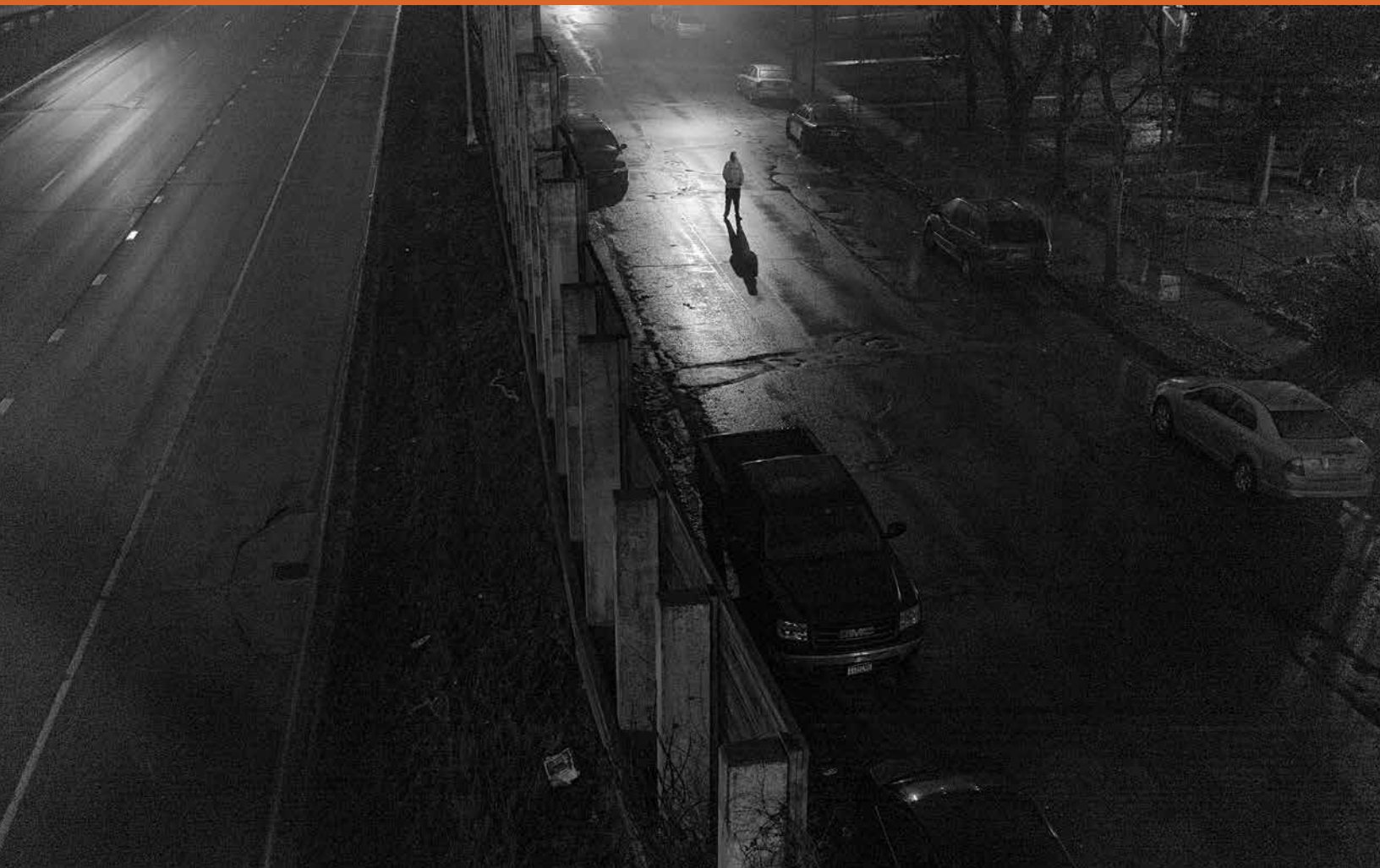


CEURA REPORTER



The Social Determinants of Native Youth Gang Involvement



Also Inside:

- Creativity Testing, Achievement, and Higher-Order Thinking in Schoolchildren
- Raising the Standard of Living for Workers While Raising the Standard of Care for Clients
- Poverty Explains Some of the Achievement Gap, but Not All
- Developing the New Barn-Raising Concept—An Englishman's Visit to Minnesota

CURA REPORTER

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Desktop Solutions

Production and Layout

Desktop Solutions

Printing

University Printing Services

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The Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) is an applied research and technical assistance center that connects the resources of the University of Minnesota with the interests and needs of urban communities and the region for the benefit of all.

The *CURA Reporter* is published 2–3 times annually to provide information about CURA’s programs, projects, and publications. Subscriptions are free upon request at z.umn.edu/subtoreporter.


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This publication is available in alternate formats upon request.

 Printed with agribased ink on recycled paper, including 20% post-consumer fiber.

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Photo on Cover: *This photo first appeared in a five-part series on Native American gangs that was published on Al Jazeera America’s website in 2015. All photos ©Tomas Muscionico.*

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The Social Determinants of Native Youth Gang Involvement

By Ross VeLure Roholt, Katie Johnston-Goodstar, and Don Eubanks



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One-size-fits-all methods to reducing gang involvement are rarely successful. Instead, an approach that addresses a community's issues, history, and experience are increasingly supported by scholarship and practice.

Abstract: While youth gang involvement nationally is believed to be on the rise, few policies and services are in place to address this issue, leaving primary responsibility to law enforcement. The focus of such responses shift quickly to deterrence and suppression strategies, tactics aimed at reducing crimes committed by gangs. These strategies alone are typically unsuccessful. This article describes a community-based participatory research project investigating the presence and activities of youth gangs in one Native American tribal community in the Midwest. Findings regarding demographics, law enforcement, community perceptions, school and student perceptions, and community resources are presented.

Analysis reveals evidence that gang involvement should be seen not only as a result of risk and protective factors in the lives of young people but also as a youth response to multiple, pervasive social factors, including poverty, historical trauma, and continuing racism—what we are beginning to name “social determinants” of youth gang activity. We include recommendations for youth and community response to social determinants.

Youth gang involvement remains a persistent problem for many communities in the United States. The National Youth Gang Survey in 2010 found one-third of U.S. cities,

towns, and rural communities reporting gang problems.¹ In Minnesota, most youth gang activity is located within the Twin Cities urban center, although youth gangs can be found in every region of the state. While many Minnesota communities report problems and issues with youth gangs, rarely do they agree on a common definition of youth gangs. The lack of an agreed-upon definition has implications for research and data collection, but it does not

¹ A. Egley Jr., and J.C. Howell, *Highlights of the 2010 National Youth Gang Survey* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2012).

matter much to community members who experience their neighborhood as no longer safe for themselves or their families.

With few services or policies addressing the emergence and presence of youth gangs, focus quickly shifts to law enforcement strategies of deterrence and suppression, thereby limiting responses to the reduction of youth criminal activity. Such strategies often have unintended consequences and mixed results in reducing youth gang activity.² Several studies discuss how suppression strategies often alienate, marginalize, and criminalize young people, creating a culture of punitive social control.³ These tactics reinforce and exacerbate young people's disengagement from social institutions and the larger community, which has been connected to reinforcing youth gang formation and sustenance.⁴ A more comprehensive approach to youth gang involvement has increasingly become supported in scholarship and practice. Rather than a one-size-fits-all method to reduce or prevent gang involvement,² successful approaches must be context-specific and address a community's issues, history, and experience. Approaches may combine elements of prevention, intervention, and suppression, based on a particular community's needs.⁵

Youth participation in gang activities is multifaceted and complex and requires a culturally aware approach. The literature on Native American youth gang involvement indicated that a comprehensive assessment also requires an exploration of the contemporary conditions of their everyday lives, as well as the historical trauma experienced by Native American communities.

Native American youth experience significant challenges and adversity across their life spans. Disparities exist in levels of poverty, environmental injustice, substance abuse, institutionalized stereotyping and racism, school performance, and physical health. More than one-fourth of American Indian/

Alaskan Native (AI/AN) youth live below the poverty line. Injuries and violence account for 75% of all deaths among Native Americans ages 1 to 19.⁶ Substance abuse is of particular concern; indigenous youth use disproportionately high quantities of controlled and illegal substances.⁷ AI/AN adolescents "have the highest suicide rate of all ethnic groups in the United States, and suicide is the second leading cause of death [for Native youth]."⁸ Limited physical activity and poor dietary intake contribute to high rates of obesity for indigenous youth; national studies have found 39% of Native children are overweight or obese.⁹

In addition to contemporary conditions, Native American youth also carry a distinct legacy of historical trauma and must confront its intergenerational effects. We explored historical trauma as it is experienced by tribal youth and its relation to gang participation. Trauma is derived from multiple historical events.

