2002

Community Capacity Building: How are Low-Income Families and Communities of Color Engaged in the Process?

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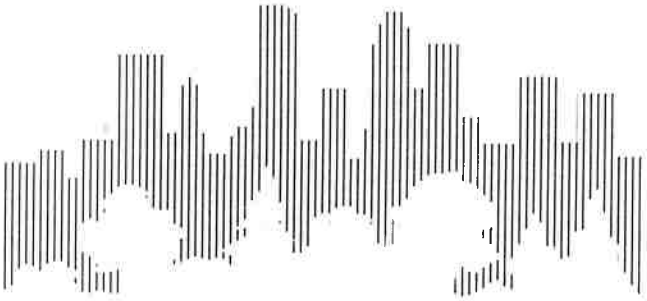

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MASTERS IN SOCIAL WORK THESIS

Juanita Judie Cutler

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all the cultural

and community guides of the past and future

who have led by example and whose mission it is to

give voice to those who struggle to be heard.

"We are capable of creating wonderful and vibrant communities when we discover what dreams of possibility we share. And always, those dreams become much greater than anything that was ever available when we were isolated from each other... Great social change movements can be traced back to such conversations; conversations among friends and strangers who discovered a shared sense of what was important to them."

Margaret J. Wheatley
"The Paradox and Promise of Community"

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I want to give special recognition and thanks to Rosemary Link who, as my thesis advisor, was an inspiration and true community guide for me. The final chapter for this thesis may not have been written without your motivating words of encouragement and guidance.

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Thanks to Laura Bloomberg, again, and Mary Anderson for reading and listening to the results of this study. Laura's work as a researcher extraordinaire, her belief and personal commitment to listening to the stories of community people inspired me to capture the stories of the disenfranchised; and Mary, you are a role model for building healthy communities.

Many thanks to two very compassionate and visionary people – Carol Thomas and Jeri Boisvert – who work within the walls of state government and who initiated this study because they are always looking for ways to include low-income people and people of color in decisions that matter to them and their families.

Thanks to my husband, children, and family for their patience, understanding and encouragement. And, a very special thanks to a group of friends who stood by me throughout this journey, who kept asking the question, "Are you finished?"

Most of all, I want to thank the community people across Minnesota who took the time to share their stories of struggle and triumph with me; who shared their stories in the hope that tomorrow's struggle for inclusion will be a better day.

ABSTRACT

COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING: HOW ARE LOW-INCOME FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES OF COLOR ENGAGED IN THE PROCESS?

PROGRAM AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT:
NATURALISTIC CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY
USING STANDARDIZED OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEWS

JUANITA JUDIE CUTLER

11 NOVEMBER, 2002

An issue for policy-makers and community organizations across Minnesota is the lack of knowledge about how to engage low-income families and people of color in community decision-making and community capacity building efforts. A culturally diverse research team interviewed forty-nine community leaders who had been identified as change agents, had struggled to become leaders, were perceived as mentors, and/or were viewed as cultural leaders. A major theme of what worked for communities to engage the disenfranchised centered on the development of safe forums for dialogue to create insightful, trusting and meaningful relationships and to better understand race, class and culture. A second theme promoted action learning opportunities to give aspiring leaders the gift of time to find their voice, and an important final theme provided an on-going support system to the trainee in the form of a trusted community mentor, leader, trainer, cultural or community guide. This research will benefit those in program and organizational development, policy-makers, community organizers, social workers and others who work to engage the disenfranchised.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Areas of Need and Purpose of Study

The successful community of the future will be one that has, by a process of dialogue and deliberation, discovered for itself the basic elements required for common ground. The future stability and success of communities will depend on their creation of a community life that is accessible to everyone. Citizens and policymakers know that if solutions are to be found to society's most intractable problems, new ways of talking, deciding, and moving to action must be discovered. Whether the technique is based on technology, town meetings, or neighborhood discussion groups, the function of deciding together is critical for communities (cited in Hesselbein, 1998, p. 231).

McKnight (1995) posits that a community is more than just a place. It is comprised of various groups of people who work together on a face-to-face basis in public life, not just in private. The people of the community come together through associations such as the American Legion, a bowling league, coffee klatches, small decision-making groups or a block club. They meet in restaurants, beauty parlors, barbershops, bars, stores and other businesses. They gather for interaction and transaction. However, it is from these associations that most labeled people are excluded, including low-income families and people of color, the disadvantaged and people with disabilities. And, it is these associations into which they need to be included if they are to become active citizens at the associational center of a democratic society.

This thesis was an exploration for understanding how low-income families and people of color are engaged in the interaction and transaction of communities across Minnesota. It presents the work of the principal investigator, supported by Full Circle Community Institute, Inc., to identify programs and initiatives across Minnesota designed to develop leadership and engage low-income families and people of color.

Background

The Governor's Office of Minnesota was awarded a State Incentive Grant (SIG) in 1998 from the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration/Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (SAMHSA/CSAP). In this grant, the state of Minnesota and CSAP agreed on two goals:

1. To develop and implement a statewide alcohol, tobacco and other drug abuse (ATODA) prevention strategy which coordinates, leverages and/or redirects, as appropriate all substance abuse resources within Minnesota that are directed at communities, families, schools and workplaces in order that these resources be directed at effective and promising prevention approaches to reduce the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs by our youth.

2. To direct 85% of the award to communities to implement community-based prevention efforts grounded in science-based research findings (SIG Manual).

The agreement resulted in representatives from the Departments of Children, Families and Learning, Public Safety, Health, and Human Services, coming together during 1999 with key community representatives from across the state to address the community issue of reducing alcohol, tobacco and other drug abuse among Minnesota's youth. The gathering of state agency representatives and community representatives resulted in the development of the State Incentive Grant Advisory Committee. Over a period of several months, the members developed a planning process to guide their work. They discussed, argued, and listened to each other, and developed a draft vision for ATODA prevention. Minnesota's draft vision for ATODA prevention seeks to create the conditions for all children and youth in Minnesota to grow up in safe and caring communities that value them and support their healthy development and transition to adulthood. The SIG Advisory Committee now needs information to guide their work towards implementation of their vision.

Purpose and Need

The SIG Advisory Committee members need to identify what efforts are currently working in Minnesota to develop safe and caring communities. They need to know how low-income families and people of color have participated in the decision-making processes for developing and implementing capacity-building programs and initiatives relative to safe and caring communities.

To support the Advisory Committee, the author, together with a research team, conducted a study that asked informed stakeholders the following major question:

How are low-income families and people of color throughout Minnesota engaged in community decision-making as it relates to the development and implementation of capacity-building efforts?

This information is intended to benefit program planners at the state level as well as planners and citizens at the community level. However, the people most distant from the decision-making table, the disenfranchised and those not included in community decision-making, will benefit the most from this study as barriers to their participation are identified and recommendations are made to alleviate them.

Relevant Literature

In reviewing the literature around the issues of engaging low-income families and people of color in community decision-making regarding capacity-building efforts, four themes emerged. One major theme was related to the complexity of current community issues and the need to address that complexity through comprehensive, collaborative community initiatives (Schorr, 1997; Briand, 1999; Aaron, Mann & Taylor, 1994; Putnam, 2000). A second theme was related to the engagement of the general public in creating a collective vision of transformation for communities and the trust that is needed to engage a complete and very diverse citizenry in the process (Steele, 1990; Potapchuk

& Crocker, 1999). A third theme was related to the development of and need for effective community leadership training (Potapchuk & Crocker, 1999; Fawcett, Paine-Andrews, Francisco, Schultz, Richter, Lewis, Williams, Harris, Berkley, Fisher & Lopez, 1995) and the fourth theme was related to issues of inclusion, diversity and values in public policy (Aaron et al., 1994). The literature search was expanded to include a broad historical perspective on how some groups of people have built social capitol while other groups have been pulled apart and struggle to produce social capitol (del Castillo, 1995; Deloria & Lytle, 1984; Hooks, 2000; Stack, 1974; Steel, 1990). The literature search was also expanded to find a relevant framework for understanding community empowerment and capacity building (Potapchuk & Crocker, 1999; Fawcett et al., 1995). The author found a plethora of literature affirming the necessary inclusion of all people in the decision-making process of community building. However, a very limited scope of research was found on how to measure community capacity as well as how to actually engage low-income families and people of color in the decision-making process.

Theoretical Implications

This study was conducted from an ecological perspective, intended to broaden the field of understanding for social workers regarding general systems theory and the impact of environment on individual behavior. A culturally diverse team of investigators used telephone interviews, personal interviews and focus groups (Patton, 1987; Rubin & Babbie, 1993) to explore how low-income families and people of color in Minnesota were engaged in the decision-making process relative to the development and

implementation of the identified programs and initiatives. The principal investigator attempted to develop an understanding of the dynamics of power and the capacity of low-income families and people of color to engage in their local community decision-making processes (Fawcett et al., 1995; Putnam, 2000; Potapchuck & Crocker, 1999; Pinderhughes, 1989).

Defining Inclusive Community and Collective Capacity Building

For purposes of this study, *community capacity* is the community's ability to pursue its chosen purposes and course of action both now and in the future; *community empowerment* is defined broadly as the process of gaining influence over conditions that matter to people who share neighborhoods, workplaces, experiences or concerns; *empowerment* refers to the process of gaining influence over events and outcomes of importance which may unfold at multiple and interconnected levels including the individual, group or organization and community; *power* involves the capacity to influence, for one's own benefit, the forces that affect one's life; *power imbalance* refers to the dynamics created when an individual or one group of people has disproportionate decision-making authority over conditions that matter to another; *social capital* refers to social networks and the associated norms of reciprocity; *bonding social capital* refers to strong ties that link one to relatives and friends who are valuable for providing more intimate social and psychological support (primary group); *bridging social capital* refers to weak ties or ribbons that link one to distant acquaintances who move in different

circles and are valuable for seeking jobs and political allies or for information diffusion (secondary group); *civic capital* refers to the collective civic capacities of a community.

