

# Taking Action Toward Equity in Youth Work

## **Summary**

Youth work is a complex and dynamic practice that reflects a long tradition of engaging young people of all ages with adults in community-based opportunities to learn, reflect, and grow. At the heart of all quality youth work practice is attention to the equity of voice between youth and adults. Learning how to navigate the power dynamics between dominant and marginalized voices can be applied not only to age, but also race, gender, ability, sexual orientation, religious affinity, class, ethnicity, immigration status and nationality.

In this E-Study, four youth workers explore three dimensions of awareness and action necessary to work toward equity: individual, organizational, and systemic. The first module engages the audience in personal reflection and awareness building to strengthen one's personal capacity to advance equity. Module 2 builds upon personal action to make collective impact through organizational structures, policies and practices. The third module brings attention to the systemic issues at play and challenges the historical constructs about youthhood that underpin many inequitable policies and practices. The final module takes a look at one particular issue, advocating for undocumented youth, through these three lenses on equity.

For the purposes of this E-study, we use the definition of equity developed by Minnesota State Colleges and Universities: the proportional distribution or parity of desirable outcomes across groups. Sometimes confused with equality, equity refers to outcomes while equality connotes equal treatment. Where individuals or groups are dissimilarly situated, equal treatment can be insufficient for or even detrimental to equitable outcomes. We also want to note that this e-study is not a definitive study of equity, but an introduction to the subject within the context of youth work, youth-focused organizations and youth policy. Please utilize the resources later in this usage note to deepen your study of this important issue.

## **Background information**

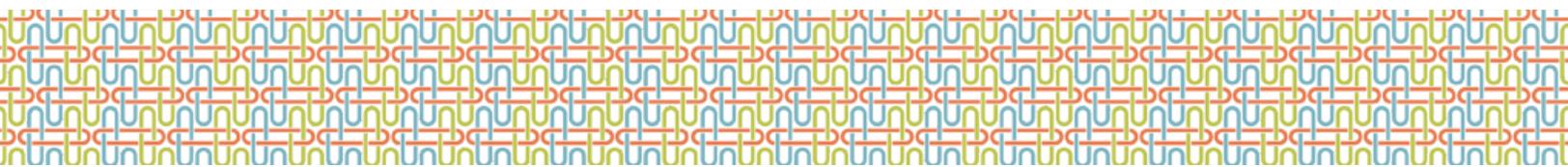
This E-study tells the story of four experienced youth workers who have championed equity to their work with young people. During their year in the NorthStar Youth Worker Fellowship, they dug deep into readings and discussions of youth-centered approaches, conducted action research, and examined their own practices as well as the policies of youth organizations.

The white papers at the heart of this E-study share their discoveries, obstacles, changes of perspective and recommendations. What emerges is the vital connection between the philosophy and values of practice and the community valuing of young people as visibly articulated in its public policies and organizational policies in regard to youth. This E-study invites people who work with and on behalf of youth to look critically at their own practices as well as the youth policy stances of the organization and community in which they work.

## **Learning Outcome(s)**

The overall learning outcomes for this e-study intend that the user will:

- Understand the importance of personal reflection and exploration as action steps toward equity,
- Begin to promote the collective action that can be taken within organizations and public policy to support equitable outcomes,



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- Begin to recognize the historical contexts, cultural beliefs and power dynamics that lead to inequitable or oppressive policies and practices, and
- Explore ways to take action within the specific context of advocating for undocumented youth.

Module	Learning Objectives
<b>Module 1: Individual Action</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take steps towards understanding context, identity, and equity.</li> <li>• Reflect on one's individual role in equity work.</li> <li>• Explore tools for intercultural development, both for individuals and working with youth</li> </ul>
<b>Module 2: Organizational Action</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gain an understanding of the importance of addressing implicit bias in order to advance equity in youth development organizations</li> <li>• Explore bias mitigation and equity promotion strategies at the organizational, individual, and collective level</li> </ul>
<b>Module 3: Systemic Action</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Become familiar with theoretical approaches to youth work that support equity and social change</li> <li>• Reflect on one's own individual, organization &amp; systemic approach to youth work</li> <li>• Learn about other approaches to working with youth</li> <li>• Become curious about new co-creative partnerships adult and youth can develop</li> </ul>
<b>Module 4: A Case Study for Taking Action</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Become more familiar with the issue of undocumented immigrant youth</li> <li>• See examples of individual, organizational, and systems change within the context of undocumented immigrant youth</li> <li>• Learn a number of action items you can take in relation to supporting immigrant youth from an individual, organizational and systems approach</li> </ul>