- ▶ In the 1800s, the federal government began to pursue policies of assimilation by outlawing indigenous spiritual practices and implementing an extensive system of boarding schools, maintained despite widespread allegations of physical and sexual abuse. By the 1930s, these policies had removed 75% of Native American sacred sites from their care and jurisdiction.¹⁰
- ▶ In 1958, the Child Welfare League of America, in collaboration with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the U.S. Children's Bureau, began administering the American Indian Adoption

Project. In the two decades that followed, a conservative estimate states that 25% to 35% of Native American children were temporarily removed from or adopted out of their biological homes.

- ▶ The U.S. government, researchers, and social workers have also been involved in medical experimentation on Native peoples and the coercive sterilization of Native American women estimated to have affected upwards of 40% of Native women of childbearing age in the 1970s.¹¹

While many of these policies have changed, we found that interactions between tribal members and surrounding communities show evidence of continuing biases against tribal communities, and tribal youth still face hostile relationships with the state and surrounding communities, which are risk factors for youth involvement in gang activity.¹² How young people are seen and treated matters.

We also included an exploration of Native youth strengths and protective factors. Despite centuries of oppression resulting in the loss of language and culture, Native youth and communities have exhibited incredible resilience. Participating in everyday tribal ways of life and teaching indigenous languages have been shown to be protective factors.¹⁰ We know from our interviews, as well as personal and professional experience, that Native youth are full of potential. They have caring communities; spiritual, cultural, educational, and tribal organizations committed to their success; and unique opportunities to engage in cutting-edge Native youth work practices such as youth media, environmental activism, and language preservation. We therefore identified specific community resources for tribal youth and attempted to understand the protective role they play. As a result of this assessment, we believe it is important to consider broader social and environmental factors related to historical trauma and continuing discriminatory

² R. Chaskin (ed.), *Youth Gangs and Community Intervention: Research, Practice, and Evidence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

³ V. Rios, *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys* (New York: New York University Press, 2011).

⁴ C. Glesmann, B. Krisberg, and S. Marchionna, "Youth in Gangs: Who Is at Risk?" *Focus: Views from the National Council on Crime and Delinquency*, 2009.

⁵ J.C. Howell, *Preventing and Reducing Juvenile Delinquency: A Comprehensive Framework*. (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 2003).

⁶ J. Myers, T. Campbell, and N. Lim, "Strengthening the Spirit of Our Future: 2008 Community Assessment Report on Risks and Protective Factors for Native Youth in Sonoma, Lake and Mendocino Counties," *Activating Native Youth Assets*, 2008, accessed at www.nijc.org/pdfs/CEY%20Report%20Web-Final.pdf.

⁷ M. Walls, "Marijuana and Alcohol Use During Early Adolescence: Gender Differences Among American Indian/First Nations Youth," *Journal of Drug Issues* 38,4 (2008): 1139-1160.

⁸ I. Wagman Borowsky, M. Resnick, M. Ireland, and R.W. Blum, "Suicide Attempts Among American Indian and Alaska Native Youth Risk and Protective Factors," *Archives Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* 153,6 (1999): 573.

⁹ M. Sarche and P. Spicer, "Poverty and Health Disparities for American Indian and Alaskan Native Children: Current Knowledge and Future Prospects," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1136 (2008): 126-136.

¹⁰ W. LaDuke, *Recovering the Sacred: The Power of Naming and Claiming* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: South End Press, 2005).

¹¹ T. Evans-Campbell and K.L. Walters, "Catching Our Breath: A Decolonization Framework for Healing Indigenous Families," in R. Fong and R. McRoy (eds.), *Intersecting Child Welfare, Substance Abuse, and Family Violence: Culturally Competent Approaches* (Alexandria: CSWE Publications, 2006), pp. 266-290.

¹² W.A. Pridmore, "Review of the Literature on Risk and Protective Factors of Offending Among Native Americans," *Journal of Ethnicity and Criminal Justice* 2,4 (2004): 45-63.



The Latin Disciples handshake.

policies that influence the development of young people.

Conducted with support of a tribal advisory board, data gathering and analysis resulted in several preliminary recommendations for youth gang prevention and the promotion of healthy youth development. Recommendations range from continuing to support existing culturally relevant youth programming to concerns with policies and media messages that debase and threaten the healthy development of young people. We end with a primary framing question:

Are racism and inequality driving forces behind Native youth gang involvement?

While we do not ignore decisions by young people to become involved in gang activity, here we focus on the social and political determinants of their involvement.

Research Methodology

We began this community-based participatory research (CBPR) project in 2011 in collaboration with a tribal government concerned with what it perceived to be rising youth gang activity within the tribal community. The project continued through meetings with a tribal research advisory board, resulting in a final

memorandum of research between the tribe and the University of Minnesota. In this agreement, decisions are made in partnership on what questions to ask, what data to analyze, and how results are presented. Our intent was to prevent typical ways research has been conducted by universities in Indian country. These typical practices involve researchers arriving with predetermined research designs to take genetic samples, knowledge, or “data,”¹³ with Native peoples being “treated as scientific objects with scant regard to community needs or the potentially harmful implications of research processes and findings.”¹⁴

Using a mixed methods approach, we generally followed the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Youth Gang Assessment

Guide.¹⁵ While this guide provided a useful strategy and outlined important foci, our experience also disclosed its limitations, particularly the need to make it more culturally appropriate. This assessment gathers data on five domains:

1. community demographics
2. law enforcement data
3. school environments and experiences data
4. community perceptions
5. community resources

For each domain, different methods of data collection were utilized. *Community demographics* included census data, tribal community demographic information, and informational interviews conducted with Native community members. Developing an understanding of the characteristics of local youth gangs required reviewing and gathering *law enforcement data*, as well as interviewing local police officers and Native community members and participating in ride-alongs with tribal police officers.

¹³ P Cochran, C. Marshall, C. Garcia-Downing, E. Kendell, D. Cook, L. McCubbin, and R.M. Gover. “Indigenous Ways of Knowing: Implications for Participatory Research and Community,” *American Journal of Public Health* 98,1 (2008): 22-27.

¹⁴ K. Walters, A. Stately, T. Evans-Campbell, J. Simoni, B. Duran, K. Schultz, E. Stanley, C. Charles, and D. Guerrero, “‘Indigenist’ Collaborative Research Efforts in Native American Communities,” in A.R. Stiffman (ed.), *The Field Research Survival Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 148.

¹⁵ (OJJDP) Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, “Comprehensive Gang Model: A Guide to Assessing Your Community Youth Gang Problem” (Washington, D.C.: OJJDP, 2009).

School environments and experiences data was easiest to gather as many questions in the assessment overlapped with those on the publicly available statewide student survey conducted by the Department of Education every three years, which we supplemented with school personnel interviews. In addition, we participated in a youth summit at the tribal school. Native *community perceptions* emerged through participation in community events and individual interviews with tribal members and tribal human service professionals, but also we reviewed mainstream and tribal media. Finally, *community resources* included a full assessment of services and programs available to young people within the Native community regardless of where they are living, observing tribal youth programs, and interviewing tribal and community youth service providers.

Findings

Findings are described in terms of the five domains of data suggested by the OJJDP Assessment Guide.

Community Demographics. In analyzing community demographics as part of this comprehensive gang assessment, one clear finding emerged: to understand Native American youth involvement in gangs, one cannot limit the assessment to a geographically bounded space such as a reservation. Our assessment revealed expansive Native community boundaries that challenge a geographical definition of “community.” Tribal community boundaries have been contested and created through U.S. federal policy. Historically, that policy intentionally destroyed Native communities, often leaving them fragmented and deracinated—torn up by the roots.¹⁶ While these practices may pose challenges for gathering demographic data as described in the community assessment, we learned that to fully understand the issue of Native youth gang involvement on the reservation, a more expansive understanding of community had to be used.

The historical formation of tribal community boundaries continues to have influence today. The community, like many other Native communities across the nation, was established with significant contention and trauma. Treaty-making, often under

questionable pretense, established formal territorial boundaries. The Dawes Act successively diminished these tribal land bases. Additional acts of government outlawed tribal spirituality and mandated boarding school attendance, thus successfully chipping away at any remaining sense of identity and strength. The Indian Relocation Act of 1956 (relocating families from reservations to major metropolitan areas) and the disproportionate removal of Native children from their homes further cemented the disconnection from both land and family. As can be expected, the Native community at the center of our inquiry, and the Native community as a whole, collectively struggles with the contemporary consequences of these societal actions.

Despite these efforts, the tribal community retains a sovereign land base, including members in both reservation and urban areas (approximate total enrollment of 4,500) and is within close proximity to other non-Native communities (~70,000 Native Americans in the state of Minnesota according to the U.S. census). The Native community continues to maintain a strong affiliation with other bands of the tribe and with other Native American communities in Minnesota and surrounding states. (*Editor’s Note:* The authors of this article signed a memorandum of understanding that the tribe at the center of this research would remain anonymous.)

