent members to recruit school participation, secure endorsements, provide advice on potential collaborations, fundraise, and assist in curriculum and staff development design. Additional funding has been received from the James Irvine Foundation ($5,000), the Phillips Foundation ($25,000), the Dwight Stuart Youth Foundation ($15,000), United Teachers Los Angeles ($1,500) and PacifiCare Foundation ($10,000).

Purpose of Youth LA program

As described by its staff, Youth LA is a multi-year program that offers high school students off-site, after-school leadership activities, sustained exposure to peers and near-peers who are college-bound, and counseling and enrichment opportunities. Its mission is to promote civic engagement, decrease tensions among groups that are divided and isolated by ethnic, religious, and socio-economic differences, and offer counseling and enrichment. Through ongoing interaction, the program hopes to stimulate empathy and ally-building among the participating students such that, in the future, when they meet people of other cultures they will recall what they learned from their fellow program participants instead of resorting to stereotypical assumptions based on class or ethnicity.

The program also hopes to reduce two kinds of closely-knit inequity that exist between the more and less privileged youth. The first is to diminish the academic achievement gap between African American and Latino students on the one hand and white and Asian on the other, and the second is to help less privileged youth understand that they can expect to have a higher level of access to social and political resources than they otherwise thought possible.

The overarching idea is that, as 9th grade participants in the Youth LA program approach 11th grade, they will become knowledgeable about their own culture and others' cultures, learn how to design and implement a community-based project, and gain leadership skills that will enable them to be peer-leaders for new 9th graders entering the program and 10th graders implementing community/service learning projects. As a means of closing the achievement gap, college counselors provide the peer leaders with guidance (especially geared towards 9th and 10th graders) regarding California's A to G requirements, college admittance requirements, and financial aid. By 12th grade, the Youth LA participants should lead their 9th-11th grade near-peers in community-based projects that encompass social, economic, and cultural differences, and be in a place to personally consider college a viable option.

Participants in pilot program

Peer Leaders

Meeting for the first time in December 2004, the initial group of 17 students (called peer leaders) included students from Dorsey High School (LAUSD, South LA), Roosevelt High School (LAUSD, East LA), Milken Community High School (private high school affiliated with the Bureau of Jewish Education and the California Association of Independent Schools, West LA), St. Matthias (Archdiocese, Downey), New Jewish Community High School (Bureau of Jewish Education, SF Valley) and Santa Monica High School (public school, Santa Monica). In total, 16 peer leaders completed the initial phase of the program, including three 12 graders, nine 11th graders, and four 10th graders. One peer leader was not able to continue with the program due to time conflicts. Although one student surpassed the number of allowable absences from monthly meetings, he has indicated that he would like to continue with the program next year. All other peer leaders participated in the majority of Youth LA monthly meetings and events between January and June 2005.

High Schools and Teachers

The program worked primarily with five public, private, and parochial schools from inner-city and suburban areas with differing socio-economic, ethnic, and religious backgrounds: Dorsey, Roosevelt , Fairfax (LAUSD, Central LA); Milken Community, and Sacred Heart (secondary school of the LA Archdiocese, Lincoln Heights). From each of these schools except Dorsey, teachers who work with 9th graders and teach Life Skills, Social Studies, Psychology, Religion or English taught at least three of 10 lessons on culture and civic engagement developed by Youth LA in their classrooms between February 2005 and May/June 2005.

Because Dorsey staff, with the exception of a guidance counselor, was not participating, a Youth LA volunteer taught one lesson to a Life Skills class.

New Youth LA leaders

A second group of students (called new Youth LA leaders) was recruited in May to join the program from each of the five schools. Along with the peer leaders, eleven new Youth LA leaders attended either the May and/or June meetings including five from Sacred Heart, three from Roosevelt, two from Milken Community, and one from Dorsey. The new Youth LA leaders' attendance was lower than expected at the May and June meetings. The staff attributes the low turnout in part to recruitment difficulties they faced. Following the peer leaders' in-class presentations (explained further in the "Classroom lessons and peer presentations" section), the teachers were asked to nominate five to six of their 9th or 10th grade students to participate in the program. Teachers were asked to select students who range from low to high academic performance and who range from poor to great awareness/respect for their own culture and others' cultures. In actuality, the students self-nominated in most instances by filling in an application and returning it to their teachers. In some cases, teachers encouraged students to apply because they felt the experience would be particularly beneficial. The staff selected 31 students from 46 applications. However, when they attempted to reach the selected students by mail and phone to invite them to the May meeting, 13 proved unreachable, 10 said yes, four said no, and two said maybe. In their comments to the staff, some students said they were unaware of the program, and others were interested but unable to commit the time. When the staff contacted the students again for the June meeting, 14 were unreachable, 18 said yes, 17 said no, and one said maybe. The staff was surprised at the low turn-out. They believed that, as it was with the peer leaders, almost all of the new Youth LA leaders they recruited would become involved in the program. In order to create a highly heterogeneous group of new Youth LA leaders, the main criteria used to select applicants were teacher recommendations and cultural background. In retrospect, the Education Director feels that they should have also interviewed the new Youth LA leaders, as they did with the peer leaders, because the interview process would have given the new Youth LA leaders applicants a chance to meet the staff to ask questions about the program and better understand the kind of commitment they were being asked to make. The staff intends to continue their recruiting efforts in Fall 2005.

Evaluation purpose and methods

The evaluation ran from January 2005 through June 2005. The purpose was two-fold: to provide formative feedback to Youth LA's staff and Planning Committee about the six-month pilot phase of the program, and to gain insights into its potential effectiveness. Formative feedback was provided to Youth LA staff and planning committee members between January and June in the form of occasional memos and through informal communication. This evaluation report focuses on describing insights into the pilot phase of the program. The Youth LA staff will likely use the positive findings regarding the effectiveness of the pilot

program to recruit more schools and to secure additional funding. Findings that indicate the effectiveness of particular program activities will reinforce the continuation of those activities. Findings that indicate deficiencies are intended to inform decisions about program improvement.

As a first step in the evaluation process, the evaluator worked primarily with the Education Director to develop a theory of action for the program (see attached Theory of Action chart). The theory of action described the resources, planned program activities, expected intermediate outcomes and long-term goals for the program. As a working document, the theory of action served to articulate the expectations for the program prior to its implementation and to provide a tool for documenting changes in priorities. The theory of action guided the development of evaluation questions, focused the development of baseline and follow-up questionnaire items and journal questions, and guided the quantitative and qualitative analyses presented in this report.

The evaluation sought to provide three main kinds of information: (1) a description of the implementation of the pilot program, (2) a record of developments among the peer leaders in their leadership skills and their understanding of their own and others' cultures, and (3) preliminary data on the cultural awareness, self-efficacy, and college-going attitudes of high school students from the aforementioned participating schools including whether or not the Youth LA classroom lessons might influence the attitudes of those students who were not yet participating as new Youth LA leaders.

Information on the implementation of the program provided a descriptive record of the kinds of program activities carried out and the kinds of modifications the Youth LA staff needed to make during the pilot phase (see attached "Implementation of Program Activities" description). The evaluator obtained information regarding the implementation of the program through ongoing communication with the Youth LA Education Director, participation/observation of peer leader trainings, attendance at planning committee meetings, and a review of program materials such as brochures, www.youthla.org website, and meeting agendas and handouts.

To gain insight into the development of the peer leaders' cultural awareness and leadership skills, the evaluator engaged in participation/observation of peer leader trainings and meetings, and asked peer leaders to respond to three sets of post-meeting journal questions (see attached Examples of Journal Questions). Journal questions were developed in cooperation with the Youth LA Education Director and Youth Services Coordinator to ensure that the information gathered would be relevant and timely. Data generated from the observations and journal responses provided a descriptive account of (1) the ways in which the peer leaders made progress towards achieving intermediate program outcomes, (2) the unexpected ways in which the peer leaders benefited or did not benefit from the program activities, and (3) the ways in which the Youth LA staff adapted their program activities to peer leader needs and feedback, as well as logistical constraints.

In order to better understand their target audience, preliminary data was gathered on the cultural awareness, self-efficacy, and college-going attitudes of high school students who received the in-class Youth LA lessons. Prior to teaching the Youth LA lessons, participating teachers were asked to administer a baseline questionnaire to their students. A follow-up questionnaire, which included the baseline items plus an additional question regarding course taking patterns, was administered after the students received the Youth LA lessons and participated in a presentation led by a group of peer leaders (see attached copy of the follow-up questionnaire). The baseline data helped paint a portrait of the program's target audiences and provided preliminary data for future use (e.g. comparing beliefs and attitudes of participants after long term participation in the program to baseline data). The baseline data also addressed questions about pre-existing differences between those students who were accepted to the program versus those who were not accepted. Although participation in the follow-up questionnaire was limited, the comparison of baseline and follow-up responses provided preliminary insights into differences in students' attitudes after receiving the Youth LA lessons.

It is important to keep in mind the small scale and scope of the evaluation and its inherent limitations. Working with a proportional, yet small, evaluation budget, some resources and forms of analyses were purposefully not pursued. To gather observational data, the evaluation employed a single observer (the primary author of this report) who recorded and transcribed handwritten notes for many but not all events. Resources were not allocated to record and review audio or video footage, which could provide more in-depth observation and analysis. The baseline and follow-up questionnaires were pilot tested with a single, small group of students and the administration of the questionnaires was handled by the teachers, not the evaluators. Due to time constraints, the evaluator did not exhaust all analysis possibilities for either the observational or questionnaire data (e.g. multiple rounds of coding, full exploration of alternative hypotheses, hierarchical statistical analyses). The evaluator did not conduct a document analysis of organizational or peer leader artifacts produced for the program. Nor did the evaluation, due to its student-focus, pursue interviews or observations of staff or participating teachers.

Beyond the choices made to keep the evaluation within scope, two unexpected problems arose with attaining journal responses and collecting follow-up questionnaire data that limited the amount of evaluation data. Despite efforts to encourage higher response rates, less than half of the peer leaders responded to the journal questions, which made it difficult to represent all peer leaders' opinions about the program and what they gained by participating. The timing of the follow-up questionnaire coincided with the end of the school year, which resulted in the lack of participation of two schools, and in sending questionnaires via mail in exchange for a gift certificate to students of two other schools. Thus, the response rate was much lower than expected for the follow-up questionnaire, limiting the comparability of baseline to follow-up responses. These limitations are important to keep in mind when interpreting the evaluation findings, and should also provide guidance for future evaluation endeavors.

Insights gained from evaluation

Progress towards intermediate program outcomes

As this section will demonstrate, the pilot program succeeded in moving the peer leaders towards most of the intermediate outcomes listed in the theory of action. The peer leaders' primary areas of growth revolved around cultural understanding and leadership skills. The concept of expanding their cultural understanding includes: bonding with and acting as allies for each other, ending their cultural isolation; accurately using program-relevant vocabulary, such as stereotyping and prejudice, becoming comfortable discussing their own cultures, empathizing with those of different cultures, and knowing how to effectively intervene in instances of prejudice and injustice. The leadership skills they improved upon included public speaking, understanding how youth can be effective change agents in their communities, and leading peers in discussion of cultural identity, prejudice, discrimination, and youth civic engagement. Intermediate outcomes the program will pursue in the coming year include providing additional information and assistance in preparing for college, engaging the peer leaders in community service projects, and potentially generating networking opportunities for the peer leaders. Table 1 describes the extent to which the intermediate outcomes for peer leaders were achieved.

Cultural understanding

A central goal of the program is to help students move from a place of cultural isolation – where they partially know their own culture and may hold stereotypical/discriminatory views of others' cultures – to taking pride in communicating to others what their culture is about, and acting as allies to peers of other cultural backgrounds. The program staff believe that, to do this, the peer leaders need to first understand, respect, and form bonds around their similarities and differences, understand cultural similarities and differences at a larger level, understand what constitutes and leads to discrimination, recognize instances of discrimination in their own lives and the lives of others, empathize with others' situations, and then be willing to take action to combat prejudice and injustice on their own behalf and on others' behalf. When these steps occur, according to the staff, the peer leaders will likely be willing to act as allies for each other and then face larger community-based issues. During the pilot phase, the peer leaders realized each of these steps and also demonstrated ally-type behavior during classroom presentations and monthly meetings.

An analysis of the observational and journal response data showed the ways in which the program staff helped the peer leaders explore their cultural heritage, understand the similarities and differences in their beliefs and experiences, expand their vocabulary regarding instances of prejudice, injustice, and discrimination, and recognize empathic feelings towards others.

Table 1: Intermediate Outcomes for Peer Leaders

Intermediate Outcome	Achieved by June 2005
Cultural Understanding, Empathy	
Groups act as allies for each other; group bonded	**Yes, work well in teams.** Example: During a classroom presentation, the peer leaders worked together to regain the students' attention and helped each other think of questions to ask the students.
Are ending their cultural isolation	**Yes, seek understanding of others.** Example: Several peer leaders reported seeing the commonalities between the Jewish bat mitzvah and Latina Catholic quiensenera coming of age ceremonies.
Accurately use vocabulary, e.g. stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, etc.	**Yes, demonstrate working knowledge of concepts.** Example: Many peer leaders described instances in which they experienced or witnessed acts of discrimination based on gender, race, and social class.
Comfortable discussing own culture	**Yes, at ease discussing own culture.** Example: During a monthly meeting, peer leaders openly exchanged stories about family traditions.
Empathize with those of different cultures	**Yes, empathize with others.** Example: A Latina peer leader became upset when a security guard at the movies harassed an African American boy, accusing him of being a drug dealer because he was wearing baggy pants.
Know how to intervene in instances of prejudice, injustice	**Want to intervene, may not know how/when.** Example: A peer leader described how he witnessed and wanted to intervene on behalf of a boy being harassed because of his clothes, but felt he tried to help too late.
Cross-school friendships develop outside of YLA activities	**At least one, not enough data to comment on whole group.** Example: One peer leader mentioned socializing with another peer leader outside of program activities and how that experience helped him better understand the other friend's culture. Several ask staff to arrange informal social activities yet have not initiated their own.
Leadership Skills, Civic Engagement	
Increasing their leadership skills	**Yes, making good progress.** Example: The peer leaders co-facilitated discussions about discrimination and successfully engaged their near-peer audience.
Articulate the goals of the program and their role	**Yes, able to articulate goals and role to others.** Example: Two peer leaders described what they gained from participating in program to new Youth LA leaders. They emphasized having a chance to meet other students from different backgrounds.
Improving their public speaking skills	**Yes, good understanding, improved on skills.** Example: Peer leaders developed a list of attributes of a good presenter, and demonstrated improvement on those skills (e.g. time management, relating to audience) during classroom presentations.
Able to train peers on cultural identity, prejudice, discrimination, and youth civic engagement	**Yes, making progress in facilitating near-peer activities.** Example: During classroom presentation activities, peer leaders were able to help high school students better understand concepts of culture, discrimination, and standing up to acts of prejudice.
Improving critical thinking skills	**Not enough evaluation data to comment on progress.**
Understand how youth can be effective change agents in community; want to engage	**Exhibit willingness to engage in community projects.** Example: At June meeting, groups of peer leaders developed ideas for ways they could help bridge achievement gap.
Addressing Achievement Gap	
Have information necessary to apply to college; know A-G requirements and understand financial aid process, sources	**Most already on-track; others receiving information and support** Example: Peer leaders received information on requirements, sources, of aid, and advice on how to apply for college at June meeting. Several peer leaders talked one-on-one with former guidance counselor, as well.
Gain networking opportunities, i.e. employment, mentoring	**No evaluation data on this outcome.**

Recognition of cultural isolation, interest in learning about others

Many of the peer leaders were able to connect across cultural and religious differences to see the commonalities they share. In February, the journal questions asked the peer leaders to describe the most interesting things they learned about the cultures of the other peer leaders, and the commonalities and differences they discovered between their culture and the culture of the other peer leaders. This 10th grade parochial school student's analogy demonstrates her initial understanding of – and desire to seek out – the commonalities between Latino and Jewish coming-of-age ceremonies, but also demonstrates how she has yet further to go in her understanding of the differences between Judaism and Christianity by using the term "Christians of God" as a unifying term:

"The most interesting things that I've learned so far about the cultures of some of the other Peer Leaders is how the Jewish culture celebrates the Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah, which somehow relates to my Latin culture of celebrating quinceaneras. We relate to each other because we are asked to become better Christians of God. We are also considered to be mature by this stage of life and are given many responsibilities to look towards for. The most important element that I have learned so far from this academy is that every culture somehow relates to one another. We believe in God, celebrate some of the same holidays, share the same talents and gifts, and no matter of our economic class we still end up being the same as one another."