### Runtime

**Approximately 6.5 hours** depending on how many recommended resources are added. Breakdown of approximate time for each module:

Module 1: 60 minutes (including 10 min. for Introductory Video)

Module 2: 35 minutes

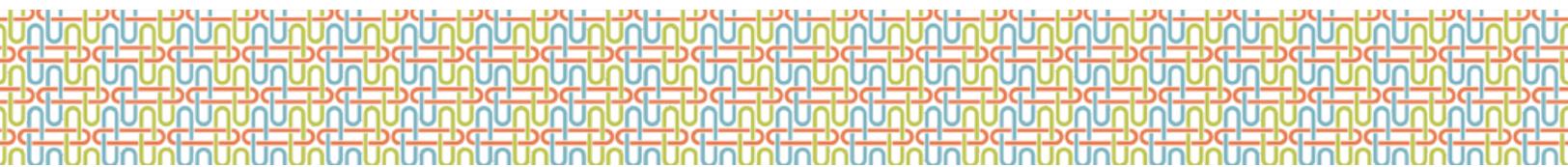
Module 3: 120 minutes

Module 4: 110 minutes

### Suggested Uses

#### **Module 1: Uses for Taking Individual Action**

- **Use #1:** Organizational Leaders & Youth Workers who want to provide training and development around building self awareness and reflection towards equity.
  - o **Estimated time:** 1 hour
  - o **How should students prepare?**
    - Review content material and videos in Module 1.



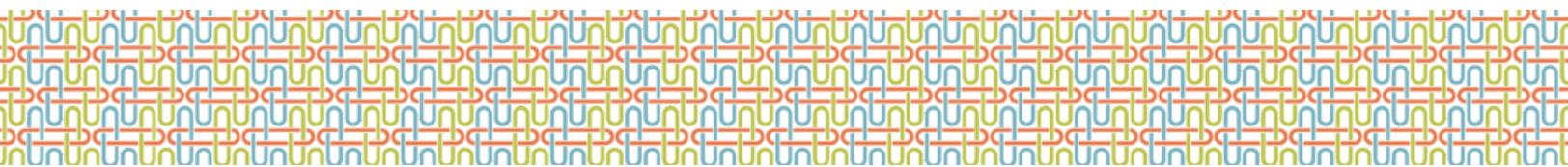


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- o **Suggested materials to be used:**
  - Utilize Definitions & Bronfenbrenner's model
- o **Suggested tasks:**
  - Have participants reflect on their own understanding of culture & identity, and how that applies/relates to the young people that they work with.
  - Brainstorm impacts on young people within Bronfenbrenner's model.
  - Brainstorm who is keeping your organization accountable in its work towards equity. How can this be expanded?
  - What action can those in your team take towards equity within your organization?
- o **Alternative tasks/assignments:** Team could complete Intercultural Development Inventory on an annual basis to continue development, evaluation and self reflection.
- **Use #2:** A youth worker could use this module with a group of student leaders in discussing understanding oneself on the path towards equity & action.
  - o **Estimated time:** 1 hour
  - o **Suggested materials to be used:**
    - Review Chimamanda Adichie's Video on Slide 1
  - o **Suggested tasks:**
    - Watch “The danger of a single story” and ask youth if they have ever seen the impact of one story being told about them or others they know.
    - Discuss what context they are in and how this impacts them and those around them.
    - Use activities from [Teaching Tolerance](#) depending on the age group.
    - Understanding Intentions versus impact.
    - Use the [Youthprise resource](#) to think about how young people could have more equitable experience and impact with in your organizations or the spaces they find themselves.
  - o **Alternative tasks/assignments:**
    - Use the [Youthprise resource](#) to develop a youth board for your organization.