This expansive notion of community provides support in many ways, and yet it also challenges ongoing efforts to address Native youth involvement in gangs. First, due to the fluidity of family ties and mobility across reservations, it is critical to incorporate data from urban Native community members as well as other reservations. Second, there is a strong collective identity as *Native American* (which is understandable); Native gangs do not discriminate on the basis of tribal enrollment or geographic locale; they gather around a common experience and identity of being Native American youth. Finally, the historic experience of tribes in a colonial nation must be central to the exploration of Native gangs and violence in Native communities. As Andrea Smith and Luana Ross state: “The violence of colonization is evidenced not merely in the most obvious forms of the history of massacres against indigenous peoples in the Americas, but in the continuing institutionalized forms of racism,

discrimination, and housing that manifest themselves on a daily basis in the lives of Native peoples.”¹⁷

In other words, to explore Native youth involvement in gangs is also to explore the violence of our nation.

Law Enforcement Data. We examined the perspectives and role of local and state law enforcement in preventing and suppressing gang involvement. This area of our research was particularly difficult because of several factors. First, law enforcement agencies are reluctant to cooperate with researchers, both because their data departments appear resource strapped and such analyses are expensive. Second, state law enforcement agencies, as of 2011, no longer collect information distinguishing young people known or suspected to be involved in gangs from other criminal activity. Previously, this information was tracked in the state through two separate databases, the Criminal Gang Pointer File and GangNet. A report published in 2010 provided details about the functions, efficacy, and dangers of these databases and indicated that there were significant ambiguities in accountability, accessibility, and required purging of gang data files. Limitations in the statute that created the database meant that it was unclear who was to administer and be accountable for it, who had access to the information, and whether (as the law indicated should happen) it was being properly purged of information. This led to the shutdown in 2011 of the GangNet database.

Additionally, the GangNet database, operated by a county sheriff’s office, operated as a feeder database into the Gang Pointer File. It therefore used less stringent standards than the Pointer File. However, this file was used by 96 agencies statewide, meaning that it could be used to identify potential gang members. The GangNet database at the end of 2008 had nearly eight times the number of individuals listed than the Pointer File.¹⁸ There are several other reasons to be concerned with the way these data were used:

¹⁷ A. Smith and L. Ross, “Introduction: Native Women and State Violence,” *Social Justice* 31,4 (2004): 1-7.

¹⁸ Individuals only needed to meet 1 of the 10-point criteria to be entered into the GangNet database, versus a minimum of 3 to be entered into the Pointer File. “Evaluation of Gang Databases in Minnesota and Recommendations for Change” (Minneapolis: University of St. Thomas School of Law, 2010), p. 14.

¹⁶ C. Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers: A Social History of the United States Indian Service, 1869-1933* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).



Unfinished Native Disciples graffiti on an abandoned home.

- ▶ The criteria tend to enforce a “guilty by association” mentality because some criteria arguably have the potential to confuse “social ties” with “criminal purpose.”
- ▶ Some of the criteria do not specifically address the issue of gang involvement.
- ▶ The criteria may allow for too much discretion to be used in regard to who is allowed to identify gang members.

These concerns demonstrate the difficulty of defining, tracking, and suppressing gang involvement. They also show the potential for abuses or unintentional neglect by law enforcement that misattributes gang involvement to young people because of loose affiliation and poor definitions of gang membership.

The literature cautions law enforcement from simply relying on suppression to address youth gang involvement. While not discounting the importance of suppression strategies to address and repress violent gang activity, as the 2012 arrests of several Native Mob gang members in Minnesota illustrates, overuse of suppression strategies can also have unintended consequences of further alienating Native young people from community institutions and

increase the likelihood of gang involvement. In our study, we encountered many arguments to justify the use of increasingly intrusive suppression strategies. While these have yet to be fully implemented, our data support a more balanced approach.

School Environments and Experiences Data. In analyzing student and school data several themes emerge. First, a majority of Native students report feeling respected by teachers and at the same time not feeling that teachers either listen or care about them. Second, statewide student survey data indicate that unlike other racial groups, Native students experience school as more dangerous than young people from other racial groups. Finally, interviews revealed a critique of both school content and pedagogy.

In analyzing the statewide student survey data, we learned that a majority of young people feel respected by their teachers in the sixth and twelfth grades. Of course, there is a difference between feeling respected among Native students (79% in sixth grade; 67% in twelfth grade) and White students (87% in sixth grade; 78% in twelfth grade). The percentage of Native students who report that “all” or “most” of their teachers show respect is just slightly higher than African Americans (74% in

sixth grade; 65% in twelfth grade), the group with the lowest percentage, but still a majority. While most students report feeling respected, this changes when they are asked if teachers or other adults at school care about them.

Here Native students report the lowest percentage. In ninth grade, only 36% of Native students report feeling cared for by teachers or other adults in school. This compares to 46% of White students and 41% of African American students. While teachers and other adults in school are seen as being respectful, they score lower when “care” is the variable. Interview data also supported these findings.

In one interview we heard this story:

The dad and I sat in the office looking at each other as we got “yelled at.”

“Why are you skipping class?” the counselor asked. “You’re never going to make it to college.” “What are you thinking!” Well it turns out it was one class the student was skipping. Never once did the counselor say *why* aren’t you going to *that* class? The student finally said the “teacher treats me bad.” “I came here and tried to transfer out of the class multiple times but the

counselor wouldn't do it." "I don't want to skip class, I don't want to be in that class!"

Another Native community member raised these issues:

I really am worried about the school system. We focus on attendance issues and ask how can we get Indian kids to school more? You should ask, are we killing them inside? Why don't we change structures? Kids aren't dropping out, they are being pushed out.

In other interviews, we learned more about how schools may be pushing kids out of school through what they choose to teach. Many Native community members said they did not see the content in public schools as relating to the everyday lives of Native young people. One interviewee described the concern like this: "The content has to relate to life; we learn through life, like math at the grocery store." Overall, interviewees advocated for a more relevant curriculum, one that "related to young people lives."

Another issue raised in the interviews related to *how* content and material were taught in schools. A consistent theme related to the typical pedagogy supported by schools. They described this pedagogy as "distant" and advocated to "stop the hierarchy mentality, make it more about [students], and empowering [students] to control their own lives." Others also indicated that there are major problems with education and employment. Young people may not be told that they have an opportunity to go to college, or that completing high school and college may be important. Some also mentioned more subtle but equally harmful problems; for example, several youth workers argued that young people are being addressed in school or elsewhere in ways that are neither culturally responsive nor responsive to the interests of these young people.

Related is a belief that Native young people are incapable or uninterested in education, a belief that often manifests as shallow or inadvertently racist attempts to engage Native young people in school or outside educational activities. The overall result of these failures in the education system are seen as setting up young people for gang involvement because gangs often provide what school does not—a form of

protection, belonging, empowerment, and employment.

Community Perceptions. Significant findings emerged in our assessment of the Native community perceptions of Native youth gangs. One overarching finding was the notion of a "devalued adolescence,"¹⁹ or as one of the tribal elders stated: Native youth are "inconsequential" to the larger U.S. society. Representations of Native youth are overwhelmingly deficit-based. Native youth are presented as "problems," "risks," and "delinquents"; they have trouble with drugs, alcohol, violence, and school. Not only are these consistent messages of damage, but they reinforce the idea that the root of problems in Native communities can be attributed to a lack of development, education, or skill while regularly submerging the social and historical contexts from which these issues emerge.²⁰

Socially speaking, we found Native youth growing up in a hostile world. A consistent stream of microaggressions was reported across all facets of the data. Individuals reported having non-Indian people refuse to talk to them and serve them. A Native community member reported encouraging her young people to wear "Native Pride" sweatshirts only to later realize that they served as a source of identification and poor treatment. A former gang member told a story of attending parent-teacher conferences; the teacher made a comment about how his son didn't have a father, and the man said, "I am right here." The teacher responded, "But you don't even look like him" and refused to believe the student had a father. A survey of local news coverage reveals frequent assumptions and presentations of criminality, as well as ignorant messages such as the sign displayed at a high school football



Hostility toward Native youth permeates American culture, such as this example from a Tennessee football game.

¹⁹ R. Dukes, R. Martinez, and J. Stein, "Precursors and Consequences of Membership in Youth Gangs," *Youth Society* 29 (1997): 139-165.

²⁰ E. Tuck, "Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities," *Harvard Educational Review* 79,3 (2009): 409-428.

game in Tennessee that went viral on national news outlets.²¹

In addition, we found an intentional distinction in the Native community between "good gangs" and "bad gangs." Bad gangs were organized for profit and willful violence, and members were not envisioned outside of their social and historical contexts but *were* presented as passing a line of morality that could no longer be empathized with or understood. Good gangs, on the other hand, were thought of as organized in response to social conditions. Some elders and youth workers indicated that good gangs have existed since the 1960s and were often the result of a need for protection from other ethnic groups. Young people affiliated with gangs because they provided protection, an outlet to respond to the lack of social status and/or to attend to the lack of job opportunities and significant poverty, were not to be responded to in the same way as those who were involved in other activities. This distinction was made not to diminish accountability for gang activities, violence, or fear experienced by the Native community (which we do not report here but did find evidence of) but rather to articulate that the reasons for gang affiliation and gang-related activity must be considered when responding to such activity.