Several students expressed more explicitly their sense of having been culturally isolated. Rather than feeling that this held them back, though, they expressed an awareness of their isolation and explained how they felt that their participation in the Youth LA program enabled them to break out of their daily experience and meet people unlike themselves. This particular student chose to answer the February journal questions differently, describing the homogeneity of her community. She explained how her cultural isolation drove her appreciation for other cultures and her desire to meet those unlike herself:

"As I discussed in our February meeting, I am growing up in a "bubble". My entire life, I have been surrounded by people from the same community. I go to a Jewish private school and up until last summer I went a to Jewish summer camp. These circumstances leave me little opportunity to meet other people from different walks of life. Yet this makes me appreciate other cultures on a deeper level. . . . I learned about other cultures from books and in the classroom. This program gave me the opportunity to meet people from different cultures, hear their personal stories and ask questions."

Another student described how the program enabled him to not only get to know others during program activities, but to also develop a new friendship outside the program:

"One of my peer [leaders] taught me a lot about the Armenian culture. Because of this program, I had visited her house and observed the various traditions and ways of life. It was interesting to see how her Armenian background had so much to do with her life, although it did not take over it. [My friend], although strongly connected to her Armenian background, is very similar to me. I am happy that I joined, because I can now relate to [her] in ways that I did not think were possible, and I have found a new friend."

A Youth LA Education Director interpreted the students' responses to indicate that they were beginning to connect with those different than themselves and reflect on their own cultural "bubble." She states that, "meeting other students in an equal status setting is extraordinarily interesting, even 'seductive.' It is a

pocket look into another world and also a reflection back into one's own assumptions and both commonalities and differences between cultures. Once you've had this experience (assuming you are open to it), it is hard to go back to the Bubble." By breaking down their preconceived notions about other cultures she feels that the peer leaders should, in the future, be able to transcend deep-seated stereotypes to appreciate people from other cultures for the individuals that they are. Her belief is rooted in research that she feels demonstrates "the critical importance of linking students who would otherwise have no opportunity to interact across race, religion, and class and of providing them the vocabulary and context to discuss and respect the cultures they are encountering," citing a study titled, "Desegregation Changed Us: The Effects of Racially Mixed Schools on Students and Society." She states that "the study tracked adults who, as students, had attended integrated schools in the late 1970's, during the peak years of school desegregation. It found that contact with diverse students during their formative years 'fundamentally changed the people who lived through it' and 'shaped their views about race and helped them overcome fear and distrust of people who were different.' Nearly a quarter of a century later it remained 'one of the most meaningful experiences of their lives.'

In addition to those who were pre-disposed to seek opportunities to meet people of other cultures, other peer leaders expressed an appreciation for this kind of opportunity after they led in-class presentations. During a carousel brainstorming session in May, the peer leaders reflected on the most positive things they gained from their presentation experiences, and three individuals indicated that it was having an opportunity to learn about others' experiences. One peer leader said, "we saw the variety of cultures," while another wrote "[I] learned new view points from different schools," and a third felt that his/her group "had a chance to see what public school students are like and how they behave."

Their interest in others seems to be an important motivation for participation in the program. As one Dorsey student stated while practicing her presentation introduction, the reason she joined Youth LA was because she "enjoy[s] diversity and getting to know people." Whether they came to the program with an interest in others or not, these examples help to demonstrate the relationship between peer leaders recognizing their isolation from other cultures and their increased desire to get to know others unlike themselves. The Education Director feels that a key reason why the peer leaders were able to reach beyond their familiar groups and learn about each other is because the staff, throughout the program, modeled for them ways to break out of their cliques and interact with others while maintaining a safe, respectful environment. For example, the staff helped the peer leaders establish ground rules for interacting with each other in a respectful manner, and interrupted the culturally homogenous cliques the peer leaders fell into at the beginning of the program by creating culturally mixed groups for each activity. The peer leaders were then able to interact more freely with peer leaders of other cultures.

By the May meeting, a culture of respectful interaction had developed among the peer leaders. This existing culture enabled the new Youth LA leaders to quickly integrate with the peer leaders and participate actively during their first meeting. One particularly poignant story illustrates the importance of establishing this

culture. A 9th grade new Youth LA leader from an inner city school showed up to the June meeting, driven there by his mother. He was extremely reluctant to stay, and after a lengthy conversation with a staff member, the Education Director decided to send a peer leader (of the same ethnicity as the new Youth LA leaders) out to talk to him. The peer leader reassured the new Youth LA leaders that it was a good program, and that guys like them needed to stick together. Although looking rather sullen and withdrawn, the new Youth LA leaders decided to stay and his mother left. He talked to another inner city peer leader at the lunch break, and by the end of the day was smiling and actively participating in both the large and small group activities. At the end of the day, everyone went around the room and mentioned one thing that they took away from the day. This new Youth LA leaders said that it was good to see a group that deals with the tough issues. It was such a remarkable turn-around that the new Youth LA leader's mother called the Education Director to say thank you. She said that he enjoyed the day so much that he wants to stay involved. This story shows how crucial it was for the program to spend time early in the program helping the peer leaders create a safe, comfortable environment in which they could break out of their cultural isolation by learning how to engage each other in meaningful, respectful dialogue.

Learning about similarities and differences with other cultures

As is described in the program activities section in the appendix, the program staff spent considerable time conducting activities and discussions with the peer leaders that concerned cultural similarities and differences. Examples include having the peer leaders (1) share stories with the group about an object that represents something very meaningful to them, (2) interview each other to find out where they each go to school, what their favorite activities are, etc. and then introduce the other person to the group, and (3) pair-up with someone and discuss topics posed by the Youth LA staff, such as the first time they experienced themselves as a member of a cultural group, and the first contact they had with members of another cultural group. Through these activities, the peer leaders learned how to describe their own cultural identity to other peer leaders, explain that which was most important to them personally, and to identify commonalities and differences among their fellow peer leaders. The following examples demonstrate the kinds of dialogue that occur during such program activities.

During the May peer leader monthly meeting, newly recruited new Youth LA leaders were invited to join the group and meet the peer leaders. They engaged in an icebreaker in which the peer leaders paired-up, as described in example (3) above, and shared their experiences regarding the first time they experienced themselves as a member of a cultural group. One peer leader said that the first time he realized he was a part of a particular cultural group was "when someone referred to me as a black brother. then I felt like I was an African American man . . ." When discussing the first contact they had with members of another cultural group, one young woman (who is a person of color) said she realized she was interacting with a different cultural group when she found herself standing in a group of people that was all white. Another person was less sure about the first

time she interacted with people of another culture, saying "maybe at camp, but I'm not sure." Through this activity, they had an opportunity to think about what shaped their own identity, share their experience with others, and learn about their peers' experiences.

At the June meeting, more newly recruited peer leaders joined the group and met with the other peer leaders. At this meeting, they engaged in several icebreakers, one of which involved pairing off with someone they didn't know and interviewing each other. After a few minutes, they were asked to introduce the person they just interviewed to the group. The peer leaders reported on things like birthdays, where their interview partner went to high school, favorite colors, sports they played, interests they had, family structure, etc. The Youth LA staff then asked them to describe the kinds of things they had in common with each other; things they could connect with. They responded by naming another person who did the same sport they did, saying 'me too' when someone mentioned that a couple of people had been in school plays, and counting how many people had the same favorite color. This kind of superficial level of bonding also took place during the first retreat in January, and served as a way for the peer leaders to begin to form bonds over common experiences and interests.

As an example of the kind of initial bonding that took place at the January retreat, one Christian peer leader from a public school thought he would have little in common with the Jewish students who attended Westside schools. However, on the second day, the peer leader raised an example of how the previous night, he stayed up late talking with some of the other male peer leaders, first about music, and then about the differences between conservative and left-wing Jewish politics. The peer leader said he realized that they had some things in common like music, and also learned that there were big differences in view points, even among people of the same culture. Later, in his response to a journal question posed in February about similarities and differences with other peer leaders' cultures, he recalled how his first assumptions were wrong about not having anything in common with the other peer leaders, saying:

"I've discovered that several students and I both like the same artists and musicians. Albeit I didn't think that we would have much in common, my assumptions were completely wrong when they turned on the radio, and were listening to Rap."

He also wrote that "the most interesting things that I've learned from the cultures of other peer leaders are how big religion plays a role in their societies, and how similar and different they and I are." This was, at least in part, another reflection on the impact that late-night conversation had on his understanding of the others' cultures.

This peer leader's reflections both at the retreat and in response to the journal question demonstrate two levels of understanding of similarities and differences that took root. At first, a more superficial level of bonding over a common interest in Rap music paved the way for a deeper level of conversation to take place about the peer leaders' cultures. Namely, this peer leader who is Christian, gained a deeper appreciation for the cultural similarities among his Jewish peer

leaders, but also was able to differentiate between the Jewish peer leaders and see them as individuals with strong differences in their perspectives and beliefs. One of the Jewish peer leaders engaged in that conversation also responded to the February journal questions concerning similarities and differences by referring to his experience during the January weekend retreat and noting the similarities between different types of Jewish cultures, as well as learning about other cultures:

"I have learned a lot about the American Jewish culture. Surprisingly it has a lot of similarities to the Russian Jewish culture. I also learned more about African-American, Latino, and Armenian culture[s]. The most interesting was the "ring share" from the African-American culture."

This peer leader also seemed to understand that, although he held very different political values, he was able to bond with the other peer leaders over their love of more superficial interests, like basketball, and maintain a level of respect when they did discuss contested issues:

"Well, first of all politically I have many differences with many other [peer leaders]. But we are able to [hear] out each others' opinions out. On the other hand a lot of us enjoy the same type of music and literature. And we all love to play basketball, and we are very competitive."

Finding common ground at a superficial level seemed to help the peer leaders gain trust and respect for each other, and engage in dialogue about more culturally-sensitive matters, like religion and politics.

In their responses to the February journal questions mentioned above, several other peer leaders also mentioned the religious differences and similarities they discovered, while others focused on the importance of family. Many described how discovering these similarities and differences helped bring them closer together. Examples of their responses include:

"Me and other peer leaders have much in common. It is so easy to speak with them, because even though we have some differences in heritage we have many hobbies in common. I think that it is the basic things that unite us. Through music, sports, and through family traditions, we have learned so much."

"I have learned that the Mexican culture have Quienseneras for the girls when they turn 15 years old. Mexican families' cultures are very similar to the Persian culture in that they both value family and togetherness."

"I learned that even though the cultures of the other peer leaders are different than mine, we still have a very strong family appreciation. Most of the peer leaders have really big families, so that gives us a similar bond of togetherness, pride and love for family and friends alike. Most importantly, I learned even though we all come from different backgrounds we are still young people, and I usually forget about the person's culture and just enjoy spending time with them as people."

In addition to learning to appreciate each others' cultures, the peer leaders learned how to relate what they learned to fellow peers. In the following two examples, the peer leaders were able to describe similarities that they shared with other peer leaders' cultures. In the first example which occurred during the May peer leader meeting, the Education Director asked a veteran peer leader to describe to newly recruited new Youth LA leaders what he enjoyed about the

program, what he learned, and what he put-up with. He replied that, by participating in the program, he went to camp and learned about the other peer leaders, especially about his similarities with Jews.

In the second example, according to a Youth LA Education Director, a peer leader was in the middle of making a presentation in April to a classroom of 9th and 10th graders, when her example of her cultural tradition included a somewhat lengthy story of her bat mitzvah. The Education Director mouthed "quinceanara" to one of the other peer leaders who jumped-in and related her quinceanara experience to that of a bat-mitzvah, and tied it to a Filipina ceremony, as well. As stated in the theory of action and demonstrated in this example, the program staff emphasizes the importance of having peer leaders verbally express what they learn from the program in order to internalize the concepts that the program teaches and practice communicating ideas concerning cultural values. The staff feels that these skills relate directly to ending cultural isolation, generating respect for their own and others' cultures, and building leadership skills.

Empathy and vocabulary concerning discrimination

Beyond understanding and being able to communicate the commonalities and differences among their various cultures, the staff pushed the peer leaders to try to empathize with others; to understand the impact of prejudicial language and discriminatory acts through their discussions and activities. One such discussion occurred at the January retreat in which the staff facilitated a conversation about the recent arrest of Edgar Ray Killen, the man accused of organizing the murder of three civil rights workers in Mississippi in 1964. This incident inspired the movie "Mississippi Burning." It surprised the Education Directors to discover that one of the African American peer leaders, but none of the Jewish students, knew that two of the civil rights workers were Jewish.

As aides to their discussions, the program staff kept various posters up through each of the monthly meetings as a constant visual reminder of important concepts. One poster spelled RESPECT in large bold letters going down the page with words relevant to the concept of respect next to each letter of the word. The other poster portrayed a pyramid of words starting with stereotyping at the bottom, leading to genocide at the top. This poster drove home the point made in several meetings that discriminatory words lead to discriminatory actions . . . and worse. The holocaust was used as a powerful example of how propaganda spreading negative stereotypes about Jews led to discriminatory actions, such as protesting Jewish-owned businesses, and eventually to the genocide that wiped out most of the European Jewish population. The peer leaders were exposed to a video of an elderly male Holocaust survivor who partnered with a young female survivor of the Rwandan genocide to bring to New York high school students lessons on the need to combat group hatred. The Education Director also felt it provided a model of ally-building.

The Youth LA staff engaged the peer leaders in several activities in which the peer leaders were placed in disadvantaged or advantaged roles based on random assignment to teams or conditions, such as social class. These activities were followed by discussions in which the staff explained the meaning of

particular words like empathy, discrimination, stereotyping, etc. and the connection among those terms. The following two examples portray how the program combined role-playing activities with discussion of concepts and terminology.

During the January retreat, the peer leaders were randomly divided into two teams and lined up to compete in a mock quiz game. One of the teams received only difficult questions while the other team received all easy questions. Additionally, one or two members of the disadvantaged team were picked on more than the other team members. The purpose was to demonstrate how it felt to be disadvantaged because of a particular group membership, and to see how the various team members would stand-up for each other. In the group conversation that followed this exercise, the following dialogue took place:

Youth Services Coordinator: "Why did you stay [with your assigned group]?"

Peer Leader: "I got frustrated, but I know that was the point. Can't really relate to someone unless you know how it feels."

Youth Services Coordinator: "That's called empathy . . . [different from] sympathy."

Peer leader: "I felt apathetic, but also some empathy."

Youth Services Coordinator: "Apathy means not caring. So, why did you say 'be nice to team 1'?"

Peer leader: "It didn't feel right."

Youth Services Coordinator: "So, you felt empathy."

This short piece of dialogue demonstrates how the Youth LA staff person was able to clarify the emotions this particular peer leader experienced, namely when he was experiencing empathy versus sympathy or even apathy. In the process of sorting out the peer leader's feelings, the rest of the group benefited from better understanding the definitions of the various emotions and what they felt like.

In February, the peer leaders engaged in an exercise on classism – discrimination that occurs based on social class. Without knowing the purpose of the game ahead of time, the peer leaders were assigned a colored card and then instructed to try to carry out various tasks that mocked real-life scenarios, such as applying to college, seeking employment, buying groceries and going to the bank to get a loan. When the peer leaders tried to carry out their tasks, they were treated differently according to the color of their cards: pink for homeless, off-white for lower class, green for middle class, and purple for upper class. In response to a February journal question, the peer leaders reflected on their experience with this exercise. As demonstrated by the following journal responses, some peer leaders began to empathize with those less fortunate than themselves:

"I had a pink card. It did not exactly imitate my life, but I have seen the discrimination occur to others. I was really able to feel and put myself in a homeless and poor man's shoes. It struck me when people automatically put me down just because of the color of my card. I immediately took offense. I myself, before the [Youth LA] program, would hold the same stereotype against the

poor and homeless. When I would initially observe them, the stereotype would be that they were unable of doing anything and I would probably just walk by. Now, from personally experiencing in a minor case what they go through. It automatically struck me when I thought about how much worse it is for them. From that time on, I have been more considerate and caring of their position."

