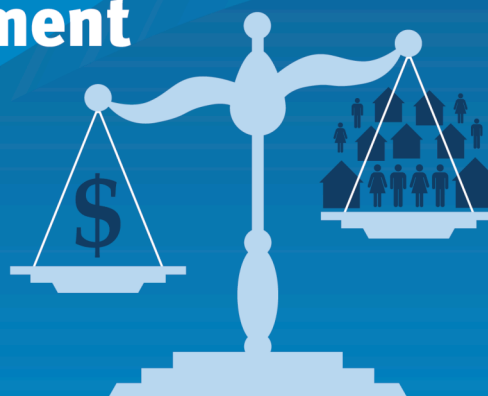


2. Community & Economic Development



RESEARCH TEAM: Participatory methods and civic engagement in community-based development

Grand Challenge: Neighborhood Visioning for Quality of Life

Key Terms:

Social capital, community development, neighborhood revitalization, education empowerment

Student Leader: Danielle Goldman

Student Members:

- Danielle Goldman - Quality of Life and Community Involvement in Logan Heights
- Serena Ip - Community Development Through Local Initiatives
- Adelina Tancioco - The Unique Qualities of Community Collaboratives: A Case Study on Mid-City Community Advocacy Network
- Rebecca Reyes- Facilitating sustained resident engagement: A case study in community development
- Robert Mowry - Doctors on Demand: Patient Empowerment

Mentor(s) Leader:

- Kerry Sheldon
- Mirle Rabinowitz Bussell

Team Narrative:

The community development pendulum is shifting again. The contemporary community development movement took root during the late 1950s and early 1960s in response to the widespread failure of federal urban policy. The deleterious effect of federal urban renewal in concert with the pervasive malaise in low-income urban neighborhoods gave rise to grassroots organizing and empowerment. Community development corporations (CDCs) were established with a primary emphasis on community organizing, participation, and networking. As these organizations matured, their capacity expanded and their

programmatic efforts shifted to physical infrastructure improvements such as the construction of affordable housing, community centers, health care clinics, day care facilities, and technology centers.

While CDCs have exhibited a tremendous aptitude for physical community development there has been a growing recognition that the most effective form of community development is holistic in nature, encompassing neighborhood organizing, physical development, and the strategic coordination of resources and efforts. In 2007 the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, a national community development financial and technical intermediary, invested \$1.1 billion in its Sustainable Communities Program. This holistic model of community development is based on the value of community cooperation and coordination. An invaluable piece of this effort is measuring and assessing locally based quality of life indicators. For community development to successfully move forward, the needs and desires of the residents must be adequately understood, and neighborhood residents must be engaged in the process. National LISC has encouraged its local offices to implement these objectives in cities across the country. To this end, the San Diego LISC office recently launched the Neighborhoods First initiative in two neighborhoods in San Diego: Colina Park in City Heights and the Logan Heights/Memorial neighborhood. The first step in the process has been comprehensive community outreach and quality of life analysis. This has provided fertile ground for student research.

The five student research projects in the Neighborhood Visioning for Quality of Life tract explore different dimensions of quality of life analysis. Several students used the Neighborhoods First Initiative as their research focus, whereas other students identified different case studies. In sum, these projects exhibit the breadth, depth, and potential of quality of life analysis and its larger value for holistic community development.

One study explored how resident involvement in the Logan Heights community affects quality of life. The author, Danielle Goldman, argues that the value of social cohesion and neighborhood ties is especially important in low-income neighborhoods where such ties can both enhance the cognitive quality of life but also provide valuable resources for material improvement. Through a comprehensive survey, this study tested two hypotheses. The first hypothesis held that subjective quality of life would differ from actual quality of life. The results showed that when asked to give a single, personal assessment of their overall quality of life, residents responded positively. However, across a set of indicators such as housing, safety, and transportation, the results showed a lower quality of life, proving the hypothesis. The second hypothesis held that community involvement would be positively associated with quality of life. The results found this hypothesis to be correct as the more involved residents were in the community, the higher their quality of life. Goldman's research contributes a valuable understanding of quality of life analysis and demonstrates the value of community organization, particularly working through schools and churches, in improving quality of life. The research conducted by Serena Ip derives from an overarching theoretical framework pertaining to the quality of life for residents in specific neighborhoods and the role of local institutions. The research for this study primarily consists of observing Herbert Ibarra Elementary, a primary school in the neighborhood of Colina Park in the community of City Heights in San Diego, in addition to conducting resident surveys and interviews with select community leaders. By conducting this research, Ip evaluated the importance of education empowerment and the role of local educational institutions in accordance with improving the quality of life for Colina Park residents. Furthermore, Ip's research is significant because it differentiates between the perception of urban planners and residents in terms of how the quality of life in Colina Park can be improved. Ip also discovered that community leaders have already engaged in civic participation for neighborhood visioning for quality of life. The