### **Module 2: Uses for Taking Organizational Action**

- **Use #1:** Organizational leaders or frontline youth workers/teams in historical “legacy” youth development organizations who want to understand how to dismantle bias and advance equity in their organization.
  - o **Estimated time:** 35 mins
  - o **How should students prepare?**
    - Start by taking two or more of the Harvard Project Implicit tests (on slide 5). Make note of/discuss any surprises in the results, and of your internal reactions to those surprises.
    - Then watch the intro video (on slide 1) and reflect in notes or discussion how this resonates with your own experience in your organization(s).
  - o **Suggested tasks:**
    - Create a list of 3-5 organizational changes for which you could provide leadership within your organization. Identify stakeholders you would need to engage in each of the changes.



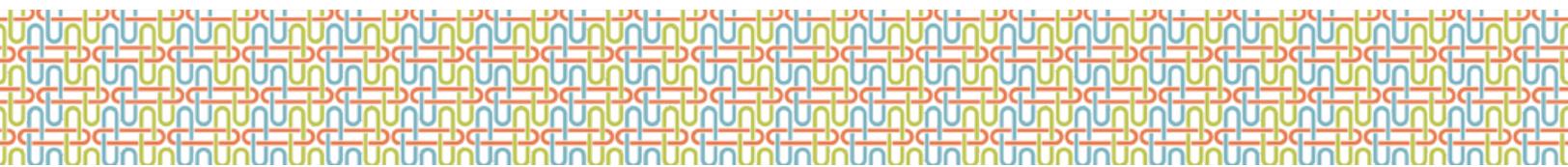


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- Create a list of 3-5 individual strategies that you could embrace to mitigate implicit biases and/or advance equity.
- **Alternative tasks/assignments:**
  - Once you have identified your lists of potential strategies, conduct 1-on-1 conversations with stakeholders in your organization to elicit their feedback about your ideas. Note both support and pushback. Once you have compiled a list of anonymous reactions, reflect individually and engage others in determining what aspects of the pushback might be based in implicit bias, and identify strategies for addressing that bias.

### **Module 3: Uses for Taking Systemic Action**

- **Use #1:** Organizational leaders or frontline youth workers/teams who are interested in shifting their approach to working with youth in ways that are co-creative and enhance social change.
  - **Estimated time:** 120 minutes
  - **How should students prepare?**
    - Work through the modules and be prepared to answer the reflection questions at the end of slides 2-7 in small groups/pairs. (Individuals can take notes on their answers and share at a later time with colleagues and/or a supervisor.)
  - **Suggested materials to be used:**
    - Watch additional videos provided about Public Achievement & Harry Boyte's background (in Slide 6).
    - Read or review articles linked within the module. (Especially Chambers & Cowan, 2003 article in Slide 5 & Boyte, 2001 chart in Slide 6).
    - See additional resource list below.
  - **Suggested tasks:**
    - After reviewing the module and answering the reflection questions, identify 2-3 people within your organization, 2-3 young people with whom you work, and 2-3 people who are peripherally connected to your organization with whom your reflections may be relevant to their work. Share your reflections with them and brainstorm some ways in which you could work together on issues you collectively care about.
  - **Alternative tasks/assignments:**
    - Explore the Public Achievement ([www.publicachievement.org](http://www.publicachievement.org)) and/or Youth In Front ([www.youthinfront.org](http://www.youthinfront.org)) websites. What resources did you find that would be relevant to your work? Which materials of theirs would you think youth, colleagues, and/or organization leaders would benefit from reading/learning more about?
- **Use #2:** Policymakers who are interested in shifting their approach to working with individuals that is co-creative and towards enacting social change.
  - **Estimated time:** 60 min. (Slides 1, 4-7)
  - **How should students prepare?**
    - Work through the modules and be prepared to answer the reflection questions at the end of slides 4-7 in small groups/pairs. (Individuals can take notes on their answers and share at a later time with colleagues and/or a supervisor.)