"At the February 7th meeting, I was given an off-white colored card (that represented the lower class). In reality, I come from an upper middle class family. I am very fortunate and I do not struggle with money. My experience in this simulated experience was a taste of what life is like as a member of the lower class. For the first time in my life, I had to fight to receive a good education. The bank clerk didn't give me a loan because I couldn't afford to prove to her that I was a trustworthy person. In my life, I never faced a situation such as this one. This activity succeeded in frustrating me, but especially in giving me the knowledge about what life is like in other people's shoes.

These peer leaders had to struggle more than they usually do to obtain things they typically take for granted. It is the program staff's hope that the understanding they gained through this exercise will carry over into their daily lives, just as the peer leader in the first quote indicated by saying that he was now more understanding of the plight of the homeless. For those that received cards representing their real-life social class, it is important to see how the peer leaders recognized the similarity of their experience during the exercise with that of their everyday lives, as demonstrated in this journal excerpt:

"The color card I had was green. This was the middle class in society. This was actually the same that I experience in my everyday life. I do classify myself in the middle class because I do have to say that I get what I need; I am never in need of anything, but I can also not get many things that I wish for."

Being able to replicate real-life situations during the role-play helped the peer leader better identify and understand her real-life situation and also helped to lend credibility to the exercise. For another peer leader, the card he received did not replicate his life, but he recognized it as the experience of his elder family members:

"I had the Pink Card. Life is somewhat different from being dirt poor as my card represented, however, society and the racial bigotry that has subsided relatively in the past few decades have long been rampant in my family."

In this case, the exercise helped connect past with present for the peer leader. On the other end of the spectrum, another peer leader experienced discomfort because she was being treated as an upper class citizen:

 "I had the purple card. My experience was extremely different than my every day life. In the game, I was treated like an upper class citizen, and it was easy for me to get to each station. People were catering to me with [out] me doing anything to gain their respect. I have never been given anything that easily. I'm used to working hard to get things I really want or need. So having that upper class status was awkward for me because it is so different from the way I live."

This peer leader's experience was awkward because she did not know how to respond to being given what she wanted without having to work for it. Although not challenged to empathize with those less fortunate, her role provided a stark contrast to the experience of those who were role-playing an impoverished person.

Since those who did not participate in the February meeting could not describe their role-playing experience, they were asked to describe a time when they personally experienced discrimination or witnessed a discriminatory act against someone else. Among the following journal excerpts, the first two are examples of peer leaders witnessing acts of discrimination and the second two are examples of experiencing discrimination:

"Yes, I have seen someone treated differently because of their social or economic class. My friends and I were making [a] line for a movie ticket and all of a sudden you hear a Caucasian security [guard] screaming at an African-American. The security was arguing about the African-American being a drug dealer because he was wearing baggy pants. This made me feel so annoyed because how can you start judging a person according to their looks if you do not even know her or him. I could see on his face that he was hurt over this indignation because he was serious."

"A couple of days ago a janitor was cleaning in my school. Some boy deliberately threw his trash right in front of the janitor showing the janitor that he was inferior. Everyone was laughing but I had empathy for the janitor. I felt kinda sad that people can be so mean. I felt the janitor on the other hand showed no emotion and just picked up the trash."

"I experienced discrimination when I wanted to try-out for the football team. The coach assumed I wanted to be watergirl but to his surprise I wanted to play. Some of my friends encouraged me but others game me the negative view. The coach told me not to expect playing time. I felt like I was gonna waste my time and others wouldn't give me respect."

"I have experienced discrimination many times for being Persian, even in my own school. In middle school and even the ninth grade, where most boys are still immature, Persian girls such as myself would get teased for being of Persian background. There are assumptions/ stereotypes that we are hairy, that we cover our furniture in plastic, and more extremely immature comments. When I was younger, boys would ask me and my friends stupid questions about how hairy we are or about our families. I felt like a minority in an odd sense and helpless. When people teased me, I would ignore them or try to tease back, but inside I felt like they were better than me and they made me feel stupid."

All of the peer leaders seemed to understand the concepts of discrimination and empathy without having gone through the exercise that their fellow peer leaders engaged in at the February peer leader meeting. Either the peer leaders came to the program with a good understanding of discrimination or they refined their understanding of the term during the January retreat. Regardless, it is important to acknowledge that they can recognize discrimination and understand why it is wrong. This, according to the program's theory of action, is a fundamental step towards standing up for oneself and others; taking action against instances of injustice. One student demonstrated an initial inclination to take such a stand:

"I've seen a boy in my school, who is low in income that was picked on because of his shoes and pants. I felt bad for him but tried to help when it was too late. The other person probably felt superior and cool because everyone was laughing."

The student not only expressed empathy for the boy by saying that he felt bad for him and recognizing the cruelty of laughing at someone because of their appearance, but also expressed regret for not intervening sooner on the boy's behalf.

The peer leaders gained the ability to recognize, discuss, and empathize with others unlike themselves. They also began to demonstrate a willingness to take a stand in defense of others who have been wronged by prejudicial language or discriminatory acts.

There is an important concept that ties together the impact of peer-leadership, class differences, intervention in the face of prejudice, and leadership skills (discussed in the next section). The concept concerns the importance of less privileged youth realizing that their opinions matter and will be listened to. It is crucial that the peer leaders believe this in order to also believe that youth can be effective change agents, and therefore be more likely to use the skills they learn in Youth LA to take action in their communities. As was demonstrated by the exercise on classism described above, there were students who were accustomed to having access to what they need. It is the Education Director's belief that these students are also likely used to being treated with respect and having their opinions taken seriously by the adults that surround them. On the other hand, those students who are less privileged are likely *not* accustomed to having their opinions heard and respected by adults around them. However, when these students realize that they can expect to be taken seriously, they will make their voice heard.

This phenomenon surfaced during a Planning Committee meeting in March attended by three peer leaders, two of whom attend inner-city Los Angeles high schools, and one who attends a private Westside high school. The two inner-city peer leaders listened quietly to the Planning Committee members as they discussed various aspects of the program, leaning back in their chairs and not making a lot of eye contact with the rest of the meeting attendees. However, when the third peer leader arrived, he readily joined the conversation, voicing his opinions about the program. The other two peer leaders looked at their fellow peer leader with a bit of apprehension, seemingly shocked that he would join in the adults' conversation, but they soon saw that not only did the Planning Committee members listen to what he had to say, they engaged him in further conversation, recognizing his ideas at various points during the meeting. The two inner city peer leaders then shifted in their chairs to lean into the conversation, and also began to participate. In effect, their more privileged peer leader had unknowingly demonstrated for them that they can have higher expectations; that they should expect to be treated with respect and have their opinions considered in a real and meaningful way. Whereas in the classism exercise the more privileged peer leaders came to empathize with those who do not have the same level of access, in this example, less privileged peer leaders had modeled for them, and then experienced, a higher level of access and respect than they had previously expected. This anecdote demonstrates the organic nature of peer leadership, and the importance of helping less privileged peer leaders understand that they have more access than they expect enabling them to become more effective advocates for themselves and others.

Leadership skills

The program staff feels that peer leaders can develop leadership skills necessary to intervene in the face of discrimination and become youth leaders in their schools and communities. These leadership skills include acting as allies, near-peer presentation skills, critical thinking, networking, and understanding how youth can be effective change agents in their communities. The peer leaders began to engage in a critical thinking exercise at the June peer leader meeting, discussing how they might engage their community and address the achievement gap between students of different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The peer leaders will engage in community-based projects next year which should develop their youth leadership and change agent skills, and may help them network with community leaders. At this stage in the program, the evaluation can only provide data on the ways in which ally-building and near-peer presentation skills have developed among the peer leaders thus far.

Acting as allies

The program staff discussed 'being an ally' in terms of the peer leaders working together, backing-each other up when they were presenting to their peers, advocating for others, and intervening in the face of prejudice. The staff feel that peer leaders need to learn how to respect each other, be able to empathize with others, and demonstrate through verbal and non-verbal language that they will stand-up and support one another. Through team building exercises, videos, and discussion, the staff explained and demonstrated this concept. Two examples of these kinds of activities were carried out during the second day of the January retreat.

The first example focused on recognizing an instance of injustice and exploring how one would be an ally for the victim. The staff had the peer leaders watch a video called Stop the Hate, produced by peer leaders in a program called Children of the Dream, sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League, which served as a precursor to Youth LA. The video consisted of a series of vignettes that dealt with racism, discrimination against inter-racial relationships, hate graffiti, and stereotyping. After the peer leaders watched the video, the staff led a discussion on how to handle those kinds of situations. The staff asked questions like, "What would you do if you saw this happen?" "What did [the people in the video] do?" "What if someone got in your face about your race?" "What if they were talking about someone else?" "Would you tell someone to stop? If it was your friend being picked on - would you go along with it?" and "What does it mean to be an ally to someone? When you're in groups of threes, how are you going to handle it? Think about what you would do if one person is being targeted..." The peer leaders grappled with how they would handle the situation if it was their friends or a stranger, if they were in a group or alone, if it was a verbal exchange or if it escalated to a physical confrontation, etc. One of the peer leaders admitted that she would likely get into a physical fight, a few said they may or may not get involved depending on the situation, and others made suggestions like seeking help from an adult, trying to reason with the offender(s), and coping with the victim. The staff wrapped up the discussion by talking about how "it takes courage to stand-up and be a leader, not to follow the status quo."

This kind of discussion tied together a variety of concepts that the peer leaders were starting to learn about, namely empathy, leadership, ally-building, and effective non-violent interventions.

The second example from the January retreat dealt with understanding the importance of working together in order to be an ally. The Youth Services Coordinator led an activity called "the machine" in which she asked the peer leaders to make-up their own individual motion and sound. She then had them, one after another, add their motion and sound to everyone else's until they built a "machine" comprised of all of the individual motions and sounds. The idea was to get them close to each other, to mix with each other and to operate as a unit. After the Youth Services Coordinator stopped the machine, she asked the peer leaders how the icebreaker fit-in with what they had been discussing during the day. Two of the students' responses demonstrated that they understood part of the purpose, which was how individuals contributed to the greater whole, saying: "people coming together to do one common role," and "individual pieces come together and work together." The staff person pushed them to understand another aspect of the exercise, asking, "If one person falls down, and couldn't continue, what would happen?" The students said they "would lose part of the symphony," and they "wouldn't work together," recognizing that, beyond contributing to a greater whole, they would lose an important contribution to the group if one of their fellow peer leaders was left out or not validated. The Youth Services Coordinator reiterated what the students said by talking about the importance of working together and by giving examples of how, if one person was not validated, the machine would not hold together.

During the March peer leader meeting, the concept of acting as an ally was tied to presentation and facilitation skills. The peer leaders were asked to consider the attributes that a good presenter would have, and they came up with two attributes relevant to being an ally, namely, protecting their friends and working together. The Education Director remembered how, "after a small group activity in which they were asked to build the ideal presenter on chart paper, the peer leaders were asked to describe their 'Presenter' to the whole group. One of the staff members whispered to another prior to the first group's presentation: 'Oh dear, we never asked them to do this as a team.' But, unfailingly, each group got up and found a way to collaboratively describe their Presenter ensuring that each member of the group had his/her time on stage."

Following up on that exercise, the peer leaders responded to several journal questions about presentation skills. In their answers, several peer leaders indicated that they were considering the importance of these attributes. In considering the attributes she felt she needed to improve on, one peer leader indicated that she wanted to ensure that her fellow presenters' voices were heard and not put down, but was unsure how to protect them:

"I may have difficulty protecting my fellow presenters. If a student puts down my fellow presenter, I am not entirely sure how I would respond. In that situation, I would not want to portray myself as an overly defensive presenter. Yet, I would work hard to make sure that my fellow presenter has gotten his/ her point across and their voice is heard and not put down."

Another peer leader also mentioned the importance of being an ally to her fellow presenters in response to the March journal question, "What it will take for your group to become a good team, one that you have absolute confidence in?" saying:

"I think in order for my group to be successful we all need to be able to work together. We need to be able to communicate and get things done successfully. I feel that my group already posses these qualities. So I think my group will go far."

It is clear that this peer leader already had confidence in her group to work together as a team. Although the peer leaders had little experience leading presentations together at that point, they had several opportunities to participate in small group discussions and activities together. Thus, it appears that those activities helped this peer leader feel comfortable working and talking with her group.

During the March and April peer leader meetings the staff tied the concept of being an ally to group presentation skills, exploring what it means to back each other up (e.g. one person leads an activity, while the others play supporting roles, such as taking notes, prompting additional questions, getting the audience to pay attention, etc.) The peer leaders practiced facilitating activities together, receiving feedback from the staff and discussing ways to handle various situations. For example, during the April practice session, the Youth Services Coordinator offered constructive criticism to one of the peer leaders about how to incorporate her fellow co-workers while presenting rather than simply dominating the section. During their classroom presentation, the Education Director felt that the peer leader who had dominated the April practice session acted more like a part of the team. In particular, the Education Director noted that at one point the peer leader talked a bit too long, but took a cue from her and allowed another peer leader to share a related story. The Education Director also said that, in the first presentation, three of the peer leaders "took the lead, but functioned very well as a team. [All five peer leaders] participated in the 2nd session and it was not too much--you had members of the team who charted responses and passed out materials and interjected as necessary." These notes demonstrate how the presentation group divided their roles and actively supported each other, as opposed to having one team member lead and the rest of the team sit passively on the side.

Examination and analysis of the Education Director's and Youth Services Coordinator's notes from the other presentations showed similar results. Two groups were able to work together better than the other two groups. In the two groups that did not fare as well, one group of peer leaders did not offer each other enough support, sitting on the sidelines instead of assisting the lead presenter. In the other group, one of the three peer leaders had a tendency to take over the facilitation of the activity rather than assisting the lead presenter. Even within the groups that worked better together, though, there were instances in which one facilitator dominated the others, taking over the facilitation of activities rather. In some cases, this tendency for a peer leader to take over for other peer leaders may have less to do with his/her willingness to act as an ally, and more to do with the peer leaders' understanding about how to be a good

team member. For example, in response to a journal question asking whether or not the peer leaders felt they had back-up from your other team members when they needed it, one peer leader who tended to dominate her group's presentation explained why she felt obligated to take over:

"I feel I had back up from one or two of my team members. If I had trouble relating a topic to the students, my team members who are in public school might have helped better than what I could have. However, I did constantly relate things in the colloquial language of teenagers today and they liked it much more. . . .. When I was not leading I paid close attention to what my peers were doing and if I felt that they needed stronger leadership I stepped in."

Although her team members did apparently attempt to co-facilitate, this peer leader felt that she needed to "step-in," as opposed to assisting, her team members if she felt their "leadership" was not strong enough. Other peer leaders, however, seemed to understand that, to be a good team member, one should support the lead presenter but not take over. The following three quotes demonstrate that they understand the difference between helping and taking over:

"Definitely I felt lots of support from my group. When one was stuck or didn't really have nothing else to say one of us had their back."

"Yes, I had plenty of back up from the other leaders. We all help out each other if we saw that we couldn't think of questions, or if it was hard to get everyone's attention then we would all get together to bring people's attention back on the topic at hand."

"Yes, they helped get the class to pay attention."

In the first two quotes, the peer leaders recognize that it was not the efforts of one single peer leader that kept the lead presenter going, but rather that they took turns helping the lead presenter keep the presentation going. The last quote was written by a dominant presenter, but shows that she understands that the other presenters played a supporting role while she was leading.

These findings were reiterated during a quick brainstorm session at the monthly meeting following their classroom presentations when the peer leaders were asked to consider the ways in which they got "support or back-up from your team during the presentation." Although only one of the seven who wrote down their thoughts understood that (s)he was supposed to write how his/her partners provided support, not what (s)he did for others, five peer leaders did provide good descriptions of ally-type behaviors. Four peer leaders explained how they or other team members would help the person speaking when they were stuck by providing the missing words or ideas, finishing sentences, and helping them remember what to do next. One stated generally that "we had each other's back (if needed)." The other two responses did not describe ally-type behavior. One stated that (s)he missed the practice session, so his/her partners filled him/her in, and the other commented on how (s)he received positive feedback on his/her presentation.

