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PROVIDING LEADERSHIP IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In 2004 the University created a separate division to provide leadership in community engagement, giving it a charge of creating and coordinating knowledge, skills, and resources for the common good through reciprocal, mutually beneficial partnerships.

That division, the Office of Community Affairs, tracks, advocates, funds, promotes, educates, and mobilizes community engagement for campus and community.

A key unit within Community Affairs is the Center for Community-Based Partnerships. CCBP facilitates the creation of partnerships among faculty, staff, students, and community members that integrate curriculum and research to address critical issues jointly identified by the partners.

Since its establishment in 2006, CCBP and its partners have conducted more than 50 projects involving dozens of faculty, several hundred students, and scores of community partners. A 40-person council of faculty, administrators, students, and community partners recommend policies and actions. These actions include awarding $100,000 in seed-funds annually for engagement scholarship. Another University of Alabama unit, the Center for Ethics and Social Responsibility, is also heavily involved in community engagement. Funded by a private endowment, CESR brings together faculty, students, and community volunteers in practical projects that build engaged and ethical citizens.

Through these mechanisms and others, The University of Alabama fulfills its obligations to the citizens who support it.

The Division of Community Affairs at The University of Alabama is led by Vice President Samory T. Pruitt. Community Affairs, through its compact with the community, plays a vital role in the University’s mission: Advancing the intellectual and social condition of the people of the state through quality programs of teaching, research, and service.
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Welcome from the Publisher

Samory T. Pruitt

We extend a warm welcome to readers of the Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship. Many of you were also our encouragers, giving us the extra measure of determination we needed to complete this first edition on a tight schedule.

It certainly wasn’t the smartest thing we’ve ever done, launching a new research journal from concept to completion in one year, but without question it has been one of our most satisfying projects.

Let me say up front: I am the publisher, responsible for financial aspects of the journal, but content decisions are those of our editorial staff and distinguished editorial board.

What were some of those decisions? Since fall 2007, we came up with a name for the journal, inviting our campus and community partners to suggest a name. We recruited a staff and a nationally representative editorial board, whom we met in conference call to incorporate their ideas into the journal’s philosophy, appearance, and operation.

In quick succession we acquired about 30 manuscripts to review for the inaugural issue and reviewed them using standard peer-review procedures. We established the journal’s visual identity, developed a related website, got estimates for printing costs, hired a printer, created a distribution list, and turned the text and images over to our editing and design team.

And here it is. Somehow we did it, thanks to our dedicated staff, fast turnaround from reviewers, some of whom were supposed to be on vacation, and, especially, our university administration.

We are proud of this first issue, but we know the best is yet to come, because the best years of engagement scholarship lie ahead as together we find more creative ways to combine curriculum and research in community settings.

Like many universities, we have a proud history of service, a term that is in our campus’s mission statement and is emblazoned on the sign announcing entry to our campus. But only in recent years have we begun to transform service into engagement, an integrated approach inviting scholars, bright students, and thoughtful community members to pool resources to produce effective, measurable, sustainable, and portable results.

It is the best of this new approach that we pledge to bring to you in the pages of your new journal. Let us know what you think and send us your ideas for improvement.

About the Author

Samory T. Pruitt is vice president for Community Affairs at The University of Alabama, from which he received the bachelor’s, master’s, and Ph.D. degrees. He can be reached at samory.pruitt@ua.edu.
It is with great pride, enthusiasm, and anticipation that I invite you to read the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship* — “a new kind of research journal.”

An enormous amount of work has gone into the development of this journal and I believe you will see that effort reflected in this edition and in the impact it will have on the field. It has been an interesting journey, many aspects of which Vice President Samory T. Pruitt shared in his welcome notes. The journey has not been one with a completely charted course. It could not have been, given our time constraints. More importantly, it should not have been. A completely charted course would have been counter to the ideals of authentic community engagement that we have attempted to follow.

It’s a cliché but a useful one in this case: We are a work in progress actively seeking ideas from campus and community in terms of structure, goals, and vision. We remain open to where we are going and how we will get there.

As we look at JCES, it is important to keep in mind that it represents the collective thinking of a group of innovative individuals with whom I am privileged to work. First, we want JCES to be the premiere academic journal in community engagement scholarship. We want it to look different, to be different, to be one journal that, with its related website, will be as dynamic as the work going on in our disciplines, a rarity in academic publishing. Second, we want it to be a vehicle for a new type of conversation about community engagement and its place in the academic review, tenure, promotion, and reward process. Third, we want JCES to lead the way in defining scholarship in the academy, scholarship in which faculty, students, and community members participate from idea to presentation through distribution. Fourth, and please pardon another cliché but I don’t know another way to say it: We want JCES to make a difference, not just on campuses and in classrooms but in communities.

That’s a tall order, but with your help we will make it happen.

JCES intends to be a leader in facilitating a new kind of discussion about engagement scholarship. Believing that engagement scholarship is transformative and that it is time for transformation in academia, JCES will be at the forefront in strengthening relationships between communities and institutions of higher learning.

*Transformation and change.* These words cause uneasiness. Our endeavor will be no different. As we dare to be a new kind of scholarly journal, questions will arise about our rigor. We are prepared to answer those questions. Be assured JCES, like all quality academic journals, uses blind peer review with rigorous evaluation criteria fully vetted through an editorial board nominated by university presidents, provosts, and accomplished scholars representing a wide range of scholarly achievements. I am extremely...
proud of our board members and fortunate to be able to draw upon their individual and collective knowledge, talent, judgment, and disciplinary backgrounds to advance engagement scholarship worldwide.

As you examine the board’s makeup you will see a remarkable breadth of disciplines, experiences, and backgrounds. Without the guidance, support, and feedback of the board, it would have been impossible to offer the selections you will find in this issue.

Just how does JCES propose to be a new kind of scholarly journal? Well, for one thing it has a different size and look. Our designers chose a format that is a blend of the news magazine and research journal. This puts us in the right publication genre but gives us more room and a better canvas for creative layouts. All right, to be entirely transparent, JCES is the exact size of National Geographic. And like that venerable publication, we selected earth-tone colors, appropriate, we think, for the kind of down-to-earth content JCES hopes to feature. We have also stepped up the use of photos and graphics. Is a picture worth a thousand words? Rarely, but that’s not the point. We live in a visual world, something most academic journals haven’t noticed. While we won’t over-do it, JCES will be more visual than the usual research journal. It will feature more color, too, but color is expensive. We’ll have to build color gradually as we acquire more funds and as contributors send us more color images.

Will we be qualitative or quantitative? That’s not the point either. The best scholarship today requires both, along with insightful commentary, informative field reports on practice, teaching, and community participation, all of which are featured in the inaugural edition and will be more evident in future editions. The journal will have a website that eventually will add multimedia to the text and images presented in JCES. Articles will be keyed to the site, adding video, photo galleries, and interactivity. We are especially excited about what JCES online will add to our ability to communicate with broad audiences on matters of health, education, innovation, leadership, justice, finance, the arts, culture, and more.

When it comes to content, JCES will be a hybrid. Research documentation will employ APA style, but you’ll find AP (Associated Press) style, too. That’s because we don’t want style to interfere with content as it sometimes does in academic works. So get ready for single spacing after everything – commas, full stops, etc. Get ready for commas always going inside quote marks. It’s simpler that way, and the majority of printed materials use that style. We will not use single quotes unless they are quotes within quotes. Orphan quotes (clever quotes without an obvious source) will be kept to a minimum. Get ready for research articles that use more narrative style and active voice, something often missing in academic writing. Get ready for a capitalization style that rejects deification by capitalization. We’ll do our best never to capitalize pseudo proper nouns, as in “Cassandra Simon is an Associate Professor of Social Work.” Make that “Cassandra Simon is an associate professor of social work.”

We have gone round and round about it, but we have decided to keep the “serial comma” in keeping with the practice of the majority of journals and books. Thus in JCES it will be, “The American flag is red, white, and blue.” That’s simpler and sometimes without that last comma the meaning is unclear.

JCES will be innovative, providing a venue for scholarly works that report on the integration of teaching, service learning, outreach, community engagement, and research. Students and community partners will be an integral part of the journal, as they are in this first edition, a role that will expand as together we find imaginative ways to engage each other.

In this inaugural issue of JCES you will find an array of works, representing some of the variety JCES promises. Whether discussing how to best establish and evaluate equitable partnerships between universities and communities (McClean and Behringer), or the importance of linking families, communities, and universities (Burbank and Hunter), or how best to engage minority participants in health care research (Janosky et al.) the selections in this issue demonstrate the importance of community partners in our mission.

It is impossible to speak of engagement scholarship and not recognize the central involvement of youth in community engagement work and subsequently its scholarship. From addressing the benefits of engaging youth in citizen science projects to recognizing the overall value of youth-adult partnerships, JCES Volume 1, Number 1 represents work from those who have
bridged the gap between the classroom and the community. Emphasizing the importance of authentic community engagement, this first issue includes articles in which youth are equal partners and stakeholders and helped in manuscript preparation.

So, yes, we have high school authors in a peer-reviewed journal. We also have an international author of a field practice article that demonstrates how the world has become our classroom. This latter article, arising from outreach in Peru led by two engineering faculty, demonstrates the truth that engagement scholarship is possible in every discipline. Two other pieces, by a community member and a graduate student, represent past and future reflections on community engagement as they relate to The University of Alabama’s traditional emphasis on service.

On behalf of the JCES staff, I must thank the university administration for its support of this effort. From President Robert Witt to Provost Judy Bonner to Interim Vice President for Research Joe Benson, and Community Affairs Vice President Samory T. Pruitt, we have received support with only one condition attached: Do good work. We also enjoyed the support of UA System Chancellor Malcolm Portera, whose pioneering work in community engagement in the 1980s underlies much of UA’s current commitment to outreach and engagement scholarship.

I must give special thanks to Samory Pruitt, who had the vision to embark on this project. His ability to draw together diverse talents and resources and his confidence that we could actually bring this journal to fruition is the mark of a true leader. I would also be remiss without acknowledging the contributions of Professor Emeritus Ed Mullins, whose expertise in editing and publishing has made this issue a reality.

Finally, I want to thank our students and community members, those we teach and with whom we partner. They make reciprocity a reality. They allow us into their lives and in so doing they teach and transform us and vice versa. I look forward to our journey together as we develop JCES into its fullest potential.

About the Author

Cassandra E. Simon is an associate professor of social work at The University of Alabama. A native of New Orleans, her Ph.D. is from The University of Texas at Arlington. She can be reached at csimon@bama.ua.edu.
Institutional history can inform the present and point to a vision of the future. The brief history recalled in this essay emphasizes The University of Alabama’s strong engagement with the state of Alabama and with local communities beginning in the early 1980s.

The recession of the 1980s left its mark on Alabama. The manufacturing sector alone lost almost 40,000 jobs. Unemployment in Tuscaloosa County, location of The University of Alabama, was the highest in the state. The university, and the state, had experienced several years of prorated budgets.

Taking note of the state’s sagging economy, the newly appointed president of The University of Alabama, Dr. Joab Thomas, in 1981 made a commitment to assist in building a strong economic base in Alabama. In his initial remarks to the Board of Trustees, Thomas established three priorities to drive the university’s engagement with the state: (1) The quality of all University academic programs would be enhanced. (2) The university would become a major research enterprise. (3) The research program would relate strongly to the economic development of the state.

An unusual opportunity for faculty and staff to implement Thomas’s vision presented itself in 1983. A General Motors plant, Rochester Products Division in Tuscaloosa, employed 200 people in manufacturing automotive components. The plant was scheduled to close if employees could not find $2 million in operating cost savings. In the end, they were short $470,000. They turned to the Tuscaloosa Industrial Board and then, in turn, to the university with an offer to sell the plant to the university as a research facility.

The discussions culminated in a three-party partnership among General Motors Corporation, the United Auto Workers, and the university. The UA Board of Trustees agreed to use the building as a research facility and to pay General Motors the $470,000 needed to keep the plant operating; however, if faculty and staff could identify the additional savings, that amount would be reduced dollar for dollar. The UAW called an election to ratify the plan to establish a trust fund by withholding monthly contributions from their paychecks to be deposited to the fund. As savings were identified, the monthly employee contributions were reduced accordingly, and ultimately their contributions were returned in full.

A three-year time frame was agreed upon, and a management committee consisting of representatives from General Motors, UAW, and the university proceeded to implement the plan.

Within eight months the $470,000 in annual savings had been identified. Encouraged by the success of the project, in 1984 General Motors decided to invest $14 million to turn the assembly plant into a highly automated, vertically integrated unit to fabricate carburetors as well as assemble them.

The university received nationwide recognition for its role in the Rochester project. Articles appeared in the New York Times, Harvard Busi-
ness Review, and Reader’s Digest. Major networks broadcast news about how a university helped save a manufacturing plant.

Here are some of the headlines of the turnaround from Alabama newspapers:

• Future Prospects Bright (editorial, Tuscaloosa News, January 21, 1983)
• Efforts Save Tuscaloosa Plant (Mobile Press-Register, January 20, 1983)
• U. of Ala. to Save Plant from Closing (Nashville Tennessean, January 21, 1983)
• Three-Way Plan Ensures Plant’s Future (Birmingham Post-Herald, February 7, 1983)
• GM Factory Is New UA Classroom (Montgomery Advertiser, February 7, 1983)
• Labor, Brain Power Join in Bid to Save Factory (Chicago Tribune, March 14, 1983)

Requests for assistance from communities throughout the state began to grow, and the university responded with a strategic plan to help counties and other groups organize and plan for economic development.

The university’s strategic plan included three goals: (1) Prevent job loss and attract new industry by building world-class programs in manufacturing technology that can be transported to existing and new industry. (2) Assist state and selected communities in creating effective economic development programs. (3) Help Alabama grow more of its own industry.

By 1995, the university had assisted in establishing the following economic development partnerships, each with strategic agendas in place: Tuscaloosa County Industrial Development Authority, Etowah County Development Authority (Gadsden), Selma Industrial Development Authority, Shoals Industrial Development Authority (Florence), Barbour County Industrial Development Authority (Eufaula), Phenix City 2000 Inc. (Russell County), Dothan Industrial Development Authority, Escambia County Industrial Development Authority (Brewton), Butler County Commission for Economic Development (Greenville), Covington County Economic Development Commission (Andalusia), and Talladega Industrial Development Authority.

Improving the state’s economy was not the university’s only engagement target. Increasing human capital was also. The Office of Economic and Community Affairs and UA’s College of Human Environmental Sciences formed a partnership to strengthen families, increasing the probability that their children, especially those in communities where large numbers live in poverty, would arrive at school ready to learn. Currently there are 12 of these centers throughout the state. They constitute the Alabama Network of Family Resource Centers. Services are community based and operate from nonprofit agencies.

History is dynamic and ever changing, but these early efforts left in place university centers that remain vital to economic efforts throughout Alabama. They include the University Center for Economic Development, the Alabama Productivity Center, the Alabama International Trade Center, and the Alabama Technology Network. These achievements also left in place a broadening and deepening legacy of engagement from which all disciplines and programs at the university are benefiting today.

About the Author

Mary Allen Jolley was director of Economic and Community Affairs at The University of Alabama from 1985-94. She remains active in community service, serving on the JCES editorial board and with the Council of the Center for Community-Based Partnerships. She can be reached at majolley@bellsouth.net.
Learning by Engaging Communities in Research

Kyun Soo Kim

The experiences I share here with JCES readers will show how my graduate program at The University of Alabama prepared me for a career in higher education, and how it influenced my current thinking about that career.

Given that learning to be a good educator is a lifelong process that does not end at any one point, I have had a rare opportunity to become a well-prepared educator by participating in several community-based scholarship projects as a research assistant in the Center for Community-Based Partnership under the auspices of the Division of Community Affairs.

The role of CCBP as a facilitator of engagement scholarship—a new and rapidly evolving theory-based approach—is to connect student/faculty and community partners in research-based projects designed to solve chronic problems identified by communities. The center creates university/community teams to expand the classroom for students and faculty while addressing quality of life issues locally, nationally, and internationally.

Two projects that were initiated and/or funded in part by CCBP—the Multicultural Journalism Workshop (MJW) and Bama Preparing Alabama Students for Success (BAMA-PASS)—receive special attention here because they directly influenced how I am now designing my courses as a young scholar in my first academic post.

BAMA-PASS helps local schools meet Adequate Yearly Progress standards, fosters democratic dispositions, improves initiative, and builds academic and civic competence. I supervised and advised undergraduate tutors who held tutorial sessions about social studies topics twice a week for one semester at John Essex High School, a K-12 school in Marengo County in the heart of Alabama’s Black Belt, one of the nation’s poorest regions.

In stark contrast with attitudes expressed in initial interactions between the tutors and the high school students, the students by the end of the program voiced significantly higher interest in going to college. Over the course of the semester both the tutors and I developed a deep understanding of the need for education in a poor community. It became clear to us that the at-risk students did not reject college because of a lack of ambition but because of a lack of opportunity, incentives, and preparation. These mutually beneficial outcomes for students and tutors were exactly in line with CCBP’s goals for the project.

MJW is a project led by the UA journalism department with CCBP’s financial assistance and support. It was conceived as a means of introducing both talented and average high school students to the ins and outs of a career in journalism through an intensive 10-day workshop on The University of Alabama campus.

Each year a team of faculty and college students join with visiting professionals to lead high school students in assignments that help them learn what it takes to succeed in a competitive
field – skills of reporting, writing, editing, designing, and presenting news in print, on air, and online.

The effects over 25 years of these workshops are impressive for both university recruiting and adding minorities to the journalism profession. About one-third of those who attend the workshop enroll at The University of Alabama, 85% attend college somewhere, more than 50 percent major in journalism or a related discipline, and the majority of these eventually enter the journalism profession. High school media advisers throughout the nation recommend the students and funding for the program is by media and media professional partners.

These examples show how communities partner with higher education to benefit the younger generation and their schools. More importantly, from the standpoint of my personal development, these examples dovetail with what I want to accomplish as a communication scholar. Fortunately, my teaching career has just begun at Grambling State, a historically black university. In the middle of handling new tasks, I keep in mind that community engagement must be a part of my teaching philosophy because I have directly experienced the insight that engagement scholarship provides students as well as the young scholar. I am obliged to translate what I learned at UA for the Grambling community.

Finally, in my graduate studies at Alabama, I became a fan of Kurt Lewin, who argued that there is nothing so practical as a good theory. I believe that research contributes to theory development, and that theory is eventually for the betterment of our society. It is at the step of conducting research about the projects I participated in at Alabama where I/we fell short. Sound familiar? I admit that my “engaged” experiences fell short of an important component of engagement scholarship because we failed to systematically assess, evaluate, and write up the results in a theory-based manner, though my mentor at CCBP, Dr. Ed Mullins, and a colleague of his in journalism are in the process of systematically assessing the effects of 25 years of targeting groups for a head start in journalism education in partnership with the Dow Jones Newspaper Fund and high school journalism teachers.

Research informs future adjustments in curricular-related activities. Furthermore, it translates the experience of one community into mutually beneficial insights for all relevant parties.

The need for adjustment calls for continuing research activities. Accordingly, a crucial task is to evaluate each engagement project and make the findings available through published research. By doing so, community engagement scholarship will support theoretical advancements in our fields. Without this vital step our efforts will be little more than trial and error.

About the Author

Kyun Soo Kim, a graduate student member of the committee that developed JCES, is teaching mass communication at Grambling State University. A native of South Korea, his Ph.D. is from The University of Alabama. He can be reached at kyun4zzing@gmail.com.
Abstract
Citizen science projects in which members of the public participate in large scale science research programs are excellent ways for universities to engage the broader community in authentic science research. The Monarch Larva Monitoring Project (MLMP) is such a project. It involves hundreds of individuals throughout the United States and southern Canada in a study of monarch butterfly distribution and abundance. This program, run by faculty, graduate students, and staff at the University of Minnesota, provides research opportunities for volunteer monitors. We used mixed methods to understand contexts, outcomes, and promising practices for engaging youth in this project. Slightly over a third of our adult volunteers engaged youth in monitoring activities. They reported that the youth were successful at and enjoyed project activities, with the exception of data entry. Adults innovations increased the success and educational value of the project for children without compromising data integrity. Many adults engaged in extension activities, including independent research that built on their monitoring observations. This project provides an excellent forum for science and environmental education through investigation, direct and long-term interactions with natural settings, and data analysis.

Introduction
A growing number of citizen science projects engage the public in observing nature using defined protocols that range from monitoring species abundance to more detailed observations of organisms and their environments (Citizen Science Central, 2008). Most citizen science projects involve networks of volunteers, many of whom participate in scientific research despite little or no scientific training. These programs provide benefits for both the participants and project managers at many levels. Because college and university scientists coordinate so many citizen science projects, they provide an excellent example of community engagement by higher education institutions. They fulfill an important mission of these institutions by offering the opportunity to work collaboratively with the broader community on issues of common interest. Because many citizen science projects address environmental questions, the resulting community engagement often directly relates to environmental health and well-being. From a scientific perspective, public involvement has expanded scientific capabilities and applications, resulting in long-term data covering wide geographic areas (e.g. Swengel, 1995; Wells, Rosenberg, Dunn, Tessaglia-Hymes, and Dhondt, 1998; Goffredo, Piccinetti, and Zaccanti, 2004; Prysby and Oberhauser, 2004; McCaffrey, 2005; Pilz,
Ballard, and Jones, 2006). From a science education perspective, citizen science projects provide venues in which non-scientists can engage in the processes of inquiry and discovery scientists use to understand natural phenomena. This engagement meets important science education goals (Ferry, 1995; National Conference on Student and Scientist Partnerships, 1997; NRC, 1996, 2000; Trumbull, Bonney, and Bascom, 2000), giving participants opportunities to ask and “determine answers to questions derived from curiosity about everyday experiences,” and “describe, explain, and predict natural phenomena” (NRC, 1996, p. 22). However, there have been few detailed studies of the educational value of citizen science projects. An exception is Brossard, Lewenstein, and Bonney (2005), who showed that adult participants in The Birdhouse Network, a Cornell University Lab of Ornithology citizen science project, gained science knowledge.

Citizen science projects also address environmental education goals by providing opportunities to engage in outdoor activities that promote connections with nature and by fostering an understanding and appreciation of environmental concepts through hands-on engagement with natural systems. Kellert (2005) found that direct exposure to nature, specifically interactions with “largely self-sustaining features and processes of the natural environment” (p. 65), particularly during middle childhood, helps to develop capacities for creativity, problem-solving, and emotional and intellectual development.

The American Institutes for Research (2005) studied the impact of extensive outdoor education programs on at-risk youth. Students who engaged in these programs exhibited increased mastery of science concepts, enhanced cooperation and conflict resolution skills, and improved self-esteem, problem-solving ability, motivation to learn, and classroom behavior. Taylor, Kuo, and Sullivan (2001) showed that contact with nature helped to reduce the impact of attention deficit disorder in children (see also Louv, 2005).

MLMP is a University of Minnesota citizen science project with well-documented scientific outcomes (Prysby, 2004; Prysby and Oberhauser, 2004; Oberhauser, Gebhard, Cameron, and Oberhauser, 2007; Batalden, Oberhauser, and Peterson, 2007). The project began as part of a graduate thesis project in 1996. Volunteers are recruited via e-mail lists and websites, word-of-mouth, or a network of cooperating nature centers. They learn monitoring protocols from hardcopy or online instructions or in training workshops. Monitoring involves weekly measurements of monarch egg and larval abundance throughout late spring and summer.

From 2001-2005 we conducted train-the-trainer workshops at nature centers throughout the eastern United States. Naturalists and other professional educators who took part in these workshops continue to train new volunteers. Faculty, staff, and graduate students in the University of Minnesota’s Department of Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology coordinate the program. They answer questions posed by volunteers and produce an annual newsletter that summarizes findings and spotlights volunteer work. They also publish findings and maintain a project website. University personnel monitor several sites and continue to conduct training for volunteers.

Volunteers choose and describe their own monitoring sites. These include backyard gardens, abandoned fields, pastures, and restored prairies throughout the monarchs’ eastern breeding range (the eastern half of the United States and southeastern Canada). The only requirement is that these sites contain milkweed (species *Asclepias*), the monarch’s larval host plant. Volunteers examine milkweed plants and record the number of eggs and larvae observed and the number of milkweeds, from which they make weekly estimates of monarch densities. They identify larvae instars (or life cycle stages; monarchs go through five larval instars). Optional activities include comparing characteristics of milkweed occupied by monarchs to randomly selected plants, collecting larvae to rear in captivity for estimates of parasitism rates, and collecting weather data. They enter their data into an online Microsoft Access relational database. Volunteers have contributed to scientific understanding of monarch butterfly population dynamics, predation, and potential responses to global science change.

Here, we focus on the educational values of MLMP, particularly when adults engage youth in informal educational settings in which participants pursue voluntary, self-directed activities not part of a school curriculum (see Falk, 2001). This free-choice learning is self-motivated and guided
by the needs and interests of the learner (Institute for Learning Innovation, 2008). While some adults were teachers, they participated voluntarily during the summer, and student participants did not receive credit. Some adults in our study were professional naturalists, but the youth and adults with whom they worked did so on a voluntary basis. Thus, all learning was free-choice. The goals of this study were to determine the degree to which adults engaged youth in MLMP, what their goals were, and what outcomes they perceived for youth participants.