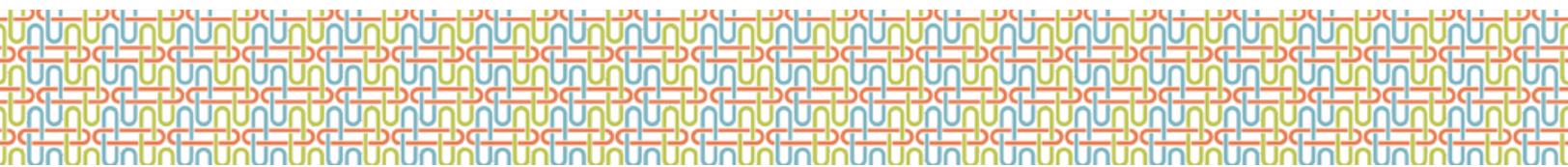


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- In Slide 6, change the first question to: What is the public contribution of your profession?
- **Suggested materials to be used:**
  - Watch additional videos provided about Public Achievement & Harry Boyte's background (in Slide 6).
  - Read or review articles linked within the module. (Especially Chambers & Cowan, 2003 article in Slide 5 & Boyte, 2001 chart in Slide 6).
  - See additional resource list below.
- **Suggested tasks:**
  - After reviewing the module and answering the reflection questions, identify 2-3 people within your organization and 2-3 people who are peripherally connected to your organization with whom your reflections may be relevant to their work. Share your reflections with them and brainstorm some ways you could work together on issues you collectively care about.
- **Alternative tasks/assignments:**
  - Explore the Public Achievement ([www.publicachievement.org](http://www.publicachievement.org)) and/or Youth In Front ([www.youthinfront.org](http://www.youthinfront.org)) websites. What resources did you find that would be relevant to your work? Which materials of theirs would you think your colleagues and/or other organization leaders would benefit from reading/learning more about?
  - Explore the additional resources listed under the Action Civic/YPAR section. How would adopting an action civic lens affect the way policy was developed? How would participatory action research affect the ways in which decisions were made and carried out about specific communities?
  - Peruse the additional resources listed under the General Recommendations section. Which titles spark your interest? Which have you read and/or heard about before?

### **Module 4: Uses for A Case Study for Action**

- **Use #1:** As a person or organization that works with youth, use this module to educate yourself on the issue of undocumented youth. This issue will provide an example of how equity can play out on an individual, organizational, systems level.
  - **Estimated time:** 30 minutes
  - **How should students prepare?**
    - Consider the lives, opportunities and barriers of undocumented young people in your life or affected by your organization as well as all those youth that are part of the larger societal systems around us. Take a few minutes to self reflect and think about what kind of equity or inequity you feel you have in your life and compare it to the types of equity and inequity undocumented youth may face. Approach the module with a sense of self reflection.
  - **Suggested materials to be used:**
    - Additional resources as needed listed below
  - **Suggested tasks:**
    - Choose an additional issue that affects the youth you work with and brainstorm actions that works towards equity within that issue on an individual, organizational and systems level.



## **Additional Resources**

### **Module 1: Taking Individual Action**

- A great resource is [Teaching Tolerance](#). This resource provides resources for educating for a diverse democracy including topics such as race, identity, sexuality, rights and activism.
- Torie Weiston-Serdan presents on [Reimagining Youth Work with an Equity Lens](#).

### **Module 2: Taking Organizational Action**

Racial Equity Tools: <https://www.racialequitytools.org/home>

Sharpe, K. (2016, October 19). "Why equity matters in youth development", Youth Development Insight Blog. Retrieved from <http://blog-youth-development-insight.extension.umn.edu/2016/10/why-equity-matters-in-youth-development>

Sharpe, K., Robideau, K. (2016, November 21). "Why Equity Matters in Youth Development", UMN EXT Youth Development Podcast. Retrieved from <http://www.extension.umn.edu/youth/training-events/online-learning/podcast-series/mp3/kathryn-sharpe-podcast.mp3>

### **Module 3: Taking Systemic Action**

#### ***Equity & Social Justice in Youth Work***

Ginwright, S., & Cammarota, J. (2002). New terrain in youth development: The promise of a social justice approach. *Social Justice*, 29(4), 82-95.

Imarisha, W., & brown, a. m. (Eds.). (2015). *Octavia's brood: Science fiction stories from social justice movements*. Oakland: AK Press and the Institute for Anarchist Studies.

