ywi

action research engagement process:

Community-Based Knowledge for the Young Women's Initiative of Minnesota

A COMPANION TO THE BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION

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Outreach-Engagement Center**

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
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WOMEN
WOMEN'S
FOUNDATION
OF
MINNESOTA

November 2017

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Citation format:

UROC Research Team, (2017). "Action Research Engagement Process: Community-based Knowledge for The Young Women's Initiative of Minnesota." October, 2017. https://uroc.umn.edu/young-womens-initiative-minnesota.

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Abstract

This report shares qualitative findings from the community-based action research engagement process (research engagement) conducted by a team from the University of Minnesota's Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center (UROC) commissioned by the Women's Foundation of Minnesota for the Young Women's Initiative of Minnesota (YWI MN).

The result of the research is a statewide *Blueprint for Action*, released in November 2017, that the initiative will use to drive collaborative and cross-sector statewide efforts to make sure all young women in Minnesota thrive. The YWI MN is a public-private partnership between the Women's Foundation of Minnesota and the Minnesota Governor's Office. UROC's research engagement process surfaced community-grounded knowledge from young women and the women that surround them (N=500) from eight communities: African American, African Immigrant, American Indian, Asian American and Pacific Islander, Latina/x and Hispanic, LGBTQ, young women with disabilities and young women from Greater Minnesota. This report is a companion piece to the *Blueprint*. UROC completed this account to share the rich information shared by communities in the hopes that it will spark insight and action within, between and across communities and sectors in Minnesota.

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Introduction & Executive Summary

"If you want to walk fast, go alone; but if you want to walk far, walk together."
– AFRICAN PROVERB

"If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."
– ABORIGINAL ACTIVIST GROUP, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA 1970S

Community-based and collaborative knowledge production can be a foundation and fuel for social change. This report shares findings from a community-based action research engagement process (research engagement) conducted by the University of Minnesota's Robert J. Jones Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center (UROC) as part of the Young Women's Initiative of Minnesota (YWI MN). The process produced a *Blueprint for Action* (*Blueprint*) with six action areas, seven guiding principles and best practices, and twenty recommendations that will guide YWI MN implementation statewide over the next seven years.

In October 2016, the Women's Foundation of Minnesota in partnership with the Governor's Office of Minnesota officially launched YWI MN as a public-private partnership, focusing on young women aged 12-24. The YWI MN definition of "woman" and "girl" is inclusive of transgender women, gender non-conforming people and anyone else who experiences the world as a woman-identified person. The WFMN has committed to investing $9 million over the next seven years to implement YWI MN.

The goal of YWI MN is to create the conditions in Minnesota where all young women are valued and can thrive. The initiative was designed to ensure young women's leadership is a key driver in the work of the initiative. To solidify young women's leadership, the Governor's Office appointed a Young Women's Cabinet and the WFMN hired the YWCA St. Paul to work with the Cabinet on leadership development. The initiative also leverages leadership across the state through a Governor-appointed YWI MN Council to catalyze resources in support of the statewide *Blueprint*.

The University of Minnesota-UROC received a grant from the WFMN to develop and conduct the research engagement process which resulted in a statewide *Blueprint* and this report.[1] The mission of UROC is to "link the University in vital public partnership with urban communities to advance learning, improve quality of life, and discover breakthrough solutions to critical problems." And our vision is to transform the ways universities and communities work together.[2] The core of the research engagement process for YWI MN was community-specific working groups and the Young Women's Cabinet, who also served as working group members. The UROC team is pleased to describe this process and qualitative findings in this report.

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[1] The YWI MN *Blueprint for Action* can be found at: http://www.wfmn.org/ywi-mn-blueprint.pdf
[2] For more about UROC, visit our website at: http://uroc.umn.edu/.

BACKGROUND ON THE YWI MN INITIATIVE

YWI is a nationwide movement. YWI MN, and the research engagement process, builds on learnings from a successful young women's initiative developed by New York City and political will established by a charge from the Obama White House.[3] This work is supported and led by a National YWI Funders Collaborative that created a learning cohort of eight women's foundations (including the WFMN) who will share best practices and field learning as the YWI initiatives unfold across the United States.

The impulse and catalyst for YWI MN was narratives, stories, and experiences of young women shared through WFMN-led listening sessions combined with statewide data that show stark and deep disparities in outcome for young women of color, American Indian young women, LGBTQ youth, immigrants, young women with disabilities and young women living in greater Minnesota. Data shows that many young women in Minnesota are on a path for prosperity and well-being. However, when the data is broken down by race/ethnicity and other factors it shows that some young women endure a disproportionate share of hardships and face barriers that often arise at the intersections of structural inequalities such as gender, race, locality, poverty, ability, gender expression and sexual orientation.[4]

The WFMN has been working with young women in communities across Minnesota for decades, including community listening sessions over the last two years. Given the statewide data on intersectional inequities, the WFMN requested that the research engagement for YWI MN gather community-based knowledge rooted in working groups formed around eight communities: African American, African Immigrant, American Indian, Asian American and Pacific Islander, Latina/x and Hispanic, LGBTQ, young women with disabilities and young women from Greater Minnesota. The working groups – made up of members of the Young Women's Cabinet and other community leaders – developed the lens, framework and focus of the research engagement process as well as surfacing critical information.

The process was based on the premise that we all have multiple aspects to our identities – including gender, race/ethnicity, class, ability, sexuality, geography and where we live – and that these aspects intersect to shape how we experience the world and how oppression impacts our lives. This concept is referred to as "intersectionality." The Young Women's Initiative of New York City defined that concept as follows:

> *[Intersectionality] as defined in 1989 by law professor, Executive Director of the African American Policy Forum and [NYC] YWI Steering Committee Member Kimberlé Crenshaw, constitutes "the view that women experience oppression in varying configurations and in varying degrees of intensity. Cultural patterns of oppression are not only interrelated, but are bound together and influenced by the intersectional systems of society. Examples of this include race, gender, class, ability, and ethnicity."[5]*

YWI MN has three phases, research and development, implementation and ongoing sustainment of the

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[3] For the Young Women's Initiative, New York City, see: http://shewillbe.nyc/; For the Obama White House Council on Women and Girls, see: https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/administration/eop/cwg.

[4] Intersectional disparities are apparent in many data sets and reports. As part of UROC's work with YWI MN we analyzed American Community Survey (ACS) data to use a more intersectional lens to look at how gender, race, disability, and geography are intertwined. We also looked at disabilities in the ACS data. However, the ACS did not provide data on sexual orientation. The ACS data is cited throughout this report. The Women's Foundation of Minnesota's *Status of Women and Girls* reports, produced by the U of M's Center on Women, Gender and Public Policy in partnership with UROC also show disparities in outcome for women and young women in Minnesota. The bibliography in Appendix F provides numerous other sources.

[5] New York City Young Women's Initiative: Report and Recommendations (May 2016), page 19. Retrieved from: http://www.shewillbe.nyc/YWI-Report-and-Recommendations.pdf.

efforts. Figure 1 below shows the full timeline and stages of the project. This report describes research conducted to support phase one of YWI MN, research and development.

Figure 1. YWI MN Seven-year Timeline
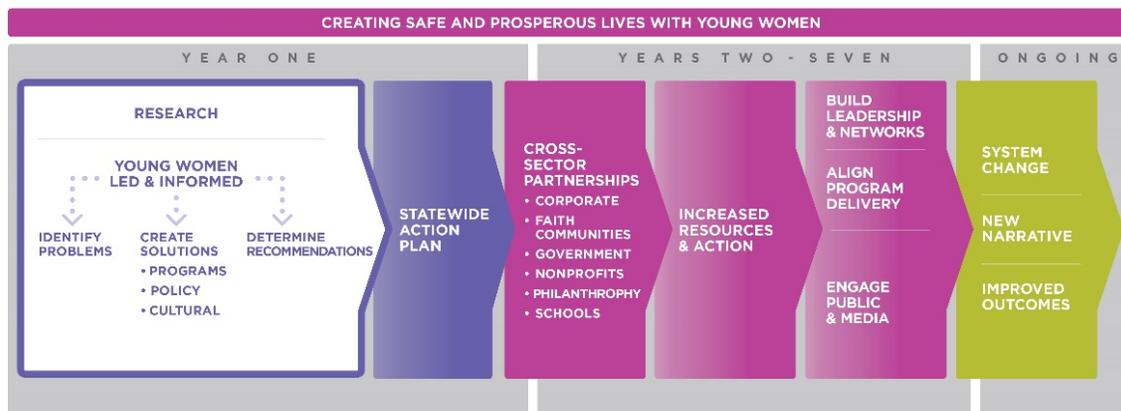
For Phase two of YWI MN, the WFMN is mobilizing partners to build pathways to economic opportunity, improve safety and well-being, and promote a state of respect for young women from communities that experience the greatest disparity in outcomes. For more on the WFMN's next steps, please see their website: http://www.wfmn.org/ywi-mn-blueprint.pdf. The YWI MN is a growing and evolving initiative that is responsive to input and changes on the ground.

THE UROC-LED RESEARCH ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The UROC research engagement was grounded in community experience to reflect the multiple and intersecting identities that shape experiences and outcomes, including gender, race and ethnicity, nationality of origin, geography, spectrums of ability, and sexuality. In each of the eight communities UROC sought a wide variety of perspectives and experiences within community identities. For example, the Asian American and Pacific Islander community includes people who identify as Hmong, Laotian, Korean, Chinese, Indian, and more, each with their own unique history and experiences. And all communities have internal differences of experience related to income, sexual orientation, geography and more. The research engagement process engaged over 500 participants that included young women aged 16-24 and the community members that surround and support them to share their experience, knowledge and best thinking.

The research engagement was embedded in a larger structure with young women in leadership to develop YWI MN. Figure 2 shows how the research engagement process, grounded in community-specific working groups and the Young Women's Cabinet, fits within the larger structure of the research and development phase of YWI MN.

Figure 2. YWI MN Phase 1 Structure[6]
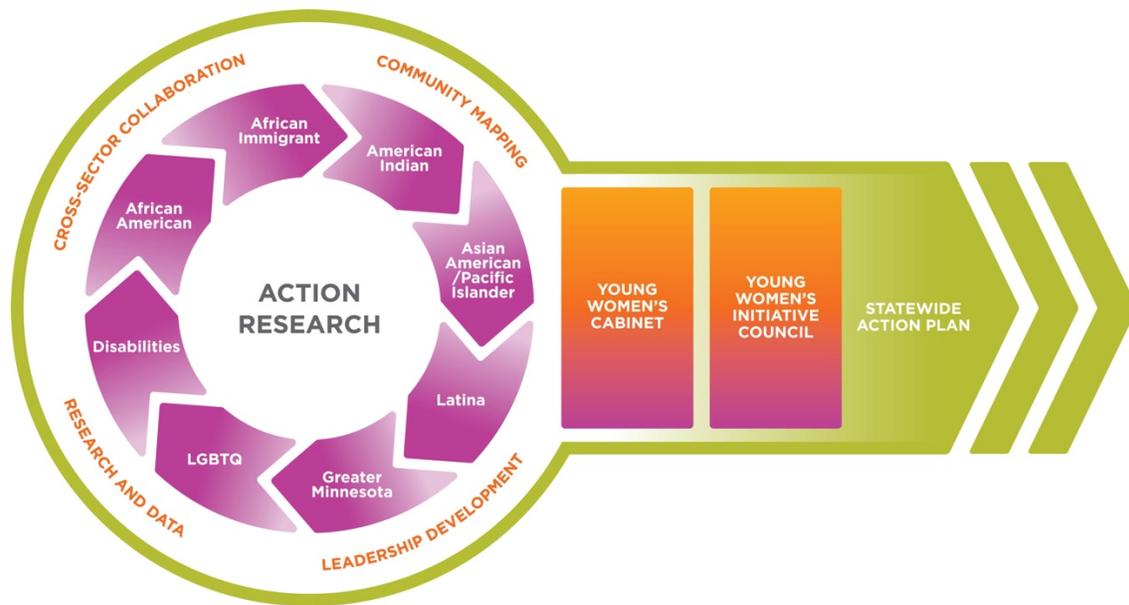
The research engagement process was designed to answer the question: *What does it mean for young women in your community to thrive?* It was guided by a focus on assets – those things that are working well for young women including strengths, resources, hard work, role models, people, programs and organizations, behaviors and practices, and cultural norms and expectations. Young women described a hope and action-oriented view of their futures, driven by role models, families and community. Actualizing the leadership potential of young women in Minnesota will lead to more equitable outcomes.

UROC also asked participants to describe the barriers that young women face in their lives so the recommendations could be crafted to address the most pressing challenges for young women in the eight communities that we engaged. The research highlighted perennial problems faced by all women in the US. Many women make less money than men, face cultural norms and expectations that limit their dreams, are viewed as "less than," are objectified, seen as weak, and experience disproportionate rates of violence (sexual, interpersonal, emotional, and physical).

This report and the *Blueprint* reveal some hard truths about Minnesota, too. The state is not yet an environment where all young women have what they need to thrive. Participants described experiences of racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, violence, stigma, and more. They also highlighted systems that do not work for all young women, much-needed areas for structural change, pervasive cultural narratives and stereotypes that are harmful, and more.

The process also identified community-specific ways that women in the eight communities experience these problems. With a focus on assets we identified 20 recommendations for the *Blueprint* that our process suggests could create a more equitable Minnesota. The recommendations are listed here in the

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[6] Please note, Figures 1 & 2 were designed by the WFMN for use in YWI MN materials. The working group Latina/x and Hispanic is denoted by the term "Latina" in Figure 1. See below on page 58 for a discussion of this term.

findings section. More depth and description is provided in the *Blueprint* that can be found at http://www.wfmn.org/ywi-mn-blueprint.pdf.

More importantly, our process identified that solutions to gender inequity are also shaped in particular ways by race, class, sexuality, geography, and disability. The process identified hundreds of people, programs, and organizations who have supported and helped young women in the eight communities achieve their goals. The WFMN will conduct an environmental scan of programs in Minnesota as one of their next steps. Participants in our process suggested that these bright spots are typically under-funded, lacking in broad social support, working against the odds, not coordinated or to scale, and in some cases hidden and underground. As one young person we interviewed said:

> *"We already have the solutions. They've been around for a while; we just need to fund them and support them. These assets are not yet capitalized and brought to scale for all young women."*
> – YWI MN RESEARCH ENGAGEMENT PROCESS PARTICIPANT

Responses to challenges in the eight communities described here and in the *Blueprint* build upon tremendous community and cultural strengths among young women. Young women in the eight communities are adaptable and resourceful. They are care givers, role models, pillars of their families and communities, entrepreneurial, and able to navigate many spaces.

The research engagement process itself sought to unleash the talent and untapped potential of young women by honing in on specific things that, if implemented, could yield bigger and better outcomes for young women in the eight communities. The findings and recommendations presented here were surfaced by and for young women in the eight communities, but we believe they will have an impact for all young women and young people in Minnesota.

It is important to note that the UROC-led research engagement occurred within a specific time and place. We began gathering data shortly after the 2016 election results and concluded data collection during President Trump's first 100 days in office. As described below, many of the policy changes announced on the campaign trail and in the beginning weeks of the Trump administration impacted the working groups and data collection. In addition, the process and data collection were impacted by the time of year (winter in Minnesota) and the short time frame (approximately four months). Participation of stakeholders was undoubtedly affected by inclement weather and difficult driving conditions, particularly when we travelled to Greater Minnesota to meet with people. Due to the short timeframe, we were not able to plan working group meetings months in advance, and this likely also impacted participation. But we felt it was important to persevere and do our very best to reach different and distinct voices within each of the eight communities to deliver the *Blueprint*.

LEADERSHIP OF YOUNG WOMEN

Our research process was unique. We used a community-driven research approach that was rooted in community wisdom and centered on young women's leadership and voices.

The UROC-led research engagement built in leadership of young women in three key ways:

1. **The Young Women's Cabinet provided overall leadership to the initiative**. Cabinet members were part of the community-specific working groups. In addition, the UROC team provided many opportunities for Cabinet members to review, revise and edit the recommendations in the *Blueprint* and this report.
2. **The fifteen-member UROC research team that conducted the research engagement consisted of emerging research-leaders with connections to all eight community-specific working groups.** The principal investigators on this project deliberately designed the research process to support the growth and development of young women and gender non-conforming researchers as part of the project.
3. **Our research team used purposeful sampling methods to connect with young women aged 16-24 from all eight working groups.**

There is certainly much more knowledge and wisdom in communities that can and will help drive YWI MN implementation. The UROC-led research engagement was part of what will undoubtedly be a long learning process.

OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT

The next section provides an in depth description of the research engagement process conducted by UROC. The research approach was intentionally designed to engage communities in co-construction of knowledge about how Minnesota can create an environment where young women from the eight communities can thrive. The process focused on community assets and wisdom, rather than only examining "issues" or "problems." The research approach was built around young women, creating opportunities for young women and their communities to engage in analysis, interpretation, and meaning-making of data through a fluid and iterative design process:

After discussion of the methods, we share detailed findings. Some of our findings have been highlighted above. The findings section has four sub-sections.

1. A framework for action and principles for the *Blueprint* that emerged from the research engagement, including a list of all twenty recommendations;
2. Core knowledge about the environmental context of young women's lives;
3. Community-specific knowledge;
4. Community-surfaced indicators and measures of thriving. Finally, the report concludes with final thoughts and next steps.

The Appendices provide a full listing of groups and individuals involved, some detailed findings, data collection protocols, a glossary of terms, and references.

Methods

"When indigenous peoples become the researchers and not merely the researched, the activity of research is transformed. Questions are framed differently, priorities are ranked differently, problems are defined differently, and people participate on different terms."
— LINDA TUHIWAI SMITH, DECOLONIZING METHODOLOGIES, 2012 P. 196.

The research engagement process developed by UROC combined action research, community engagement and leadership, and participatory approaches in an iterative process to engage multiple stakeholders in project design, framing of questions, data collection and analysis (or the process of making "meaning" around the data). The methods were designed to be participatory, asset-focused, transparent, respectful, opportunity and hope-based, open, and inclusive. The approach was community grounded so that knowledge and actions (i.e. the *Blueprint*) would flow from strengths and community-identified challenges and barriers.

Our main research questions were:

1. *What does it mean for young women in your community to thrive?*
2. *What barriers do young women in your community face?*
3. *How can we overcome those barriers?*

The research engagement process had three components:

1. Eight community-specific working groups consisting of three Young Women's Cabinet members and community leaders and stakeholders in the eight identified communities (83 active working group members, UROC facilitated a total of 20 working group meetings). The working groups were multi-generational by design.
2. Interviews defined as "community wisdom conversations" that sought to dig deeper into community networks (N=161)
3. Online surveys (N=332)

In addition to collecting primary data, the UROC team also reviewed community-based reports to gather supplemental data to support data collection. We started with websites and reports produced by working group members and their organizations as a way to center their knowledge in the process. The team also analyzed US census data with an intersectional lens. The UROC team created a starting framework for the working group meetings by reviewing and coding qualitative data gathered by the WFMN through community listening sessions with young women in eight communities they hosted in 2015 and 2016. For more information on the WFMN's Listening Sessions, see: http://www.wfmn.org

To answer the research questions, UROC began the working group meetings with an exploration of assets – those things that are working well for young women including strengths, resources, hard work, role models, people, programs and organizations, behaviors and practices, and cultural norms and expectations. Knowledge was anchored on great work that is already happening as an asset-focused place to start. This helped participants in the process leverage their strengths and their communities' collective knowledge to identify structural and institutional barriers that make it harder for some young women to thrive despite their best efforts.

The working groups provided guidance, insight, and information to the process. Given the short time frame for the project, UROC convened two working group meetings per group to elicit knowledge, direction, and feedback. The process concluded with three "make-up" sessions for anyone not able to attend their working group meeting and a final closing meeting with all groups together. Each meeting started with a short presentation followed by facilitated discussion and some small group work. Working group members and meeting dates are provided in Appendices A and B.

The research team worked with working groups and professional and personal networks to identify young women for community wisdom conversations. Each team member purposefully sought interviewees with a wide and diverse range of experiences within each working group community, including class, gender identity, generation, geography (i.e. urban, suburban, and rural), ethnicity, country of origin, and more. This sampling method is sometimes referred to as "purposeful sampling." It is not meant to generate a statistically representative sample. This sampling method matched the project goal of identifying a wide range of perspectives and knowledge from within the eight communities to create the *Blueprint*.

The UROC team created an online survey to provide another avenue for participants to provide insight. Some people wanted to contribute ideas but did not have the time or inclination to participate in an in-person interview. The online survey extended the reach to include more participants from Greater Minnesota.

We received approval for this project from the University of Minnesota's Human Subjects' Protection Institutional Review Board (IRB). The project was not deemed "human subjects' research." We did not collect identifiable data or personal information; rather we sought to use community-based research methods to engage a wide range of stakeholders to document their best thinking on how to create equity in outcomes for young women.

In the next section we describe more about what we mean by community-based action research engagement and how this process is rooted in theory and practice. Then we describe the data that was collected using the three methods – working groups, interviews and surveys – and how we analyzed that data. We also discuss the limitations and challenges we faced in the process.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY ACTION RESEARCH AND ENGAGEMENT?

There are many different approaches to co-constructing knowledge and community-based research. This project combined a basic action research framework[7] with principles of engagement (or engaged research), but the UROC team also drew from many traditions to develop our approach to creating the *Blueprint*. This includes Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR),[8] scholarly work on decolonizing research methods,[9] an intersectional approach to research,[10] as well as the research team's collective experience living in and working with communities.
Below we describe what we mean by community-based action research and engagement.

Action research is an approach to the research process rooted in participatory methods to knowledge production that involves multiple stakeholders in the creation of research from beginning to end. It is not a research method; rather action research is an approach to research rooted in co-constructed

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[7] See for example, Bradbury (2015); Stringer (2014)
[8] See for example, Minkler & Wallerstein (2009); Minkler (2015); Israel, et al. (2013).
[9] Smith (2012); Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva (2008).
[10] K. Crenshaw (1991), pp. 1241-1299.

knowledge production that equally values multiple types and sources of knowledge. It opens the process of inquiry to multiple voices and perspectives that elicit community-grounded knowledge. Further, participatory knowledge production can itself be a process of self-discovery and determination, community-building, agency, and dismantling negative and stigmatizing cultural and social narratives. Research approached this way can be part of an emancipatory process that surfaces actionable knowledge on which to base a movement with concrete change strategies.[11]

The approach of action research is fundamentally about problem-solving through knowledge production. A core tenant is that real-world problems are best solved by using the strongest and most appropriate types of knowledge for each specific, communally-identified problem. Action research values many different types of knowledge production, including experienced-based knowledge, story, narrative, qualitative data collection (interviews, focus groups, etc.), and quantitative data. Action research approaches use research methods that are appropriate to answer questions which are developed and honed through participatory processes. Action research projects typically seek clarity, understanding and knowledge to guide action, and so action research is often oriented to local and situated understanding of an issue or problem. At its core, action research involves a joint construction of process and meaning.[12]

Action research often follows what has been called the action research cycle.[13] Figure 3 displays how this works. Projects start by co-designing the goals, methods, and strategies among many stakeholders; typically some combination of trained researchers, people impacted by the problem (viewed as experts), and other stakeholders. Then this group decides who will collect data. A critical step in all research is analysis. Analysis is the part of the research process where researchers make sense of what the data means. The action research approach typically seeks to include many perspectives in this phase of the project. Analysis methods include quantitative analysis (such as frequency counts, statistics, regression models, etc.) and many different forms of qualitative analysis (such as grounded theory, thematic analysis, narrative analysis, and more.) Then the knowledge is a basis for action, which always leads to new questions. Thus, the cycle starts over.

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[11] See for example, P. Freire, (2010;1970).
[12] Stringer (2014), p. 41.
[13] Stringer (2014).

Figure 3. Action Research Cycle

It is very typical that the action research cycle leads the research in new and unexpected directions. This is part of the process and to be expected. The community-rooted and participatory nature of the action research approach means that it is often unpredictable. As Eric Stringer (2008) notes, "steps taken to solve one problem sometimes take the lid off a whole range of related issues and problems."[14] This is important. Each project and iteration goes deeper and deeper into root causes by surfacing new or marginalized knowledge.

The UROC team combined the action research approach with engagement, specifically principles around engaged research. "Engagement" is rooted in reciprocal and mutually-beneficial partnerships. Partnerships can range from formal and contractual to short-lived and ephemeral. Authentic engagement is rooted in respect for culture, history, multiple types and sources for expertise, and experience. It also necessitates power-sharing and openness.

The University of Minnesota's Office for Public Engagement (OPE) describes engaged research as a continuum. Researchers can work for a community, meaning that they orient their research toward having an impact, or sharing knowledge or expertise. Researchers can work in communities. In this type of engagement the researcher locates their research project (or parts of it) in a community setting. Finally, researchers can work with communities. UROC conducts work with communities and the YWI MN research engagement process was designed to work with young women and other community leaders in all eight communities.

At the outset of UROC's work with YWI MN, we developed a set of principles that we sought to embed within our work to help us utilize the best of action research and engagement.

- Focus on strengths and resilience for individuals and communities.
- Inclusive and participatory, even though this may take longer. Walking together, we can go deeper and be more sustainable.
- An inclusive process of meaning-making is required to understand the implications of empirical data in the real-lives of young women in each community.

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[14] Stringer, 2008, p. 142.

- Engage community strengths to surface solutions.
- Value culture, community, and self-determination to model and help build thriving communities that support young women of color, American Indian young women, LGBTQ young people, immigrants, young women with disabilities and young women living in Greater Minnesota and their leadership potential.
- Recognize historical oppression and biases that shape the present-day experiences of young women in powerful ways that reflect the unique experiences of each community.
- Acknowledge and build upon the great work and strength happening in all communities. Surface what is already there so as not to erase or replicate work already happening on the ground.

For YWI MN, UROC developed an engagement process that builds on what communities already know, respects and engages community wisdom and knowledge, and connects young women of color, American Indian young women, LGBTQ young people, immigrants, young women with disabilities and young women living in Greater Minnesota and their communities with each other and across multiple stakeholder groups. The UROC team built its work on the belief that each community and its young women can and should develop the priorities that resonate in their lives and experiences; and that there is value in coming together to share, learn, challenge, and grow.

The UROC team designed and implemented a process that embodied the goals of YWI MN in both how we worked and what we learned. The process valued assets and community-based knowledge, creating a space to explore common-ground and tensions within and between communities. Leadership of young women spurred the data collection and we intentionally built research-leadership among the eight communities with UROC's research assistants. Finally, the research process built upon and helped foster additional connections within and between communities. This links the process of research engagement with the result of the *Blueprint* and more. Thus, the process itself functioned as an outcome or result for YWI MN.

It is the UROC team's desire that the process we started – surfacing what it means for young women to thrive – takes on a life of its own and continues to live, evolve, reiterate, change and grow within and between communities with young women and their communities leading the way.

DATA COLLECTED

From December 2016 to the end of March 2017, the UROC research engagement process gathered information from over 500 young women aged 16-24 and the community members who surround them. The UROC team facilitated 20 working group sessions with members in all eight community groups and participated in the biweekly Young Women's Cabinet meetings. Below we describe the data collected in working groups, interviews and surveys. This is followed by a description of the iterative data analysis, discussing how the iterative process creates space for more minds and voices in the analytic process.

The UROC team developed a demographic form specifically for use in the YWI MN so that we could provide real-time feedback to the UROC research team for our purposeful sampling and to inform stakeholders about who participated in the process. The form allowed the team to be intentional about networking and invitations for interviews and surveys. Demographic forms can be limiting, labelling, stigmatizing and not identity-affirming. The demographic form we used was inspired by forms used by Intermedia Arts and piloted by members of the UROC research team. It allowed participants to self-select from a wide range of options and was intended to be brief, non-invasive, anonymous, and choice-oriented. Demographic data was not intended for use in the analysis and is not reported here as such.