Presentation skills

To develop the peer leaders' presentation skills, the staff had the peer leaders develop their own ideas about the attributes of a good presenter, gave them opportunities to practice their skills, and had them make group presentations to the students who received Youth LA lessons taught by participating teachers in their classes. As they did in teaching other skills and concepts, the staff led by example, using the same presentation techniques that they taught the peer leaders and having the peer leaders lead activities that they had already participated in. At the January retreat, one staff member explained this approach, encouraging the peer leaders to pay attention not only to the content of the activities and discussions but also to the way in which the staff were facilitating them:

"You're going to be standing up and facilitating this, like [my partner] and me. You need to be able to engage students. . . in an example from earlier, I engaged the group when you were all looking tired by using a stereotype of Jews as being stingy and greedy, and I got your attention. I did that on purpose. You can do that as a facilitator."

The peer leaders seemed to grasp some important concepts about effective presentation and group facilitation when they described the attributes of a good presenter. They came up with the following list of attributes:

"Protect fellow presenters
See things from a different perspective
Listen and read people's expressions
Not get too extreme in showing all strength (spine) or all compassion (heart) -- having a balance
Have a sense of humor, stay happy
Have a good grasp on what you're talking about
Tie everything together
Stand strong and be confident
Relate to all of the people you're presenting to; try to understand what it's like to be them
Take a deep breath and relax
Know how to think and respond
Get people's attention
Manage time effectively
Be smart and creative
Keep it together and bounce back when you're caught off-guard"

In their subsequent journal entries, the peer leaders were asked to identify the skills they felt they personally already possessed and need to work on, and what they felt it would take to for their presentation group to become a good team. One Peer Leader thought he possessed all of the qualities listed in the question. The rest of the group indicated only having a portion of the skills, and two mentioned skills not listed, namely being able to make others feel comfortable enough to participate in a discussion, and being able to get to the point quickly. The presentation skills that the Peer Leaders mentioned most often (4-6 mentions) were their ability to get the audience's attention, listen and read the expressions of the audience, be smart and creative, maintain a sense of humor, and see things from other people's perspectives. The skills that the Peer Leaders mentioned less often (2-3 mentions) were their ability to stay strong and confident, relate to the audience, think and respond to the audience, and manage time effectively. The following skills were mentioned only once: having a grasp

on what they're talking about, being able to tie everything together, and staying relaxed.

In responding to the question about the skills they needed to improve on, the peer leaders gave a wide variety of responses that can generally be viewed in three groups of attributes. The first set of attributes, echoed by all but one peer leader, has to do with managing the structure of the presentation. Five of the nine peer leaders who responded felt that they could use some work on time management, and a few mentioned related points, such as working on their timing, making sure that they know what they want to say, and being able to express the salient points without getting off-track. The second set of attributes has to do more with personal skills, such as learning how to "bounce back" when something catches them off-guard, being smart or creative in the way they handle their presentations, and being able to show a strong, confident, but relaxed demeanor. The third attribute was actually a point of confusion that two Peer Leaders raised. They were not sure what it meant to "protect your fellow presenters," or how they would do it.

Concerning what the peer leaders felt it would take for their presentation group to become a good team, three peer leaders said that they were very confident that their team would do well, each citing different reasons. One said that they were well-prepared by the program, another (as previously mentioned) said that their team worked well together and understood how to communicate with each other, and the third said that the team had a sense of humor, knew how to manage their time, and could handle the audience. Among the rest, no one said they did *not* have confidence in their team, and only a few explicitly mentioned needing additional practice and team bonding time. In order to feel confident in their team, each peer leader mentioned different criteria, including being able to: work together and communicate well, see other's perspectives, think and respond to the audience on the spot, relay the importance of the program, and accept constructive criticism and concepts.

The staff gave peer leaders time to practice in April, reinforcing the idea of working together to facilitate activities, and challenging them during their practice runs by role playing disruptive students, and discussing their tactics for dealing with disturbances: The peer leaders were encouraged to divide their roles into lead presenter and supporting roles (e.g. collecting note cards, scribing, and keeping the audience engaged), but switch who would facilitate particular parts of the presentation. Each group of presenters had an opportunity to practice facilitating one portion of the presentation with the whole group. During these practice runs, the staff role-played obnoxious students, challenging the peer leaders to deal with disruptive behavior. For example, while practicing a section of their presentation, one of the staff members challenged the peer leaders with the question, "why should I pay attention to you?" to which the peer leader responded, "because I'm the facilitator and you need to pay attention." After the peer leaders finished facilitating their section, the Youth Services Coordinator asked the peer leaders what they felt they did well and what they needed to improve on. A discussion ensued about the importance of maintaining a peer-to-peer feeling between the presenters and audience. The staff explained that, rather than asserting an authoritative stance over the high school students by

saying things like 'pay attention to me because I'm the facilitator,' the peer leaders needed to try to develop a feeling of mutual respect with their near-peer audience, e.g. 'pay attention to me because I would respect you if you were talking.' Generating a sense of mutual respect, the staff said, would help get the message across that the students could also do what the peer leaders were talking about and demonstrating.

After another group of peer leaders attempted to facilitate discussion around a portion of the Stop the Hate video, a discussion ensued about the difference between presenting and facilitating. One of the peer leaders was concerned that (s)he did not have a good enough answer for why African American students shouldn't use the "N" word with each other when it was so prevalent in the music they listened to. The Program Director responded saying:

"Remember that you are a facilitator, that you are there to pull information out of the audience during discussions, not push information at them, which is the role of a presenter. A presenter pushes information, a facilitator pulls information. So, you don't have to have the answer ... can do what [another peer leader] did, and say "does anyone disagree?" Those kinds of questions get the issue out there and get them to continue the conversation...make it safe to discuss."

In this example, the Youth Services Coordinator helped distinguish the presentation and facilitation roles that the peer leaders would play, and also highlights how another peer leader used language to get the audience to grapple with the issue at hand rather than trying to come up with answers. In both examples the staff helped the peer leaders work through tough situations that could arise during their presentations, and also helped clarify how the peer leaders could more effectively reach their audience.

The staff dedicated a significant portion of the monthly meetings to helping the peer leaders prepare to facilitate activities in the classroom with their peers. However, it became clear during their April practice session and during the in-classroom presentations that the peer leaders need more practice in order to become effective facilitators. Based on my observation of an in-classroom presentation and the Education Director's and Youth Services Coordinator's notes on other group presentations, there were a few areas for future skill building that rose to the surface. Before proceeding, though, it is important to recognize that presentation and facilitation skills are difficult to master; skills that consultants and professionals who lead groups, for example, take courses to learn and only master after considerable practice.

Perhaps most importantly, the peer leaders seemed to need more time to become familiar with the activities they facilitated. The peer leaders had not, prior to the April meeting, been participants in some of the activities that they led, such as the development of an action plan. The Education Director and Youth Services Coordinator noted in two of the four presentations that there were points at which the peer leaders were unsure of the agenda or how to proceed with their back-up plan when technical glitches occurred. There seemed to be instances in at least three of the presentations when the Youth Services Coordinator needed to redirect the peer leaders' discussions with the students in order to help keep the presentation on track.

One area for future skill development is the need for peer leaders to make more fluent conceptual connections for the students. In at least two of the presentations the peer leaders had difficulty maintaining a sense of continuity from one activity to the next. The activities followed a logical order, moving from awareness and understanding of problems, to brainstorming possible resolutions, to realizing that youth can empower themselves to resolve the problems. However, as was noted by the program staff and my observation, at least some of the peer leaders did not seem to be able to make those connections. For example, one peer leader repeatedly used the statement "keep this in mind as we move to our next activity," which did not fully capture what the "this" is or what the students are supposed to take away from one activity and take to the next. The peer leaders' inability to make meaningful connections between activities, though, is likely a product of their, to date, limited exposure to the concepts they presented as well as their lack of experience with group facilitation.

A second area for future skill building or agenda reconstruction concerns the pacing of the presentation sections. Both during the practice session in April and the in-class presentation I observed, the peer leaders appeared to rush from one topic to the next without being able to bring one activity or topic of discussion to conclusion before having to jump to the next. Without more data, it is hard to identify a particular reason, e.g. a lack of facilitation experience, agenda too compressed, etc. Regardless, it is a topic the staff and peer leaders may wish to address before the next round of in-classroom presentations.

Overall, the peer leaders made progress in learning how to co-facilitate group activities, address their audiences respectfully, and address issues of identity and prejudice with their near-peers. Although they need additional practice in these and other presentation skills, the majority of the peer leaders expressed confidence in their fellow peer leaders to operate as a team and to back each other up. Based on the positive feedback from the high school students' evaluations and the teachers' comments to the program staff, the students seemed to enjoy the peer leaders' presentations and became interested in the program.

Preliminary data on the cultural awareness, self-efficacy, and college-going attitudes of students who received in-class Youth LA lessons

In order to better understand Youth LA's target audience, preliminary data was gathered on the cultural awareness, self-efficacy, and college-going attitudes of high school students who received Youth LA lessons in Spring 2005 from teachers who participated in Youth LA's January in-service training. These students were asked to respond to a questionnaire administered in February/March prior to receiving the in-class Youth LA lessons. A follow-up questionnaire, which included the baseline questionnaire items plus an additional question concerning the students' courses, was administered after the students

received the Youth LA lessons and participated in a presentation led by a group of Youth LA peer leaders.

The data from the baseline questionnaire helped paint a portrait of the program's target audiences, established a point of comparison for potential longitudinal data gathering, and answered questions about pre-existing differences between those students who were recruited for the program versus those who were not recruited. Five schools participated in the administration of the baseline questionnaire, including three from the Los Angeles Unified School District: Dorsey High School, Fairfax High School, and Roosevelt High School; Milken Community High School, a private Jewish school, and Sacred Heart High School, a private Catholic school. Teachers who administered the Youth LA lessons administered the questionnaires in their classes and returned the completed questionnaires directly to the evaluator by mail. One of the Sacred Heart High School teachers and the Milken Community High School teacher each taught one lesson prior to administering the questionnaire. The other teachers administered the questionnaire prior to teaching any of the Youth LA lessons. However, receiving the initial lesson made no statistically significant difference in the students' responses to the baseline questionnaire items. A total of 168 out of 192 students in the teachers' classes returned questionnaires, representing 19-25 students in each of the 8 classrooms (Fairfax, Roosevelt, and Sacred Heart each taught the lessons in two classes).

Due to end-of-school-year time conflicts, only three of the five schools participated in the administration of the follow-up questionnaire: Milken Community, Sacred Heart, and Roosevelt. Fairfax and Dorsey were unable to fit the questionnaire in to their schedules prior to the end of the school year. The teachers from Roosevelt were able to administer the questionnaire in class, and students from Milken Community and Sacred Heart received the questionnaires by mail. As an incentive, students from Milken and Sacred Heart who returned questionnaires were given $10 gift certificates to their choice of Amazon.com or Barnes & Noble. A total of 59 students completed the follow-up questionnaire: nine Milken, ten from Sacred Heart, and 36 from Roosevelt. One of the Sacred Heart teachers administered five lessons. The teacher from Milken Community taught at least 3 lessons, as did the Roosevelt teachers. Although participation in the follow-up questionnaire was limited, the comparison of the baseline and follow-up questionnaire responses provided preliminary insights into differences in students' attitudes after receiving the Youth LA lessons.

Baseline questionnaire findings

Demographics

The 168 students who responded to the baseline questionnaire are primarily Latino (68.5%), African American (17.9%), and white (10.7%). Other ethnicities represented include Asian American (1.8%), Middle Eastern (1.8%), Pacific Islander (1.8%), American Indian (1.2) and Indian or Pakistani (1.2%)[1].

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[1] Multiple responses accepted in order to account for multiple ethnic identities.

Approximately 10% of the students did not check a particular ethnicity and instead chose to write-in their own description of their cultural/ethnic identity, such as "Mexican American," or "Persian, Jewish" and another 8% checked a box and added their own clarifying description. For example, one student checked that (s)he was Asian American, and also wrote in "Korean" as a clarifying description. Almost 8% of the students claimed multiple ethnicities, and 3% identified themselves as Jewish. There were marked differences in the students' cultural/ethnic backgrounds when grouped by their schools. For example, all of the students who attended Dorsey identified themselves as African American (55%) or Latino (45%), whereas 79% of the Milken Community students identified themselves as White, 14% as Middle Eastern, and only 7% as Latino. In terms of ethnicity, Roosevelt and Sacred Heart were similar in that they were predominately Latino (97% and 86%, respectively), and students from Fairfax represented the most diverse mix of ethnic/cultural backgrounds with 47% Latino, 38% African American, 9% white, and 6% identifying as either Asian American, American Indian, or Indian/Pakistani.

The majority of the students were female (62.4%), and the mean student age was 15 years, ranging from 14 to 17 years old. Differences in age and gender between the schools showed up as expected. For example, students from Fairfax took the questionnaire as part of their Life Skills class, typically taken by 9th graders, were 14 or 15 years old (98%) and mostly male (71%), whereas Sacred Heart students (an all-female school), who took the questionnaire as part of a religion class were all female, ranging in age from 14 to 16 years old, and Milken students were more evenly split in terms of gender, but were generally older, ranging in age 15 to 17 years old. This made sense given that the questionnaire was given in a Psychology class open to upper classmen.

The questionnaire assessed the students' cultural awareness and empathy towards others (question 4), experience with discrimination (questions 5 and 6), participation in extra-curricular activities (question 7), feelings of self-efficacy (question 8), and also asked about their post-high school plans (questions 9 and 10).

Cultural awareness and empathy towards others

In terms of their cultural identity and empathy towards others, the students' responses ranged the full spectrum for each statement that they rated, but on average, their responses indicated that the students generally believed that their cultural identity was important. They also expressed an interest in, if not existing acquaintances with, people of cultural/ethnic groups other than their own. Across the various schools, the students' responses to questions about cultural awareness and empathy were not statistically significantly different (see Chart 1 for mean responses to question 4). However, differences between the schools were evident in the students' responses to several of the baseline questionnaire items, namely concerning their experience with discrimination, their level of participation in extra-curricular activities, their feelings of self-efficacy, and their post-high school plans.

Experience with discrimination

The students indicated in response to question 6 that, overall, they rarely if ever experienced discrimination based on their ethnic group, religion, sexual orientation, gender, or language ability. Nor did they feel that they excluded or insulted others for any of these reasons. When asked what kinds of discrimination they had experienced (question 5), 39% of the students said they had experienced racial discrimination, 42% had not, and 19% were not sure. Concerning discrimination based on their immigration status, 11% said they had, 78% had not, and 11% were unsure (see Chart 2). About 19% of students experienced discrimination based on their national origin, 61% had not, and 20% were not sure. Only 8% of the students said they had been discriminated against because of their sexual orientation, 84% had not, and 8% were not sure. Overall, 28% of the students said they experienced discrimination based on their gender, 62% said they had not, and 10% were unsure. However, significantly[2] more students from Sacred Heart (53%) and Milken (42%) reported experiencing discrimination based on their gender than students from Roosevelt, Fairfax, or Dorsey (see Chart 2a). Overall, 22% of students indicated being discriminated against because of their religion, 58% had not, and 20% were not sure. However, significantly[1] more students from Milken (58%) said they experienced discrimination based on religion than students from other schools (see Chart 2b).

