



Longitudinally Evaluating a Community Council Comprised of Community Members

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Background

- Community Councils(CC) continue to be used in community research, particularly with Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR)
- Usually members of CCs are mostly or exclusively agency reps/community leaders
- Few CCs are comprised exclusively of community members
- Evaluating a council's development can gauge maturation and progress toward achieving goals
- Many group evaluation instruments available but, to our knowledge, none have been used longitudinally with a community member based council to assess composition, development and progress

Objective

To describe recruitment, retention and monthly (CCES) and semi-annual (CCPE) evaluation processes over the first 4 years of a newly established Community Council (CC)

	2008-09 n=51 (%)	2009-10 n=38 (%)	2010-11 n=42 (%)	2011-12 n=24 (%)
Crescent* Zip Code	74.4	78.8	81.0	87.5
Female	78.4	64.9	66.7	66.7
Age				
18 or under	16.7	11.4	16.7	25.0
19-24	10.4	20.0	40.5	37.5
25-34	25.0	20.0	14.3	12.5
35-44	29.2	28.6	11.9	12.5
45+	18.8	20.0	16.7	12.5
Number of Children <18				
0	33.3	24.2	43.9	50.0
1	16.7	33.3	34.1	29.2
2 or more	48.0	42.4	22.0	20.8
Currently Pregnant (females only)	15.0	16.7	14.3	12.5
Grandparent	20.0	17.1	24.2	20.8
Race/Ethnicity				
African American	61.2	72.2	90.5	100.0
White	14.3	5.6	0.0	0.0
Hispanic/Latino	12.2	5.6	2.4	0.0
Biracial/Multiracial	10.2	13.9	7.1	0.0

* Crescent - 9 zip codes in city with highest poverty density
** Columns not adding up to 100% are due to non-responses

Methods

- Project aim was to increase breastfeeding(BF) rates among low-income women but, members were not selected for their interest in BF but rather to represent the general population who might influence these decisions, serving as both advisors to the project and research subjects
- Monthly meetings were coordinated and facilitated by our community partner, the Perinatal Network of Monroe County, Inc. who also recruited council members (a minimum one year commitment was requested)
- Light dinner, bus pass, childcare provided at meetings in addition to \$20/meeting stipend
- Monthly and quarterly/semi-annual surveys were developed
- The Community Council Process Evaluation (CCPE) (Table 2), adapted from University of Wisconsin's "Community Group Member Survey", was longer and assessed group functioning, maturation, and sense of achievement. This was administered 2-3 times/year
- The Community Council Evaluation Survey (CCES) was a short survey developed for use at each meeting to provide immediate feedback (except meetings when CCPE was administered)

Strengths

- Consistent administration over 3+ years with no modifications thus allowing for comparisons
- Both surveys captured change over time w/fluctuations consistent w/verbal feedback
- Surveys did not overburden members/subjects and showed their opinions were valued

		March '09 n=14 %	April '10 n=10 %	March '11 n=14 %	May '12 n=20 %
Section 1: Participation					
How long have you participated in this Community Council (CC)?	< 6 months	100	20	27	0
	6-12 months	0	20	18	42
	1-2 years	0	60	36	32
	> 2 years	0	0	18	26
Section 2: How well do you think the council...					
The council brings together people with an interest in the issue?	Moderate/High	43	80	33	32
	High	29	10	33	60
Listens to everyone's views?	Moderate/High	36	60	8	21
	High	64	40	58	68
Creates mutual respect, understanding & trust within the CC.	Moderate/High	36	50	25	22
	High	50	40	50	72
Members know where the CC is headed?	Moderate/High	29	40	46	26
	High	21	40	36	58
Meetings accomplish what is necessary?	Moderate/High	21	40	36	16
	High	29	50	46	74
Makes progress and has results?	Moderate/High	43	50	42	21
	High	29	50	25	63
Communicates progress & achievement?	Moderate/High	50	30	18	22
	High	43	50	73	72
Section 3: Please indicate your perceptions about the CC...					
My viewpoint is heard.	Sometimes/All the time	21	10	8	11
	All of the time	58	60	58	68
I am viewed as a valued member	Sometimes/All the time	22	30	27	21
	All of the time	50	60	46	74
I feel comfortable with the council	Sometimes/All the time	7	10	25	5
	All of the time	72	70	67	90
I am satisfied with the council's progress	Sometimes/All the time	29	20	17	11
	All of the time	64	70	66	84
Section 4: To what extent did the CC have an impact on you in terms of...					
My understanding of infant feeding practices in my community	Medium/High Impact	39	10	32	26
	High Impact	45	50	42	58
My knowledge of resources available in the community	Medium/High Impact	54	30	50	32
	High Impact	31	50	17	47
My sense that together we can make a difference	Medium/High Impact	43	10	26	32
	High Impact	57	70	58	52
My knowledge of ways to respond to community issues about infant feeding practices	Medium/High Impact	31	0	36	27
	High Impact	46	80	46	68
My ability to evaluate progress and results	Medium/High Impact	36	22	33	22
	High Impact	43	56	50	39
My understanding of others' perspectives	Medium/High Impact	50	30	27	29
	High Impact	50	50	73	53
My ability to work with others	Medium/High Impact	36	30	34	11
	High Impact	50	50	58	84
My understanding of council processes	Medium/High Impact	36	10	34	21
	High Impact	57	80	50	68
My ability to communicate effectively in a council	Medium/High Impact	43	22	36	21
	High Impact	50	56	56	68
My ability to help resolve council conflict	Medium/High Impact	43	50	36	22
	High Impact	36	30	46	60
My ability to help a council achieve its goals	Medium/High Impact	36	10	40	38
	High Impact	57	80	60	50
My leadership ability	Medium/High Impact	39	25	17	24
	High Impact	54	63	67	65
Section 5: What is the extent to which you think the council has benefited our community?					
	Moderate level of benefit	46	30	42	21
	Much benefit	39	50	42	53
Section 6: Please answer the following about today's meeting.					
Overall organization of meetings	Good	46	20	20	32
	Excellent	46	60	50	63
Overall accomplishments of meetings	Good	57	30	18	27
	Excellent	29	40	64	63