Working Groups

Working groups included the 24 member Young Women's Cabinet and additional working group members who were officially appointed through a process conducted by the Governor's office of Minnesota. The Young Women's Cabinet is an official Governor's Office cabinet and members were selected through a competitive application process. For additional working group members, an initial list of potential members was generated by the WFMN and Governor's office with input from the YWCA of St. Paul and UROC team. Criteria included working with young women in one of the eight communities, being a member of one of the eight communities, and a recognized formal or informal community leader.

The Governor's Office sent an invitation letter to the list of potential working group members inviting them to apply. The process officially appointed 65 individuals to serve on the working groups. Their names and contact information was forwarded to UROC after the appointment process was completed. UROC worked with a total of 89 individuals on the working groups, however six did not participate in any working group meetings. Individuals self-identified as members of the working group in which they participated, but many identified as members of more than one group.

The working group kick-off meeting held on November 29, 2016, had over 120 participants.[15] The first working group meeting was originally scheduled for December 1, 2016, which we determined was too soon after notification of appointment. Our team rescheduled working groups in coordination with group members by calling each member and using a Doodle Poll. Our first working group meeting occurred on December 6, 2016, with the Asian American and Pacific Islander working group. Our final working group meeting occurred on February 18, 2017, in Grand Rapids, Minnesota, for the Greater MN working group.

The UROC team facilitated a total of 20 working group sessions. Below, Table 1 shows the meeting schedules and number of attendees. There were many individuals who were only able to attend one of the working group meetings. However, our team communicated regularly with all working group members by phone and email.

Table 1: Working Group Sessions

Dates		# of Attendees
Nov 29, 2016	Kick-off	120
Dec 6, 2016 to Jan 31, 2017	First meetings	47
Jan 24, 2017 to Feb 18, 2017	Second meetings	55
April 8, 2017	Closing (optional)	60

The "charge" for the working groups was to provide advice and guidance on the *Blueprint* framework, help surface concepts for recommendations, and develop a community-based measurement model of what it means for young women to thrive. Each working group defined for itself what it meant for young

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[15] The Governor's Office appointment letter for working group members indicated the kick-off orientation session was to be held on Tuesday, November 29, 2016. It did not indicate the date for the first working group meeting. UROC received the list of working group members and contacted them during the week of November 21, 2016.

women in their own community to thrive. The process also sought to lift up what is already working, since many participants in the working groups are themselves doing impactful work with young women.

The first meeting of each working group had four primary goals:
1. Group formation and development of group norms
2. Review the YWI MN plan and the role of the working groups
3. Review, react to, and critique a data brief that the UROC team created to explore disparities
4. Review and critique the draft *Blueprint* framework that the UROC team developed from a combination of sources (including WFMN Listening Sessions, secondary data analysis, and review of secondary community-based reports).

Second meeting of each working group had two primary goals:
1. Review and discuss revised frameworks, guiding principles, and action areas
2. Think-pair-share activity about most pressing action steps in each of the six action areas prefacing the need for communities to lead and advocate for themselves

Make-up working group meetings:
1. Reviewed all information to that point
2. Solicited feedback, critique and comment
3. Facilitated a cross-group conversation

Closing meeting:
1. Report-back on a short form of the *Blueprint* for feedback
2. The WFMN garnered final input and approval of the *Blueprint* from the Young Women's Cabinet
3. bswing, inc. a local design firm, in partnership with UROC conducted a design learning workshop so that working group members and the Young Women's Cabinet could start thinking about how they might implement parts of the *Blueprint*.

The UROC team also provided opportunities for the working groups and Cabinet members to provide input and feedback on a draft of the *Blueprint* and this report. At least one person from each working group provided detailed feedback on this report and helped shape the analysis.

Interviews

The interviews, or as we called them "community wisdom conversations," allowed the UROC team to extend deeper into community networks within the eight communities including: African American, African Immigrant, American Indian, Asian American and Pacific Islander, Latina/x and Hispanic, LGBTQ, young women with disabilities and young women from Greater Minnesota.

Interviews were conducted by all 15 UROC research staff on the YWI MN project. The UROC team also trained two volunteer peer interviewers from the Women's Center of the University of Minnesota and two YWI Cabinet members. We used a purposeful sampling technique to try to gather as wide a range of experiences as possible. The UROC research team conducted outreach with our contacts in the working groups, Young Women's Cabinet, as well as professional and personal networks. Many working group members were program staff at youth serving agencies where we conducted small group interviews with staff and youth participants. We reached out to university programs and centers, local non-profits, and specific key stakeholders to host these conversations alongside our UROC team. Chart 1 displays a networking map for how our team identified participants for individual and group interviews.

Chart 1. Network of Community Outreach for Interviews
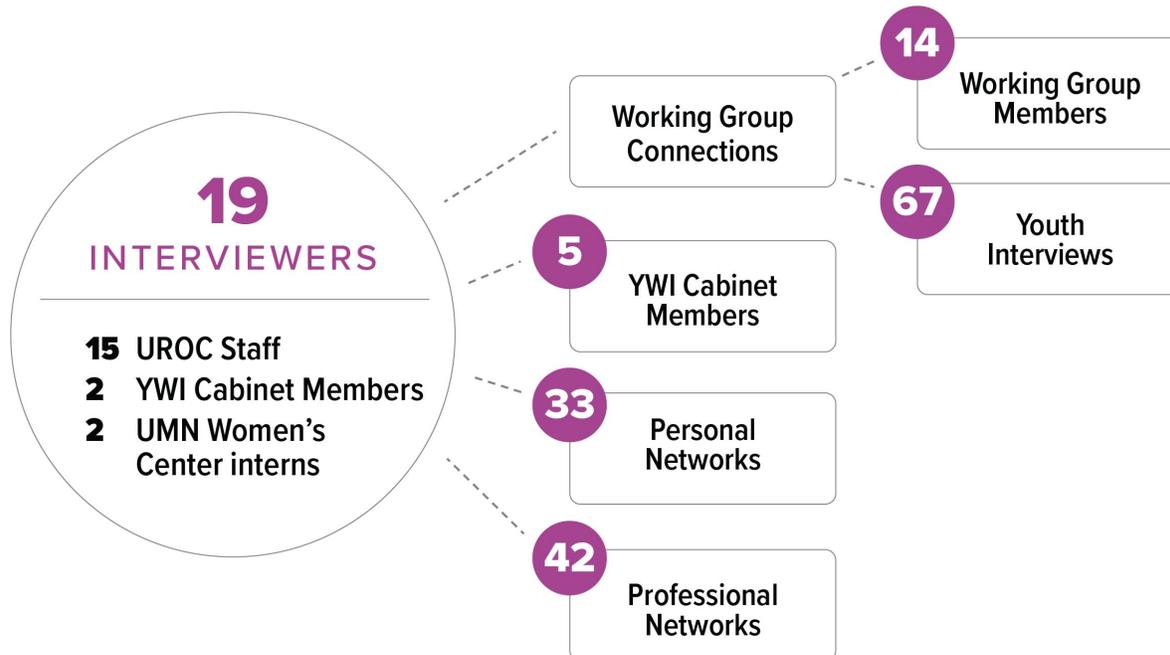
The interviews were semi-structured, yet formatted to surface information for the recommendations. Questions were focused on four domains: what it means for young women to thrive, barriers they face, strengths and assets, and key areas for action. The UROC team, with four trained peer interviewers engaged 161 people in our community wisdom conversations including young women and their communities. We developed detailed and typed notes from each interview. These conversations surfaced vital community-specific information for the development of the recommendations.

Participants in community wisdom conversations were a diverse group. Just over 91% of the participants provided demographic information. The majority of participants were young women. Eighty-five percent (85%) of participants identified as female, and 7 percent identified as gender non-conforming or non-binary. Over 65% of our interviews were conducted with individuals between the ages 11 and 25 (median age of 22). The majority identified as people of color or American Indian. Twenty-three (23%) percent identified as part of an immigrant community. Many identified as a member of the LGBTQ community. Eighteen participants identified as having a "cognitive difficulty" (which includes mental health illnesses). Sixty percent (60%) of participants identified as having an urban residence, 27% as suburban, and 13% as rural. Forty-eight percent of participants said Hennepin County was their residence, followed by 23% as Ramsey County, and 29% in Greater Minnesota.

Surveys

While our priority was interpersonal networking and outreach we believed that we could not reach many potential voices this way, especially across the entire state of Minnesota. To include more people we created an online survey to quickly capture people's best thinking about what it means for young women to thrive, barriers they face, strengths and assets, and key areas for action. The survey was also translated into Spanish and back translated for accuracy by a native Spanish speaker.

The survey was created using an online tool at the University of Minnesota called Qualtrics. The UROC team launched the survey on January 24, 2017 and emailed a link to the online survey to all the working group and Cabinet members, professional networks, statewide listservs and more. We also asked the WFMN and Governor's Office to promote the survey link. Survey inclusion criteria asked individuals to self-select as a young woman aged 12-24 or a community member who surrounds young women. The survey closed on April 2, 2017. The survey had 332 responses; 265 of which provided detailed qualitative information. Demographic questions were included at the end of the survey and were optional and we had a low response rate for demographic data.

The majority of survey participants identified as a "working professional" (55%), just over a third (37%) identified as a young woman/gender non-binary person, and 17% identified as "other" which included family members. On the whole, survey participants were older than interview participants, with a median age of survey respondents at 31 years old. And unlike the interviews, a majority of participants who completed demographic information identified as "white" at 58%. However, compared to interviews, the survey was completed by people living in more counties across Minnesota. Overall, the survey gathered information from a slightly older generation of women, many of whose work involves young women.

Iterative Analysis

All data was analyzed using constant-comparative analysis and thematic coding to sift the data points into concrete recommendations for the *Blueprint* and additional findings presented here. The process was iterative, meaning that the UROC team developed components and showed them to working groups and the Cabinet for input, changes, and course corrections.

The process of analyzing, and syncing community perspectives for this project was performed as an iterative (or inductive) process to coincide with and drive the data collection process. The UROC team of research assistants transcribed qualitative field notes collected from working groups, interviews (group and individual), and surveys. This data was open-coded by the entire UROC researcher team using NVivo software. Axial coding informed by secondary data analysis and quantitative data analysis was then conducted to further develop the results of the open coding for additional content.

The UROC team coded the data into five categories: assets/strengths; barriers/disparities; solutions and recommendations; indicators and measures of success; and models and examples of good work. Using NVivo, this coded output was analyzed as a whole and by community for each of the eight communities. Each coded output was reviewed and summarized by two team members for the key themes, quotes and recommendations. We trained and engaged all of the research assistants in this task, making sure to assign coded output to team members who were not part of each working group. Then team members who worked with each working group reviewed and refined the analysis.

To create the recommendations for the *Blueprint* all the output summaries were analyzed and synthesized into topic areas. Then, each recommendation was crafted based on the data by looking at stated barriers, assets, and community-based understanding of what it means for young women to thrive. Our whole UROC-YWI MN research team participated in providing feedback. As noted above, this process included numerous check-ins, reviews, and feedback opportunities from the Young Women's Cabinet and working group members. Figure 4 provides a visual representation of how the data we collected was conceptualized.

Figure 4. Analysis Process
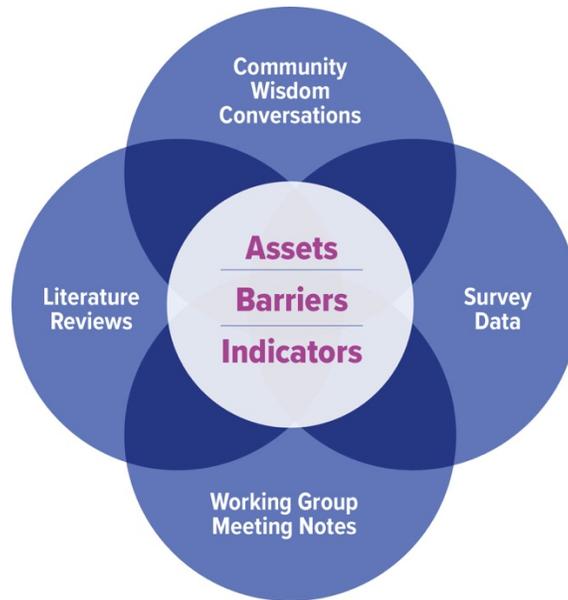
The UROC team also surfaced a broad assortment of community-grounded indicators and perspectives around economics, education, health, leadership, safety, and institutional factors that are described in the findings section and listed in full in Appendix E.

The process allowed for community buy-in and critical input from young women and people who work directly with young women at every step. The research engagement process created many and regular opportunities for "course corrections," check-ins and refinements as part of our iterative process. With young women in the drivers' seat, the plan is also relevant to conditions today.

Limitations

The primary limitation was time. This was a fast project out of necessity. The UROC team needed to complete a draft of the *Blueprint* during the 2016-17 legislative session if the information was to be used during the State budget planning process. We collected data during the Minnesota winter over the holiday season and project participants were busy people in high demand. Further, there are many knowledgeable people with important insights that we were not able to engage in the project for various reasons. Many people indicated interest in participating but were not able given the time frame. Our team of research assistants worked hard to connect working group members and schedule meetings that would work for the majority of participants. We also heard from some stakeholders that they did not trust the process or one or more of the institutions leading the effort (including the University of Minnesota, the Governor's Office, Women's Foundation of Minnesota, etc.).

The UROC team reviewed many secondary reports and explored quantitative data that contain important information that could help drive the YWI MN initiative. This includes community-based reports, the scholarly literature, media reporting, US Census data, Minnesota Student Survey data, and more. This critical information shaped how we conceptualized and analyzed the qualitative data. However, given the time constraints of this project the UROC team was not able to fully integrate quantitative and secondary data into this report. A list of some key resources is provided the bibliography in Appendix F.

Findings

The research engagement process yielded tremendous knowledge about the strengths and assets of young women and their communities. It also surfaced barriers faced by young women of color, American Indian young women, LGBTQ young people, immigrants and refugees, young women with disabilities and young women living in greater Minnesota. Some of these barriers include dominant narratives, institutional practices, and societal structures that disproportionately impact young women in these communities.

The purpose of the research engagement process was to work within eight communities to identify community-based knowledge and a plan of action to guide YWI MN implementation over the next seven years. It is clear that this work is just the beginning. The UROC team analyzed and synthesized data from the research engagement process to produce a *Blueprint* document, which contains 20 specific recommendations within six action areas. As noted above, findings described here are a companion to the *Blueprint*. Here we share deeper and broader qualitative findings from the working groups, interviews (community wisdom conversations) and online surveys to go a little deeper than the recommendations. Findings are described in four sections.

Section one describes findings from the research engagement process about the framework and principles that participants think should animate implementation of the *Blueprint*. The framework provides community-based wisdom and guidance on how to approach the work, rather than proscribing specific steps or actions to take. This section concludes with a high-level overview of the 20 recommendations for action.

Section two describes core knowledge and experiences that the process identified as contextual factors that shape both assets and barriers for young women. This information sheds light on community-identified factors and experiences that shape environments in which young women can thrive and that block young women from thriving. Here we dig deeper beyond the recommendations to share additional information that participants in the research engagement process identified as important. This is critical background and understanding that can help shape the YWI MN implementation and may yield important areas of work in addition to the recommendations.

Section three provides a description of community-specific knowledge and wisdom related to young women in Minnesota. The process highlighted deeply intersectional experiences of oppression and pathways forward. But young women and their communities from each group also highlighted unique experiences, knowledge and histories that are highly relevant for YWI MN implementation. We explore findings related specifically to young women in the African American, African Immigrant, American Indian, Asian American and Pacific Islander, Latina/x and Hispanic, LGBTQ communities and young women with disabilities, and from Greater Minnesota. Each community surfaced unique specific themes, strengths and barriers as well as nuanced ways that common themes impact them.

Finally, section four describes findings related to quantitative measurement of thriving using community-based indicators. Participants were clear that quantitative data is important but by no means tells the complete story. The research engagement process identified many novel ways of conceptualizing what to measure and how to capture quantitative data. The main take-away is that in addition to looking at individual and community-level outcomes, we must also identify and build ways to measure inputs and supports (or lack thereof) for young women to thrive from institutions, government entities, policymakers, non-profits, philanthropy, research and academia, and broader society.

SECTION 1: FRAMEWORK AND PRINCIPLES FOR ACTION

The research engagement process identified a framework for action that includes action areas and guiding principles. The action areas were derived from previous listening sessions conducted by the Women's Foundation of Minnesota (WFM) and refined through our research engagement process. The principles and recommendations were developed through a research engagement process, engaging stakeholders in co-creation.

The research engagement findings are clear. Participants strongly asserted that action taken within the *Blueprint* will be most beneficial if targeted and tailored to specific communities and their unique experiences.

The framework contains **six interconnected action areas**, displayed in Figure 5. These are health and wellness, education and lifelong learning, cultural and self-identity, safety and violence prevention, family and caregiving, and financial stability and prosperity.

Figure 5. Action Areas
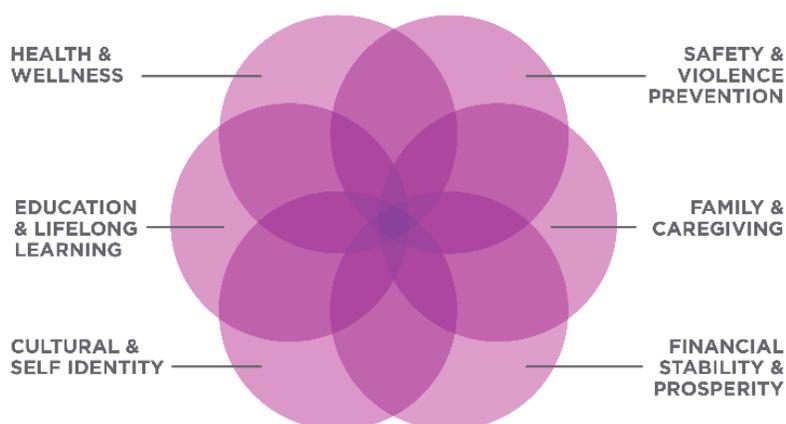
Participants in the process highlighted the myriad ways that these areas are overlapping and intertwined. For example, wellness is related to safety and violence prevention. Personal income and financial stability is rooted in educational attainment. The wage gap experienced by women may result from many barriers including education, violence, a health crisis, or family and caregiving responsibilities. These barriers are even further exacerbated by racism and discrimination against people with disabilities and LGBTQ young people. As supported by much research, participants also said that adverse life experiences, trauma and structural oppression have cumulative and interconnecting effects throughout the lifespan and generations. The research engagement process found that creating conditions for young women to thrive requires action in all of these areas. Thus, the *Blueprint* is divided into these six areas, yet all are visually represented as overlapping.

The process also surfaced seven guiding principles for action.

These were surfaced within and across communities as critical to the ethos that participants believed should animate implementation of the *Blueprint* and any other activities to work toward young women thriving.

1. Young women and their communities should be centered in the process.
2. Showcasing individual role models and examples of thriving women from diverse communities for each recommendation will help inspire the change.
3. Outcomes for young women are shaped by the successes of families and communities so the recommendations require multi-generational solutions.
4. The impacts of sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism, and ableism have real and sustained impact on people and they are embedded in our institutions, practices and policies.
5. Social change is iterative and evolving. We try something, learn, change and retry until we get it right.
6. Solutions and "problems" are found in the same place. There are many potential solutions.
7. Shared accountability, we are all potentially part of the solution./

In addition, the research engagement process strongly articulated the need to use a community-level focus based on a deep understanding of history, rather than simply focusing on individual-level outcomes. This included a strong theme of inter-generational work among women in each community as a foundation for thriving. **Information surfaced in the research engagement process indicates that these principles for "how" to do intersectional gender equity work will help the recommendations achieve the desired outcomes.**

Evolving Understandings of Gender and Differently-abled Young Women

"Since our initiative focuses on black women, indigenous women, women of color and international women, we cannot talk about women without talking about other genders erased by colonialism."
– YWI MN COMMUNITY WISDOM CONVERSATION PARTICIPANT

"We are also disabled through neoliberalism and capitalism, for example pesticides from migrant farm workers and nuclear testing in certain communities. These babies were born with severe disabilities and birth defects. There is a history of violence and colonialism that is tied to certain disabilities."
– YWI MN COMMUNITY WISDOM CONVERSATION PARTICIPANT

Young women engaged in this process, including young women on the YWI Cabinet and research assistants at UROC, are developing new understandings of identities and priorities that older generations and others can learn from. They see the ways that our multiple identities are interwoven and work together to shape our experiences. Many of these young women advocated for less rigid identity definitions and deeper understanding of how we experience identities as a spectrum rather than in a binary.

Young women engaged in our process described being uncomfortable with rigid ideas of gender as either woman or man (often referred to as the "gender binary"). The YWI Cabinet, many interviewees, and the UROC research assistant staff were very clear that the term "woman" should be inclusive of transgender women, gender non-conforming people and others who experience the world as a woman-identified person. Many also advocated for moving beyond the acronym LGBT to challenge our basic assumptions about biological sex, gender and sexual orientation. Some young women and gender non-conforming youth in our process believe that the gender binary in the US results from colonialism and the ideas of a dichotomy between women and men are rooted in patriarchal moral or religious beliefs.

Others discussed their cultural knowledge about the gender binary by pointing to examples of a more fluid gender identity that exists within their communities, such as the belief that Hmong shamans can change sex and the concept of "two-spirit" in some American Indian communities. This is a new area of identity development, one where an older generation may be less familiar or comfortable. This is true for marginalized and dominant communities alike, because the gender binary and gender roles are felt almost everywhere.

The UROC team explored several ways of representing this emerging notion of gender that we heard repeatedly from young women in our process. For example, in writing we tried always including the phrase "transgender women and gender non-conforming people." We also experimented with using the convention of "woman+" to affirmatively signify inclusion of transgender women and gender non-conforming people. However, we decided not to use this convention because there is not yet widespread agreement and there were differences of opinion and experience expressed throughout our process. We believe this is important work and we try to be intentional in this report to present an inclusive understanding of "woman." We provide more information in a glossary in Appendix G with terms and definitions.

Young women engaged in the research engagement process also described "disability" as part of a spectrum of abilities. The category of disability is very broad and includes many different aspects that are both genetic and acquired, including mobility, cognition, mental health, and more. Some participants preferred to reframe the label "disability" to "differently abled." Many participants expressed understandings of disability through a "social model." This model posits that while the experiences of disability are very real, disability is also socially constructed through capitalism, patriarchy, and societal ideals about what is normal and healthy. Young women also show that many attributes and characteristics that our society considers "disabilities" are experienced as positive abilities that allow young women to connect with others and have more empathy. Further, young women with disabilities possess valuable insights and knowledge that is often unrecognized by dominant society. Young women are working hard to dismantle stigmas and misinformation about people with disabilities.

Participants described how the label of disability impacts different communities. Young women surfaced connections between race and diagnosis of mental illness, as well as discussing the ways health and disability disparities may be caused by racism. These themes are discussed in more depth below. They also highlighted higher rates of abuse, violence and sexual assault among young women with disabilities. Further, participants highlighted the widespread social norm of denial of sexuality and sexual desire imposed on people with disabilities.

Terms, concepts and identities in this space may be natural and understood for some, but are not easy for everyone. The UROC team has explored these concepts at length as part of our engaged research process because the participants identified them as important. We invite us all to learn together. It is our belief that we do not have to fully understand something in order to respect it.

What does it mean for Young Women to Thrive?

Our process surfaced a great deal of information about what young women think it means to thrive. We summarize that here. To thrive, young women cannot be limited by inequities, gender norms, racial and cultural stereotypes, heterosexism, ableism, and societal expectations for girls and women. There is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to creating a world where all young women can thrive. A new approach to the old problem of gender inequality is needed. We learned through the research engagement process that this new approach should encompass all aspects of young women's identities, including their communities, cultures, and experiences, with a lens that sees the ways identities intersect to shape outcomes. This "intersectionality" requires aligned and coordinated action across sectors, including public, private, community, and individuals. **The UROC team heard loud and clear that participants in the research engagement process believe targeted solutions are needed to reach the universal goal of equal opportunity so all young women can thrive.**

The research engagement process tells us that young women in the eight communities are thriving when they:

- Are supported by a loving community with positive role models and a strong cultural identity.
- Have access to formal education as well as the life skills they need to make decisions.
- Feel safe and free from all forms of violence in their home, school, community and work.
- Are physically and emotionally healthy, and feel good about themselves.
- Their families are financially stable and they are able to pursue their own dreams.
- Are not limited by gender norms, racial and cultural stereotypes, and societal expectations for girls and women.[16]

Necessity of Data Disaggregation

"Policies are based on data – therefore data needs to be more broken down."

– YWI MN COMMUNITY WISDOM CONVERSATION PARTICIPANT

"Need to look at data in multiple lenses – we shouldn't lump data together. When we dive deeper, we can see significant disparities."

– YWI MN COMMUNITY WISDOM CONVERSATION PARTICIPANT

"We need to tease out the data so we can see where help is needed the most."

– YWI MN COMMUNITY WISDOM CONVERSATION PARTICIPANT

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[16] The goals surfaced in the YWI MN action research process are in line with the Search Institute's 40 developmental assets needed for strong adolescent development. http://www.search-institute.org/content/40-developmental-assets-adolescents-ages-12-18.

Participants in the research engagement process identified the need for deeper disaggregation of existing data. The purpose behind wanting more disaggregation of data is to foster more intersectional analyses. This theme came out strongly within the working groups. The working groups advocated for disaggregated data to highlight deeper intersections and identify areas of greatest need, with the caution of avoiding stereotyping and stigmatizing narratives. For example, if we disaggregate data on gender and race by income level, then we can visualize the intersections between gender, race/ethnicity and class. It also shows the intersectional oppressions related to class, LGBTQ status, and disabilities.

In general, participants in the research engagement process wanted to see more detail on class and economic status. Members of the disability and LGBTQ working groups, as well as many people we interviewed in these communities, wanted to see data describing how race/ethnicity, class, and place (i.e. rural, suburban, and urban) intersect with disabilities and LGBTQ status. Likewise, working groups based in racial and ethnic communities wanted to see how disabilities, LGBTQ status and place of residence impact their community's experiences.

Chart 2, below, shows how disaggregation of data can powerfully illuminate areas of greatest disparity. The graphic below shows the median (or middle point) for total personal income for all individuals aged 16-65 in Minnesota. Median is the halfway point where half the group is above and half the group is below. If we were looking at the mean or average the numbers would be much higher because big earners would skew the numbers. This chart includes all individuals categorized within the American Community survey as in the workforce (including employed individuals and those seeking employment). We included all individuals in the workforce, including those who were unemployed and without income, in order to include the full range of personal income within each community. The chart shows the personal income by gender, race, and place; as well as how all of these interact to exacerbate inequities for overlapping identities. For example, American Indian women living in greater Minnesota have much lower personal income compared to white women in greater Minnesota and American Indian women in the Metro area. These numbers are not perfect, but the chart shows how disaggregation can help illuminate intersectional disparities.