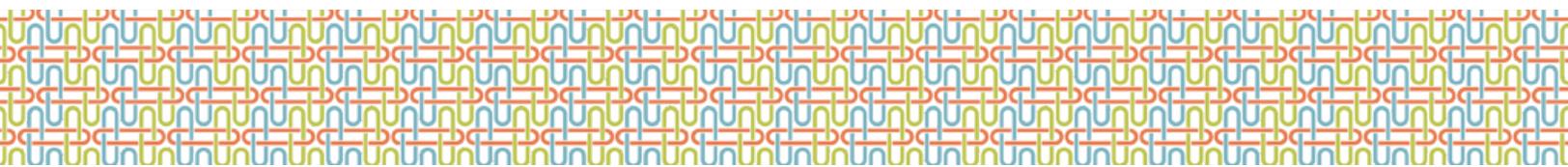
McDaniel, M. (2017). Social justice youth work: Actualizing youth rights. *Journal of Youth Development*, 12(1). Retrieved from <http://jyd.pitt.edu/ojs/jyd/article/view/488>

Richards, J. (2015). [A call to action for a human rights-based approach to youth work](#).

Richards, J. (2016). A human rights-based approach to planning and evaluation [Module]. The Hubert Project. Retrieved from [hubert.hhh.umn.edu/NorthStarFinal4/index5.html#screen/d200973f-b4af-4e09-9cfd-b79738819ca0](http://hubert.hhh.umn.edu/NorthStarFinal4/index5.html#screen/d200973f-b4af-4e09-9cfd-b79738819ca0)

Weiston-Serdan, T. (2017). *Critical mentoring: A practical guide*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.

#### **Action Civics/Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR)**



- Avila, M. (2017). *Transformative civic engagement through community organizing*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.
- Ayala, J., Cammarota, J., Berta-Ávila, M. I., Rivera, M., Rodríguez, L. F., & Torre, M. E. (Eds.). (2018). *PAR EntreMundos: A pedagogy of the Américas*. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Boyte, H. (2008). *The citizen solution: How you can make a difference*. St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press.
- Boyte, H. C. (2001). *A tale of two playgrounds: Young people and politics*. San Francisco, CA: American Political Science Association.
- Cammarota, J., & Fine, M. (Eds.). (2008). *Revolutionizing education: Youth participatory action research in motion*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Levinson, M., & Fay, J. (Eds.). (2016). *Dilemmas of educational ethics: Cases and commentaries*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Levinson, M. (2012). *No citizen left behind*. Cambridge, MA: President and Fellows of Harvard College.
- Rai, S. M. (2008). *Civic driven change: opportunities and costs*. In A. Fowler & K. Biekart (Eds.), *Civic driven change: Citizen's imagination in action*. The Hague: Institute of Social Studies.
- Youth in Front-Advice on Leading Change from Experienced Youth Activists and Allies:  
<http://www.youthinfront.org/about.html>

### **Public Achievement**

Boyte, H. (2018). *Awakening democracy through public work: Pedagogies of Empowerment*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

Public Achievement website: [www.publicachievement.org](http://www.publicachievement.org)

[Public Achievement Resources](#), Sabo Center for Citizenship and Democracy at Augsburg University

### **Recommended Reading**

Alexander, M. (2010). *The new Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness*. New York, NY: The New Press.

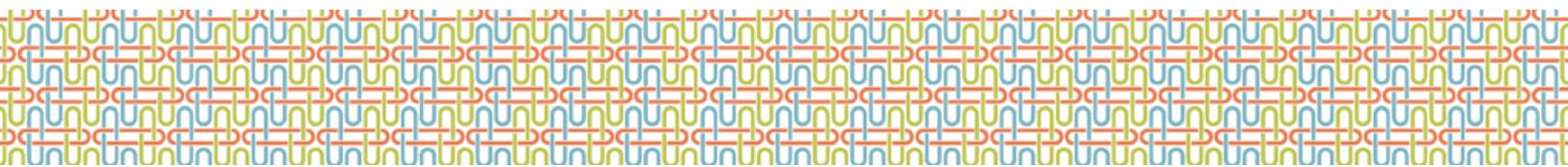
brown, a. m. (2017). *Emergent strategy: Shaping change, changing worlds*. Chino, CA: AK Press.

Cole, T. (2012, March 21). The white-savior industrial complex. *The Atlantic*.

[www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/the-white-savior-industrial-complex/254843](http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/the-white-savior-industrial-complex/254843)

Janmohamed, Z. (2015, May 31). When language loses its bite. *Counter-Archives*.