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[2] Chi square test of significance, p < .01

Chart 1: Cultural Identity and Empathy Towards Others

Mean Responses to Question 4
Scale: 1=strongly disagree to 4=strongly agree

Statement	Mean
My cultural/ethnic identity is an important part of who I am	3.5
I like meeting and getting to know people from cultural/ethnic groups other than my own	3.5
There are other cultural/ethnic groups who have been denied justice and treated unfairly, just like some people from my cultural/ethnic group	3.3
I am involved in activities with people from other cultural/ethnic groups	3
I am interested in learning about the problems other cultural/ethnic groups have gone through	3
My cultural/ethnic group would be better off if people paid attention to problems facing everyone instead of problems that only hurt my cultural/ethnic group	2.8
People from my cultural/ethnic group need to stick together because we cannot rely on people of other cultural/ethnic groups to fix our problems	2.2
When I meet someone from another cultural/ethnic group, I generally know what the person likes even before I talk to him or her	1.9
I am sometimes embarrassed that I am a member of my cultural/ethnic group	1.4
It would be better if different cultural/ethnic groups stayed away from each other	1.2

Chart 2: Types of Discrimination Experienced

Percent Response to Question 5
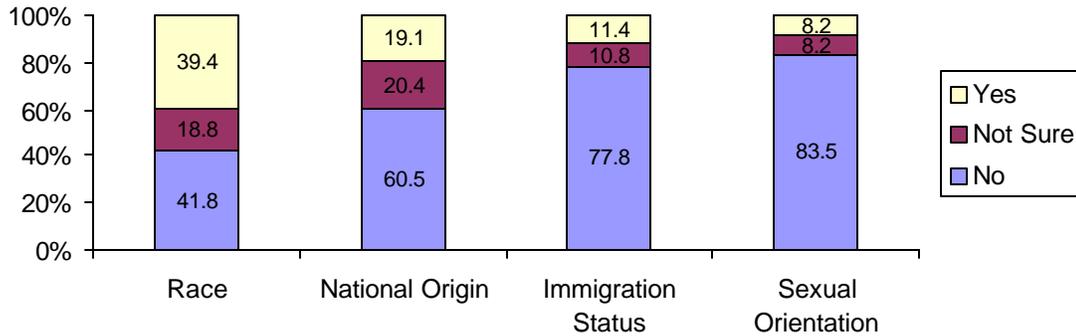
Chart 2a: Experience with Gender Discrimination by School

Percent Response to Question 5
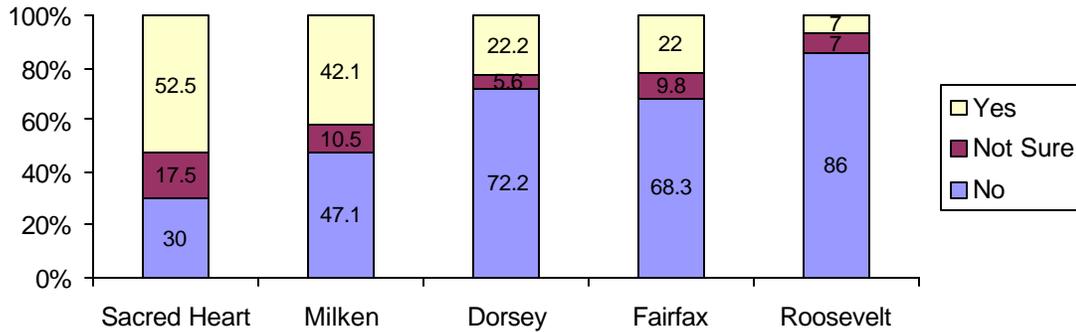
Chart 2b: Experience with Religious Discrimination by School

Percent Response to Question 5
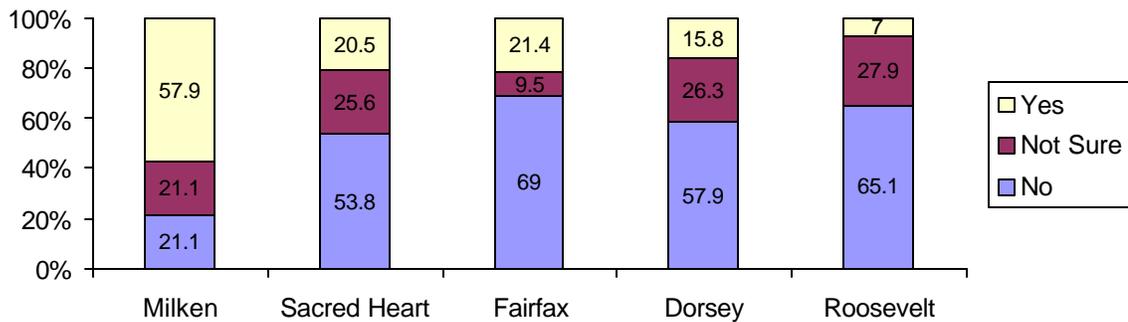
Participation in extra-curricular activities

The students' responses covered the spectrum of possible responses (never to every day), but overall, the majority of students were not very active in extra-curricular activities, typically participating only a few times a year in activities such as sports, school clubs, youth groups, volunteering, the arts, or going to a

museum (see Chart 3). That said, there were significant differences[2] among the schools in their frequency of participation in school clubs (see Chart 3a). Over half of the students at Roosevelt, Dorsey, and Fairfax said they never participated in school clubs, whereas over half the Sacred Heart students participated at least a few times per year, and over half of the Milken students participated at least a few times per month. There were also significant differences[2] among the schools in their amount of volunteerism with community organizations (see Chart 3b). Although there were a small number of students at Roosevelt, Fairfax, and Dorsey who volunteered on a weekly basis or more, over half of the students from these schools volunteered a few times per year or not at all. By contrast, half of the students from Sacred Heart volunteered at least a few times per month, and all of the students from Milken volunteered either a few times per year or a few times per month.

Chart 3: Participation in Extra-Curricular Activities

Mean Response to Question 7
Scale: Never, Few times/year, Few times/month, Few times/week, Almost every day

Play school or community sports	Few times/month
,Participate in a youth group at church, temple mosque, community groups	Few times/year
Watch TV or play video games after school rather than participating in organized after-school activities	Few times/week
/Participate in theater, dance, or music activities classes/ performances	Few times/year
Go to a museum	Few times/year
Travel more than 10 miles from home	Few times/week

Chart 3a: Participation in School Clubs By School

Percent Response to Question 7

School	Less than few times/year	Few times/month	Few times/week or more
Milken	31.6	42.1	26.3
Sacred Heart	68.2	10.3	20.5
Fairfax	66.4	16.7	7.2
Roosevelt	84.1	9.1	6.8
Dorsey	84.2	0	15.8
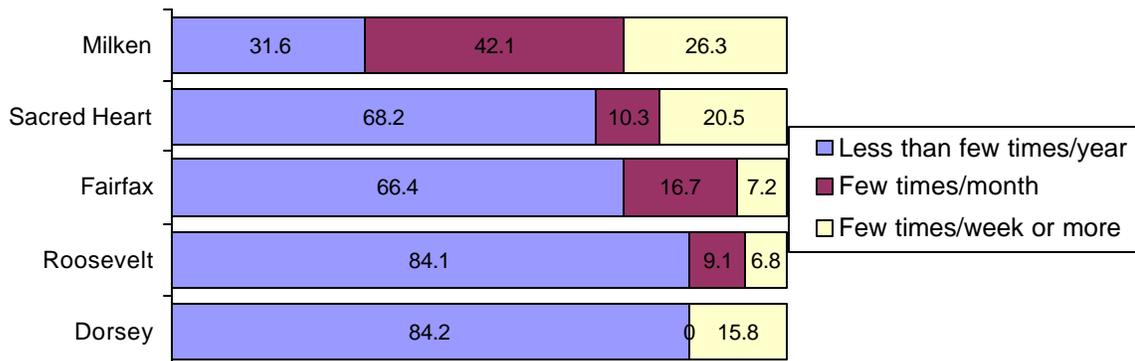
Chart 3b: Participation in Volunteer Activities By School

Percent Response to Question 7

| School	Less than few times/year	Few times/month	Few times/week or more
Sacred Heart	48.7	20.5	30.8
Milken	57.9	42.1	0
Fairfax	59	30.8	10.3
Roosevelt	76.7	11.6	11.7
Dorsey	83.4	0	16.7
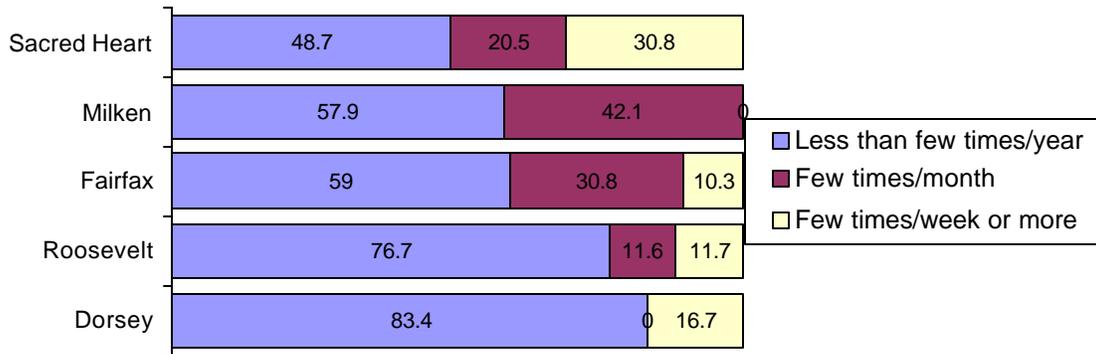
Self-efficacy

Even after taking into account differences in self-efficacy scores between males and females, the students reported having medium-high feelings of self-efficacy with an overall score of 7.12 on a 10-point scale, where a 1 indicated feeling that they could never take a particular action, such as planning an activity for a school group or standing up for a friend when (s)he is being treated unfairly, a 5 indicated feeling that they could sometimes take that action, and a 10 indicates that they could always take that particular action. There were, however, significant differences[3] between the average self-efficacy scores at the various schools. Students from Milken (7.90) scored significantly higher than students from Roosevelt (6.62), Sacred Heart (6.62), and Dorsey (6.87), and students from Fairfax (7.57) also scored significantly higher than students from Roosevelt and Sacred Heart (see Chart 4).

Chart 4: Self-Efficacy Scores By School

Mean score to Question 8

Scale: 1=Could never do this, 5=Could sometimes do this, 10=Could always do this

| School	Mean score
Milken	7.9
Fairfax	7.57
Dorsey	6.87
Sacred Heart	6.62
Roosevelt	6.62

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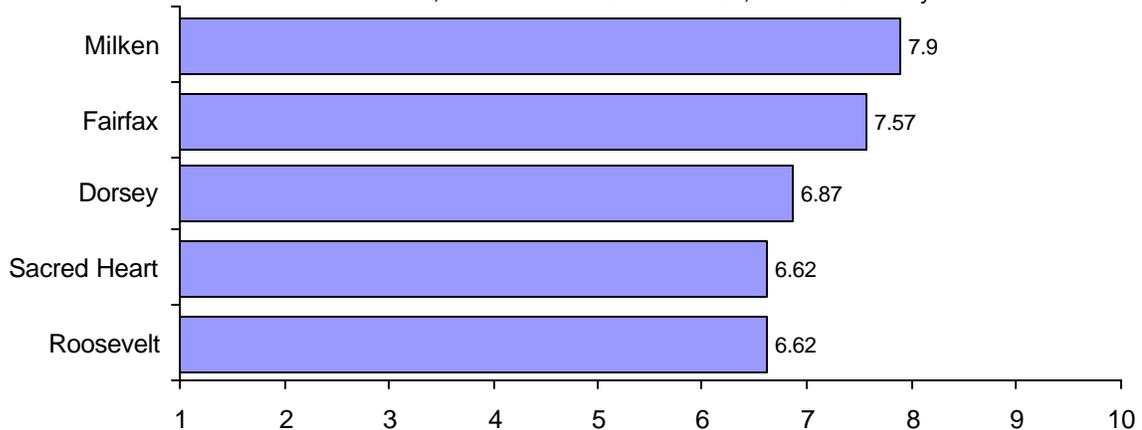
[3] Analysis of Covariance, $p < .05$

Post-high school plans

All but one student said they planned to graduate from high school. In terms of their post-high school plans, 75% of the students who responded to the questions said they planned to attend a 4-year college, only 6% said they did not plan to go to college, and 19% were not sure. However, many students checked multiple post-high school plans, perhaps seeing the military, trade school, or community college as stepping stones to a 4-year college (see Chart 5). Only 12% planned to go into the military, 22% were not sure, and the remaining 66% said they did not plan to go. For trade school (e.g. technical, culinary), 15% planned to attend, 38% did not, but almost half (47%) of the students were not sure. This may reflect a lack of understanding of what a trade school is more so than the extent to which they are considering trade school a viable post-high school option. Overall, 23% of the students said they planned to attend community college, 40% said they did not, and another 37% were not sure. However, the students' responses depended significantly[4] on the school they attended (see Chart 5a). Only 5% of the Milken students said they planned to attend community college as opposed to the 21% - 39% of students from the other schools who planned to attend. There were many more students from the other schools (36% - 47%) who were uncertain whether they would attend community college than the Milken students (11%). Taking this into account as well as the fact that those students who said they planned to attend community college also planned to attend a four-year college[5], it is highly likely that the students who attended Fairfax, Roosevelt, Sacred Heart, or Dorsey were much more likely to consider attending a community college before attending a four-year college than the Milken students.
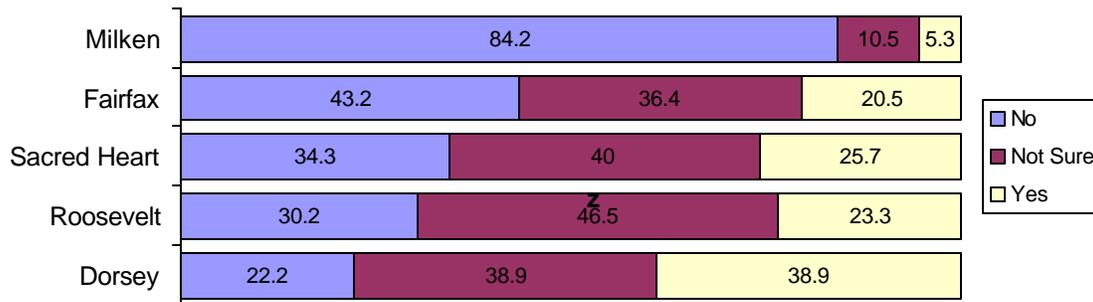
Chart 5: Post-High School Plans

Percent Response to Question 9

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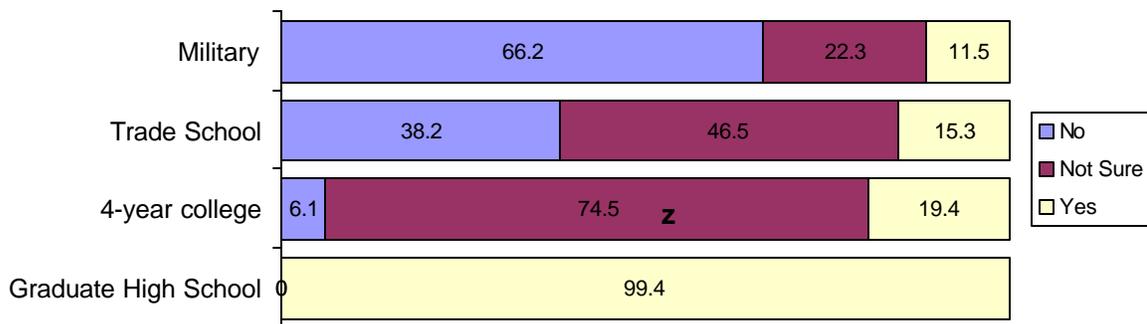
[4] Chi square test of significance, p < .05

[5] Chi square test of significance, p = .001

Chart 5a: Plans to Attend Community College By School
Percent Response to Question 9

School	No	Not Sure	Yes
Milken	84.2	10.5	5.3
Fairfax	43.2	36.4	20.5
Sacred Heart	34.3	40	25.7
Roosevelt	30.2	46.5	23.3
Dorsey	22.2	38.9	38.9

Students responded with a higher degree of confidence than expected to question 10. The students somewhat to strongly agreed that they would go to college as soon as they graduated high school, and that they understood the high school academic requirements needed to get into the college they want to attend. They were slightly less sure, somewhat disagreeing, that they knew how to complete a college application or knew how to get information about financial aid. Rather than reflecting true knowledge about preparation for college, however, it is likely that their answers reflect an overall sense of self-efficacy and involvement. Those students who strongly agreed that they understood what it takes to get into college were also more likely to demonstrate high self-efficacy and involvement in extra-curricular activities[6].