Chart 2. Sample of Data Disaggregation: Personal Income of Minnesotans Aged 16-65

SAMPLE: PERSONAL INCOME OF MINNESOTANS AGED 16 TO 65

| ALL MINNESOTA | GENDER | GENDER • RACE | GENDER • RACE • PLACE |

$36,090

WOMEN $30,491

MEN $42,107

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN $20,623

WHITE WOMEN $31,580

ASIA/PACIFIC ISLANDER WOMEN $38,100

AFRICAN IMMIGRANT WOMEN $19,545

AMERICAN INDIAN WOMEN $20,900

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN GREATER MN $13,600

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN METRO MN $21,717

WHITE WOMEN GREATER MN $26,425

WHITE WOMEN METRO MN $37,121

AMERICAN INDIAN WOMEN GREATER MN $18,000

AMERICAN INDIAN WOMEN METRO MN $24,302

DATA FROM THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

The working groups reviewed and critiqued multiple iterations of a data brief analyzing US census data to explore key domains related to thriving for young women of color, American Indian young women, LGBTQ young people, immigrants and refugees, young women with disabilities and young women living in greater Minnesota. The feedback surfaced this strong desire for appropriate disaggregation of data as a potential data-driven mechanism for action. More work is required to fully implement the vision for quantitative data that was articulated throughout the research engagement process. Section four below provides some discussion, but what is needed is a more thorough quantitative process that is shaped by community perspectives.

20 Recommendations for Action

The primary aim of the research engagement process was to develop recommendations for the *Blueprint*. The full *Blueprint* describes each recommendation. It includes the full recommendation text with a brief description of what inspired the recommendation. The *Blueprint* also provides a brief highlight of outcomes, barriers, strengths, community considerations, and sample strategies for implementation that were identified by the research engagement process. Below Figure 6 provides a list of all twenty recommendations organized into action areas. Of course, many recommendations could fit into several action areas since there is overlap.

Figure 6. Overview of Recommendations for Action

ACROSS ALL ACTION AREAS
1. Build on Assets
2. Disaggregate Key Data
3. Reframe Harmful Narratives

FINANCIAL STABILITY & PROSPERITY
4. Build Gender and Community-Oriented Financial Literacy and Life Skills
5. Enhance Career Pathways

SAFETY & VIOLENCE PREVENTION
6. Increase Awareness of Violence Against Young Women
7. Expand Housing Options
8. Increase Services for Survivors of Violence

EDUCATION & LIFE-LONG LEARNING
9. Develop Young Women Leaders
10. Create Accurate/Representative Curriculum
11. Build a Better Post-Secondary Pipeline
12. Increase Diversity of K-12 Staff (+ Training)

CULTURAL & SELF-IDENTITY
13. Ensure Community Spaces and Conversations
14. Respect and Teach Multiple Languages

HEALTH & WELLNESS
15. Increase Access to Women's Health Care
16. Increase Mental Health Support
17. Prevent Violence through Healthy Relationships

FAMILY & CAREGIVING
18. Increase Access to Childcare
19. Change Gender and Generational Roles
20. Facilitate Holistic Mentorship

The full *Blueprint* can be found at http://www.wfmn.org/ywi-mn-blueprint.pdf.

Below we provide a list of the twenty recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Build on Assets
Conduct a thorough environmental scan across the state to identify existing efforts to support young women in Minnesota.

Recommendation 2: Disaggregate Key Data
Institutions make it a standard practice to disaggregate data by gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, income, sexuality, disability and place.

Recommendation 3: Reframe Harmful Narratives
Promote messages that ensure young women can experience the world without limitations.

Recommendation 4: Build Gender and Community-Oriented Financial Literacy and Life Skills
Ensure young women have access to community-specific opportunities for training and education on financial literacy, life skills, and entrepreneurialism tailored to young women, which are built on cultural, linguistic, community, and geographic assets.

Recommendation 5: Enhance Career Pathways
Ensure young women have opportunities and pathways to high-skill, high-wage careers and jobs; increase participation in STEM fields and technical careers; and increase advancement opportunities and pay for young women in female-dominated employment sectors.

Recommendation 6: Increase Awareness of Violence Against Young Women
Develop and implement a public awareness campaign to highlight the incidence and everyday impacts of violence against women within specific community contexts, de-stigmatize survivors of gender-based violence, and connect more survivors of violence to services.

Recommendation 7: Expand Housing Options
Increase housing options for young women and their families, including rentals and homeownership opportunities, as well as short, medium, and long-term shelter.

Recommendation 8: Increase Services for Survivors of Violence
Increase awareness and supportive services for survivors of abuse and violence with an intersectional lens.

Recommendation 9: Develop Young Women Leaders
Develop the capacity of young women for political and civic leadership.

Recommendation 10: Create Accurate/Representative Curriculum
Create accurate and representative cultural and historical education at the K-12 level that reflects the diversity of the country, both past and present.

Recommendation 11: Build a Better Post-Secondary Pipeline
Build a pipeline specifically designed to prepare and support post-secondary attainment for young women who experience the greatest disparities.

Recommendation 12: Increase Diversity of K-12 Staff (+ Training)
Increase the diversity of public school staff at all levels to better reflect the K-12 student body in Minnesota. Assure that all staff have appropriate training, resources and supports to develop greater competency and respect for all students.

Recommendation 13: Ensure Community Spaces and Conversations
Support communities to create their own multi-generational spaces to hold conversation and dialogue about gender, race, place and other intersecting identities within and across communities.

Recommendation 14: Respect and Teach Multiple Languages
Support community and educational pathways for young women to build and explore connections among language, culture, and positive self-identity in communities of color, American Indian communities, LGBTQ communities, immigrant communities and disabilities communities.

Recommendation 15: Increase Access to Women's Health Care
Promote access to women's health education and services built on cultural and community strengths so that young women know about their bodies and can make appropriate and healthy choices as they grow and age.

Recommendation 16: Increase Mental Health Support
Increase access to culturally-specific mental health services and supports for young women in Minnesota.

Recommendation 17: Prevent Violence through Healthy Relationships
Educate young women and men about healthy relationships, harmful narratives and norms, and promoting positive self-identities to reduce violence.

Recommendation 18: Increase Access to Childcare
Increase access to childcare and early education opportunities that are accessible (day, time, location), affordable, high quality, and culturally appropriate for young women and their families.

Recommendation 19: Change Gender and Generational Roles
Ensure social norms are expanded beyond traditional gender roles.

Recommendation 20: Facilitate Holistic Mentorship
Support community-based, multigenerational mentoring and life coaching for young women.

SECTION 2: CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

The iterative and thematic analysis of community-specific data surfaced themes that participants in the research engagement process identified as important context for creating equity in outcomes. Much of this context relates to wide-spread experiences, narratives, and oppressions that impact people across genders within each community. Thus, while not necessarily specific to young women, the themes are highly relevant assets, strengths, and experiences of intersectional oppression; the information is meant to support and enhance the 20 recommendations that were approved by the Young Women's Cabinet.

Some of the topics presented here are already associated with recommendations, while others are so common and foundational that they apply more broadly and are touched on by many of the recommendations. Some of the topics did not lend themselves to a recommendation that could be implemented by this kind of initiative, but were nonetheless identified by participants as important for how the initiative proceeds.

First and foremost, participants affirmed the centrality of <u>focusing on assets</u> as a way to activate and act upon the strengths of young women and their communities. They provided robust information about things they felt were supporting young women in their communities, including families, friends, community networks and support, cultural knowledge and self-empowerment, mentorship, and some programs and services. Several recommendations in the *Blueprint* address the need to build on assets and surface strengths through young women's leadership.

While affirming assets, participants also raised and discussed many barriers faced daily by young women of color, American Indian young women, LGBTQ young people, immigrants and refugees, young women with disabilities and young women living in greater Minnesota. These include schools, narratives and stereotypes, policing, transportation, poverty, lack of mental health support, violence and more.

In this section we discuss key themes that working groups, interviewees and survey participants came back to again and again as supportive or as creating barriers for young women. In some instances things described as supportive for some, such as family relationships and love, create barriers for other young women, such as if their families were absent or abusive or if their family enforced a patriarchal notion of women. This contradiction is an important lesson for building equity. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. Each young woman's experience is her own.

Many participants saw assets in the notion that solutions and problems are found in the same place. In discussions, this also emerged as a tension between identifying gaps and barriers while still focusing on assets and strengths. Some people who participated in the research engagement process were wary of

moving too quickly to identify "positive" things for fear of sweeping large-scale structural inequalities under the rug. At the same time, there was a strong desire to avoid focusing on barriers as these have historically been misunderstood and have resulted in stigma and stereotyping of communities.

Below we explore themes that were common across working groups, interviews and surveys. It is, of course, not possible to discuss all of the relevant contextual factors for an initiative that seeks to build equity for young women across many communities, experiences and geographies. Rather, we seek to surface an array of critical factors, themes and topics raised by participants in the research engagement process. We know that deep rooted change necessary to build equity for all young women requires growth, evolution and iteration in learning and knowledge production. Thus, this represents a first step.

Family Relationships

"Outside the family realm, young women are dealing with societal pressure to look/act/present in a certain way and that can severely limit one's self image and comfort in participating in activities."

- YWI MN SURVEY PARTICIPANT

"Young women are still being raised to bow down to men, and do as they are told. Women are all 'stupid' up here [Northern Minnesota]. There is no basic respect, just in everyday normal interactions. And domestic violence is very prevalent. It is in fact expected, it is 'normal' up here."

- YWI MN SURVEY PARTICIPANT

Family and familial relationships were identified as both a source of great strength and for some as a force perpetuating inequity. Many participants shared how families buffer against wide-scale structural inequalities by providing support, love and positive self-identity. Family can help young women see their strengths and provide guidance. However, many also described a generational divide between older family members and young women that can hinder the positive impact that families can have. Some described how family violence, patriarchal family structures, unsustainable work/family balance, family rejection of LGBTQ youth, and young women as family caregivers can create barriers for young women to thrive. But most agreed that young women's families should be seen as an asset in the work of YWI MN implementation.

Young women value their roles and responsibilities in their families. Many described that mothers, aunts and grandmothers are strong role models and pillars of their communities. Similarly, young women described tremendous support and self-identity they gain from their families. For many communities that participated in the research engagement process, family relationships are at the core of personal identities and they buffer against discrimination, oppression, and hardship.

However, a common theme was that family responsibilities can make it harder for young women to pursue educational goals, develop a successful career, and maintain social connections. They discussed the double-bind where girls are expected to help in the house, be great students and care for boys and men. But boys and young men are not always held to the same standards.

All the working groups and many other participants placed this double-bind in the context of broader social and economic inequality. For example, groups discussed how workplace discrimination against women of color makes it harder to find a high-paying job that in turn makes it harder to provide for their families. Several working groups highlighted patriarchal family structures in some of their communities as harmful to young women. This included cultural perspectives that women are less-than men, that

women should take care of men or be subservient. They highlighted these kinds of harmful social narratives within their communities that need to be addressed as well as addressing harmful social narratives in dominant society. It was suggested that social norms for men also need to change.

Working groups highlighted the need for affordable and quality childcare. Young women often provide childcare for their families and care for their own children. This can present barriers to young women who are parenting. Thus, more widespread availability of childcare could help reduce these barriers. Likewise, it could help overcome the cultural barrier that young women should take care of children instead of pursuing their hopes and dreams. Working groups presented a vision where it is possible to do both.

Culture and Community-Building

"There must be a commitment to non-judgement, safe spaces to allow women to
be honest with themselves and others about who they are, what they want and what they value."
– YWI MN SURVEY PARTICIPANT

"This generational conversation is important. But we have experienced this with our own mothers. So it's good to pull it into context. Maybe our own mothers acted out of their fear based on what they went through when they corrected us or told us something about our behaviors and appearance. We need to have more around the table to have these conversations. As a community, we need to be on the same page to understand each other. We can speak with love (or be honest when we're not speaking with love). Each generation is going through different stuff. These cross-generational conversations are really important."
– YWI MN AFRICAN AMERICAN WORKING GROUP PARTICIPANT

"It is important for women to get together and mobilize, whether that is through social media, organizations, or protests. Even one voice is enough to be a leader of change."
– YWI MN COMMUNITY WISDOM CONVERSATION PARTICIPANT

Participants in the process discussed the important role of community spaces that provide a place of refuge and strength for young women of color, American Indian young women, LGBTQ young people, immigrants and refugees, and young women with disabilities. Working groups discussed a lack of spaces in schools, work and the wider world where their culture and history is understood and is the norm. Participants described their experiences in Minnesota as a place where most spaces in society cater to the dominant society.

Participants discussed widespread social narratives and practices that create divisions within communities. This can take the form of generational differences, class differences, ethnicity/place of origin differences, ideas about hard work, assimilation, colorism, and more. It was agreed that these kinds of intracommunity divisions, hierarchies and oppressions are harmful to young women thriving and barriers to success. Participants believed the solution was in creating intentional ways for young women and others in their communities to connect and build community together.

The working groups reflected on the value and importance of the kinds of processes used in the research engagement process as something of lasting value as a way to build and find common cause within each group and between groups. All the working groups agreed that this kind of process should

happen more frequently and in more formal and funded ways. Specifically, groups highlighted the values of connecting within communities of women and across generations to repair some generational wounds and to build role models and mentorship between older and younger.

Cross-group commonalities and intersections were also described. Working groups discussed how the research engagement process facilitated by UROC illuminated ways that different marginalized communities experience similar things. This builds greater connections, political power, and strength. Finding and acting from a common cause means everyone can thrive.

Culture and community were common themes related to the majority of programs and services that were mentioned by working groups as supporting young women to thrive. They described supportive programs, services, institutions and practices as those that recognize and celebrate culture and history. Participants described assets as providing helpful and necessary assistance within a culturally respectful framework. Successful programs and services were described as centered on young woman within their broader social and community environments. Further, they were described as accessible, such as providing transportation, interpreters, meals, etc.

Working groups provided many examples of things that are working to support young women from their communities.

Language, Culture and Identity

"When young Native American students know their language and culture, they do better in school. It's a protective factor for them."

– YWI MN AMERICAN INDIAN WORKING GROUP PARTICIPANT

"This is America, you have to speak English."

– YWI MN SURVEY PARTICIPANT

Four of the working groups (African Immigrant, American Indian, Asian American and Pacific Islander, and Latina/x and Hispanic), and many participants in interviews and surveys, described multilingualism as an asset. **A young woman's ability to speak her native language, or the language of her elders, connects her across generations and builds cultural and self-identity.** Language abilities were connected to the strong themes that emerged in the research engagement process around inter-generational approaches and historical perspectives. Language connects across generations and builds an understanding of where one comes from.

Language suppression was described as a central component of cultural imperialism and bias. For example, several working groups discussed how accents are viewed negatively in the US and Minnesota. Young women with accents are impacted by harmful social narratives about immigrants and refugees and they experience racism and discrimination. The American Indian working group highlighted the role of language suppression in the subjugation of indigenous peoples in the Americas and worldwide, as well as the importance of language revival in shaping positive self and community identity.

Participants in our process talked about the barriers that language can present for young women in the US for whom English is not their first language. Many new immigrants and refugees in the US must learn English as a second language. Language barriers create challenges in communicating with health professionals, government officials, school staff, and much more. Furthermore, non-native English

speakers may rely on their children, frequently young women, as translators for services and connection with government and others outside their community. Participants suggested that young women who are immigrants or refugees may face bullying or discrimination due to their accents or background, including employment and housing discrimination.

Valuing multilingualism and rebuilding languages that have been suppressed were described as a critical resource for building strong identities and communities. Negative social and cultural narratives about language were seen as a barrier and a much needed area of culture change. Language retention, reclamation and promotion help young women connect with their elders, their past, and their present-day community. It honors their community and culture helping build a strong self and community identity.

Schools, Education and Curriculum

"It really seems that our cornerstone issue right now is education. All Minnesotans know and recognize that we have a problem with education disparities, but the issue is intersectional. Band-Aid policy solutions are being proposed when we need to go from the ground up."

- YWI MN SURVEY PARTICIPANT

[We need to]… "create culturally-relevant educational experiences rich with teachers, administrators, mentors who reflect the ethnicity and life experiences of students and their families."

- YWI MN SURVEY PARTICIPANT

School spaces were described as critical institutional settings, with daily practices and policies that could promote success and thriving, but that most often hinder young women of color, American Indian young women, LGBTQ young people, immigrants and refugees, young women with disabilities and young women living in greater Minnesota. These included experiences of bullying, deep cultural misunderstandings between teachers and students, lack of community role models, policing and labelling of students with diagnoses, tracking into non-college prep courses, lack of diversity in college prep classes, curricular gaps, and more. Harmful experiences included both unstructured interactions in educational spaces and institutional practices and policies.

All groups highlighted how these negative experiences are exacerbated by a lack of diverse teachers and professors in schools and higher education. This was a major theme echoed across all aspects of the research engagement process. At the same time, participants emphasized the need for cultural competency among all teachers, staff and educational professionals. They suggested that this should be part of teacher training, such as requiring teachers to take an ethnic studies class or some equivalent.

Participants provided a great deal of information about racism that is experienced by young women in Minnesota school systems. Multiple participants described examples and personal stories related to racist practices and microaggressions by teachers, classmates, and school staff. Participants in interviews relayed experiences that were harmful, for example a Latina girl was told by classmates that she would be "deported" if she continued playing with a white boy on the playground. Similarly, a Muslim girl was repeatedly called a "terrorist" by her classmates. These experiences have a profound negative impact on young women's educational success and overall outcomes.

A very common theme all working groups had was that the history they learn in school does not tell the story of who they are as communities. This was identified as harmful to communities and a widespread

barrier to thriving for young women. Many identified the impact of knowing one's history as shaping one's ability to thrive through cultural and self-identity. Participants in our process expressed that the way history is told about people of color, people living in poverty, immigrants, American Indians, people with disabilities and LGBTQ people is often inaccurate, contains harmful stereotypes, or is erased completely. Participants drew a direct link between what is taught in schools, widespread beliefs and knowledge in dominant society, and treatment of marginalized people.

For example, it is harmful and discordant for American Indian students to learn about Europeans first contact with the Americas in a positive light when it led to genocide of their people. Many participants described the need for this kind of re-framing and broader understanding of history, both within their communities and in the broader dominant society. They pointed out that a lack of full understanding of history impacts the dominant culture as well. The history taught in schools becomes part of popular narratives and forms the basis for inaccurate/harmful policies.

Participants in the research engagement process surfaced the historical roots of the intersections between harmful social narratives, biases, racism, and discrimination as deeply embedded in institutions, policies and practices. They emphasized that a more inclusive history can help undo these intertwined barriers.

The content of educational curricula in Minnesota was deemed deficient in several key ways. Participants identified a lack of curricular focus on what they identified as accurate history and historical trajectories of people of color, American Indians, LGBTQ youth and people with disabilities. They suggested that these educational deficiencies impact self-understanding and lead to false and harmful social narratives about them in the dominant culture. Likewise, several groups suggested that the educational system is biased toward history of the dominant culture. Participants pointed to gaps in the public education system as a leading cause of general population-level lack of knowledge and understanding of people of color, American Indians, immigrants, LGBTQ people, and people with disabilities, and at its worst, fueling microaggressions and hate-based discrimination.

Participants talked about undocumented status and its impact on school, access to resources, employment, and fears for family members if the family has different documentation status. Many interviews and surveys echoed these same themes. They said there is "no such thing as an illegal person." However, simply being an immigrant in and of itself can raise barriers and is a source of widespread discrimination. Working groups and other participants also suggested that many new immigrants are not aware of resources that are available to them, such as healthcare assistance. Immigration and the need to maintain immigration paperwork can be used as a form of manipulation, coercion and labor/sex trafficking.

At the same time, education was also viewed as an asset with the potential to change the life trajectory and support thriving for young women. Our process highlighted some examples of what is working, including culturally-specific schools and spaces, great mentors and role models in schools, and programs that provide key information and resources (i.e. financial resources), and self-empowerment.

Education was identified as a keystone to the other action areas. The school building can be a place to access healthcare, financial support, healthy meals, and knowledge. When a school is doing things "right," the school has effectively connected with parents and has made the school context accessible. Positive cultural and self-identity is highly influenced by how schools handle racism, exclusion, history, culture, biases, discrimination, etc. Further, educational attainment is critical to future financial success.

Several working groups also identified parental trust and valuing of education as an unrealized strength. But this can also be a barrier for parents to understanding the biases their children face in school and how education and schools may be harmful.

Harmful Narratives and Stereotypes

"Look into our social structure and how young women function inside our society; and how young women function in their lives … you can see the negativity and negative effects on them."
– YWI MN COMMUNITY WISDOM CONVERSATION PARTICIPANT

"We are oftentimes kept in our place by this invisible cage made of all sorts of rules about what a proper woman looks like or how one behaves. We are governed by these rules on what makes us a worthy human being."
– YWI MN COMMUNITY WISDOM CONVERSATION PARTICIPANT

"They [students of color] are often pathologized as bad kids when in reality their trauma is what is showing up. The social messages reinforce all the negative, racist stereotypes they are exposed to on a regular basis."
– YWI MN COMMUNITY WISDOM CONVERSATION PARTICIPANT

Participants in the research engagement process were very clear that daily encounters with people who express harmful narratives, stereotypes, misrepresentations, and falsehoods is a significant barrier to thriving for young women. As discussed above, much of this was linked to what is taught as official history in schools, but extends into many other arenas of life.

Participants described the impact of pervasive Eurocentric beauty standards and norms on young women of color. They described how media and pop culture create unrealistic and oppressive ideas of beauty that target young women. These standards negatively present themselves in hairstyles, dress, behaviors, culture, race, and gender. Oppressive beauty standards can lead to harmful behaviors, isolation, and negative feelings of one's body/image. It also celebrates whiteness, while disregarding women of color and indigenous women.

Participants discussed the emotional toll and added work for immigrants and refugees in having to understand and navigate multiple identities and cultures while living in the US. Many suggested that this can be exhausting and is extra work that non-immigrants do not have to do. Participants described the need to balance identity in the practice of language, actions, or dialect and said this can be a heavy load to bear for immigrant minorities in the midst of societal expectations and demands.

The African Immigrant group surfaced intersections with anti-Muslim and anti-Islam bias and violence. They discussed the dominant cultural narratives about the hijab and government surveillance in the era of terrorism. The Asian American and Pacific Island group highlighted the need to also include their stories as part of the immigrant experience. Likewise, the Latina(x) working group shared that they are often viewed as economic migrants even though for many their experience is as refugees fleeing violence.

Policing and Police Brutality

"Wellbeing is feeling safe in the street, and I don't mean because of police presence. Having resources for housing, education, and employment, mental health and community engagement could all be helpful."
– YWI MN SURVEY PARTICIPANT

"[White] police officers can take off their uniform, but we cannot take off our blackness."
– YWI MN COMMUNITY WISDOM CONVERSATION PARTICIPANT

Many participants highlighted policing and police brutality as a barrier to thriving, particularly for communities of color, immigrants and refugees, and American Indian communities. Many stated that from their experience, negative interactions with police are disproportionately experienced by black and brown people; and that this impacts young women. Currently, much of the civil and human rights advocacy work on mass incarceration focuses on boys and men of color. However, participants noted that rates of arrest and incarceration of women of color have also increased. This can have large collateral impact on children and families, since **most women in the prison system are mothers**. In addition, police brutality against men of color impacts the willingness of young women of color to call police for domestic violence and other crimes if they fear the police will react with violence. Participants shared that an underlying lack of trust between communities of color and the police has direct negative impacts on the safety of young women of color.

Reliable Transportation

"Access to transportation is a factor in education and safety, because if women with disabilities can't even make it to class, then transportation is clearly a systematic barrier to financial stability and education."
– YWI MN DISABILITIES WORKING GROUP PARTICIPANT

"Needing a ride to go somewhere - whether it is to buy groceries or visit family - can also put some young women in an especially vulnerable position."
– YWI MN SURVEY PARTICIPANT

Transportation is another critical component that can present structural barriers. Many people in our process highlighted transportation as an underlying barrier to opportunities, particularly for young women living in poverty. Many individuals highlighted the importance of transportation. Lack of safe, reliable, and affordable transportation can place young women in vulnerable positions. It also results in many missed opportunities and advancements (i.e. unemployment and educational resources).

For example, in one of our interviews, a participant described how some Hmong families are "reluctant to allow their women to drive," which means that young women may have limited access to some opportunities. Access alone, therefore, may not be enough for young women; some face unique community-based aspects of transportation that need to be considered.

Participants in our process also suggested that transportation is a particular problem in rural communities where there is very limited access to public transportation. It is very difficult for young women to travel to work, obtain essentials (such as food), and seek medical help due to the lack of

funding in transit systems. In many cases, they feel "stuck" in their little towns. Even more, lack of transportation can trap some young women in violent situations.

Poverty (Intersectional)

"The biggest barriers are financial, with families needing them for home help and care and also to earn money to help the family with current expenses. In some communities the expectation is that they [young women and girls] care for younger siblings and take care of housework, which limits their ability to go to college and participate in extracurricular activities."

- YWI MN SURVEY PARTICIPANT

An intersectional lens requires consideration of the way poverty and lack of resources impacts young women's abilities to thrive. Participants in our process suggested that many young women in their communities experience homelessness and poverty and that this impacts their ability to access healthy food and clean water which are obviously necessary for young women to thrive. Without these basic needs, young women cannot excel in other areas of their life.

Participants in the research engagement process discussed homelessness related to poverty as a significant barrier to thriving. Some pointed to current practices and policies related to rental housing, particularly the eviction process and unlawful detainer laws. Unlawful detainer laws is the legal process that landlords can use to evict a tenant for non-payment of rent. This can result in a criminal record, and substantially impacts a person's ability to obtain rental housing. Participants described how these policies and practices penalize women living in poverty who are not able to pay rent. It creates a criminal record and makes it much harder for young women and their families to obtain rental housing. They advocated changing these laws and policies so that young women can remove it from their record and obtain safe housing. Evictions are throwing more and more women and their families into homelessness. Further, poverty and homelessness intersect with domestic violence and trafficking. Abusers sometimes damage rental properties as a way of punishing a victim, and this can result in eviction.

Participants raised food security as a poverty-related issue affecting young women; and they affirmed that access to food is a basic right that should be available at all times, no matter your socioeconomic status. Food insecurity is defined as the state of either having limited or uncertain access to food that is nutritionally adequate, culturally acceptable, and safe, or having an uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.[17] Research on this topic concurs with findings from the research engagement process, and suggests that mothers and children are hit hardest by food insecurity. For example, a recent study found that household food insecurity, defined as a form of economic struggle that includes the lack of access to enough food for an active and healthy life, is associated with negative physical and mental health outcomes in children and adults, such as poor child development, increased hospitalizations, anemia, asthma, suicidal ideation, depression and anxiety, diabetes, and chronic disease.[18] Female-headed households have a household food insecurity prevalence rate of 34.4%, and households with young children under the age of six have a prevalence of 20.9%. These rates are significantly higher than the national rate of 14.3%.[19]

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[17] Bauer (2012).
[18] Chilton, Knowles, and Bloom (2016).
[19] Ibid.

For many students, school is the only place a meal is secure. Some schools have school gardens, where children learn how to garden and get to eat their food; others have "backpack programs," where donated food is sent home weekly or daily in a special backpack. At the very least, participants said that free and reduced meals should be expanded to include a wider range of incomes, as well as investigating alternative sources of food so that no student is hungry.

People enduring poverty are also strong and resourceful. Participants discussed the strength of entrepreneurialism among low income women, particularly in the face of longstanding historical exclusion from the work force and other forms of family wealth such as home ownership and more. Young women were described as having economic drive and skill to provide for themselves and their families. This was described as small-business operations, "side-hustle," holding down multiple jobs, and more. This asset often goes unnoticed and unsupported by broader society. The working groups suggested that there is a lack of capital, role models, training and support specifically for women entrepreneurs and business women. Broader formal and informal supports for women's entrepreneurism would help with financial stability and prosperity, not just for women but also for their families.

Lack of Affirming Mental Health Support

"Access to adequate mental health has always been a pervasive theme. Without the proper support for trauma and victimization, the ability to step away from violence and abuse becomes more difficult, because it has become so normalized in their lives and our culture at large."