* Only 4 out of the 7 survey administrations are shown. ** Columns not adding up to 100% are due to non-responses.
◀ Significant findings referenced under "results" section

Limitations

- At 5 of 42 meetings NEITHER survey administered
- Social desirability bias and attendance fluctuations may have affected results
- Absolute # of surveys was small & CCPE had a relatively high readability level (though it did not seem to hinder responses)

Acknowledgments

Former Community Council Members who contributed to this project and the many partners and contacts of the Perinatal Network of Monroe County, Inc. who identified potential council members.

Results

- Since 2008, CC met 42 times averaging 19 participants/meeting (range 9-23)
- Six (6) members attended regularly all four (4) years; but overall CC membership changed yearly.
- At 18 months significant increase in interest, strained resources and impacted manageability
- 2011 membership was limited to 21 and waiting list established
- 48 individuals expressed interest in membership but attended only 1-2 meetings (these tended to be Latino, pregnant or with children at home (not counted as "member" in Table 1))
- 2012 membership demographics shifted to more African Americans (rather than White or Hispanic/Latino), younger, and w/out children. (Table 1)
- CCES were completed at 33 meetings with fairly consistent, many with improving, results over time:
 - 73% indicated meeting was interesting (range 44%-88%)
 - 90% marked the meeting was what they expected (range 67%-100%)
 - 96% felt comfortable talking (range 77%-100%)
 - 97% felt other members/researchers listened to them (range 85%-100%)
 - 98% reported they planned to attend future CC meetings (range 90%-100%)
 - 65% indicated the overall meeting was excellent (44%-84%)
- 7 CCPE completed. Due to consistent results, 4 of 7 evaluations presented in Table 2
- Significant CCPE findings over time as reflected in responses included: (Aspects that were consistently low 2009-12 are highlighted in RED)
 - How well do you think the council...
 - creates mutual respect, understanding & trust within the CC ("high" rating ↑ from 50 to 72%)
 - meetings accomplish what is necessary ("high" rating ↑ from 29 to 74%)
 - makes progress and has results ("high" rating ↑ from 29 to 63%)
 - communicates progress and achievement ("high" rating ↑ from 43 to 72%)
 - Please indicate your perceptions about the CC...
 - I am viewed as a valued member ("all the time" response ↑ from 50 to 74%)
 - I feel comfortable with the council ("all the time" response ↑ from 72 to 90%)
 - my viewpoint is heard ("all the time" relatively unchanged from 59-68%)
 - To what extent did the CC have an impact on you in terms of...
 - my understanding of infant feeding practices in my community ("high impact" response 45% to 58%)
 - my knowledge of resources available in the community ("high impact" response low and variable 31% to 17% to 47%)
 - my sense that together we can make a difference ("high impact" response relatively unchanged from 57 to 52%)
 - my ability to evaluate progress and results ("high impact" response 43% to 39%, with slight increase to 56% midway)
 - my ability to work with others ("high impact" response ↑ from 50 to 84%)
 - my ability to help resolve council conflict ("high impact" response ↑ from 36 to 60%)
 - my ability to help a council achieve its goals ("high impact" response relatively unchanged from 57 to 50%)

Discussion

- Both CCES and CCPE tools easy to implement, provided direct member feedback and identified area for improvement
- CCPE is useful as a comprehensive, longitudinal assessment of group dynamics, progress and maturation.
- It is not clear whether more than semi-annual use of CCPE is necessary if there is a regular meeting evaluation like CCES
- Although responses skewed toward "positive" end of scales, results & feedback were valuable in modifying meeting content/structure/activities (e.g. role plays, DVD and PowerPoint presentations, guest speakers)
- Lessons learned:
 - Limit members from same family;
 - Expect attrition due to work, school, incarceration, travel;
 - Regularly revisit with members the purpose/benefit of evaluation