Preexisting differences between students recruited and not recruited to the program

In general, taking into account pre-existing differences among the schools, the students selected to be a part of the Youth LA program in Spring 2005 did not respond differently to the baseline questionnaire than those students who were not selected to be a part of the program. The only difference was that those students selected to be a part of the program were significantly[2] more likely to regularly participate in theater, dance, or musical activities than those students who were not selected for the program. Among those selected for the program, 50% said they participated in the arts a few times per week or more as compared to 15% of those students who were not selected for the program.

Comparison of responses to baseline and follow-up questionnaire

Among the 59 Milken, Roosevelt, and Sacred Heart students who responded to both the baseline and follow-up questionnaires, there were few statistically significant changes in their responses. Comparisons were made on a school-by-school basis in order to take into account pre-existing differences between the schools. The only topic about which some students changed their opinions concerned their experience with certain types of discrimination, namely whether they had ever experienced racial or gender-based discrimination, and how often they called someone an insulting name based on the person's sexual orientation, gender, ethnic group, or religion.

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[6] Correlation, p < .05

Concerning the change in response about racial and gender-based discrimination, there was not enough data from Sacred Heart to determine the significance of the change in their responses about experiencing various forms of discrimination. However, there was sufficient data to indicate that students from Roosevelt and Milken answered questions about experiencing racial and gender discrimination on the follow-up questionnaire significantly differently[3] than they did the baseline questionnaire. More Roosevelt students indicated having experienced racial discrimination on the follow-up questionnaire (34% up from 19% on the baseline questionnaire), and fewer students were unsure whether they had or had not experienced racial discrimination (see Chart 6a). This indicates that between the time of the baseline and follow-up questionnaires, the Roosevelt students gained some clarity on the meaning of racial discrimination or became more aware of its existence in their own lives. Among the Milken students, the number of students who were unsure whether or not they had experienced racial discrimination dropped between the baseline and follow-up questionnaires (see Chart 6b). However, unlike the Roosevelt students, more Milken students indicated on the follow-up questionnaire that they had *not* experienced racial discrimination than they originally stated on the baseline questionnaire (64% up from 55%). Again, this likely indicates that the Milken students gained some clarity on what constitutes racial discrimination between the time of the baseline and follow-up questionnaires.

Chart 6a: Change in Racial Discrimination Experienced
at Roosevelt Between Baseline and Follow-up Questionnaires
Percent reseponse to Question 5

Chart 6b: Change in Racial Discrimination Experienced
at Milken Between Baseline and Follow-up Questionnaires
Percent reseponse to Question 5
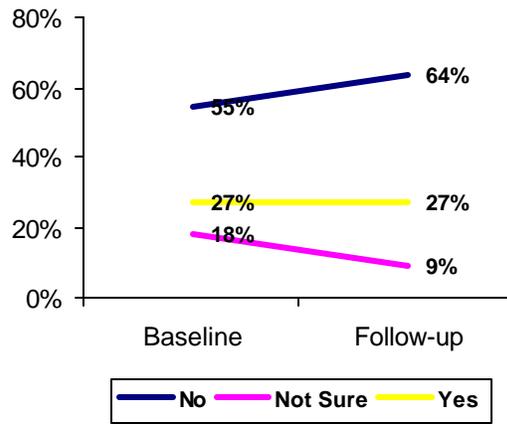
When considering gender-based discrimination, the Milken students did not demonstrate a meaningful change in their responses (see Chart 7a). However, the Roosevelt students once again seemed to gain some clarity and awareness of its occurrence in their lives. Comparing the baseline to the follow-up questionnaire responses, significantly[3] less Roosevelt students were unsure about whether or not they had experienced gender discrimination (see Chart 7b), and more of the students said that they had experienced gender discrimination (28% up from 6%).

Chart 7a: Change in Gender Discrimination Experienced at Milken Between Baseline and Follow-up Questionnaires
Percent response to Question 5

Chart 7b: Change in Gender Discrimination Experienced at Roosevelt Between Baseline and Follow-up Questionnaires
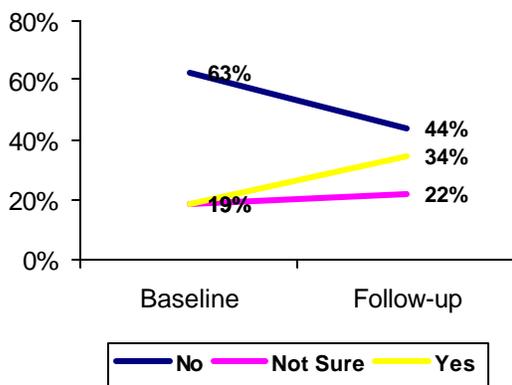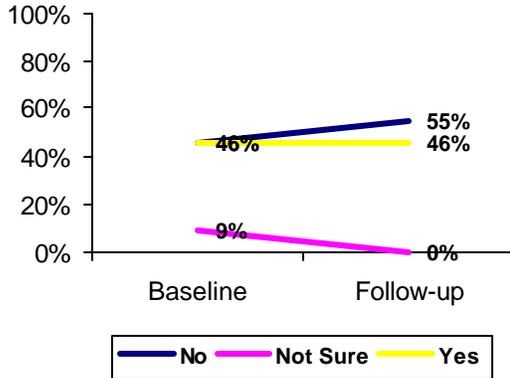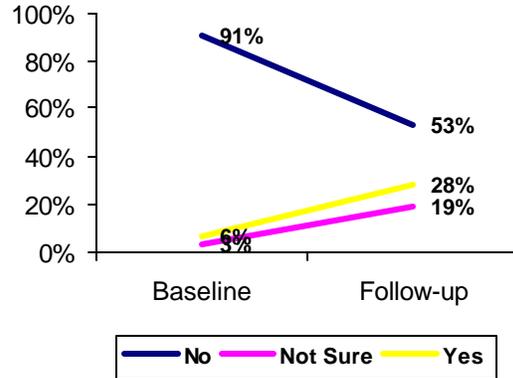Percent response to Question 5

The changes in the students' responses may be due in part to what they learned through the Youth LA stereotyping and discrimination lesson taught by their teachers and/or their experience with the peer training. It is important to note, however, that the students did not significantly change their opinion about whether or not they had experienced other forms of discrimination based on their religion, national origin, immigration status, or sexual orientation.

Looking at each school's responses, it was interesting to find that the students generally did not change their opinion about the frequency of their experiences with discrimination. There was one exceptional case. On the follow-up questionnaire, significantly[3] more Roosevelt students indicated that they called someone else a name to insult their sexual orientation, gender, ethnic group, or religion more frequently than they had indicated on the baseline questionnaire. Again, this may have more to do with the students' increased awareness about stereotypes and name-calling as a result of the Youth LA lesson than it has to do with actual increased name-calling behavior. However, it is more likely due to the awareness gained through peer training. Indeed, the Education Director noted at the peer leader's presentation that when students were asked if instances of discrimination occurred at Roosevelt, an intense conversation about gay-bashing took place. All of the students seemed familiar with the bullying that another student at their school had undergone, but it appeared to the Youth LA staff as if they were discussing the situation together for the first time.

In general, the students from Milken, Roosevelt, and Sacred Heart expressed few statistically significant changes between their responses to the baseline and follow-up questionnaire items. In effect, this consistency of response reinforces the program staff's belief that changes in students' attitudes towards those with different cultural or ethnic backgrounds, understanding and ability to stop discrimination, feelings of self-efficacy, active participation in extra-curricular activities, and civic engagement are more likely to occur in a meaningful and long-lasting way through non-classroom programming where students from

different background can engage with their peers around these issues rather than solely learning about the issues through short, in-class lessons taught by an adult.

Course taking patterns

Students responding to the follow-up questionnaire were asked to report which classes they took in the Spring 2005 and which classes they planned to take in the Fall 2005. The purpose was to ascertain which kinds of classes the students were enrolled in and whether or not they were on-track to fulfill basic graduation and University of California (UC) admission requirements. Students were not asked to report their grade level, so we cannot accurately assess whether students are truly on-track. However, we do know that the Sacred Heart students who filled out the questionnaires were 14-15 years old, which likely means that they will be sophomores this Fall, most Roosevelt students were 15-16 years old, and thus likely sophomores and juniors next year, and most Milken students were 16-17 years old, which likely means they will be juniors and seniors in Fall 2005. All of the Milken students are taking a math, science, English, history, and language arts class. Many seemed to take advanced-level courses, e.g. Pre-calculus, physics, Hebrew level IV. This indicates that the Milken students are likely on-track to meet UC admission requirements. It is important to focus more attention, then, on the students from Roosevelt and Sacred Heart.

During the 2004-2005 academic year, with the exception of one student who did not take a history class, all of the 11 Sacred Heart students reported taking each of the major subjects (Geography or World History, English 1 or 2, Geometry or Algebra 1, Integrated Science or Biology, and Spanish 1, 2, or 3 or French 1). Six students took a visual or performing arts class, and eight took at least two additional classes, such as Religion and Computers (see Chart 8). Their plans for the Fall are similar, with all but two students taking a history class (World History or US History), and all students taking an English (English 2 or 3), math (Geometry or Algebra 2), science (Biology or Chemistry), and language arts (Spanish 2, 3, 4, or AP or French 2) class. However, fewer students plan to take a performing or visual arts or an additional class.

Chart 8: Course Taking Patterns at Sacred Heart

Percent Responses to Question 11
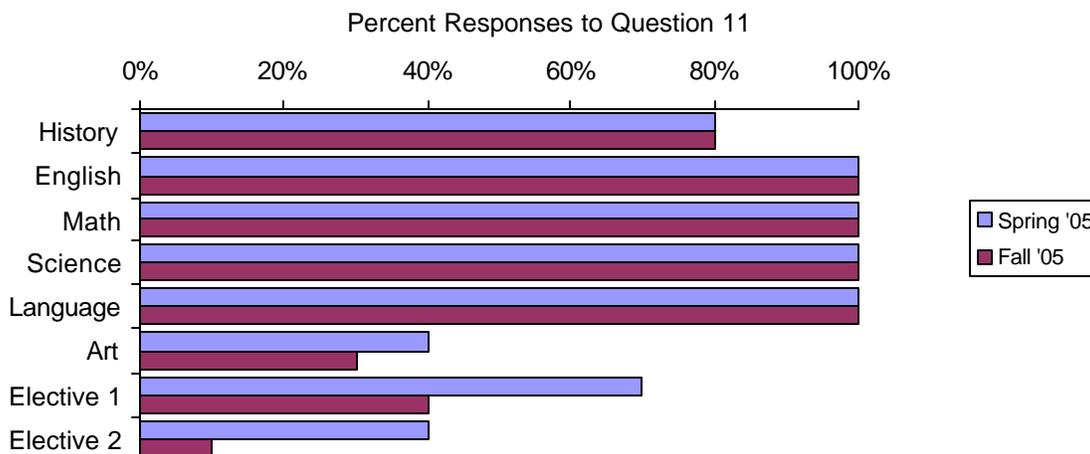
The 34 Roosevelt students who responded to question 11 reported taking fewer of the major subject area classes than the Sacred Heart students. All of the students reported taking a history/social studies course (World History), and all but one took an English course (English 10, American Literature). However, substantially fewer students (74%) took a math course (Geometry, Algebra 1 or 2, Pre-calculus) or a language arts course (Spanish 1, 2, or AP, French 1, or Japanese 2), only 50% took a science course (Biology, Physics), and only 32% took a visual or performing arts course. Most (71%) took at least one additional class. In the Fall, they plan to shift their courses, with 21% more Roosevelt students taking a science class (Chemistry, AP Biology), 8% more taking a math class (Geometry, Algebra 2, Trigonometry, Pre-calculus), 27% more taking a visual or performing art class, but 24% less students taking a history class (US History), 15% less taking an English class (American Literature), 6% less taking a language arts class (Spanish 2, 3, or AP, French 2 or 3, or Japanese 3), and 45% less taking an additional course.

Chart 9: Course Taking Patterns at Roosevelt

Percent Responses to Question 11
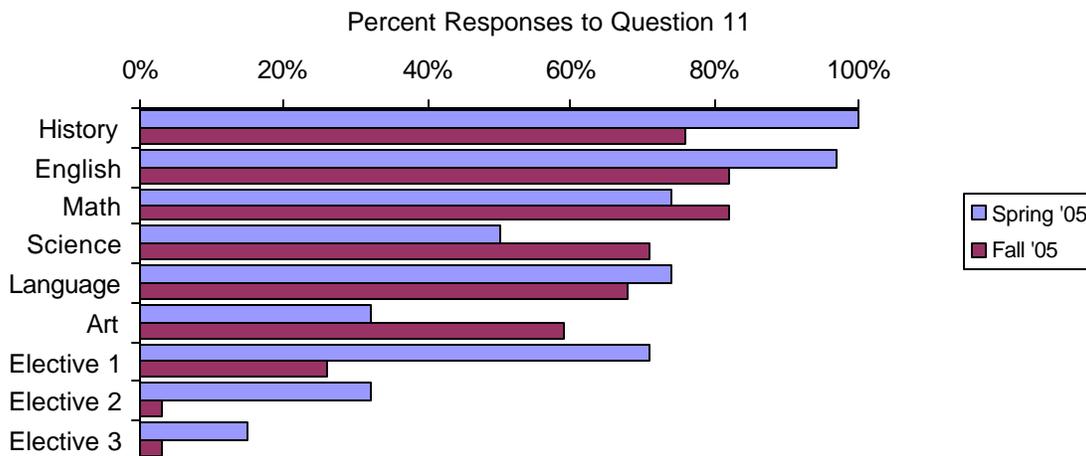
It is cause for concern that the Roosevelt students appear to be decreasing the number of classes they take in the Fall, and that not all students took math, science, English, and language courses in the Spring 2005. One hopes that, rather than reflecting an actual decline in course enrollment, the students simply forgot to write-in or could not recall all of the courses they took or planned to take in the Fall.

Recommendations for future evaluation activities

While the scope and time for this evaluation was limited, the program would benefit from longer-term tracking and evaluation. A longitudinal study of the peer leaders and new Youth LA leaders would help determine whether there is a long-term impact on beliefs and attitudes towards others, community activism, college attendance, workforce participation, etc. There are many kinds of insights that a longitudinal study can provide concerning the effectiveness of the program. Below are a few recommendations for future study.

It is possible that the program could indirectly affect the academic performance of the 9th graders over the course of their high school years. Participation in the program should positively influence the students' sense of self-efficacy, which is believed to improve academic performance and leadership potential. If the program is successful in building peer-to-peer relationships between college-bound and non-college bound high school students and in providing college guidance, those who otherwise would not have pursued college may increase their sense of self-efficacy. The students might then feel empowered to pursue advanced high school course work and apply to colleges they otherwise would not have considered. Thus, the program may want to collect academic performance data (e.g. attendance, suspensions, grades, standardized test scores, course taking patterns, participation in clubs, sports, or service activities, college applications) for a longitudinal analysis of the relationship between program activities and academic performance, and if feasible, collect the same data on those 9th grade classmates who will not become program participants. Likewise, it would be important to track and describe the students' and peer leaders' knowledge of, and aspirations to attend, college. This could be done with a pre-post questionnaire, a study of monthly written journal entries, and/or group or individual interviews. Learning about the students' academic performance, financial constraints, family values, and career interests would also play an important role in understanding their aspirations and plans.

The program would also benefit from understanding how the teachers implement the Youth LA classroom lessons. By observing or interviewing teachers about their implementation of the lessons, the program would be able to surface concerns, answer questions, assess adherence to curriculum, and gather feedback about the curriculum, program, and student learning. This could be done through classroom observation, pre-, mid-, and post-implementation questionnaires, and/or pre-, mid-, and post-implementation group or individual teacher interviews.

Finally, the program would benefit from continuing to track and describe the students' and peer leaders' knowledge of, and ability to carry out, (a) near-peer training sessions, (b) effective interventions when faced with acts or words of prejudice, and (c) community-based projects. This could be done with a study of written journal entries, letters, etc., and observation of the students' and peer leaders' interactions and dialogue during program activities. I strongly encourage the program to consider involving the peer leaders in the evaluation of their own progress as well as the evaluation of the program at a broader level. This may increase the peer leaders' sense of ownership of the program and increase their commitment to the program's future.