At the national, state, and local levels, there has been a renewed emphasis upon the importance of community in supporting human growth and development, creating economic opportunity and establishing shared values and activities that connect people with one another in meaningful, participatory ways (Bruner, 1999). In this study, three common themes regarding strategies that worked to connect people in communities across Minnesota included the development of safe forums for dialogue between the citizenry of each community, the use of a community or cultural guide in action learning, and the development of trust as an outcome of safe dialogue and meaningful action learning.

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Historical Concept of Community

McKnight (1995) promoted a definition of community as was first described by Alexis de Tocqueville, the French count who visited the United States in 1831. Tocqueville found small groups of common citizens coming together to freely form organizations that solve problems. He observed three features in how these organizations operated. First, they decided they had the power to decide what was a problem. Second, they decided they had the power to decide how to solve the problem. Third, they often decided that they would themselves become the key actors in implementing the solution. He considered these citizen associations uniquely powerful and the foundation cornerstones of American communities. Toqueville wrote in his book, *Democracy in America* (cited in Briand, 1999, p. 29) "Nothing [was] more striking...than the absence of...the government." In his view, the citizens of each locality could address the affairs of their locality better than the government was able to because the citizens were enlightened and awake to their own interests. Furthermore, they were accustomed to reflecting and acting on the issues themselves.

In contrast, as these small groups of immigrant citizens to America were freely coming together to form associations, the familial and tribal associations of American Indian people were being systematically torn apart and destroyed as the Bureau of Indian Affairs was being created by the government (Citizen's Advocate Center, 1969). The Bureau of Indian Affairs was established in 1834 as a division of the War Department,

charged with creating peace treaties with Indians as sovereign nations and with enforcing promises to cease hostilities, confining Indians to particular lands. The Bureau was transferred to the Department of the Interior in 1849 and Indians have since then been defined by the land reserved for them as conquered people. The Bureau became the army of occupation exercising all powers necessary to govern the Indian territories. Indians were granted citizenship in the United States in 1924, and the Bureau's responsibilities were broadened to include administration of programs created by Congress to give the new citizen what it considered proper training. As trustee, governor and benefactor of the Indian, the Bureau of Indian Affairs was a pervasive presence in the Indian world. The Harvard Law Review (cited in Citizen's Advocate Center, 1969, p. 7) said:

> "Although the normal expectation in American Society is that a private individual or group may do anything unless it is specifically prohibited by the Government, it might be said that the normal expectation on the reservation is that the Indians may not do anything unless it is specifically permitted by the Government."

Researchers at the Citizen's Advocate Center (1969) referred to one Indian group as all kin; they said the Cherokee lived as one people born in permanent and fixed relation who would come and go, sharing resources and supporting one another. The researchers considered the vitality of the Cherokee sense of community as defying both description and the probing analytical mind of the dissecting social scientist.

In the African American community, Stack (1974) found that cooperating networks of people shared many goals constituting a group identity. Stack found that patterns of exchange were embedded in well-defined kinship obligations among people

living in poverty and in cultures lacking a political state. Social relationships between kin who had consistently traded material and cultural support over the years displayed feelings of both generosity and martyrdom. The cost of the item exchanged between kin that created the obligation was not considered because there was a common belief that one good deed deserved another. Among kin and friends, temporary child exchange was a symbol of deep mutual trust. The reciprocal obligations lasted as long as both participants were mutually satisfied during which time stable friendships and personal networks were formed. During this process, friends often came to be defined as kin, someone who could be counted on while assuming the recognized responsibilities of kinship, thus enlarging the kinship network. Stack (1974) observed that poverty created a need for this exchange of goods and service. In her concluding statement, Stack said the black urban family, embedded in cooperative domestic exchange, proved to be an organized, tenacious, active, lifelong network.

Putnam (2000) described these natural networks as social capital. He said networks of community engagement traditionally involved mutual obligations; they fostered sturdy norms of reciprocity: I'll do this for you now, in the expectation that you or someone else will return the favor. The social exchange theory Putnam preferred had a more generalized reciprocity: I'll do this for you with no expectation of a return favor in the confident expectation that someone else will do something for me down the road. Putnam described the core idea of social capitol theory as the concept that social networks have value. Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among

individuals – the social networks and norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. Putnam (2000) quotes L.J. Hanifan, state supervisor of rural schools in West Virginia, 1916:

> *Social capital is those tangible substances [that] count for most in the daily lives of people: namely good will, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals who make up a social unit... The individual is helpless, if left to himself... If he comes into contact with his neighbor, and they with other neighbors, there will be an accumulation of social capital, which may immediately satisfy his social needs and which may bear a social potentiality sufficient to the substantial improvement of living conditions in the whole community. The community as a whole will benefit by the cooperation of all its parts, while the individual will find in his associations the advantages of the help, the sympathy and the fellowship of his neighbors.*

By the turn of the eighteenth century, civic inventiveness and development of associations reached an all-time high. One half of all the mass membership organizations that ever enrolled at least 1% of the adult population were founded in the decades between 1870 and 1920, including the Red Cross, the Knights of Columbus, the Boy Scouts, the Parent Teacher Association and the Rotary Club. Immigrants from Germany, France, Sweden, Norway, Ireland and other countries continued to arrive in the United States and their ethnic groups spawned their own fraternal associations. They organized mutual aid societies, free loan societies, burial societies, social, sports and recreational societies, language newspapers, churches and synagogues. The benevolent society for mutual aid was the bedrock of community, providing financial security, camaraderie, and political representation (Putnam).

The building of associations among African Americans freed from bondage who were facing profound social dislocation followed much the same pattern between 1870 and 1900. W.E.B. Du Bois emphasized the importance of African American secret societies such as the Odd Fellows and Freemasons, in furnishing "pastime from the monotony of work, a field for ambition and intrigue, a chance for parade, and insurance against misfortune" (cited in Putnam, 2000). The church, especially, played a role of unique importance in social capital formation within the African American community. Beyond its purely religious function, it had the roles of lyceum, conservatory, forum, social service center, political academy, financial institution, preservationist of culture and champion of freedom.

Development of associations within ethnic communities reached an all-time high during the early years of the nineteenth century. However, the end of the nineteenth century brought division by class, ethnicity and race. The progressive era was marked with ethnocentrism and racist vigilantism with daily lynchings of African Americans across America. The separate but equal Jim Crow laws spread legal exclusionary practice from the south to the mid-west and west. African Americans in particular were intentionally excluded from participating in politics and civic engagement. During this same time, associations were developed linking blacks and whites together in support of social reform, above all, the NAACP and the Urban League (Putnam, 2000).

Meanwhile, in the southwestern part of the nation during1880, the first family members of a future community organizer and social reformer, Cesar Chavez, arrived in

America from Mexico (del Castillo, 1995). Chavez was born in Arizona in 1927, growing up with his grandmother who, along with his mother, became a major influence on his life. They instilled a love of the rituals of church, holidays and special feast days; and they taught him how to speak and read his language. However, he was not allowed to speak Spanish at school and was punished with the ruler to his knuckles when he forgot. In the evenings he listened to adults talk about the haciendas, how big landowners treated people, about the injustices, the cruelties, the exploitations. He observed his father and relatives as they organized community members to assist with fund-raisers for political candidates and encouraged Mexican-American voters to vote as a group. This was the early training ground for Chavez. When he was twelve years of age, his family lost their family farm and had to make their way to California, joining more than 250,000 other migrant workers. They were a multinational people: poor whites, black sharecroppers, Mexican immigrants and Mexican migrants from other states, dispossessed urban workers of every nationality. Despite their differences in language and background, they shared a daily struggle against insecurity, hunger, and fear. Chavez as a Mexican-American, other Mexicans and black migrant agricultural workers had the additional obstacle of racism to face (del Castillo).

During this period, as the Chavez family moved up and down California from farm to farm, young Cesar encountered the conditions he would commit the rest of his life to changing: wretched migrant camps, corrupt labor contractors, meager wages for back-breaking work, and bitter racism. For Chavez, cooperation was the aim of life; common respect was the basis of cooperation and happiness; and spirituality and

humanism were the criteria of respect. Chavez argued that, "Poor people and immigrants...brought to this country some very important things of the spirit. But too often, they are choked; they are not allowed to flourish in our society. People are not going to turn back now. The poor are on the march: black, brown, red, everyone, whites included" (cited in Del Castillo, 1995). More than a well-known labor and union leader of the farm workers, more than a spiritual leader of the Chicano movement, Chavez was an American social reformer (del Castillo).

A Philosophical and Conceptual Framework for Community Empowerment

Putnam (2000) reported that historically, social capitol had been the main weapon of the have-nots who lacked other forms of capital. "Solidarity forever" had been the rallying cry for those such as ethnic minorities and the working class who lacked access to conventional political clout. He recognized, however, that social inequalities could be imbedded in the construct of social capital. He observed that norms and networks that serve some groups could obstruct others, particularly if the norms were discriminatory or the networks socially segregated. The civil rights movement was, in part, aimed at destroying certain exclusive, non-bridging forms of social capitol – racially homogenous schools and neighborhoods. Putnam found that while social capital was important in sustaining community, it did not exempt society from the need to worry about how a particular community was defined – who was in and who was out. The evidence provided by Putnam showed that community and equality are mutually reinforcing, not mutually incompatible. Conversely, the growing gap between the rich and poor during the last

third of the twentieth century coincided directly with the first sustained decline in social capital; America became less well adjusted economically and less well connected socially and politically.

Putnam (2000) referred to two dimensions of social capital as being important: bridging social capital (inclusive) and bonding social capital (exclusive). He gave examples of bonding social capital as ethnic fraternal organizations, church-based women's reading groups, or fashionable country clubs. Dense networks within ethnic enclaves provided crucial social and psychological support for less fortunate members of the community, while furnishing start-up financing, markets, and reliable labor for entrepreneurs. By contrast, he gave examples of bridging social capital as networks better suited to linking one to external assets such as jobs and political allies. The civil rights movement, many youth service groups, and ecumenical religious activities provided opportunity for more distant but needed connections to be made.