Finally, what did Native community members believe was causing gang problems? Reiterated several times in interviews were the social conditions of young people: intergenerational trauma, microaggressions, threats to sovereignty and identity, poverty, and unresponsive institutions. Some mentioned that a sense of belonging might be lacking because young people do not have access to their culture or traditional values, because their families are too overwhelmed or do not notice this need, or because young people are otherwise excluded from taking on meaningful roles. One interviewee connected gangs to living in a "postgenocidal culture." Some individuals viewed gangs as a foreign concept for Native people but a result of the injustices and genocide perpetrated against indigenous people.

The Native community had an expansive understanding of how to address the issue of gangs. Key areas of focus emerged:

²¹ www.cbsatlanta.com/story/24039650/metro-atlanta-native-american-reacts-to-al-trail-of-tears-sign.



Several high-quality, effective community and culturally based youth programs have been developed and offered for Native young people, both on the reservation and in urban areas.

- ▶ families and parenting
- ▶ school
- ▶ youth services and programs
- ▶ addressing the legacy of trauma in the Native community
- ▶ working with young people directly on social and emotional development

The Native community advocated that a comprehensive response had to address both the social determinants

(e.g., historical trauma, continuing discrimination experienced by Native youth) and individual behaviors (e.g., parenting styles and behavior, youth development). They agreed that work needed to continue to address the social determinants of gang activity and more efforts needed to focus on reducing troubling behaviors among Native youth.

Community Resources. Several high-quality, effective community and

culturally based youth programs have been developed and offered for Native young people, both on the reservation and in urban areas. These programs have demonstrated positive outcomes in supporting healthy cultural identity, encouraging prosocial activities, and helping to address Native community-identified youth issues, such as youth unemployment and youth violence. Unfortunately, most of these programs are supported by grant funding and

often last only as long as funding is available. Large gaps in opportunities for young people in both reservation and urban communities often result. On the reservation, tribal government has begun to support robust and sustainable youth centers. In a very short period of time, these centers have attracted large numbers of community young people on a daily basis. The role and value of community centers and community-designed interventions in reducing youth involvement in gang activity should be considered.

Summary

We continue to work with our Tribal Advisory Committee to review and report on the Native youth gang assessment we completed. Based on our ongoing analysis, we offer initial conclusions based on the data we have presented in this report. First, for those Native youth who are significantly involved in violent, antisocial gang activity, current methods to address Native gang activity on a tribe-by-tribe basis are insufficient. Our findings suggest an approach that recognizes how Native gangs are interconnected by both family ties and collective experiences and concerns. We recommend collaborative efforts by tribal governments, human services, and police departments, across and between tribal communities, to better address gang activity in any single tribal community. Youth involvement in gangs will not be adequately addressed on a tribe-by-tribe basis but must include collaborative efforts across the Midwest.

Second, our analysis reveals evidence that gang involvement should be seen not only as a result of risk and protective factors in the lives of young people but also as a youth response to multiple, pervasive social factors, including historical trauma and continuing racism—"social determinants." We recommend a more focused attention on social determinants to better understand how these contribute to Native youth involvement in gangs.

Finally, we suggest a deep exploration of how young people can be involved in representing themselves and their tribal and Native communities, increasing societal consciousness, actively challenging a culture of social control, and strategically and intentionally resisting and challenging conditions that force them toward gang involvement. Too often, young people are viewed either as victim or criminal, especially in the literature on youth gang involvement. These images often shape prevention and intervention efforts toward either protective or punitive-based programming. We advocate for youth programming that acknowledges young people's agency and possibility and builds a stronger connection between young people and the communities they live in.

Our data support a holistic and expansive response to Native gang involvement that goes beyond law enforcement efforts to suppress criminal activity. While necessary as part of a holistic response, law enforcement should be part of a larger effort aimed at addressing young people's experiences of social exclusion and community isolation. Reducing Native youth gang activity will require not only diverting young people from gang activity, suppressing criminal activity, and providing engaging opportunities both in and after school hours but also addressing the legacy of historical trauma, the continuing effects of discrimination, and institutions that fail to respond to or support Native young people.

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The research upon which this article is based was supported by a grant from CURA's Faculty Interactive Research Program. The program was created to encourage University faculty to conduct research with community organizations and collaborators on issues of public policy importance for the state and community. These grants are available to regular faculty at the University of Minnesota and are awarded annually on a competitive basis.

The photos accompanying this article first appeared in a five-part series on Native American gangs that was published on Al Jazeera America's website in 2015. All photos ©Tomas Muscionico.

Creativity Testing, Achievement, and Higher-Order Thinking in Schoolchildren

By Brad Hokanson and William Bart



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“Today, the defining skills of the previous era—the ‘left brain’ capabilities that powered the Information Age—are necessary but no longer sufficient. And the capabilities we once disdained or thought frivolous—the ‘right-brained’ qualities of inventiveness, empathy, joyfulness, and meaning—increasingly will determine who flourishes and who flounders.”
– D.H. Pink, *A Whole New Mind [Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future]*

Abstract: Creativity and innovation are seen as critical factors in economic growth and personal success. This article presents research about the creative capability of Minnesota schoolchildren and the correlation between creativity and academic success. Creativity, as a measured skill, has declined in American schoolchildren since 1991, and this decline will have a greater impact on economic vitality than shortfalls in science or math. Methods, results, and analysis are presented, and the article concludes with observations about the nature of education and connections between higher-order thinking, creativity,

and achievement scores. The research on which this article is based was supported by a grant from the University Metropolitan Consortium, which is coordinated through CURA.

Creativity is essential to the economic health of any region; the innovative capabilities of a community or nation are what spark economic engines. Minnesota is known as a state with an innovation economy, which has helped it to weather economic storms. The current economic health of the metropolitan

area developed from a number of factors: support of a quality educational system, our social engagement, and numerous innovations and inventions created in the state. We know the names and the inventions as part of a legacy granted to Minnesota, and we recognize the value of maintaining creativity and innovation as building our future. For example, 3M, a leading Minnesota company, needs a new innovative product *every week* to remain viable.

One of those achievements in creativity and innovation addressed

creativity itself. More than 50 years ago, at the University of Minnesota, Dr. Paul Torrance created what remains the gold standard for measuring creativity—a series of visual and verbal tests. In the 1950s and 1960s, Dr. Torrance tested thousands of schoolchildren in the Minneapolis area and rated their creativity. Subsequent long-term research on the test results found creativity to be the most salient factor in lifelong success, three times stronger an indicator than intelligence.

Currently, nations, countries, and states around the world have all begun to expand their creative capability; Singapore, Denmark, the United Kingdom, and Taiwan all have national efforts to support and increase creative industries. This could be described as a change in the knowledge economy: “Today, the defining skills of the previous era—the ‘left brain’ capabilities that powered the Information Age—are necessary but no longer sufficient. And the capabilities we once disdained or thought frivolous—the ‘right-brained’ qualities of inventiveness, empathy, joyfulness, and meaning—increasingly will determine who flourishes and who flounders.”¹

At the same time, the value of creativity and innovation has been strongly recognized in business. An IBM worldwide survey of chief executives lists creativity as the most important skill for a contentious and dynamic future, far outpacing any other management skills.²

The jobs of the knowledge economy will not be based solely on what you know but on the new ideas, syntheses, and connections that can be generated.

Over the past decades, our state and national educational system has focused more and more on a narrow set of characteristics—standardized tests that deal with the fundamentals. The United States performs relatively poorly on international tests in math and sciences and cites this as a national problem. Minnesota evaluates all state schools on a series of achievement tests that focus on reading, science, and mathematics. These are supposed to be the skills needed to create and maintain a successful society.



An IBM survey of chief executives showed that creativity was the most desired management skill.

Some counties are seeking to diminish the importance of standardized testing. For example, some East Asian nations are consciously moving away from strict standardized testing to encourage more creative learning just at the time the United States is often placing more emphasis in the reverse direction. As a Chinese educator said: “You’re racing toward our old model. But we’re racing toward your model, as fast as we can.”³

One consistent complaint about standardized testing is the validity of the measure. Does test performance in writing or math translate into long-term success, or is it one of a number of necessary skills? How does math skill correlate to other essential traits, such as creativity, needed for a successful society? Creativity measures through testing show a strong correlation with lifelong innovative productivity in areas such as patents, businesses started, and internationally recognized achievement. Importantly, longitudinal research by J.A. Plucker⁴ on the early creativity test subjects finds the correlation to lifetime achievement three times stronger for creativity than for general intelligence.⁴

In our research, we tried to find out how creative contemporary schoolchildren are; we knew that research has shown a decline in creativity scores across America since 1991.⁵ We also examined how the current Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment Test (MCAT) corresponds to creativity tests. Intelligence does not usually correspond with creativity, and since creativity is a stronger indicator of lifetime success, the results could raise questions about the validity of achievement tests. And given the current concern with the racial achievement gap, we also sought to examine if this academic disparity was evident in creativity results as well. Do students who do poorly on achievement tests exhibit higher levels of creativity?