findings of this study support the contention that low-income neighborhoods need support from larger associations because the support is absent from the local society. More importantly, this research contributes insights on residents' perspectives for future planning in the Colina Park neighborhood. It also provides a valuable case study on community development in San Diego

A third study further examines quality of life analysis as it pertains to evaluating the efficacy of individual organizations within specific neighborhoods. Adelina Tancioco's research focused on a detailed study of a community collaborative in the City Heights neighborhood. Community collaboratives are a grassroots response to the disenfranchisement experienced by marginalized communities. Through a case study, Tancioco's paper examines the unique qualities of the Mid-City Community Advocacy Network (CAN), a community collaborative in San Diego, and she considers the best method for evaluating the organization's strengths and weaknesses. Utilizing the SAO (Study, Ask, and Observe) method of research, Tancioco explored Mid-City CAN's guiding philosophy, mission, goals, structure and organizational culture. With Mid-City CAN's unique attributes fully identified and understood, Tancioco suggests that the best method for evaluating Mid-City CAN is David Fetterman's empowerment evaluation process.

Outreach represents a critical foundational step in a larger effort to facilitate sustained resident engagement through holistic, resident-driven community development. As such, a fourth research paper in this collection, written by Rebecca Reyes, presents a case study of the El Cajon Community Development Corporation (CDC) Community Development Program and evaluates the organizational outreach methods employed to recruit and retain resident participation in neighborhood associations. In evaluating the development and execution of the El Cajon CDC program design, this study unveils the most critical components of an operative model to effectively inform and mobilize local residents residing in Downtown El Cajon. The findings show that a grassroots, tactical outreach strategy coupled with thoughtful documentation and follow-through cultivates relationship building with strong indicators for successful resident recruitment and retention. Moreover, a strategic plan and a system of evaluation yield greater organizational capacity and stronger accountability to program goals and outcomes. It is clear that the El Cajon CDC has implemented an organized model that is useful for other community based organizations engaged in the early stages of community organizing; however, it is too soon to draw affirmative, measurable conclusions. The findings of this study contribute to scholarship and practice by confirming previous conclusions about community organizing to promote local quality of life while revealing place specific insights.

The final study in this collection of five research papers investigates the importance of technology in improving quality of life. The study prepared by Robert Mowry contends that as nearly fifteen percent of the US population navigates through life's perils without health insurance, this problematic health care environment has led to an upsurge in the use of other avenues for health care advice and treatment outside the traditional health care system. Free and discounted medical advice is now available on Web sites such as WebMD which, according to the open Internet ratings service Quantcast, is one of the top 50 such sites and receives an estimated 19 million visitors to its site each month. Easier access to quality healthcare information coupled with doctors availing themselves to patients anytime through websites, such as Kasamba.com, puts patients in a more empowered position than they ever have been before. Through researching websites which broker such doctors' services, the most striking element is that not only are those without health insurance taking advantage of such services, but even those with adequate health coverage have opted in. The acceptance of this new type of appointment less dispensing of medical advice is a

testament to its staying power as a long term trend, poised for further growth. The findings also offer valuable insights into the potential of Internet technology to enhance quality of life factors at the grassroots level.

In sum, this collection of five research papers examines multiple dimensions of quality of life research. They demonstrate the importance of different lines of inquiry including a consideration of the process, tools, and participants in the quality of life planning process. The results yield valuable insights into current quality of life planning efforts here in San Diego and will be of tremendous utility to practitioners, community members, policy makers, and scholars.

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Links:

Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC) - <http://www.lisc.org/>

El Cajon Community Development Corporation - <http://www.ci.el-cajon.ca.us/>

Multimedia Archive:

Available presentations for this group can be found on the Senior Sequence website at: http://seniorsequence.net/?page_id=440