- YWI MN SURVEY PARTICIPANT

"When we ignore an issue like mental health, it becomes much bigger."

- YWI MN AFRICAN AMERICAN WORKING GROUP PARTICIPANT

Participants in our process talked about the barriers young women in the eight communities face when trying to access appropriate mental health services and supports. Many described an overall lack of services and that mental health care practitioners are not culturally competent to treat specific issues of women of color and indigenous women. For example, our African American working group members expressed that it was difficult for them to share their issues with a "white therapist." Women of color and indigenous women discussed how they carry generations of trauma that should be recognized by their mental health practitioners. According to participants, the epigenetics of trauma is important to recognize and understand, especially when healing and helping women.

Additionally, participants described experiences of microaggressions based on race, sexual orientation, sexual identity, gender and ableism when seeking mental health therapy and counselling, which creates additional roadblocks to treatment and healing. Participants in rural communities expressed multiple challenges to seeking mental health services, including lack of resources, geographic accessibility to services, and similar to the above comments, lack of culturally-specific services outside of the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Intersectional Nature of Violence Against Women

"If you feel safer, you can take steps to achieve your goals and meditate on what you want."
– YWI MN COMMUNITY WISDOM CONVERSATION PARTICIPANT

"Many young women have faced sexual victimization and as a result of greater society's lack of acknowledgement of their abuse, and lack of trauma treatment options are unable to reach their potential. We live in a rape culture where women are viewed differently than men and judged rather than seen as a victim of domestic violence and /or sexual exploitation. They have to justify why it happened to them rather than going after the perpetrator."
– YWI MN COMMUNITY WISDOM CONVERSATION PARTICIPANT

Participants highlighted the extremely detrimental impact of violence, including sexual violence, on the lives and outcomes of young women in their communities. Specifically, working groups and other participants highlighted the intersectional impacts of violence based on many aspects of young women's identities. Young women face gender-based violence, but participants surfaced ways that oppression related to gender-based violence is also imbued with race, ethnicity, documentation status, sexual orientation, sexual identities and perceptions of ability.

Violence was described in all communities. For example, missing and murdered indigenous women and girls was discussed by the American Indian working group as well as their active community organizing to bring awareness and justice to this issue. Several groups talked about sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. Participants raised the high numbers of murders of transgender women of color. For immigrant groups, they discussed how some have experienced violence in their home countries and as part of their refugee experience; but that this past history is not recognized here in the US. Rape and sexual violence was also brought up as an important issue that impacts health, wellness, education, family and more. Many also discussed the impact of family violence and sexual assault and difficulties women can face in reporting this violence due to fears and past experiences of how police and other systems (police, social services, child protection, etc.) might handle the report.

Many participants discussed the daily and routine forms of violence they experience through microaggressions, discrimination and fear or threats of violence. These forms of violence were described as endemic experiences that shape their everyday lives.

Conclusion

The research engagement process highlighted strong and supportive families, cultures, and communities as a pathway to opportunity and equity. Participants put forward a vision of community strengths as the way to build individual opportunity and thriving for young women. Thus, it is not surprising that the process highlighted many issues – such as poverty, transportation, police brutality, violence, and more – that impact whole communities, including young women in those communities. When communities are strong and have the resources they need, then families and communities can support and provide opportunities for young women to thrive.

The communal vision surfaced through the research engagement process presents a deep well of hope and also a challenge to Minnesota and the current cultural climate that seems to prioritize individual attainment. Contextual factors described here, suggest that equity in opportunity and outcome for

young women of color, American Indian young women, LGBTQ young people, immigrants and refugees, young women with disabilities and young women living in greater Minnesota will require work on many different kinds of fronts – structural, institutional, and cultural. There is hope. Young women and their communities are ready to lead. Leaders across the State are ready to listen, learn and act.

The next section describes community-specific knowledge surfaced from each group.

SECTION 3: COMMUNITY-SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE

"There need to be multiple and varied options available to young women. We all need different supports and resources, and we are rarely in need of only one type of support."

– YWI MN SURVEY PARTICIPANT

The following eight sub-sections highlight community-specific information gathered from the working group meetings, community wisdom conversations, and survey data. While there are many experiences of young women and gender non-conforming youth across communities that are shared and common, as presented above, our participants felt strongly about the need to present the unique experiences and contexts that shape each community.

We recognize that communities and identities are intersecting. This is by no means a comprehensive coverage of all the context, wisdom, strengths and barriers within each community. There is no way our quick process could capture the fullness of experience, history, and knowledge within the eight communities. Here we provide a short overview with some descriptive quantitative data about each community and some of the strong themes that emerged from our research engagement process from within each community. YWI MN and all its partners and collaborators will undoubtedly learn, grow, and evolve as the initiative is implemented. Thus, this report provides a starting point. We expect this knowledge to grow and deepen.

The team leads at UROC used the opportunity of writing sections on community specific wisdom as a learning experience for the young women and gender non-conforming researchers on the UROC team. Analysis and initial thematic write-ups were conducted by project research assistants with guidance from team leads. We felt it was important to use every opportunity to showcase thought-leadership from young women on our team and to provide experience with the many skills required in conducting research. It is important to note that this section presents a highlight of strong themes that were echoed by many participants. In a report such as this we are not able to share all information that was provided to us. We hope that the majority of participants in the process see themselves and their contributions in this report.

This section is organized by working group community. Each sub-section opens with a short data overview of American Community Survey (ACS) data on young women in each community in Minnesota to set the context. This is meant to provide a population-level context related to population size and distribution in Minnesota for each community with a couple of salient indicators related to thriving, income, education, and health insurance coverage. These indicators certainly do not tell a complete story and there is much more quantitative data analysis needed to more fully understand contexts, conditions and outcomes. Partners and colleagues at the Center for Women and Public Policy at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs are in the process of sifting through available quantitative data to help provide more context on intersectional experiences in Minnesota. Then we describe learnings from each community about what it means for young women in their communities to thrive, as well as any specific or unique obstacles that were highlighted.

Young Women in Minnesota

According to the American Community Survey (ACS), part of the United States Census, there are approximately 452,819 young women aged 12-24 in Minnesota with just over half residing in the 7-county Metro Area.[20] At age 25, the median[21] total income for young women in Minnesota is $27,443.[22] By age 25, approximately 95% of all young women in MN have graduated from high school or received a GED, with 44% attaining a Bachelor's Degree or above. Approximately 10% of young women in Minnesota are currently without health insurance coverage. Approximately 3% are naturalized citizens, while nearly 5% are non-citizen residents.[23] But as we show below, there are noticeable disparities among young women by race and place.

The research engagement process reviewed and reacted to the types of quantitative data that are typically presented about marginalized communities that experience disparities. Our team was mindful to analyze quantitative data, such as the American Community Survey, thoughtfully to explore disparities in ways that surface intersectional forms of oppression. More work is needed to engage communities in disaggregating quantitative data.

Community identities are intersecting and do not fit into discreet categories for many young women. Racial and ethnic identification is too complex for us to fully explore in this short report. The data show that each community has variations and strengths that help shape community-rooted solutions. We were able to obtain ACS data to help describe barriers and opportunities for young women with disabilities, but we were not able to obtain comparable data to help us describe those same barriers for LGBTQ youth.

Young Women in African American Communities

"First of all, prosperity means they [African American young women] have a strong support system - family, extended family, healthy friendships."
– YWI MN SURVEY PARTICIPANT

"A woman who is thriving [in the African American community] has the support from her community (friends, family, coworkers, teachers, mentors, etc.). Which in turn gives her the confidence to keep thriving and moving forward. It's as simple as someone telling her she is doing a great job."
– YWI MN SURVEY PARTICIPANT

According to the ACS, there are approximately 30,579 African American young women aged 12-24 in Minnesota. Approximately eighty-seven percent (87%) reside in the Twin Cities Metropolitan area (26,567) with a small proportion living in Greater Minnesota (4,012). At the age of 25, the median total income for African American young women in the labor force is $18,843 overall. In the Metro Area the

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[20] The 7-County Metro Area includes the counties of Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott and Washington Counties. We estimate that 54% of young women in Minnesota live in the Metro Area, and 46% live in Greater MN, comprised of the remaining 80 counties in the state.

[21] The term "median" means that it is the halfway point. That is that half of the group was above that line and half was below. This is a slightly different calculation than the mean, which is an average. An average can skew the figure if there are outliers at the top or low end of the range.

[22] Includes employed and unemployed young women aged 25.

[23] American Community Survey PUMS Data – Census (2014 5-Year Estimate) https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/pums.html

median income is $23,455, with a much lower median income of $16,843 in Greater MN.[24] By age 25, approximately 96% of African American young women in MN have graduated from high school or received a GED, with 17% attaining a Bachelor's Degree or above. Approximately 16% of African American young women are currently without health insurance coverage; in the Metro Area it is 17% and in Greater MN it is 8%.[25]

In our research engagement process we connected with young African American women and their communities across the Twin Cities and Minnesota. In this working group, participants self-identified as African American, and often interchangeably identified as Black. The African American community includes many identities and experiences, including descendants of slaves from the African diaspora and recent African immigrant and refugee communities. Minnesota has a significant population of African immigrants and refugees who have different experiences so the YWI created a separate working group to address the specific needs, assets, and barriers that African immigrants face. We included young women with a wide range of experiences and circumstances with variability across class, sexuality, gender identity, ability, and more.

Participants described a variety of assets and strengths within the African American community that support young women to thrive. First and foremost, participants noted the importance of having healthy adult women in their lives who they can look up to for guidance. Belonging to a supportive community, and seeing adult African American women thriving – both educationally and professionally – are essential for thriving. The presence of strong, loving relationships, and being a part of a reflective community was repeatedly noted as an essential asset and contributing factor of personal and community-wide success.

Maintaining a strong sense of self and identity was frequently cited in African American community wisdom conversations and survey responses. For many individuals, this has been a direct source of strength in the face of barriers. Being able to practice self-love and self-care, and being emotionally healthy, were strengths many participants highlighted as particularly important for them in overcoming obstacles and succeeding. Additionally, being proud of your identity was often cited as a particular source of personal strength for many working group members and young women we interviewed, and as an asset to be developed in young African American women.

A strong sense of self and community identity was directly linked to knowing the full historical experience of African Americans in the United States and what participants described as the cultural lies told about that history. This includes acknowledgement and understanding of the pervasive impacts of slavery, Jim Crow, segregation, housing discrimination, long-standing discriminatory policies, racism, and more on young women and their communities. But more importantly, participants believed thriving happens when these historical, cultural, structural and institutional forms of oppression are seen in the context of resistance, freedom fighting, activism, and communal and individual strength in the face of obstacles.

Participants highlighted a generational rift between some young women and older, perhaps more established, women in their communities. Young African American women described finding it difficult to have open and nonjudgmental conversations with elders in their community. For example, a cabinet member stated that it is "hard to connect and feel comfortable with the older generation" (African American WG Meeting #1). Young Black women who participated in the research engagement process

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[24] Includes employed and unemployed young women aged 25.
[25] American Community Survey PUMS Data – Census (2014 5-Year Estimate) https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/pums.html

described feeling misunderstood or judged by some older women in their communities. They described different norms and expectations of Black women across generations, such as how they should wear their hair, how they should dress, how they should speak, and how they should behave or act. Participants placed this tension between generations within the context of African American women trying to chart a course in a society where there are pervasive experiences of oppression and discrimination.

Participants across generations expressed that having cross-generational conversations are really important in mending these divides; and that inter-generational understanding and support is a critical component of thriving. In the first working group meeting, members expressed that the working group process in YWI MN is a great starting point for mending these divides. They embraced the opportunity to work with various generations of African American women to create solutions for their community.

Participants in the research engagement process highlighted many pervasive and persistent barriers faced by African American women on their path to success and overall wellness. These roadblocks present themselves through multiple factors: institutionalized racism, intersectionality/dual marginality, historical trauma, educational disparities, misrepresentation, sexual violence, lack of mentorship, and many more.

Within the themes of structural and institutional racism, school contexts were highlighted as key sites of institutional and cultural barriers to thriving. Participants provided many personal stories about institutional racism as well as microaggressions, and described these as common experiences among African American young women in Minnesota classrooms. According to participants, this unfair treatment is apparent in school suspension practices, segregation of schools, conduct disorders, tracking into advanced placement class, the school-to-prison pipeline, and more. Participants noted that in schools which have many students of color with largely white teachers and staff, students seemed to struggle with the perception that their teachers did not know how to relate to their backgrounds, experiences, and barriers outside of the classroom.

Echoing many, one YWI MN survey participant said:

> *"The biggest barriers of young African American women aged 12-24 in my community are institutional or systematic barriers located in schools and the criminal justice system. The impact of these barriers involved loss of capital for them and the communities in which they live and work. In fact, government, schools, and the criminal justice systems all work to basically, maximize profit before maximizing the life outcomes of young women."*

Participants from the African American community highlighted the lack of diversity among teaching staff and educational leadership as contributing factors to how schools negatively impact young women. One young woman in an interview said: "The only educators that looked like me were Behavioral Specialists and Janitors. I have never had a Black teacher." Greater diversity among teachers, who can relate to the experiences of young women of color, was mentioned repeatedly, especially in schools where discrimination and disproportionate treatment for students of color are prevalent. Overall, the need for more education and training to build cultural competence among educators – as well as professionals in other sectors – was suggested by many participants of the African American community wisdom conversations.

Closely intertwined with the themes of institutional racism, a strong theme among African American participants in the process was the underrepresentation, omissions, and inaccuracies of African American history in K-12 and postsecondary education. Participants suggested that African American

girls only learn accurate information about their culture and history when they choose to take a class in college, rather than learning about their history as a part of their K-12 experiences. This lack of culturally accurate education was described as creating and perpetuating many barriers for young women, especially surrounding self and cultural identities.

Financial stability was described as a critical component of thriving for young women. Participants described numerous barriers, such as historic discrimination in housing, endemic workplace discrimination, pay gaps for African American women, and more. Intergenerational poverty was highlighted as a major barrier in the Black community, and one that intersects with virtually every other aspect of everyday life. Access to basic essentials of life, such as healthy food, affordable housing, and mental and physical health services were repeatedly cited as barriers for young African American women. Participants described how for many low-income Black families, many basic needs for survival and wellness are financial burdens. They expressed a lack of systemic support for low-income families.

Many participants in the African American community wisdom conversations stressed the importance of seeing young women of color in traditionally "male" positions, and the current absence of women of color in those roles. The lack of representation, many noted, is particularly significant in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields and legislative/governmental positions. This contributes to the perception among young African American women that these professional options and aspirations are limited for Black women.

Participants in the research engagement process from the African American community also talked about difficulties finding mental health care practitioners that are culturally competent to work with Black women. African American working group members expressed that it was difficult for them to share their issues with a "white therapist." These experiences are supported by the National Alliance for Mental Illness which found that: "African Americans have been and continue to be negatively affected by prejudice and discrimination in the healthcare system. Misdiagnosis, inadequate treatment and lack of cultural competence by health professionals cause distrust and prevent many African Americans from seeking or staying in treatment."[26]

Overall, African American young women and their communities who participated in the research engagement process saw strengths and barriers to young women thriving. They highlighted their families, communities, and shared history and cultural knowledge as key sources of support. However, they also described deep institutional and cultural barriers that maintain and perpetuate structural inequity, poverty, and discrimination.

Young Women in African Immigrant Communities

"Believing in yourself will get you far. Self-Identity is vital! It needs to be explored and strengthened in order for you to be happy."

– YWI MN COMMUNITY WISDOM CONVERSATION PARTICIPANT

"Black immigrant women have a triple consciousness. We have to navigate three cultures – Black, African, and White. Every culture is different, but we deal with it. White people don't have to do this. W.E.B Dubois' theory of double-consciousness neglects the immigrant experience."

– YWI MN COMMUNITY WISDOM CONVERSATION PARTICIPANT

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[26] National Alliance on Mental Health (2017).

According to the American Community Survey (ACS), there are approximately 9,597 African immigrant young women aged 12-24 in MN, with 7,673 in the Metro Area and 1,924 in Greater Minnesota. The most common countries of origin are Somalia, Liberia, Ethiopia, and Kenya, respectively. On average African immigrants aged 12-24 have been in the U.S. for nearly nine years. At age 25, the estimated median total income for African immigrant young women in the labor force is $18,025 overall; in the Metro Area it is $21,053 and in Greater Minnesota it is $16,843.[27] By age 25, approximately 98% of African immigrant young women in MN have graduated from High school or received a GED, with 22% attaining a Bachelor's Degree or above. Approximately 19% of African immigrant young women are currently without health insurance coverage, while approximately 20% are without coverage in the Metro Area, and 14% lack coverage in Greater Minnesota.[28]

As noted above in the section on young women in the African American community, YWI MN created a separate working group specifically for young women in African Immigrant communities to recognize and value differences in experience. In our research engagement process we connected with young African immigrant women and their communities across the Twin Cities and Minnesota including immigrants and refugees from East and West Africa. We included young women with a wide range of experiences and circumstances with variability across class, sexuality, gender identity, ability and more. We also sought to include young women in the African immigrant and refugee communities who practice Islam.

Many, but not all, African immigrants came to the United States as refugees from armed conflict, famine or other life threatening situations. For example, many Somali immigrants from East Africa arrived from Somalia or refugee camps because they were fleeing oppression and violence in their home countries. Minnesota is home to the largest Somali diaspora community in the United States.[29] Likewise, many in the Liberian community also arrived in the Unites States fleeing violence. Participants identified the need for Minnesota to welcome African immigrants with the knowledge that many have experienced a great deal of trauma, but that in those experiences is tremendous strength and a wealth of resources.

Participants described a variety of assets and strengths within the African immigrant community that support young women to thrive. Participants described family support including parents, grandparents and other family members as key to thriving for young women. They also discussed positive role models, educational aspirations and attainment, positive self-identity, and young women's strength as advocates for themselves and their communities. Similar to other communities, participants from the African Immigrant community discussed the ways that their families and communities help to provide support that young women may not receive from other institutions, such as education and schools, government assistance, and more. Interdependence and support through the sharing of resources with family members was a major strength discussed. Finally, many participants said that a strong self-identity among young women in African immigrant communities and believing in one's self was described as a major strength for young women in their communities.

Many participants described the pursuit of education as a potential pathway forward to thriving for young women. They described education as central to empowerment that enables young women to have more options and choices. Many participants believed that the more education a young woman attains, the more likely they are to pursue lifelong learning, which leads to higher financial prosperity

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[27] Includes employed and unemployed young women aged 25.
[28] American Community Survey PUMS Data – Census (2014 5-Year Estimate) https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/pums.html.
[29] Minnesota Historical Society (n.d.). Becoming Minnesota: Stories of Recent Immigrants and Refugees - Somali. Retrieved from www.education.mnhs.org/immigration/communities/somali.

and stability. Education supplies a foundation for a better life, problem-solving skills, and career skills. Many participants stress the importance of quality and culturally appropriate education as a factor for success. But widespread educational challenges and barriers were also described.

Participants suggested that young African immigrant women have unique difficulties navigating the U.S. education system, especially when preparing for post-secondary education. Because their parents are new to the US and may not be familiar with educational institutions and how they work, African immigrant students must navigate the American education system on their own without adequate support. Young women expressed that being first generation means that that their parents or support systems do not always know the various educational resources available to them, including scholarship opportunities. This creates a large opportunity gap for young women in this community.

Participants described the following educational barriers: lack of family/generational knowledge about postsecondary education, lack of financial support, lack of information about scholarships and financial aid, high costs, unsupportive high school staff, and cultural norms surrounding womanhood. Similarly, lack of knowledge surrounding FAFSA processes was frequently cited. Young women in this community expressed their concerns around loan information (how to choose the best kinds of loans), grants, and scholarships. Many African youth wonder if they will be financially able to attend college. Participants also described several community-based programs that are effective at helping young women navigate these challenges. However, these programs and resources were small in scale, and needed additional funding to reach more youth.

Participants highlighted a contradiction with English language learning, particularly for East African immigrants. Young women are placed in English language learning courses if they arrive in the United States in elementary school, but new immigrants in their teens are often placed directly into high school without support for learning English. Participants expressed a need for better support for English language learning across the age spectrum, which strongly impacts whether or not young women will continue on to college.

Navigating between the cultural norms and expectations of different cultures (sometimes referred to as "code-switching") was described by many young women in the African immigrant community. Participants described the difficulties African immigrant women of color face in navigating multiple identities and cultures living in America. Code-switching occurs in everyday experiences. African immigrant women express the need to balance their multiple identities in the practice of language, actions, or behaviors. Participants described this as a heavy load to bear for immigrant minorities in the midst of societal expectations and demands. One young woman said: "We try to erase our culture when around others. We need to accept that we are not a part of mainstream culture. We all bring different perspectives to the table."

Participants from the African immigrant community described the extra mental energy needed to navigate three different worlds - White America, Black America, and African culture – and how this can be draining and stressful. As one young woman in an interview expressed: "[It's] hard to be a whole person anywhere we go, while still maintaining integrity." Another participant who completed a survey described the challenges of navigating many different ideas of what it means to be a young woman.

"[There is] lots of conflicting pressure on definition of 'womanhood' in physical appearance - receive strong negative backlash from elders and community if too 'Americanized' such as not wearing the hijab or by wearing pants, on the flip side experience public harassment, threats and judgement from mainstream society for choosing to wear more traditional clothes."

Many African immigrants and refugees in the U.S. must learn English to successfully navigate school, jobs, and other systems. While some participants talked about multilingualism as an asset, most described how their accents are viewed negatively by society. They relayed incidents of judgement and preconceived notions from health professionals, government officials, or school staff. Many participants described how younger immigrants and refugees may face bullying or discrimination due to their accents or background.

Young African immigrant women described feeling limited and constrained by gender norms. Participants described African immigrant women as the primary caregivers and as responsible for holding their families together. While there is great strength in these roles, participants also described some of their family structures as disadvantaging women, as many young women are expected to be devoted wives and mothers first and foremost. These traditional gender roles and norms are part of some patriarchal family structures in the African immigrant community that can dissuade women from higher education, working outside the home, and becoming financially independent. For example, one young woman who participated in an interview said: "My brother and I both live at home with our parents. However, I am expected to clean and wash the dishes after dinner. If my mom isn't home, I'm expected to cook for my dad and brother."

Additionally, some African immigrant communities place high importance on marriage. Some young women participants from the African immigrant community described that marriage and childbearing were seen as the highest achievements for them and that regardless of education and career achievements, marriage would always be seen as the ultimate measure of a woman's success in their family and community. These patriarchal views of womanhood created many frustrations and barriers to young women's self-determination and their visions of success. An interview participant described an example of the pressures of getting married. At her college graduation ceremony her family asked, 'When are you getting married?' I have all this education, but my family doesn't want me to apply it."

Within families some African immigrant women described the need to make themselves "smaller" to make their husbands feel superior. This type of patriarchal family structure is not just in the African immigrant community, but it was described by young women in the African immigrant community as a barrier for them to thrive. Additionally, young women in this community note the generational differences on womanhood. For example, one participant stated that her mother still holds on to traditional values about how women should behave, even when she knows it is damaging. Young women believed that some elder women in their communities internalize some misogynist customs of their culture, which they then pass down to their daughters.

Some African immigrant communities, particularly from East Africa, identified numerous intersections with anti-Muslim and anti-Islam bias and violence. For example, in schools, many Muslim students who are African immigrants described being told not to wear their hijabs by their parents (out of fear of being judged). The hijab is such a strong facet of Muslim identity, yet many participants said it is unsafe to wear in schools due to the isolation and violence wearing it brings. Participants described incidents of racist and discriminatory language directed at young African immigrant and Muslim women in schools. They expressed fear from mainstream society since current day political rhetoric is steeped in messages and images that are anti-immigrant, often portraying Muslims as terrorists. According to one interview

participant, "white students' knowledge on current identity politics is skewed, with violent messages such as swastikas written on bathroom walls."

A unique barrier for young women who are Muslim African immigrants is a difficulty in finding religiously appropriate spaces for physical activity. According to the Ummah Project MN, even though there are many exercise facilities, Muslim women in the U.S. find it challenging to engage physical activities. For example, Minnesota lacks health and wellness facilities consistent with Islamic ethics.[30] Sports are compulsory in schools and physical activity is an important part of health and thriving. Some Muslims face religious and cultural barriers to participating in sports related to Islamic ethics, such as required sportswear or co-ed exercise facilities.[31] However, these barriers are not universal for all Muslim women, and do not stop participation in physical activities. Participants also described successful programs and spaces that were accessible for many Muslim young women, such as the YWCA Midtown and a Black Muslim women swimming club at the University of Minnesota.

Overall, African immigrant young women and their communities who participated in the research engagement process saw strengths and barriers to young women thriving. They highlighted their families, communities, and cultural and religious traditions as sources of support and pride. However, they also described deep institutional and cultural barriers that perpetuate stereotypes, violence, poverty, and discrimination, which prevent young African immigrant women from reaching their full potential.

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[30] Ummah Project MN (2017). Retrieved from http://www.ummahproject.org/ummah-center.html.
[31] Ibid.

Young Women in American Indian Communities

"When I see a young woman, raising a child alone, working, going to school, using public transportation and relatives to get where she needs to be, I see her trying to do her best with what she has and is not afraid to ask for help. She is able to research resources which will benefit her and believes she can be successful - knowing it is going to take time and a lot of work."

– YWI MN SURVEY PARTICIPANT

"WE ARE STILL HERE!"

– YWI MN AMERICAN INDIAN WORKING GROUP PARTICIPANT

American Indians were the original inhabitants of Minnesota. According to the American Community Survey (ACS), there are approximately 11,193 young women aged 12-24 who identify as American Indian in MN, approximately half in the Metro Area and half in Greater Minnesota. At age 25, the estimated median total income for American Indian young women in the labor force is $18,922 overall, $26,934 in the Metro Area, and $12,143 in Greater Minnesota.[32] By age 25, approximately 71% of American Indian young women in MN have graduated from High school or received a GED, with 6% attaining a Bachelor's Degree or above. Approximately 18% of American Indian females aged 12-24 are currently without health insurance coverage, it is 9% for those who live in the Metro Area and 21% in Greater Minnesota.[33]

These figures look very different for those young women who identify solely as American Indian without selecting another racial and ethnic category in the Census (5,495 people, with most living in Greater, MN). The median income is $14,436 overall, and it is $20,740 in the Metro Area and $7,630 in Greater Minnesota.[34] By age 25, approximately 68% of young women who identify solely as American Indian have graduated from High school or received a GED, with 1.23% attaining a Bachelor's Degree or above. Approximately 17% of young women who only identify as American Indian aged 12-24 are currently without health insurance coverage; in the Metro Area it is 9% and in Greater Minnesota it is 21%.[35]

The current population levels of American Indian young women result from colonialism, genocide and displacement of American Indian people from their land. In Minnesota, most young women in the American Indian community identify as part of the Dakota/Lakota and Anishinaabe (including Ojibwe) tribes. The US census uses the tribal name Sioux for Dakota/Lakota and Chippewa for Ojibwe. The names "Sioux" and "Chippewa" are the Federally-recognized names for tribes. But, these are not the preferred tribal names according to the Indian Affairs Council for the State of Minnesota. Participants in the research engagement process strongly advocated for use of Dakota/Lakota and Ojibwe as the appropriate terms. Naming is important.

There are seven Anishinaabe reservations and four Dakota reservations in Minnesota, all of which were created by treaty between the Unites States government and tribal and sovereign nations.[36] In our research engagement process we connected with young American Indian women and their communities

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[32] Includes employed and unemployed young women aged 25.
[33] American Community Survey PUMS Data – Census (2014 5-Year Estimate) https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/pums.html.
[34] Includes employed and unemployed young women aged 25.
[35] American Community Survey PUMS Data – Census (2014 5-Year Estimate) https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/pums.html.
[36] See: https://mn.gov/indianaffairs/tribes.html.

across the Twin Cities and Minnesota. We included young women with a wide range of experiences and circumstances with variability across class, sexuality, gender identity, ability, geography, and more.