[www.counterarchives.org/2015/06/01/when-language-loses-its-bite-by-zahir-janmohamed](http://www.counterarchives.org/2015/06/01/when-language-loses-its-bite-by-zahir-janmohamed)



Kahane, A. (2010). *Power and love: A theory and practice of social change*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

King, M. L., Jr. (1967, August 16). *Where do we go from here?: Annual report* [Speech]. Atlanta, GA: 11th Convention of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Retrieved from [youtube.com/watch?v=HagCA3FytMU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HagCA3FytMU)

Le, V. (2018). *Nonprofit AF Blog*. Retrieved from <http://nonprofitaf.com/>

NPR. (2018). *Code Switch Podcast*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/>

## **Module 4: Taking Action for Undocumented Youth**

[15 Ways to Advocate for Undocumented Youth](#): A document that suggests great ways to advocate for undocumented youth

[Know Your Rights](#): A write-up on important basic immigrant rights in an accessible format including printable pocket-sized cards

[The Facts on Immigrants Today](#): Current facts and data on immigration to aid in discussions

[Resource Guide: Supporting Undocumented Youth](#) - A comprehensive guide from Department of Education for adults that work with Undocumented youth, focused on post-secondary options

[Minnesota Dream Act Fact Sheet](#): Information and resources for the MN Dream Act Law

[Immigration Law Center of Minnesota](#) - a nonprofit agency that provides immigration legal assistance, education to communities and professionals around immigration issues, and advocates for policies that respect the universal human rights of immigrants.

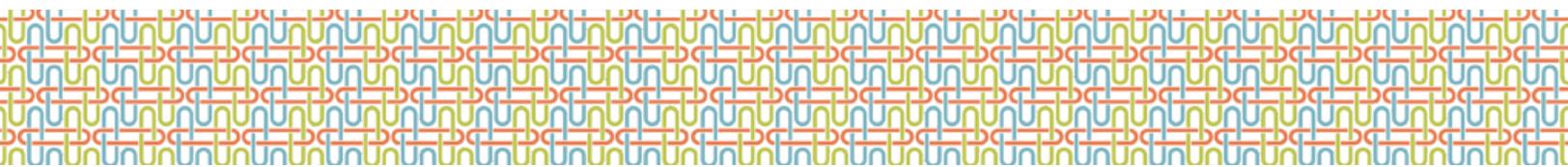
Book: *Enrique's Journey* By Sonia Nazario (2007). Read this book for a well written account of the plight that one central American youth goes through in order to reunite with his mother in the United States.

## **References**

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Becker, H. (1982). Culture: a sociological view. In K. A. Tiemann (Ed.), *The intersections collection* (pp.1161-177). Boston, Massachusetts: Pearson Learning Solutions.



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- Roholt, R. V. (n.d.). *Youth Advisory Structures: Suggestions for Agency Practice*. Retrieved from <https://youthprise.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/YAG-report-final.pdf>.
- Southern Poverty Law Center. (2018). *Diversity, Equity and Justice*. Retrieved from <https://www.tolerance.org/>.
- Tarrow, S. G. (2011). *Power in movement*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- What is Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory? (2013, November 3). Retrieved from <http://www.psychologynoteshq.com/bronfenbrenner-ecological-theory/>.
- Witt, J. (2011). *SOC*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

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- Bruni, F. (2015, 12/12). The lie about college diversity. *The New York Times*
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- Hockett, D. (2017, 9/18). Video: TEDxMidAtlanticSalon Talk: "We all have implicit biases. So what can we do about it?" Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKHSJHkPeLY>.
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- Plaut, V. C. (2014). Diversity science and institutional design. *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 1(1), 72-80. doi:10.1177/2372732214550164
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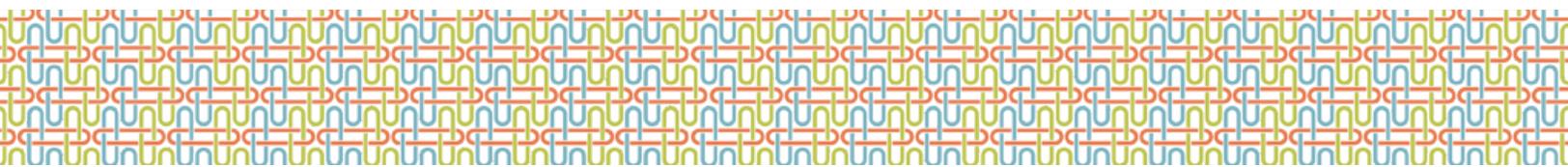
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