Methods
Evaluation Context and Methods
We conducted this research in coordination with a utilization-focused program evaluation (Patton, 1997) that would help to inform this and other citizen science projects that engage youth. An additional assessment was to understand the value of the program, and by extension other similar programs, in promoting educational goals that the adult leaders had for youth. Research questions addressed the contexts in which adults involve youth in this program, how adults implemented monitoring activities with youth, and the value of engaging youth in the project as perceived by the adults.

We used a mixture of quantitative (survey) and qualitative (purposive interviews) methods. All evaluation participants were adult volunteers; we observed, but did not survey or interview, the youth.

We initially conducted a short survey of participants monitoring with children as an addendum to our yearly evaluation questionnaire in 2004. Most participants filled out the survey online; participants without Internet access received questionnaires by mail. The addendum included multiple choice questions that addressed demographics, youth interest in activities, and the context of their participation in the project. As an incentive to fill out and send in the survey, we offered a free book on monarch biology.

We used the survey results to identify a purposive (Miles and Huberman, 1984) sample of volunteers whose answers indicated that they had the most experience monitoring with children. While the group represented a variety of monitoring contexts, our smaller interview group did not proportionally represent all of the contexts identified by the initial survey. Interviewees included teachers monitoring with children from their classes or their community and nature center educators. They were from North Carolina, Minnesota, Texas, and Vermont.

Interviews consisted of a series of open-ended questions designed to elicit data about participant goals and experiences monitoring with children, the context in which these experiences occurred, stories that illustrated their points, what they wanted from the program, and what materials they used. The interviewer used a format that allowed interviewees to speak from their own perspectives during 30 to 60 minute interviews conducted by phone (n = 7), in person (n = 1), and by e-mail due to a hearing impairment (n = 1).

Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts and written notes were then analyzed to derive coded categories from important themes and concepts, organizing the data in clusters for further analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1984). Coding, by co-author Kountoupes, entailed three stages: (1) initial exploration of the data to identify broad categories, or open codes; (2) axial coding, or coding to identify relationships between and among categories; (3) selective coding to identify a central story imbedded in the first two stages. This systematic analysis, rather than forcing themes into pre-existing categories, enabled development of themes grounded in data analysis and observation (Ezzy, 2002).

Results
Quantitative Results
Of 141 survey respondents, 52 (37%) identified themselves as participating in MLMP with children. Table 1 summarizes the contexts in which these respondents engaged youth. The three most common types of child participants were family members, neighbors, friends, or students of adult volunteers (Table 1a). Most adults monitored with five or fewer children, although some groups included more than 10 children (Table 1b). Groups tended to include relatively narrow age ranges, and few adults worked exclusively with children under the age of 7 (Table 1c).

Adults were asked to identify three favorite activities of the children. Finding monarch eggs and caterpillars was overwhelmingly the favorite
activity (Table 2). We tested for correlations between age and the likelihood that activities were included in the top three, combining single age groups of elementary (ages 5-9) and secondary students (ages 10-16) to increase the sample sizes within each group. There was no age effect on the likelihood that any activities were or were not included among the top three.

Only one activity was rated difficult (identifying the correct instar of a caterpillar) by more than 25% of respondents (Table 3), although many groups did not do the three optional activities with children, and adults completed some required activities without involving the children (the milkweed density survey, filling out the data sheets, and inputting data into the online database). The age of the children involved in the monitoring had no effect on the likelihood that they did any of the activities except inputting data; 80% of the children aged 5-9 and 43% of those aged 10-16 did not enter data ($X^2 = 3.77$, df = 1, $p = 0.05$).

**Qualitative Results**

Interviewees included four naturalists who monitored with children at nature centers and five teachers monitoring with children during the summer. One teacher’s children were part of her group, and two teachers, both in Texas, continued monitoring into the school year with entire classes. Nature center groups included families who were trained at nature centers and then continued to monitor at that nature center, youth monitoring with home-school groups or other educational groups, and summer day camps for which monitoring was a focus activity. The sizes of the groups led by teachers in the summer ranged from 5 to 14 students, with up to 20 students working with the teachers who continued during the school year. These teacher-led groups included elementary students (one group), middle school students (three groups), and high school students (one group). Sizes of nature center groups ranged from 1 to 11 children and were often variable from week to week. The children at nature centers ranged from 6

**Table 1. Characteristics of Youth Monitors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. Group Type*</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family of adult volunteers</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbors/community</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School group</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home school group</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature center program</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other summer program/camp</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day care</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2. Responses to: Rate the Three Monitoring Activities that Children in your Project Enjoy Most.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity*</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finding caterpillars/eggs on plants</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rearing larvae</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being outside</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying eggs and caterpillar instars</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counting plants or monarchs</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection and entry</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking egg home to watch metamorphosis</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[*Percent of respondents who listed each activity as one of the top three*]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>b. Group Size (number of children)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>c. Youth Ages</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-6 years</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-9 years</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-12 years</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>worked with multiple ages</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[*Respondents could give multiple answers*]

【Table 3. Responses (percentages) to: Please Rate the Success Children Experienced with Each of the Following Monitoring Activities.】

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MLP Activity</th>
<th>Easy</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Difficult</th>
<th>Did not do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distinguishing milkweed from other plants</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying correct caterpillar instar</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding eggs and larvae</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completing milkweed density survey</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filling out data sheets</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inputting data</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recording weather data*</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rearing larvae to estimate parasitism rates*</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparing plants occupied by monarchs to random plants*</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[*Optional activities*]
years old to high school students.

Our interviews revealed monitoring logistics and practices to which children responded positively and negatively. When the qualitative data gleaned from interviews allowed, we compared positive and negative reactions to correlated thematic activities (Table 4). For example, children enjoyed carrying and using their equipment appropriately. Responsibility for the equipment generated pride in their work even though it was very simple, consisting of clipboards, field journals, meter sticks, data sheets, hand lenses, and rain gauges.

"[The children] love walking around with their butterfly nets; they love looking with their hand lenses. This is very cool business." – MLMP volunteer

However, this positive feeling did not apply to all equipment. Two adults remarked that children were not very interested in using the rain gauge. Additionally, most noted that children responded positively to being around and finding monarchs, but the activities that involved milkweed did not engage them as effectively, and they were discouraged when they did not find monarchs.

Adults made modifications to improve the experience for the children with whom they were working, but eight interviewees emphasized the care they took not to veer from the prescribed protocol. They emphasized the importance of teaching children that a key part of scientific research is following the methods exactly to ensure scientific accuracy and validity. Three groups collected data from small sub-sites of 50 or fewer plants and monitored every plant, rather than following the random sampling methodology outlined in the protocol. Two groups only counted eggs and larvae with the children, noting that time constraints did not allow them to do the milkweed counting or the optional weather or milkweed condition data collection.

One naturalist conducted a training for youth only. She found that children could not keep up with adult learning speeds when adults and youth were trained together, and adults lost interest when she took the time needed to practice and teach children the protocol properly. The modified training involved more hands-on learning; they "went out in the field and practiced the monitoring rather than talking about it."

Five interviewees made changes to the data collection sheets to cater them to their groups' ability and interest. These changes included simplification (such as using a separate page for each day), adding columns to allow children to write down additional observations, color-coding data sheets, and making multiple data sheets to allow comparisons between sections of a single site.

Six interviewees had children pair up to collect data in the field with one observer and one recorder. Newer monitors were paired with experienced individuals when possible, providing leadership opportunities as well as a way to quickly teach data collection. In three cases, inexperienced children monitored with an adult until they felt confident doing it on their own or with another partner. Many adults separated nonstructured play, or "hang-out" time, from data collection time, resulting in less distraction and playing around when children needed to concentrate on accurate data collection.

Most interviewees added extension activities to MLMP protocol. Depending on the children's ages, additional activities ranged from reading story books about insects to designing and carrying out independent research. Activities mentioned by at least two interviewees included raising and tagging monarchs, observing and identifying organisms in the field, implementing other outdoor educational activities, and taking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities Children Enjoyed Most</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using research equipment</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being around monarchs</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding eggs/larvae</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being outside</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeing field results online</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding other living things</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socializing with other children</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using field guides</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Interviewees could give multiple responses. n = 9]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities Children Enjoyed Least</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collecting weather data with rain gauge</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children respond less to milkweed than monarchs</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not finding eggs/larvae</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosquitoes and hot weather</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entering data</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Adult Perceptions to Children’s Response to MLMP Activities
science-related field trips. Five groups conducted additional outdoor field research. Three of these five groups designed and implemented independent research projects — coming up with the question, designing methods to answer it, and collecting their own data — in addition to collecting MLMP data. They presented their findings at local, regional, state, and international science fairs and to community groups. The other two groups chose a site-level question, working together to design methods to answer these questions. For example, one group of children monitored two different sites, a restored prairie section and an agricultural field with milkweed, and compared their data to learn if there were any differences in monarch population characteristics between the sites.

Interviewees identified a number of challenges to involving children in MLMP. Online data entry, the biggest challenge, was resolved in a variety of ways. Five adults entered the data weekly without involving the youth. Two groups entered data every week, and two had a data entry party at the end of the season. Three interviewees said that the children simply did not like being inside in front of a computer. Access to computers was noted as a problem by three interviewees and time constraints by two. Adults with access to multiple computers had the most success entering data with groups of children. Because of concern for accuracy, two adults entered all the data themselves.

Perceived Value of MLMP to Children

A comparison of adults’ goals for monitoring with children and their perception of what children gained shows that many of their goals were met (Table 5). All adult interviewees said their principal motivation was giving children an opportunity to make important scientific contributions by participating in “real” science. (Table 5a). Clearly, this goal was met; learning and understanding scientific research was the most commonly noted outcome of participating in MLMP (Table 5b):

"To me there is nothing more exciting than seeing kids turned on to science and to be able to have them turned on doing ‘real’ science." — volunteer

"It (MLMP) has truly changed the whole thought process of working with kids and giving them science that is real.” — volunteer

Adults nurtured children’s perceptions of themselves as scientists in many ways. For example, some of them recognized youth participants by placing signs at their monitoring sites that explained the project and identified the participants. One group wore “Jr. Lepidopterist” name tags while monitoring, and many showed the children their field data on MLMP’s website, emphasizing the importance of their contributions.

Providing “fun” activities that nurtured a love of science were goals for the adults, and they reported that these social goals were realized (Tables 5a and 5b). Interviewees identified enjoyment of time outside and socializing and meeting friends as important outcomes of the project. They supported social outcomes by providing a social hour each monitoring day to eat, talk, debrief, and become closer (n = 6) and having an end-of-season party (n = 6).

“They (children) get to come to my house and we hang out afterwards and always have goodies on the porch. It’s just kind of hanging out and it’s good. There’s tons of bonding, science bonding.” — volunteer

Discussion

Many citizen science projects have an explicit educational focus, and when their target is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5. Adults Goals for Monitoring with Children and Perception of Outcomes*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>a. Goals</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make important science contributions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inquiry-based learning experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do real science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect with nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspire children to work in the sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun learning experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult leader loves doing science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>b. Perceived Outcomes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand real scientific research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children feel like real scientists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do something important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discover, learn about living things outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time to socialize and meet new friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy time outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children go on to study science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership opportunity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[*Respondents could give multiple answers]
a youth audience, many of them work through schools. For example, GLOBE (Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment) promotes investigations of the environment in primary and secondary schools (GLOBE, 2008), and many classrooms participate in stream monitoring programs (Overholt and Mackenzie, 2005). The values of these programs in formal education settings have been well documented (Bouillion and Gomez, 2001; Juhl, Yearsley, and Silva, 1997; GLOBE, 2008). However, many citizen science projects take place in informal science education settings and youth engagement is primarily through adult volunteers; it is this context that we addressed in our study.

Because monarch butterfly eggs and larvae can be found in urban, rural, and suburban areas, MLMP is accessible to a diverse audience. Additionally, monarchs are familiar, fairly common organisms easy for children to observe and handle. While this project has the benefit of an accessible and familiar organism, our findings are applicable to a broad range of outdoor science research projects, including those that focus on birds, weather, other insects, and even earthworms. Engagement in these projects can increase youth involvement in hands-on science, providing opportunities for keen observations and immersion into natural settings.

Many adults (37% of the participants in our quantitative survey) were engaging youth in this citizen science project. They had clear educational and social goals and perceived that these goals were being met. The large range of ages of children suggests that citizen science projects can provide quality experiences for many ages. Additionally, this age range as well as the variety of group types, sizes, and contexts illustrated how this free-choice learning activity is guided by the varied needs and interests of participants.

Adults identified a number of challenges for children, elected to do some of the more difficult activities themselves, and chose not to do some of the optional activities when they monitored with children. They modified training procedures and activities to increase learning outcomes. Only one project activity was identified as difficult for children by over 25% of survey respondents (assigning an instar level to caterpillars that they found in the field), suggesting that youth are able to carry out most activities, at least with the help of adult mentors.

Both our survey and interview data identified online data entry with children as a barrier, with adults in over half of our survey (59%) and interviews (55%) doing this activity without involving the children. The data provides interesting reasons for and ways of coping with this challenge. In general, children didn’t like being indoors in front of a computer, and access to computers was a barrier for some groups. Some adults were also concerned about the accuracy of data reporting if children entered the data. As we have said, some resolved this challenge by entering the data themselves while others made data entry into a party, illustrating adult creativity in addressing challenges.

Nature of Science

Our interview data identified several aspects of engaging youth in the citizen science project applicable to their understanding of the nature of science (AAAS, 1993). A basic premise of science is that the world is understandable, that through careful and systematic study we can discover patterns in nature. Adults accurately perceived that youth were conducting “real” science. They were engaged in finding patterns during their systematic monitoring with the aid of scientific equipment. In fact, it bears repeating that adults perceived that the proper use and care of this equipment was a source of pride and helped children identify themselves as scientists.

Another key finding was the importance to adult volunteers of maintaining the scientific validity of the research, even as they modified procedures to make them more appropriate to their youth audience. The validity of all scientific claims must be determined by accurate observation and measurements, and adults clearly understood this. They took the science seriously and communicated this seriousness to the children. This attention to detail is key to the success of scientific research and clearly connects this audience to research done in more traditional settings. The adults ensured that the methods were repeatable and the findings meaningful.

A key feature of the scientific process is that answers to one question lead to more questions as we refine our understanding of natural systems (AAAS, 1993; NRC, 2000). In general, citizen scientists follow protocols that they have
not designed and submit their data to project organizers. If this were all that they did, they might better be called “citizen technicians” than “citizen scientists.” Interestingly, Brossard et al. (2005) found that participation in The Birdhouse Network did not increase adult understanding of the process of science; the experiential context of the project did not stress this process. Although participants were involved in one part of the scientific process, they were not involved in asking the questions or analyzing the data, and were probably motivated more by their interest in birds than their interest in science (Brossard et al. 2005). However, most adults in our qualitative study took steps to ensure that the youth were engaging in the entire process of science, from asking their own questions to analyzing and presenting their own data. The prescribed protocol focused their observations in a way that coming up with testable questions based on their own interests was a natural next step. This finding suggests that engagement in citizen science is a perfect opportunity to encourage youth to ask meaningful questions.

Interesting comparisons can be made between the science conducted by citizen science volunteers working with children and science conducted in traditional research settings. The focus on the educational value of the research may at first seem different from science done in more traditional settings. However, adult interviewees modified the program carefully, ensuring that the youth had a positive learning experience while preserving their data validity. In many ways, this is not very different from what occurs in research labs. Training the next generation of scientists is a goal in many university and private sector science labs, and protocols must often be modified to meet the practical requirements of available equipment, money, time, and expertise. The connection of this citizen science program to an active university science research program emphasizes the authentic science research aspects of the project findings.

Program Value

The interview data highlighted both the scientific and social value of MLMP to children. A dominant theme centered on participants’ feelings about doing real scientific research; adults perceived that the children felt like real scientists and were proud of their contributions. Another theme centered on giving children the opportunity to connect to nature. When the adults were asked to identify what children enjoyed most about MLMP, many of their answers involved being outside. The children loved to find and discover plants and animals outside, as well as simply spend time outdoors with other children. The value of providing this time for outdoor discovery is well documented in recent literature (e.g. Louv, 2005; Kellert, 2005).

Additionally, interviewees noted the importance of the social aspects of the program. The shared experience allowed children to meet new friends with like interests while enjoying time together outdoors. One interviewee summed it up well when she described the experience for her group of children as “science bonding.” Another emphasized a need for alternatives to just sports and recreation during the summer, giving testimony to the children’s thirst for learning about nature.

Recommendations

Adults in this citizen science project engaged youth in creative and effective ways, clearly recognizing a variety of values in their participation. Our research suggests the following ways to promote more youth involvement in science, increase the quality of this experience, and future venues for this research:

Engaging youth and children. We interviewed individuals identified via our quantitative survey as being particularly successful at engaging youth in MLMP. These adults helped us identify practices for monitoring successfully with children, and it is likely that adults involved in other citizen science projects could make similar recommendations or form volunteer networks, sharing their experiences and resources as well as giving ongoing support. Project organizers could help identify youth-friendly training and enrichment activities that could be produced in print and accessed on the Internet. Our evaluation shows that many adults have developed such activities on their own; project managers could collect, suggest and otherwise facilitate such activities. One way to involve more children in monitoring is to promote partnerships among volunteers, nature centers, summer schools, and summer camps. Several of our volunteers have initiated success-
ful partnerships that are centered on training and promotion, and programs could support these partnerships in a variety of ways.

**Future research.** Additional research could better inform quality field research programs for children. First, we did not survey or interview youth participants. Triangulation using data from this audience would help us better understand their experiences. Long-term research on youth participants could identify how programs like this affect overall achievement in science, as well as changes in attitudes about the environment or science. We also recommend that future studies address socioeconomic and ethnic differences among children involved in field research projects, since these and many other factors affect the needs, interests, and experiences of youth audiences (e.g. Bennett, 1999). Our focus on teachers and naturalists helped us identify programs and strategies that could inform the smaller, less formal activities of families and friends. However, because a large proportion of children involved, and probably many others, monitor with family members or friends, more explicit focus on these groups would be beneficial. Previous researchers have identified a lack of informal science and environmental education programs that target adults (Ballantyne, Connell, and Fien, 1998), and citizen science programs address this lack. The motivation to engage their children in an educational program might encourage more adult participation. A fruitful next step will be to compare the different adult audiences that engage youth. For example, our interviewees engaged in a significant amount of practitioner innovation, using their experience in an ongoing assessment of what did and did not work. It would be interesting to find out how much of this innovation was based on their prior expertise with youth and science learning.

**The Complete Experience.** Many of our groups engaged in the entire process of science, from asking questions to analyzing data to sharing their findings. Participation in this process is unusual in most citizen science projects in informal education settings (see also Citizen Science Central, 2008). Perhaps interviewing adults with explicit educational goals for their youth participants made this degree of science participation more likely. The connection between engaging youth in the entire scientific process, and the research resulting from this kind of engagement, is a fruitful area for future research.

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Authors’ Notes

We thank the hundreds of MLMP volunteers who have participated in this project since its inception, especially the youth volunteers and the adults who monitor with them. Laura Molenaar, Cindy Petersen, Carol Cullar, Jennifer Weist, Suzanne Simmons, Mary Kennedy, Jess Miller, Annette Strom, and Jane Borland have been particularly inspiring role models, and we thank them for their huge investments in science and children. We also thank the New London, Minn., and Spicer, Minn., schools; Arlington, Texas, schools; St. Hubert School in Chanhassen, Minn.; Duluth, Minn., schools; Cunningham Ranch of Maverick County, Texas; Rio Bravo Nature Center in Eagle Pass, Texas; Schiele Museum in Gastonia, N.C.; Texas Military Institute in Austin; Navarino Nature Center in Shiocton, Wisc; Hitchcock Nature Center in Maine. Nate Meyer provided valuable comments on an earlier version of this manuscript. The National Science Foundation (ISE-0104600), the Xerces Society, the University of Minnesota Extension Service, and Monarchs in the Classroom provide financial support for MLMP.
Students in service-learning courses represent a source of quality mentors for youth. Pre- and post-mentoring measures confirm high initial expectations.

University Students’ Expectations For Mentoring High-Poverty Youth

Carolyn Hughes and Sara J. Dykstra

Abstract

What are the motivations of college students who mentor youth from high-poverty backgrounds? Our team surveyed university students before and after an elective service-learning course that included voluntary mentoring of high-poverty youth. Mentors were motivated primarily by the opportunity to have a positive impact on youth through (a) being a role model, friend, source of support, and caring adult, and (b) increasing their own understanding of inner-city schools and culture in order to serve youth better. Following the experience, mentors reported having largely achieved these aims. In addition, their responses reflected greater confidence in themselves as mentors, better understanding of the challenges and contexts of high-poverty environments, and a higher level of cross-cultural comfort. Based on these findings, we propose strategies for future mentoring efforts in the context of service learning.

Introduction

Mentoring programs addressing the healthy development of U.S. youth have burgeoned during the past decade (Rhodes and DuBois, 2006). Their popularity has grown because mentoring is viewed as an inexpensive and effective means of positively influencing at-risk youth (Portwood, Ayers, Kinnison, Warris, and Wise, 2005). At-risk youth – particularly from high-poverty backgrounds – may experience substantial benefits from mentoring (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, and Cooper, 2002).

Although mentoring at-risk youth has been studied considerably, little is known about why mentors engage in and sustain mentoring relationships. This research gap coincides with the finding that, although an estimated 3 million U.S. youth currently are being mentored, 15 million more are in need of a caring, supportive adult (MENTOR, 2006). Indeed, recruiting and retaining mentors is a prevailing national problem (Wandersman et al., 2006). More information is needed regarding what motivates people to volunteer to mentor and their mentoring expectations and assumptions — particularly with the growing number of at-risk youth (Larson, 2006). The primary goal of mentoring is to address the needs of youth, but if mentors’ expectations of and motivation for mentoring are not addressed, we are unlikely to close the mentoring gap. Because mentoring is a reciprocal, potentially mutually beneficial relationship, it is critical to know mentors’ assumptions and expected benefits.

University students in service-learning courses represent a potential source of quality mentors for youth. Service learning is designed as a reciprocal relationship in which students address a community need and increase their civic engagement and social awareness by reflecting on
their service activity (Schmidt, Marks, and Der- rico, 2004). Service-learning students are likely to be trained and receive ongoing support in class. Further, there is evidence that the reciprocal benefits experienced through community involvement promote students’ civic engagement and long-term involvement in mentoring after a course terminates (McClam, Diambra, Burton, Fuss, and Fudge, 2008).

Few studies exist of university-based service-learning mentoring programs for at-risk youth (see DuBois et al., 2002; Rhodes and DuBois, 2006). DuBois and Neville (1997) examined the relation between characteristics of mentor-mentee relationships and mentors’ ratings of perceived benefits for youth. However, this study did not give details of the related service-learning course or where or what mentoring activities occurred. Further, despite growing U.S. school dropout rates, particularly in high-poverty high schools (Orfield, 2004), and the potential for university students as mentors, we found no published study of a university-based service-learning program in which mentoring of high-poverty youth occurred in a high school setting. If we intend to increase enrollment in such programs, it is critical to determine why university students may choose to engage in mentoring.

Noting the growing need for mentors of at-risk youth and the lack of research on service-learning mentoring programs for high school students, we conducted an exploratory examination of the assumptions and expectations of university students voluntarily enrolled in a service-learning course designed to mentor youth attending high-poverty high schools. We specifically wanted students who were mentoring voluntarily, not as a course requirement, in order to determine why people may choose to engage in mentoring.

We used a survey to answer the following questions:

1. What are the expected benefits of the mentoring process for mentors and mentees?
2. Do rankings of mentors’ priorities for mentoring change over time?
3. What assumptions do mentors have regarding the mentoring process itself, particularly with respect to interacting with youth from high-poverty backgrounds?
4. What is the mentors’ comfort level in high-poverty environments?
5. To what extent do mentors’ assumptions relate to their racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic background?

Responses to a questionnaire were compared before and after the mentoring experience to determine if expectations were met. In addition, we collected and examined qualitative data.

**Method**

**Service-Learning Class**

This study was conducted at a private urban university in the southeastern United States serving approximately 12,000 students of whom 69% were white, 8% black, 6% Asian, 5% Hispanic, and 12% unreported. Most (99%) undergraduates lived on campus.

Participants in the study were enrolled in an elective service-learning class entitled “High-Poverty Youth: Improving Outcomes.” The purpose of the course was to improve outcomes for youth attending high-poverty high schools through mentoring and to increase participating students’ awareness of (a) the effects of poverty on youth, and (b) economic disparities across neighborhoods, schools, races, and ethnicities. Students met in class twice weekly in the 16-week course. The instructor facilitated discussions on mentor training, racial segregation, white privilege, unemployment, the working poor, high school dropout rates, and related topics, augmented by readings, videos, and guest speakers.

Each student mentored a high school student once or twice per week at the mentee’s school. The course required participants to complete ongoing reflective journals and to share their mentoring experiences in classroom discussions and focus groups. The instructor graded the journals based on activities, feelings, and experiences in relation to class content and awareness of the effects of poverty on youth and their families. Although the course required 22 hours of mentoring, over half completed 5 to 10 hours more, as reflected in their journals.

Each university student was matched one-on-one with a mentee based on similar interests and class schedules. Mentoring was conducted during class study time when mentees were allowed to work individually on class assignments. Mentor and mentee typically interacted
in a quiet corner of the mentee’s classroom, the school library, or computer center, as directed by the teacher. As identified in mentor journals, activities included befriending, tutoring, supporting mentee class performance, and assisting in the college application process. In addition, pairs spent time attending sporting events, going to the mall, seeing movies, or eating out. Mentors and mentees also communicated with each other via e-mailing, phoning, and text-messaging. Approximately one-third of mentors reported to the class instructor or mentees’ teachers that they maintained their mentoring relationships one year or more beyond the semester either by spending time with their mentees (if continuing to live nearby) or electronically (if having left the area).