Ayala (cited in Hesselbein, 1998, p. 261) found indicators of social change identified by people as they in conversation lamented the weakening and collapse of community. Ayala said people mourned the decline of families, neighborhoods, villages, churches, civic clubs, and other groups that once gave men and women a sense of belonging and of being needed. Wheatley (cited in Hesselbein, 1998, p. 9) observed that human beings had a great need for one another; they had an instinct of community. She observed that private conversations occurred on a regular basis regarding who people are and what matters. What needed to happen, she concluded, was that private conversations, usually held in kitchens and grocery stores, needed to be held at the broader community

level where the call of that purpose would attract other individuals and all their uniqueness. Wheatley forecasted the result would be a community founded on desire not directives by the government or outside power.

Principals for Political Discourse and Community Empowerment

Popenoe (1994) found that people required two essential things for their social well-being: close personal attachments and good community relationships. He stated that to have a society in which these are enhanced, one must seek to restore a cultural balance between individual autonomy and community needs. He said this ideology of communitarian individualism promoted families that could perform their assigned tasks, communities that could provide support to such families, and a larger society bound together by a culture of shared values.

Briand (1999), on the other hand, argued that deliberate dialogue in safe forums was necessary to judge and choose between conflicting good things and values, a process he called practical politics. He said politics needed to proceed not through an explicit search for the common good, but implicitly through an effort to address specific, concrete problems, challenges and opportunities that involve conflicting good thing – things that need to be reconciled by the political acts of deliberating, forming a judgment, choosing, and collectively devising a way forward that everyone can go along with.

Briand (1999) identified five principles that, when used to guide the discourse of decision-making within communities, produced more effective results than communities not using them. He identified the five principles as:

1. *Inclusion:* Having a broad range and large number of ordinary persons, not just formal decision-makers, providing consent and contribution to the decision-making process, allowing no one to feel left out;
2. *Comprehension:* Having a profound and comprehensive political understanding of the matter to which the community must respond, searching for mutual understanding of underlying sources of differences between all people, and connecting the community effort to the big picture;
3. *Deliberation:* Recognizing and accepting that every political situation presents people with a hard choice between good things about which they care deeply, and that the best collective judgment of people comes forth through dialogue;
4. *Cooperation:* Working together for mutual benefit and fostering civic relationships versus using a mutually harmful win-lose competitive process;
5. *Realism:* Having no illusion about the ease of overcoming obstacles but also having no illusion about the ease of collectively solving problems and meeting challenges confronting communities.

According to Briand, the essential task of democratic politics is to enable the public to make sound decisions, as a public. To do this, citizens must form a common perspective, reach a shared judgment, and make a collective choice about how they will

respond to the problems and opportunities their communities encounter. The purpose of leadership, then, is to improve the public's ability and readiness to form a common perspective, to reach a shared judgment and to make a collective choice that sets a direction for the community that everyone can go along with. He argues that leadership is the activity of promoting inclusion, comprehension, deliberation, cooperation, and realism in a community's politics...it is the activity of promoting practical politics.

Enabling Strategies for Community Empowerment

The Heartland Center for Leadership Development (cited in Briand, p. 30) found that communities that had coped well with fundamental restructuring exhibited (among other things) a participatory approach to community decision making, a cooperative community spirit, a problem-solving orientation to issues of public policy, and a belief in self-reliance or the conviction that, in the long run, you have to do it yourself.

Empowering individuals to resolve their own issues and work together to create healthy, active communities has long been an ideal among the helping professions and periodically, policy makers (Jonson-Reid, 2000). She found little evidence, however, to suggest that individual empowerment was a building block of community empowerment; empowered communities could have un-empowered residents and vice versa. Jonson-Reid discovered some people could develop a sense of empowerment versus an actual ability to exercise power. In other words, participation in community groups or

associations could create a personal sense of empowerment but the individual still may not be an effective community change agent.

Fawcett et al. (1995) defined community capacity as the community's ability to pursue its chosen purposes and course of action both now and in the future. He theorized that collaborative partnerships serve as catalysts for the community, prompting members to take action to effect changes in programs, policies and practices throughout the community causing a reshaping of community to better address issues and concerns. He defined community empowerment as the process of gaining influence over conditions that matter to people who share neighborhoods, workplaces, experiences, or concerns. Fawcett identified four main enabling strategies for facilitating the process of community empowerment:

- Enhancing experience and competence (the use of data, individual training, listening sessions, technical assistance to create action plans, and consultation for selection, design and implementation of projects);
- Enhancing group structure and capacity (the inclusion of people affected by the problem being addressed including low income, people of color and youth; technical assistance for organizational structure of committees across sectors, leveraging of financial resources, and grant writing);
- Removing social and environmental barriers (location of meetings, cooperative agreements and media engagement); and,

- Enhancing environmental support and resources (focus groups to assess community desires, public sharing of results, networking, outside technical assistance to leverage micro-grants for grass-roots efforts).

Fawcett et al. (1995) used this framework of empowerment and subsequent activities as a model for improving collaborative partnerships for community health and development. He offered this framework as a tool for community support organizations to enhance competence and resources of community members, leaders and organizations.

Potapchuk & Crocker (1999) developed a similar framework that explored the elements of civic capital that he described as the engine that drives a community to overcome bafflers, create accountability, manage change, and get things done. He theorized that the difference between a community that turns the corner on its troubles and one that continues to stumble from crisis to crisis, is the ability to build strong connections among successes, deep relationships among diverse stakeholders, and a compelling vision for change that drives this shared work. His framework outlined five civic capacities that successful communities nurture:

- Finding a shared vision to motivate people to action;
- Inclusion, collaboration and accountability that is rooted in deep levels of trust;
- Engagement of the public in building political will for community transformation;
- Strengthening capacity of leadership to conduct community business; and
- Developing an organizational structure that connects organizations and supports them to deepen their work within the community.

Putnam (cited in Potapchuk & Crocker, 1999) found, during his twenty-year search for civic success, that more important than governmental structure or economic achievement was the presence of trust, reciprocity and lasting relationships among citizens and the civic groups they created. Putnam argued that the true wellsprings of democracy were bowling leagues and church choirs, neighborhood associations and block clubs. He found that these groups, a sign of strong social capital, gave cause for people to get to know their neighbors, learn how to work together and to give back to community. Potapchuk & Crocker applied these findings from individuals working together to the interaction of organizations and institutions within the community, a sign of strong civic capital.

The author reviewed both frameworks (see Figure 1) and, for two reasons, chose to use the framework developed by Potapchuk & Crocker to organize the main body of research findings from this study. First, the themes that emerged from this study align more closely with the civic capital framework described by Potapchuk & Crocker because they included a separate section for developing a shared vision. Second, the language Potapchuk & Crocker used to describe components of their framework was more compatible with the language used by participants in this study than that used by Fawcett et al. (1999).

Figure 1: Comparison of models for understanding community capacity

Potapchuk & Crocker (1999): Framework for Nurturing Civic Capital	**Fawcett et al. (1995): Framework for Facilitating Empowerment**
• **Finding a shared vision**: Inspiration and hope; push toward new accomplishments; transformation into better place to live, work and play; outcomes and indicators to keep on track; combined energy of citizens, organizations, government; statement of community-wide shared values;	
• **Inclusion, collaboration and accountability**: Meaningful dialogue on race, class, culture, gender; managing complex relationships; demographics and quality of participation; bridging differences; safe spaces; clear and shared decision-making process; communication;	• **Enhancing group structure and capacity:** Technical assistance for strategic planning, financial sustainability and grant writing; organizational development across sectors; key stakeholders involved; inclusion of people affected by the problem;
• **Public and political will**: Public opinion, message framing and data analysis; targeted sharing of information; community-wide public agenda;	• **Enhancing environmental support and resources:** Information and feedback on community change; develop ties to existing sectors/groups; network; access to outside experts; celebrate community accomplishments
• **Strengthening capacity to conduct community business:** Training and technical assistance; coaching; reflection and visioning; grooming new leaders; research; political coalition building; community conversations;	• **Enhancing experience and competence:** Listening sessions and surveys to identify issues; identify targets and agents of change; establish guidelines to select leadership; provide training in leadership skills;
• **Organizational Infrastructure:** Decentralized decision-making; public-private partnerships; shared responsibility; catalytic 'spark plug' organizations; bridge-building organizations; flexible and sustainable funding;	• **Removing social and environmental barriers:** Convene focus groups to assess community interests; social marketing; location of meetings; cooperative agreements; media campaigns; conflict resolution training;

McKnight (1995) identified three points of entry into community life for people who had been historically excluded. The three points of entry included:

- Heroic individual efforts that required great commitment and persistence;
- Family and friends who usually saw that a good life was more than just a serviced life; and
- Community guides, those individuals who assumed a special responsibility for guiding excluded people out of the world of social service and isolation into the realm of the community.

The community guides – teachers, mentors, trusted persons – brought individuals into life as citizens by incorporating them into community relationships where their strengths and capacities could be expressed and valued – where they could join in association to create an inclusive participatory community.

III. METHODOLOGY

Conceptual and Operational Definitions

How are low-income families and people of color throughout Minnesota engaged in community decision-making as it relates to the development and implementation of community capacity building efforts?

To answer this question, the author conducted a naturalistic cross-sectional study for explanatory purposes using an interview guide with a standardized open-ended approach (Patton, 1987; Rubin & Babbie, 1993) for interviewing informed stakeholders and key informants. The author, as principal investigator, conducted the research with support from a three-member telephone interview team from Full Circle Community Institute, Inc. The research team, using an eight-question contact or interview log (see Appendix A), gathered qualitative data by completing forty-nine telephone interviews. The principal investigator then conducted seven face-to-face interviews and two focus groups with three participants in each. The major conceptual issue for the research was lack of knowledge about how low-income families and people of color are engaged in community decision-making regarding capacity building efforts.

The principal investigator used an email questionnaire (see Appendix B) and a listserv provided by a state agency to identify programs and initiatives throughout Minnesota designed to develop leadership and empower children, youth and families.