Lessons learned

Despite starting off with a defined mission, some powerful collaborations, a research base and a successful experience with another intergroup relations program, *Youth LA* program developers faced the unknown. The pilot program sought to answer the following questions:

- *Can a long-term, after-school program run by an outside agency make a measurable difference in encouraging Cultural Understanding and Empathy, cultivating Leadership and Civic Engagement, and building bridges among youth from different races, religions, and socio-economic levels?*

- *Can it help us to identify intervention points in addressing the achievement gap?*

These questions must ultimately be answered by a longitudinal study that can measure long-terms changes in attitudes and behaviors. Still, the UCLA evaluation of the pilot program has provided Youth LA program staff with valuable lessons learned, which can be applied to future planning.

I.   The Evaluation Process

Working with the Program Evaluator required a larger time investment yet proved to be far more rewarding than originally anticipated. Because the Education Director had multiple responsibilities - from assembling a Planning Committee and writing grants to developing curricular materials, designing workshops, and recruiting schools and students – she assumed that once an evaluator was on board, the process would run itself. Instead, the Evaluator was a continuous presence, not only as an observer at meetings, but as a voice asking for clarification. Having to articulate goals and explain the theoretical and experiential underpinnings behind certain activities compelled the Education Director to recognize where there was a lack of clarity between program goals and activities and provided a chance to re-evaluate programming. It was quite wonderful for a resource-strapped organization to have the focused attention of an outsider.

II.   The Implementation Experience

A.   Recruitment

Recruitment of both participating schools and individual students has been difficult. It was not that difficult to gain the unanimous endorsement of the LA Board of Education, because the program addressed District priorities including the civic mission of the schools, service learning for high school graduation, and culturally-relevant teaching strategies. Also members of our Planning Committee included current and former LAUSD personnel, some of whom had personal or professional relationships with LAUSD decision-makers. But a letter of encouragement from the Board President to High School Principals generated very little response. It was personal outreach to motivated teachers that led schools to participate in the pilot phase. Will it get easier once the program develops a higher profile? We hope so, but unrelenting pressures on schools to meet the requirements of the "No Child Left Behind" Act and to prepare for high-stakes testing make many reluctant to take on "something more."

We recruited our first cadre of Peer Leaders, in collaboration with our initial partners -   LAUSD, the Bureau of Jewish Education, the Secondary Schools of the L.A. Roman Catholic Archdiocese, and the California Association of Independent Schools - as well as with individual teachers or counselors with whom members of our Planning Committee had relationships.

Once students had applied, an interview process was conducted at or close to their schools. Most of the students interviewed were accepted. Of the 20 accepted, one never showed and two were not able to attend the first meeting, which was a prerequisite for future participation. Of the 17 students remaining, only one did not complete the first year, dropping out because of time constraints.

Because of the high level of commitment and retention of the original group, we made a serious set of mistakes in our next recruitment phase in April. Our first mistake was to accept a finite number (5 or 6 students per school) of applications, assuming that the vast majority of students accepted would participate. Secondly, we did not conduct interviews but accepted the students on the basis of their application/essay and teacher recommendation. Our primary focus was to recruit a pool of students that represented the overall demographics of the greater Los Angeles area. In retrospect, I believe the interview process actually made the project real to the youth and enabled them to attach faces to the program and to have questions answered. The interview itself is, of course, a valuable experience for students. Not conducting one was a missed opportunity.

The result: a low percentage of the students accepted to the program actually showed up for the May and June meetings. We have learned that interviews must be part of the selection process in the future.

B.   Cultural Understanding and Empathy

To assess the extent to which the students were developing Cultural Understanding and Empathy, we looked at certain rough behavior measures. There has been definite growth over the course of the past six months. We knew that bringing together previously isolated youth from different economic, religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds would require structured programming to encourage interaction and to dispel stereotypes. But we found ourselves frustrated at their second meeting (a two-day retreat in the Malibu mountains) that our initial group of 17 who had been nominated because of their leadership skills and their commitment to diversity, were self-segregating at meals. On the second day, a staff member tossed aside the agenda and asked the youth to get into the groups that they had just sat with at the cafeteria. Once they had done so, she asked them to reflect on what their groups looked like and what the purpose of the program was. By the end of the retreat (whether because of the reflection or the continued time together or because of a

series of team-building activities or just time on a basketball court), the youth had begun to bond as a group. At subsequent meetings, signs of their knowing (and caring about) each other as individuals became apparent. For example, one student was stumped by an activity that called for a response from her. Another student (different gender, different race, different religion) was able to help the first student by prompting her on the basis of his knowledge of a hobby of hers: Japanese animation. Beyond this telling anecdote, the youths' journal entries -- particularly following the classism activity – show that they are beginning to recognize the different life experiences of their peers and recognize the impact of these socio-economic circumstances on their opportunity structure.

What **was** startling was that once the climate was established newcomers could enter and be welcomed and the climate preserved. In June at an all-day retreat at Occidental College, one-third of the attendees were new and yet, by the afternoon, it would have been impossible for an observer to identify the "veterans" from the new students. Even more surprising was the fact that new students were younger and had not been nominated as leaders, but simply self-selected. What we will need to explore in the future is whether this climate of respect and caring can be maintained and, as a question for future study, can it be teased apart and analyzed. What defines this climate? How was it established? Can it be replicated?

C.   Leadership Skills and Civic Engagement

During the pilot, we encouraged the youth to share verbally and artistically aspects of themselves that made them unique. We also helped them identify commonalities they shared. This process evolved into preparation for conducting peer trainings to other high school classes. In small groups, they began to practice communicating to a near-peer audience who they were and why they chose to get involved in Youth LA. The teams would then facilitate human relations activities designed to encourage their audiences to explore the issues of prejudice and discrimination; to assess whether such instances occurred in their own schools; and to begin to problem solve ways in which these issues of bias could be overcome.

Although the 9th grade audiences universally gave the Youth LA peers "thumbs up" on their evaluations and appeared to enjoy the presentations, the Youth LA staff recognized that the peers themselves had insufficient time to know the full training agenda they would be expected to facilitate and, thus, could not internalize it sufficiently to feel comfortable. The youth were successful despite this and clearly "had each others' back" but in some cases one student would dominate the group. In all of the cases, it would simply have been a smoother, easier process with better transitions between activities if the youth had been introduced to the material a month earlier. We have learned the necessity of building in more time so that the youth can internalize both the activities they are to

present and their rationale. The questions posed by the Evaluator to the youth and to the staff were invaluable in focusing our thinking here.

Additionally, students were introduced to issues of civil rights and of young civic activists beginning with their second meeting. Some of the work that should have continued on these issues, however, was dependent on homework assignments which we were surprised to find the youth not completing despite their academic competence and their commitment to the program. We need to re-examine the role of homework and we plan to clearly define our expectations for the youth in the fall.

D.   Addressing the Achievement Gap

The program was designed to include youth from both privileged and underprivileged communities not only to decrease cultural isolation but to provide college-bound role models to low-income students; to prompt all of the students to define community problems in a way that seeks the common good; and to provide increased access to the post high school world. There has not been sufficient time to tell us what impact the exposure will have, but our activities are beginning to be more sharply defined. As an example of this, our June youth program was a full-day retreat at Occidental College where the setting was chosen to provide a positive campus experience. A member of our Planning Committee, a retired school counselor, provided a comfortable way for the youth to engage in an informal question-and-answer session on prerequisites for college admission and ways in which to obtain college funding. An activity that the youth participated in: describing what a wealthy school, a middle class school, and a ghetto school are like and what this signifies in terms of student outcomes led one 9th grader who participated for the first time to comment: "I'm glad there is an organization like this that deals with the tough issues."

An anecdote that addresses both leadership skills and addressing the achievement gap occurred this Spring. Youth LA participants were invited to attend a spring meeting of the Planning Committee. Three students attended: one student was from a private school; the other two were from two different inner-city public schools. The two public-school students were unusually shy and quiet in the company of the adults they did not know. When a question was addressed to the youth, the private-school student responded with assurance and provided a definite answer. The other students looked startled and then, after noticing the positive reception the first student's remarks had generated, they both began to add their perceptions regarding the program. The opportunity to be on an equal footing with adult decision-makers was new but, more importantly, the two public-school students were able to learn from their private-school counterpart an effective way of interacting with adults, and they felt

rewarded by the experience. Such opportunities will be built into the program and replicated.

III.   The Evaluation Findings

Table I is the most accurate reflection of what was achieved during implementation of the pilot. The program implementers so often get bogged down in the logistics of the program that its successes get overlooked. Particularly satisfying was the evidence from the youth's observed behavior and journal entries that they had bonded within a few months of coming together from previously isolated communities and that they could now function as a cohesive and supportive team. And (although we have not yet deciphered the components) we have seen this climate of respect and support stretched to welcome newcomers.

Appendices

Timeline of Youth LA Activities

2004	
Initial Planning Committee Meeting	January 8
Planning Committee Meeting	February 26
Planning Committee Meeting	April 22
Planning Committee Meeting	May 27
Planning Committee Meeting	July 22
Planning Committee Meeting	September 23
Planning Committee Meeting	December 2
Orientation Dinner for peer leaders	December 4

2005	
Peer leader Weekend Retreat	January 16-17
Teacher Professional Development Workshop	January 20
Peer leader Monthly Meeting	February 7
Planning Committee Meeting	March 7
Peer leader Monthly Meeting	March 10
Peer leader Monthly Meeting	April 4
Peer leader Presentations to 9th/10th graders	April 12-21
Peer leader Monthly Meeting	May 9
Teacher Appreciation Dinner	June 1
Planning Committee Meeting	June 2
Peer leader Day-Long Workshop	June 26

Theory of Action Chart

Resources	Intermediate outcomes	Ultimate goals

General:
- Funding
- Office space
- Mail
- Email
- Website

Program-specific:
- Planning Committee members
- Youth LA program directors, staff
- School space, i.e. classrooms where curriculum is taught
- Sites for meetings, fieldtrips
- College counselors
- Peer leaders
- Former peer leaders
- New Youth LA leaders
- Curriculum
- Outside speakers

Activity
- Orientation dinner
- Retreat
- Teacher training
- Teaching of curriculum
- May '05 recruitment of New Youth LA leaders
- Initial cadre meeting
- Student monthly meetings
- Peer leader school visits
- Senior peer leader culminating activity
- Second teacher training/ feedback session
- College counselor advice
- Inform parents of A-G reqs., $ aid
- Spring'05 recruitment of new schools
- 2006 visits to civil rights sites

Peer leaders:
- Articulate the goals of the program and their role
- Groups act as allies for each other; group bonded
- Are ending their cultural isolation
- Accurately use vocabulary, e.g. stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, etc.
- Comfortable discussing own culture
- Empathize with those of different cultures
- Know how to intervene in instances of prejudice, injustice
- Increasing their leadership skills
- Improving their public speaking skills
- Improving their critical thinking skills
- Able to train peers on cultural identity, prejudice, discrimination, and youth civic engagement
- Understand how youth can be effective change agents in community; want to engage
- Have information necessary to apply to college; know A-G requirements and understand financial aid process, sources
- Gain networking opportunities, i.e. employment, mentoring
- Cross-school friendships develop outside of YLA activities

Cadre:
- Articulate the goals of the program and their role
- Ending their cultural isolation
- Comfortable with discussing own culture
- Gaining empathy for those of different cultures
- Increasing their leadership skills
- Gaining ability to intervene in instances of prejudice and injustice
- Improving their critical thinking skills
- Understand how youth can be effective change agents in community; want to engage
- Start to bond and become friends; some cross-school(?) friendships outside of YLA program start to develop
- Have information necessary to apply to college; know A-G requirements and understand financial aid process, sources

Teachers :
- Understand program goals, their role, role of peer leaders
- Effectively teach lessons on cultural identity, prejudice, discrimination, cultural effects of immigration
- Understand how peer-to-peer training is effective in teaching above issues and demonstrating youth leadership
- Recruit 2005 New Youth LA leaders

- To increase students' civic engagement
- To increase students' leadership ability
- To decrease cultural isolation
- To increase students' respect for their own cultures
- To increase students' respect for others' cultures
- To make it more feasible and more likely that students who otherwise would not have considered college are more likely to attend, (i.e. students meet college admission requirements and know how to apply to college). This will help narrow the achievement gap.

Implementation of program activities

Beginning with an orientation dinner in December 2004, Youth LA brought the peer leaders together on a monthly basis to engage in activities intended to help them learn about their own cultures, empathize with each other, gain exposure to Los Angeles area cultural sites, decrease their cultural isolation and prejudices, and gain peer-leadership and civic engagement skills. The program intertwined activities that addressed these issues throughout the monthly meetings, but during the initial months focused more on breaking down their cultural isolation and stereotypes about others, and building empathy and allies. The later months focused more heavily on building near-peer group presentation skills, discussing college admittance, and thinking critically about how they could take action to address issues like closing the achievement gap at a local level. Although the staff initially intended the peer leaders to develop plans for community-based projects by June, they decided to wait until after the summer break to fully engage the peer leaders in developing concrete plans. As the new Youth LA leaders joined the peer leaders in May and June, the program again incorporated group bonding activities to help merge the new members with the more tenured members. Originally, the June meeting was intended to be a weekend trip to culturally significant locations, Manzanar National Historic Site where the Japanese were interned during World War II and a trip to Sacramento to meet with state legislators. However, the staff decided to postpone the trip until Spring 2006 in order to ensure that the students would see culturally relevant activities at Manzanar and to more likely find the legislators in session and available.

Classroom lessons and peer presentations

During a professional development workshop in January, participating teachers learned about the goals of the Youth LA program and their role in teaching the lessons and recruiting new Youth LA leaders. The teachers received a draft curriculum consisting of 10 lessons aligned to the current California Content Standards, including: English/Language Arts, History, Social Sciences, and Civics. The staff provided guidance in teaching the curriculum and solicited their feedback to improve on the draft lessons. Youth LA provided a final draft of the lessons in April 2005.

After the teachers taught at least 3 of the lessons, Youth LA sent to their schools a team of peer leaders, accompanied by Youth LA staff and/or volunteers, to conduct a set of human relations activities and facilitate conversation on the issues of identity and ways of combating prejudice. The Youth LA staff believes, based on their own research and past experience that presentations made by the peer leaders (near-peers) will help the 9th and 10th graders benefit more from the curriculum and become more interested in following the examples of the near-peers by participating in the Youth LA program.

The Youth LA lessons taught in-class and the presentations made by the peer leaders served several purposes. The in-class lessons provided students with working knowledge of issues concerning culture and civic engagement upon which the peer leaders built their presentations. The peer leaders' presentations intended to accomplish three goals: 1) to provide the peer leaders with a meaningful experience leading and training fellow high school students that fostered collaboration and team work and provided them a leadership opportunity; 2) to provide 9th (and some 10th/11th) graders with discussions of identity, respect, and social action led by an ethnically diverse team of peers; and 3) to recruit new peer leaders to the Youth LA program.

Peer leader training

The program trained an initial group of 17 peer leaders who already possess leadership qualities and some of whom also "counter stereotypes" by embodying multiple cultures or by defying stereotypes, i.e., the African American student from an inner city school who was both a wrestling champion and a member of the Academic Decathalon team. The peer leaders met on a monthly basis between December 2004 and June 2005 to expand their understanding of their own culture, appreciate and form friendships with those who are not like themselves, learn to recognize prejudice and its impact on the individual and to develop strategies to confront it, increase their leadership and presentation skills, and understand the ways in which youth can be effective change agents in their community. The trainings were also designed to prepare the peer leaders to lead the 9th and 10th graders (their "near-peers") through a set of human relations activities to facilitate conversation on the issues of identity and ways of combating prejudice. In addition to the monthly meetings, peer leaders received articles and hand-outs about relevant topics such as civil rights issues and examples of other young activists who made a difference to spur their thinking. They were expected to complete homework assignments and converse about the topics they addressed on the www.youthla.org blog. The peer leaders, however, failed to complete the majority of their homework assignments and never posted their thoughts on the blog.