Research Venue

While different types of school districts could allow the research to examine differing characteristics, for our venue we sought a district that had a substantial scale and representative demographics to be indicative of student performance of the entire state. The district we chose for a research venue was a microcosm of the entire state in terms of ethnicity and income.

¹ D.H. Pink, *A Whole New Mind [Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future]* (Grand Haven, Michigan: Brilliance, 2008), p. 22.

² IBM Business Services, *Capitalizing on Complexity: Insights from the Global Chief Executive Officer Survey* (Somers, New York: report, 2010).

³ P. Bronson and A. Merryman, “The Creativity Crisis,” *Newsweek*, July 10, 2010.

⁴ J.A. Plucker, “Is the Proof in the Pudding? Re-analyses of Torrance’s (1958 to present) Longitudinal Data,” *Creativity Research Journal* 12,2 (1999): 103-114.

⁵ K.H. Kim, “The Creativity Crisis: The Decrease in Creative Thinking Scores on the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking,” *Creativity Research Journal* 23,4 (2011): 285-295.

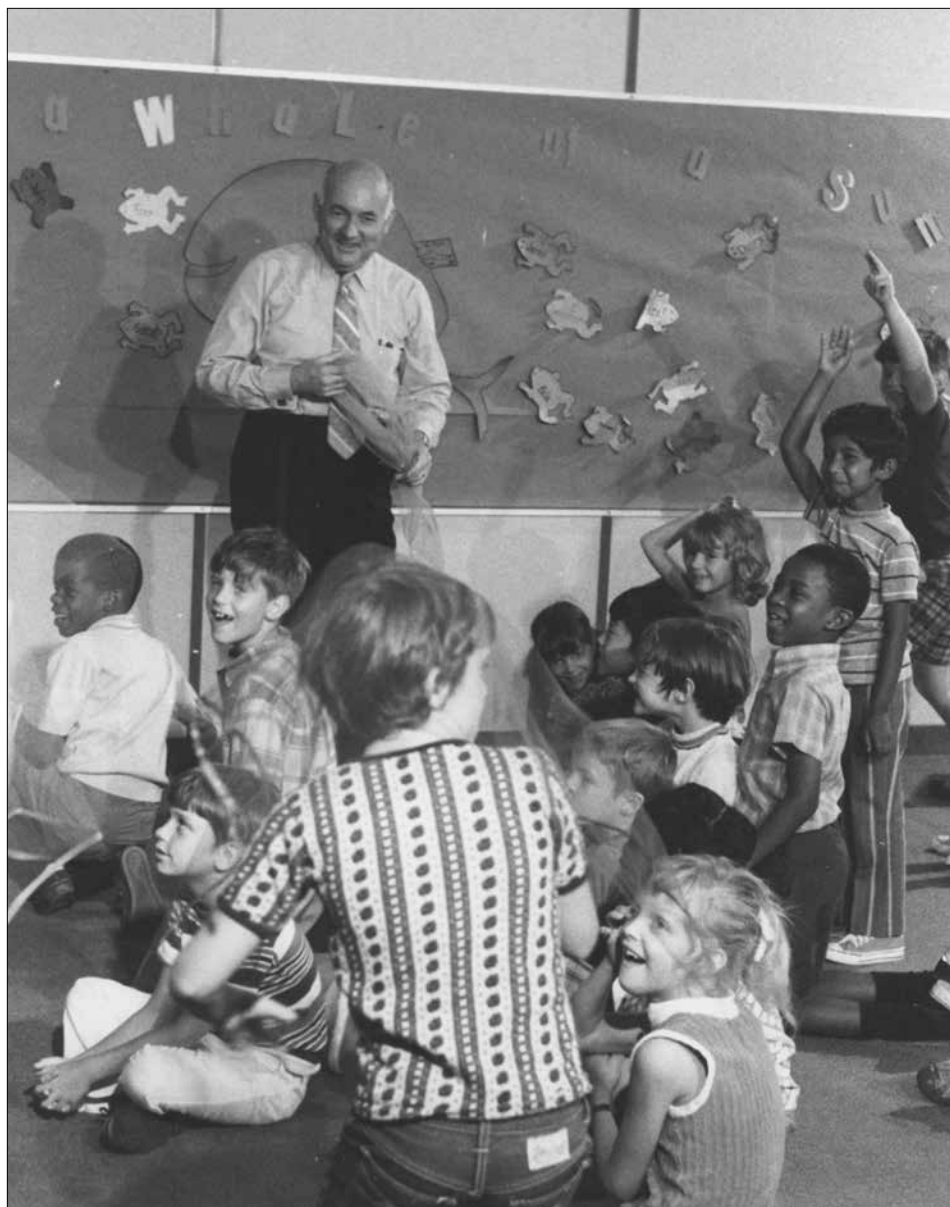
Research was conducted in a single large suburban school district, in each middle and high school in the district. Currently there are about 39,000 students from 14 different communities enrolled in the district. Of the district's students, 78% are White, 10% Black, 4% Hispanic, 6% Asian, and 1% Native American; 32% of the students in the district receive free or reduced-price lunches; 7% have limited English proficiency; and 13% receive special education. Demographics and socioeconomic status vary significantly across the district while the curriculum remains relatively constant. Six district middle schools and five high schools were tested.

We were fortunate to work directly with the research department of the district for the administration of the tests and in the ensuring of data anonymity. In addition to administration of the creativity tests to more than 1,700 schoolchildren, other salient data were connected to individual creativity scores, including achievement and demographic data such as race, economic status (as evidenced by free or reduced-price lunches), and disciplinary citations, thereby allowing a richer understanding of the nature of creativity and achievement.

Creativity Testing

Creativity, and specifically divergent thinking, is measured by the ability to generate a wide and detailed range of responses to a given stimulus in a set period of time. Answers are counted and analyzed for diversity, rarity, and complexity of thought. For example, answers to a question about what one could eat for dinner could include pizza, bread, or fish. Providing more answers would be indicative of a higher level of creativity. There are a number of common answers to this question, and some answers are unexpected; comparing responses to common answers can provide an understanding of the originality of the student. More conceptually complex answers illustrate more complex levels of creativity; in our example, "pizza" is an answer that could be a response around the world, but eating one's hat or eating one's words would be less-expected responses in almost any culture. The answers that are sought are those that are unexpected, novel, and new—*by definition*, more creative answers.

Most direct measurements of creativity use tests based on the



Most measurements of creativity use tests based on work that Dr. Paul Torrance did while at the University of Minnesota more than 50 years ago. The value of Torrance Tests comes from their wide use and the fact that you can compare an individual's performance against similar groups on a large scale.

early work of Dr. Paul Torrance. The Torrance Tests used in this research were developed and first published in the early 1960s and are widely used to test creativity. Their value comes from extensive use and the ability to compare individual performance to similar groups and ages on a large scale. A series of activities are used to provide a series of metrics. The stimulus can be a drawing, sound, or text; different versions of the test collect drawn or written answers.

The test in this case was the figural version of the test; a series of three visual forms to spur drawn responses from the students in three 10-minute periods. In the district schools, tests

were administered over three different days to minimize disruption to the educational program. This is an accepted method for administering the test. The tests were administered in randomly selected homerooms in each school.

Tests were completed in 47 eighth-grade classrooms and 39 eleventh-grade classrooms by teachers trained in the administration of the tests.

The publisher of the Torrance Tests scored the tests, providing for a high level of reliability and a comparison of the results with a large and contemporary data set. In other words, scores from the district were compared with scores from students of a comparable age and

grade. Scores and analysis were provided to the district, and at each school's discretion, to the individual students.

Aspects of Creativity

A number of different aspects of creativity are examined with the Torrance Tests, and these aspects help us understand both the nature of creativity and the ability of the students who are tested. The metrics describe the ability to produce numerous and novel ideas as well as skills in abstraction, elaboration, and synthesis. The main metrics can be summarized as:

- ▶ **Fluency:** the ability to develop multiple ideas to a given stimulus.
- ▶ **Originality:** generation of unusual or unique ideas; based on statistical infrequency.
- ▶ **Abstractness of titles:** relates to synthesizing and organizing aspects of thinking; capturing the essence of the information presented.
- ▶ **Elaboration:** imagination and development of ideas.
- ▶ **Resistance to closure:** moving past the simple, direct answer to more original ideas.

Under this testing system, each metric receives a raw score that is

derived from the number of answers or elements identified under the evaluation protocol. Raw scores are then converted to a standardized score with a median of 100 and a standard deviation of 20 using a database of previous tests and evaluated by grade and age.

Minnesota Comprehensive Achievement Tests

Like other states, Minnesota applies a battery of tests to students in the public school system, and scores from these tests were made available from the research team, tied to individual creativity scores. The tests administered to students in the study included measurements of math, science, and reading. These tests are taken by all eighth and eleventh graders in Minnesota each year. The tests, computer-scored, rate students as *exceeding*, *meeting*, or *not meeting* state standards.