Participants

All 29 students in the class consented to participate in the study. The class consisted of 4 sophomores, 11 juniors, 13 seniors, and 1 graduate student; 26 were female (18 white, 7 black, and 1 Asian), and 3 were white males; 14 reported having attended a public high school, 13 a private high school, and 2 did not specify. High schools attended were 16 suburban, 7 inner city, 5 urban not inner city, and 1 unspecified. Family income during high school was reported as upper income (15), middle income (11), lower income (2), unspecified (1). Students were not asked to quantify income levels. All but four students reported prior experience with high-poverty youth, typically tutoring. None reported previously serving as a mentor to youth.

Setting

Mentees attended one of two comprehensive high schools in the local metropolitan school district of 73,000 students. Both schools offered courses in academic and career preparation and served students from high-poverty neighborhoods. High school A had a graduation rate of 42% and enrolled 1,267 students, of which 78% were black, 19% white, and 3% other ethnicities (Hispanic, Asian, Native American). High school B had a graduation rate of 50% and an enrollment of 1,407 – 70% black, 23% white, 5% Hispanic, and 2% Asian. Both schools were identified as “needing improvement” based on graduation rates and test scores prescribed by No Child Left Behind. Eighty percent of residents in the students’ neighborhoods were black, 40% unemployed, and 44% of families lived below the poverty level. Typically, the head of household was a single female receiving or previously receiving public assistance (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006).

Procedures

Questionnaire development. We developed a questionnaire to assess expectations and assumptions about mentoring youth from high-poverty backgrounds. First, we chose items from questionnaires used in previous investigations of mentoring relationships (e.g., MENTOR, 2006; Rhodes, 2002). Second, we drew additional items from end-of-semester reflection papers written by former students in the same service-learning mentoring class to ensure relevance of content. Third, we field-tested items by asking undergraduates not in the class to complete the questionnaire and provide feedback, which we incorporated into the final version of the survey. Fourth, we constructed a second survey changing wording to the past tense for the post-mentoring survey.

There were two parts to the questionnaire. In the first part, we asked mentors to provide gender, ethnicity, year in school, major, type of high school attended, type of community lived in during high school, and family income level. The second part contained four sections relating to the mentoring experience. Section 1 addressed mentor assumptions regarding expected benefits to themselves, such as building friendships, experiencing personal growth, and applying knowledge from class to real life experiences. In the pre-survey (11 items on a 1-5 scale where 1 = “not at all important” and 5 = “very important”), we asked mentors to rate, “How important are the following potential benefits to YOU, the mentor?” In the post-survey, we asked, “How important have the following benefits been to YOU, the mentor, during your mentoring experience?” (Table 1).

The second section queried mentors regarding the expectations they held for benefits their mentees might experience, including having a consistent, caring adult, improving academic performance, and completing the college application process. Section 2 asked, “How much do you expect your MENTEE(S) to gain in the following areas?” on the pre-survey, and, “How
much did your MENTEE(S) gain in the following areas?” on the post-survey on nine items using a 1-5 scale where 1 = “No gain at all” and 5 = “Gain a lot” (Table 2). Section 3 questioned mentors’ assumptions with respect to the mentoring process, the role of a mentee’s cultural background in the mentoring relationship, and challenges facing inner-city city youth. Mentors were asked, “Do you agree/disagree with the following statements?” for both the pre- and post-survey using a 5-point scale marked “Strongly disagree” (1) and “Strongly agree” (5) in response to 11 items (Table 3). The final section asked mentors to report their level of comfort serving in a mentoring role, interacting with people with different backgrounds, and discussing race-related issues. Mentors were asked, “What is your level of comfort?” on five items on both the pre- and post-survey using a 5-point scale where 1 = “Very uncomfortable” and 5 = “Very comfortable” (Table 4).

**Table 1. Expected Benefits to Mentors Pre-survey/Post-survey**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expected Benefits to Mentors Pre-survey/Post-survey</th>
<th>PRE-SURVEY</th>
<th>POST-SURVEY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learn the value of positive supports and resources for youth from high-poverty backgrounds</td>
<td>Mean: 4.68  SD: .553</td>
<td>Mean: 4.52  SD: .634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn to be a positive role model</td>
<td>Mean: 4.66  SD: .553</td>
<td>Mean: 4.48  SD: .688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain an understanding of inner-city schools or community centers</td>
<td>Mean: 4.34  SD: .936</td>
<td>Mean: 4.62  SD: .622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience personal growth</td>
<td>Mean: 4.18  SD: .863</td>
<td>Mean: 3.83  SD: 1.227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build friendship</td>
<td>Mean: 4.17  SD: .805</td>
<td>Mean: 4.17  SD: .739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply knowledge from class to real life experiences</td>
<td>Mean: 4.17  SD: .805</td>
<td>Mean: 4.17  SD: .739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Become more confident with people that are different from me</td>
<td>Mean: 4.04  SD: 1.105</td>
<td>Mean: 3.76  SD: 1.327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reevaluate my own priorities</td>
<td>Mean: 3.83  SD: .848</td>
<td>Mean: 4.10  SD: .860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase self-confidence</td>
<td>Mean: 3.52  SD: 1.271</td>
<td>Mean: 3.17  SD: 1.167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore a potential career choice</td>
<td>Mean: 3.10  SD: 1.102</td>
<td>Mean: 3.31  SD: 1.228</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Ratings were on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all important, 3 = somewhat important, 5 = very important). On the pre-survey mentors were asked: “How important are the following potential benefits to YOU, the mentor?” and on the post-survey, “How important have the following been to YOU, the mentor, during your mentoring experience?”

**Data Analysis**

We calculated frequencies, means, and standard deviations for all items for both pre- and post-mentoring and for demographics. We conducted independent samples t-tests to determine significant changes across time. We then rank-ordered items on Sections 1 and 2 (expected mentor and mentee benefits) according to mean scores and compared pre- and post-survey results to identify changes in mentor priorities. Frequency of responses and mean scores were calculated for items in Sections 3 and 4 (assumptions about mentoring process and level of comfort) pre- and post-mentoring. In addition, we tabulated these responses per level of response (i.e., 1-5) for each item rather than by rank order to
determine agreement among mentors. Finally, ratings of demographic subgroups (e.g., ethnicity, type of high school attended, family income) were analyzed for response patterns.

**Results**

T-tests revealed no changes from pre- to post-survey across items, indicating that expected outcomes closely matched achieved outcomes. Findings related to (a) rankings of benefits to mentors and mentees, and (b) assumptions about the mentoring process and level of comfort are discussed below. Finally, we bring in qualitative data from journals and interviews.

**Expected Benefits to Mentors**

Table 1 shows mean pre- and post-mentoring ratings of potential benefits to mentors rank-ordered according to pre-mentoring scores. Prior to mentoring, mentors rated all potential benefits listed as important to them. Mean ratings of all 11 benefits ranged from 3.10 to 4.66 (5 = “very important”). Benefits rated as most important to mentors were those that addressed positive gains to their mentees, either directly or indirectly: “learn the value of positive supports and resources for youth from high-poverty backgrounds” (mean = 4.66), “learn to be a positive role model” (mean = 4.66), “gain an understanding of inner-city schools or community centers” (mean = 4.34), and “gain an understanding of the experience of a different cultural group” (mean = 4.21). Benefits rated as least important to mentors were those that focused directly on benefits to the mentors themselves: “reevaluate my own priorities” (mean = 3.83), “increase self-confidence” (mean = 3.52), and “explore a potential career choice” (mean = 3.10). Despite receiving lower rankings, however, these benefits were still rated as “somewhat important” or higher.

Few changes in ratings on items were found from pre- to post-mentoring. The three highest-rated benefits in the pre-survey, all mentee-focused, retained their ranking in the post-survey (i.e., learning the value of positive supports and resources for youth, being a positive role model, understanding inner-city city schools/community centers).

The benefits valued least post-mentoring (i.e., increase self-confidence and explore a potential career choice), which focused directly on the mentors themselves, remained at the bottom of the rankings post-mentoring. Ratings for all items were examined for differences based on demographic subgroups (e.g., black vs. white, inner city vs. suburban school background, prior experience with high-poverty youth, family income level). No response patterns were found across groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expected Benefits to Mentors</th>
<th>PRE-SURVEY</th>
<th>POST-SURVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve goal setting and attainment</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build a friendship with a mentor</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a consistent, caring adult to interact with</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase exposure to different types of people</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage in the college application</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase self-confidence</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve academics</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve social relationships with their peers</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Ratings were on a 5-point scale (1 = no gain at all, 3 = gain a little, 5 = gain a lot). On the pre-survey mentors were asked: “How much do you expect your MENTEE(s) to gain in the following areas?” and on the post-survey: “How much did your MENTEE(S) gain in the following areas?”

**Table 2. Expected Benefits to Mentees**
Expected Benefits to Mentees

Mentors’ pre- and post-mentoring ratings of expected gains to mentees are displayed in Table 2 as ranked by pre-mentoring ratings. When questioned regarding their assumptions about mentees’ gains from mentoring, mentors had high expectations for the anticipated benefits. Prior to mentoring, mean ratings of potential gains ranged from 3.07 to 4.34 where 5 = “gain a lot.” The top-ranked area in which gain was expected was “improve goal setting and attainment” (mean = 4.34). The next highest-ranked areas of expected gain all focused on benefits to mentees via the mentoring relationship itself: “build a friendship with a mentor” (mean = 4.31), “have a positive role model” (mean = 4.28), and “have a consistent, caring adult to interact with” (mean = 4.07). The areas in which mentors expected mentees to make the least gain were related less directly to the mentoring relationship itself: “increase self-confidence” (mean = 3.62), “improve academics” (mean = 3.34), and “improve social relationships with their peers” (mean = 3.07).

Little change in ratings of mentors’ perceptions of mentee gains occurred from the pre- to post-survey. The three lowest-ranked areas of expected gain, which focused less on mentoring itself (i.e., increasing self-confidence, improving academics, improving peer relationships), maintained their rankings post-mentoring. Mentee benefits ratings were analyzed for demographic subgroup trends, but none emerged.

Assumptions About Mentoring High-Poverty Youth

Table 3 displays responses to items investigating mentors’ assumptions about mentoring high-poverty youth, grouped according to (1) the mentoring process itself, (2) the role of cultural background, and (3) the inner-city environment. Prior to mentoring, responses indicated that mentors assumed that the mentoring process would be reciprocal between mentor and mentee. Specifically, mentors strongly agreed that they could learn as much from their mentees as mentees could learn from them (item 7, mean = 4.76) and that mentoring benefits mentors and mentees equally (item 3, mean = 4.24). Responses also suggested that mentors believed they had the skills to mentor, as indicated by item 9 (“I feel confident that I can be an effective mentor,” mean = 4.62) and item 2 (“the most important part of mentoring is just to be yourself,” mean = 4.48). Mentors were in less agreement that the success of mentoring primarily depends on the willingness of the mentee (item 5, mean = 3.86), that mentoring is a difficult process (item 6, mean = 3.69), and that there are certain skills and training needed to be an effective mentor (item 4, mean = 3.41).

Responses indicated strong agreement that peoples’ cultural backgrounds are an important part of who they are (item 8, mean = 4.72). At the same time, only two mentors “somewhat agreed” and 25 “strongly” or “somewhat” disagreed that to be an effective mentor it is important to be of the same cultural background as a mentee (item 10, mean = 1.59). Mentors also indicated that they felt safe working in an inner-city school (item 11, mean = 4.28) and that they were familiar with the challenges facing inner-city youth (item 1, mean = 4.03).

Few changes in ratings occurred from pre- to post-survey (see Table 3). Some patterns did emerge, however, relative to demographic subgroup responses. Black mentors and white mentors who had attended inner-city schools (n = 9) indicated greater familiarity with the challenges facing the inner city (item 1, mean = 4.78) compared to white (and one Asian) mentors who had not attended school in the inner city (n = 20, mean = 3.70). In addition, black mentors (n = 7) disagreed less strongly with the importance of being the same cultural background as a mentee (item 10, mean = 2.29) than did other mentors (n = 22, mean = 1.36).

Level of Comfort

Mentors’ reported levels of comfort in serving as a mentor and in relation to race and social class issues were notably high prior to mentoring, as shown in Table 4. No mentor reported feeling uncomfortable working with people of a different culture or race (item 4, mean = 4.69) or acting in a mentoring role (item 2, mean = 4.59). Only one mentor indicated feeling “something uncomfortable” working with people from a different socioeconomic class (item 3, mean = 4.62) or understanding the needs of youth from high-poverty backgrounds (item 1, mean = 4.17). Only three mentors indicated some degree of discomfort in discussing issues related to race and race relations (item 5, mean = 4.14).

Few changes were reported in ratings from
Table 3. Assumptions about Mentoring High-Poverty Youth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MENTORING PROCESS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can learn just as much from my mentee as s/he can learn from me</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel confident that I can be an effective mentor</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The most important part of mentoring is just to be yourself</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring benefits the mentor and mentee equally</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The success of mentoring primarily depends on the willingness of the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mentee to be mentored</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring is a difficult process</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are certain skills and training you need in order to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be an effective mentor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CULTURAL BACKGROUND</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A person’s cultural background is an important part of who they are</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to be of the same cultural background as your</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mentee in order to be an effective mentor</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INNER-CITY ENVIRONMENT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel safe working in an inner-city school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am familiar with the challenges facing inner-city youth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: On both the pre- and post-survey mentors were asked: “Do you agree/disagree with the following statements?”
pre- to post-mentoring. Notably, however, although eight mentors indicated being either “neutral” or “somewhat uncomfortable” in understanding the needs of high-poverty youth (item 1) on the pre-survey, all 29 mentors reported feeling comfortable in this area post-mentoring. Level of comfort in discussing race-related issues decreased slightly to a mean of 4.0 (“somewhat comfortable”) from pre- to post-survey. Demographic subgroup analysis revealed that all seven black mentors and two white mentors who had attended inner-city schools reported being either “somewhat” or “very comfortable” on all five items. Only 1 Asian mentor and 9 of the remaining 20 white mentors responded with a similarly high level of comfort. All mentors who reported “neutral” or lower levels of comfort discussing race and race relations pre- and post-survey were white.

Qualitative Findings

Comments made by mentors during focus groups and in their journals supported the positive mentoring experiences indicated in questionnaire responses. For example, one mentor shared, “The main way I benefited from my mentoring experience is the sense of fulfillment that has resulted from it, because I actually feel as though I have had a positive impact on D.’s life. Reading articles and hearing people say that mentors and positive role models can really make a difference in the lives of high-poverty youth is not nearly as compelling as actually experiencing the difference firsthand.”

And a mentee shared, “Mentoring is a new part of my life now. I encourage all students to do this if someone hasn’t been there for them or if they never had much attention.”

Another offered, “It is not what I expected. When I first started, I thought my mentor would be mean – a person standing over me. But when we met, we just clicked. We joked and laughed and we were serious too. The best thing was when I said I felt stupid and she said, ‘No, you’re awesome. You’re not stupid — you’re my mentee. Just study, and if you need me to come make you, I will!’ Now my chemistry grade went from failing to around a C because of her.”
A teacher said: “V. was just doing what he had to to get by and now that’s all changed since the mentoring. This is very important for so many students — they need pointed in the right direction and shown that they can do more.”

Another teacher added: “People don’t realize how much time the mentors put in. They go beyond the call of duty, helping the students with financial aid, taking them on trips and out to eat, and things like that. What a huge thing it is for the mentees just to get taken out to eat!”

Informal interviews with mentees, mentors, and teachers supported these positive comments.

**Discussion**

In this study, students in a university-based service-learning class had high expectations for a semester-long mentoring experience prior to the actual mentoring in high-poverty high schools. Post-mentoring measurements of these expectations confirmed these expectations, as reflected in the nonsignificant differences in mean scores from pre- to post-survey. Qualitative comments in journals and focus groups supported these measurements. These findings are especially important because we found no published study that measured perceptions of service-learning college students mentoring youth in high-poverty high schools before and after the mentoring experience. There is also very little research that examines the assumptions volunteers have about what benefits they might gain from the process for themselves and their mentees (DuBois and Rhodes, 2006).

This research, among other results, helps us understand what motivates people to volunteer to mentor youth and how to retain mentors (e.g., Grossman and Rhodes, 2002; Parra, DuBois, Neville, Pugh-Lilly, and Povinelli, 2002; Wandersman et al., 2006).

University students who voluntarily enrolled in an elective service-learning mentoring course indicated being motivated primarily by having a positive impact on youth by (1) being a role model, friend, source of support, and caring adult, and (2) increasing their understanding of inner-city schools and culture in order to serve youth better. Importantly, mentors also felt after the experience that they had achieved these aims.

**Other lessons.** In recruiting mentors it may be important to emphasize the expected outcomes our mentors valued highly, such as friendship, rather than lower-ranked ones, such as improving mentees’ academic performance or exploring their career options (see Tables 1 and 2). Further, considering that an estimated one-half of mentoring relationships end prematurely (Rhodes, 2002), it is critical to seek mentors’ views regarding whether they achieved their identified aims. Our findings also support previous research that shows that matching mentor/mentee race and ethnicity are not critical factors in successful mentoring (DuBois et al., 2002). No differences were found with respect to perceived mentoring outcomes based on race or ethnicity of mentors. Blacks were slightly more likely to report greater familiarity with inner-city environments and higher levels of comfort across cultures than whites; however, white mentors from inner-city high schools had ratings similar to blacks on these items. Interestingly, mentors across all demographic groups (white, black, low- to upper-income families) had similar ratings across benefits achieved for mentors and mentees despite mismatches in class and race across the majority of mentor pairs. Most mentees were low-income blacks, and most mentors were higher income whites.

These findings held true despite white mentors’ slightly lower familiarity and comfort levels in inner-city environments. Therefore, from the mentors’ perspective, cross- and same-race pairing was equally effective. In fact, the only item on which the overwhelming majority answered “strongly disagree” was, “It is important to be of the same cultural background as your mentee in order to be an effective mentor” (Table 3, item 10).

Our finding that mentoring programs should recruit from all races and socioeconomic classes is especially encouraging because whites tend to volunteer as mentors more often than other races and because youth most in need of mentoring tend to be minorities (Rhodes, 2002). Still, a perception persists that pairs should be matched by race, class, and other factors (e.g., Diversi and Mecham, 2005). Our findings do suggest, however, that some mentors unfamiliar with predominantly black inner-city environments initially may need additional training.

The most highly ranked pre- and post-survey ratings of benefits focused on benefits for men-
Previous research suggests that mentoring relationships are of higher quality, more effective, and longer lasting if mentors do not have their own self-interest as a primary motivator in entering into the relationship but rather the interests and needs of the mentee (Karcher, Nakkula, and Harris, 2005).

However, Rhodes and DuBois (2006) suggested college mentors may be more motivated to fulfill their service-learning requirements than to serve their mentee’s needs. In contrast, mentors in our study place mentee well-being above their own, as suggested by higher ratings on “being a caring adult” and “being a role model” than on reevaluating personal priorities. Qualitative comments also supported this distinction: “Mentoring was a way for me to respond and do something to change the outcome of a student, rather than just study the problems.” Mentors also believed that the benefits of mentoring were reciprocal (Table 3, items 7 and 3). As indicated in post-survey ratings, service-learning effects in our findings are seen in enhanced civic engagement, promotion of positive mentoring relationships, and satisfaction with benefits experienced.

Although black mentors’ ratings of level of comfort and sense of familiarity with inner-city environments were slightly higher than those of whites, mentors’ pre- and post-survey ratings of their own ability to mentor and their level of comfort in cross-cultural environments in general were quite high. For example, no mentor disagreed with the statement, “I feel confident that I can be an effective mentor” (Table 3, item 9) in either the pre- or post-survey, and only one mentor prior to and only one mentor after mentoring “somewhat” disagreed that the most important part of mentoring was to be oneself (item 2). Studies have associated high self-efficacy with effectiveness of mentoring (Parra et al., 2002), suggesting that students who chose to be in the elective service-learning class were those who felt confident about mentoring. Also, the majority of mentors had prior experience with youth from high-poverty backgrounds, a factor that relates to effectiveness of mentoring (DuBois et al., 2002). It may be advisable in future service-learning mentoring programs to assess mentors’ level of confidence in engaging in high-poverty environments and to provide extra support where needed.

A university-based service-learning class may be an ideal setting for promoting effective mentoring relationships with high-poverty youth. Specifically, the class incorporated recommended practices found in the mentoring literature, such as ongoing monitoring, structure, clear expectations, and support (DuBois et al., 2002; Rhodes and DuBois, 2006). In this class, observation of mentoring activities was provided on site by the class instructor’s biweekly supervision, as well as examination of mentors’ journals. Mentoring contact and duration expectations were established and tied to class grades. Class discussions and focus groups addressed mentor support needs, and the instructor provided written feedback to journal entries. Organized mentor/mentee activities like campus tours and trips to sports events were scheduled periodically.

Academic content covered the effects of poverty on youth and their families, as well as race, class, and gender. That may account for mentors’ reported increases in knowledge of the needs of high-poverty youth and the challenges they face. (Tables 3 and 4, item 1). Post-mentoring reflections submitted for class also indicated that mentors better understood the context in which negative outcomes for low-poverty youth may occur. The academic content of the class in combination with daily reflections on the mentoring experience appears to have addressed the issue raised by Rhodes and DeBois (2006) of the “fundamental attribution error,” or locating the problem within the individual rather than considering the context in which a behavior occurs. Mentoring activities, reflective journals, and academic activities may have combined to educate mentors about racial and class disparities beyond book learning alone. In supporting mentors, moving beyond a “blame the victim” perspective may be critical to the success of mentoring relationships, particularly because most potential mentors are white middle-class persons likely to be paired with low-income black or Hispanic youth. A combined academic and service-learning experience may also increase social justice awareness (Eyler, 2002) among students, an explicit goal of service-learning pedagogy, as well as their mentoring beyond the duration of a college class.
Study Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

A tip-off that research is exploratory is the number of suggestions at the end for follow-up study. Ours is no exception. Here are our thoughts about further study and research design considerations:

• To validate self-reports more thoroughly, include direct observation of mentoring as it occurs.
• Conduct informal interviews several times in the study instead of just at the end.
• Make the service-learning course two semesters in length.
• Recruit more representative volunteer mentors; ours were primarily white females attending a private university.
• Compare attitudes on race and poverty of students enrolled in general university classes with service-learning students.
• Our study suggests self-efficacy is an important concept in mentoring dynamics. Future studies might make this a central concept.
• Leave some journal entries ungraded, as grading them may have affected content.

Conclusions

According to the literature, mentoring has a positive impact on America’s youth. Moreover, mentoring is gaining in popularity. But there is a gap between the number of available mentors and students in need of mentoring. Although a primary goal of mentoring is to address the needs of youth, mentors’ expectations of and motivation for mentoring are also important. Failing to assess them will further contribute to the mentoring gap. Mentoring programs joined with research-based service learning can stimulate lifetime social issue awareness and community participation by students, mentees, their teachers, and university faculty, adding to our understanding of both mentoring dynamics and cross-cultural issues.

References


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By taking on the role of researcher or evaluator, youth experiment with new behaviors and possible identities — a key developmental task.

Participatory Research and Community Youth Development: VOICES in Sarasota County, Florida

Moya L. Alfonso, Karen Bogues, Meredith Russo, and Kelli McCormack Brown

Abstract

This article reports a case study of community-based participatory action research conducted as a community youth development activity, demonstrating a trend toward engaging youth in youth development efforts. The project actively engaged middle school youth in their communities and offered an avenue through which they could contribute to matters of importance to them. Youth are presented as stakeholders in the research process. Concrete strategies for collaborating with youth are described and evaluated.

Introduction

Community-based participatory action research offers an alternative to traditional youth development efforts that “assume youth can be developed separate from their communities and in organizations devoid of community members” (London, Zimmerman, and Erbstein, 2003, p. 34). Community-based participatory action research is an approach that actively engages youth in their communities and offers them a voice in issues that affect them (for a discussion of youth development programs see Roth, 2004). This approach is based on the premises that: (1) “strong communities are built on active participation and civic engagement of members, including youth”; (2) “if youth are able to participate in civic and public affairs as participants, not solely beneficiaries, they tend to experience optimal development”; and (3) “adults can overcome negative attitudes and misinformation about youth if they join with youth to address community concerns” (Camino, 2000, pp. 11-12).

Community-based participatory research offers numerous benefits to youth, communities, and universities (for a summary see Alfonso, 2004), including positive developmental outcomes for youth, healthier communities, increased utilization of community programs and resources, and improved research processes and outcomes (Green and Mercer, 2001; Landis, Alfonso, Ziegler, Christy, Abrenica, and Brown, 1999; Meucci and Schwab, 1997; Minkler and Wallerstein, 1997).

Involving youth in the research process may result in more reliable results because of decreased social distance, broader information scope, increased credibility with the target audience, inclusion of key stakeholders, enhanced intervention attractiveness, greater acceptance of the research design and results, and more accurate assessments of the invasiveness of methods and questions (Alfonso, 2002).