The research team then explored how low-income families and people of color in Minnesota were engaged in the decision-making process relative to the development and implementation of the identified programs and initiatives. Finally, the author analyzed the data to develop an understanding about the capacity of low-income families and people of color to engage in their local community decision-making processes.

Definition of Terms

For purposes of this study, *community capacity* is the community's ability to pursue its chosen purposes and course of action both now and in the future; *community empowerment* is defined broadly as the process of gaining influence over conditions that matter to people who share neighborhoods, workplaces, experiences or concerns; *empowerment* refers to the process of gaining influence over events and outcomes of importance which may unfold at multiple and interconnected levels including the individual, group or organization and community; *power* involves the capacity to influence, for one's own benefit, the forces that affect one's life; *power imbalance* refers to the dynamics created when an individual or one group of people has disproportionate decision-making authority over conditions that matter to another; *social capital* refers to social networks and the associated norms of reciprocity; *bonding social capital* refers to strong ties that link one to relatives and friends who are valuable for providing more intimate social and psychological support (primary group); *bridging social capital* refers to weak ties or ribbons that link one to distant acquaintances who move in different circles and are valuable for seeking jobs and political allies or for information diffusion (secondary group); *civic capital* refers to the collective civic capacities of a community.

Sampling and Data Collection Instruments

The culturally diverse research team was made up of four individuals, including the principal investigator. The diversity of the research team was seen as an advantage because culture is a factor in the interactive processes between individuals, families, groups, and their environment (Pinderhughes, 1989), and the majority of the participants were to be people of color. The team, by way of their own cultural diversity, was able to employ a high degree of cultural sensitivity and mutual understanding as a way to meaningfully engage participants in the study. The entire team was involved in conducting telephone interviews, but only the principal investigator was involved in face-to-face interviews and conducting focus groups. The team gathered qualitative data utilizing the phenomenological principle of attempting to understand decision-making issues from the point of view of the participants (Patton, 1987; Rubin & Babbie, 1993). The team attempted to understand this viewpoint from the perspective of low-income people and people of color; to understand the participants' feelings and their point of reality.

The principal investigator for this study used snowball sampling in two stages (Patton, 1987). In the first stage, the research team used telephone interviewing to gather information from a small group of key informants who worked for the state department or non-profit agencies and who were knowledgeable about and/or were involved in community empowerment and capacity building efforts within the state of Minnesota. This small group identified other program leaders and participants who qualified for

inclusion in the study because of their involvement in their local community or their knowledge of leadership projects or initiatives. The four-member research team then interviewed the larger sample. During the process of interviewing the respondents over the telephone, the research team created a list of focus group participants based on the respondent's interest and expertise in the subject of community capacity building and availability for a pre-selected date and time. A second group was identified from the telephone interviews as being appropriate for a personal interview based on the complexity and perceived success of the initiative the respondent was involved in or the desire of the participant to have a face-to-face conversation with the interviewer versus the use of the telephone.

The principal investigator used an interview guide approach combined with a standardized open-ended approach (Patton, 1987) for each of the interview formats: the telephone interview, the personal interview and the focus groups. The author created a contact log for the telephone and personal interviews that included eight precisely worded questions with three of the questions allowing for flexible probes (see Appendix A). The author encouraged the research team to use their professional judgment in using in-depth questioning to explore pertinent subjects. The author also created a set of semi-structured questions for use with the focus groups (see Appendix C).

The telephone and personal interview questions and probes were designed to obtain overall program design and process information, including:

- What is the primary focus of your program and how are low-income families and people of color engaged in the efforts?
- Who participated in planning it?
- What are the motivating factors for their being engaged?
- What are the perceived or real barriers to their lack of engagement?
- How is success defined and who defines success?
- What tangible and intangible resources are currently in place or need to be in place?
- What can we learn from successful/unsuccessful approaches?
- What other entities/organizations/support systems are currently engaging low-income families or people of color in meaningful, decision-making ways within the community?

The focus group questions were designed to gather more in-depth information regarding how low-income families and people of color were motivated to participate in programmatic and community decision-making:

- What are key components of your program or initiative as it relates to community capacity building and inclusive decision-making?
- What are the barriers or difficulties in getting low-income and people of color involved (historically, perceived or real)?
- What have you found to be the most effective strategy to get folks involved? What motivates them to start and how is their involvement sustained?

Data Collection and Analysis

At the beginning of each telephone and personal interview, the respondent was given information on the purpose of the study and given an overview of the consent process. The personal interviews were audio taped. Participants were told they could skip any question they were uncomfortable with or not able to answer. All telephone interviewees were asked for verbal permission to proceed. The majority of American Indian and Hispanic participants preferred to be interviewed in person at a location of their choice. People who participated in personal interviews were asked for written consent (see Appendix D) to proceed and all participants were given information on how to access the results of the study.

Two focus groups were held with three people participating in each. Six respondents who agreed to participate in the focus groups did not attend. The principal investigator and one support member of the research team convened each group; the support member took notes and the principal investigator facilitated the dialogue. Participants were given an overview of the purpose for convening the focus group and were told they could skip any question they were uncomfortable with or not able to answer. Both focus groups were audio taped. The participants were given an overview of the consent form, asked to give their written consent to proceed, and then were given information on how to access the results of the study.

The researcher assured all participants in the study that neither they nor their organization would be identified by name in the final report. The telephone respondents did not receive compensation for their participation. Those participating in personal interviews and focus groups received coffee and rolls or lunch.

Limitations and Values of the Study

Several limitations were noted in this study. The author was able to complete a lengthy literature review, however, articles specific to the development of community leadership and articles regarding the involvement of low-income people and communities of color in community decision-making were limited and difficult to find. A greater void was found relative to the involvement of social work in the macro field of community capacity building. The primary contributors to the field of empowerment and capacity building are from the fields of social science and public health, which gives credence to the need for social workers to lend their perspective to the field.

A major limitation to the study was the limited participation of citizens who are not considered leaders or organizers within their community. Many of the participants were just one step away from being considered not involved and were able to relate to that segment of the population, however, they were clear about not speaking for their community peers. Another limitation was the small number of actual participants in the focus groups. Three people from each focus group did not attend, leaving only three participants in each group.

There are noted values in the study despite the limitations. The literature review created the opportunity to reflect on historical markers and cultural change over the years in relationship to the cultural make-up of Minnesota at the present time. This study presents the opportunity to learn from history. It presents the opportunity for social planners and macro-level social workers to consider how the development of bridging social capital could influence natural networks of ethnic enclaves to bring them into the broader community. Funders and policy-makers have the opportunity to see what study participants have to say regarding what motivated them to get involved in communities and to see how they are currently involved in community capacity building. This is an opportunity for policy-makers to respond to what grassroots community organizers say works for them, including recognition of their desire to be included.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Partcipants

The participants involved in this study provided insight into how low-income families and people of color in Minnesota are currently engaged in community decision-making processes. The participants also presented insight into their personal capacity to engage in those decision-making processes.

The principal investigator asked people in state agencies who have funded leadership development initiatives to identify possible candidates for inclusion in the study. The candidates, in order to be considered as a participant in the study, had to be identified as an informed stakeholder or key informant regarding the involvement of low-income families and people of color in community capacity building efforts. Thus, each of the participants was known as an effective leader in their community, had assumed the role of a mentor to another, had been perceived as a change agent or activist for getting things done, and/or was viewed as a cultural leader. The candidates were extended an invitation to participate and voluntarily became participants. The participants then developed an expanded list of candidates, who were prioritized according to geographic location.

The participants included twenty-six women and twenty-three men, of whom nine were African American, fourteen were Native American, one was Chinese, seven were

Hispanic, four were Somali, two were Vietnamese, four were Hmong, and eight were European American. Twenty-six were directors or supervisors within a community agency or community development initiative, twenty were self-described community organizers, and three were state employees. Thirty-six people completed telephone interviews, an additional seven people completed both a telephone interview and personal interview, and six additional people participated in both a telephone interview and a focus group. There were a total of forty-nine people involved in interviews. Six people completed a telephone interview and agreed to participate in a focus group but did not attend the focus group. Twenty-six participants lived and/or worked in a city or metropolitan area and twenty-three lived and/or worked in rural Minnesota.

Framework for Sharing Results

The study presented here provides strong affirmation for the necessary inclusion of low-income families and people of color in community decision-making processes. The search for information and understanding about how they are included in the processes began with the question:

> ***How are low-income families and people of color throughout Minnesota engaged in community decision-making as it relates to the development and implementation of capacity-building efforts?***

Data analyses were completed on the transcriptions from the telephone interviews, personal interviews and focus group interviews. Because common insights

emerged from these three sources, findings from the three strategies are grouped together according to theme. The results regarding general citizen participation are presented within a framework for political discourse developed by Briand (1999). The main body of research is presented within a framework for understanding community empowerment developed by Potapchuk and Crocker (2000). The models are explained in detail in the literature review and reviewed briefly here. *Comments from participants in this study are presented in italics.*

Framework for Practical Discourse

Citizen Involvement in Decision-making and Choosing Public Good

Briand (1999) theorized that government, as the producer of political goods, effectively created a body of taxpayers who were then consumers of the goods, removed from the political process, acting as detached taxpayers instead of involved citizens. Political consumers expect public officials to do things for them. He emphasized the importance of proactive citizen involvement in making good choices among potential public goods at the local level. **In the current study, citizens from around Minnesota had this to say about how decisions are made**:

Respondent #1: An American Indian community activist involved in research and policy, said:

> *The state functions on a different framework than Indian people... so people won't coalesce around ideas spawned by state agencies, foundations, etc. The state puts the words "American Indian" in front of their initiatives... like American Indian*

Housing Initiative... but it doesn't reflect the values of Indian people so it has no meaning to the people. Words don't mean anything. Indian people need to be part of the machinery, not just ad hoc players – like advisory committees – peeking into the boiler room where all the energy is really created. We need to be at the policy level. Our presence must be constant and regular.

Respondent #2: A representative from the state chapter of a national organization said:

There's not a lot of community involvement in decision-making right now – at least in healthcare access across the state. A lot of our healthcare problems are with immigrant populations... they're distrustful of government systems. I don't think they feel empowered to make any decisions, I don't think they know how to come to the table. They don't trust the system, they don't understand the system.