In addition, data were also provided by the district research office on gender, citations for discipline, English proficiency, art courses completed, and eligibility for free or reduced-price lunches, thereby allowing measured creativity to be correlated with a wide range of influences and possible causes.

Analysis

Creativity is often examined through the use of "raw" scores as well as "standardized" scores. Raw scores are a simple count of responses meeting

certain criteria, such as applicability to the prompt. Standardized scores use the number of identified responses to generate a mean score for the entire population of the age or grade. This method of scoring allows comparison of the district or an individual school to national samples. This is rated as 100, and other scores are calculated from this midpoint. Additional statistical analysis comparing different schools and the two grades involved in the study was done as well.

Results

We found that district eighth graders scored above the population mean in terms of *fluency* (the ability to generate multiple, divergent answers) and *originality* (generating unusual or unique answers). Both scores were less than a standard deviation above the mean but statistically significant. Students in the district, on these two metrics, have a strong level of skill in the production of quick and simple ideas (Table 1).

On the other hand, the same testing reveals that when it comes to complex skills of creativity, students do not fare as well. They scored a half standard deviation below the general population in terms of *titling* (synthesis and abstraction of ideas) and *elaboration* (the imaginative ability to develop ideas). In short, while students could generate a number of ideas, they lacked the ability to produce and develop more complex

Table 1. TTCT Figural-A Mean Standardized and Raw Scores, Eighth Grade

	Fluency	Originality	Elaboration	Titling	Closure	Average
Mean Raw Score	24.02	16.66	7.75	6.18 ^a	13.41	na
Standardized Score (grade)	113.74	106.44	89.84	87.84	109.22	101.41
Average National Percentile (grade)	68	60	36	34	65	55

a. Eleventh-grade scores higher.

Table 2. TTCT Figural-A Mean Standardized and Raw Scores, Eleventh Grade

	Fluency	Originality	Elaboration	Titling	Closure	Average
Mean Raw Score	20.72	14.78	7.16	6.32 ^a	12.88	na
Standardized Score (grade)	104.93	102.00	92.77 ^a	93.45 ^a	106.11	99.87
Average National Percentile (grade)	58	54	40	42	61	52

a. Eleventh-grade scores higher.

ideas, which is a troubling evaluation of their capability for higher-order thinking.

The creative ability of schoolchildren varies with their grade in school. In general, the socialization process of elementary school, among other factors, tends to restrain creative skills; popular wisdom holds that younger children are very creative and freely express their unusual ideas. One lesson children learn in school is to learn the rules and to conform. Older children also are more conscious of their relationship with other schoolchildren, again depressing creativity.

As part of this research study, creativity testing was also conducted on eleventh-grade students, and as expected, creativity scores declined compared with eighth-grade students. This comparison allowed us to examine

change over time within a district; while the same populations were not tested, it does give a picture of development within the district.

In comparison with the eighth-grade results presented in Table 1, the eleventh-grade results in Table 2 illustrate a decline in both raw and standardized scores, meaning that the ability to be creative has declined in absolute terms, with eleventh graders developing fewer results than eighth graders. At the same time, the standardized scores are lower, meaning the older students are comparatively less well prepared compared to the general population.

Eleventh graders were rated strong and weak in the same areas as the eighth-grade students, that is, moderately strong in *fluency* and *originality*, while lagging in the higher-order skills of *elaboration* and *titling*. Perhaps more

significantly, eighth graders performed better than eleventh graders in virtually all areas.

Ethnic groups were consistent at both eighth- and eleventh-grade levels in terms of the creativity testing, with highest scores on *fluency* and lowest cores on *titling* and *elaboration*. The number of ethnic minorities are fairly small and probably limit the statistical analysis at this level.

Significant performance differences were found between genders. As with other forms of educational measurement, some differences should be expected between genders in both eighth and eleventh grades. It is well understood that girls develop cognitively earlier than boys, and that their social skills (which are very supportive of higher-order thinking metrics) are much more advanced at an earlier age.

Table 3. TTCT Figural-A Gender Comparisons, Eighth Grade

	Fluency	Originality	Elaboration	Titling	Closure	Average
Male Average Raw Score	23.78	16.03	6.91	5.62	13.01	
Male National Percentile (grade)	67	56	28	30	62	50
Male Mean Standardized Score	112.97	104.19	83.82	84.85	107.28	98.61
Female Mean Standardized Score	114.66	108.82	96.05	90.96	111.30	104.35
Female National Percentile (grade)	70	63	44	38	69	61
Female Average Raw Score	24.28	17.31	8.60	6.76	13.82	

Table 4. TTCT Figural-A Gender Comparisons, Eleventh Grade

	Fluency	Originality	Elaboration	Titling	Closure	Average
Male Average Raw Score	20.19	14.48	6.57	5.93	12.40	
Male National Percentile (grade)	55	52	33	39	57	47
Male Mean Standardized Score	103.56	100.84	88.37	91.39	103.81	97.62
Female Mean Standardized Score	106.67	103.62	98.04	95.84	108.85	102.61
Female National Percentile (grade)	61	56	48	45	65	58
Female Average Raw Score	21.38	15.23	7.87	6.76	13.47	

Generally speaking, eighth-grade girls tend to have an advantage on every creativity subtest over eighth-grade boys. As shown in Table 3, while boys and girls perform comparably on *fluency* and *originality*, and both scores are above the grade-based national average, girls are significantly higher on all creativity subtests at this level. For both *elaboration* and *titling*, both boys and girls perform below the national average. Eighth-grade boys, in contrast, are about one full standard deviation below the national average, with percentile ranks of 28 and 30, respectively. Average standardized scores for girls are above the national mean, while average scores for boys are below the national mean.

While there are changes in the gender-based data for eleventh graders, as girls remained slightly above the national grade-based mean, and boys were slightly below the mean (Table 4). Both boys and girls demonstrated less advantage in terms of *fluency* and *originality* and were more skilled in terms of *elaboration* and *titling*, perhaps demonstrating the development of higher-order thinking skills. In general, for both boys and girls, creativity declined between eighth and eleventh grades, but the comparative creative advantages of girls over boys remained highly significant. This is most evident in scores for *elaboration* and *titling*, creativity metrics that focus on higher-order thinking in pursuit of creativity.

District Performance on the Minnesota Comprehensive Achievement Tests

As with all Minnesota districts, all students completed the Minnesota



The creative ability of schoolchildren varies with their grade in school. In general, the socialization process of elementary school, among other factors, tends to restrain creative skills. Older children also are more conscious of their relationship with other schoolchildren, again depressing creativity.

Comprehensive Achievement tests. At the eighth-grade level, 64% were proficient in science, 57% in math, and 54% in reading. Significant score changes

had occurred in reading due to changes in the test used. State eighth-grade averages for proficiency were: science 44%, math 59%, reading 54%.

Table 5. Correlation Matrix for the Creativity Subtest and Scholastic Achievement Scores

	Fluency	Originality	Elaboration	Titling	Resistance to Closure	Science	Math	Reading
Fluency	1							
Originality	.79 ^a	1						
Elaboration	.32	.44	1					
Titling	.14	.28	.48	1				
Resistance to Closure	.48	.45	.36	.36	1			
Science	.09	.16	.31 ^c	.30 ^c	.17	1		
Math	.09	.15	.30 ^c	.29 ^c	.13	.77 ^b	1	
Reading	.07	.15	.35 ^c	.30 ^c	.14	.72 ^b	.69 ^b	1

Product-Moment Correlations Among Eight Cognitive Variables

To examine the connections between the achievement tests and the creativity tests, scores on the creativity subtests were compared to the three MCAT tests in reading, math, and science. Only the eighth-grade students have been evaluated to date.

Three principal observations were made from the data:

1. As expected with creativity tests in general and with the Torrance Tests in particular, the first two metrics of creativity were highly correlated at .79, consistent with research by Dr. Torrance that reported a correlation of .81, as well as with recent meta-analyses of creativity testing. To paraphrase Linus Pauling, the best way to have an original idea is to have a lot of ideas (see Table 5, upper left corner, note *a*).
2. The Minnesota Comprehensive Achievement scores were strongly correlated between the three tests at .77, .72, and .69. Students who performed well on math, for example, also performed well on science, and in general performance on all three achievement tests was consistent. Good students were good students across the board; less successful students were consistent as well (Table 5, lower right corner, note *b*).
3. While the simpler creativity skills of *fluency* and *originality* did not correlate well with achievement scores, the two higher-order measures, *elaboration* and *titling*, were moderately correlated. These two higher-order scores also correlated with the other creativity metrics, which could indicate a connection between learning activities that stress higher-order thinking, such as art, music, creative writing, or philosophy, and performance on the narrowly focused achievement skills. In other words, improvement in math could be spurred by broader learning activities outside of mathematics, for example (Table 5, note *c*).

Discussion

The findings from the research are important first in terms of the creative skills of the students and second in terms of addressing the larger issues of



“Everyone agrees that creativity is a key skill for the twenty-first century, but we’re not teaching our kids this skill. We’ve become so obsessed with rote learning, with making sure that kids memorize the year of some old battle. But in this day and age that’s the least valuable kind of learning. That’s the stuff you can look up on your phone!”