Our study took place in Sarasota County, Florida. Over the past several years, community-based participatory research has been used here to address local public health concerns like...
tobacco and alcohol use among adolescents (Landis et al., 1999; McCormack Brown, McDermott, Bryant, and Forthofer, 2003; McCormack Brown, Forthofer, Bryant, et al., 2001). The level of involvement of youth in the research process in Sarasota County has varied. For the alcohol and tobacco prevention research, for example, youth were hired and trained to conduct research with the intent of decreasing the social distance between the researcher and the researched; youth development was not the primary goal (Landis et al., 1999). Youth researchers were involved at the level of research assistant and had little control over the direction of the research process and use of results (Kirshner and O’Donoghue, 2001; Landis et al., 1999). In our study, however, youth were actively involved at every level of the research process and collaborated with adults to determine the direction of the research. A case study of VOICES (Viewpoints of Interested Civically Engaged Students) is presented as a community youth development activity. Youth researchers’ thoughts on community-based participatory action research are shared, methods and results are detailed, and lessons learned are discussed. Connections between research and action are demonstrated.

Guiding Research Objectives

In keeping with the Community Youth Development (CYD) Model, the project was organized and led by a youth-adult partnership formed between the second and third authors. The model is used to assess gaps in services and barriers to participation and tries to identify how best to meet needs through creation of programs. Project organizers created VOICES to identify gaps in out-of-school time activities, barriers to participation in existing programs, and specific needs of youth addressed through systemic changes. However, through the course of the project, youth researchers, who were considered partners in the research process, included foci on other issues relevant to teens’ lives, such as transportation, family relationships, and use of leisure time. Ultimately, five domains of middle schoolers’ lives were explored: family, peers, school, neighborhood, and the future.

Youth as Stakeholders in Research

To be involved in research as something other than the object of study, youth first have to be considered stakeholders in the research process. Stakeholders include “the people whose lives are affected by the program under evaluation and the people whose decisions will affect the future of the program” (Bryk, 1983). [For a historical discussion of stakeholder involvement in research see Bryk (1983), Coleman (1976), and Gold (1981).] Research studies designed without the input of key stakeholders are arguably more narrowly focused than they would have been had stakeholders been involved in deciding what questions should be asked (Coleman, 1976) and result in information that is less likely to be used in the decision-making process (Gold, 1981).

Evidence supports youth capacity for functioning as stakeholders in the research process, so long as developmental issues are considered and respected (Finn and Checkoway, 1998; Hart, 1997; Hart et al., 1997; Horsman, DeCicco, and Griffin, 1994; Horsch, Little, Smith, Goodyear, and Harris, 2002; McCormack Brown et al., 2001; Ozer et al., 2008). Within the realm of public health, for example, youth have contributed to research in the areas of wellness (Schwab, 1997), community health (Torres, 1998), HIV/AIDS (Harper and Carver, 1999; Nastasi et al., 1998), sexual risk (Schensul, 1998), tobacco and alcohol use (Landis et al., 1999; McCormack Brown et al., 2001), and physical activity and nutrition (Alfonso, Jenkins, and Calkins, 2003). Most youth have been involved at the level of research assistant, not as research partners (Kirshner and O’Donoghue, 2001), underscoring a tendency for adults to limit youths’ contributions to the research process.

Participatory Research as Youth Development

Youth involvement in research and evaluation is seen as a youth development opportunity when youth are provided with opportunities for making substantial contributions to the research and evaluation process (Harper and Carver, 1999). Participatory action research provides an avenue through which youth can make substantial contributions to the research process (Kirshner, Strobel, and Fernandez, 2003). Participatory action research is based on the notion that knowledge generated through action and contextual experimentation and participatory democracy will inform methods and goals of the research.
Participatory action research is multi-method and involves participants in each step, from defining objectives to application of results (Greenwood and Levin, 2000). Professional researchers serve as cogenerators of knowledge within the participatory action research framework. Stakeholders’ local knowledge combined with professional researchers’ training and expertise combine to create a more valid, credible, and reliable understanding of the issue at hand (Greenwood and Levin, 2000). Professionally trained researchers serve as important sources of support for lay researchers, especially since stakeholders are, in general, “not sufficiently well organized or not sufficiently affluent” to organize, fund, and manage policy research (Coleman, 1976, p. 308). Participatory approaches to research do not claim to solve power differentials between researchers and the researched. Power is not given to participants, though circumstances that allow for empowerment are created (Carrick, Mitchell, and Lloyd, 2001; Kelly, 1993).

Supportive and caring relationships with adults and peers are key to youths’ learning and development (Vygotsky, 1978). Surrounded by caring and supportive adults, youth can participate as researchers and evaluators and become invested in the health and well-being of their communities (Camino, 2000; Kirshner et al., 2003). The development of ongoing relationships with adults and pairing of youth with experts (i.e., adults or older youth) is an effective method for ensuring that youth understand projects in which they are involved and develop the requisite skills for conducting research and evaluation (Harper and Carver, 1999; Hart et al., 1997; Horsch et al., 2002; Johnson and Johnson, 1985; Vos, 2001; McCormack Brown et al., 2001). Principles associated with youth research and evaluation include respect, equality, empowerment, and collaborating with youth in all aspects of the project (Camino, 2000). Dialogue is an important component of participatory research and community youth development. Adults facilitate youth development by actively encouraging dialogue and allowing youth to answer questions asked of the adult researcher, paraphrasing and soliciting comments from quiet youth (Hart et al., 1997; Kelly, 1993).

By taking on the role of researcher or evaluator, youth experiment with new behaviors and possible identities – a key developmental task (Dworkin and Bremer, 2004). Effective youth development participatory research programs encourage youth to perform beyond their current capacity and take on new roles (Horsch et al., 2002; Roth, 2004; Sabo, 2003). For example, within the research and evaluation context, supportive adults teach youth evaluation or research terms, thus providing youth with access to a script they can use when performing in their new role as researchers (Sabo, 2003). Adults perform in facilitative, as opposed to instructional, roles by guiding and assisting youth and documenting but not directing the process (Sabo, 2003; Schwab, 1997; Vos, 2001). Adults nourish youth’s sense of authority by creating moments when youth are in challenging roles (e.g., teaching, research) and using these experiences to reflect on what the youth have learned (Kelly, 1993).

Community Youth Development in Sarasota County

The CYD of Sarasota County has been the leader in youth civic engagement in Sarasota County since 1995. It is a voluntary collaboration of not-for-profit youth-serving agencies and teens working to address the needs of middle and high school youth. CYD’s core philosophy is to engage young people as vital resources and experts in the process of addressing the needs of their peers. CYD strives to provide youth with an environment that is conducive to positive youth development. (See Larson, Eccles, and Gootman, 2004, and Dworkin and Bremer, 2004, for descriptions of key features.) Youth serve as equal decision makers in all aspects of the program including hiring staff, setting budgets, writing grants, establishing policy and procedures, creating positive drug-free events, and evaluating the program.

CYD has an annual budget of $500,000 and operates with three full-time and three part-time staff, including two teens. CYD serves as a role model for Sarasota County in the practice of youth-adult partnerships and engaging youth as resources. This is accomplished through training youth and adults, developing youth-adult partnerships that focus on specific activities (e.g., National Youth Service Day events) that provide first-hand opportunities for community leaders to work with teens, and advocating for opportunities for youth to be engaged in addressing
issues that affect their lives (e.g., law enforcement, education).

Because of CYD’s success, youth civic engagement initiatives have been able to gain credibility and acceptance very quickly within the community. Community leaders who collaborate with CYD are familiar with the CYD requirement that youth must be involved as partners in everything they do.

The VOICES Project

The VOICES project represents an important component of CYD’s Youth Civic Engagement Initiative. The Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth and the Community Foundation of Sarasota County funded the project. VOICES was created as a means of engaging middle school youth in civic life through meaningful participation. Whereas CYD had an extensive civic engagement program in place for high school youth designed to increase participation in civic activities such as voting, civic discourse, and community leadership, leadership and civic engagement programming for middle school youth was limited. VOICES was an effort to empower and engage middle school youth in community decision making by sharing their viewpoints through the research project. VOICES varied from our regular approach by utilizing a research model to gather and assess information collected and engaging middle school youth.

The third author, while in her junior year at a local high school, developed VOICES. A graduate of the Students Taking Active Roles (STAR) leadership training offered by CYD, she developed VOICES after attending a presentation on a similar initiative offered in California through the John Gardner Leadership Center at Stanford University (http://gardnercenter.stanford.edu). The purpose of VOICES was to learn about Sarasota County teens by going to the “experts” — teens. This is central to the philosophy of CYD. By engaging youth in the process of identifying teens’ needs, community organizations learn the most effective ways of addressing teen needs through programming and can expect better participation because teens are promoting the activities and behaviors to their peers.

Methods

Recruitment of youth researchers. Students were recruited with the cooperation and assistance of the Sarasota County School District, especially middle school coordinators and faculty and staff from four local middle schools. Middle school coordinators were hired to coordinate prevention activities in the school. One of their roles was to engage youth in prevention activities. Youth were targeted based on their interest in learning new things and making a difference in their community. In addition, adults were asked to identify youth who had leadership potential not being cultivated in another way (e.g., student government). Twenty students applied for the program, 12 attended an orientation meeting, and eight completed the training program and worked on the research project. All eight youth researchers were eighth-graders. Approximately half were actively involved in school or community activities (e.g., Boy Scouts, student government), while the others participated because they were looking to get more involved in their community.

Training and support. Youth researchers received training in leadership, community assessment, and communication skills from staff and volunteers of CYD. Staff and the first author provided training and technical assistance on research skills. Training modules included ethics, question development, focus group guide development, focus group moderation, qualitative data analysis, and survey development, delivered in that order. Youth researchers attended an orientation, one-day of mapping and consensus building training, one day of focus group training, one day of focus group re-training, and two days of survey development. From January through March, youth researchers received six days of formal training. Surveys were administered in April, survey data entered over the summer, and the final report presented and delivered in September.

The general training approach involved: (1) presenting information through discussion, brief lectures, modeling of skills, and participation; (2) helping youth make the research their own; and (3) providing opportunities for practice and feedback (Alfonso, 2004). Sole reliance on lecture-based training strategies was avoided (see Takata and Leiting, 1987). Opportunities for reinforcement were provided throughout the project. Specific training strategies included youth-graduate student partnerships, provision of feedback on activities and products, group discussion, team
building exercises, experiential learning, and role-playing (Alfonso, 2002).

In addition, research methods were incorporated into the training process. Trainers used environmental mapping and brainstorming to encourage youth to identify and think about issues to address (Schwab, 1997). Focus group facilitation methods were used to encourage dialogue among youth researchers, process training activities, and model skills necessary for facilitating group conversations.

The authors' prior experience working with youth allowed the training process to work smoothly. It is interesting to note that once the research process was completed, youth researchers and adults realized there were additional questions that they wanted to answer. The biggest barrier to the process was the inability to distribute surveys in the schools. Finding alternative locations was a substantial challenge.

Our team trained graduate students who volunteered to assist with the training of youth researchers to minimize the challenges (e.g., power sharing), risks (e.g., adultism [adult bias against children]), and frustration associated with youth-adult collaboration (Alfonso, 2004; Harper and Carver, 1999; Horsch et al., 2002; Schwab, 1997). As part of the training, graduate students participated in a focus group discussion designed to orient them to the developmental characteristics of eighth graders (e.g., “What was it like to be an eighth grader?”). This discussion segued into what to expect when working with youth and sensitized them to behaviors to avoid, such as rigid, directive approaches (Lau, Netherland, and Haywood, 2003).

**Design and methodology.** A sequential mixed-methods design was used to gather information from middle school youth in Sarasota County (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). Qualitative methods, including mapping and focus groups, were used first, to gather thick descriptions (facts in context) of life as a middle school-aged youth in Sarasota County. Mapping was used to identify the domains of interest to be investigated — family, peers, school, neighborhood, and future. Youth researchers used focus groups to explore these domains with other middle school students. Youth researchers developed a survey based on the focus group findings and administered it to other middle school-aged youth in Sarasota County. Qualitative and quantitative findings were synthesized around each key domain of interest, and recommendations for action were made specific to each.

We used community mapping to identify resources in Sarasota County and to help youth discover domains of interest (e.g., family). Eight youth researchers completed a community map of the resources available to support youth in Sarasota County. This was done as part of youth development training to help them understand how communities work and recognize the interrelation of various facets of a community. Youth were asked to use words, pictures, or symbols to describe the positive people, places, or things available in Sarasota County to assist youth.

Results included organizations (CYD, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCA), institutions (schools, government, hospitals), businesses (movie theaters, mall), and people (teachers, police). Community mapping provided the framework for developing the focus group guide. Youth researchers brainstormed questions specific to each domain of interest and, with the assistance of adults, developed a focus group guide for use with their peers. Sample questions included the following:

- What is it like to be a teen in Sarasota County?
- What kind of volunteer work do you do?
- Think back to your last family dinner. Tell me about it.

Youth researchers conducted 24 focus groups (n = 144) with sixth to eighth grade students at local middle schools. School officials selected individual students from each classroom based on their grade and gender (e.g., sixth grade females). Focus groups were audio-recorded, and youth researchers took notes during the discussion. Youth were provided with an introduction to qualitative analysis and were guided through the analysis process (see Appendix A for worksheets used). Youth researchers worked in teams made up of two youth and one graduate student. Focus group notes and tapes were distributed to the teams. The notes were used as the primary source of information, with tapes used to fill in notes and identify illustrative quotes for inclusion in the final report. Each team was provided with three worksheets to assist in the analysis process (Appendix A). The first worksheet listed questions to be considered when reading the notes and dis-
cussing responses. The second asked the team to summarize key themes and suggest quotes specific to each domain for each focus group. Once the teams analyzed each focus group, the larger group used the third worksheet to guide a discussion of similarities and differences across focus groups, key findings, and future research needs.

Youth researchers’ responses to “What else do we need to know?” generated survey items (Appendix A). A large group format was used to create the initial draft of the survey. Youth researchers brainstormed the questions and adults helped youth researchers format the survey. A laptop computer and ability to print questionnaires were key components of this process. Youth researchers pre-tested the survey to ensure it would be easy for other youth to complete and would provide desired information (Appendix B). They pre-tested the survey with middle school-aged youth including family, friends, and alternative school students. Youth researchers discussed the pretest findings in a large group, resulting in a modified survey. The final survey was four pages in length and had approximately 22 items (closed and opened). Item types included demographics, activities done for fun, work experiences, perceptions of treatment by adults, and volunteer experiences.

The final version was distributed at various venues including a local shopping mall, movie theaters, CYD events, the beach, and at local camps and summer programs. Youth researchers collected 578 surveys from sixth to eighth grade students (11 to 14 years of age) from both public and private schools in Sarasota County. Most survey respondents were Caucasian (86%), attended public school (84%), had access to a computer every day (87%), and had access to the Internet every day (82%). African-Americans and students from one area in the southern part of the county may have been underrepresented because of lack of community organizations through which to distribute the surveys.

The first author created a spreadsheet that calculated information for each survey item. Youth researchers entered the data into the spreadsheet and reviewed the results as a group. Project organizers guided the group discussion, asking youth to consider:

- What strikes you as you look at the results?
- What ideas do you have for addressing the issues raised (e.g., transportation)?

Youth researchers discussed the data and compared findings to what was discovered using mapping and focus groups.

Organizers questioned the youth researchers’ assumptions, challenging them to think through their interpretations. After analyzing and interpreting the data, youth researchers and project organizers developed data-driven recommendations for action. Qualitative (focus group) and quantitative (survey) findings and recommendations for action were summarized for each domain (see Table 1 for sample findings and recommendations). In Table 1, the second column displays mixed-method results, and the third column provides a summary of evidence-based recommendations.

With the support of the project organizers, youth researchers presented their results and recommendations at a community meeting at the School Board of Sarasota County. A variety of community stakeholders attended, including local middle school guidance counselors, university faculty, middle school coordinators, parents, community agency representatives, school staff, media, and public transportation representatives.

The presentation focused on the five domains, with students presenting their results and recommendations through oral presentation with slides and videotaped skits. For example, after showing a PowerPoint entitled “The Stat Family,” youth researchers showed a videotaped scenario of youth researchers sitting around a dinner table discussing their findings about families and middle school youth. Each youth researcher played the role of a family member.

Basic facts discovered during the project were mentioned in the scenario and reinforced on subsequent slides (e.g., 20% [of students] never talk with their parents about important issues). A final report, “Into the Minds of Middle School Students,” collaboratively developed with guidance from the first author, was made available to community members in attendance.

**Application of Results**

The success of the participatory action research process is judged by stakeholders’ acceptance and action based on research results.
(Greenwood and Levin, 2000). For the most part, VOICES researchers were not in positions of power necessary for implementing their recommendations. However, anecdotal evidence suggested some individuals who attended the community presentation accepted the results as a valid and reliable evidence-base on which to make decisions and pursue changes in the local community and schools. To date, the research team has collected the following evidence that project recommendations are being applied:

1. A local middle school guidance counselor used VOICES data to support the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Focus Group Themes and Survey Results</th>
<th>Recommendations for Actions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Focus group participants reported “hardly ever” eating with family, citing conflicting schedules (e.g., sports activities). Survey results: • 67% of students have dinner with their family every night. • 48% talk with their parents once or twice a week.</td>
<td>Any conversation is an important one. Teens and adults don’t always agree on what is important, but we encourage adults to take every opportunity to talk with their child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>Focus group participants, particularly girls, reported cliques, self-image, and popularity were major issues affecting them. Survey results: • 44% report they feel no pressure to fit in at school. 65% say their friends help them make good decisions.</td>
<td>Create more instances where teens cannot make bad decisions, like the programs offered by CYD. Continue the WEB program started in the middle schools in 2003-2004 to assist with peer pressure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>Focus group participants reported having too much homework. Survey results: • 58% dread school because they’re tired from homework. • 69% feel study hall would help.</td>
<td>Offer a study hall as an elective class during the school day or create after-school programs to assist with large amounts of homework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>When asked about their neighborhoods, focus group participants agreed they were safe but boring. Survey results • 68% feel there is little or nothing to do in their neighborhood. • 53% have never used the SCAT bus (local transportation).</td>
<td>Continue the “ten cents” policy for youth under the age of 18 throughout the year. Middle schools could also institute SCAT bus field trips to familiarize youth with how to use the bus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>Focus group participants reported feeling pressure about making the right academic decisions for college and getting a good job. Survey results: • 89% say they want to go to college. • 58% believe Sarasota County has things to help them reach their goals.</td>
<td>Offer more education for middle school-aged students and parents on getting into college. For example, offer seminars focused on scholarships and internships available, how the “Bright Futures” scholarship program works, the SATs, and what courses to take in high school. These should be offered at the middle school age so that when those students reach high school, they know where they’re going and how to get there.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
creation of a study hall at the middle school where he worked. The counselor said his job was to “do data-driven guidance,” and the VOICES report provided him with a “list of concrete, data-based” recommendations for action, which he kept on his desk.

2. A local community college and major university agreed to include eighth-graders in college-bound awareness information previously directed only to high school students.

3. Local public transportation (SCAT bus) added stops in rural areas, as well as additional routes that youth researchers recommended, for example, the beach and the mall.

**Lessons Learned**

Table 2 provides insight into what the youth project leader gained from her experiences with VOICES. But VOICES was a learning experience for all involved, not just those in leadership roles. For example, we learned that:

Middle school youth are able to meet high expectations. CYD staff set high expectations for youth participating in its programs. However, University of South Florida project organizers and staff had not worked with middle school-aged youth in such an intense project in the past and were uncertain about their ability to stay focused and engaged to completion. Through their perseverance and commitment to completing the project (eight months from start to finish), VOICES students met these high expectations. Feeling they were treated as equals and respected for their abilities and ideas, youth investment in the project grew.

Middle school youth develop at different rates. Youth researchers were expected to develop self-confidence and responsibility skills in addition to knowledge of research methods from participation in VOICES. The timing in which the impact of involvement on youth researchers became evident varied across individuals. Some adapted to the expectations and skills quickly, making significant impacts throughout the project. Others took longer to gain the confidence
or trust in their skills, resulting in what appeared to be a large jump in ability in a short period of time. In general, youth development occurred in direct proportion to development of the right atmosphere in the experience. Once youth developed trust with each other and the adults with whom they were collaborating, developmental changes were easily detected.

Consider in advance who can and will determine what should be known. Epistemological and ethical issues arise when conducting community-based participatory action research (Clark and Moss, 1996). Ideally, youth help determine research objectives and retain the power to modify and exclude research questions (Kelly, 1993). Failing to include youth in the determination of research objectives can result in time delays and decreased youth investment and ability to perform research tasks (Landis et al., 1999).

However, funding requirements often place constraints on the level of youth control over the research process that is possible (see Green and Mercer, 2001). When VOICES youth researchers changed the research focus from identifying gaps in services, barriers to participation in existing programs, and specific needs of youth to topics they viewed as more relevant (transportation, family relationships, use of leisure time), project organizers were forced to consider the following questions:

- Who decides what should be asked or what is worth knowing?
- How do adults and university professionals, who bring with them funding-related agendas, collaborate with youth and accommodate recommended changes?
- What happens when youth researcher interests or priorities do not match funder or agency requirements?

Ensure good, clear communication with community and school partners. When community-based agencies work in collaboration with school districts, extra care should be taken to ensure good, clear communication. A lack of clear understanding about the project led to discomfort among school district officials regarding the questions used for focus groups and the survey. School district officials were uncomfortable with the segment of the focus group script that focused on family, as follows:

- Now we are going to talk about your family. Tell me about your family. Think back to your last family dinner. Tell me about it.
- How many times a week do you talk to your parents about things that are important to you?
- How many times a week do you talk to other family members about things that are important to you?
- How many times a week do you eat dinner with your household family?
- Where are you when you feel like your parents listen to you the most?

Ultimately, this discomfort precluded the ability to administer the survey in the schools during noninstructional time, forcing the VOICES team to identify other methods for obtaining a diverse sample.

Middle school youth are capable of critical analysis. During the survey analysis and interpretation phase, VOICES participants learned first-hand the need to critically analyze data or information. Youth researchers critically questioned the results of their own survey, especially those findings that contradicted their experience. For example, results indicated 44% of survey participants agreed “not at all” with the statement, “I feel pressured to fit in at school.” After much discussion, youth researchers decided to present this finding along with a caveat that it did not match their experiences. Youth researchers addressed this disconnect in the final report.

We believe that youth may have been influenced to answer questions in a manner that was more socially desirable. While the surveys were anonymous, we believe respondents knew that youth were actually the ones reading these surveys, and they wanted to avoid appearing weak or inadequate in the eyes of the researchers, their peers, or even themselves.

Conclusions

This article presented a case study of community-based participatory action research as a community youth development activity. VOICES demonstrates a trend toward including youths in key roles in prevention programming and youth development.

The project: (1) triangulated qualitative and quantitative evidence to support out-of-school
time programs throughout Sarasota County and shed light on key contexts in which middle school youth develop (e.g., school); (2) engaged youth in identifying and addressing the needs of teens in Sarasota County; (3) empowered youth as vital resources in the development of a healthy community; and (4) provided a middle school option for the civic engagement initiative currently operating at the high school level. Youth were presented as stakeholders in the research process, and participatory action research was discussed as an approach that allows for youth to be actively involved in each phase of the research process and to have a voice in decision making. Youths’ thoughts on community-based participatory action research were shared and lessons learned were discussed.

In summary, VOICES was a successful youth development project in which committed adults and youth worked closely with youth researchers. In addition, high expectations were held for youth, they were made to feel that their work was meaningful and significant, and they were set up for success through opportunities to take on challenging roles (Gambone and Connell, 2004; Larson et al., 2004; Lee, Murdock, and Paterson, 1996; Roth, 2004; Sabo, 2003).

Here are two representative comments from VOICES researchers:

“[It is] nice that people listen. [We are] not always taken seriously, and we have a lot of good ideas. It’s good to have people listen.”

“[I am a] better person and feel good for having helped the community.”

VOICES in Sarasota County represents one community-based participatory action research project that involved a small number of youth researchers and adults and only one round of research. One reviewer cautioned against broad conclusions on the experience of so few students and one research round. We agree, and the reader should keep these limitations in mind. What worked in Sarasota County may not be the best approach for others considering participatory action research in their youth development programming. However, this article, along with the broader literature, contributes to what is known about youth participation and community change by emphasizing concrete strategies and tools for collaborating with youth researchers as valued stakeholders.

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**Authors’ Note**

Thanks to VOICES youth researchers Nicole Altenes, Lindsey Atha, Eric Brennan, Thomas Cocchi, Chip Kenniff, Liz Liberman, Heather Rola, and Carla Valor; the Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth and the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, who funded the research project; the Sarasota County School District, including Sherri Reynolds (pupil support services), the middle school coordinators and staff and other faculty at Laurel-Nokomis, McIntosh, Pine View, and Venice middle schools; the Triad Alternative School; staff and graduate students from University of South Florida Prevention Research Center; and the local agencies, including the Boys & Girls Clubs of Sarasota County, Sarasota County Parks & Recreation, Sarasota Family YMCA, South County Family YMCA, and Sarasota Square Mall. We also thank the JCES reviewer who provided such a thorough critique of the initial version of this manuscript.
Appendix A. Focus Group Analysis and Survey Item Generation Worksheets
(reformatted for publication to fit on one page)

Worksheet 1: VOICES Focus Group
Data Analysis — Team Activity

Break into teams and do the following for each focus group:
1. Read your notes.
2. Listen to parts of the tape where notes are incomplete.
3. Identify themes within each group. Look for patterns in what the youth said or didn’t say and ask yourself the following questions:
   - What did each youth in the group say to answer the question?
   - Were there answers that were the same? Did youth agree?
   - Were there answers that were different? Did youth disagree?
   - How many gave the same answer?
   - Was the answer in response to a “leading” question or was it a spontaneous response? [Example of leading: “So you think tobacco is bad?” “Yes.”]
   - What do the words mean (What does “fit in” mean? What does “belong” mean)?
   - What’s the big deal? What were youth really trying to say?
   - What quotes really do a good job of demonstrating what youth were trying to say? Write these out and note who said them (e.g., 6th grade boy).