Respondent #3: A community organizer and leadership development coordinator explained how those whom she is training impact the agency she works for including its political agenda:

My agency has a public policy department and they survey all the clients then analyze the dialog and figure out what the issues are and identify what they want to work on. So currently, they're working on barriers to employment, affordable housing for low-income people... expunging unlawful detainers... getting rid of application fees. That's huge! But they're not doing so good because the landlord lobby is doing a good job and turning it around... I think they've decided to do a study instead of doing anything about it. So those initiatives came out of just a

grassroots group of leaders – some people that lived in homeless shelters, some low-income parents, came together to talk about what affordable housing means.

Respondent #4: An African American community organizer told how she gets input from community and then prepares political action on behalf of and with community:

We don't want to talk for people so we set up meetings out where the people are and when need be, they can come face to face with decision-makers. We provide transportation, childcare, refreshments – help them come and participate. We try to create a really welcoming environment and that usually means having meetings in the community. We're now planning a community picnic with fun and games – just a fun day, and then we'll ask people the hard questions.

Five Principles for Discourse on Decision-Making

Briand's (2000) alternative to political consumerism was embedded within the construct of five principles: Inclusion, comprehension, deliberation, cooperation, and realism. He developed the five principles intending for them to guide the political discourse of citizens in search of the common good during local decision-making processes.

1. **Inclusion** was the first principle, and related to the inclusion of the citizenry in decision-making as the foundation of democracy (Briand, 2000). The findings in this study brought out the passion as well as the challenges of the participants regarding their desire to be included in decision-making.

Respondent #5: A community activist in the Latino community said:

> *Democracy is really the power of the people... even the power of the individual. There are rules and policies that are there for our benefit... some to our detriment, but most to our benefit. [In spite] of all the faults my parents had, my father instilled in me a belief in democracy... in the democratic process, a belief in the constitution, even though it didn't have us included to begin with... those rights were intended to be good for all people.*

Respondent #3: An inner-city community activist and leadership coordinator explained the difficulties and rewards of getting people to understand the political process:

> *This is about explaining the government system to people who have never heard it before. I had the real deal – the real experience – and it might be way complex and fly over some people's heads, but through dialogue and questions they can get at the fundamental pieces to understand what this is all about – how they can be involved, how their involvement can benefit their community. It doesn't happen very often in this town, that real people are involved on that neighborhood level. [Within my project] I tried to figure out what's a good way to shift that.*

Respondent #6: A state agency worker shared information about multiple childcare initiatives across the state and said:

> *Success depends on when people are brought into the process. "We" cannot study, plan, implement, then invite. This needs to be a partnership from the beginning.*

2. **Comprehension** was the second principle, and it stressed the need to exchange ideas among all stakeholders in order to understand the public's perspective (Briand, 2000). The principal investigator for this study found overwhelming evidence of the need for safe dialogue to reach common understanding.

Respondent #2: A healthcare advocate told a story about healthcare professionals wanting to implement new public healthcare strategies in a large metropolitan community:

> *They [health professionals] went in with some preconceived ideas about what the health issues might be for the community and they were totally wrong. They talked to the community, which was mostly Hmong at that time, and found out that what they wanted were fire alarms. And they said, "What? Fire alarms?" A lot of Hmong people are shorter and couldn't reach the ceiling even on ladders, and they had a lot of kids that were home sometimes by themselves; they would cook and start fires on accident. So they put the alarms in and the amount of fire calls pre and post were significantly reduced and everybody was healthier and safer.*

Respondent #7: An American Indian counselor shared his concern about the need to address the high rate of suicide among Indian people:

An effective plan requires community-wide buy-in and ownership; that's why we have a planning committee that includes leaders from outside the Indian community as well as within the Indian community. We have grassroots activists, political representatives, state agencies and twenty-three community agencies. We have seven tribes represented from around Minnesota and the mid-west. We need the whole community to understand the issue. An Indian elder said he wanted to ask survivors what helped them to recover from suicidal thoughts; now the youth will need a safe place to interact with the elders.

3. **Deliberation** was the third principle; it described transformation from individual opinions to shared public ideas (Briand, 2000). The principal investigator for this study found participants understanding the need for this but the participants also identified the challenges of moving their issues to a public agenda.

Respondent #8: A community worker who convenes Community Circles told of her frustration and hope regarding an effort to support 18-35 year-old African American males who are facing significant jail time:

It's hard to get the word out that just incarcerating people and not doing any rehabilitation is not a smart decision. People are going to get out of prison, they're not going to have resources and they're going back to the same neighborhoods, so what do you expect them to do? The Restorative Justice Circle is an alternative to just locking people up. It's a community driven process where everyone has an equal say – it's not driven by the courts, judges or anybody like

that – we have people from every level... Over the last three years it's been a struggle for the criminal justice professionals because they've had to look at doing justice in a different way... and it's come to a real partnership – a real sense of community.

Respondent #1: An American Indian political advocate explained his challenge of representing Indians from both the reservations and the urban area:

People get motivated to participate when they have a forum to share their concerns; when they have a formal recognized process for their voice to be heard. The challenge comes from the competition between the reservation members and the off-rez Indians. The reservation members enjoy certain rights and funds that the off-reservation people don't but they think they do! Living on the rez may give you more protection, but employment is limited; if you want to provide more for your family you have to leave the rez – it's a hard choice. We try to address all the issues through different boards and advisory committees on the rez and off – and then communicate between them.

4. **Cooperation** was the fourth principle and involved collectively advancing ideas of public good through to the policy-making level (Briand, 2000). The principal investigator for this study found themes of apprehension and struggle about moving issues to the public policy level.

Respondent #9: A counselor working in an agency that has a large Hmong clientele shared apprehension about moving domestic abuse to a public agenda:

> *There's a real sense of shame associated with allowing family issues to be known in public; many workers from within the community don't let their families or the community know what they do. Yet the domestic abuse issue must become a public issue to be effectively dealt with.*

Respondent #12: A grassroots community leader in an out-state Latino community shared her optimism about the effects of organizing around issues of migrant workers:

> *We have a very young organization started in 1998. We do community organizing, advocacy and direct service in affordable housing, wages, immigration support and ESL classes. The membership of the organization is made up of migrant workers – they guide what we do and it's been a very healthy way to grow. We've been surprised by how quickly we've been able to grow and begin to work on the issues – in spite of the risks our members take to be here.*

5. **Realism** was the final and fifth principle and related to understanding the reality of how difficult and time consuming it could be to implement practical politics (Briand, 2000). The principal investigator for this study found themes of struggle to move ahead with issues:

Respondent #10: A community leader from the Latino community wondered if cooperative and sincere participation was truly possible:

The biggest hurdle is to help people understand, then believe in and trust the democratic process. To do this, the people in power must demonstrate the democratic process. Where is the commitment to do this?

Respondent #11: An African American community leader talked about the challenge:

Things don't always go as planned – in fact, they almost never do. Even though we try to do continuous quality control there's always something happening you didn't count on.

Framework for Understanding Community Empowerment

Briand (2000) developed the five principles to help people work through the maze of complex variables of self-interest, values, and choices. Fawcett et al. (1995) and Potapchuk and Crocker (1999) took this a step farther and developed models of community empowerment to help communities understand the collaborative process for gaining influence over conditions that matter to people who share neighborhoods, workplaces, experiences or concerns. A comparison of the two models is shown on Table 1, page 22.

The author chose to use the Potapchuk and Crocker framework to organize the main body of research findings because he included a separate section for developing a shared vision and used language to describe components of his framework that was more compatible with the language used by participants in this study. Potapchuk and Crocker identified five civic capacities that successful communities nurture:

- Finding a shared vision to motivate people to action;
- Inclusion, collaboration and accountability that is rooted in deep levels of trust;
- Engagement of the public in building political will for community transformation;
- Strengthening capacity of leadership to conduct community business; and
- Development of an organizational structure that connects organizations and supports them to deepen their work within the community.

Finding a Shared Vision

Civic capital was what a community produced when it shared and was motivated by a compelling vision of the future. The process of developing a collective community-wide shared vision gave citizens the opportunity to articulate the quality of relationships and community they were trying to build. Neighborhoods were then better able to establish a sense of direction using outcomes and milestones as motivators and guides for program development, funding decisions and the work that was needed to achieve the desired results (Potapchuk & Crocker, 1999). The findings from this study affirm his thesis.

Respondent #13: A Somali translator saw multiple needs within her community and decided to do something about it:

> *As a medical translator I was hearing many stories and seeing many needs so I decided to do something about it. I organized people from within my community and today we're able to help our community in many ways because we came*

together. We still have big barriers to overcome around religion, culture and language – but we try to help people.

Respondent #3: One community leadership coordinator and trainer said:

The basic program is just a six-month community action and training program. People apply to be in the program, then they're interviewed and I select them based on their vision for their community, their commitment and passion for their community... they need personal motivation to develop their community projects.

Respondent #5: An organizer in the Latino community said:

You just start to get really energized and hopeful that even you, this little person with a little bit of college and a passion for community organizing can actually affect the world. You start to believe that, and the more that you believe it, the more no one can stop you. I think that's the power of hope.

Inclusion, Collaboration and Accountability

Civic capital was what a community produced when it had deep reservoirs of trust among diverse stakeholders that enabled inclusive and collaborative decision-making. In every community the difference between creative tension over diversity and disabling social conflicts came down to how complex relationships were managed – relationships that too often divided rather than united a community's varied stakeholders. Working across boundaries, one quickly realized the social problems of today were too complex to be solved without concerted action from all sectors of a community (Potapchuk &

Crocker, 1999). The principal investigator for this study found a high degree of affirmation regarding the need to build trust, especially through the strategy of dialogue and the need for comprehensive and collaborative efforts to address complex community issues.