– Kyle Wedberg, CEO, New Orleans Center for Creative Arts, as quoted in J. Lehrer, Imagine: How Creativity Works.

education in a typical suburban school district, learning, and testing.

Consistent with other research in the field, we found that the creative capability of schoolchildren in eighth and eleventh grades to be mixed. Students in both grades were significantly higher than the national mean for their grade and age for both *fluency* and *originality*. Students in general were able to generate a larger number of ideas, and the ideas were more diverse and unusual. On the other hand, scores for the other two main metrics, *elaboration* and *titling*, were substantially lower, indicating less ability to develop ideas or to synthesize or abstract thought.

Taken together, this may indicate a more shallow development of a capability for new ideas and a lack of skill in advancing more complex or complete ideas. It could be hypothesized that this is a result of substantial testing and preparation for testing, with less emphasis on the development of higher-order thinking. Kim⁵ and Bronson and Merryman³ also cite this as possible reasons for the nationwide decline in measured creativity, along with other causes such as increased screen time and the narrowing of standard curricula. Neither their observations nor our local research bodes well for a skilled populace in the future; the American

advantage in education has long rested on the ability to be creative:

Everyone agrees that creativity is a key skill for the twenty-first century, but we're not teaching our kids this skill. We've become so obsessed with rote learning, with making sure that kids memorize the year of some old battle. But in this day and age that's the least valuable kind of learning. That's the stuff you can look up on your phone!⁶

Connecting creativity with the full learning that must take place in secondary school rests on the nature of creativity as higher-order thinking. The generation and development of new ideas goes beyond the simplistic interpretation of creativity as a skill of the fine arts. The moderate correlation between the two higher-order creativity metrics, *elaboration* and *titling*, and the three areas of the achievement tests indicates their value in a broader educational context. This correlation provides the connective tissue between creativity and achievement. Hypothetically, educational development in the areas of elaboration, synthesis, and abstraction could indirectly support

advances in achievement scores as well as in actual learning. Increasing scores through a heightened narrow focus may only have an incremental effect on learning, but building the full learner through more complex learning activities could be transformative. This is consistent with findings from Vaughn and Winner, where arts-oriented courses were correlated with increased SAT scores.⁷

Brad Hokanson is a professor in Graphic Design at the University of Minnesota. He has a diverse academic record, including degrees in art, architecture, urban design, and received his Ph.D. in Instructional Technology.

He teaches in the areas of creative problem solving, interactive media, and critical thinking. His research focuses on creativity and design thinking. He currently is researching the relationship between creativity and achievement in schoolchildren, comparing measured creativity with standardized achievement. He is also currently teaching a massive online course on creativity for the University.

He has published his research in a wide range of journals in the fields of creativity and educational technology. He has recently been elected President of the

Association of Educational Communication and Technology.

William M. Bart is a professor in Educational Psychology at the University of Minnesota and Coordinates the certificate program in talent development and gifted education. He received his Ph.D. in Educational Psychology from the University of Chicago.

He teaches in the areas of creativity and cognition, gifted and talented education, and critical thinking. His research focuses on the relationships among cognition, instruction, and testing. Presently he is pursuing that interest through research on cognitive diagnostic testing and on the development of talents and gifts among students. The issue of how research in cognition and testing can inform effective school practice also remains of interest.

He is a Fellow of the American Psychological Society.

The research upon which this article is based was supported by a grant from the University Metropolitan Consortium. The authors also published an article based on their research in the journal *Thinking Skills and Creativity*. Visit z.umn.edu/13c4 to read more.

All artwork featured in this article is produced by children and adolescents.

⁶ Kyle Wedberg, CEO, New Orleans Center for Creative Arts, as quoted in J. Lehrer, *Imagine: How Creativity Works* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012).

⁷ K. Vaughn and E. Winner, "SAT Scores of Students Who Study the Arts: What We Can and Cannot Conclude About the Association," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 34,3/4 (2000): 77-90.

Poverty Explains Some of the Achievement Gap, but Not All

By Will Craig

The Twin Cities have one of the worst achievement gaps in the nation. On third-grade reading tests, 70% of White students meet the achievement standards, while only 38% of students of color meet those standards.¹ This article attempts to understand the causes of that gap. It focuses on family income and finds it explains much of the gap. Some schools in the Metro area have been able to close the remaining gap for low-income students of color.

There are three straight-forward ways to account for the racial achievement gap: family income, limited English

English proficiency (23% meet the standard) and those eligible for special education programs (31% meet the standard).

A disproportionate number of people of color are low income. If LEP and special education are controlled, was there a chance that income explains all (or most) of the achievement gap? Exploring that possibility was the major purpose of this report.

Third-grade Reading Scores - Adjusted

I asked the Minnesota Department of Education to produce data on third-grade test scores by race and income

points for American Indians (See Table 1, column a). I use the term “Black” because the Minnesota Department of Education race data combines African American students and the children of African immigrants. Hispanic and Asian student gaps, where limited English proficiency can be a major issue, shrink to 14 and 2 percentage points, respectively, after eliminating LEP students.

The next step is to look at the impact of family income on test scores. Family income level was determined by looking at whether a student was enrolled in the free or reduced program. For a family of four, those earning under

Table 1: Adjusted Twin Cities Area Third-grade Reading Test Results for Public School Students by Race/Ethnicity and Income, 2013–14. (Excludes students with limited English proficiency and those receiving Special Education services.)

Race / Ethnicity	All Students		Lower Income Students (Free and Reduced Lunch)			Higher Income Students (No Lunch Subsidy)		
	Meets or Exceeds Standard (a)	Number Students (b)	Meets or Exceeds Standard (c)	Number Students (d)	Percent of Race, Ethnicity (e)	Meets or Exceeds Standard (f)	Number Students (g)	Percent of Race, Ethnicity (h)
White	75%	18,052	57%	2,835	16%	78%	15,217	84%
Asian	73%	1,877	52%	496	26%	80%	1,381	74%
Hispanic	61%	1,187	53%	607	51%	70%	580	49%
Black	42%	3,708	36%	2,918	79%	62%	790	21%
American Indian	43%	354	38%	263	74%	58%	91	26%
TOTAL	69%	25,178	47%	7,119	28%	77%	18,059	72%

proficiency (LEP), and disability of some kind. We know that lower income students do worse on the Minnesota Comprehensive Achievement Tests (MCA); only 24% of those enrolled in the free or reduced program meet the standard. Similarly, low achievement levels exist for those with limited

for all public schools in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.² I asked them to remove students who are eligible for LEP services or who are receiving special education services. With those factors removed, the achievement gap continues to exist: 33 percentage points for Black students and 32 percentage

\$44,000 are eligible for this program.³ Figure 1 shows that children from lower income families do worse than those from higher income families, regardless of race.

¹ Statistics in this paragraph and the next are taken from Wilder Research’s Minnesota Compass: <http://www.mncompass.org/>

² I also asked them for eighth-grade math scores and analyzed that data to a lesser degree. Results were similar to what is presented here.

³ Children in families earning less than 130% of the federal poverty line are eligible for free lunch; families earning less than 185% of the federal poverty line are eligible for a reduced price lunch. For a family of four, these thresholds amount to roughly \$31,000 and \$44,000, respectively, per year.

Table 1 documents the impact of family income on third-grade reading test results in more detail. Overall, more than three quarters (77%) of the higher income students succeed while less than half (47%) of the lower income students do. That drop in performance for low-income students holds for every race and ethnic group (compare columns c and f). Asian student performance continues to match that of Whites at both income levels. The Hispanic achievement gap shrinks farther when controlling for family income—from 14 percentage points overall to four percentage points for low-income students and 8 percentage points for higher income students.

Gaps continue to be significant for African Americans and American Indians even when controlling for income. For Blacks, the gap was 33 percentage points overall. It shrinks, but not significantly, to 21 percentage points for low-income students and to 16 percentage points for higher income students. Higher income Blacks do better than lower income Whites, but they remain significantly behind Whites at the higher income level. The same pattern holds for American Indians.

The real problem for Blacks and American Indian students is multifaceted. Their achievement gaps for lower income students are the largest of any group. And three quarters or more of their students come from low-income

families. Therefore, I will focus the rest of this paper on low-income students. For simplicity, and because they are a much larger group, I will restrict my analysis to Blacks.

Lower Income Black Children

Test results for low-income Black children are even more discouraging than they appear in Table 1. A significant portion of Black students are at the lowest levels of reading proficiency. Department of Education test results are originally presented in four categories, two below the standard and two above the standard. The lowest of those categories is *Does Not Meet the Standard*, while the next higher sub-standard measure is *Partially Meets the Standard*.

Figure 2 shows the test results for low-income Blacks and Whites. Some 43% of Blacks fell into the lowest category—*Does Not Meet the Standard*. This is the largest single block of Black students; only 24 percent of lower income Whites were this deficient. On the next step of the ladder, Blacks and Whites have a nearly equal number of students who *Partially Meet* the standard. The big difference between the two groups is the huge percentage of Black students who have not begun to meet the standard.