Participants in the research engagement process described many assets and strengths in the American Indian community that supports young women to thrive. Family, extended family and community support was seen as essential. Further, participants discussed the critical role of language, culture and history in building strong self and community identities among young women. They described how essential a strong self and community identity is to thriving for young American Indian women. However, the long legacies of American conquest, genocide, boarding schools, destruction of American Indian communities, persistent racism, and poverty uphold many institutional and structural barriers for young women to thrive.

Many participants discussed the importance of a definition of "family" that is broader than the parents and children. American Indian young women described being cared for by grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and more. When these caregivers give American Indian women positive support, young women thrive. Participants suggested that helping young women to thrive means also finding ways for the broader community (including extended family members) to rebuild their cultures and traditions, access higher education, jobs and other skills. This multigenerational approach would further help young women with navigating education systems and achieving their goals.

Many participants spoke of the resiliency that young American Indian women have within themselves. Participants see this strength exemplified through accomplishments like achieving higher education, knowing what resources to ask for, and being a caretaker of their children. Some participants suggested that young women learn this strength from family members and elders who live, thrive and find hope for resistance and recovery from historical trauma and colonization. Simply existing and being here was described as a triumph over genocide and a source of strength and pride. Young women from the American Indian community presented a vision of thriving that involves their whole communities and honoring their historical legacies.

Participants discussed how resistance to historical trauma and colonialism is a generational strength. Other avenues American Indian communities show strength and resiliency is through protests (i.e. #NoDAPL against the Dakota access oil pipeline), humor, and reviving and maintaining cultural ceremonies and foods. Minneapolis has an extensive history of Native American civil rights movements, so this resistance of the dominant culture to save what is left of the culture is not a new topic for the American Indians in Minnesota. Embracing young American Indian women's strength and resiliency will help keep the culture alive and well.

Language and cultural learning was described as essential for young American Indian women to thrive. Participants stated that the more the young women know about their culture, the better they do in school and the higher self-esteem they have. However, participants described barriers for young American Indian women to learn their language and culture because of the cultural erasure from colonization. Not many people know cultural ceremonies, practices or stories, and this is important to teach young women so they can eventually pass this cultural knowledge on to future generations. Because this cultural knowledge has been limited due to colonization, there are few individuals who can pass on this knowledge; but it is NOT impossible. Many participants suggested that schools and homes have a role in language reclamation for young American Indian women. Teaching indigenous languages in school will help with cultural knowing and keeping these languages alive, and also will benefit the parents who might not know the language as well. Also, it is important to learn gender-specific cultural lessons. This can include ceremonies or practices for women in American Indian communities. Teaching

young American Indian women keeps the culture alive and shows resistance and resilience to historical trauma and colonization.

One of the major topics discussed by the American Indian participants was education. There was discussion about the ways that teachers and curriculum limit American Indian students. Young American Indian women participants in the research engagement process described feeling that their ancestors are left out of history and underestimated in the classrooms. This contributes to distrust in the education system and low self-esteem among American Indian young women. This lack of culturally accurate teaching creates many barriers for young women, especially surrounding self and cultural identity. Some believed that educational settings were not created for them and their communities.

Many participants highlighted the central role played by curricular omissions in creating stereotypes and fostering racism and harmful social narratives. Accurate American Indian history is left out of the texts Minnesota is currently teaching their students. Participants reported this is a continuation of marginalization of the American Indian community. Omission and erasure of American Indian history tells young American Indian students that their ancestors were not important and that neither are they. Participants believed some of the curriculum is inaccurate because historical accounts focus on the perspective of white, European American colonizers as "real" American History. This denies the destruction of American Indian peoples through colonization and genocide, and the impact on American Indian people living today.

Participants also pointed to a need to train staff in culturally competent communication styles and in a more accurate understanding of history. Some young American Indian women said they have to educate their teachers about who they are and the history of their community. Participants said instead teachers should learn to examine their own biases, be required to know American Indian history, and learn how to teach in a culturally responsive way. Young American Indian women described experiences with teachers that they perceived as discriminatory or resulting from a lack of cultural competence, such as undermining their abilities, being treated different than their white peers, and being labeled with behavioral problems or a learning disability. These discriminatory acts have lasting impressions on young American Indian women that affect self-esteem and their educational goals.

Many participants described specific schools that had an American Indian culturally-specific youth group or afterschool program where the students learn about their culture and connect with each other. These programs were often led by American Indian staff as well, serving as role models. During these groups, young women are able to practice and learn their culture with activities like beading, language learning, and doing empowerment techniques to build self-esteem and resiliency. There is evidence that these practices help young women to graduate with a high school diploma, have higher self-esteem, and have more cultural grounding. Young women described feeling safe within these spaces, centered on American Indian culture and social interconnectedness. It provided participants with school counselors and staff members who know their cultural background. This was described as a supportive and successful approach to helping young American Indian women thrive in their educational journey.

In addition to education, participants in the American Indian community highlighted many disparities experienced in their community as a result of conquest and genocide. These include health disparities (such as diabetes), violence, poverty, police brutality, missing and murdered indigenous women, child-out-of-home placements, and child mortality. Participants also discussed the disproportionate impact of the opioid and heroin epidemic on American Indian women, including young girls. This epidemic is impacting multiple generations of American Indian women simultaneously. Further, participants

identified the presence of toxins, pollutants, and Superfund environmental sites (i.e. hazardous waste sites) located on or near reservations as a problem for health and wellbeing.

Young women from the American Indian community highlighted many barriers to thriving, but ultimately they saw their response to immense barriers resulting from the past as a sign of strength and resilience. Many described how traditional language, ceremonies, and ways of knowing that are being passed down from their elders offer a path forward for American Indian young women. This way forward envisions an alternative definition of success built on mutual respect and dignity for all, and opposes mainstream definitions based on acquisition of wealth, consumerism, exploitation, and domination of the land.

Young Women in Asian American and Pacific Islander Communities

"People often see young Asian women as people who lack very little power and leadership, and often put them in a position where they have no voice in making decisions. This happens both at home, in their community, hospital and school."

– YWI MN SURVEY PARTICIPANT

"Typically, we think of the Latino community when discussing immigration – but it affects the Asian American community too."

– YWI MN ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER WORKING GROUP PARTICIPANT

According to the American Community Survey (ACS), there are approximately 26,277 Asian American and Pacific Islander females aged 12-24 in MN, with 21,022 in the Metro Area and 5,255 in Greater MN. At age 25, the estimated median total income for Asian American and Pacific Islander young women in the labor force is $25,984 overall, $24,000 in the Metro Area, and $35,000 in Greater MN.[37] Within this group there is a wide range based on country of family origin. For example, median personal income for Hmong women is $23,000, whereas it is $46,000 for Asian Indian women. By age 25, approximately 90% of Asian American and Pacific Islander young women in MN have graduated from High school or received a GED, with 51% attaining a Bachelor's degree or above. Approximately 14% of Asian American and Pacific Islander young women are currently without health insurance coverage overall.[38]

Working group members were very clear that there is great diversity within the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. It is imperative to recognize the various backgrounds embedded within the larger grouping of AAPI because they have different experiences and outcomes. In MN, AAPI groups with the largest populations (in order from largest to smallest) are: Hmong, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean, Lao, Cambodian, Filipino, Japanese and Thai.[39] Further, when the working group reviewed ACS data, some participants expressed surprise by the income and educational attainment data for young AAPI women, because the numbers did not reflect their experiences. Some of the older participants wondered if perhaps there has been a generational improvement for younger AAPI women.

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[37] Includes employed and unemployed young women aged 25.
[38] American Community Survey PUMS Data – Census (2014 5-Year Estimate) https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/pums.html.
[39] U.S. Census Bureau, 2006.

The majority of the participants in the research engagement process identified as Hmong while others identified as Asian Indian, Korean, Lao, Karen and Bengali. It is important to note that many, but by no means all, members of the AAPI community came to the United States as refugees fleeing persecution, specifically Hmong, Lao and Karen communities. Participants described how this difference within the AAPI community has a profound impact on outcomes for young women in the AAPI community.

Although not all AAPI communities were represented in the research engagement process, we were able to obtain rich data that closely reflects the AAPI population in Minnesota. In addition to paying attention to the diversity of communities within the AAPI community, we also connected with communities across the Twin Cities and Minnesota. We included young women with a wide range of experiences and circumstances with variability across class, sexuality, gender identity, ability, and more. The research engagement process surfaced many strengths and barriers that are unique to AAPI young women and their communities, including family, community and culture, gender norms, education, and violence. Newer immigrants and refugees also identified some barriers and strengths related to their transition to U.S. culture.

Participants talked a great deal about the positive and negative aspects of family, community and gender norms for young women from the AAPI community. Many AAPI young women identified their mothers as strong role models, caretakers of their families, and cultural links between grandparents and children in the community. But this space in between generations was also described as a very difficult position for mothers and their daughters, causing tension in some families.[40]. Participants described how their mothers juggle multiple roles moving between "old" customs (with older family members) while adjusting to the "new" traditions (with her children).

Gender norms in some families and communities were also described as limiting women's autonomy and authority compared to boys and men. For example, participants described how from a very young age girls and young women are expected to come home from school to cook, clean and take care of siblings; responsibilities that are often not placed on boys and young men. One participant described the role of a good daughter: "A good daughter is someone who is obedient, goes to school, contributes to parent's bills and dresses with conservative clothing. She is married young and gives birth to many sons." Young women described a stressful double-cultural bind for many young AAPI women, particularly in the immigrant and refugee community, with pressures to assimilate to American culture and adhere to older generation's cultures. Each identity has its own obligations: the perfect daughter from the cultural aspect and the successful millennial from the westernized culture. While these norms are changing, many participants talked about unspoken rules for females to follow.

At the same time, family and community events such as funerals, weddings, and cultural holidays were described as positive aspects of heritage and identity that bring together the AAPI communities to celebrate their cultural practices. In these circumstances many participants echoed the themes from this quote: "We can communicate freely without judgement. Our similar situations make us tied together." Community was described as a large family with supportive networks promoting self-love and kindness. Many AAPI participants said that there is no culture without its people, and that young AAPI women hope to preserve their culture to pass onto future generations.

Young women wanted to chart a new course where they can both find ways to honor their family and community culture while also following their own dreams. Participants described how members of the AAPI communities hold diverse understandings of women's roles that are not necessarily mutually

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[40] Xia, Do, & Xie (2013).

exclusive. Participants wanted more conversation with older generations surrounding aspects of their culture, while creating their own pathways forward. This includes promotion of equity between men and women, advocating for women in leadership positions, and support for women in political offices and STEM fields.

Most AAPI participants described education as a key to success, while also highlighting harmful educational experiences and barriers. For example, participants described ridicule, harassment or other derogatory treatment from classmates and even from teachers because they are bicultural and bilingual. Parents who are new to the U.S. educational system lack critical knowledge to support their children, such as applications, financial aid, scholarships, and more.[41] Further, participants described how some AAPI young women are encouraged to get married so that a man can provide them financial security, rather than seeking higher education to obtain their own financial security. Participants also described a lack of AAPI educators in the state of Minnesota. Finally, the common practice of grade placement in the U.S. by age potentially puts new immigrant young AAPI women at a disadvantage, especially when they are just learning English, including the alphabet.

In school, some teachers assume that young AAPI women should excel in all subjects, especially math. Research also suggests that Asian American youth perceive increasing discrimination (i.e. negative stereotyping) from teachers and consistent peer discrimination over the high school years related to the idea of the "model minority."[42] As one participant noted, "We need to reframe the 'model minority' narrative. Not all Asians are doing well. Context matters in Asian communities."

Language barriers impact some members of the AAPI community and were identified in numerous ways. Trying to understand and navigate systems while living in a new culture is difficult when many adults are themselves English language learners. For example, in health care contexts, participants said there are not enough translators readily available in the health clinics to help fill out important forms or to inform family members on important medical procedures. Often, young women fill the role of translator and interpreter for adult family members receiving medical care. Participants saw this as an unnecessary burden on young AAPI women, where the burden should fall on clinics to have appropriate language access for patients.

Participants described discrimination in employment based on names. As one participant said, "Since my name is harder to pronounce and not a common 'American' name, I may not get the position, compared to an applicant with 'John Smith.'" Discrimination impacts job prospects and income for young AAPI women. This type of discrimination can also lower self-confidence.

Participants described generational poverty in some AAPI communities, particularly Southeast Asian refugees. They said that many in the older generations work long hours in industrial settings, while young women take care of responsibilities at home. Living in impoverished neighborhoods, many AAPI houses are small, forcing families to fit five or more family members into two bedrooms. One participant said: "young girls never had a room, yet alone a bed to themselves growing up. I remember sharing my bed with two other siblings while my parents slept on couches. This was normal in my home." Sharing rooms is not the problem here, rather the challenge for families to increase their income and attain financial security and social mobility.

Young women within the AAPI community described experiences of many types of violence. Participants talked about sexualization and sexualized images of AAPI women as harmful. Domestic violence in

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[41] National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education (2008).
[42] Thompson, Kiang, & Witkow (2016).

particular was highlighted as a major barrier to thriving, particularly among AAPI young women who identified as refugees or immigrants. Domestic violence was described as exacerbated by not being able to speak English, not understanding their rights as a U.S. citizen, and threats of deportation for immigrants. Many AAPI women stay quiet about the abuse they endure. Participants said that in some communities, domestic violence is slipped under the rug because of cultural practices. "We do not call the police because our culture accepts the violence." Additionally, many AAPI women rely on their spouse for financial stability or for legal documentation (i.e. work visas, green cards).[43] These situations create additional barriers for victim/survivors seeking support. Further, the issues of trafficking and child brides were discussed as having unique impacts on young women in some AAPI communities.

Many participants said there are few safe spaces for AAPI transgender and queer youth. Within AAPI communities, there are many anti-LGBTQ sentiments, though not everywhere. In some AAPI cultures, it is unacceptable to identify as LGBTQ. "They are shunned from their family if they come out of the closet." Dealing with homophobia and transphobia within the AAPI community and outside in the general society is doubly draining. Intersectional social groups for the LGBTQ-AAPI community were seen as necessary and vital solutions for self-identity, safety, and mental wellbeing.

In addition, there are many societal misconceptions about AAPI women. For example, many participants discussed the public view that all Asian people have the same ethnicity and country of origin. One person said, "The public believes that we are all Chinese." This notion fails to recognize the diversity of the AAPI community. Further, many participants described a widespread perception of AAPI women being seen as "exotic," submissive, and quiet. Participants also suggested that the general public has false or exaggerated beliefs that all young women in the AAPI community experience restrictive gender norms within their households and that they are submissive to men. Participants highlighted some of these as issues, but were very clear that young women and their communities are charting a new path forward. Furthermore, many of these issues related to gender equality are also present in dominant society as well.

The AAPI community is extremely diverse in culture, ethnicity, and community history. Understanding this community requires further disaggregation of data as there are vastly different experiences and outcomes. Participants in the AAPI community described barriers and strengths. The strong role of mothers, cultural ceremonies, and community were seen as beacons for young AAPI women to thrive. The pressures to be a "good daughter" contain both supportive and harmful elements. It pushes young AAPI women to excel, but also places high pressure to maintain grades and gendered family responsibilities. Many described generations becoming more open-minded and that customs and traditions are slowly shifting in ways that honor the past and allow more young women to access community strengths that support thriving. However, much work still remains in changing broader access to opportunities and harmful social narratives about AAPI people.

Young Women in Latina/x and Hispanic Communities

Before describing community-specific knowledge from young women in the Latina/x and Hispanic community, it is important to review terms. In this report, we use the term Latina/x and Hispanic to refer to the community of persons from Latin America or from Latin American descent. This is a broad and heterogeneous population representing over 30 countries and thousands of languages, most of which are indigenous. In research engagement process and this report, we are inclusive of all people of

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[43] Rainbow Research (2016).

indigenous backgrounds from Latin America. In addition to the many indigenous communities in Latin America, there are also Latinos of African and Asian descent. Our research engagement process sought to surface experiences from across these different backgrounds. We recognize that the breadth and depth to explore the many different experiences and identities of being Latina/x in Minnesota would require a significantly longer research engagement process.

The terms Hispanic, Latino, and Latina carry different meanings for people, and there still is no universally accepted definition for these terms. The term Hispanic was first introduced into the U.S. lexicon in the 1970s for use in the Census to note persons from countries of Spanish-speaking origin. It was intended as a geographic rather than a racial category. While the use of the word Hispanic is not as widespread as it once was, the term continues to refer to people from the Spanish-colonized and Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America, e.g. Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Colombia, etc., and can refer to people from Spain as well.

The term Latino is used in the U.S. to refer to persons from all countries in Latin America. Although, there is no consensus on which countries are included in Latin American (i.e. some definitions exclude French Guiana, Guyana, and Suriname from Latin America).[44] Latino is used today in the U.S. to encompass ethnic heritage, immigrant history, and a sense of shared cultural values from people across Latin America. The term Latino is the preferred term by many. The Spanish language associates many words with either a masculine or feminine gender through the use of vowels ("o" for masculine and "a" for feminine). Thus, the term Latino is gendered "male" in Spanish. There is no universally agreed upon gender-inclusive term to use in its place.[45] Several terms that are used include Latin@, Latine, and Latinx. In our research engagement process, many community members indicated a preference for the term "Latinx." Because YWI MN is focused on the experiences of young women and girls, and is also inclusive of transgender and gender non-conforming individuals, we use the term Latina/x.

According to the ACS, there are approximately 28,258 Latina/x and Hispanic young women aged 12-24 in Minnesota, with 18,383 in the Twin Cities Metro Area and 9,875 in Greater Minnesota. At age 25, the median total income for Latina/x and Hispanic females is $19,545 overall, $16,832 in the Metro Area, and $20,623 in Greater Minnesota.[46] By age 25, approximately 72% of Latina/x and Hispanic young women in MN have graduated from High school or received a GED, with 11% attaining a Bachelor's Degree or above. Approximately 29% of Latina/x and Hispanic young women are currently without health insurance; in the Metro Area it is 33% and in Greater Minnesota it is 21%.[47] In Minnesota, Latina/x and Hispanic young women have cultural and family roots from across Central America, South America and the Caribbean, with the most common countries of origin being Mexico, Puerto Rico and Cuba.

Participants in the research engagement process highlighted unique strengths and assets of the Latina/x community that support young women to thrive. These included family support, positive sense of self and community, strong women role models, bi/multilingualism, and values of perseverance and determination. However, participants also recognized barriers to thriving, such as negative stereotypes and stigmas, the challenge of navigating multiple identities, racism and microaggressions, generational

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[44] For example, see https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/difference-between-hispanic-latino-and-spanish_us_55a7ec20e4b0c5f0322c9e44.
[45] Berastaín, P. (2017, Aug 31) "Should organizations use Latin@ or Latinx?" *National Latino Network*. Retrieved from: https://enblog.nationallatinonetwork.org/should-organizations-use-latin-or-latinx/.
[46] Includes employed and unemployed young women aged 25.
[47] American Community Survey PUMS Data – Census (2014 5-Year Estimate) https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/pums.html.

differences, and for some, significant challenges due to a political system that unduly criminalizes immigrants. Since many, but not all, Latina/x families are recent immigrants or are in community with recent immigrants, the national anti-immigrant political rhetoric framed many of the conversations in the research engagement process.

Most of the young Latina/x women who participated in the community wisdom conversations identified themselves as being first generation born in the U.S. Some came from families who emigrated many generations ago, while others described living in the U.S. without documentation. Our research engagement process did not ask for immigration status, but both the working groups and community wisdom conversation participants brought these stories up as significant community contexts that impact young Latina/x women. One young Latina/x wrote in "DACAmentado" on her demographic form as a play on words from "documentado," meaning "documented," referring to her status as a beneficiary of DACA.[48] The theme of immigration weaves itself through many Latina/x communities, both as a community asset and as a barrier to thriving due to societal and political structures. Participants expressed frustration at political rhetoric that paints Latina/x immigrants as criminals, rather than their lived realities as refugees seeking safety from violence, war and extreme poverty.

Fears, threats, and the imminent danger of deportation were discussed by many participants as pressing challenges facing Latina/x communities. One participant in a Working Group meeting shared an anecdote of a community member who was taken by ICE while grocery shopping, an anecdote that resonated with many as representing a general fear in Latina/x communities. This fear was also extended to police and law enforcement in general. Participants connected these challenges to an impact on their mental health. In general, trauma around relocation, prior experiences of violence and instability, and negative experiences after migration affect their well-being and mental health.

Participants shared many negative cultural stereotypes and assumptions that are made about Latina/x communities. For example, participants described common assumptions that all Latina/x are undocumented. Others assume that Latina/x individuals do not speak English. As one interview participant said, "Just because you look Latina doesn't mean you don't know how to speak English." These negative stereotypes and assumptions are expressed through microaggressions, discrimination, and bullying in school that many Latina/x youth experience on a daily basis. Threats of deportation and statements of not being welcome were described by many participants as common occurrences in schools and in the wider community. Many noticed increases in anti-immigrant sentiments directed toward young people since the 2016 presidential election. For example, one Latina/x young woman reported being told that she would be deported if she continued playing with a white boy in the playground. Young women in the Latina/x community said that these microaggressions often lead to social disconnection, making it difficult to seek resources and support.

Participants described Latina/x young women as deeply rooted in their culture. They regard self-identity as knowing their roots, traditions, languages, and ethnic backgrounds. Latina/x women are proud of their self and cultural identities and their community network. According to an interview participant, "This makes us who we are. Empowers us more." Another participant said one of her biggest

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[48] DACA is the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, which is a federal program created in 2012 by the Obama administration granting deferred deportation for children who arrived in the U.S. without documentation, with specific eligibility criteria and application costs. This act covers roughly 800,000 children and young adults in the U.S., with approximately 16,000 eligible DACA recipients residing in Minnesota. Approximately 62% of eligible DACA recipients are from Mexico and Central America. Currently, President Trump has said he will not re-authorize this program, suggesting that Congress come up with a solution. Sources: https://www.migrationpolicy.org/content/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca-profile-minnesota, http://www.npr.org/2017/09/05/548754723/5-things-you-should-know-about-daca.

accomplishments was finishing her History Day project because she was able to educate others about her community. Participants saw cultural knowledge and self-knowledge as interconnected, and integral to a thriving young Latina/x. Despite pressures to "Americanize," many participants echoed these interview quotes, "We need to keep traditions going! You cannot pass these along to your kids if you don't know them," and "We shouldn't have to hide our culture because we are in a different country."

Latina/x participants emphasized family as a core part of their self-identity and community, and a key to thriving. Many women in the Latina/x community play an important role in their family and community. When young Latina/x youth were asked who their role models were, most reported their mothers, who they saw having perseverance, determination, love, and support. They are appreciative of what their mothers have endured and achieved. Several young people described heroic acts of bravery and self-sacrifice displayed by their mothers through migrating to the U.S. in the hopes of starting a new life here. One interview participant regarded her mother as an "entrepreneur."

Within the family, participants shared some tensions that impact young Latina/x. Many expressed generational differences between parents and children, some of which they attributed to changing societal gender norms for what is acceptable for women in careers, dress, and behaviors. Participants described traditional Latina/x family values adhering to a patriarchal family structure where husbands are the heads of households and women care for children and do the housework. These structures also impact middle and high school Latina/x girls who may be limited from participating in extracurricular activities. One young women who participated in an interview said, "Family members expect me to stay at home or do other things. It is important to show that women can go into STEM fields, and do things that are outside of the household." Some of these family tensions also arise from what one interview participant called the "immigrant mentality survival mindset," where youth strive to achieve more and rise to every opportunity presented to them to honor the hard work their parents went through in giving their children these opportunities. Many Latina/x young women feel caught between these expectations in the home and expectations for academic achievement.

On the other hand, participants described missed opportunities to not achieve their potential when young Latina/x succumbed to the negative messages around them. Negative messaging around failure— and a lack of positive, affirming messaging around success—sets up Latina/x women, especially those who are undocumented, to feel defeated at a young age. One young woman who participated in an interview said, "Society expects Latinas to fail." Participants described "hiding" in high school out of fear and negativity related to their documentation status.

Poverty was described as a significant barrier for achieving success in this age group, and some participants indicated that it may impact girls harder than boys. Poverty, while limiting access to basic needs, is compounded by the legal status of members in a household. One participant described her father who was undocumented working a job for three dollars an hour. When he asked for more money, he was threatened with deportation. This is a deeply-felt reality in Latina/x communities that employers are willing to exploit and take advantage of immigrants who are vulnerable and criminalized for escaping violent, war-torn, and impoverished countries. Poverty has a compounding factor, as parents have limited resources for children's development compared to affluent families.

For many Latina/x women, financial constraints and college affordability are barriers to dreams of higher education and opportunities of development. Many parents cannot help their children pay for college expenses. These barriers are exacerbated even further for young women who are undocumented. Our participants suggested that these students often forgo college because there is a scarcity of financial support for them. As one interview participant put it, "I think that any first generation young woman

that pursues a college education, against barriers, is successful."

Many participants said that they believe the education system was not designed for all types of young people; and those who don't fit experience implicit bias, bullying, and abuse. Latina/x students, according to participants, experience schools that are majority white students with few teachers of color, many of whom struggle with cultural competence for Latina/x students. Participants said these conditions can foster institutionalized racism and microaggressions in the school environment. This trend was exacerbated in Greater Minnesota. Participants described successful models for Latina/x youth as culturally-specific and linguistically-specific programs where Latina/x youth can find mentors, build relationships with caring adults, gain life skills, and access resources.

Participants perceived an overall negative portrayal of Latina/x young women in mainstream media. Because mainstream media shapes social norms, beliefs, and stereotypes, participants identified media portrayal as a source of marginalization, portraying gender inequality, and relying on negative stereotypes on Latina/x communities and Latina/x women. They discussed harmful body image messages and objectification of women in media as impacting young Latina/x women at a crucial time in their development. In addition, one interview participant observed that women in traditional roles were more frequently portrayed in Latina/x movies, and she saw this as a threat to young women's development and imagination. Similar to the conversation on role models, Latina/x participants desired more visible representation of Latina/x women in film and media.

Participants described limited access to birth control, affordable health insurance, and sex education, combined with a social taboo of discussing sex and sexuality. Participant attributed these factors to the high rate of teen pregnancy among Latinas/x in Minnesota, noting that this can have long term negative impacts that affects educational attainment. Yet participants identified many schools, programs, and services that successfully work with Latinas on family planning. Schools with health clinics and easy access to birth control (without requiring parental consent) were seen as a stigma-free and accessible way to help young women plan pregnancies, avoiding teen pregnancy. Increased linguistic accessibility of health clinics (i.e. materials available in Spanish, Spanish-speaking staff, etc.) also serve the needs of young Latina/x women effectively.

Domestic and sexual violence was described by many participants as too common, and also linked teen pregnancy. Legal status can negatively impact victims and survivors from seeking trauma recovery options. As one survey participant noted, "We live in a rape culture where women are viewed differently than men and judged rather than seen as victims of domestic violence and/or sexual exploitation. They have to justify why it happened to them rather than going after the perpetrator."

Most of the young women in the Latina/x community identified themselves as first generation born in the U.S. Navigating two cultures and language and cultural differences can make it difficult for Latina/x young women to navigate between their own individual needs and their family's needs. The discomfort of having to choose between identities to be successful leads to self-doubt, questioning their identity. Many young women described trauma around their culture, history, relocation, and migration effect their well-being and mental health. The stereotype described by one interview participant that "all Hispanics are Mexicans and all Mexicans are drug-dealers," not only disrespects Latina/x identity but also adds to anxiety and mental pressure. Similarly, participants suggested that not all Latina/x young women are from low income families.