Respondent #3: One leadership development coordinator and trainer said:

> *I was trained in by the people in the neighborhood – and here you don't tell anyone what to do! But what you can do is create a safe forum where open dialog can happen and people can learn from each other; and, I believe the most powerful thing to happen is trust, in those moments when we have a safe forum where people can openly dialog with each other from all different cultures, and we came up with some very powerful things that we did.*

Respondent #8: An African American human service worker who convenes community circles said:

> *People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. You can learn everything there is to know, if they don't trust you, you can't do anything. People have to get to the point where they can say yes, we trust you to do this and bring the information back without making your own decision. The trust issue just came from sharing... sharing stories and everyone listening to the other person. It doesn't happen over night.*

Respondent #2: A first generation immigrant shared an observation:

I think you need to build a lot more trust with African American and American Indian people. I'm a first generation immigrant and people come to America with these ideas that America is a great place. It's a lot better than where immigrants might have come from, where governments kill all the people in education or things like that, so they come and even though they have to learn the language and culture, it's like a brand new start – well, more for the immigrants than the refugees who were forced to come here. But for the American Indian and African American, they're just thinking same ole – same ole.

Respondent #14: An American Indian program development specialist made this observation:

Indian people suffer from historical trauma – as a result and much like the Jewish people, we suffer high incidence of suicide, loss of spirit, cultural pain. The trauma of Indian extermination (13 million) and the slavery experience passes from generation to generation. Children haven't experienced it, but they hold on to it psychologically. One of four Indian children attempt suicide; one-third drop out of school; forty percent are in special education. Add in racism and economic disparity along with sexual abuse and rape, which is five times higher than others, and I'm led to believe that chemical dependency is a response to trauma. Mainstream society and therefore treatment practices, miss the mark.

Respondent #1: Another American Indian participant said:

We must define a place, a venue, where understanding can happen in honest, enduring dialogue. This must happen for people in state agencies, organizations, and for individual people. No one person can speak for all Indian people – even tribal leaders need to recognize and understand this. Greater understanding must come through the dialogue – open, honest, and true. It can't be temporary, it can't just happen because it's part of a grant or someone's work plan. It must happen because people want to make it happen. Mutual value and respect... valuing the sacred history of Indian people... respecting the spirituality of all people... that can only happen in dialogue.

Respondent #3: A community development trainer said:

A lot of the struggles are because of racism... people are isolated by culture and race, by classism, people are isolated... rich people are isolated from poor communities and poor communities are isolated from middle class. So there's a big gap in knowledge about each other and in understanding each other. There's a lot of ignorance on the part of all people about different classes and stuff like that. Being an AFDC mom and living in this community – I know I definitely had my prejudices against rich people – things I learned in porch sitting 101. There's so much to do... I have a student who partnered with a 4-H cooking program to meet once a week with a Somalian women's group – this guy's been teaching them American cooking! Stir fry – they love it! The women often feel isolated, afraid to go out because of their English; they don't know how to shop at a grocery store, how to use store equipment or kitchen equipment – so this gives

them a real practical purpose to come together, and of course, you know when women are in the kitchen they don't just talk food!

Respondent #5: A community organizer from a metropolitan Latino community said:

You can have faith in a process, or faith in a person, or you have faith in a particular organization, a particular principal or city mayor – faith that a particular person that you have faith in is going to go into a good direction just because these are faithful people at the table, or at least, there's one person that you KNOW will not take you astray. The bottom line is you have faith in that individual. Someone that you totally believe in... if you don't have that you don't have much. This person – not there to lead the way for you, but to be in it side-by-side with you.

Respondent #15: An American Indian chemical health worker and community organizer said:

The trust process begins when people begin to put their minds together in dialogue; its like a pebble thrown into the water and the ripples that follow; you're co-creating with people and in the process everyone becomes a leader together... it's synchronicity. If we could all just believe in the process – like children believe – it's magic.

Representative #16: One community policy advocate said:

One of the things that came out in the work that we've done in the Somali community is once the people started getting the information about healthcare they worked within their own communities to spread the word and to help each other understand the process. They could be a really good role model of how to work within their own community to get out the information and to educate each other.

Respondent #17: A Somali community advocate explained the challenges he faces in attempts to share information with his community:

We hold workshops for Somali immigrants on specific topics such as legal regulations in this country and housing issues. We contact the traditional leaders, the elders, because people will come out if they are involved. We also call the religious leaders to help out. Most Somali remain isolated from others in the community – especially the elderly and adults – because of the language barriers. Many of them aren't literate even in their own language. The majority of the head-of-households are women because their husbands may have died in the civil war in Somalia. Some of them have very large families, twelve to sixteen children which makes it even more difficult.

Respondent #13: A Somali woman explained the importance of cultural understanding:

Success depends on meeting cultural expectations such as honesty and integrity. When demand outpaces resources, clients can be turned away which builds

mistrust. Culturally, going back on an offer is unacceptable and will lead to the client not trusting and not returning.

Respondent #5: A community organizer lamented:

There's so much that's not known by low-income communities. Very little knowledge of rights and very little activation of those rights. And non-profits could do a better job of educating the community... sharing information. Too often I've seen organizations rally groups of people and everybody wonders what happened afterwards, why did it die? It was because there was no sharing of information for it to grow. The leadership was contained, which leads to just fulfilling your own agenda, controlling. You can't control community organizing. You just can't.

Respondent #18: A rural community organizer explained the challenges being faced by new arrivals to small rural towns:

Until we get interpreters into rural communities it will be an upstream battle to get them involved. We need interpreters in hospitals, police departments... everyone gets frustrated with the language barrier. So, no, they're not involved in decision-making right now – although several churches are working at it. They need the luxury of time. Of course the Native American discussion can't be put in the same category as other "language" minorities. That issue is generations old. We don't see them involved on a large scale – if they are at all, it's on an individual basis as part of various collaborative efforts.

Public and Political Will

Civic capital is what a community produced when it meaningfully engaged the public to build political will that would drive community transformation forward. Building public will depended on a community-wide agenda where citizens could focus on an issue and politicians could support it with action (Potapchuk & Crocker, 1999) in much the same way a community vision is developed. In this study, the author found a strong theme affirming the need for building public will, however, the link to political will was more limited.

Respondent #3: One inner-city community organizer shared her observation:

> *You know how sometimes you can get really discouraged about how the way things are in this world – well I'll tell you – there's many, many people out there who are just doing it... because they love to and they feel the responsibility about community and about the people around them and the young people and elders and seniors.*

Respondent #5: A metro-area community organizer from the Latino community said:

> *Leadership just means individuals who are enthusiastic and have a lot of faith, believe in democracy, have knowledge of how democracy should be working, and kind of gives that to individuals. I find people who may be griping about an issue, continually, and I'll come up to them and say, what would you like to do about it?*

If you could do something what would it be? Then give them baby steps to solve their own issues. Be the person to start it going.

Respondent #12: An organizer from an out-state Latino community said:

We surveyed one hundred eighty migrant workers – it's a healthy way to start something – because that's what guides our on-going program. We did some organizing and have been more effective than anticipated even though our members are taking a great risk to be involved. They risk their housing, immigration status, wages... there's lots of fear. However, these are the very issues that motivate our people and members to become involved – the poor conditions we live in – racism. A good thing is we've been able to develop a program that's working to help end racism.

Respondent #3: A community development coordinator in a large metropolitan area said:

One really cool thing they're doing is a sermon contest, or Spiritual SpeakOut they call it, where pastors of churches write sermons about preventing domestic abuse. And it was a big hit last year and so they're doing it again this year and they've actually gotten some national attention for it. And winning sermons, they're looking into getting them published in some kind of formal publication... isn't that cool?

Respondent #19: A member of a community organizing group in a large northern city said:

We focus on concerns of low-income people, issues like housing, welfare rights, employment, childcare, education. Sometimes people try to have us advocate for them without them becoming involved – they want others to solve their problems - but it doesn't work that way. We get people by going door-to-door to come together around an issue and develop solutions together. People like the feeling of seeing people they know stand up and say what's on their mind without being afraid.

Respondent #5: A community organizer in a metropolitan Latino community shared her thoughts about passion as part of community organizing:

It's the passion. You can describe it as pet peeves, what makes people angry, or someone's dreams that gives them motivation, but it all comes from passion. Passion can be very angry or very loving, it's very emotional. There's a huge amount of emotion that's displayed... negative, positive, indifferent, confused, frustration. You need to tap into that. When you see chaos, that's where I want to be – you don't turn away from it, you want to be right in the middle of it because that's when the truth is going to come out and if you stick with it and motivate the person to get deeper into what the frustration is, the tipping point happens. It happens, and then that person will be able to bridge over to a more positive state and be an amazing organizer for that issue.

Strengthening Capacity to Conduct Community Business

Civic capital was what a community produced when it built a system of supports that nurtured new leaders, provided training and resources when needed, and catalyzed continued efforts around issues of children and families. It gave leaders the opportunity to reflect, assess where they were, contemplate new ideas, and move forward re-energized while building new networks of support and opportunity (Potapchuk & Crocker, 1999). In this study, the primary researcher found differing styles of support systems for individuals as well as organizations, however, there were ribbons of common themes across different communities regarding specific strategies that work.

Respondent #5: A community organizer from a metropolitan Latino community extolled the value of education:

> *I think that what happened to me was the more training I got, the more I was awakened to... I began to read about women's suffrage, civil rights and I began to see history repeating itself... we look down on those who have sought higher education... my brothers would say "How white of you!" That's a shame that we have that attitude... then my mentor introduced me to a college professor, I took a free course and that was the beginning of my awakening.*

Respondent #3: One leadership trainer and teacher explained important aspects of her program:

> *Recognition is big... recognizing them as leaders. A lot of people have not thought of themselves as leaders, they're just out there doing the hard work. And then, developing their voice and self-esteem... by the end of six months they've had*

many opportunities to [practice] in a safe way to find their voice – to get their message across in a focused way.

Respondent #20: A representative of a large private foundation said:

We focus on rural residents and communities... with several programs designed to develop community leadership across the state. We work at being inclusive of people from all walks of life. We don't believe money is the answer – it helps – but it isn't what builds community. We put our efforts into leadership training and technical assistance.