Worksheet 2: VOICES Themes and Quotes
Directions: Use this form to record themes and transcribe quotes that do a good job of demonstrating major themes. Focus Group Description:

Worksheet 3: VOICES Focus Group Analysis — Large Group Activity
Look for similarities and differences across each focus group

   - What were youth trying to say?
   - What didn’t youth talk about? Did they fail to mention something you thought for sure they would talk about?
   - What were they saying in common?
   - Did they disagree with each other?
   - How do the groups compare? Consider what you accomplished overall.
   - Did you get an answer to each question?
   - Are the answers useful? What else do we need to know (i.e., possible survey questions)?

Appendix B. Pretesting Assignment
Purpose: To try out our survey before it’s too late to make it better!

Directions:
Find three to four friends or family members who are 12 to 17 years of age and WON’T be taking the survey for real. Ask them (and their parents) if they will help you try-out a survey. Tell them the focus isn’t on their answers so much as on if the survey makes sense or is confusing. Schedule a time to meet with them. Pretesting takes about 20 minutes.

Steps:
1. Hand them the survey. Before they start, ask them, “While you’re taking the survey, please circle any words you think other youth would think were confusing or didn’t make sense.”
2. Look at your watch — write down what time they start and what time they finish.
3. Take notes on questions they ask while taking the survey. Have them put a star by questions they couldn’t answer easily.
4. Once they’re finished, ask them to tell you in their own words what the instructions asked them to do. Take notes.
   a. Does their description match what the instructions say?
   b. If not, how could we change the instructions?
5. Ask them to show you which words they circled. For each word they circled, ask them how they would make it less confusing. Which word should we use?
6. Ask them, “Is there anything else we could do to make the survey better?”
7. Thank them for their help!

Bring this completed form to our next meeting. You should have one for each time you pretested the survey.
The Community Advocate Model: Linking Communities, School Districts, and Universities to Support Families and Exchange Knowledge

Mary D. Burbank and Rosemarie Hunter

Abstract

Increasingly diverse communities that reach across traditional boundaries are on the rise in urban communities in the United States. Changes taking place within these communities also affect K-16 institutions that serve them. As the landscape of American neighborhoods evolves, stakeholders collaborate to forge partnerships and programs that value and reflect these changes. The Community Advocate Model (CAM) presents a unique opportunity for establishing reciprocal relationships between parents from historically underserved populations and K-16 educators. By connecting families, school, community resources, and the university, parents are able to exchange information and have direct access to system educators. Similarly, rapidly increasing immigrant populations enhance these neighborhoods and systems with rich and diverse language and cultures, bringing new opportunities and challenges for local schools and higher education to meet their academic needs. Our research indicates the need for platforms where families, communities, and schools share information on access and success in public school in the United States. Among other areas, families cite the need for information on the developmental and social needs of K-12 students and resources on immigration, health services, and employment.

Introduction

The landscape of America’s communities is changing. Nationally, nearly one third of school-age children are cultural minorities, with 16% of the teaching force from non-majority populations (National Center for Education Statistics, 1996). Projections for the next 20 years identify dramatic changes in national demographics, with 61% of population increases occurring among members of the Hispanic and Asian communities (Hodgkinson, 2002; Stanford, 1999). Response to the rapidly changing demographic shifts has been particularly dramatic in Salt Lake City, which has seen an increase in its minority population of 117% between 1990 and 2000 (Perllich, 2002).

In those years, one in three new residents was a member of a minority community, the Hispanic population more than doubled, and the primary urban school district reported 53% (2006 Salt Lake City district census data) in its non-majority student population. Like many homogenous, predominantly English-speaking communities, Salt Lake City is undergoing rapid demographic shifts resulting in cultural and linguistic mismatches between those working in public schools and the students and families served by K-12 classrooms. For members of this urban community, linkages between multiple stakeholders were essential in providing opportunities for responding to a richly diverse landscape.
This investigation examined the ways an institution of higher education, an urban school district, and a local community, collaborate to build upon the insights of educators, community partners, and families seeking to improve the K-16 experiences of students and families. We describe a model for preparing parents as community advocates and discuss the perspectives of stakeholders in the project. We attend specifically to the roles of a university, school district, and community advocates as partners in building pathways to higher education. Key to the success of the current program was the willingness of those working within a community-based research partnership (Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, and Donohue, 2003) to provide support and insights.

**Partners in Building Communities and Pathways to Higher Education**

When stakeholders come together as partners to exchange knowledge, opportunities are present for members to develop the relationships essential to creating healthy communities. In their text on community-based research, Strand et al. (2003) discuss the components of truly collaborative efforts. Within these partnerships stakeholders work jointly to identify common issues worthy of investigation, with the goal of greater social justice and institutional reform for those within a community. Through the collaborative efforts of partners from a local school district, community organizations, institutions of higher education, and residents, project developers created opportunities for joint goal-setting. The partners developed a systematic plan for evaluating CAM successes and limitations. Along with sharing resources, stakeholders identified obstacles to greater participation in education and shared knowledge of ways to access higher education.

Strengthening K-16 educational experiences through campus-community partnerships has been a primary goal of the University of Utah, the Salt Lake City School District, community partners, and residents on Salt Lake City’s west side. In 2002, University Neighborhood Partners (UNP), a university-community engagement initiative, brought stakeholders together to develop partnerships focused on increasing the pathways to higher education for traditionally underserved students. UNP identified multiple avenues leading to public education success and ultimately accessing higher education.

In its mission statement, UNP works to “bring together University and west side resources in reciprocal learning, action, and benefit … a community coming together” (www.partners.utah.edu). UNP’s goal is to develop reciprocal relationships where all members’ knowledge and contributions are valued. UNP targets seven ethnically and culturally rich west side neighborhoods.

**Building on Social Networks**

The rapidly increasing immigrant and refugee populations in Salt Lake City’s northwest quadrant bring a richness and diversity that open opportunities for community members and local schools to collaborate in substantive ways. Capitalizing on the collaborative efforts of UNP, a steering committee of school district, university, and community partners identified ways of sharing knowledge about higher education that builds upon family and university expertise. The CAM emerged after a yearlong study by west side residents, area K-12 school administrators and staff, and university researchers. The west side’s relatively small size (seven neighborhoods, two zip codes), proximity to the University of Utah, and a history of partnerships reflect collaboration where players are more than institutional representatives. A history of working together allowed partners to capitalize on individual expertise where turf setting and second guessing were not on anyone’s agenda. CAM’s central goal, to increase access to and success in higher education, guided monthly meetings leading to implementation over two years.

In 2004 the partnership program was established to provide parents with tools and knowledge to support their children in education and to share the knowledge that parents bring with educators and the school district. As one of its primary objectives, the CAM addressed some of the challenges faced by many west side families by training a core group of community advocates who live in the neighborhoods and reflected the community’s cultural and linguistic diversity. The project advocates came together with University of Utah faculty, community leaders and educators, and family experts to gain the tools and skills necessary to navigate the public educational system with the ultimate goal of sharing their knowledge with other parents and members.
of their communities. The specific goals and objectives of the project included the development of resources and services to parents/families and their children through community advocate training that will: (1) identify ways of benefiting from the knowledge parents and families bring to school communities; (2) share information on how parents can successfully work with schools; (3) assist parents in becoming more involved in their child’s education; and (4) prepare advocates who will spread their knowledge to other parents.

Our model illustrates the power of collaborative networks in educating new generations of students. It pulls together families, school, community resources, and higher education in mutually beneficial relationships. The partnership goal stems from a philosophy of broadening an understanding where shared knowledge will benefit schools, families, and the communities. By sharing knowledge, goals, and long-term aspirations for education, the partnership supports greater voice and involvement of traditionally underserved parents in the K-16 schools. The partnership provides families with both a public forum for contributing to their children’s education and access to the tools for succeeding in contemporary K-16 schools.

### The Power of Advocacy Programs

Researchers and practitioners have long known the “funds of knowledge” (Moll and Gonzales, 1997) that students bring to schools should be recognized and celebrated. Through legitimizing backgrounds, life experiences, and ways of approaching work, students, school, home, and community are meaningfully connected. In addition to recognizing the knowledge that children and parents bring to school communities, parent advocacy groups serve as ambassadors linking schools to homes and homes to schools.

Historically, parent advocacy groups served the needs of students receiving special education services. Advocates’ roles vary from helping families write letters and attend meetings to sharing information on policies and the law, questioning strategies, and developing educational plans (Wrightslaw, 2006). More recently, advocates serve as communication links for many families whose children are affected by state and national standardization and accountability movements (e.g., No Child Left Behind, particularly within the context of Title I schools). Advocates assist families in learning more about current accountability issues; they provide parents with information on testing and the ways in which performance is measured; and they share information on how parents and caregivers can access services such as tutoring and special education services (Burbank, 2008).

### Community Advocate Program Design

#### Workshop Training Series. During the 2005-2006 academic year, two workshop series provided members of the west side community with information on education-related topics. The first workshop included a two-day training session for Spanish speakers delivered by members of the school district, community organizations, and university faculty. Funding through a 21st Century Learning Grant provided participants with transportation to the two fall sessions, child care, meals, and stipends for participation. The spring 2006 training was specifically geared toward English speakers and included the same services.

#### Recruitment. Under the guidance of a community advocate working collaboratively with the program director, participants from the community were recruited as members of an existing group that met regularly to discuss issues related to education and services for families. The fall 2005 training delivered in Spanish served 14 participants, and the spring session served 18. Families were provided with workshop sessions that focused on community schools, advocacy for children, building relationships between families and schools, accessing school services, healthy habits, and information on resources for children receiving special education services. Additional sessions were geared toward the developmental needs of children from birth through adulthood and higher education.

During the spring 2006 workshops, 18 participants took part in two half-day workshops delivered in English. The workshop content of the spring series mirrored the fall presentation. Participants shared extremely positive feedback including their reactions to sessions that focused on how to interact with their children, suggestions for effectively communicating with their children, and ideas on how to engage in activities other than watching television. Participants commented positively on the workshop presentations on effective strategies for communicating
with teachers and ideas on how to become more involved in their children’s schools.

Workshop presentations on strategies for self-care and self-improvement practices within their own education or career goals were also highlighted positively. Participants also cited as particularly useful their newfound knowledge regarding their rights as parents.

**Methods**

To answer our research question regarding the impact of a workshop series on family advocacy, we collected data from three groups of participants: (1) families from the local community who took part in the workshop series; (2) leaders of the advocacy training sessions; and (3) stakeholders from the university, community, and school district steering the project. The first evaluation was conducted from data gathered from parent participants in the 2006 workshop series. A program evaluator and graduate assistant from the university facilitated the evaluation. A total of 13 workshop participants were present and contributed to the evaluation. Focus group participants were asked to evaluate the quality of their experiences in the workshops, to make suggestions for future workshops, and to develop plans for incorporating the information gained into their daily lives and communities.

Quantitative data on the surveys completed by project stakeholders were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Because of the low total (n = 20) no statistical analyses were performed. To analyze the qualitative data we began by having each research team member examine the content of focus group transcripts, meeting transcripts, and interviews. Using grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), we determined dominant themes using a form of triangulation (Denzin, 1989). Table 1 summarizes the major qualitative findings of the workshop series.

**Results**

**Family Participants**

Participants generally gave extremely positive feedback regarding their workshop experiences. Content areas received positively included how to interact with their children, strategies for increased communication with their children, ideas for engaging in activities other than watching television, tools for improving communication with teachers, suggestions for becoming more involved in their children’s schools, and suggestions for engaging in self-care and self-improvement in conjunction with their own education or career goals.

Participants also indicated that attendance at the workshop series helped them understand their rights as parents better. Parents reported that the information they learned was very valuable and that they would share the information with other parents, neighbors, family members, and friends—indicating a knowledge ripple effect within the community.

Suggestions for improving the workshops included infusing strategies for interventions related to behavioral problems or gang issues, inviting teachers to speak about their perspective so that parents could learn from what teachers have to say, and identifying how, from the perspective of classroom teachers, to become more involved as parents.

**Partners in Collaboration — Workshop**

**Trainers’ Perspectives**

A focus group of workshop session leaders was held to evaluate their perceptions of the success of the series. Focus group questions asked workshop coordinators to identify whether the series was a success, including strengths, weaknesses, and suggestions for future sessions.

Asked about the utility of various workshops, a trainer who shared information on life in middle schools reported that the parents who participated in the trip to her school “loved the meeting at the middle school.” The parents were reported as being “in awe” of the school. Prior to their visit they had been intimidated to go into the building. One of the mothers said she was glad to hear that the glass in the building was shatter proof. A group of parents whose children currently attend a local elementary school reported that the middle school tour served as an opportunity to understand what their children had to look forward to as they moved to middle school. The tour provided information on after-school programs, and participants reported being very excited to learn about the organization of the school. A discussion on the school’s middle school teaming approach gave parents a feeling of support. They were particularly interested in understanding campus safety and security and how the school system worked.

One session facilitator mentioned the impor-
tance of providing opportunities for parents to become a part of the process of learning about school and being a part of their children’s lives in schools. She also noted that parents in attendance felt a camaraderie with each other. According to the middle school facilitator, participants were “overwhelmed by the resources” the school was able to offer.” One mother commented on the merits of community education through classes as being a “great opportunity” for a mother and daughter to complete coursework together.

In addition to the general school tour a group facilitator suggested the need for more time to share information on all that the school had to offer. Increased time was suggested with a specific focus on the components and strategies for navigating the school experience. Further suggestions included the need for grade level tours on how to navigate public education at various stages of a child’s school career. Suggested workshop topics included providing help with tasks such as reading a report card, understanding concepts such as GPAs, and strategies on how to navigate the school system.

**Future Workshops: Topics and Formats**

The focus group participants discussed additional topics of interest for parents attending future meetings. Specific suggestions included sessions on the social and behavioral needs of ad-

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**Table 1. Major Project Findings**

| Workshop benefits for family participants | Valuable content in areas such as communication strategies, at-home activities for families, and parental rights. Reducing “fear of the unknown” in U.S. schools. |
| Workshop limitations for family participants | Information on the developmental needs of children and adolescents. Information on how higher education can be a part of their lives early on. Specialized content sessions based upon family needs. |
| Workshop benefits identified by workshop trainers | Opportunities for sharing information in a less structured setting. Feelings of camaraderie for participants. A way for parents and children to connect. |
| Workshop limitations identified by workshop trainers | Smaller customized breakout sessions. Shorter sessions using interactive formats with opportunities for conversations versus more formal presentations. Attention to immediate needs such as documentation status, access to financial resources, and daily living. |
| Workshop benefits identified by community stakeholders | Opportunities for parent networks through collaboration and parent involvement. Knowledge of mutual concerns across groups. Strategies for navigating the educational system. Increase confidence where parents contribute to their children’s education. |
| Workshop limitations identified by community stakeholders | Time constraints for parents and families. Need for in-depth work with families to ensure transfer of workshop information into families’ daily lives. Content must be broadly applicable while simultaneously individualized. |
olescents. One facilitator noted that parents are often aware of the social and behavioral changes in their children and are not always aware of how to respond to the specific needs of teenagers. Another noted that many parents require information on “normal” behavior for adolescents and found that reassuring. Sessions on the developmental needs of students at various age levels could be discussed during separate sessions based upon the grade levels and ages of students. Parents were reported as eager to learn whatever information is available.

A suggestion was made for future workshops where parents could be provided with information on opportunities to understand that students’ needs vary over the course of the school experiences. These sessions would provide parents with information on how higher education, and education in general, can be part of their lives.

This emphasis on higher education was called significant by a facilitator: “If families don’t know anyone who has ever been to college, then the families may need connections with those individuals who have the ability to make additional connections.” Additional suggestions shared by the workshop facilitators included: (1) using parents and advocates as facilitators in future projects and workshops; (2) holding separate sessions for parents needing information related to the individualized education process; (3) discussing open classrooms as examples of ways in which parents may become involved in school sessions; (4) teaching parents and caregivers skills that help them assert their rights or encourage greater empowerment; (5) understanding the special needs of immigrants. (One facilitator noted that simply moving to the United States brings a complex set of challenges and stressors. Facilitators suggested attention to the stress factors that children experience just by moving into a new system. Issues of work status and legal standing were suggested as areas for future discussion.); (6) examining work schedules and pressures of life and their impact on follow-through; (7) considering topics on such matters as gang intervention, delinquency issues, and step by step information on attending college.

A question was posed regarding the size and composition of workshop sessions. Facilitators suggested smaller sessions where parents have greater choice in attendance. Additional facilitation of the sessions was suggested: Small group sessions could follow a general meeting format followed by breakout sessions that align with individual interests and needs.

Participant feedback identified the need for a friendlier presentation format. Mothers didn’t like sitting in uncomfortable chairs. They expressed the need to move around a bit more and to make the daily schedule shorter. Other suggestions included taking away barriers such as tables to encourage participants to talk more about issues and needs. The parents who participated in the 2005 series were open and willing to learn.

We discovered from participant feedback that facilitators need to be aware of differences in needs based on immigration and documentation status. Some parents were documented, some not. Concerns of undocumented parents were often related to their own status, as well as to their children’s needs. Facilitators suggested bringing in aides who could provide more explicit information.

Facilitators suggested the need for more time to talk about the broader issues families are facing. Presenters and planners were encouraged to consider the viewpoints of many immigrant families with regard to work and education. There is an assumption that once a degree is obtained all doors open, and parents often expect to see money coming back to the family. Families are often unaware that the payback from education is not as substantial and immediate as expected.

Some participants thought too much content led to levels of restlessness and side conversations by some participants. To combat this concern, participants suggested greater opportunities to actively participate and a need for addressing learning styles within the presentations to actively engage in content by talking about issues, applying content to their lives, and brainstorming plans for putting ideas into action. Participants noted the importance of a conversation style versus lecture presentations. Language differences didn’t seem to matter as much as the delivery.

**Partners in Collaboration**

**Stakeholders’ Perspectives**

In addition to gathering feedback on the workshop series from parent participants and workshop facilitators, Families United steering committee evaluated the work of the Families United workshop series. Using closed- and open-ended questions, we gathered feedback from uni-
versity, community, and school district partners. While there are 73 official members of the network, there are 20 network members who regularly attend meetings. Assuming a pool of 20 would have likely responded to the spring 2006 survey, a return rate of 60% is reported. Overall, responses were very positive and reflect general support of the project.

Close-Ended Questions

Network members were asked to rate the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “not at all,” 3 being “somewhat,” and 5 being “completely”; responses were all toward the positive end of the scale:

1. Would the workshop series provide representatives from the community with the knowledge and skills necessary for learning more about the local educational system (mean = 3.75, sd = .45)?

2. Would the series assist in developing and facilitating a community advocacy training program that will: (a) educate parents on how to successfully work with schools (mean = 3.67, sd = .65); (b) assist parents in becoming more involved in their child’s education (mean = 3.75, sd = .62); (c) produce advocates who will spread their knowledge to other parents (mean = 3.42 (sd = .51); (d) build a network through collaboration between area schools, the university, and community organizations (mean = 4.00, sd = .60)?

Respondents indicated as strengths the basic information and resources available to parents; parents coming together and sharing knowledge of mutual concerns; preparing parents to work with schools; preparing parents to support their children; and giving parents an overview on how to navigate the educational system.

They described the instructors brought in from the different agencies to mentor and teach as “wonderful,” and they affirmed that the series empowers people who live in the community and provides opportunities for sharing new ideas and skills.

Regarding limitations, they noted the challenge of covering many worthy topics within the time constraints of parents; that some topics are not pertinent to all parents and others need additional discussion time; and the need for additional training for parents to become trainers of other parents.

Asked to explain how the workshop series helped educate parents on how to work successfully with schools, they indicated that because schools, nonprofits, and the university are involved in planning the training, schools are prepared to engage the parents once they get community advocate training. They were also aware that parents can become engaged in their neighborhood schools and can become aware of what is available at their schools. Because school personnel are an integral part of the training, more follow-up and mentoring may be necessary.

Members were asked to identify the ways training would assist parents in becoming more involved in their child’s education. They indicated that the training helps to increase parents’ confidence that they can support and advocate for their children; gives them contact names if they encounter challenges; gives them examples and opportunities for involvement; helps them become aware about the need to become involved in their child’s education; reduces their fears about becoming involved; and teaches them about a variety of ways to become involved.

Members were asked to list ways in which advocate training would transfer to the wider community. They indicated that the parent advocates will educate neighbors and friends about what they have learned and make more resources available; through word of mouth, parents will influence other parents to become involved and may pass along some of the training to other parents; and the parents who were involved may be seen as leaders within their different family and community networks.

Next Steps

While the primary goal of the first year was to develop and implement a workshop series, long-term goals are focused on the development of sustained frameworks designed to encourage participants to share their newfound knowledge with members of the community. Parents shared that the workshop information was very valuable and that they plan to share the information with other parents, neighbors, family members, and friends, indicating a larger ripple effect within the community.

Parents’ suggestions on how to improve
the workshops included incorporating more intervention strategies with regard to behavioral problems or gang issues. They also suggested including more teacher-speakers so that parent advocates could learn from the experiences of educators. The perspectives of educators were recommended as mechanisms for helping families learn as much as possible from teachers. Two project goals have been identified as mechanisms for broadening the audience with whom the information will be shared. To begin, a series of general follow-up activities was suggested as a way of sharing the workshop information with friends and neighbors. Suggestions included topics for parents such as:

• Taking parents from your child’s school on a tour of the school.
• Setting up a meeting with the principal of your child’s school to talk about the training and identify how you can become more involved at the school.
• Signing up to volunteer at your child’s school as a tutor/homework helper.
• Reading to/with your child three times a week, and then after a month, four times a week and then five times a week.
• Planning a trip for you and your child to the art museum, planetarium, or natural history museum.
• Spending 10 minutes each day talking with your child about what he/she learned in school that day.
• Deciding how much TV your child is allowed to watch each day and then making a list of activities your child can do instead of watching TV.
• Signing your child up for a dance, art, or music class through city-based activities.

The second plan for extending the impact of the work series is to provide these newly trained advocates with opportunities to work within the local school district. Plans are in place for community advocates to use their training to benefit other families. Participants will be recognized for their participation as school-based advocates through free educational opportunities for advocates and their children.

Summary

Increasingly diverse communities that reach across traditional boundaries are on the rise in major urban communities in the United States. Changes taking place within these communities are also occurring in the K-16 institutions that serve them. As American neighborhoods evolve, stakeholders collaborate to forge partnerships and programs that value and reflect these changes.

After a year-long collaborative study by the University of Utah, an urban school district, and community partners, the Community Advocate Model emerged as a campus-community partnership focused on connecting families, schools, and community resources to empower families living in northwest Salt Lake City to support their children’s success in education. By training a core group of parent advocates, the program addresses and fosters better understanding of the challenges facing families in these neighborhoods. Advocate training sessions were conducted by university faculty, community leaders, educators, and family experts. The workshop content was designed to equip families with the tools necessary to navigate the public educational system with the ultimate goal of sharing their knowledge with members of their communities. During the 2005-2006 academic year, two workshop series provided 32 members of the west side community with information on education-related topics. The fall 2005 training delivered in Spanish served 14 participants with the spring session serving 18 community members.

Overall, family participants shared positive feedback, including their reactions to sessions that focused on how to effectively communicate with their children and with teachers and regarding strategies for self-care and parental rights. Additionally, parents reported that the information they learned was very valuable and that they would share the information with other parents, neighbors, family members, and friends. Family participants’ suggestions for improving the workshops included adding strategies for interventions related to behavioral problems or gang issues; inviting teachers to speak about their perspective so that parents could learn from what teachers have to say; and identifying how to become more involved as parents from the perspective of classroom teachers.

Presenters identified providing opportunities for parents to become a part of the process of learning about school and being a part of their children’s life in schools as one of the strengths
of the program. Overall, presenters shared that participants were particularly interested in learning about how school systems operated and ways to support their children in education. Facilitators’ suggestions included social and behavioral development of children and adolescents; information on higher education and a variety of topics geared to provide immigrant parents with information about how systems in the United States operate; and how to achieve greater voice and empowerment.

Community partners also provided a positive assessment of the workshop series, reporting that the content of the workshop would educate parents on how to successfully work with schools and provide parents who will share their knowledge with other families in the communities. When examining limitations, members identified the need for more interactive training and additional information on developmental and behavioral issues. Presenters suggested sharing the series with a broader audience and adding topics for follow-up information sessions.

The Community Advocate Model presents a unique opportunity for establishing reciprocal relationships between parents from under-represented populations and K-16 educators. By connecting families, school, community resources, and the university, parents are able to exchange information and have direct access to system educators. Similarly, rapidly increasing immigrant populations enhance these neighborhoods and systems with their rich and diverse language and cultures, bringing new opportunities for local schools and higher education to meet their academic needs.