Beginning in Fall 2005, they will learn how to conduct service projects during their 10th - 12th grade years. These service projects could count towards the students' service learning requirement (a high school graduation requirement for LAUSD and many other districts for students graduating in 2007 or later). The activities of these meetings and events are described below.

The initial dinner meeting for the students was held in December 2004 at the Japanese American National museum where they had an opportunity to get to know each other through icebreaker activities, explore their own culture, and take a docent-led tour of the museum. The peer leaders were asked to commit to participating in a 2-day retreat in January and in monthly training meetings from February through June 2005.

The 2-day retreat was held at Camp Shalom in Malibu in January 2005. At this retreat, the peer leaders participated in a number of team building activities, began an exploration of ways in which young people have played a role in expanding civil rights in the U.S., and viewed some video vignettes that were developed as a community service project by other teens. The goals of the retreat were to build intercultural relationships through a respectful sharing of their own cultures, foster leadership, strengthen communication including vocabulary around issues of diversity and bias, and heighten their empathy for others who are different from themselves, plus initiate them to their future role as peer leaders in 9th/10th grade classrooms.

The program staff held the remainder of the monthly meetings at a variety of cultural locations in the Los Angeles area, including the California African American Museum (February), the Museum of Tolerance (March), the Jewish Federation Building (April), the Museum of Tolerance (different exhibits in May), and for the first time, a college campus, Occidental (June). Aside from the June meeting which lasted from 9 am – 4 pm, the meetings generally lasted four hours, from 4-8 pm on Monday evenings.

Appropriate for recognizing Black History month, the February meeting included a docent tour of the California African American Museum and a discussion of segregation. The peer leaders then participated in an icebreaker activity geared to hone their observation skills. The main focus of the meeting, however, was to engage the peer leaders in an activity and discussion on classism. In her own words, the Education Director described the activity in the following way:

> [The Peer leaders] went from one work station to another, each holding a variously colored card. Their task was to get the signatures of the adults at the four sites around the room: "a college admissions director," "an employment counselor," "a grocer," and, "a realtor."
>
> What the youths did not know was that the cards they carried represented an economic class to which they had been arbitrarily assigned, nor did they know that the adults had been instructed to respond to them on the basis of the color of their cards. High income applicants were to be treated courteously and receive the goods they sought; while the homeless were to be scorned and occasionally thrown into jail for being "disruptive." The youth received no coaching.
>
> Gradually, some of the "wealthy" began to exercise their power in unexpected ways. One "rich" girl used her clout to order food at the grocery, but had it delivered to the address of a "poor" friend. Another sought to bail out one of the "homeless" from jail, while a third negotiated a college loan but was dismayed when he learned that he could not name another as the recipient of the loan.
> As the activity was debriefed, one girl who attends a Jewish private school in West LA (and who was assigned a pink, "homeless" card), said, *"Usually I can get what I want if I'm persistent. This time, it did not matter what approach I took, I still couldn't get the things I needed."* With the discussion continuing a boy from Dorsey High School who had the same color card) said, *"It wasn't so different from what I'm used to."*

As indicated in the Education Director's account and as discussed in the "Empathy and vocabulary concerning discrimination" section, the exercise on classism had a meaningful impact on many peer leaders' perceptions about those from other social classes. The staff led a follow-up activity to reiterate what it means to be an ally, perpetrator, bystander, and target of classism.

The March meeting began with a docent tour of the "Finding our Families, Finding Ourselves" exhibit at the Museum of Tolerance followed by a discussion of the peer leaders' reactions to the stories they heard during the exhibit and an exchange of their own stories about their families' immigration to the United States, customs, and generational differences. After dinner, the peer leaders participated in an icebreaker activity in which they had to teach a fellow peer leader something they knew and then each demonstrate what they learned from the other. They next watched a film about a Holocaust survivor and a Rwandan woman and discussed how the two individuals told their stories, tying together the focus on understanding cultural differences and similarities among various types of families with the next activity about presentation skills. The staff then grouped the peer leaders, gave each group a large outline of a person, and asked them to draw attributes of a good presenter. Each group presented their presenter person's attributes, and the staff facilitated a discussion to compile the various attributes into a single list. The peer leaders then took a few minutes to practice introducing themselves to their small groups. The section "Presentation skills" describes the list of attributes that the peer leaders developed as well as their reflections on the attributes they felt they did and did not possess.

The focus of the April meeting was to prepare the peer leaders for their upcoming in-class 90-minute presentations to 9th/10th graders. There was no museum tour or other cultural activity. The staff gave the peer leaders copies of the presentation materials, led them through the order of the presentations, and had them practice the various aspects of the presentation in

small groups and by facilitating the whole group. After practicing each section, they discussed tactics for working as a team, better facilitating the activities, and dealing with student disruptions and technical/logistical problems. Each peer leader critiqued their own performance and received additional feedback from the staff. The sections of the presentation included: personal introductions, an icebreaker activity about interpreting others' emotions, discussion of a video vignette about confronting stereotyping and prejudice, a back-up activity in case the video did not work in which students describe and figure out how to intervene in scenarios depicting acts of discrimination, development of an action plan for students to identify and take action against problems at their school, and closing remarks including how students can become involved in the program. Youth LA made arrangements for groups of 3-5 peer leaders, accompanied by one to two adults representing Community Advocates, to visit the 9th and 10th grade classrooms that received Youth LA lessons. Further discussion of the April practice session and the feedback on the actual presentations is found in the "Presentation skills" section.

The May meeting was held at the Museum of Tolerance again, but this time the peer leaders visited the Holocaust exhibit and the new Youth LA leaders toured the "Finding Our Families, Finding Ourselves" exhibit. Before the tours, the new Youth LA leaders and peer leaders met separately so that the new Youth LA leaders could learn about the purpose of the program and what would be expected of them while the peer leaders engaged in other activities like a Carousel Brainstorm in which they recorded what they gained from their experiences presenting to the 9th/10th grade classes. After the tour the peer leaders and new Youth LA leaders participated in two icebreakers to get to know each other and to help the new Youth LA leaders feel more comfortable sharing stories in a group setting. Although the new Youth LA leaders' parents were encouraged to attend the meeting, only one adult – a teacher from Sacred Heart – attended the meeting, mostly to ensure that her students would have transportation.

The June event was held at Occidental College. The day began with an overview of the Youth LA program for the new Youth LA leaders' benefit. The peer leaders and new Youth LA leaders then participated in several icebreakers to help the new participants get to know the others. The first icebreaker required those involved to paired-up with someone they did not know in order to learn about and then introduce each other to the group. For the next activity the peer leaders and new Youth LA leaders had to figure out how to untie a human knot and then discuss who took leadership roles during the activity and how they communicated with each other. The last icebreaker involved each person introducing a personal symbol and why it was important to them. The staff then led an activity in which the students were grouped into rich, middle class, and poor schools. Each group was tasked with describing the likely conditions at their school, and when the groups reconvened, the staff facilitated a discussion about the differences between school environments and how that contributes to the achievement gap. After lunch, a retired school guidance counselor provided information and answered questions about college requirements and the application process. The staff then transitioned to an activity in which the peer leaders and new Youth LA leaders self-select into one of three committees (program planning, building investment, and recruitment) to brainstorm how they can help close the achievement gap at the local level. The groups reconvened to present their ideas to the whole group. The day ended with everyone stating something they took away from the day.

Examples of Journal Questions

The following are examples of questions peer leaders responded to for their journals:

February journal:
1) The February 7th meeting dealt with discrimination based on social and economic class (homeless, poor, middle or upper class), or *classism.* If you were present, please answer a; if you were absent, answer b.
   a. What color card did you have? Was what you experienced different or the same from your everyday life? Please explain.
   b. Please answer (i) <u>or</u> (ii).
      i. If you have ever experienced discrimination or preferential treatment (been given advantage over others) because someone assumed what social/economic class you were in? Explain what happened and how it made you feel.
      ii. Did you ever see someone treated differently because of their social or economic class? What did you see? How did it make you feel? What do you think the other person felt?

March journal:
1) At our February meeting at the Museum of Tolerance, you were asked the question, *"What makes someone a good presenter?"* You drew and described a list of the attributes of a good presenter. You came up with some wonderful attributes and I've captured some of them here. [list compiled during meeting was provided for them] Thinking about the list of attributes, please write a paragraph in response to each of the following questions. (If you did not attend Monday's meeting, look at the list (above) that your fellow peer leaders developed, and answer the same questions.)
   a) Which attributes do you feel confident that you possess?
   b) Which attributes do you think you need to learn or improve on?
   c) What it will take for your group to become a good team, one that you have absolute confidence in?

April journal:
Part 2: Thinking back to the April 4th peer leader meeting, how well did that meeting prepare you and your group for the presentation?

2a) Describe the activities or discussions that you found most helpful and explain how they helped you or your group prepare for the presentation.
2b) In what ways did you feel unprepared, if at all?
2c) What, if anything, do you think the Youth LA staff should have done differently to help you feel more prepared?
2d) Did your group connect before the presentation (either by phone/email, or at the school) in order to determine who would play which role? If so, what plans did you make (e.g. how you planned to handle time keeping, back-up, recording information, group facilitation, etc.)? If not, do you wish you had met or talked with your group before starting the presentation?

Initials (first, middle, last): ____ ____ ____
Birthday: ___ ___ - ___ ___ - ___ ___

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Follow-up questionnaire
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YOUTH LEADERSHIP ACADEMY
2005 Student Survey

_____Youth LA is a leadership organization for Los Angeles high school students. Youth LA is interested in knowing what you think about yourself, as well as your community, friends, and school. Here's what you need to know about filling out this questionnaire:

1) This is NOT a test. You will not get a grade for completing this questionnaire.
2) Your individual answers will NOT be given to your teachers, parents, or anyone else. Your answers will be combined with your classmates' answers.
3) If possible, it is important that you answer ALL questions and that you answer each question HONESTLY.
4) If you are not sure what a word means, please circle the word you do not understand and ask your teacher to explain it. Then try to answer the question.

_____

Section A: Culture and Ethnicity

1) How old are you? Circle ONE answer

11	12	13	14	15	16	17

2) What is your gender?

___Male   ___Female

3) In thinking about your cultural heritage and ethnicity, which groups do you most identify with? You may write-in a response if the groups listed do not fully describe how you think of yourself.

___ African American   ___ Asian American   ___ Pacific Islander
___ American Indian   ___ Latino   ___ Pakistani or Indian
___ Armenian   ___ Middle Eastern   ___ White

___ Other description: _____

Initials (first, middle, last): ____ ____ ____
Birthday: ___ ___ - ___ ___ - ___ ___

4) When answering this next set of questions, the words "cultural/ethnic group" mean the group or groups you described in your answer to question 3. For example, if you answered question 3 by saying "Latino," then think about belonging to the cultural/ethnic group "Latino" when answering these questions.

Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Circle only <u>ONE</u> answer for each question.

		Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
A	My cultural/ethnic identity is an important part of who I am.	1	2	3	4
B	It would be better if different cultural/ethnic groups stayed away from each other.	1	2	3	4
C	I am interested in learning about the problems other cultural/ethnic groups have gone through.	1	2	3	4
D	I am sometimes embarrassed that I am a member of my cultural/ethnic group.	1	2	3	4
E	I like meeting and getting to know people from cultural/ethnic groups other than my own.	1	2	3	4
F	My cultural/ethnic group would be better off if people paid attention to problems facing everyone instead of problems that only hurt my cultural/ethnic group.	1	2	3	4
G	I am involved in activities with people from other cultural/ethnic groups.	1	2	3	4
H	People from my cultural/ethnic group need to stick together because we cannot rely on people of other cultural/ethnic groups to fix our problems.	1	2	3	4
I	When I meet someone from another cultural/ethnic group, I generally know what the person likes even before I talk to him or her.	1	2	3	4
J	There are other cultural/ethnic groups who have been denied justice and treated unfairly, just like some people from my cultural/ethnic group.	1	2	3	4

5) Have you ever <u>experienced discrimination</u> based on your:

	Yes	No	Not sure		Yes	No	Not sure
Race	__	__	__	Gender	__	__	__
Religion	__	__	__	Immigration status	__	__	__
National origin	__	__	__	Sexual orientation	__	__	__
Other: _____	__	__	__				

6) Please tell us <u>how often</u> you have experienced or done the following:

		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
A	You were hassled by a store clerk or store guard	1	2	3	4
B	You called someone a name to insult their sexual orientation, gender, ethnic group, or religion	1	2	3	4
C	People acted as if they thought you were not smart	1	2	3	4
D	You left someone out of an activity because the person was of a different sexual orientation, gender, ethnic group, or religion	1	2	3	4
E	You were called an insulting name that had to do with your sexual orientation, gender, ethnic group, or religion	1	2	3	4
F	People assumed your English was poor (even if you were born in America)	1	2	3	4

Initials (first, middle, last): ____ ____ ____
Birthday: ___ ___ - ___ ___ - ___ ___

Section B: School and Community Groups
Circle only **ONE** answer for each question in this section.

7) How often do you typically do the following:

		Never	A few times per year	A few times per month	A few times per week	Every day or almost every day
A	Play school or community sports	1	2	3	4	5
B	Participate in school clubs (NOT sports)	1	2	3	4	5
C	Participate in a youth group at your church, temple, mosque, or community groups (like the YMCA)	1	2	3	4	5
D	Volunteer for community service activities	1	2	3	4	5
E	Watch TV or play video games after school rather than participating in organized after-school activities (e.g. sports, clubs, youth groups)	1	2	3	4	5
F	Participate in theater, dance, or music activities/ classes/ performances	1	2	3	4	5
G	Go to a museum	1	2	3	4	5
H	Travel more than 10 miles from home	1	2	3	4	5

8) Even if you have never done some of these things, tell us if you think you *could* do them if you had the opportunity. On a scale from 1 to 10, where "1" means you could never do this and "10" means you could always do this, please tell us how sure you are that you could do the following things:

For example, I don't think I could ever eat an entire pizza by myself, so I would circle:

	I could **never** do this				I could **sometimes** do this					I could **always** do this
Eat an entire pizza by myself	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

		I could **never** do this				I could **sometimes** do this					I could **always** do this
A	Plan an activity for a school or youth group	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
B	Stand up for myself when I feel I am being treated unfairly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
C	Get help from adults to stop someone from being picked on	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
D	Volunteer an answer when my teacher asks the whole class a question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
E	Work with other students to solve a problem	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
F	Do what it takes to help other people in my community	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
G	Explain what is important about my culture/ ethnicity to others who are not like me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
H	Stand up for a friend when (s)he is being treated unfairly because of his/her culture/ethnicity, religion, gender, or sexual orientation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I	Tell other students what I think even when they all think something different than I do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Initials (first, middle, last): ____ ____ ____

Birthday: ___ ___ - ___ ___ - ___ ___

Section C: High School and Beyond

9) Please tell us if you plan to do the following (check all that apply):

	Yes	No	Not sure
Graduate from high school	__	__	__
Attend a trade school (e.g. technical, culinary)	__	__	__
Go into the military	__	__	__
Go to community college	__	__	__
Go to a 4-year college	__	__	__
Other: _____	__	__	__

10) If you think you would like to go to college, please tell us how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Circle only <u>ONE</u> answer for each question.

		Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
A	I am going to college as soon as I graduate from high school.	1	2	3	4
B	I know the academic requirements I need to complete in high school in order to get into the college I want to attend.	1	2	3	4
C	I know how to complete an application for the college I want to attend	1	2	3	4
D	I know how to get information about financial aid for college	1	2	3	4

11) Please write the classes you are taking NOW and the classes you plan to take in the FALL. Be sure to write in the specific NAME and LEVEL of class.

For example, if you are taking math now and you plan to take math next Fall, write both the NAME (e.g. Algebra) and LEVEL (e.g. I or II) of math you are taking:

	Classes you take NOW	Classes you will take in the FALL
Math	Algebra I	Algebra II
Science	Integrated Coordinated I	Biology

	Classes you take NOW	**Classes you WILL TAKE in the FALL**
Social Science / History		
English		
Math		
Science		
Language		
Visual or Performing Arts		
Other class / Electives		
Other class / Electives		
Other class / Electives		

Thank you for completing this questionnaire!