Representative #21: A community organizer from a western rural town said:

Many more people got involved when we started doing workshops on "Undoing Racism" – it changed our style of organizing to a model that encourages the voice of people. White people and immigrants in the organization are honest at the workshops – they're not afraid to speak honestly.

Representative #12: A community organizer from a southern Latino community explained how migrant workers make up the heart of their organization:

A big success for us is that the structure and membership of our organization is made up of migrant workers; to be a voting member of the board you have to be from the community. We're totally staffed by migrant workers and we do regular staff development that includes trainings on social and economic justice. But we

won't consider ourselves successful until we see concrete changes in the lives of all our migrant workers – when we have improved wages and living conditions.

Organizational Infrastructure

Civic capital was what a community produced when it created an infrastructure of organizations and initiatives that developed the capacity of stakeholders to deepen their work and build connections among programs. Often this work was started by a "spark plug" in the community, an agency willing to take on the hard issues. Since the well-being of children and families is a shared responsibility, this provided opportunity for stakeholders across community sectors including public-private agencies and institutions to work together collectively. (Potapchuk & Crocker, 1999). In this study, the author found that the "spark plugs" of community action were more often individuals than organizations and if there was a "spark plug" agency, it was rarely linked to a broader organizing structure. Another common theme found in both the metropolitan and rural communities, related to the challenges people have with time of meetings, childcare, transportation and location of meetings.

Respondent #22: A Vietnamese community advocate considered his agency a liaison between his community and other agencies within the larger community:

We work with outside community people and agencies to support our own community members – low-income, refugees. We work with them on housing issues, medical and legal issues. A big part of what we do is to provide translation and technical assistance to our people and to other agencies and people working

with our community. Our success is based on who we are – all our staff is from the community – we know the language and culture.

Respondent #13: A Somali translator organized people in her community to create an agency that serves as a liaison between the Somali community and other agencies:

I saw a need and decided to do something about it. Today we do home visits, provide transportation to appointments, make referrals to other agencies and resources, do childcare for parents while they take care of business. A lot of what we needed was housing so now we help with section-8, energy assistance, co-sign for those who are without rental history. We also do ESL classes and job training including work ethics, computer training, resumes.

Respondent #18: A community organizer in rural Minnesota talks about the challenges of distance:

Out here there are a lot of miles between people and places, and sadly enough, the decisions are always made by the people who show up – they become the people in power. It's especially challenging for new immigrants because they not only have to deal with transportation, but they don't know the mores and rules of engagement even when they can get to where they need to be! That's why my office is really my car – I have a cell phone and lap top and away I go. Technology is really important out here in the country – it's our life-line to the world around us. And creating opportunities for people to come together is

important – that's why we're having a rural economic development conference later this summer. I know a little about a lot of things, I connect a lot of people.

Strengthening Civic Capital

According to Potapchuk and Crocker (1999), the civic capacities discussed above need to come together in timely, coordinated and synergistic ways. During this process of coming together, civic capital is created. Dialogue would help communities to understand their civic capital – where it is working well and where it needs to have extra support. Dialogue would allow citizens to see the big picture of their community and to understand how their individual concerns fit within the big picture. Dialogue would help everyone to understand each separate capacity, the importance it holds relative to the whole, and would help to build the roadmap for achieving the collective vision of the community. The principal investigator for this study found many references to the complexity of community issues, including poverty, but found few references to the development of a community-wide comprehensive big picture.

Respondent #23: A participant from a large foundation serving communities across several states shared his observations:

We're just beginning a long-term process to reduce poverty in a large metropolitan area in Minnesota and a smaller city in a different state. It will be two-to-three years before outcomes will begin to show, but we're in this for the long haul. There's evidence that the typical grant-making process of three years doesn't work so we're committing to a ten-year process – time is important.

We're also coming from the belief that community people themselves need to be making the decisions regarding their community including the distribution of external supports or assets. We can provide financial support, technical assistance, help communities to go through a visioning process, but the community ultimately defines what will work for them. We help them define strategies, not projects, that will get them from here to where they say they want to be in ten years. The communities will be identified by their capacity to support the initiative, including creation of future jobs, institutional support and capacity for providing training and education when needed – and of course having the potential to actually impact poverty. We'll be looking for allies that are committed to the same beliefs – this needs to be a private-public effort – the government needs to be on board.

Change, when thrust upon us, provokes conflict and prompts resistance, but it can also stimulate progress (Briand, 2000). He suggested that one way to think of leadership is to see it as a creative and effective response to change and the need for change. He considered it a mistake to think that leadership was the exclusive province of a chosen few who just happened to have the right traits or the right ideas for making things better. Briand argued that the power and the authority to change things for the better did not, and should not, reside in the hands of a few. He stated that it is the citizens of our communities who have the ability, right, and responsibility to produce the change desired.

Discussion

Barriers and Challenges to Getting People Engaged in the Process

The challenges of transportation, availability of childcare, and time of day for meetings were common themes from respondents in both the metropolitan and rural areas. Across the state of Minnesota, another common challenge to participation in decision-making is the difficulty of language. Immigrants from all directions of the world including Mexico, Russia, India, and countries from all of Africa and more, are being located in rural towns and small cities where interpreters are not as plentiful as in the larger metropolitan areas. Beyond the challenge of language, is the challenge of developing an understanding and respect for cultural diversity that goes beyond what this state has experienced in recent history. Many of the new immigrants, excited to be in the United States and Minnesota, are developing internal natural networks to learn the culture of America, the mores and rules of their new communities, the process of government and daily living. They depend on cultural guides or organizations from within their ethnic community to bring them information and learning opportunities and to interact on their behalf with the outside community. Most immigrants have faith in American democracy and opportunity.

Members of the African American and Native American communities, on the other hand, continue to live in a high degree of distrust for the government or anything that resembles a bureaucracy that may impose some rule, regulation or conjured-up program upon them. Information gathered from respondents in the study correlated with

the literature review which showed ample evidence of reason for the distrust, based on historic trauma and the effect of enemy-memory and the psychological barriers to participation (Steele, 1990; Citizen's Advocate Center, 1969).

Motivation to be Engaged in Community

There were two common motivating factors for people to become engaged in community affairs. The factor most often mentioned, was having someone the participant respected and trusted encourage them to get involved. This person was often referred to as a mentor or teacher and was most often someone from the community. It was a common theme that this special person was somehow involved in bringing new knowledge or hope to the individual, and was often seen as someone who was well informed about community issues. The way participants used this special person correlates with McKnight (1995) who described a community guide as someone who could help bring the disenfranchised into the life of community.

The second factor was belief – often referred to as hope – that something important to the person could be improved if the person became involved in the community process. This often had to do with access to affordable and decent housing, ability to earn a living wage, or a child's education. This correlates with those who argue that one must create a vision of where one wants to be years down the road and create mile markers along the way in order to have hope for the future and to develop trust that it will happen (Potapchuk & Crocker, 1999; Schorr, 1997).

Key Strategies for Engaging and Sustaining People in the Process

Across each community, there were common themes regarding strategies that work to bring people into the mainstream of community life. The strategies are listed according to the number of times it was referenced by respondents and by the emphasis or amount of passion the respondent used when talking about the strategy.

- **Safe Forum for Dialogue:** Every participant in the study referenced the importance of having a safe place to dialogue with fellow citizens, decision-makers, agency representatives, and/or people from other cultures. They need the opportunity for an open dialogue to learn from each other, develop mutual understanding, learn about the big picture of community, develop trust for each other, and discover the purpose for becoming a decision-maker in community affairs or projects.

- **Action Learning:** Several participants talked about the value of learning on the job and/or in the community. They needed the support system created by a mentor or trainer who could guide them in their work and thinking and also be their cheerleader, motivator, listener, and safe sounding board. Participants currently in leadership development programs valued the chance to have immediate opportunity to test and use new learning. The feeling of accomplishment was linked to their motivation to continue learning and to continue community action.

- **Development of Trust:** The issue of trust appeared as a strong theme throughout the study. The development of trust was presented as something one needed to do in order to accomplish anything constructive within the community or with any group of people. Developing a safe place for dialogue was seen as a primary strategy for building trust – a preliminary step to whatever else needed to happen. Potapchuk & Crocker, (1999) agree that a community forum for dialogue needs to happen, however, it needs to happen in order to address the complex issues of community. According to them, the forum then becomes the process through which trust begins to develop. Therefore, developing a safe forum for dialogue to solve community issues inherently becomes the process for developing trust between the participants.

This study was an attempt to search out answers to how low-income families and people of color are involved in community decision-making as it relates to the development and implementation of capacity-building efforts across Minnesota. The search for answers led the principal investigator on a journey of discovering untapped leadership and heartfelt desire by the participants in the study to be involved and influential in the decision-making processes of their communities. The search resulted in discovering strategies used by people within their ethnic communities and neighborhoods to be effective leaders; and the search brought forward the challenges and risks faced by courageous individuals who were willing to step into the public eye in search of solutions to difficult problems.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

During the course of the study, the author was able to discern both similarities and differences between the necessary key components of community capacity building and the engagement of citizens in the decision-making process. A review of the literature identified recurrent themes in terms of what communities need in order to be healthy and productive. Putnam (cited in Potapchuk & Crocker, 1999) found that more important than governmental structure or economic achievement was the presence of trust, reciprocity and lasting relationships among citizens and the civic groups they created. In this study, there was strong affirmation by the diverse array of participants for the need to develop trust among citizens from different cultures, class and sectors of the community, with an emphasis on developing strong relationships. There was less formal recognition of the need for reciprocity, perhaps because it was not understood in a literal sense to be part of the developmental process for relationships.

The framework for community capacity building developed by Potapchuk & Crocker identified five civic capacities that successful communities nurture:

- Finding a shared vision to motivate people to action;
- Inclusion, collaboration and accountability that is rooted in deep levels of trust;
- Engagement of the public in building political will for community transformation;
- Strengthening capacity of leadership to conduct community business; and

- Developing an organizational structure that connects organizations and supports them to deepen their work within the community.