### References


### About the Authors

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Youth Community Engagement: A Recipe for Success

Mary E. Arnold, Brooke Dolenc, and Elissa E. Wells

Abstract

This article describes how community engagement contributes to youth development. Drawing on the literature on youth engagement, youth development, and youth-adult partnerships, the authors examine a successful community youth engagement program that engages youth and their adult partners in a participatory evaluation project that results in community action. The research emphasizes the important role of youth-adult partnerships in community youth engagement projects and outlines strategies for success.

Introduction

Imagine this scene, played out frequently by community groups with the best intentions for youth: A boardroom table is surrounded mainly by adults with one or two youth at the table. The youth at the meeting have been honored with the responsibility of being representatives on the board. Because they value youth perspectives, the adults feel good about including them. The conversation, while important to the work of the group, is clearly not resonating with the youth, who do their best to appear engaged and interested. As the discourse continues the youth rarely speak up, and when they do, they are cut off or not fully understood by the adults running the meeting. At the end of the meeting the youth feel set free, having fulfilled yet another “leadership” expectation, even if they are unclear about the role they actually played. The adults feel satisfied, knowing they have included the voice of youth, thus demonstrating their commitment to youth development in their community.

While this vignette intentionally paints a stereotypical picture of youth involvement, it also highlights the common struggles of engaging youth in meaningful roles that lead to community engagement and social change.

Youth community engagement in recent years has developed significant momentum. Developmentalists, researchers, and community leaders agree that involving youth in addressing issues that affect them has tremendous potential for social change. As with many emerging fields, much more is needed, particularly in developing effective methods for youth engagement. Nonetheless, considerable advances in the field have been made. Drawing on the literature of youth engagement, youth-adult partnerships, participatory evaluation with youth, and positive youth development, this article highlights an innovative youth development program that culminates in community decision making and social action. Observers of this program will not find youth sitting passively around a boardroom table, but rather working side by side with adults and community members to identify community concerns and take action to address issues that matter to them.
Youth Engagement
Youth have been participating in social change in the United States for many years. The Vietnam War and civil rights movement are two relatively recent examples. Youth volunteerism is on the rise, with over 55% of youth participating in volunteer activities (National and Community Service, 2004). There is also growing evidence that engaging youth is a critical component of effective youth programming (Gambone and Connell, 2004). As youth organizations respond to the importance of youth engagement, most have focused on youth’s role in governance or other decision making bodies. Hence, the boardroom meeting described above can be prevalent among agencies desiring to move in the right direction with youth. But according to the Search Institute (2005), there are many ways to engage youth. Here is its list of eight domains of youth engagement:

1. Youth service: volunteerism, community service, and service learning.
2. Youth leadership: often developmental in nature, helping youth acquire skills to understand and address issues affecting them.
3. Youth decision making: youth in governance or other roles that lead to decision making in a community.
4. Youth philanthropy: giving of one’s time and resources for the benefit of others.
5. Youth political engagement: youth in civic and political affairs.
6. Youth organizing: community organizing and advocacy.
7. Youth media: developed and disseminated by youth.
8. Youth evaluation and research: youth in systematic inquiry into issues that affect them and their communities.

Zeldin, Petrokubi, and MacNeil (2008) outline similar strategies for youth engagement, including: (1) governance and policy making; (2) training and outreach; (3) organizing and activism; (4) communication and media; (5) service and philanthropy; and (6) research and evaluation. The identification of multiple ways to engage youth has led to innovative programs seeking to identify successful practices for youth engagement. An area receiving particular attention recently, engaging youth as full partners in research and evaluation on programs that affect them, is youth participatory evaluation.

Youth Participatory Evaluation
Important youth contributions to participatory evaluation include theoretical development (Checkoway and Gutierrez, 2007; Fetterman, 2003; Sabo, 2003), and practical strategies (Camino, Zeldin, Mook, and O’Conner, 2004; Checkoway and Richards-Schuster, 2006; Delgado, 2006; London, Zimmerman, and Erbstein, 2003; The Innovation Center, 2005; Sabo Flores, 2008). They are natural outgrowths of the general participatory evaluation movement within the larger field of program evaluation. Participatory evaluation itself is rooted in the field of action research emphasizing purposeful use of research results for community improvement. Building on the idea of stakeholders having an important role in evaluating the programs that affect them, participatory evaluation has established a foothold in a variety of social evaluation projects, particularly in community development, education, and community health. Participatory evaluation emphasizes strengthening communities through the empowerment of local citizens and stakeholders as they discover and use evaluation knowledge for their own betterment (Cousins and Whitmore, 1998).

As the field of participatory evaluation evolved, continued refinement of its purpose occurred. Particularly striking was the differentiation between efforts that promoted the use of evaluation findings, also known as practical participatory evaluation, and efforts that emphasized social justice and empowerment of the evaluation participants, known as transformative participatory evaluation (Brisolara, 1998; Cousins and Whitmore, 1998). An interesting dynamic of youth participatory evaluation is its dual emphasis on practical and transformative evaluation. As Sabo (2003) points out, the distinction between the two loses some relevance when applied to youth because of the developmental nature of working with youth, because as a whole, the voice of youth is underrepresented in programs that affect them. Youth participation in the evaluation of programs has potential to increase the practical utility of findings as well as to transform participating youth, thus contributing to their...
own positive development. Indeed, one reason this dual approach has gained traction is because of the changes in developmental theory that have occurred in the last 20 years (Sabo, 2003).

**Positive Youth Development**

Before the 1990s, most programs for youth focused on interventions to help youth at risk for a variety of problems. While research and programming for at-risk youth continue, programs for other youth are not. However, the movement toward positive programming for all youth was greatly aided by Pittman’s (1991) statement that “problem free is not fully prepared.” Since the early 1990s, the field of positive youth development, and the influence of such programs on child and adolescent development, continues to undergo theoretical development (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, and Hawkins, 2002; Eccles and Gootman, 2002; Lerner, 2004; Pittman, 1991; Roth and Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Furthermore, clarification and general agreement about the outcomes of positive youth development programs are being ardently sought after in research. These developments are welcome news for researchers, practitioners, and funders, who have long struggled to articulate the theory, intent, and impact of positive youth development programming.

The goal of positive youth development programs is to encourage and facilitate the growth of “functionally valued” behaviors resulting in thriving and well-being throughout adolescence, with the ultimate goal of helping youth develop into productive and contributing adults (Damon, 2004; Lerner, 2004; Roth and Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Functionally valued behaviors include competence, character, connection, confidence, and caring, commonly called the “5 C’s.” (Eccles and Gootman, 2002; Lerner, Fisher, and Weinberg, 2000; Pittman, Irby, and Ferber, 2001; Roth and Brooks-Gunn, 2003). The ultimate outcome of the 5 C’s is a positive contribution to one’s community, increasing through adolescence and becoming a valued aspect of one’s adult life (Lerner, 2004). Others have also noted the role a young person’s expectation to “give something back” plays a key role in that person’s civic and moral development. Benson (1997) includes responsibility and service as well as high expectations from adults among the important developmental assets for youth, and Gambone and Connell (2004) outline youths’ positive contribution to community as one of the long-term outcomes as they move into adulthood.

One of the hallmarks of positive youth development programs is the atmosphere in which the program takes place (Roth and Brooks Gunn, 2003). Kress (2004) identified four essential elements of positive youth programming. These elements outline the types of opportunities that youth must be given through positive youth development programs: (1) to feel a sense of belonging; (2) to develop mastery; (3) to develop independence; and (4) to practice generosity. Inclusion of these elements in youth development programs sets the stage for youth to develop into community leaders.

In addition to the program context, the presence of an ongoing relationship with a non-parental adult is critical to the success of positive youth development programs. Adults provide youth with encouragement and support, and in the best cases, gradually allow youth to take more and more active leadership in the programs that serve them. As the field of positive youth development continued to change, so did the philosophy underscoring the programming methods. Not so long ago it was common to hear adults speak of conducting programs to youth. Later, the language changed to refer to programming for youth, and more recently programming with youth can be heard among adult youth workers. Indeed, understanding the role a youth-adult partnership plays in youth development is receiving much current attention in the literature. Although youth-adult partnerships are an important aspect of youth development programs, these partnerships do not happen easily or without significant buy-in, training, and support.

**Youth-Adopted Partnerships: the Critical Link**

Youth programming conducted in partnership with the audience it serves sparked new program development around youth-adult partnerships. The youth-adult partnership movement itself reflects the deeper philosophical shift taking place. As Zeldin, Petrokubi, and MacNeil (2008)
point out, developing a youth-adult partnership curriculum was not enough. The more pertinent issue was the need to understand and embrace a whole new set of principles and values underlying youth programming.

Research into the effective adoption of youth-adult partnership principles is limited and reveals mixed results. In a study of five demonstration sites for involving youth in governance programs, Jones, Byer, and Zeldin (2008) discovered that buy-in from local staff is critical to successful implementation of such programs. Buy-in alone, however, is not enough. Even staff members who believed in youth-adult partnerships often lacked support, resources, or training to make youth-adult partnerships an integrated part of ongoing programming.

In addition, momentum appeared to be an important element of success. Programs lost momentum when there were delays or cancellation of events, as youth and adults often became involved in other projects. A related challenge is that youth often juggle multiple responsibilities: school, sports, clubs, and other leadership roles. As such, youth need to feel that their efforts are valued and make a difference or they are likely to fall away from youth-adult partnerships. Projects able to spark youth interest and with a clear structure, direction, and timeline appear to be important elements of successful programs (Jones, Byer, and Zeldin, 2008).

In a study investigating the adoption of youth-adult partnership practices into existing 4-H Youth Development programs, Zeldin, Petrokubi, and MacNeil (2008) discovered three goals and leverages for success. First, the goal of “planting seeds,” or setting the stage for a new programming expectation, is recommended. Key ways to achieve this goal include garnering the support of people who already support the idea (“champions”), building social networks, and connecting youth-adult partnerships with existing priorities and responsibilities of stakeholders. The second goal focuses on “walking the talk,” thus modeling the principles and expectations of youth-adult partnership programming whenever possible.

Achievement of the second goal happens by providing continual access to research, ideas, and best practices; through hands-on coaching and training of stakeholders; and through group reflection and planning related to higher quality implementation of youth-adult partnerships principles. The final goal is to reach the point of “how we do business,” where youth-adult partnerships are fully integrated into ongoing program efforts with sufficient infrastructure to support the role expectations and responsibilities for all stakeholders. When this happens a collective narrative emerges of youth contributions to the organization. Moreover, Zeldin, Petrokubi, and MacNeil (2008) also found significant barriers to the adoption of youth-adult partnerships, including pushback from stakeholders in “traditional” programs, the need for program staff to sell the idea of youth-adult partnerships to stakeholders, and time constraints.

Expansion in positive youth development and participatory evaluation and lessons learned about youth-adult partnerships and youth engagement provide a provocative backdrop on which to develop community youth engagement programs. Emerging from the new understanding are the keys to youth engagement program success.

It is clear that the essential link between youth and community engagement is effective youth-adult partnerships. The review of the youth-adult partnership literature, however, reveals that adoption of these practices can be difficult. Important considerations for success also include: (1) dissemination of youth-adult partnerships through a program plan that uses an outline for implementation, but allows for individual variations depending on location; (2) infusing youth-adult partnership principles through ongoing programming; (3) developing programs that are finite in nature with clear start and end points; (4) building programs around curriculum and projects that are already familiar to the participants; and (5) recognizing that without strategic and patient efforts, stereotypes and roadblocks to successful youth-adult partnerships and youth community engagement will persist (Wheeler, 2007). A 4-H program for community engagement entitled the Participatory Evaluation with Youth Community Action program was designed to engage youth in social science research. This program provides an exemplary model of effectively preparing youth for successful community engagement.

The program trains youth and their adult partners to plan and host community forums in order to identify a community need that can be addressed by an action project. The program fol-
allows the social inquiry model; thus participants also gain skills in research and evaluation. The program training schedule and activities follow Arnold and Wells’ (2007) participatory evaluation with youth curriculum. Training activities are highly interactive and hands-on and match the cycle of social inquiry. An outline of the training is provided in Table 1.

Putting it all Together: Participatory Evaluation as a Method for Youth Engagement

The 4-H program originates in the youth branch of the Cooperative States Research, Education, and Extension agency of the United States Department of Agriculture. For over 100 years the 4-H program has provided youth with opportunities for hands-on learning with an emphasis on leadership, citizenship, and community service. Years ago, 4-H focused on innovations for farming and for boys and home stewardship for girls. While the agriculture and home economics roots are still present, 4-H members of both genders now participate in projects related to technology, natural resources, science, health, and engineering. In addition to emphasizing youth-adult partnerships, 4-H has long recognized the importance of engaging youth in communities.

4-H is emerging as a leading program for positive youth development (Lerner, 2008), and has made significant strides in articulating its program theory that emphasizes how youth are engaged in learning content while at the same time developing skills such as responsibility and leadership. Learning takes place within an intentional program atmosphere that emphasizes the four essential elements outlined by Kress (2004). The model predicts that such learning leads to positive youth development and ultimately to long-term well-being in adulthood (see Figure 1).

Importance of Training

As noted earlier, having youth work in partnership with adults is a key strategy for building youth empowerment and engagement, but in order for these partnerships to be positive and productive, youth and adult teams must receive training in how to work together meaningfully. Training begins with activities designed to help youth and adults work together as teams. For example, one activity asks youth and adults to brainstorm the benefits and challenges of working together. Each group (youth or adults) then takes turns sharing their thoughts by posting the benefits and challenges on the wall. Adults are usually very frank in their assessments, saying youth are “overcommitted” and “impractical.” Likewise, youth will often say the adults are “too rigid” and “old-fashioned.” But the adults are also likely to comment on the youth’s creativity and enthusiasm, while the youth will recognize adults for their wisdom and experience. Activities build on each other to help teams explore the nuances of working together, assessing differences and simi-

<table>
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<td>Youth-Adult Partnerships</td>
<td>To prepare youth and adults to work effectively as a team</td>
<td>Collaboration, Data collection, organization, analysis, and interpretation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Framing community issues</td>
<td>To determine a topic for a community forum</td>
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<td>Community Forums</td>
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<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>To develop skill in organizing, summarizing, and analyzing information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reporting and Action</td>
<td>To prepare youth to report results and plan an action project</td>
<td>Data interpretation, Reporting, Action planning</td>
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Table 1. Participatory Evaluation with Youth: Curriculum for Building Skills for Youth Community Action
larities, and exposing potential problems, such as adultism (adult bias against children). Each activity is debriefed before the next one is introduced. At the end of the session, participants are invited to reflect on their personal experience and learning and to share their thoughts with the rest of the group. The sessions increase understanding between youth and adults and set the stage for clear communication during the rest of the training and for future youth-adult interactions.

Preparing to Plan and Host a Community Forum

The majority of the training prepares teams to plan and host a community forum as a form of community data collection. To set the stage, the trainers host a mock forum, where training staff are the hosts and moderators and training participants are the forum attendees. At the end of the mock forum, training staff highlight the various processes that contribute to the success of the forum, including moderator and recorder skills and techniques for facilitating audience participation. Following the mock forum, activities focus on helping participants identify appropriate forum topics, and teams brainstorm a potential topic for their forum. Later, the youth practice moderating and recording techniques during actual mini-forums held during the training. A debriefing session at the end of the mini-forums allows youth and adults opportunities to discuss possible solutions to problems that may arise during the forum.

Data Analysis, Reporting, and Action Planning

In addition to preparing for a community forum, a series of training activities teach youth how to organize and analyze the information gathered at a forum through a content analysis exercise. Teams complete a separate analysis of data gathered through a brainstorming exercise and share their results with the larger group through a poster presentation, allowing an opportunity to practice reporting research findings. The training ends with a session on team action planning, providing participants with an understanding of the steps and strategies for effective action planning.

Program Evaluation and Impact

A formal process and outcome evaluation of the program was conducted. Three questions guided the evaluation:

1. What is the quality of the training?
2. Do training participants gain skills and knowledge related to the learning outcomes?
3. Are the teams able to plan and host a community forum and carry out a community action project?

Process Evaluation

Evaluation of the trainings was ongoing. Qualitative data collected throughout the trainings ranged from informal debriefings following an activity to more structured activities such as written reflections. These “checkpoints” allowed trainers to understand how well the training was going and what participants were learning and experiencing. Careful notes were kept about what worked and what did not. The notes were used to create the facilitator’s notes in the curriculum (Arnold and Wells, 2007.) Examples include the importance of creating and discussing ground rules for the training with participants before training begins, making sure adults understand they are active participants in the project (not just chaperones), and debriefing participants.
Beyond the training, each site was monitored for successful program implementation to see how well the project unfolded once the teams returned to their communities. Several consistent issues came up across sites, with one of the biggest being low attendance at the community forums. This information was used to develop recommendations for more successful forum planning.

**Outcome Evaluation**

The program curriculum has been used to train 16 teams of youth and adults over the past two years. A self-report learning assessment conducted at the end of each training measured participant knowledge and skills in each of the eight topics covered in the training. Using a retrospective pre-test method, participants rated their level of knowledge and skills before and after the training on a five-point scale [none (1), a little (2), some (3), quite a bit (4), and a lot! (5)]. Figure 2 shows pre and post mean participant ratings. A paired t-test analysis revealed significant differences between pre and post means for all items (p < .01). In addition, over 97% of respondents indicated that they: (1) enjoyed the training; (2) learned things they could use; (3) felt prepared to lead a community forum; and (4) learned things they had not learned in other places. Respondents also rated the training quality as “good” or “very good” (85%), and 92% rated the effectiveness of the training as “good” or “very good.”

Two longer-term outcomes for the project, hosting a community forum and conducting an action project, were monitored for success. Of the five teams trained in 2007, four have hosted a forum and completed an action project. The fifth team dropped from the project immediately following the training. Ten teams were trained in 2008. The trainings took place in January and February, and to date four of the teams have held community forums, and two teams have completed an action project. Action projects completed so far include refurbishing bleachers at a local high school, planning and hosting a series of community youth and family activity nights, and planting flowers to enhance a community in preparation for hosting the U.S. Olympic track and field trials.

Narrative evidence from youth participants further highlights the impact of the program. The positive effect the community action project had on the community was eye-opening for one participant who stated:

“One of my favorite things about the forum was seeing all of our hard work put to use in the final project, which was sprucing up the events center in time for the Olympic Trials. Our project reached many more people than I had originally thought it would, and I was gratified when over 50 people volunteered their time to pull weeds and get dirty with us.”

Another stated: “One of the things I learned most from this process is that if even just a few people take the time to organize something like a forum, it is really a great way to bring the community together and do something important.”

Another highlighted the reach of engagement that took place, saying: “You really do impact a lot more people than you think you do. By listening to everyone’s idea it can generate into something bigger than yourselves.”

Finally, the personal development of youth engaged in the project was articulated by a participant who said: “By participating in the program I know how to express my opinion in a diplomatic and straightforward manner. It meant a great deal to be a part of a statewide community action event. I felt that all of the youth went away feeling far more confident and with greatly improved communication skills.”

**The Scholarship of Integration and Application: A Model Program for Effective Youth Community Engagement**

In his provocative work challenging the status quo of academic scholarship, which traditionally focuses on the generation of new knowledge, Boyer (1990) argued for an enlarged definition of scholarly work. In particular, he highlighted efforts by faculty members involved in the scholarship of outreach and engagement to include the scholarship of integration, application, and teaching. One of the hallmarks of programs delivered through Land Grant University Extension programs is the promise of research-based programs both in terms of program content and delivery methods. Incumbent upon all extension educators is the requirement of knowing the research base of a program, and implementing the program in a way that builds on the best known practices of the day. Beyond knowing and applying knowledge, extension faculty members also contribute to the growth of the field through sys-
tematic evaluation of the program’s implementation and impact, and sharing results with peers, thus contributing to the knowledge base of best program practices.

The Participatory Evaluation with Youth for Community Action program is a model of the type of scholarship advocated by Boyer. The program integrates current knowledge in youth engagement theory and practice by intentionally combining the critical elements of participatory evaluation, positive youth development, and youth-adult partnerships resulting in application that informs future practice. Several key contributions of this application are highlighted below.

**Participatory Evaluation and Community Engagement.** One of the unique aspects of the Participatory Evaluation with Youth for Community Action program is the opportunity to develop skills in evaluation and research in a manner that is embedded in youths’ own environments and communities. The skills of social inquiry, and the accompanying ability to gather, analyze, synthesize, and share data, are highly valued skills in the contemporary work environment and transferable to different career settings. Our program provides an opportunity for youth and adults to research, discuss, and evaluate real concerns that matter to them and their community and create an action plan for change.

This results in the empowerment of youth in their natural community settings, allowing for the youth to experience the transformative power of community engagement. Holding a forum in their community and creating a finite timeline for their project make the program participation practical for youth and adults and alleviate some of the pitfalls some youth engagement programs encounter.

**Seeing Community Engagement as a Positive Youth Development Strategy.** Positive youth development theory asserts that all youth have the capacity to change and grow as they interact with their communities (Benson, Scales, Hamilton, and Sesma, 2006). In addition, community engagement is endorsed as a vehicle for actualization of the five C’s in youth (Balsano, 2005). Even so, such development does not always occur spontaneously, but requires deliberate and intentional strategies of engagement. Developmentally, teens are negotiating their independence. Consequently, programs need to be aware of such growth in autonomy and use this as an asset to strengthen programs with youth. Programs also need to capitalize on teen’s existing social structures while at the same time connecting them to society in order to provide youth with a greater sense of belonging within their communities. The Participatory Evaluation with Youth for Community Action program encourages youth engagement and action within the community, leading to positive youth development and the ultimate goal of lifelong contribution to others.

**Youth-Adult Partnerships and Community Engagement.** Youth engagement thrives when there are successful partnerships between youth and adults. Teens need adults who inspire and support them. The participatory evaluation/community action model for youth-adult partnerships
incorporates youth and adults through every stage of the program (e.g., attending the training, planning and hosting a community forum, and implementing a community action project). Successful youth build links across families, schools, peers, and communities that in turn support their pathways.

Youth Engagement: A New Vision

By combining the best elements of quality youth engagement practices, we can envisage a brighter future around the boardroom table. Imagine now a boardroom meeting that has been planned in partnership among youth and adult board members, where deliberate efforts have been made to train the youth and adults on how to work together effectively. Instead of sitting quietly to the side, youth members co-lead the meeting, providing frequent and thoughtful contributions to the conversation. The agenda for the meeting itself has been established through an assessment of community needs and interests, and has at least a partial focus on community engagement. As a result, youth are propelled further down path of positive development, supported by the adults and communities that believe in them, gaining confidence and competence, and developing a lasting commitment to the value of community engagement.

References


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Establishing and Evaluating Equitable Partnerships

James E. McLean and Bruce A. Behringer

Abstract
In this paper, the authors present two models for establishing and evaluating partnerships. They also provide a working definition of a partnership, propose strategies for identifying resources for starting and maintaining partnerships, and provide several methods for evaluating them. Their purpose is to increase understanding of the dynamics of building stronger, more equity-based partnerships. Models recommended are the Give-Get and Double Rainbow.

Introduction
It is customary to label most cooperative ventures as partnerships. But a true partnership is one in which each party contributes (or gives) to the partnership and receives (or gets) benefits from it. Behringer and McLean (2002) described this requirement in detail. King, Williams, Howard, Proffitt, Belcher, and McLean (2004) illustrated an application of it in a group of community projects. The model, which can explain many of the key elements of a partnership, evolved from early program efforts to describe both university and rural community expectations and contributions at East Tennessee State University. A planning grid from the ETSU Health Professions Education Program was used to explain curricular change and community benefits that occur simultaneously through joint project activities. Its matrix form provides a simple visual depiction on a single page. The grid (see Figure 1) was adopted as a required part of the small grant application packet to document partnership planning.

The Give-Get Model draws upon social psychology, business practice, and community development theories to assist in program and community partnership development. To be effective, partnerships require extensive involvement by both parties. This involvement both recognizes and legitimizes the process and an organizational framework created for that involvement. In the “Ladder of Citizen Participation,” Arnstein (1969) framed community participation from experiences with the Office of Economic Opportunity, defining partnerships and their operational differences within a continuum of manipulation-empowerment and emphasizing institutional beliefs and values to create positive symbiotic relationships with their surrounding community. In DePree’s Leadership Is An Art (1989), meaningful, challenging, and inclusive approaches to organizational development and leadership
were explored that underscored the importance of valuing participation, inter-organizational relationships, and the resulting contributions. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) described an approach to viewing communities in light of the assets they can contribute toward change, not just the social problems that they confront. The ethic of community partnerships, as formulated by the Kellogg Foundation (Richards, 1996), extended this approach to increase the perception of value in community as a contributor, not just as a site, for higher education through community-based and interdisciplinary experiential learning.

The Give-Get Grid developed at ETSU extended these approaches by valuing community-identified issues and opportunities (needs, problems) as contributions to the educational process and as benefits to faculty and students as real world educational opportunities. Adopting a community issue or opportunity often meant bringing together disciplines and departments not accustomed to working together, resulting in new configurations and renewed faculty involvement with communities.