Young People in LGBTQ Communities

"[We] Need to reframe the harmful model of the monolith of the white-male gay community. Instead, we should talk about how race, religion, and gender impact the LGBTQ community."
– YWI MN COMMUNITY WISDOM CONVERSATION PARTICIPANT

"There is a gynecologist at Boynton Health Service who has been identified as very trans-friendly. She herself is not queer or trans but she just knows how to speak gender neutrally. There are allies out there that are willing to put in that work."
– YWI MN COMMUNITY WISDOM CONVERSATION PARTICIPANT

The LGBTQ community includes a wide range of gender identities and sexual orientations, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and gender non-conforming individuals. The YWI MN focuses on the experiences of womanhood and girlhood, and so our research engagement with the LGBTQ community emphasized experiences of lesbian, bisexual, and queer women, as well as transgender women and gender non-conforming youth. This section uses the acronym "LGBTQ" to encompass this broad heterogeneous community. Many of these terms are defined in the glossary in Appendix G.

It is difficult to obtain data on LGBTQ individuals that is comparable with the other communities that were part of the YWI MN research engagement process. Instead, we provide data from two reports on LGBTQ discrimination and health. An estimated 24% of lesbian and bisexual women make less than the federal poverty line, a number which exceeds that of heterosexual women.[49] Among MN LGBTQ individuals who identified as transgender or gender non-conforming while in grades K-12, 78% reported experiencing harassment, 27% reported experiencing physical assault, and 4% reported sexual violence.[50] LGBTQ youth are 1.5 to 2.5 times more likely to experience physical abuse in their households than heterosexual youth, and 5.5 to 9 times more likely to be sexually abused.[51] In terms of education, LGBTQ youth are 1.5 to 2 times more likely to be physically assaulted at school than straight students, and experienced higher rates of peer harassment on race, religion, gender, disability, physical appearance, and sexual orientation than straight students.[52] Multiple research reports highlight that 20-40% of homeless youth are LGBTQ.

This section presents information about the LGBTQ community that we learned from participants. Participants identified many strengths within the LGBTQ community, including support systems such as families, religious communities, organizations and advocacy groups, and within the LGBTQ community. Participants also described resilience and empathy gained through shared experiences of discrimination and oppression. All of these aspects contribute to the success of LGBTQ young women and gender non-conforming youth. However, participants also described barriers that are unique to this group, such as specific phobias (e.g. homophobia, transphobia), mental health, poverty, lack of safe and affordable housing, disparities, and harassment and violence. We also present an additional sub-section about transgender women since this group experiences specific and unique oppressions.

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[49] Grant, Mottet, & Tanis (2011).
[50] Ibid.
[51] Hanson (2015).
[52] Ibid.

Participants placed a high value on family support as well as non-traditional support systems as a major asset to thriving. For many, family members are described as caring, sympathetic, understanding, and compassionate. Many LGBTQ young women and gender non-conforming youth described turning to their families for financial and emotional support. Participants emphasized that family can be more supportive about sexuality and gender identities than dominant social narratives would suggest. However, positive experiences from family are not universal.

The LGBTQ working group noted that homelessness among LGBTQ youth is often explained by a dominant social narrative that LGBTQ youth are routinely rejected by their families because of their sexual orientation, leading to homelessness. However, the working group highlighted that many families love their LGBTQ children and that some homelessness among LGBTQ youth may result from family poverty, rather than rejection. Some non-LGBTQ family members may be supportive, but may not be equipped or able to provide the comprehensive support their LGBTQ young women and gender non-conforming youth need.

Lack of familial support due to homophobia and transphobia, and in some cases family rejection, was identified as a significant source of pain and hardship for many LGBTQ youth. When members of the immediate family are not supportive, many are able to turn to extended family members for more support. Participants also highlighted the strength-based ability of LBGTQ youth to create "chosen" families, which come in the form of supportive friends, peers, colleagues, teachers, neighbors, and community members that LGBTQ persons can turn to in time of need when family is not available or unsafe. These chosen families can supplement familial relationships. This is particularly important for LGBTQ young people who do not have families that accept and support this part of their identity.

Participants expressed the tight-knit nature of the LGBTQ community as being one of the best assets for LGBTQ persons. The research engagement process highlighted a plethora of robust organizations, clubs, and groups that support the LGBTQ community. Many of these entities assist LGBTQ individuals with career development, financial opportunities, educational assistance, community engagement, housing, health care, and building social interconnectedness within the LGBTQ community. Some of these groups are interest-specific, such as LGBTQ spaces for students belonging to a certain major or who share a similar hobby. Some participants highlighted the role of faith and religion in providing a safe space and refuge for LGBTQ youth – while also critiquing the ways that their faiths can be exclusionary and harmful. Many seek out religious and spiritual services that are LGBTQ friendly or which have LGBTQ individuals who lead their services.

While the strength and support within the LGBTQ community was evident, participants recognized areas for growth; describing hierarchies where gender non-conforming, transgender, and bisexual/multisexual individuals are viewed as "lower than." Participants also described structural oppressions, such as white supremacy, ableism, colorism, and more, that create divisions within the LGBTQ community. Participants found solutions by creating intersectional communities along race, culture, religion, and ability identities within the larger LGBTQ community. In addition, participants expressed hope in continued growth and inclusivity of this community, which has thrived and resisted over centuries of oppression and violence. Overall, the support that LGBTQ individuals find in others like them is a great source of support and empowerment.

Participants described significant homophobia and transphobia in almost all systems and institutions, including employment, education, housing, health care, and in general public sentiment. This included overt acts of transphobia and homophobia (e.g. hate crimes, insults, slurs, etc.), microaggressions, or less blatant forms of discrimination, that are often normalized or minimized in everyday interactions.

Many described how difficult it is to fit into a society where it is generally assumed that everyone is heterosexual unless disclosed otherwise, and where cultural norms reinforce and impose heterosexuality in institutions. Similarly, participants described near universal cissexism, the assumption that every person aligns their gender identity and expression with their biological sex. Many participants expressed the need to "escape" from dominant society in spaces where heterosexuality and gender identities are not assumed.

LGBTQ identities can also be hypersexualized in a way that non-LGBTQ identities are not, especially for bisexual people and other people attracted to more than one gender, as well as transgender individuals being deemed as sexually deviant rather than as valid identities.

Participants also highlighted that they experience intersectional forms of oppression related to multiple identities, such as racism, ableism, classism, Islamophobia, fatphobia. Members of the LGBTQ community in Greater Minnesota described experiencing less connection to others within the LGBTQ community and thus significant social marginalization. Participants placed a high value on educating the public about the challenges and barriers they faced from an intersectional lens.

Participants indicated that general health care and mental health care is difficult to access due to cost, transportation, and more. Participants also described a lack of competence among medical professionals when providing care to people in the LGBTQ community. For example, many mental health service providers do not have a basic understanding of LGBTQ identities and lived realities. Participants were especially passionate about mental health care reform, as one participant said, "suicide rates among LBGTQ youth is exponentially higher than that of other populations and marginalized people are more at risk of attempting/committing suicide."

Many LGBTQ young women and gender non-conforming youth experience poverty, which limits adequate access to financial resources and financial support systems. LGBTQ persons in poverty may be limited from attending college, or accrue significant student debt, have limited access to affordable healthcare, food security, and sufficient funds for costs of living. These experiences are evident across all of the LGBTQ community, but are exacerbated by other intersecting identities such as ethnicity/race and ability. When LGBTQ women and gender non-conforming youth are forced to focus on acquiring basic survival needs – such as food, clothing and shelter – opportunities to pursue educational, career and life aspirations are made secondary. Financial wellness was identified as one of the most important needs for LGBTQ women and gender non-conforming youth, where many of the other action areas could follow once economic stability was achieved.

Currently, there are many systems in place that create barriers for financial stability and wellness for LGBTQ young women and gender non-conforming youth. For some this stems from lack of family support due to their gender identity or sexuality. As one interview participant asked, "When you can't rely on family for economic support, what do you do with no safety net?" As noted above, some participants suggested that the narrative of family rejection may be used to divert attention from larger systemic oppressions. Participants expressed the dire need for better pay and working conditions, and many experience harassment and hiring discrimination due to sexuality or gender identity.

An integral part of financial security is access to safe and affordable housing. Participants expressed that housing insecurity is a major barrier that LGBTQ youth experience. Many factors make someone vulnerable to insecure housing. One survey participant said, "Many girls/young women of color/LGBTQ [individuals are] experiencing homelessness due to the gaps in our child welfare, and juvenile justice systems, shelter and housing interventions." Insecure housing may consist of living in a place with

abusive family members or housemates, staying night-to-night at different places, trading survival sex for housing, living in poor and hazardous conditions because of lack of economic resources, living out of a car or living outside. Secure housing would be described as safe, free from abuse and violence, and long-term. Housing security for many is the first step to achieving financial security, and many disparities in outcomes are a result of housing insecurity.

Similarly to participants in other communities, LGBTQ participants highlighted a lack of LGBTQ history taught throughout all education levels, including activism and movements, important events such as the Stonewall Riots, understanding of gender and gender identities, and successful LGBTQ individuals throughout history. In addition, participants expressed that sexual education should be comprehensive and include LGBTQ sexuality and gender identities, as well as safe sex practices that are not specific to only cisgender, heterosexual individuals. One Cabinet member was very passionate about sex education reform, explaining that "sexual education is an ongoing battle, but I think it needs to continue to normalize [LGBTQ] identities." By educating students about different types of gender identities, sexualities, and sexual activity, students may be more comfortable exploring their identities and preferences in a safe environment.

Participants also suggested that LGBTQ students have specific challenges in school settings. One interview participant perceived that the reason why she doesn't know many out transgender girls at her school is because "[coming out] wouldn't happen a lot in middle school because [transgender girls are] scared." In general, teachers and staff can send negative messages of discrimination, transphobia, or homophobia to other students and staff, which creates unsafe environments for LGBTQ students.

Our participants indicated that LGBTQ young women and gender non-conforming youth face disproportionate rates of sexual, domestic and systemic violence. This violence occurs in public spaces, relationships, educational institutions, workplaces, and more. Many participants expressed a fear of being in public alone, where one participant said, "You cannot walk the streets without being catcalled or harassed." Experiences of violence also start very young. A study found that 15% of transgender participants left a school due to harassment.[53] Transgender and gender non-conforming participants stated there is a pressure to "pass" as cisgender (i.e. to fit gender norms of male or female) to avoid violence and confrontation at all ages. A study on dating violence of 5,647 youth found that compared to heterosexual youth, lesbian, gay and bisexual youth experienced significantly higher rates of both victimization and perpetration.[54] Transgender respondents of this study reported the highest rates of victimization, along with highest rates of perpetration, with the exception of sexual coercion.[55] Cabinet members, working group members, and other participants expressed the need for supporting LGBTQ young women and gender non-conforming youth in learning healthy relationship skills.

Specific Findings for Transgender Women
The LGBTQ working group highlighted some themes with specific import for transgender women that might get lost if not deliberately called out in its own section. Transgender women, and more specifically transgender women of color, face discrimination, violence, erasure and more. In this section we highlight a few themes from our data. The UROC team recognizes that our process engaged some transgender women, but not enough to fully surface themes and core concepts so we include some findings from secondary sources here as well.

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[53] Grant, Mottet, & Tanis (2011)
[54] Dank et al. (2013)
[55] Ibid.

A key barrier surfaced for transgender women was the ability to obtain appropriate, supportive and non-judgmental health care. According to our data, the healthcare system frequently dismisses the gender identity of transgender women by lumping them together with cisgender men. This was described as harmful both emotionally and physically. Due to mis-gendering or disrespect, many transgender women/trans-feminine people do not trust healthcare professionals, and therefore they may not seek medical services. Participants highlighted that clinics that provide women's health usually refer to individuals who have a vagina and are seeking obstetrics and gynecological services. This leaves a gap in health care for transgender women. Further, access to gender-affirming surgeries and hormones is not equal for all transgender people. While not every transgender person wants these services, participants discussed that these services currently are high-cost, inaccessible, and have significant impacts on mental health of transgender individuals. Instead, participants suggested that these services should be available, covered by health insurance, and at affordable rates.

A 2016 report from Lambda Legal highlights the discrimination and difficulties that transgender women face in accessing health care:

> *Even when transgender people do receive medical treatment, their interactions with hospital staff—including physicians, nurses, allied health professionals, admitting and registration personnel and security officers—often result in negative experiences. Examples of inappropriate staff behavior cited by transgender patients include: Laughter, pointing, joking, taunting, mockery, slurs and a wide variety of negative comments; Violations of confidentiality, regardless of HIPAA; Use of improper name and/or pronoun for patient; Exceptionally long waits for care; Inappropriate questions and/or exams, including needless viewing of genitals; Prohibitions of bathroom use, or challenges to it; Inappropriate room assignments; Failure to follow standards of care.* [56]

Another specific harm faced by transgender individuals is violence and murder. Many participants described that transgender women experience much higher rates of violence than cisgender people. This is especially true for transgender women of color.

On the whole, participants from the LGBTQ community highlighted many strengths, such as their bonds and support as a community and many resources. However, young women and gender non-conforming people in the LGBTQ community face discrimination, hatred and violence. Further, LGBTQ identities experience intersectional forms of oppression with other identities such as race/ethnicity, class, geography, and more. Thus, the experiences of the LGBTQ community are interwoven throughout the other community groups.

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[56] Lambda Legal (2016).

Young Women with Disabilities

"Disability is ignored by society as a marginalized identity that we need to care about."
– YWI MN COMMUNITY WISDOM CONVERSATION PARTICIPANT

"We don't need to overcome disabilities. We just need to be accepted."
– YWI MN COMMUNITY WISDOM CONVERSATION PARTICIPANT

"…even getting to school is an issue since transportation access and reliable transit are not guaranteed to people with disabilities."
– YWI MN DISABILITIES WORKING GROUP PARTICIPANT

Estimates based on the American Community Survey (ACS) suggest that among young women aged 12-24 with disabilities in Minnesota, 15,655 individuals live with cognitive difficulties, 3,401 with ambulatory impairments, 6,532 experience difficulty living independently, 3,239 experience self-care difficulties, and 3,915 experience hearing or vision difficulties. A slight majority of young women with disabilities reside within the Metro Area. We were not able to identify ACS data about employment and income for young women with disabilities. However, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2016 the unemployment rate of people with disabilities was 10.5 percent, while the unemployment rate for people without disabilities was 4.6 percent.[57] From the ACS data, educational attainment for women with disabilities varies by disability. Overall, upwards of 90% of women with disabilities earn a High school Diploma or GED as their highest degree. Estimates suggest that some continue to gain experience in college, and many continue on to complete their Bachelor's degrees. Around 59% of hearing impaired young women eventually earns a Bachelor's degree as their highest degree, and 98% earn a high school diploma or GED.[58]

The research engagement process included voices from a wide range of participants from within the community of young women with disabilities. We were able to gather information from young women with disabilities related to cognition, vision, independent living, mental health, mobility, and hearing. Another important aspect of the community of young women and gender non-conforming youth with disabilities is its diversity and intersectionality. Participants who shared information about the disabilities community belonged to a number of diverse communities, representing a variety of racial and ethnic communities, different sexualities and gender identities, and geographies throughout the state of Minnesota. Participants also represented a number of different educational institutions, job and career fields, socioeconomic levels, religious and spiritual communities, and activist movements. The insight participants brought helped create a holistic view of the knowledge and experiences Minnesota young women and gender non-conforming youth with disabilities contribute to the greater community of people with disabilities as well as the other communities to which they belong.

There are several policy, law, and language related factors that are foundational for understanding experiences of young women and gender non-conforming youth with disabilities. Participants stressed the importance of what is called "person-first" language. Person-first language centers the individual rather than their disability; for example, "person with disabilities" rather than "disabled person." The

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[57] Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2017) "Persons with a Disability: Labor Force Characteristics – 2016." *U.S. Department of Labor.* News Release, June 21, 2017. Retrieved from: https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/disabl.pdf.
[58] American Community Survey PUMS Data – Census (2014 5-Year Estimate) https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/pums.html.

passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990, created formalized laws and policies in place that are supposed to protect and support the rights of persons with disabilities, and that bar discrimination against persons with disabilities.[59] The ADA was modelled after the 1964 Civil Rights Act. This report does not comprehensively describe all of these laws and regulations; rather, we describe what our participants shared about their experiences. It is important to note that there is a robust legal framework that may or may not be appropriately implemented in all places, and people with disabilities also experience stereotypes, paternalism, discrimination, and other cultural and social forms of oppression.

The disabilities community includes a wide range of experiences such as cognitive, physical, mobility, behavioral, and more. It includes conditions that were acquired at birth, such as Down's syndrome, and disabilities acquired later in life, such as mobility issues from a car accident, mental health conditions, and more. Working group members discussed the importance of recognizing that many disabilities are socially constructed, such as behavioral challenges experienced in schools. And participants expressed that some communities of color are disproportionately labelled as "disabled" due to broader forms of racism and oppression. Participants shared barriers and obstacles, such as financial instability, educational settings that were seen as unsupportive, violence and lack of safety, difficulties accessing healthcare, lack of mental health services, and problems related to self-determination and paternalism. Participants in the research engagement process also highlighted strengths and assets, such as empathy, critical problem solving skills, creativity, and community.

Young women often described their disabilities as enabling abilities that help them connect the people around them. The experiences of disabilities lead to empathy and understanding, which allow them to better relate to others with patience and grace. Participants talked about the inspiration they get from people who are confident about their disabilities and who give time and energy to others, both in and out of their community, because these people live compassionately for others. Participants discussed how their experiences propel them to pursue positivity, compassion, empathy, creativity, and problem solving skills. As one participant noted, "everyone has their abilities from disabilities that are unique." Similarly, many participants believe that experiences of disability build stronger and deeper problem solving skills. One participant said this is "because of all the difficulties societies impose on them."

Almost all the participants described positive experiences with strong support systems from families, friends, and mentors. Several participants described how young women and gender non-conforming youth with disabilities come together to support one another. For example, participants mentioned support systems such as National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) at University of Minnesota-Twin Cities and strong friend groups. Community settings such as these provide support systems that support mental health, while also building intentional communities with their peers. Participants described how identifying with others and navigating resources together creates solidarity and social interconnectedness to combat stigmas around people with disabilities.

Paternalism and denial of self-determination can be a critical and unique barrier for some young women and gender non-conforming youth with disabilities. Participants described how society assumes they cannot make decisions, or that they are helpless and weak. Some instances were described of caregivers making decisions about young women with disabilities without consulting them. Paternalism is often manifested in the denial of sexuality for young women with disabilities.

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[59] For more information see: https://www.ada.gov/ada_intro.htm.

A common theme across many different types of disabilities was harmful stereotypes and public perceptions about people with disabilities that impact self-worth and can lead to discriminatory treatment. Specifically, participants talked about how many people are ill-informed, judgmental and, at times, cruel. Members of the public often ask questions about disabilities in ways that make young women feel "weak and fragile." Participants described many instances in which people with disabilities are marginalized, not treated seriously, disrespected, and bullied. This has real consequences. Some described dropping out of school and leaving jobs due to bullying, harassment and cruelty. Behavioral health and mental illnesses, which can be defined as a type of disability, are often stigmatized and can affect performance at school, social connections, and more.

Financial instability has different impacts on young women with disabilities depending on the type of disability they experience and familial ability to support them. People with disabilities are employed in many sectors of the labor market, although national data suggest that people with disabilities overall have high levels of unemployment.[60] Women with disabilities have very low rates of employment compared to men with disabilities.[61] While not everyone with a disability is part of the work force, for those who are working, participants described how laws allow employers to hire people with disabilities at a lower wage, even below minimum wage. This has a significant impact on financial stability and independence. In addition, many young women on disability-based public assistance said it does not pay enough to thrive financially. Financial instability can be intensified by lack of access to short and long-term leave in many employment sectors for people with disabilities and their caregivers. Likewise, many noted that with high unemployment, many people with disabilities do not receive employer-sponsored health insurance and must rely on Medical Assistance. Medical Assistance qualification has income and hourly work cap requirements that can be counter-intuitive and hard to manage. Furthermore, policy loopholes for disability benefits can end up restricting employment and community integration for people with disabilities.

Additionally, participants described how young women and gender non-conforming youth with disabilities face multiple barriers in educational institutions, including isolation, severe harassment, and lack of formal accommodations necessary for academic success. Young women with disabilities value their education, but many said they do not receive adequate support in the classroom. Some participants described that lack of support or bullying in the school environment lead to students leaving public school for online schooling, home schooling, or dropping out of school entirely. Financial hardships can exacerbate difficulties affording higher education.

One of the biggest concerns for young women with disabilities is their safety. Young women with disabilities have higher rate of becoming victims of violence and abuse than other young women, and in particular, those with intellectual disabilities have higher rates of being victims of sexual violence than those without a disability.[62] Research has found that children with disabilities (of all genders) are three times more likely to be sexually abused than children without disabilities.[63] These are staggering rates that warrant public outcry, yet our participants perceived little public awareness of this issue. For people

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[60] In 2016, 17.9% of persons with a disability were employed, compared to 65.3% of persons without a disability. Unemployment rates for persons with a disability were 10.5%, compared to those without a disability at 4.6%. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2017) "Persons with a Disability: Labor Force Characteristics – 2016." *U.S. Department of Labor.* News Release, June 21, 2017. Accessed from: https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/disabl.pdf.

[61] Ibid. Nationwide, women with disabilities are employed at 15%, while men with disabilities are employed at 21.3%. This compares to women without disabilities employed at 59.5%, and men without disabilities employed at 71.5%.

[62] Davis, Leigh Ann (2009). "People with Intellectual Disability and Sexual Violence." *The Arc.* Accessed from: http://www.thearc.org/what-we-do/resources/fact-sheets/sexual-violence

[63] Smith, Nancy, and Harrell, Sandra (2013). "Sexual Abuse of Children with Disabilities." *Vera Institute of Justice*. March 2013. Accessed from: https://www.vera.org/publications/sexual-abuse-of-children-with-disabilities-a-national-snapshot

with disabilities who are also persons of color, there is more invisibility for this type of trauma. Further, participants described deeply held public stereotypes of people with disabilities as incapable of having romantic and intimate relationships. Participants in the research engagement process wanted to challenge these stereotypes, and wanted action on ending sexual violence towards people with disabilities.

Accessible transportation is a significant need for young women with disabilities. Transportation provides a vital lifeline for people with disabilities to access employment, education, healthcare, and community life. Transportation services allow individuals with disabilities to live independently within their communities.[64] However, according to one study, about 560,000 people with disabilities in the United States never leave home because of transportation difficulties.[65] Access to transportation influences other important aspects of a young woman's life, such as education and safety. For example, if women with disabilities cannot regularly attend class or work because of lack of transportation, then transportation is clearly a systemic barrier to education, employment, and financial stability.

Many participants shared concerns that the category of "disability" leads to a generalization of many different types of experiences. As one participant said, "one person doesn't represent the whole population." Most of the participants specified that each case is unique, highlighting differences between more visible disabilities (e.g. some physical disabilities) compared to more invisible ones (e.g. learning disabilities or mental illness). In addition, there are intersectional experiences related to disability and race, which can create invisibility and added harm around people of color who have a disability. The group highlighted a general societal lack of understanding of laws and legal frameworks around disabilities. They also suggested that our society tends to overlook the abilities and self-determination of young women with cognitive disabilities. Some participants preferred a reframe of the concept of disability to "differently abled" to shed light on the diversity of abilities across all individuals, and to create a positive association with the experiences of disability.

Young Women in Greater Minnesota

"In Northwest Minnesota, girls and young women come from families that have experienced multi-generational poverty and for those from reservation communities, economic disenfranchisement as well."
– YWI MN SURVEY PARTICIPANT

"Those who are different races, LGBTQ+ have more barriers than white women. Working in a school, I see members of these communities singled out and punished more severely than white students."
– YWI MN SURVEY PARTICIPANT

"I've worked with young women who have been in dangerous, abusive and/or exploitative situations in part due to lack of transportation."
– YWI MN SURVEY PARTICIPANT

According to the American Community Survey, there are an estimated 210,235 young women living in Greater Minnesota aged 12-24. Approximately 90% are White. At age 25, the estimated median total

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[64] The Arc (2017).
[65] American Association of People with Disabilities (n.d.).

income for Greater Minnesota females is $24,507.[66] By age 25, approximately 96% of young women living in Greater MN have graduated from High school or received a GED, with 37% attaining a Bachelor's Degree or above. In Greater Minnesota approximately 9% of young women are without health insurance coverage, compared to 10% in the Metro Area.[67]

However, an intersectional lens looking at young women in Greater Minnesota shows that young women of color, American Indian young women, and young women from immigrant and refugee communities experience disparities compared to white young women in Greater Minnesota. For example, the median income for white young women at age 25 in Greater Minnesota is $23,159 compared to $16,843 for African American young women and $12,143 for American Indian young women.[68] There are similar disparities in education and health insurance coverage.[69]

This section is about the experiences of place and geography, for young women who do not live in the Twin Cities metropolitan region. We describe communities outside of the Twin Cities Metropolitan area as "Greater Minnesota." There are a few small urban areas outside of the Twin Cities (such as Duluth, Rochester, and St. Cloud), but much of Greater Minnesota is rural with small towns. In Greater Minnesota the research engagement process was able to connect with a broad range of communities across race/ethnicity, those with disabilities, and the LGBTQ community. We travelled to both Northern and Southern Minnesota to better understand the range of experiences, including farming communities, small towns, the Iron Range, and American Indian reservations.

Young women in greater Minnesota described significant challenges including declining population size, economic hardship, more "traditional" or conservative understanding of gender roles, and racism, xenophobia, and other forms of discrimination. Participants shared a deep sense of self-awareness, specifically about what their community has and what it lacks. Many described disparities and patriarchal values in small towns, and different values (family, culture, historical, etc.) that matter to them and the community at large. Greater Minnesota participants discussed the lack of resources and opportunities in small towns and rural areas across the state. However, many identified strengths too.

In terms of strengths, participants identified their mothers and other women in their communities as role models. They described women in their communities as resilient, having the resolve to persevere despite challenges. For example, one young woman from greater Minnesota said she was inspired by her mother who has mental issues and works for a social service provider. In a small town, women take on many roles such as housewife, worker, daughter, mother, and mentor. Participants acknowledged these strengths and challenges, seeing women as the backbone of the community. Like their mothers, many young women in greater Minnesota are in leadership positions and take on multiple tasks. This makes them more involved and active in their community.

One asset of living in the rural communities is the social support system provided by the community. Participants described how communities behave like extended families that know each other and are there to help. Many participants described women in their communities as bringing their experiences and knowledge to bear for the betterment of others. Participants also talked about the role of storytelling in the community as a way that women learn about what other women did in the past and

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[66] Includes employed and unemployed young women aged 25.
[67] American Community Survey PUMS Data – Census (2014 5-Year Estimate) https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/pums.html.
[68] Includes employed and unemployed young women aged 25.
[69] American Community Survey PUMS Data – Census (2014 5-Year Estimate) https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/pums.html.

the latter serving as "role models."

Many young women in Greater Minnesota defined thriving as having access to basic resources, being self-reliant, and having life choices. Similarly, they defined prosperity as stability, not necessarily wealth. Yet in order to thrive, many young women felt torn between a sense of responsibility to stay in their community, and to leave to seek opportunities for educational and career advancement. Many young women felt that in order to thrive they needed to "get out of here" in pursuit of educational opportunities, broader experiences, and more activities or resources. At the same time, they believed it is equally important to go back to their communities and be there for others. Young women said that thriving meant: "doing what you want to do"; "being able to have healthy food, resources, money to provide for goods, and access to education"; and "independent with a sense of emotional and financial security." They see opportunity to thrive through equal access to education, resources, and services (such as childcare support).