Themes from participants in this study align with the components in the framework to varying degrees. The greatest alignment was with the component regarding the need to strengthen the capacity of leadership. Community citizens were well aware of the need for training and were outspoken about what works for them, including having a mentor available over a period of time and a safe place for dialogue about what is being learned and what needs to be done. The greatest misalignment was in recognizing the degree of difficulty and risk one entails when attempting to move an issue from the community level to the public political level. Community organizers were very cognizant of the risks their group members had to take to move issues into the public eye: they risked their housing, immigration status, wages, and/or cultural and family isolation whenever the issue was perceived as private, as was the issue of domestic abuse. Yet, these were the very issues that motivated the people and members of various groups to become involved.

Another theme centered on the value of having a special person helping participants to enter into the activities of community life. This person was often referred to as a mentor, teacher or cultural guide. This aligned with the three points of entry into community life that McKnight (1995) identified for people who had been historically excluded. The three points of entry included individual efforts that required great commitment and persistence; support of family and friends who usually saw that a good

life was more than just a serviced life; and community guides, or those individuals who assumed a special responsibility for guiding excluded people out of the world of social service and isolation into the realm of the community.

The greatest challenges centered on the issues of race, culture and class. The fast paced growth of new immigrants and their relocation to rural towns and small cities has eclipsed the capacity of communities to create support services, especially in the areas of language translation and interpretation. Social isolation was seen as a primary barrier to community participation, and it was seen as a response to historic and current issues of racism as well as to difficulties presented by language. Members of the Native American and African American communities were more apt to not participate outside their cultural community due to the silencing effect of historic trauma and inherent distrust of people from the dominant culture and government itself.

Recommendations

A major theme of what works for communities, centered on the development of safe forums for dialogue between the full citizenry of every community as a means to create trusting and meaningful relationships. The dialogue itself presents community members with the opportunity to identify their collective strengths and capacities upon which they can build an infrastructure for supporting and promoting each other. The dialogue presents the opportunity for creating the essential ingredient of hope as part of a community-wide visioning process that could elevate the status of family and children to

the highest level of attention. The dialogue presents the opportunity and platform for delving into the search for understanding regarding race, class and culture.

Existing and new initiatives that are designed to provide community leadership development, should focus not only on the creation of safe forums for dialogue, but should also focus on the creation of action learning opportunities. Aspiring leaders need the gift of time to find their voice and to have the opportunity to practice newly learned theories of community empowerment. The most important aspect is to provide an on-going support system to the trainee in the form of a trusted community mentor, leader, trainer or community guide.

The study clearly identifies a gap in the literature regarding the perspective and input of social work at the macro level of community empowerment and capacity building. Using an ecological perspective on family systems, one could theorize that healthy individuals have a greater capacity to create healthy families, who then have a greater capacity to contribute to the development of healthy communities. Within this theory there are multiple opportunities for social workers to expose individuals and families from all walks of life to the possibility of becoming community builders or community guides for Minnesota neighborhoods. Social workers can be educators as well as advocates of social change. The field of social work could explore the connection between historic trauma and one's enemy-memory as it relates to non-participation in the politics of community when the outcome desired is for the common good. If in fact, the field of social work is to promote the ability of people to interact in social environments,

then it becomes all the more relevant and important for social workers to fill the need for representation in professional literature regarding community empowerment.

"In its essence, leadership is about learning how to shape the future
Leadership exists when people are no longer victims of
circumstances, but participate in creating new circumstances.
Leadership is about creating a domain in which human beings continually
deepen their understanding of reality and become more capable of
participating in the unfolding of the world.
Ultimately, leadership is about creating new realities."

Joseph Jaworski

"Synchronicity: The Inner Path of Leadership"

RESOURCE LIST

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APPENDIX A

CONTACT LOG

Program: _____

Contact Person: _____ **Phone:** _____
Address: _____ **Fax:** _____
_____ **Email:** _____
_____
_____

Program Summary (can you send/fax overview information about your program?):

- What is the 30-second description of the initiative?
- Who participated in planning the initiative?
- What is the time-frame (beginning and ending) of the program?

What is the primary focus of the program (e.g., training, community organizing, economic development)?

- What population of people is intended to benefit from the program?
- Have there been any surprises or unintended results?

What efforts have been particularly successful in increasing the participation of low income/communities of color in community-based capacity building efforts?

- What are the motivating factors for their being engaged?
- What are the barriers (real or perceived) to their engagement?
- How will success be defined?

Do you receive resources from other agencies/organizations to support this program? What resources do you receive (funds, technical assistance, etc.)?:

If you were to receive funding from an outside agency or organization, how would you decide how to allocate it? What are your most pressing financial needs?

Other than money, what additional support would be most helpful to maintaining or strengthening your efforts?

In the coming weeks, would you be willing to participate in a gathering to discuss your efforts and what you've learned from this work?

Who else do you know of in your area or anywhere in the state that is doing this work? (begin new contact sheet for each recommended contact).

APPENDIX B

(Letter of cooperation)
went out as email

To: State Agency Staff
From: Carol Thomas
CC: Jeri Boisvert
Re: Resources needed!
Date: March 15, 2001
Priority: High!

Judie Cutler, working in partnership with Full Circle Community Institute, Inc., is conducting a study as part of her masters thesis in Social Work: Program Development, Planning and Administration, at Augsburg College. The Departments of Children, Families and Learning, Office of Community Initiatives, and Public Safety, Office of Drug Policy and Violence Prevention, are supporting Ms. Cutler in her efforts.

The primary goal of the study is to develop an understanding of the capacity of Minnesota's low-income families and communities of color to engage in their local community decision-making processes relative to the collective well being of their people. Ms. Cutler will begin this process by interviewing state and local program leaders. She will identify what resources are available, what capacity-building programs or initiatives are effectively reaching the targeted families, and will determine what gaps exist between effective programming and the participation of low-income families and communities of color in the planning and decision-making process . She will make recommendations on how to fill the gaps and how to support low-income families and communities of color to be engaged in the collective decision-making processes for developing healthy communities.

The study will support the State Incentive Grant efforts to understand the impact of racism and classism on youth and the tie to substance abuse and other harmful behaviors. Therefore, we are asking you to support this effort by identifying community-based capacity building efforts currently being funded by the state and implemented across MN. Please e-mail me the names of people you think should be on the interview list, using the following two categories:

1) State agency staff who would know of state resources being used for community capacity building in relation to low income families and/or communities of color (you can list your own name here).

2) Local program people, volunteer or paid, whom you would recommend for inclusion on the list of folks interviewed to describe existing/needed resources to reach the goal of fully involving low income families and/or communities of color in community decision-making.

Please e-mail me the name of a contact person, organization/agency name, a telephone number, and indicate where the initiative is being implemented. E-mail me the information by March 19 or as soon as possible thereafter. We should have a report and recommendations from Ms. Cutler by mid-summer. Thank you for supporting this effort.

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Welcome!
Introductions (name and what organization/community they represent)

Overview of purpose for focus group

Consent forms (include audio tape)

Focus group questions:

1) Please share key components of your program as it relates to building community capacity and inclusive decision making.

2) What are the barriers or difficulties in getting folks involved? (Historic, perceived or real)

3) Search for best practice: What have you found to be the most effective way/strategy to get low-income people and people of color involved in decision-making within communities? What motivates them to get involved and how is their involvement sustained?

APPENDIX D

A Study of Community Capacity Building: How are Low-Income Families and Communities of Color Engaged in the Process?

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to be in a research study of the capacity of Minnesota's low-income families and communities of color to engage in local decision-making processes as it relates to the collective well being of their people. You were selected as a possible participant because the agency you are affiliated with was identified as an organizer, financial or general supporter of a community capacity-building program or initiative. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Judie Cutler in partnership with Full Circle Community Institute, Inc., as part of her master's thesis in Social Work: Program Development, Planning and Administration, at Augsburg College.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of the capacity of Minnesota's low-income families and communities of color to engage in local decision-making processes that relate to the collective well being of their people. What is the extent of the participation gap for communities of color and low-income community members? How and where are they engaged in capacity-building efforts? What are the motivating factors for their being engaged? What are the perceived or real barriers to their lack of engagement? What entities/organizations/support systems are currently engaging low income families or people of color in meaningful, decision-making ways within the community? How is success defined? What tangible and intangible resources are currently in place or need to be in place? What can we learn from successful/unsuccessful approaches?

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do one or both of the following things: 1) Participate in a 15-minute telephone interview to share your story about community capacity building, and/or 2) participate in a 90-minute focus group to explore what you and others from your geographic area have learned while implementing or participating in a capacity-building initiative.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

The study has limited risks: First, other participants in the initiative may feel antagonistic towards you because they perceive you as a 'chosen' or special representative. Second, you may experience political hostility because your initiative was chosen to learn from instead of a neighboring initiative.

There are no direct benefits to participation.

Indirect benefits to participation may include: Knowledge gained from learning about other initiatives and an opportunity to share the highlights of your initiative with program development people.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you as an individual. If public money is used to support your organization or initiative, the name of your organization or initiative may be included in published reports. Research records will be kept in a locked file; only the researchers will have access to the records.

Tape recordings may be used during the focus groups to ensure that the integrity of the dialogue is captured in the final report. Those having access to the tape recordings and raw data include the following members of Full Circle Community Institute, Inc.: Judie Cutler, Sam Grant, Laura Bloomberg and Kathy Bogen.

All tapes and raw data will be destroyed by August 30, 2001.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Augsburg College or with any funding agency or department of the State of Minnesota. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The primary researcher conducting this study is Judie Cutler. Secondary researchers include Sam Grant, Laura Bloomberg and Kathy Bogen. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Judie Cutler at 612-724-5708 or Dr. Rosemary Link, thesis advisor at Augsburg College, 612-330-1147.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information or have had it read to me. I have received answers to questions asked. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature_____ Date_____

Signature of investigator_____ Date_____

I consent to be audiotaped:

Signature_____ Date _____

I consent to allow use of my direct quotations in the published thesis document.

Signature_____ Date_____