Collaborative planning is necessary to complete the Give-Get Grid as part of the small grant program. This approach was based on social exchange theory and negotiations practice. Blau (1964) identified social exchange as a process of tapping social and work networks to define common interests. Each partner needed to define its interests (Fisher and Ury, 1991) and identify why it sought to engage in a project, thus defining its expectations (“gets”). While access to a Kellogg grant stimulated interest, the programs soon took on a life of their own. As negotiations proceeded, each party identified additional potential resources that they could contribute and the value to them of the other partner’s contributions. For example, the university valued old community stories as a resource in the development of a theatrical production that highlighted the potential value of the “gives” by rural residents. Likewise, community residents saw the presence of university students in their towns as a potential encouragement for rural students to consider post-secondary education. These examples of direct and spillover elements exemplify how one party’s “gives” begin to match the other party’s “gets.” Over time, the Give-Get Grid Model helped all to understand the need theory of negotiation (Nierenberg, 1981) based upon common interests rather than the traditional “win-lose” approaches that characterize many town-gown relationships. By emphasizing contributions as well as benefits to each partner, the model proves superior to traditional “win-win” thinking (Covey, 1989).

It is easily seen how this model can be extended to the school-university partnership. First, it can provide a framework for defining the partnership and clarify to both partners what they can expect to contribute to the partnership and how they can expect to benefit. Second, it can provide the framework for evaluating the partnership in both formative and summative ways.

Figure 2 provides a very simple illustration of the Give-Get Grid Model applied to a university-school partnership. While it only provides summary information, an actual Give-Get chart would provide the information in much more detail. A good illustration of this can be found in King et al. (2004, pp. 80-81). Figure 2 does illustrate how the Give-Get Grid Model is an excellent planning tool for developing a university-school partnership by allowing each partner to know what it will contribute to and receive from the partnership. While the Give-Get Grid Model was developed originally as a planning tool, it can also provide the basis for evaluating the partnership.

Building Partnerships
While the Give-Get Grid Model is an excellent planning tool, planners also will find it instructive to consult the Double Rainbow Model (see Figure 3). Any university-school partnership should be based upon the belief that the part-
nership can provide mutually beneficial relationships between higher education and the school. While the Give-Get Grid Model is a method for identifying the benefits and contributions of each partner, it is also very important that both partners understand the specific audiences and stakeholders of the partnership. This would include all parties that might be affected by the partnership. This concept can be elaborated using the Double Rainbow Model. This model recognizes that each partner in negotiations is not monolithic but instead includes complex social and work networks. Based upon the Units of Solution Theory (Steuart, 1993), benefits of partnership projects could be defined to include individuals, families, groups, and community beneficiaries to each partner. This approach created the mirror image displayed as concentric layers in the community and university that provides an illustration of the various beneficiaries of the partnership in a hierarchical fashion. This depiction of the constituencies in each partnership displayed in a hierarchical fashion is called the Double Rainbow Model. It can be used as a technique to determine the impacts of a partnership on both partners as well as a tool to identify environmental influences of the partnership. Figure 3 provides an illustration of this for a university-school partnership.

The primary beneficiaries at the university were university students preparing to become teachers, as the partnership would provide them with a clinical site to develop their teaching skills. For the school, their students would be the ultimate beneficiaries of the partnership as it would result in their improved achievement. The next level of impact would be on the university faculty who would benefit by having access to a teaching and research laboratory and the school faculty who would have access to expertise and support of university faculty including the latest best-practice research. The next level of impact would be the college and university and the school and school system. These institutions would benefit from improved efficiency and the ability to draw on each other’s expertise. It is interesting that in a university-school partnership of this type, the next level of impact would be the same for both the university and school – the community and state.

From the university’s perspective, the community and state would benefit by the increased exposure and the ability to graduate better prepared teachers. From the schools’ perspective, the community and state would benefit from...
the improved achievement of their students. Discussions using the Double Rainbow Model also enabled partners to identify unintended consequences of projects. The model can be particularly helpful in identifying potential sources of information useful in evaluation.

Identifying the benefits and contributions as well as the stakeholders of a partnership does not ensure its success. King et al. (2004) identified a number of practices that improve the likelihood that a partnership will be successful. Below is a list of some of these practices that could focus on university-school partnerships:

1. More than anything else, partnerships thrive on personal connections. The personal relationships that develop between university and school probably have more impact on the continuation of a partnership than any other factor.
2. The traditional flow of information from university to school needs to become bidirectional. That is, university faculty must accept that the partnership is a two-way street with their gaining from the practical situation they would find in a school.
3. Full participation by both partners in the planning and implementation is crucial to a successful partnership. Buy-in depends on both partners providing input to the planning and implementation of the partnership.
4. The personal connections noted in Item 1 are built by working together on all phases of the partnership.
5. Even if both parties participate in developing the Give-Get Grid and the Double Rainbow models, unexpected outcomes will result from the partnership. That is, both parties will end up giving more and getting more than they identified in the planning stage. The relationship must be strong to deal with these unintended consequences.
6. Partnerships can learn from each other. That is, if there are partnerships between the university and more than one school, there are advantages to sharing those benefits.
7. The longer a partnership operates the more benefits will come from it.
8. Successful partnerships will breed successful partnerships. A successful partnership between two parties in one area will often result in partnerships to solve problems in other areas. Additional partners may also become involved and contribute.
9. Communication and personal interaction overcome barriers. This takes us back to the first item. The success of a partnership depends upon open communication and personal interaction.

While the two models that have been presented and the operating principles help to build and maintain a partnership, the process is not without its challenges.

**Challenges in Partnership Formation**

The two models described above represent tools that were used in planning and initiating a number of collaborative community-university partnership projects. The models also became helpful in formative and summative evaluation of the overall program. Community and faculty partners identified several thematic challenges in the partnering process that were both defined and facilitated when using the models.

- Community-based learning challenged faculty members to modify teaching and learning methods for course-based learning objectives. This change was a required educational contribution to the partnership, and it enabled greater graduates’ satisfaction with their educational preparation, especially in self-confidence, public speaking, and the ability to design and implement community-based nutrition programs (Marks, Nelson, Burnham, Coates, Duncan, Lowe, Lowery, and Seier, 2004).

- Faculty members were challenged to prove the academic rigor of community-based learning. Because assignments were no longer an academic exercise but rather were founded on meeting real needs of community members, student performance was
evaluated by peers and community members as well as by professors. Academic peers unfamiliar with community-based learning questioned educational outcomes.

- Community members reported “attitude is all-important.” Rural communities watch for real demonstrations of sustained interest. This occurred when faculty interest reached beyond the prescribed project activities. As one leader said, “I knew things had changed when … the relationship went beyond sharing their ice cream cone (Kellogg grant monies) to really discussing hard issues that we in communities have to deal with daily” (King et al., pp. 78-79).

- Both community and university partners tended to underestimate project contributions (“gives”) and benefits (“gets”). The authors compared the Give-Get Grids submitted by a sample of projects in their applications for resources with post-project Give-Get Grids and found that the average number of University “gives” increased from 4.3 to 6.8 and University “gets” from 5.0 to 6.9. Community “gives” remained similar at 5.0 and 4.8 but community “gets” increased from 4.8 to 7.3. While this was not a difficulty but rather a pleasant surprise for those partners who did engage in projects, the underestimation represents a potential barrier for others who may consider participation.

- Community leaders found introducing university involvement in their issues only made sense as an equal partnership. University contributions enabled reframing local issues in new ways and the partnership enabled the community to address issues that it could not accomplish by itself. The partnership became a way to involve the whole community in a project (Proffitt, 2000, March).

Evaluating Partnerships

Once partnerships have been established, they will not last unless it can be shown that they are successful. Thus, an effective evaluation process is important. Evaluation has two primary functions. First, an effective evaluation provides timely information to improve a partnership as it is being implemented. Second, evaluation can document the success of a partnership.

The evaluation of the partnership can draw heavily from the Give-Get and Double Rainbow models described in this paper. In fact, these models can form the basis of the evaluation of the partnerships. However, the evaluation must include other criteria. In the age of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, one very important criterion is equity. Is the partnership equitable not only to both partners, but also to all stakeholders of both partners? It is easy to see how the Give-Get Model can be used to identify the inputs and outcomes important to the partnership. It is also easy to see how the Double Rainbow Model can be used to identify the various stakeholders in the partnership. Another problem is to determine what criteria would be used to evaluate equity. Equity, like partnership, has many definitions. We recommend the definition developed by Lawrence Lezotte in the 1970s. An illustration and description can be found in Lezotte, 1984.

His essential contribution is that achieving equity requires more than merely equal access. Specifically, Lezotte suggests that you must have equal access, participation, and outcomes to achieve equity. That is, entry into any program must be equitable. This can be evaluated by examining the levels of participation in the program by various subgroups. Finally, the various subgroups must demonstrate equal outcomes. This concept was written into federal law with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Lezotte’s concept of equity has been applied in a number of situations. It was the basis of an equity evaluation study (Brookover and McLean, 1983) of Mobile County, Alabama, schools commissioned by a federal court (also described in a conference paper by McLean, Davis, and Brookover, 1983). Davis, McLean, Brookover, and Davis (1986) applied this definition to an evaluation of digital equity for students at the dawn of the digital age.

Summary

This research presents two models for defining and implementing university-school partnerships as well as a number of suggestions for making these partnerships successful. In addition, a set of criteria are provided for evaluating partnerships. The Give-Get Grid is an excellent model for two prospective partners to negotiate
a partnership. The Double Rainbow model provides a systematic method for determining what individuals and groups a project will impact for both partners and how these stakeholders relate. Preliminary applications of the models suggest that they can facilitate both the implementation of the model and help in the evaluation. For example, these models can be used to determine the expected outcomes of a partnership and the constituency groups or stakeholders that it might impact. Finally, the equity of a partnership can be assessed by considering the participants’ access to the program, varying rates of participation by subgroups, and the outcomes by subgroup. While the results presented here are preliminary, the models have the potential to help move engagement scholarship to a new level.

References


Kretzmann, J. P., & McKnight, J. L. (1993). *Building communities from the inside out: A path toward finding and mobilizing a community’s assets*. Chicago: ACTA Publications.


About the Authors

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Abstract

Overcoming barriers is essential to get more members of underserved populations to participate in clinical research. Adjusting recruitment procedures to fit the lifestyles and routines of the targeted participants is recommended to achieve the goals of Healthy People 2010 and 2020. There is a paucity of research regarding factors that contribute to whether participants follow through after registration. In two community-based prevention education programs for minority women and men, a research team identified some of the factors affecting participation. Individuals were more likely to attend a program after registering for it based on a mix of personal and program variables.

Introduction

Recruiting and retaining participants from underserved populations for clinical research is a challenge. Yet, overcoming these barriers is essential to reducing health disparities in these communities, with the ultimate goal of achieving Healthy People 2010 (United States Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.) and 2020 (United States Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.) objectives. There is little research on the factors that influence whether individuals actually follow through as a participant after they have agreed to participate in a research study. In an extensive review of minority recruitment and retention, Yancey et al. (2006) reported factors that appear to influence the barriers. These included community involvement, incentives and logistical issues, type of study design, and passive versus active recruitment strategies. Passive strategies are the traditional means of recruiting. Examples are print and television ads, which require individuals to contact the research staff. Active strategies are those in which the staff goes directly to the community or contacts individuals through the mail or by telephone. These strategies depend more on community relationship building.

While the number of studies on recruitment and retention of minorities for research is increasing, the literature is still sparse regarding why participants do not appear for their scheduled research appointments. There is some evidence that missed primary-care appointments result from such things as forgetfulness (Martin, Perfect, and Mantle, 2005; Hussain-Gambles, Neal, Dempsey, Lawlor, and Hodgson, 2004; Neal, Hussain-Gambles, Allgar, Lawlor, and Dempsey,
inconvenient appointment time (Neal, Hussain-Gambles, Allgar, Lawlor, and Dempsey, 2005), mistrust (Neal, Hussain-Gambles, Allgar, Lawlor, and Dempsey, 2005), or lack of satisfaction with office staff (Yancey, Ortega, and Kumanyla, 2006; Lacy, Paulman, Reuter, and Lovejoy, 2004). There are fewer studies that examine demographic variables correlated with missed primary-care appointments. The results of such studies include younger age (Weingarter, Meyer, and Schneid, 1997; Cashman, Savageau, and Lemay, 2004; Lasser, Mintzer, Lambert, Cabral, and Bor, 2005; Waller and Hodgkin, 2000; Neal, Lawlor, Allgar et al., 2001), being female (Neal, Lawlor, Allgar et al., 2001), and being African-American (Lasser, Mintzer, Lambert, Cabral, and Bor, 2005). Distance between the site of care and the patient’s home may be a significant factor in determining whether the patient keeps his or her appointment; however, results of these studies have been inconsistent (Cashman, Savageau, and Lemay, 2004). Moreover, these findings regarding missed primary-care appointments may not be generalizable to missed appointments for research studies.

Several strategies to increase recruitment and retention of minorities into clinical research have been proposed (Janosky, Kohley, Sciullo, et al., 2006; Janosky, Laird, and Sun, 2008; Davis, Bustamante, Brown, et al., 1994; Sadler, Peterson, Wasserman, et al, 2005). A number have been implemented by The Center for Primary Care Community-Based Research (CPCR) at the University of Pittsburgh’s School of Medicine. (Janosky, Kohley, Sciullo, et al., 2006). Specific strategies include partnerships with community and religious leaders, partnering with Commonwealth of Pennsylvania state health improvement project teams, recruiting directly in the community (health fairs, farmers markets, and community events), and more traditional or passive strategies such as television and print media. The costs associated with these various strategies are reported elsewhere (Janosky, Laird, Kohley, et al., 2008). Additional implementation strategies that CPCR has utilized include reminder phone calls, “sorry we missed you” letters sent subsequent to a missed research appointment, and providing a menu of available dates and locations for education sessions in an effort to make dates/times more convenient. The issue of participants’ missing or not following through on scheduled research appointments has the potential to directly impact the conduct and cost of the research.

The overall objective of this investigation was to describe the factors that contribute to participation versus censored participants in two community-based education programs. One program was designed to reduce cardiovascular disease in minority women, and the other addressed stroke and prostate cancer in minority men. Censored participants were defined as those who self-registered and consented to attend a specific self-selected community-based education program but failed to follow through. Participants who rescheduled their attendance in advance of the scheduled session were not considered as censored. Data were derived from intake forms that indicated date and time an individual registered for an educational program, referral source, where a session was being held (in the community or on a university campus), demographic information (address, sex, age), and project data indicating whether individuals who registered actually participated.

**Methods**

Our team collected data during the recruitment phase for the two studies: “Minority Women’s Heart Initiative,” funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration; and “Innovative Strategies in Reducing Stroke and Prostate Cancer in African-American Men,” funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Health. Both were community-based prevention and care education programs for men 35 and older and for women 25-75. The “Innovative Strategies” study utilized a community-based intervention that attempted to remove barriers to patient education with regard to stroke and prostate cancer prevention and to foster compliance with prevention and treatment activities.

The purpose of the minority women study was to identify and monitor a cohort of women at risk for cardiovascular disease, with a special emphasis on including women who identified as African-American, and to educate the community regarding prevention of cardiovascular disease. Both studies were under the direction of the primary author. The research was conducted through CCPR (Janosky, Laird, and Sun, 2008; Janosky, Laird, Kohley, et al., 2008).
Data from intake forms indicated date and time an individual initially registered for an educational session, referral source, where the session was being held (in the community or on campus), and demographic information (address, sex, age). Additional data available through CPCR records indicated the date and time the educational session was held, which participants attended the 90-minute session, lapse of time in days from registration to initial date of the session, and distance (calculated from zip codes) in miles from the registrant’s home to the site of the program.

Programs were scheduled in conference centers on the University of Pittsburgh campus and in the community at houses of worship, community centers, and the like. Separate sessions were scheduled for men and women according to each study’s protocol in each season of the year. Dates and times varied to allow the most flexibility for participants (midday, evening, weekends, etc.).

Results

Distance from the participant’s home to the site where the research session was held, lapse of time between scheduling and participation, age of participant, season of session, how the participant heard about the study, time of session, proximity to site, lapse of time in days, and age were all used as possible predictors of attendance. For comparisons between groups, chi-square analyses were used for categorical variables, and independent t-tests or two-way ANOVA was used for continuous variables. For the examination of concomitant effects, where suitable, either a linear regression or a logistic regression was used. Though statistical significance was defined as p < .05, actual significance levels are presented for other cutpoints.

We collected data from August 2005 until July 2006. A total of 872 individuals registered for both studies; 375 (43.0%) subsequently participated in the respective studies (27.5% men and 49.5% women).

Table 1 presents a summary of the results for those who attended and those who did not attend by the aforementioned predictors. Table 2 presents a summary of the results by sex and attendance status for the predictors of interest.

The mean age was 47 years (sd = 10.4). The mean age of those who attended (46.05) and those who did not attend (49.14) was statistically significant (p < .001). The men’s study of prostate cancer and stroke required that participants be 35 or older, while the women’s study of cardiovascular disease included those 25 to 75. Nonetheless, the differences reported here between the ages of attendees did not seem to be substantially influenced by this criterion. There were, however, significant differences between men and women. Registered men attended at the rate of 27.5%, and registered women attended at the rate of 49.5% (p < .001).

Table 1 also shows a statistically significant difference for attendance by season of the year (p = .005), where the session was held (p < .001), how the participant heard about the study (p < .001), time of session (p = .03), proximity to site (p < .001), lapse of time in days (p < .001), and age (p < .001). Our findings suggest participants are more likely to attend in the winter and spring, if the session is held in the community rather than on campus, and if the session is held before 5 p.m.

Table 2 shows the findings for each of the predictors by attendance status and sex. For those attending, season of session (p < .001), day of session (p = .001), where the session is held (p = .03), and how the participant heard about the study (p = .037) all differed for men and women. The attendance rate for women was higher when the session was held on a weekday; however, men were more likely to attend on the weekend. Women attended more in the winter and spring, while men were more likely to attend sessions in the summer or fall.

Women were more likely to attend a program if it was held within 14 days of their registration. Men, on the other hand, were more likely to participate if the program was held within 19 days of registration (p < .001).

Individuals were more likely to attend if the program was in the spring and winter than in the summer or fall (p = .021), and were more likely to attend a program held in the community (p < .001) than at a university site. Season made no difference (p = .361) for those who did not attend. Men were more likely to attend if the session was within 4.8 miles of their home zip code, and women within 5.2 miles (p < .001).

A binary logistic regression was performed with predictors that were statistically signifi-
cant from the univariate comparison including where the program was held, how the participant heard about the study, season of the year, lapse of time from registering to participating, and age of the participant. The overall correct predicted percentage was 74.0%, and the cut value is .460. Significant predictors included the site of the session (p < .001) and how participants heard about the study (p = .001), driven specifically by television (p = .007), age (p < .001), season (p = .005) and lapse of time (p = .006) (Table 3).

### Conclusions

These findings add to our understanding of what works in recruiting minorities into research studies. Scheduling programs in the community...
during the winter and spring and in the evening increases the probability that those who register for a study will subsequently participate. There were significant differences in attendance with respect to sex. Other predictors include how the participants heard about the study, age, and time lapse between registration and scheduled attendance. The reader is cautioned against general-

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Registrant Participation Status by Sex</th>
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<td><strong>Not Attended</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Season of Session</td>
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<td>Summer (June, July, Aug)</td>
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<td>(N=140)</td>
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<td>n</td>
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</table>
izing these findings to other populations and settings for the following reasons:

1. Other minority groups might not respond in the same way as our participants, all self-identified as minority and/or African-American.
2. Recruiting for purposes other than a community-based prevention and care educational program result in difference rates.
3. A different conclusion might be reached if a broadened definition of censoring is used; the definition of censored used here was nonattendance at the scheduled and consented education session.
4. Generalizability to other climates might be limited since the study was conducted in Pittsburgh, which has four distinct seasons.

There has been a wealth of research on minority participation in research, including influences and barriers. However, unlike missed primary care appointments, there has been little research into missed research appointments by minority participants. Woolf et al. (2000) investigated the differences between office-based patients who consent to be surveyed at home and have their records reviewed and patients who do not consent. This study indicated that patients who consented to have their records reviewed were older, included fewer women and African-Americans, and reported poorer physical function than those who did not give consent. Through the use of multivariate analysis, older age, male sex, and lower functional status were significant predictors of giving consent.

Similarly, the current study highlights differences between research participants who register for a study and subsequently attend or do not attend, with the latter considered as censored here. Differences between our study and that of Woolf et al., include a differing rationale, different modes of invitation to prospective participants, profiles of possible participants, and other variables.

Our study adds to the understanding of some of the influences, limitations, and obstacles to minorities actually following through with research appointments once they have registered.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cut Value</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>p-value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Correct %</td>
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<td>&lt; .001</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Media</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TV</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lapse</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>&lt; 0.001</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.036</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Logistic Regression Results for Predicting Attendance of Registrant Participant

Not only must researchers consider what brings minority participants to the door of interest and registration for research studies, but they must also consider what will facilitate their full participation and completion of a study. Ushering minority participants to and through the front door for participation in research is not enough. Important factors to consider and master to have minority participants register and successfully complete a research study include: (1) types of locations where they will most likely participate and follow through; (2) season of year and time of day that is most convenient; (3) proximity of the research site to the participant’s home; and (4) lapse of time between registration and study visit. Knowing these factors prior to initiation of a study will give researchers a better chance of meeting their goals.

Identifying and negotiating the factors found to be significant are part of the fabric and crux of community-based research. Research is not simply about the achievement of clinical or epidemiological goals, but for maximum success and participation, we must achieve these goals in harmony with participants’ lifestyles, environments, and desires.

Further research in this and related areas is needed to specify additional challenges to the successful recruitment and retention of minority participants in research. Navigating these challenges will be crucial to eliminating disparities and achieving the goals of Healthy People 2010 and 2020.

References

and Underserved, 15, 474-488.


About the Authors
Janine E. Janosky is vice provost for research and professor of mathematics at Central Michigan University. Qing Sun, Susan B. Laird, and Anna Kostura are all graduate assistants at the University of Pittsburgh. Janosky may be reached at Janine.E.Janosky@cmich.edu.

Authors’ Note
This study was completed while Janosky was executive director of the Center for Primary Care Community-Based Research at the University of Pittsburgh. The authors acknowledge the contributions of the center’s staff. The Pennsylvania Department of Health and Health Resources and Services Administration funded the research.
In planning JCES, the editors and editorial board wanted to include research from the field. We believed it would become one of the best read sections in the journal. We had all heard, or said ourselves: “I’ve got all this good stuff I’d like to share with others, but where can I publish it?” You can send it to JCES’ Research from the Field. We begin with two reports from University of Alabama scholars. We start locally only because our scholars knew about the section. Now that you know, we hope you will write up your field research and send it in. And spread the word.
Developing Contemporary Engineering Skills Through Service Learning in Peru

Pauline Doherty Johnson, Philip Webb Johnson, and Noam Shaney

Abstract

International service learning at The University of Alabama engages students in leadership and teaming roles. In Peru, students practiced skills that meet challenges of engineering in a global society and demonstrate accreditation learning outcomes not easily taught in traditional classrooms. Students in settings like this also get first-hand experience in what engineering is ultimately about: building things that make people’s lives better. Assessing the experience in a post-trip survey, students rated teaming lessons, communications, and experiential learning skills as particular strengths.

Introduction

Rapid globalization across many fields is causing dramatic changes in the engineering profession, influencing the manner in which products are invented, designed, and manufactured (Polczynski, 2006). Outsourcing engineering services to developing countries is now commonplace. However, data from the Institute of International Education (2006) shows that, among the students going abroad on international educational experiences, engineering ranks in the bottom three disciplines. The synchronization of engineering education outcomes with the profession’s evolution is critical if graduates are to be successful on a global stage.

Updated standards for engineering degree programs reflect this need by expanding the traditional toolbox of engineering technical skills to include soft-skill proficiencies. Specifically, “an ability to function on multi-disciplinary teams … design a system, component, or process to meet desired needs within realistic constraints such as economic, environmental, social, political, ethical, and sustainability … and the broad education necessary to understand the impact of engineering solutions in a global, economic, environmental, and societal context” are current ABET (Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, 2000) outcome criteria.

It is a difficult challenge to implement these soft-skill experiences in a meaningful way in the classroom in a curriculum that is already full. The international engineering service learning experience provides an excellent opportunity to develop these skills and prepare students for the challenges of modern engineering.

International Service Learning Benefits

International service learning can have a profound effect on students, faculty, and those with whom they collaborate, with spillover effects for faculty recruiters, advisers, peers, and their home institutions. Furthermore, a proportionally higher number of women and honors students participate in service engagement than are represented in the general engineering student body. The benefits of global experiences for students include development of leadership, teaming, management, communication, and cross-cultural skills; flexibility, adaptability, maturity, independence, and the ability to analyze, adjust to, and appreciate local customs and cultural contexts; and the acquisition of a global perspective, appreciation of the societal implication of their work, and the satisfaction of working with a client to take an international community project from conception and planning through installation. Experience abroad forces students to deal constructively with cultural differences and situations they would not otherwise face.

The International Engineering Service Learning Program at The University of Alabama was established to incorporate these opportunities for growth into the student learning experience to prepare students for the challenges of the modern engineering profession. It does this by getting students ready to serve as effective, en-
gaged, and ethical professionals by promoting and supporting student engagement in meaningful service for academic credit through two University of Alabama centers, the Center for Ethics and Social Responsibility and the Center for Community-Based Partnerships. These centers provide administrative and seed-funding support to promote student engagement in service learning.

The engineering service experience in Peru was structured within the Engineers Without Borders™ model. This program integrates interdisciplinary engineering service learning with community partners, practitioner oversight, and faculty mentoring.