While these are the ideals for thriving, many participants said that these are far from the reality for many young women in Greater Minnesota. Currently, they described that many young women stay in their community and do not access higher education, and many fall into cycles of poverty. Economic hardships were a major barrier discussed by working group members. For those young women who do get a college education, many face significant student loan debt. Considering that many young women earn less money than men, women's debt has a greater impact on their life opportunities and choices. Those in rural areas feel "left out" and "left behind" regarding economic security compared to job opportunities and incomes for those in the Twin Cities. These realities were compounded for American Indian communities in rural Minnesota. Finally, homelessness is a growing concern in Greater Minnesota that disproportionately impacts young women. As one participant put it, "often motherhood is what puts them in that situation."

Young women in Greater Minnesota described gender disparities disadvantaging women. The expectations placed on men and women are different in all aspects; from their family aspirations to education to employment. In rural communities, women are expected to maybe finish high school, get married, and have children. The same expectations may not be always true for boys or men. Women have to balance these familial and societal expectations for them, while navigating their own desires. Women in Greater Minnesota who do not fit these expectations may face additional struggles navigating through their communities and families.

Gender disparities also present themselves in the prevalence of sexual violence against women. Participants expressed their view that society reinforces a culture of male dominance, evidenced in institutions such as schools, workplaces, workforce programs, and even safety net benefits. In turn, a culture of male dominance supports, validates, or turns a blind eye to sexual violence against women. In rural communities, incidents of sexual violence can be of particular harm and danger to victim/survivors because many community members may know the perpetrator; the perpetrator may have a good reputation in the community, and services for victims are few and far between. One participant said, "Rape is a common occurrence with little or no justice to the rapist." Participants also cited issues of missing and murdered indigenous women and sex trafficking as having specific importance and severity in Greater Minnesota. Sexual violence in all its forms is a barrier to thriving for young women and can have long-term mental health impacts.

One of the biggest barriers experienced by young women in Greater Minnesota is the geographic inaccessibility of resources and services. Participants described long distances between places, along with services that are few and far between. Transportation is a necessity in Greater Minnesota to access

basic resources such as health care, housing shelters, domestic violence and sexual violence services, mental health care, and more. Many of these services simply are not available or accessible to many. Lack of transportation for many young women makes these service gaps even greater. Some participants described a sense of isolation living in Greater Minnesota.

Young women from diverse and marginalized backgrounds have specific experiences in Greater Minnesota. For young women of color, American Indian young women, immigrants and refugees the sense of isolation and discrimination is heightened compared to those in the Twin Cities. Small towns and rural areas were described as homogeneously white, so these communities feel even more isolated. Many young women in these groups suggested that they face more overt discrimination and racism in greater Minnesota than they would in the city, and there are fewer people of color with whom to connect and built support networks. LGBTQ young women have similar experiences, as they face transphobia, homophobia, and discrimination in small towns. Participants said small towns tend to have more traditional values around gender norms and sexuality.

Many participants said that expression of their culture, if different from the white community, was discouraged. More than that, others described experiences of racism, discrimination, and stereotyping based on "difference." Segregation in cities and neighborhoods also perpetuates this lack of understanding and exposure to different cultures. One participant shared that in Duluth, there are stigmas around which community and neighborhood one lives in based on demographic segregation in the city. Another participant expressed discomfort with not fitting in: "This is a small, rural community and I am an outsider here. I hope we move soon because I don't want my daughter growing up here. I don't see a lot of positives here." Further, one participant reflected upon her childhood upbringing in a homogeneous white community with little or no exposure to diverse cultures. She felt aware of racial injustices and associated barriers, but did not know where to start, how to learn more, or connect.

Participants also noted that many white people living in Greater Minnesota are trying to understand and adapt to different cultures, and that there is a broad spectrum of diversity-related initiatives. Yet this is slow work and not without challenges. The conservative nature of Greater Minnesota is connected to institutional oppressions, racism, and discrimination in schools and elsewhere. Participants noted that in rural communities, advocating for certain diversity initiatives is often met with push-back. One school created accessible bathrooms for transgender students, and were sued shortly after.[70] The recent national election of President Trump was also cited as signal of the lack of exposure to diversity in rural communities. Overall participants felt that diversity education should start in K-12 schools.

In addition to these issues, participants discussed "brain drain" and low retention rates of student of color as interconnected issues. The community setting influences the retention rates of students of color in colleges, LGBTQ community, and people with disabilities, who transfer to major cities for more opportunities and to be more networked with people from within their communities. Lack of representation of marginalized communities, especially in leadership positions and in educational settings, contributes to settings of discomfort, microaggressions, and misunderstandings. In addition to lack of diversity, participants cited that overall "brain drain" is a concern for rural communities. While young women may leave their community to seek higher education and career advancement, community members felt disheartened when they did not return to bring their new skills and knowledge back.

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[70] Zamora, Karen. (2017) "Parents' group drops lawsuit over Minn. transgender student's locker room use." *Star Tribune*. April 13, 2017. Accessed from: http://www.startribune.com/parents-group-drops-lawsuit-over-minn-transgender-student-s-locker-room-use/419436794/

Finally, participants discussed the factors that impact mental health and well-being for young women in rural communities, such as addiction, homelessness, financial instability, discrimination, sexism, disability, lack of resources, and more. Much of this has already been discussed above. Particular to the expectations laid for young women, a participant described how high standards set for young women (i.e. good looks, good education, does housework, has a social lifestyle and nurturing characteristics) lead to unhealthy mental pressure for young women. In a similar context, stigma attached to disability (including media's portrayal of disability) limits their abilities, rather than allowing their full potential to shine. Having a disability in a rural area has specific stigmas; and people with disabilities may be treated in ways that contribute to them feeling weak and fragile, rather than whole and beautiful. As stated before, there are not many mental health resources in rural communities, and so mental health concerns may go untreated for a long time. Participants expressed a desire to see more youth groups in rural Minnesota promoting social connectedness as a resource to young women to support their mental well-being.

SECTION 4: COMMUNITY-SURFACED INDICATORS OF THRIVING

The research engagement process identified and surfaced community-based indicators of thriving, as well as indicators of barriers that young women face. We define an "indicator" as a quantifiable characteristic or something inherent in thriving that can be measured with quantitative data. This is challenging because most of the indicators currently used to address disparities are measuring negative things or things that are not going well for young women. Further most indicators focus on individual young women, rather than measuring the size, scope and characteristics of the barriers young women face.

It is important to identify and develop indicators that participants in the process and young women themselves see as accurate and appropriate measurement of thriving. This includes a measurement model that identifies assets and strengths of young women, and more importantly a measurement model that quantifies (or counts) the structural barriers that young women encounter. Indicators of thriving, therefore, would be quantifiable characteristics of what it looks like when a young woman is thriving and also ways of measuring barriers that need to be removed and progress made. Below we provide few examples from our data about financial stability to illustrate what is meant by indicators before diving in.

- Income of young women at age 24 is an indicator of financial stability that can be measured using census data.
- Amount of funding for job training programs specifically tailored to meet the needs of young women's qualifications for high-paying job sectors is an indicator of structural support that can be measured by looking at the State budget.
- Homeownership among young women's families is an indicator of financial stability and generational wealth production that can be measured using census data.
- Mortgage loan approval rate for young women's families is an indicator of structural support from financial institutions for homeownership that can be measured by looking at banking data.

As described above in Findings Section 1, we were able to discern a list of factors that signify that a young woman is thriving as described by participants from all eight communities, including when young women: are surrounded by loving communities and positive role models; have access to education (formal and informal); feel safe; are healthy (emotional and physical); are financially stable; and are not limited by norms, stereotypes and expectations.

We analyzed our qualitative data to identify potential quantitative (or numbers-based) indicators within each of these broad themes narrowed to the following list:

- Leadership and role models
- Education
- Safety
- Healthy
- Financial Stability

As noted above, the definition of "thriving" surfaced in this process incudes more than these areas, notably cultural and self-identity. Not all aspects of "thriving" can or should be quantitatively measured. Future work should seek to combine quantitative and qualitative information.

There is much more work to be done to turn the indicators and areas for measurement surfaced here into a full-fledged measurement model to address change and progress in YWI MN. But, the concepts around community-identified indicators creates an opportunity for future evaluation that may help orient the initiative into work that is deemed meaningful and impactful for communities and surface ways to measure that impact. Further, as the reader will note below, many of the indicators identified in this process intersect across many areas. For example, financial stability is linked to safety and healthy relationships. This section summarizes our findings related to community-based indicators of success. A full list of identified indicators is provided in Appendix E.

Leadership and Role Models

Participants in the research engagement process suggested that a lack of diversity in top leadership positions across institutions and in government is a limiting factor for young women thriving. Thus, participants strongly encouraged measurement of diversity of leadership and the impact of that diversity on the outcomes of young women and their communities. Diversity, specifically intersectional diversity, of leadership was seen as both a role model for young women and a way to change how systems work by bringing in new perspectives that may be more aligned with the life experiences of young women in the eight communities.

Reflecting on their own personal and professional experiences, a great many participants described the benefits of receiving mentorship, and (often in-turn) providing mentorship as a facet of leadership. Throughout this discussion, respondents repeatedly focused on the relevance of substantive *representation and role modeling* in both schooling and the workplace, where deficits can have broad and long-lasting effects. Many wanted to see indicators that reflect this value.

Across the eight communities, individuals were interested in seeing an increase in diversified hiring practices that would place greater numbers of women in decision-making roles, and an increase in the availability of mentorship programs. These comments were often directly related to the strong desire across multiple communities to work toward achieving economic parity for men and women. Indicators related to leadership suggested a broad definition of "leader" that incorporates both official and formal leaders (management, elected official, CEOs, etc.) and information or community leaders that help young women find their way. Again, within the context of leadership participants wanted to identify indicators of individual leadership attainment and ways of measuring the existence of and investment in the necessary broader structural supports to develop and promote leadership from within young women and their communities.

Education

Throughout the project, education was one of the most commonly cited factors in the success of young women and gender non-conforming youth, and thus there was much discussion about measurement of things related to education. For most participants, education was seen as a critical but currently deeply flawed path to success for young women in the eight communities. Data related to educational indicators suggest that participants see part of the problem as related to what and who is measured as indicators of educational success. In other words, if data collection is meant to drive resources, our participants indicated that we may be measuring the wrong things and thus driving education in directions that may not fully address young women's needs and may, in fact, be harmful.

Disparities within the State's educational system were highlighted, particularly the relation between educational attainment and financial stability, socioeconomic mobility, and an overall state of thriving. Participants also identified the interconnections between experiences in school and mental health, self and community identity, violence, racism, and bullying. Participants suggested the identification of indicators around how the educational system itself and individual experiences in educational settings may be harming young women from some communities.

With respect to state-funded education, participants were particularly interested in the connections between educational achievement rates, curricular content, and identities of and training for staff. On many occasions, participants expressed concern at their inability to see their cultural identities meaningfully reflected in the lessons they received in the classroom, or the composition of the faculty at their school. Many called for flipping indicators from individual students to ways of measuring whether diversity of school staffing, staff training, and curricular components match the students they serve.[71] In essence, the process suggested it is important to measure schools' readiness to support students and the level of school-based "opportunities" for students to succeed, as well as student educational attainment.

In addition to concerns around formal education, a number of participants also expressed a great deal of interest in further investing in continuing education for adults and non-traditional learners, including those seeking, among other things, mentorship. Additional funding for extracurricular/experiential learning, including things like after-school clubs, nature outings, and vocational training, were stressed by participants. These are all things that can be quantified.

In short, the process suggests that we measure education differently. Rather than focusing solely on individual educational attainment, often from a deficit framework, participants identified the need to focus on system variables to measure how well the educational system (schools, staff, pipelines into college, etc.) works for young women in the eight communities.

Safety

Physical safety was identified by participants as a major area for measurement because it was seen as an impediment to thriving. In particular, street harassment, sexual violence, and domestic violence were identified as threats across each of the eight communities. Participants identified weakness in commonly used indicators such as law enforcement statistics and clinic visitation figures because they only represent a fraction of experiences. In addition to the explicit transgressions against women and

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[71] See for example: https://www.apmreports.org/story/2017/08/28/keeping-teachers.

gender non-conforming young people which occur regularly in both private and public spaces, participants identified a number of more implicit or systematic barriers to safety that they provided as possible indicators for thriving.

A number of concerns about the persistence and perpetuation of bias, misogynistic attitudes, inequitable policies, and social service deficits were expressed by participants. While social institutions such as family, government, and religion were generally viewed as assets and positive supports that mitigate risk factors in other contexts, for some these domains were also perceived to be instigating factors or barriers. For many respondents, generational (or traditional) attitudes on gender and sexuality within their respective communities were a problematic by-product, or consequence, of a much larger positive source identity and guidance.

In general, the process suggested that new ways of measuring safety should be developed that incorporate a wider range of experiences including sexual harassment, violence and domestic violence, and well as intersectional verbal violence and structural violence that may harm self and community identity.

Health

For many participants, health was a critical indicator of thriving and thus a measurement need. While physical health and nutrition were widely identified as important considerations, the discourse about health was largely shaped by the topic of mental health and indicators related to the young women's mental well-being and available supports. For a number of people, the existence of stigmas around gender, sexuality, race, national origin, and other manifestations of otherness created a mental health burden for young women and gender non-conforming youth. Overall, participants identified a lack of appropriate and culturally or racially affirming mental health support as a significant barrier to success; and the need for indicators of financial and other supports for making sure young women have access. Key indicators around mental health were also related to education, including the availability of mental health curricula—to include culturally informed training for teachers and students, and the availability of mental health professionals in educational environments.

Within the broader health domain, participants also identified sexual and reproductive health (or rather access to reproductive healthcare, and knowledge about sexual and reproductive health) as a significant contributor to success. Indicators around reproductive health, similar to mental health, related heavily to education. For a number of participants, the measurement of the availability, consistency and quality of curricula concerning sex and reproduction was identified as an important area for measurement because it was seen as a significant barrier to success that frequently overlapped with a range of economic considerations, including the availability of funding for educators and clinics.

Participant's discussion of sexual health, reproductive health, and mental health also suggested significant interest in the factors affecting individual meaning-making around healthy relationships. For many participants, possessing the physical, emotional, and financial ability to prioritize healthy relationships (rather than being stuck in abusive or coercive relationships) was perceived as an important indicator of success and thriving. Many identified a lack of awareness concerning healthy relationships in their communities as a barrier, and suggested that a measurement of community-wide education and intervention was critical due in part to the cyclical nature of domestic violence.

In sum, participants identified a broad range of health experiences as important to measure. Similar to the sections above on economics and education, participants were pushing for new ways of measuring

health that focus on structural supports and availability of appropriate and affirming health-promoting opportunities. For example, rather than simply measuring mental health outcomes, the process identified the need to develop indicators of mental health services provision and access.

Financial Stability

In relation to financial stability, participants in the research engagement process identified the need for consistent and intersectional measurement of the persistence of gender and race/ethnicity-based disparities in employment and pay. Participants identified a cluster of potential indicators around the concept of financial stability, which includes income, homeownership, wealth generation and more. For many participants, financial stability and financial independence were positively associated with the ability to pursue healthy relationships, occupational fulfillment, community engagement, or otherwise take on risk and opportunities that are necessary for growth and fulfillment. Financial stability was strongly linked to housing. Topics such as homeownership, rental affordability, and cost of living, which all have significant economic components, were identified by participants in the research engagement process as critical considerations and frequent determinants of success for many young people.

In relation to education and economics, participants suggested indicators around financial literacy as potential measures for success and stability. With respect to financial literacy, many participants identified financial education at all ages as important. Participants suggested identification of indicators to measure when and what is offered on a range of topics, including credit, savings, debt, navigating career options, and financing their (educational, entrepreneurial, and residential) dreams.

Participants in the research engagement process identified these economic factors as critical to thriving and thus important to measure. These economic components can be translated into quantitative data points that measure young women's progress and the structural and institutional factors that could support or inhibit progress. Many participants suggested that most indicators currently in use focus on the economic status or attainment of individuals, but the individual frame is not how they experience disparities in income and access to capital, training, and opportunities. From a measurement perspective, the process highlighted the importance of including indicators that document the level of structural support and investment in young women and their communities to reach these economic goals, rather than simply reporting on individual young women and their economic or financial status.

Conclusion

Throughout the data collection process, participants discussed a range of distinctive institutional factors impacting the success and prosperity of young women. The data collection specifically asked participants to reflect on what they saw as *poor indicators of success*. Many participants cautioned against any measurement perspectives that fail to address or acknowledge the existence of institutional and historical deficits that impact young women in their communities. This includes identification of ways of measuring the deep structural and historical impacts of slavery, colonization, anti-immigrant status, discrimination against LGBTQ people, and people with disabilities. Indicators of institutional and social factors include looking at things like past government-funded infrastructure development and how it impacts the present; banking, finance, insurance, and loan practices that have historically disenfranchised communities of color; and more.

Participants also discussed the importance of measuring the impact of present-day practices of inclusion and acceptance of non-conforming identities, either at home or in the workplace that can have a lasting

effect on an individual's prospects and sense of self-worth. While external institutions were often the focal point of discontent and source of insecurity, many individuals identified their home life as an equally significant challenge, due to incongruous household responsibilities and expectations. Other examples of institutional factors include capital investment in early and continuing education, extracurricular and experiential learning opportunities, and safe spaces; and the persistence of barriers to the transfer of intergenerational wealth.

The research engagement process surfaced some exciting thinking about measurement of YWI MN over the years to come. In particular, the process surfaced the critical importance of re-visioning what we seek to measure, moving from indicators of individual success to indicators of levels and types of investments and support in promoting individual and community success. Further, participants were clear, data needs to be disaggregated enough to identify intersectional experiences of oppression. Both of these ways of thinking about measurement of thriving can be challenging. Most currently and easily available quantitative data is currently set up to measure individuals, not the performance of systems. Most data sets are not designed to allow for deep intersectional analysis. This will require a thorough change of data practices across systems.

Young women of color, American Indian young women, LGBTQ young people, immigrants, young women with disabilities and young women living in greater Minnesota (and the communities that surround them) have deep wisdom about what it means for them to thrive AND what it will take to unleash their potential. Our process was clear, young women face barriers and many of those barriers are structural, meaning they reside within institutions and have long histories of harm and disinvestment. There is a great deal more work needed to turn these insights into a community-rooted measurement model for "thriving." The research engagement process suggests this effort is necessary to center the YWI MN initiative in the actions and effort that young women and their communities believe will yield the outcome of a state where all young women can thrive.

What is Next? Conclusions and Next Steps

This report shared findings from the action research engagement process designed and led by UROC in support of YWI MN. We engaged with over 500 young women and their communities from eight communities, including: African American, African Immigrant, American Indian, Asian American and Pacific Islander, Latina/x and Hispanic, LGBTQ, young women with disabilities and young women from Greater Minnesota. The goal was to surface community-based knowledge to build the *Blueprint for Action* for YWI MN and assure that it was rooted within leadership and experiences of young women and gender non-conforming youth. This report is a companion to the *Blueprint* and shares our qualitative findings as well as our research engagement methods and some of the theory and philosophy behind our methods.

In this final section, we highlight some key topics and point to the future. This process was quick, with only five months to gather and analyze information. Anchoring the research engagement process within the working groups and Young Women's Cabinet helped the UROC team go deep into community knowledge. But we acknowledge that there are many more people with valuable insights and much more to learn as YWI MN implementation begins.

The research engagement process surfaced many effective community and individual strengths and assets that are already supporting girls, young women, and gender non-conforming young people to thrive. While at the same time, the process also identified many impactful systemic barriers, stereotypes, beliefs, and harmful practices, and intersectional oppressions that hold back and diminish American Indian young women, young women of color, LGBTQ young people, immigrants and refugees, young women with disabilities and young women living in greater Minnesota.

Participants were very clear about how to move forward. The work to build equity and equal opportunity should flow from the strengths and assets in the lives of young women. To accomplish this, young women and their communities need to be part of the implementation. The WFMN has made substantial commitments to support the leadership of young women in the statewide implementation of YWI MN, including the Young Women's Cabinet (and the YWCA St. Paul), existing grantees and Girls Best. This report and the *Blueprint* identify many positive things happening in the lives of young people.

While an asset focus is the foundation of success, participants made a clarion call to Minnesota as a state to honestly identify and acknowledge barriers and harms faced by young women. And further to see that these are rooted in very real experiences of intersectional oppression by gender, race, place, class, sexuality, and ability. But deficit thinking is not the way forward.

The research engagement process built a foundation. But moving forward requires continued seeking of better data, deeper understanding of each recommendation and action area, and greater insight into the intersectional ways this work impacts each community. As the YWI MN initiative unfolds, there will be plans for evaluation of efforts to document change, success and knowledge and statewide progress measures. Our participants identified the need to explore both how young women thrive AND whether changes are made that shift the environments within education, government agencies, non-profits, philanthropy, and the private sector in ways that foster thriving.

Participants find particular strength in their cultures and communities. When communities thrive, so too do young women. The research engagement process suggests that a path to thriving is built, not on individual achievements alone, but on the strength of communities. Community strength means also

paying attention to elders, parents and even younger children. Thus, our process surfaced the need for multi-generational approaches and thinking. When young women know their cultures, languages, and histories, then they can better know and love themselves. Participants suggested that knowing and loving oneself helps young women develop strong self-identities and leadership.

While young women from the eight communities that anchored our process share much in common, they also have specific strengths and face unique barriers. The research engagement process identified six action areas, seven principles and best practices, and twenty recommendations. Participants said each should be applied and implemented with community specific approaches. This necessitates continued connection with communities to learn, grow, adapt and evolve as YWI MN unfolds.

The UROC team is grateful for the participation, insights and wisdom of so many in building the *Blueprint* and the findings in this report. However, we know that this is just the beginning. There is still so much more to learn. As YWI MN is implemented, new questions and knowledge will rise to the surface. Social change is necessarily iterative, learning from successes and failures. The Women's Foundation of Minnesota has made substantial commitments to move the work forward over the next seven years.

Finally, we want to acknowledge that in order for sustainable change to occur in the lives of young women we must have shared accountability. This is too big a lift for any one group or coalition to "solve." The *Blueprint* and findings call us all to look within our personal and professional lives for areas where we can each contribute to building a Minnesota where all young women can thrive. At UROC, we plan to bring analysis and action around intersectional oppressions more deeply into the core of our work in communities and the university through our signature projects, more than 60 affiliated projects and partnerships, public events, educational mission, and more. This project has impacted how UROC approaches our work and mission.

In closing, again the UROC team thanks our whole YWI MN research team, the working group members, the Young Women's Cabinet and all who participated in community wisdom conversations or completed a survey. This report and the *Blueprint* is your knowledge and wisdom. For that we thank you! We also thank the Women's Foundation of Minnesota and the State of Minnesota Governor's Office for being committed to this work and inviting UROC to bring its mission and principles to YWI MN.

Appendices

APPENDIX A: WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

This section provides a list of the working group members and the lead research assistant (RA) who coordinated each group. The UROC team would like to express deep gratitude for the input, wisdom and commitment of the working group members and the UROC RAs.

African American Work Group
Lead RA: Shanelle Lalor

First Name	Last Name	Organization/Affiliation
Nena	Abosi	YWI MN Young Women's Cabinet
Titilayo	Bediako	We Win Institute
Dorothy	Bridges	Federal Reserve
Joyce	Ester	Normandale Community College
Silver	Moran-Stewart	YWI MN Young Women's Cabinet
Marika	Pfefferkorn	MN Black Male Achievement Network
Aiysha	Mustapha	Unique Beginnings Foundation
Sharon	Pierce	MCTC
Verna	Price	Girls in Action
Anika	Robbins	Anika Foundation
Asante	Samuels	YWI MN Young Women's Cabinet
Zayed	Ahmed	Avenues for Youth

African Immigrant Work Group
Lead RA: Aria Weatherspoon

First Name	Last Name	Organization
Mohamed	Farah	Ka Joog
Wokie	Freeman	Assistant City Manager Brooklyn Park
Raei	Gessesse	YWI MN Young Women's Cabinet
Wilhelmina	Holder	Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment (WISE)
Amal	Muse	YWI MN Young Women's Cabinet
Taiwo	Ogundedji	YWI MN Young Women's Cabinet
Saciido	Shaie	Ummah Project
Fartun	Weli	Isuroon

American Indian Work Group
Lead RA: Feather Tapio

First Name	Last Name	Organization
Susan	Beaullieu	MN Communities Caring for Children
Beverly	Bushyhead	Nonprofit Assistance Fund
Cathy	Chavers	Bois Forte Band of Chippewa
Brenda	Child	University of Minnesota Professor
Deb	Foster	Ain Dah Young Center
Melanie	Franks	MN Indian Affairs Council

Vanessa	Goodthunder	YWI MN Young Women's Cabinet
Angie	Hirsch	Minnesota Department of Human Services American Indian Mental Health
Katie	Johnston-Goodstar	University of Minnesota Professor
Brook	Lafloe	YWI MN Young Women's Cabinet
Nicole	Matthews	Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition
Adrianne	Miller	YWI MN Young Women's Cabinet
Patina	Park Zink	Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center
Elaine	Salinas	Migizi
Deanna	Standing Cloud Green	Tiwahe Foundation
Lonna	Stevens	Office for Justice Programming
Stacy	Thunder	Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Legislative Branch
Odia	Wood-Krueger	Minneapolis Public Schools - Indian Education

Asian American and Pacific Islander Work Group
Lead RA: Kaeblie Yang

First Name	Last Name	Organization
Hsakushee	Baldwin Zan	St. Paul Public Schools
Kay	Bay Lah	YWI MN Young Women's Cabinet
Sunny	Chanthanouvo	Lao Assistance of Minnesota
Soulita	Her	YWI MN Young Women's Cabinet
Ange	Hwang	Asian Media Access
Sipra	Jha	Lao Assistance of Minnesota
Kaitlyn	Lindaman	
Mai	Moua	Hmong American Partnership
Tenzin	Nordon	Lamton
Ekta	Prakash	CAPI USA
Beki	Saito	Rainbow Research
Anna	Singhathip	YWI MN Young Women's Cabinet

Disability Work Group
Lead RA: Montana Filoteo

First Name	Last Name	Organization
Diane	Cross	Fraser Child & Family Center
TrixieAnn	Girtz Golberg	Lifetrack Resources
Hope	Hoffman	YWI MN Young Women's Cabinet
Kim	Keprios	ARC Greater Twin Cities
Rachel	Larson	YWI MN Young Women's Cabinet
Eleanor	Sherman	YWI MN Young Women's Cabinet
Julie	Storck	Wilderness Inquiry
Darlene	Zangara	Olmstead Implementation Office

Greater MN Work Group
Lead RA: Stephanie Bahr

First Name	Last Name	Organization
Sarah	Curtiss	Men as Peacemakers
Barb	Dorn	YWCA Mankato
Andrea	Duarte-Alonzo	YWI MN Young Women's Cabinet
Grace	Espinoza	YWI MN Young Women's Cabinet
Barb	Houg	Peacemaker Resources
Alice	Jacobson	YWCA Duluth
Brianne	LaDuke	YWI MN Young Women's Cabinet
Angela	Larson	Western Community Action
Caroline	Larson	Support Within Reach
Nevada	Littlewolf	Virginia City Council, City Hall
Haleigh	Ortmeier-Clarke	YWI MN Young Women's Cabinet
Whitney	Place	Minnesota Department of Agriculture
Becky	Schueller	Evergreen Youth & Family Services

Latina/x and Hispanic Work Group
Lead RA: Feather Tapio

First Name	Last Name	Organization
Rachelle	Hernandez	Office of Admissions University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
Derek		Assistant to Rachelle Hernandez
Rosa	Tock	Chicano Latino Affairs Council
Ruby	Lee	CLUES
Roxana	Linares	Centro Tyrone Guzman
Wendy	Lorenzo-Sanchez	YWI MN Young Women's Cabinet
Yesenia	Salazar	YWI MN Young Women's Cabinet
Katherine	Santamaria-Mendez	YWI MN Young Women's Cabinet
Patti	Totozintle	Casa de Esperanza

LGBTQ Work Group
Lead RA: Montana Filoteo

First Name	Last Name	Organization
Ann	DeGroot	Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board
Beth	Holger-Ambrose	The Link
Nidhi	Jariwala	YWI MN Young Women's Cabinet
Andrea	Jenkins	Libraries Research & Learning University of Minnesota
Grace	Maruska	YWI MN Young Women's Cabinet
Monica	Meyer	OutFront
Trina	Olson	Pfund
Raquel	Simoes	Avenues for Youth
Alicia	Sojourner	YWCA Minneapolis
Kava	Vasquez	YWI MN Young Women's Cabinet

Working Group Numbers Breakdown
Approximately 90 letters were sent out by the Governor's office asking for professionals who worked with young women to apply and volunteer as a working group member for the 8 designated communities.