Strong collaborations were established with Peruvian partners from Nature and Culture Internacional and Programa de Conservacion y Uso Sostenible de la Diversidad Biologica (Program for Sustainable Use and Conservation of Biological Diversity) in Iquitos, Peru. They provided logistical assistance and community liaison. In addition the local engineering college at Universidad Particular De Iquitos (University of Iquitos), gave us access to field equipment and joined our students and faculty on field testing, surveys, group discussions, shopping for supplies for our upstream village projects, and evening social outings.

Our target communities were five remote Amazonian villages accessible only by boat from the city of Iquitos in the Amazon Jungle of Peru. Iquitos is the largest city in the world with no access by road. Student-generated service project ideas were developed from conversations with the community during an initial survey trip. This was followed up by two campus-based design projects. A capstone senior design team designed an observation tower to attract ecotourism dollars, and an independent study technical elective student designed a primitive wastewater latrina (latrine) system. Two project installation trips to Peru followed. Projects resulting from this collaboration include soil, water percolation, and topographic surveys, a generator installation to hook up village lights, latrine installation, and most recently the installation of 18 solar panels in three villages. Successive groups are attempting to build upon previous learning. Future teams will construct two rainforest observation towers in sensitive bio-diverse habitats as part of a wider effort to develop sustainable local income from ecotourism in order to prevent deforestation for subsistence agriculture.

Elements of the program include revolving leadership and multi-disciplinary teaming roles.
in satisfying pre-, peri-, and post-trip project deliverables. Students are required to incorporate into the project realistic limitations such as technical, economic, environmental, cultural, ethical, social, and sustainability constraints, together with on site procurement, project management, and implementation. Reflection through daily journal entries and evening project meetings reinforced experiential learning. Course outcomes and experiences were evaluated through an end-of-trip report and assessment survey.

Assessment of Learning Outside the (Classroom) Box

Twenty-six students have participated in three Peru trips to date. Pre-2008 students completed standard University of Alabama course evaluations that were largely useless for this type of learning experience; however, the open-ended comments solicited by faculty as feedback proved insightful and useful in planning subsequent trips. The five students on the 2008 solar panels installation trip participated in a formal post-trip assessment. Students scored elements of the experience using a five-point evaluation scale on 12 course elements that included ABET outcomes. In addition, the students were asked four open-ended questions that allowed for qualitative assessments and additional comments (Table 1).

The average score of 4.8 is quite high, indicating strong agreement that the course was a valuable learning experience. Among the outcomes that serve as an assessment basis for engineering accreditation, students agreed strongly that it was an effective learning experience with regard to communication, learning outside the classroom, teaming, and assessment of societal impacts. They agreed, but not as strongly, that it was a valuable learning experience regarding leadership.

In the qualitative section of the survey, students were asked to identify five areas of learning not found in a traditional classroom. They were also asked about challenges, unexpected events, and personal growth. Five students provided eight responses each for a total of 40 comments. Of these responses, seven dealt with communications, particularly the challenges and successes with technical communications given limited language skills and non-technical clients. Example: “The form of communication didn’t matter as long as the ideas were able to cross the language barrier.” Five more responses dealt with cultural issues. Example: “Developing countries don’t really run on a schedule, but still manage to get things done.” Four responses addressed
positive aspects of teaming. Examples: “Being an effective supportive member of a group.” “The area in which I grew most was working as part of a team and communicating effectively.” Three more dealt with ingenuity. Examples: “I learned to look for alternative and nontraditional methods to accomplish tasks.” “How to make things work with what you have.” “About solar panels and how to install them.”

Others addressed leadership, coping, personal growth, and the value of international travel. Examples: “Helped reinforce leadership skills.” “I could make it without everyday luxuries like electricity and toilets.” “If I push myself I can do things I never imagined.” “I grew most in the knowledge of international traveling. Even though I had been overseas before, this trip was a much better experience. We were given more responsibilities …. I was happy to grow in this area because of my very big interest in traveling and seeing the world.”

While the number of students evaluating their experience is low, their assessment is consistent with feedback the instructors have received over and over again following similar service learning trips.

Learning outside the classroom box is the “real deal,” our students continually tell us. And teaching outside that box has similar rewards for faculty.

Future assessments will include a pre-trip evaluation to better measure learning outcomes. A question will also be added to solicit suggestions for future trips rather than leave this as an implied question under “other comments,” though when asked if they would recommend this trip to others, three gave it a 5 (strongly agree), one a 10, and one “5 x 1000!”

**References**


**About the Authors**

Pauline Johnson and Philip Johnson are associate professors in the Department of Civil, Construction, and Environmental Engineering at The University of Alabama. Noam Shaney is director, Peru Program, Conservation and Culture International. Pauline Johnson can be reached at paulinej@eng.ua.edu.

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**Table 1. Specific Course Learning Outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This trip was a valuable learning experience with respect to:</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Accreditation Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>functioning as a member of a team</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>developing leadership skills</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>developing organizational and communication skills</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experiential learning without the aid of formal instruction</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>examining possible/actual economic, environmental, and societal impacts of a specific, relatively constrained engineering solution</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>project management in an international setting</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>understanding the importance of stakeholder (village) input to project planning, scheduling, and/or installation</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional career development</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experiencing another culture</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my own personal growth experiences</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expanding my view of the developing world</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend this trip to peers</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall average</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 strongly agree, 4 agree, 3 neutral, 2 disagree, 1 strongly disagree
Forming a Rural Health Partnership Network

Karl Hamner, Paul Kennedy, and Tim Wolfe

Abstract
Walker County, Alabama, population 70,713, typifies health challenges in rural America. The county is poor with per capita income $10,000 below the national average. It lacks an adequate health care infrastructure — 4 physicians per 10,000 population compared to 7 nationally. The county has severe chronic health problems. For example, there are 67 heart failure deaths per 10,000 population compared to 20 nationally (Alabama Community Health Resource Guide, 2008). There are many other similar statistics, but a new conjunction of health care providers and leaders offers promise for a united approach in Walker County.

Walker County’s health care issues are not new. They mirror those in other rural regions of the nation. Providers and community leaders have been struggling with them for decades. To improve access to and quality of chronic disease care in the county, the Walker Area Transformational Coalition for Health (WATCH 2010) was formed.

Forming rural health networks also is not new. In fact, because of its proven effectiveness (Wellever, 2001), the federal government’s Report to the Secretary (2008), recommends the practice. What is new is the breadth of WATCH 2010, made up of the county’s only hospital; a rural health clinic; a free clinic in the county seat; the regional mental health service provider; a family support service agency; the local office of the Department of Human Resources; two academic institutions (a community college and The University of Alabama); the Chamber of Commerce of Walker County; and two nonprofit foundations (a regional community foundation and the foundation for the hospital’s parent organization).

Partners were recruited to maximize the benefits of collaboration between local, regional, and state agencies, both public and private. This diversity will improve the plight of residents with chronic conditions, offering a more comprehensive approach than ever before.

The Challenges
In establishing the network, we faced a number of significant challenges. They included trust, self-interest, turf issues, inertia, and leadership. Trust was a significant roadblock to getting the network off the ground. Potential partners asked, “What’s their REAL motivation behind wanting to collaborate?” They also wondered why the federal government would give money to develop and operate rural health networks. Everyone wanted to know, “What’s the catch?” A lot of effort went into assuring members there were no hidden agendas for either the lead agencies or in the federal funding.

Another challenge was self-interest. Everyone had to address the question, “What’s in it for my agency?” This is especially critical when asking partners to contribute time, resources, or money.
Leaders are still in the process of ensuring that each agency’s ability to meet its own mission is enhanced by the scope and planned activities of the network. They are being as even-handed as possible in requesting in-kind contributions to the development and operation of the network.

Two issues related to self-interest are turf issues and inertia. Perhaps the biggest barrier to forming the network is the “silo” mentality that characterizes health and social services in our nation. Federal programs are administered through separate channels. Funding streams are separate and performance and reporting requirements are widely divergent. Together these create artificial service “silos” that are often restrictive and inflexible (2008).

The result is disincentive to collaborate and coordinate services. Stemming from this is an inertia that challenges the functioning of the network. While all network entities are in some way involved in health and wellness, none has all of the components of outreach, services, or access to the public. Operating individually fosters a “not my job” mentality in which staff feel they cannot do anything about issues not within their immediate mission.

Entering into an official networking arrangement changes the service horizon, however. As a network partner, and agency and its staff are motivated and equipped to do something about these related concerns. Individual agencies are no longer a service “dead-end” for the client. Rather, each partner has become a distribution point for further services, ensuring that the client is referred to those partners and/or resources that can help with related problems.

As needs without immediate solutions develop, we are able to craft new or refined solutions. Traditional approaches to medicine do not lend themselves to partnering; rather, they tend to specialization. This network helps all components approach problems holistically, engaging the community and service recipients in ways providers cannot do independently.

Leadership is the final challenge we face, but it also has proven to be part of the answer. Networks do not form themselves. Someone has to step up and take on the initial work in convening the network. We are fortunate that three dedicated individuals decided to work together on that task. By distributing the preliminary work and responsibilities for the initial stages we ensured success by not overburdening one person.

To be the first director of the network, we identified a former mayor of Jasper (the county seat), a leader all parties trust to direct the network’s evolution.

WATCH 2010 will continue building trust and addressing issues like divergent record keeping, reporting systems, confidentiality, data security, and concerns over geographic isolation and transportation. Poverty and lack of health care are intertwined nationwide (see, for example, Poverty in America, 2007). Persons without resources cannot afford health care. This is why WATCH 2010 is exciting. It provides a unique solution to the health challenges facing rural Alabama and rural America, linking primary health care providers, social services, businesses, and educational institutions into a cohesive network that will drive efforts to reduce the burden of chronic illness, promoting wellness among underserved rural residents by eliminating some of the major obstacles.

References


About the Authors

Karl Hamner is director of scholarly affairs at the Capstone College of Nursing at The University of Alabama. Paul Kennedy is executive director of the Walker Area Community Foundation. Tim Wolfe is director of grant development and special projects at Baptist Health System in Birmingham.

Reviewed by David Kerr
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University of Botswana, Gaborone

I can imagine that *New Creative Community* will be a maddening book for many readers. To start with, it seems to be intended for two types of consumer: a general reader curious to know more about the topic and community arts practitioners needing to see their own profession in a broad context and perhaps also needing their flagging spirits raised. The book is neither autobiography nor history, exhaustive survey, global comparison, cultural facilitators’ manual, nor cultural theory, even though it contains elements of all of these. Artists may find the book’s emphasis on community building overly optimistic and program-focused, while sociologists and social workers may deplore the privileging of art as an agency for change. But I believe it is precisely this marginal status between many different disciplines and perspectives that make it an important text for all these categories of readers.

Goldbard’s fundamental thesis is that, at least in the United States, elitist concepts of art prevent grass roots community culture from developing an important role in negotiating social diversity. She traces the growing gulf between elite and community culture, explains how this is an indicator of submerged and potentially dangerous conflict, and offers a blueprint for supporting community culture as a way of enhancing harmonious diversity.

Goldbard is well placed to make this argument. She is a veteran of numerous community arts campaigns from the 1960s to the present, and is not afraid to give examples from her own experiences to illustrate her thesis. She rehabilitates buzz words from the 1970s such as “development,” “alternative,” “democracy,” and “community” itself. During the 1980s and 1990s these terms became somewhat debased through overuse, over-simplification, or association with partisan ideologies, but Goldbard, through her penchant for case studies and her strong historical perspective, breathes fresh life into the words. In her history of community arts in the United States, she goes back to 19th century anti-slavery movements, but she concentrates on the 1930s, Popular Front activities, artistic initiatives derived from Roosevelt’s New Deal, and alternative/minority cultural movements in the 1970s and 1980s (Chapter 5). She feels that the cold wind of privatization ushered in by Reagan’s presidency blew through the U.S. cultural landscape, affecting attitudes up to the present. This helped to impose what Goldbard calls a “standardized middle-class culture”; it led to the draining of public support of the arts from multicultural and minority programs (“betting on the underdog”) and concentrating instead on “red carpet institutions” (p. 201).

When discussing contemporary activism, Goldbard doesn’t try to formulate taxonomies of cultural movements and programs. Instead she provides a few vivid examples of significant trends. The closing of the San Antonio-based Esperanza Peace and Justice Center in 1977, for instance, illustrates the way emergent Christian fundamentalism made a successful backlash against a program supporting Hispanic and gay rights (Chapter 7). In a more recent example,
Goldbard also describes the work of H2H (Holler to the Hood) in Whitesburg, Kentucky, as typical of what she calls “the new hybridity” (p. 221); its use of old-fashioned face-to-face culture (such as theater), community media (such as local radio) and global media (especially the World Wide Web) shows how 21st century groups are turning their back on low-key, ad hoc activism and taking advantage of reshifting global cultural patterns to raise their profile. Some readers familiar with the field of community arts may deplore the absence of their favorite projects, but that is inevitable in a book attempting so many theoretical goals in addition to case studies.

In fact, one attractive feature of the book is the mix between theory and practice. Goldbard is by no means shy of theory, drawing liberally from Paulo Freire, Augusto Boal, Frederick Koch, and Franz Fanon. But she is always keen to link theory with practice by providing case studies or descriptions of workshop techniques. The relationship goes both ways, as can be seen from her titles of chapters 3, 4, and 6 (“A Matrix of Practice,” “An Exemplary Tale,” and “Theory from Practice”). For readers who are unfamiliar with what community arts work is all about, Chapter 4, simply but without condescension, outlines a typical campaign from planning through implementation to action and evaluation.

Although the United States is her main focus, Goldbard is constantly aware of global trends, derived no doubt from her organization of and participation in international arts-based conferences. Running through New Creative Community is a motif based on the irony that the United States claims global, cultural hegemony through its media industries, but is under-developed in its support for homegrown, grass-roots cultural projects. Here it has much to learn from Europe—state-subsidized arts industries, or from such Third World movements as Latin American Theatre of the Oppressed or African Theatre for Development. While cultural movements outside of the United States tend to see their work as a weapon in the struggle against cultural imperialism, Goldbard would like to link such strategies to U.S. “cultural wars” (Chapter 7).

One of the most valuable aspects of the book is the way it deals with some of the major ethical and strategic dilemmas faced by community arts practitioners. For example, in Chapter 7, Goldbard deals very sensibly with the problem of continuity of skills from one generation to another. She recognizes that practitioners from her own generation have huge reservoirs of skills to hand down to the next, but also that their guru status might stand in the way of younger artists wishing to experiment with newer media or strategies. Another dilemma that arts facilitators constantly face is the legacy of indigenous local traditions and values on subcultures seeking their identity in a complex, multicultural environment. This may lead to conflicts between such traditions and the values of the broader national culture. To what extent, for example, should an arts facilitator tolerate sexist, homophobic, or even ethnocentric attitudes simply because they are part of a minority culture’s traditional discourse? Goldbard handles this ethical minefield sensitively, summing up her argument with a quotation from Jewish theologian Mordechai Kaplan: “The past has a vote, but not a veto” (p. 152).

Probably the greatest strength of New Creative Community is found in the last two chapters (8, “The Field’s Developmental Needs,” and 9, “Planning for Community Cultural Development”). Many books on arts-related topics are strong on analysis but weak on recommendations. By contrast, Goldbard has obviously thought hard about what U.S. community arts practitioners should do to move away from the marginalization that state policies and corporate investment have created. She provides a practical road map that has arguably utopian aims but achievable, bullet-pointed objectives.

Finally, the book is reasonably priced, with relevant photographs, a very useful short glossary, and a selective, but not too academic reading list. For those readers willing to step out of conventional binaries of “art for art’s sake” at one extreme and art as a tool for social engineering at the other, Goldbard’s eclecticism should provide a stimulus for reflection on intercultural community building in a globalized world.

Reviewed by Stephen Schneider
The University of Alabama

Eli Goldblatt describes *Because We Live Here*, a study of his work with Temple University’s Writing Program, as “part institutional history, part anthropological field journal, part sociological analysis, and part manifesto” (p. 8). In the pages that follow, Goldblatt provides a rigorous, honest, yet ultimately inspiring evaluation of the collaborative literacy programs he and other Temple faculty have helped establish over the past decade. *Because We Live Here* does not, however, focus simply on the theories and practices that led Goldblatt and the Temple Writing Program to develop the institutional and community partnerships they did; rather, it attempts to define successful community engagement as a dialogic relationship between university and community partners.

*Because We Live Here* is primarily an exploration of what Goldblatt defines as “writing beyond the curriculum.” This concept builds on what Goldblatt sees as the success of writing-across-the-curriculum programs, which emphasize writing as a mode of learning and communication across all disciplines. Writing beyond the curriculum links these programs to the “public turn” in composition studies, which Paula Mathieu (2005) defines as a movement to connect writing classrooms to community engagement and social justice. In this model, literacy and writing are understood not as predefined skills or abilities, but instead as the cultivation and maintenance of relationships through written texts. For Goldblatt, these relationships necessarily extend beyond the university, thereby linking literacy education and community engagement to broader issues of social justice.

In Chapter 1, Goldblatt links writing beyond the curriculum to his re-reading of Dewey’s *Democracy and Education*. By linking educational principles of growth and communication to questions of civic participation, Dewey provides not only a progressive educational method but also a rationale for university-community partnerships. Goldblatt emphasizes the social dimensions of Dewey’s pedagogy by emphasizing “access, reflection, and connection.” Goldblatt develops from Dewey a model for “[bringing] the margins to the center” and “[cultivating] relationships both inside and outside school to support literacy learning” (p. 15). For Goldblatt, the relationship between education and democracy is one that necessarily links universities to the communities that surround them and comprise their constituents. Nonetheless, these relationships are not always already operative, and only grow from diligent work by both teachers and administrators.

Chapters 2 and 3 examine Temple’s diverse student base, providing compelling and rich descriptions of Temple’s student demographics and transfer numbers. If Goldblatt had gone no further, he would have clearly demonstrated how much richer and more responsive our work as teachers can be when we have this kind of ethnographic understanding of our institutions. But he uses the strong transfer relationship between Temple and community colleges in the Philadelphia area to suggest the need for “deep alignment” between these various institutions (p. 96). Deep alignment goes beyond articulation agreements, which often set transfer standards and equivalencies but overlook pedagogical goals, and implies a shared curricular vision that is responsive to competing institutional mandates but remained centered on student needs. Focusing on conferences and informal collaborations between Temple, the Community College of Philadelphia, and other metropolitan institutions, Goldblatt demonstrates how deep alignment between institutional partners allowed them to address issues such as retention and six-year graduation rates.

Deep alignment further draws on Deborah Brandt’s (2001) concept of “literacy sponsorship” to articulate open, collaborative partnerships between different institutions and community organizations. Literacy sponsorship describes how institutions and individuals involved in literacy education articulate implicit yet powerful models of literacy via their policies and programs. Goldblatt’s model of deep alignment suggests that literacy education is most effective when it involves multiple stakeholders and can accommodate multiple models of literacy. To this end, Chapter 4 focuses on New City Writ-
ing, a Temple program that works “as a partner with local schools and neighborhood organizations” (p. 131). Much of the chapter describes NCW’s work with Proyecto sin Fronteras and The Lighthouse, Latino/a educational programs aimed at fostering community involvement. For Goldblatt, these collaborations allowed both Temple faculty and their community partners to articulate their models of literacy sponsorship and productively align their programs. University participants came to function as “knowledge activists,” providing intellectual and institutional resources to support rather than supplant community organizations’ goals (p. 141).

Perhaps the most compelling discussion for scholars focused on community engagement is Chapter 5’s focus on developing and securing grants. While Goldblatt limits his analysis to Temple’s work with the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, he nonetheless describes in detail the process of developing community and foundation relationships, articulating conceptual and programmatic frameworks, and ultimately utilizing grant money. While the three programs described by Goldblatt differ in scope, they nonetheless emphasize that well-written grants can themselves be a form of community engagement.

Goldblatt details how grants were collaboratively written and funds divided between organizations, with oversight being shared by university and community partners; such partnerships become a form of social action, with universities helping community organizations reach their own goals rather than providing targets from elsewhere. This model emphasizes how literacy sponsorship, and a commitment to literacy as relationship-building, can foster community organization while still meeting the goals of writing beyond the curriculum.

Paradoxically, Goldblatt is weakest when contrasting his own model of literacy sponsorship to those of other colleges and universities. While his study of Temple is careful, nuanced, and balanced, his assessments of nonmetropolitan universities tend to be painted with a broad and unflattering brush. Large state universities, particularly land grant institutions, are compared to monocultural cornfields, prisons, and hospitals with little evidence provided to support the claim that faculty and students have little or no connection to their surroundings. Faculty at research institutions are likewise depicted as having little interest in undergraduate teaching or community engagement, and while this is no doubt true of some academics (and maybe even some institutions), it ignores successful community partnerships that faculty at nonmetropolitan schools have created.

While this assessment doesn’t weaken Goldblatt’s overall argument, it may leave some readers wondering whether programs such as New City Writing can exist outside of a metropolitan setting. Nonetheless, scholars looking to connect their research and teaching to broader communities and likeminded institutions will find in Goldblatt a source of inspiration and an instructive model. While he seldom skirts the real difficulties of forging responsive university-community partnerships, he nonetheless demonstrates that these partnerships can be truly collaborative enterprises and thereby effect real, if modest, change.

References


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Instructions for Authors

The editorial board of the *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship* (JCES) invites the submission of manuscripts that relate to its mission: to provide an outlet through which faculty, staff, and students and their community partners may disseminate scholarly works from all academic disciplines with the goal of integrating teaching, research, and community engagement.

All forms of writing and analysis will be acceptable for the journal with consideration given to approaches that apply a variety of methodologies. Manuscripts that demonstrate central involvement of students and community partners will be given most-favorable consideration. Manuscripts should be free of racial, religious, gender, ethnic, or any other identifiable forms of bias.

It is assumed that manuscripts are submitted for exclusive publication in JCES and have not been simultaneously submitted elsewhere. Submission of a manuscript implies commitment to publish in this journal if accepted for publication. Authors submitting manuscripts to the journal should not simultaneously submit them to another journal; nor should manuscripts have been published elsewhere in substantially the same form. Authors in doubt about what constitutes prior publication and same-form submission should consult the editor.

Inquiries and submissions should be e-mailed to Cassandra E. Simon, associate professor, School of Social Work, The University of Alabama, at jces@bama.ua.edu. At this time, hardcopy submissions are not accepted.

Presentation of the Manuscript

Manuscripts should be typewritten in Microsoft Word with a separate cover page. They should also be double spaced in Times New Roman 12-point type. Article length, except in rare instances, should not exceed 25 pages including text, tables, and references. Tables and other graphics should be submitted as separate documents with their place in the manuscript indicated. The abstract and cover pages are not included in the page count. Manuscripts should follow the style guidelines specified by the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th edition). Helpful excerpts of the guidelines may be accessed at http://www.apa.org/journals/authors/all-instructions.html. APA is also the required reference style.

Author(s) should supply a separate cover sheet with the name(s), affiliation(s), and other identifying and contact information (address, phone numbers, fax numbers, and e-mail addresses) for each contributing author. Additionally, authors should include four to six keywords at the bottom of the cover sheet. All identifying information or references to the author(s) must be removed from the manuscript. Manuscripts which include identifying information will not be reviewed prior to correction. Each manuscript must also include an abstract of 150 words or less that summarizes the major themes of the manuscript. Manuscripts not meeting these criteria will be returned to the author before being sent out for review.

Authors are required to submit written permission to reprint from the original pub-
lisher any quoted material of 300 words or more from a single source. Any quoted material from a newspaper, a poem, or a song (even a phrase), and any table, figure, or image reproduced from another work requires submission of written permission.

All images must also be submitted electronically, in JPEG format with no less than 200 pixels per inch resolution for black and white and 300 for color images.

Manuscripts will undergo blind peer review (Figure 1 traces the process). It is the intention of this journal to assign manuscripts to reviewers within 4 weeks of compliant and correct submission. Reviewers are requested to return manuscript reviews within 5 weeks of receipt. Based upon this timeline, authors should have a final response regarding manuscripts within 10 weeks of submission.

Figure 1. Review process
HELP US GET THE WORD OUT!

The staff and editorial board invite you to subscribe to JCES and to pass the word to faculty, staff, students, administrators, and community partners.

Our intention is to publish one issue this year, two or three next year, and to become a quarterly in the third or fourth year depending on response and funding.

We have set out to be a different research journal for several reasons: First, we want JCES to be useful not only to the academy but also to our community. Second, we believe a research journal can be interesting to read and pleasing to the eye. Third, we intend to develop a companion website that will open up research to all the senses, well, maybe not smell and touch, but who knows? Some day somebody may discover how to disseminate these senses by mass means. Stranger things have happened. Even with current technology, we can study and write about them, as they are among the most important senses for human engagement.

We need your help and advice as we look for ways to make even our severest critics say, “Hey, I get it. I understand what this journal is about and why research is important to my well-being.”

With this issue, we’re a long way from being where we want to be. Passivity dogs our trail. Wordiness leaves us dazed. Bureaucratic language attacks on all fronts. Plain language eludes us. Still we hope you agree that we’re on the right track.

1. Culture Fest 2008
2. New UA engagement magazine
3. Farmers Market
4. Parent Leadership Academy
5. Multicultural Journalism Workshop
6. Center for Ethics and Social Responsibility
7. Engineers Academy
8. Black Belt 100 Lenses Project (Photography)
9. & 11. Engineers Without Borders in Peru
10. Rural Health Conference
The Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship is published at The University of Alabama by the Office of Community Affairs for the advancement of engagement scholarship world wide.