93 young women applied for the Young Women's Cabinet. Twenty-four Cabinet Members (3 for each of the 8 communities) were officially appointed by the Governor out of the applicants.

Community Working Group	Total Applications Received by Governor's Office	Attended Work Group Meeting 1	Attended Work Group Meeting 2	Attended Make Up Session 2/13	Attended Make Up Session 2/15	Attended Make Up Session 2/18	Total Number in Working Groups (+3 Cabinet Each)
African American	8	6	5	1	1	1	12
African Immigrant	5	4	6			2	8
American Indian	11	9	8			1	18
Asian American/ Pacific Islander	8	11	6		1		12
Young Women w/Disabilities	6	3	4				8
Greater MN	6	5	6				13
Latina	4	5	8				8
LGBTQ+	9	4	4			1	10
Totals	57	47	47	1	2	5	89

APPENDIX B: WORKING GROUP MEETING DATES AND LOCATIONS

Activity	Day	Month	Date	Time	Work Group
Kick Off!	Tue	NOV	29	4 to 8	All + Cabinet
Workgroup Meeting	Tue	DEC	6	4-8	Asian American/Pacific Islander
Listening Session (WFMN session)	Wed	DEC	7		NOT facilitated by UROC
Workgroup Meeting	Thu	DEC	15	4-8	African Immigrant
Workgroup Meeting	Sat	DEC	17	9-1:30	Latina
Workgroup Meeting	Mon	DEC	19	4-8pm	American Indian
Workgroup Meeting	Tue	DEC	20	4-8pm	African American
Workgroup Meeting	Wed	DEC	21	4-8pm	LGBTQ
Workgroup Meeting	Wed	DEC	28	4-8pm	Disability
Workgroup Meeting	Sat	JAN	14	11am-3pm	Greater MN
Workgroup Meeting	Tue	JAN	17	4-8	Asian American/Pacific Islander
Workgroup Meeting	Tue	JAN	17	4-8	LGBTQ
Workgroup Meeting	Thu	JAN	19	4-8	Latina
Workgroup Meeting	Thu	JAN	19	4-8	Disability
Workgroup Meeting	Tue	JAN	24	4-8	American Indian
Workgroup Meeting	Tue	JAN	24	4-8	African Immigrant
Workgroup Meeting	Thu	JAN	26	4-8	African American
Makeup Session	Mon	Feb	13	5-8pm	All
Makeup Session	Wed	Feb	15	2-5pm	All
Makeup Session	Sat	Feb	18	11am-2pm	All
Workgroup Meeting	Sat	Feb	18	12-2pm	Greater MN
All WG Get-Together	Sat	April	8	10am-2pm	All + Cabinet

APPENDIX C: COMMUNITY WISDOM CONVERSATION SEMI-STRUCTURED TEMPLATE

	Overarching Questions	Sample Drill-Down Questions
Context	What communities are you a part of? Personal and professional experience What lens or perspective are you bringing to this conversation?	Describe what communities you are part of? Ethnic, racial, religious, gender/sexual minorities Do you work with young women (age 12-24)? If so, any specific communities of young women?
Vision/success	Describe an example of a young woman in your community who you think is thriving? What has she accomplished? How do you define success?	What assets, skills, capacities, opportunities and supports does she have in her life? How do you know that she is thriving? What are the signs or indicators that she is doing well? (If the question is too big, refer back to the Action Areas.)
Barriers/ Solutions	What do you see as the biggest barriers to thriving for young women in your community? Describe what those barriers look like?	Some barriers may include: racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia/transphobia, violence, misogyny How do they negatively impact young women? What systems are they in? Who has power over these barriers? (Government, society, etc.) How would you go about changing these barriers?
Strategies, Priorities, Frameworks	What do you think are the most important action areas? What do you think is most urgent? How? Frameworks for change. Are we missing anything?	Where would you start first? What are the most important things for us to focus on in the action plan? What action areas do you see that we have not yet included?
Measures	How will we know when young women are thriving?	What indicators should we look for? What indicators are commonly used that you think are not good (e.g. teen pregnancy, academic achievement, etc.)?
Good work in the field	Who is doing good work with young women? What practices do we want to continue?	What agencies? What are the best practices that they use? How do you know that it is good work?
Magic Wand	If you could wave a wand and make equity in opportunities a reality:	What would be different? What would be better? What should stay the same?
Wrap-up		Is there anything else you think we need to know to for the Action Plan?

APPENDIX D: ONLINE SURVEY QUESTIONS

[Below is an exported version of the online survey we used in Qualtrics, a secure online survey format available to students, staff, and faculty at the University of Minnesota.]

YWI MN Input survey

Introduction to the YWI-MN

Hello and welcome! Thank you for your interest in our online survey to gather information for the Young Women's Initiative of Minnesota! We want to hear from you about your expertise and knowledge about young women* in Minnesota and what it means for them to thrive.

What is the Young Women's Initiative of Minnesota? The Young Women's Initiative of Minnesota (YWI MN) is a public-private partnership between the Governor's Office of Minnesota and the Women's Foundation of Minnesota (WFMN). The YWI MN aims to create a vision and a plan for achieving equity in opportunities for young women* aged 12-24 in Minnesota, as led by community voices.

We are in a planning phase to develop a **statewide Action Plan** to be completed by the end of April 2017. Content for the Action Plan is being surfaced through this survey and conversations with the community, as facilitated by the Robert J. Jones Urban Research Outreach/Engagement Center (UROC) at the University of Minnesota.

The initiative is rooted in eight communities experiencing the greatest disparities because we know that solutions here will be solutions for all young women*. These include: **African American, American Indian, Latina/Hispanic, African Immigrant, Asian American/Pacific Islander, young women in Greater Minnesota, LGBTQ+ youth, and young women with disabilities**. We know that communities and identities are intersecting. **What are we asking for in this survey?** Information from this survey will help shape the **statewide Action Plan**. We want to know what it means for young women to thrive, key barriers, priorities for action, and your definition for prosperity and wellbeing. We will ask you to share your thoughts and experiences about your own community, or communities with which you have direct first-hand experiences. We believe that communities have their own visions of success; and that problems and solutions are found in the same place. Most of these questions are open-ended. You are free to skip or choose to not answer any question. At the end we will ask you to complete a short demographic survey so that we can describe the different communities that participated in our survey. We will not associate your name with any information that you provide. This survey will take approximately 10 minutes, depending on how much you write.

Contact, Questions, or Concerns – If you want to talk with someone about the project or this survey you can contact Dr. Lauren Martin at mart2114@umn.edu or 612-624-0435 or Makeda Zulu-Gillespie at zulug001@umn.edu or 612-626-9829. To learn more about the initiative, visit the website uroc.umn.edu/young-womens-initiative-minnesota.

Q2 Do you want to continue on to take the survey?

○ Yes, I consent to participate in this survey

○ No, I do not consent to take this survey. (This option will take you to the end of the survey.)

Q3 What perspective and experience are you bringing to this survey? Please select all that apply:

I am a young woman/gender non-binary person between age 12-24

My work involves young women/gender non-binary persons between ages 12-24

Other (please explain): _____

Display This Question:

If What perspective and experience are you bringing to this survey? Please select all that apply: = My work involves young women/gender non-binary persons between ages 12-24

Q4 If your work involves young women*, can you *briefly* please describe how? (e.g. teacher, school social worker, sexual assault advocate, mentor)

Q5 As you answer questions in this survey, we want you to focus on communities in which you have first-hand knowledge and experience. This includes communities you are a part of and those you work within. Which communities are you thinking about as you complete this survey? Select all that apply.

African American/Black

African Immigrant

American Indian

Latina/x or Hispanic

Asian/Pacific Islander

LGBTQ+ Youth

Young Women with Disabilities

Young Women living in Greater Minnesota

Other: _____

End of Block

Barriers

Q6 In this section we ask you some questions about *barriers* that you believe young women* aged 12-24 face in achieving success. Please focus on the communities that you indicated above. We believe that solutions and problems are found in the same place.

Q7 Can you describe what you see as the *biggest barriers* for young women* aged 12-24, in your community? We encourage you to think about: the types of barriers young women face the systems these barriers are located within (e.g. government, schools, community, criminal justice, etc.) the impact of these barriers on young women

End of Block

Actions that Need to Be Taken

Q8 If you could change anything in the State of Minnesota to create opportunities for young women* aged 12-24 to thrive, what would you change?

Q9 What do you think are the top priorities for positive change for young women* aged 12-24, in your community?

Q10 If you could choose where to start first in creating an action plan, which area would you choose? Please rank the following areas according to priority of importance, with 1=highest priority to 6=lowest priority. Click and drag items to reorder.

_____ Education and Lifelong Learning
_____ Safety and Violence Prevention
_____ Family and Caregiving
_____ Cultural and Self identity
_____ Financial Stability and Prosperity
_____ Health and Wellbeing

End of Block

Indicators of Prosperity and Wellbeing

Q11 In this section we want to ask you what you think it looks like when young women*, aged 12-24, *thrive*. Remember we want you to focus on communities in which you have first-hand knowledge and experience.

Q12 Think about a young woman* you know that you believe is *thriving*. What are the skills, capacities, supports, or assets they have in their life? What have they been able to accomplish?

Q13 Some people define prosperity as having success, wealth, or money. What does *prosperity* look like for young women* in your community?

Q14 How would you define *wellbeing* for young women* in your community? Please give some examples.

Q15 How do we know that a young woman* is thriving? Please describe what you believe to be the best and most appropriate *indicators or measures* that young women* are thriving.

End of Block

Great Work that is Already Happening

Q16 We know that there are many things that are going well for young women* aged 12-24. What do you believe are the *best practices* that support young women* to succeed? Think about the practices you have seen that work in communities, programs, curriculum, networks, personal connections or more.

Q17 What are the *gaps in services and supports* for young women*?

Q18 Thanks for your input on the action plan! This is valuable information!

You're almost done... the next section is a few questions about you :)

End of Block

Demographics - Tell us a little about you

Q19 This section asks some demographic questions about you. This information will help us make sure we are gathering information from many different communities and will help us describe who participated in the survey. This information will never be used to identify you for any reason.

Q20 Tell us how you identify your race, ethnicity, and community. Check all that apply:

African

African American

Asian

Asian American

Biracial

Black

European

First Nations

Indigenous

Latina/o/x

Multriracial

Native American / American Indian

Native Alaskan

Native Hawaiian

Pacific Islander

White

Foreign-born

Immigrant community

Asexual/aromantic/demisexual

Bisexual

Lesbian or gay

Pansexual

Queer

Transgender

Gender non-binary

Other: _____

⊗I'd rather not say

Q21 What is your gender identity?

Female

Male

Gender non-conforming / non-binary

Other: _____

⊗I'd rather not say

Q22 How old are you today?

_____

Q23 Which county in Minnesota do you call home? Choose one county, or multiple counties by holding down shift

[List of all 87 Counties in Minnesota]

Q24 Would you describe your current home as urban (city), suburban, or rural? Choose one:

○ Urban

○ Suburban

○ Rural

○ Other: _____

Q25 Do you identify as having any of the following disabilities? Check all that apply:

Hearing difficulty (deaf or having serious difficulty hearing)

Vision difficulty (blind or having serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses)

Cognitive difficulty (Because of a physical, mental, or emotional problem, having difficulty remembering, concentrating, or making decisions)

Ambulatory difficulty (Having serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs)

Self-care difficulty (Having difficulty bathing or dressing)

Independent living difficulty (Because of a physical, mental, or emotional problem, having difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping)

Q26 Did someone help you fill out this form?

○ Yes

○ No

Q27 If someone helped you fill out this form, can you describe this person?

○ Interpreter or translater

○ Family member

○ Other: _____

○ N/A: No one helped me fill out this form

End of Block

Closing

Q28 Would you like to stay informed and connected to the work of the Young Women's Initiative of Minnesota during the implementation phase?

○ Yes

○ No

Q29 If yes, please provide your name and email address and we will add it to the Women's Foundation of Minnesota mailing list for this project.

Q30 Your First Name

_____

Q31 Your Last Name

_____

Q32 Your email address

_____

Q33 Thank you for your input for the Young Women's Initiative of Minnesota!
This information is valuable wisdom as we build our statewide Action Plan.
If you want to talk with someone about the project or this survey you can contact Dr. Lauren Martin at mart2114@umn.edu or 612-624-0435 or Makeda Zulu-Gillespie at zulug001@umn.edu or 612-626-9829.   To visit the website, click here: uroc.umn.edu/young-womens-initiative-minnesota

End of Block

APPENDIX E: MEASURES AND INDICATORS OF THRIVING IDENTIFIED THROUGH THE UROC PROCESS

Category	Sub-Category	Description
Education:		
		Disaggregated educational outcomes (educational attainment, retention, and academic interests)
		Academic Performance (honors, awards, etc.)
		Equitable school punishment policies
	Academic Curriculum:	
		Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education and Tracking
		Coursework in Diversity, Culture, and History (e.g. cultural appreciation, or cross-cultural communication)
		Language Training and Application (e.g. interpersonal skills, or healthy relationships)
		Prosocial Behavior Training (e.g. interpersonal skills, or healthy relationships)
		Coursework on Coping and Resiliency Skills
		Coursework on Health, Sexual Health, and Reproduction
		Coursework on Mental Health (issues, awareness, help)
		Volunteerism (programming, coursework and credit, and mentorship opportunities)
		Coursework that affirms the worth, capacity, and ability of women
		Coursework on media literacy, aimed at countering pernicious mass media content
		Coursework on Social Systems, and the navigation of Social Systems
	Lifelong Learning:	
		Traditional Continuing Education (e.g. degrees, certificates, coursework, and independent study)
		Alternative Credentialing
		Libraries, Community Learning Spaces, Computer Labs (Access)
		Adult Literacy and Numeracy Coursework
		English as a Second Language (ESL) Programming
		Career Transition and Employment Programming
		Time Management and Academic Skills Coursework (e.g. Computer Skills)
		Wider Implementation of Diversity Training
		Access to Career Formal/Informal Networking
	Learning Materials:	
		Textbooks and Textbook Discounting/Sharing
		Technologies (e.g. computers, tablets, laboratories, garages, interactive textbooks)
	Extracurricular:	

		School-Based Programs: Sports, clubs, musical instruments, etc.
		Community-Based Programs: Sports, clubs, musical instruments, etc.
		Non-Academic Volunteer Opportunities
	Financial Knowledge:	
		Banking Coursework (e.g. credit, savings, recurring payments and fees)
		Renting, Leasing, Mortgaging, and Ownership
		Entrepreneurial Coursework
	Counseling:	
		Guidance Counselor Availability
		Guidance Counselor Preparation and Training
		Guidance Counselor Diversity (symbolic v. substantive representation)
		Performance Evaluations (e.g. student placement, parent satisfaction)
		Disciplinary Data
	Teaching:	
		Teacher Training and Indoctrination (e.g. cross-cultural competency, diversity, and facilitation)
		Teacher Diversity (symbolic v. substantive representation)
Financial Stability:		
	Occupation:	
		Minnesota's higher education system remains gendered
		Occupational clustering contributes to the wage gap, threatens women's economic security, etc.
		Women-owned businesses are concentrated in traditional fields
		Occupational clustering undermines statewide productivity
		Employment Statistics (e.g. unemployment, hours per week, wage and salary, longevity)
		Occupational Prestige
	Wage Gap:	
		Women disadvantaged by lower wages across occupations
		Lower wages within female-dominated professions
		Pay equity policies and legal enforcements
		Pay gap of women of color and women from immigrant backgrounds compared to white males/males
		Lifetime earnings by demographic group
		Workplace bias and stereotyping against women, including lesbian, trans and queer
	Housing:	
		Rental housing affordability ranked within the Midwest
		Prevalence and incidence of homelessness among women and children

		Funding for shelters
		Number of shelters and amount of bed space
		Homeownership within female-headed households (single, multigenerational)
		Housing Statistics for females
	Socioeconomic mobility:	
		Own birth weight
		School Readiness
		Poverty Rate
	Work-Life Balance:	
		Percentage of population working 50+ hours
		Total hours of work
		Total hours of caregiving
		Total hours of personal care
		Total hours of leisure
		Total hours of caregiving services received
	Poverty	
		Financial assets of females and female-headed families
		Unemployment rates for female-headed families
		Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) participation
		Receipt of food stamps
		Number of children living in poverty (See Socioeconomic mobility)
		Number of women living in poverty (See Socioeconomic mobility)
		Life expectancy, years in retirement, and savings/assets
	Finances:	
		Return to equity for female homeowners
		Financial independence
		Financial literacy
		Savings and Investments
		Debt
	Public/Private Investment:	
		Scholarships
		Funding for arts and culture within community
		Funding for extracurricular activities and early education
		Funding for Nonprofit Organizations
	Childcare:	
		Affordability
		Cost-benefit / tradeoff
	Health Coverage:	

		Affordability
		Quality of coverage; quality of care (detailed breakdown)
Safety:		
	Objectification:	
		Prevalence and incidence of sexualized female bodies in media (television, movies, videos, etc.)
	Harassment:	
		Prevalence and incidence of harassment and bullying (in school, workplace, etc.)
		Harassment and bullying based on non-dominant identities
		Harassment and bullying related to gender roles
	Sexual Violence:	
		Prevalence and incidence of dating violence
		Prevalence and incidence of sexual assault (by location)
		Percentage of population having experienced sexual assault/rape
		Timing, prevalence of rape
		Statistics on sex trafficking
	Social Isolation:	
		(Temporarily Blank)
	Safe Spaces:	
		(Temporarily Blank)
	Social Awareness:	
		Acceptance of LBTQ community/individuals (substantial focus on objectification, and institutional violence)
		Greater recognition of queerness as a part of a continuum/spectrum
	Intimate Partner Violence:	
		Number of individuals seeking domestic violence services
		Crime reporting on partner violence, sexual violence, and stalking
		Mental health and chronic disease reporting
		Economic costs of domestic violence borne by state
Health:		
	Physical Health:	
		Physical activity totals and frequencies for young women, particularly as compared to young males
		Incidence and prevalence of cancer
		Incidence and prevalence of acute and chronic illnesses
		Incidence and prevalence of obesity and weight issues <body image>
		Incidence and prevalence of heart disease and stroke
		Incidence and prevalence of substance abuse

		Access to quality of drinking water, access to healthy food, recreation
		Sleep totals
	Reproductive Health:	
		Proportion of young women not using contraceptive measures
		Prevalence and incidence of unintended pregnancies
		Access to prenatal care
		Birth weight of own children
	Mental Health:	
		Incidence and prevalence of mental health issues
		Persistence and prevalence of gender norms (esp. deleterious norms)
		Indicators exposing the role of (race, gender and class) intersectionality in mental health
		Incidence and prevalence of internalized mental health conditions (stigmas)
		Immigrant mental health with focus on culturally specific ailments, culture shock, and isolation
		Suicide prevention
	Disabilities:	
		Increased attention to and resourcing for disabled individuals
		Increased recognition of the role of intersectionality
		Access to and participation in recreation and experiential opportunities
	Health Care:	
		Access and affordability
		Living arrangements contributing to need for early assistive services
		Access to paid sick leave
		Access to employer-provided health insurance (or lack thereof)
	Religion and/or Spirituality:	
		(Temporarily Blank)
Leadership and Role Models:		
	Politics:	
		Percentage of elected office positions held by women
		Proportion of individuals represented by female politicians
		Representation of women on county commissions
		Percentage of women in city or local government, county government, and state government
		Female voter participation
	Business & Nonprofits:	
		Representation of women in corporate positions, particularly C-level positions

		Overall representation of women in the workplace
		Indicators of gender perceptions/biases in the workplace
		Representation of women in executive academic and academic support positions
	Law:	
		Indicators of gender perceptions/biases in the workplace
		Female representation within the courtroom, including a count attorneys and judges
		Data on the passage or existence of female specific provisions and protections
	Volunteerism:	
		Number of hours volunteered by females
		Percentage of youth (up to age 24) now or ever engaged in volunteering
		Mentorship program involvement/statistics
		Mentorship program availability
Social/Institutional:		
	Connections and stability:	
		Qualitative data on community connections
		Qualitative data on family satisfactions
		Qualitative data on peer connections
		Qualitative data on the internal perceptions of young women (worth, capacity, ability)
		Qualitative data on the external perceptions of young women (worth, capacity, ability)
		Qualitative data on the acceptance of bilingualism
		Qualitative data on male views (violence, discrimination, capacity)
		Qualitative data on elderly views (violence, discrimination, capacity)

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APPENDIX G: GLOSSARY OF SELECT TERMS RELATED TO GENDER, SEXUALITY AND TYPES OF DISABILITY

Below is a list of terms about gender and sexuality that are commonly used in this report followed by a list of types of disabilities. This is not a comprehensive glossary of terms. The definitions provided here have been drawn from other resource guides and community wisdom, and have been modified by UROC staff as needed.[72]

Cisgender: A person who identifies with the gender they were assigned at birth, often associated with their biological sex.

Cisnormativity: The belief held by individuals or systems that all people are naturally cisgender (i.e. gender identity does and should match their biological sex), and general preferential treatment to cisgender people.

Gender binary: The concept that there are only two genders, man and woman, and that everyone must be one or the other. Also implies the assumption that gender is biologically determined.

Gender expression: The way in which a person expresses their gender outwardly through dress, behaviors, and appearance.

Gender identity: One's deeply held core sense of being a girl/woman, boy/man, some of both, or neither. One's gender identity does not always correspond to biological sex.

Gender non-conforming: Denoting or relating to a person who does not conform to prevailing social and cultural expectations for their gender.

Heteronormativity: The belief of individuals or systems that everyone is naturally heterosexual (i.e. straight), and a general preference for heterosexual relationships.

Heterosexual: A person primarily emotionally, romantically, and/or physically attracted to members of the opposite sex/gender. Also known as "straight."

Homophobia: An intense fear, dislike, prejudice, or hatred of people who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, queer, or broadly as not having a heterosexual orientation. Homophobia and transphobia can together be considered a form of anti-LGBTQ bias.

Homosexual: An outdated and generally considered offensive term referring to people with emotional and/or physical attraction to people of the same sex/gender. It is more common and acceptable to use terms referring to gender identities such as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer. The root *homos* comes from Greek, meaning "same." Contemporary understandings of gender identity and sexual attraction highlight fluidity and a spectrum of identities and desires, rather than fixed categories that "homosexual" implies. In addition, homosexuality was considered a mental illness and criminalized for a long period of time, and therefore is not preferable.

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[72] LGBTQ-related terms have been drawn from PFLAG's Glossary of Terms. See https://www.pflag.org/glossary.

Intersectionality: Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, this term signifies that identities and oppressions intersect in ways that cannot be extricated from each other. Oppressions are multiplicative, not additive. This concept calls on research and practice to examine ways that race, class, gender, and more come together to create different realities (and disparities) for the people experiencing them.

Intersex: The combination of chromosomes, hormones, internal sex organs, and genitalia that do not match the typically expected definitions for male or female.

Latinx: A gender-inclusive term used to describe persons of any and all genders within the Latino/a community (i.e. persons with Latin American origins). Other gender-inclusive terms include Latine and Latin@. There is no current consensus on these terms as usage of these terms is still adapting. Further, these terms are specifically used in the United States, and may not be in use in Latin American countries.

LGBTQ: An umbrella term referring to those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer. In some variations, the Q refers to *questioning*. Other variants of this acronym are LGBT, GLBT or GLBTQ. There are additional acronyms which include *asexual* and *intersex* (e.g. LGBTQIA). Some prefer LGBTQ+ to signal inclusivity of many identities within this broad umbrella term.

Lesbian: Generally, a woman who is emotionally, romantically, and physically attracted to other women.

Queer: A term used by some people—particularly youth and young adults—to describe themselves and/or their community. Reclaimed from its earlier negative use, the term is valued by some for its defiance, by some because it can be inclusive of the entire community, and by others who find it to be an appropriate term to describe their more fluid identities. Traditionally a negative or pejorative term for people who are gay, *queer* is still sometimes disliked within the LGBTQ community.

Questioning: Refers to someone who is exploring and discovering their gender identity, gender expression, and/or sexual orientation.

Sexual orientation: The combination of romantic, emotional, and sexual attraction to other people which are unique to each individual and part of the human condition.

Transgender: Often shortened to *trans*. A term describing a person's gender identity that does not necessarily match their assigned sex at birth. Other terms commonly used are *female to male* (or *FTM*), *male to female* (or *MTF*), *assigned male at birth*(or *AMAB*), *assigned female at birth* (or *AFAB*), *genderqueer*, and *gender expansive*. Transgender people may or may not decide to alter their bodies hormonally and/or surgically to match their gender identity. This word is also used as a broad umbrella term to describe those who transcend conventional expectations of gender identity or expression. Like any umbrella term, many different groups of people with different histories and experiences are often included within the greater transgender community—such groups include, but are certainly not limited to, people who identify as transsexual, genderqueer, gender variant, gender diverse, and androgynous.

Transphobia: An intense fear, prejudice, dislike, or hatred of people who identify as transgender or who do not conform to gender binaries of "man" and "woman." Transphobia and homophobia can together be considered a form of anti-LGBTQ bias.

Two-spirit: A concept originating from the Anishinabeg people, and used in many American Indian communities, which is a culturally-specific term for the LGBTQ community. This concept originates from Anishinabeg cosmology recognizing the duality of male and female spirits, and individuals' capacity to embody both of them. This term is not used by all tribes, and can have different meanings in different communities.

Types of Disabilities:

The CDC defines a disability as "any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities (activity limitation) and interact with the world around them (participation restrictions)."[73] There are many types of disabilities, including conditions acquired at birth (e.g. Down's syndrome), disabilities acquired through accidents (e.g. traumatic brain injuries), and disabilities acquired through a combination of environmental factors and genetic factors (e.g. mental illness or multiple sclerosis).

We found that the U.S. Census Bureau created accessible and easy to understand definitions of disability, which we used in our demographic questions. They follow below.

Hearing difficulty: people who are deaf or having serious difficulty hearing.

Vision difficulty: people who are blind or have serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses.

Cognitive difficulty: Due to a physical, mental, or emotional problem, having difficulty remembering, concentrating, or making decisions.

Ambulatory difficulty: Having serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs.

Self-care difficulty: Having difficulty bathing or dressing.

Independent living difficulty: Due to a physical, mental, or emotional problem, having difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping)

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[73] CDC (2017) "Disability Overview." Accessed from www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/disability.html