Some schools are succeeding with lower income Black students. Table 2 lists the top 10 schools or districts that have been successful with low income Black students; all got over 50% of their

low-income Black students to meet or exceed the standard, well over the 36% average for all such students. There is no clear pattern describing these successful schools. They are a mix of traditional and charter schools, central city and suburban schools, schools with high and low concentrations of Black students, and schools with high and low concentrations of students on free or reduced price lunch.

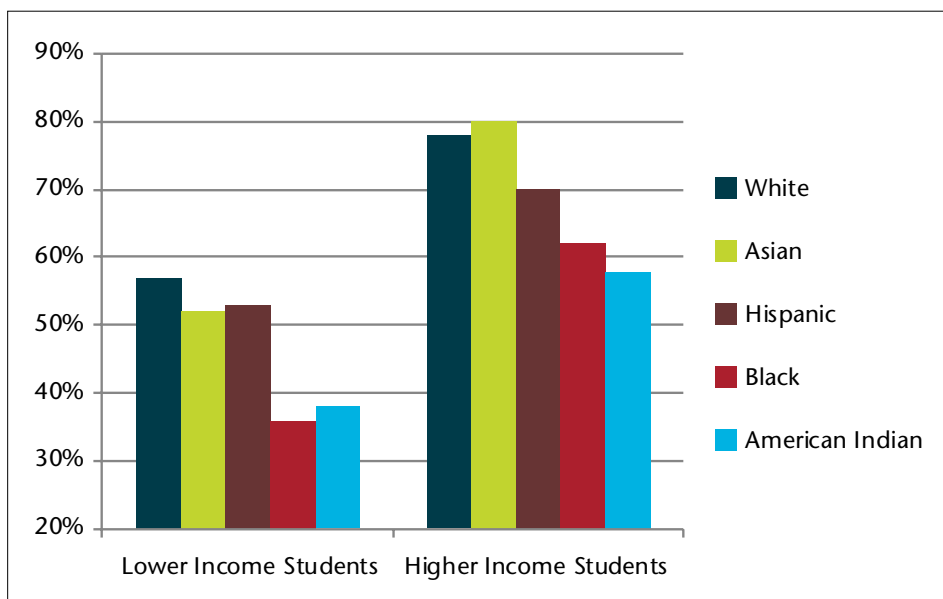
Table 2 does not show individual schools within the traditional districts. My special data request was made at the district level because I wanted to avoid disclosure rules that would drop results when numbers got small. Some individual schools might have made this list. For example, the Department of Education public website shows relatively high Black test scores for several individual St. Paul schools, though that data has not been differentiated by participation in the free or reduced lunch program.⁴

Parental awareness may be the one unifying factor describing these successful schools. Parents are paying attention to their options and have made a decision to enroll their child in a charter school or a suburban school district where their child might have a better chance to succeed. Making such choices can be tricky, because not all charter or suburban schools are as successful as those listed in Table 2. Overall, charter schools and traditional schools have the same low 36% success rate.

It is unfair to totally blame schools for the failure of their students. Many inner-city students come from homes that are much poorer than the free-lunch income threshold used here. Their lives may include homelessness and other stress factors. They may have not benefited from two-parent or early-childhood development programs. All those factors limit a child's readiness to learn.

But schools certainly get some of the blame. School policy lets an experienced teacher opt out of his or her current school and apply to another school in the same district. This policy leaves tough schools with

Figure 1. Third-grade Reading Proficiency of Lower and Higher Income Students, by Race. Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, 2013–14. (Excludes students with limited English proficiency and those receiving Special Education services. Base of graph begins at 20%.)



⁴ See <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Data/>. St. Paul had four individual schools that might have made the list in Table 2: Capitol Hill Magnet/Rondo, Jackson Preparatory, Linwood Monroe Arts Plus Lower, and St. Anthony Park. The overall third-grade Black test results were 58% or above for each. Participation in the subsidized lunch program ranged from 26% to 92% in these schools. No Minneapolis school had a success rate above 50%.

Table 2: Schools Producing Best Third-grade Test Results in Reading for Low-income Black Students, 2013-2014. (Excludes students with limited English proficiency and those receiving Special Education services.)

District or School	Percent Low-income Black Third Graders Meeting or Exceeding Reading Standard (excludes LEP and Special Ed students)	Location	Traditional or Charter	2015 District/School-Level Demographics ¹ (all grades, all students)	
				Percent Black Students	Percent Free or Reduced Lunch
Global Academy	89%	Columbia Heights	Charter	73%	91%
West Metro Education Program ²	74%	Downtown Minneapolis	Traditional	49%	52%
West St. Paul - Mendota Hts. - Eagan District	64%	Mendota Heights	Traditional	11%	41%
Eastern Carver County Public School District	64%	Chaska	Traditional	4%	20%
Friendship Academy of Fine Arts	64%	South Minneapolis	Charter	91%	93%
Shakopee Public School District	61%	Shakopee	Traditional	9%	33%
Life Prep	58%	East St. Paul	Charter	42%	77%
Harvest Preparatory School	56%	North Minneapolis	Charter	97%	93%
North St. Paul - Maplewood - Oakdale District	53%	Maplewood	Traditional	19%	52%
Eden Prairie Public School District	53%	Eden Prairie	Traditional	14%	21%

1 Data from Department of Education's Minnesota Report Card website - <http://rc.education.state.mn.us/>

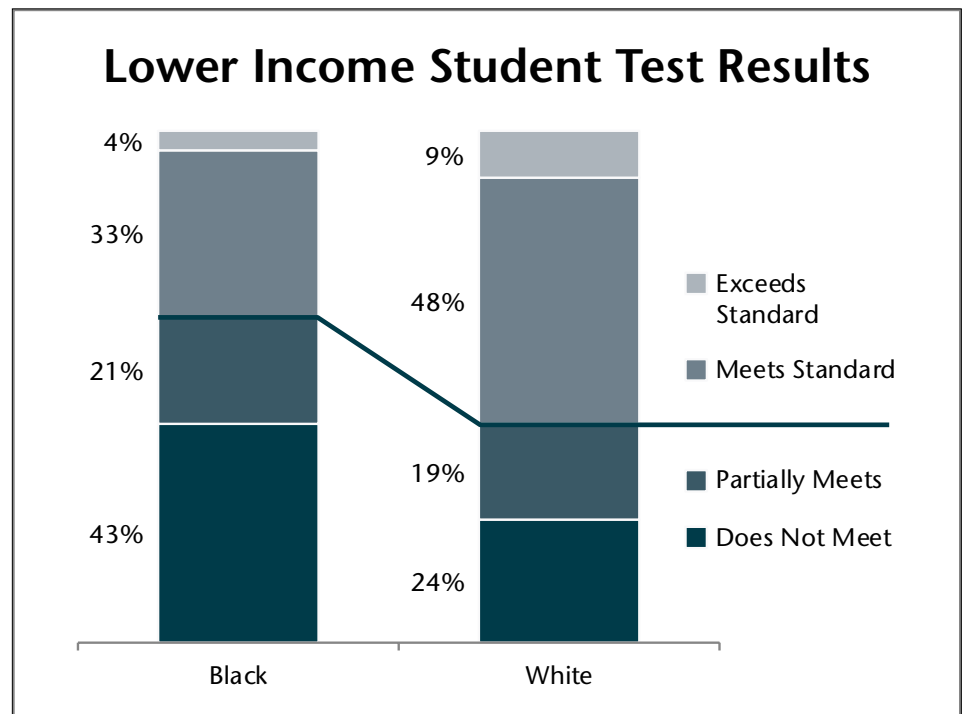
2 West Metro is a voluntary integration district involving Minneapolis and 10 Hennepin County suburban districts.

new inexperienced teachers every year, teachers who would struggle with any group of students and are not prepared for the challenging ones. Furthermore, teacher salaries are set by contract based on their own education credits and years of experience; little reward is given for success with students⁵ and no extra pay is available to those who succeed with at-risk children. Individual schools in larger districts often have limited freedom to innovate. In an ideal world, teachers, principals, administrators, and school board members would be held accountable for the success of their children and rewarded when they do well.

Will Craig is CURA's Associate Director Emeritus.

⁵ Minnesota's Quality Compensation (Q Comp) program provides an option for performance pay. See "Reforming Teacher Contracts: A Look at the Impact of Q Comp on Student Achievement in Minnesota" by Elton Mykerezi, Aaron Sojourner, and Kristine West in the Spring/Summer 2015 issue of the *CURA Reporter*.

Figure 2. 2013-14 Metro Area Reading Test Results for Low-income Black and White Third Graders. (Excludes students with limited English proficiency and those receiving Special Education services.)



Disrupting Poverty with Mentoring Young Adults

by Monique Linder

The name “Disrupting Poverty” was selected about midway through the impact study that I conducted for Mentoring Young Adults (MYA), a St. Paul-based organization that provides crisis management for vulnerable adults. I was in the midst of a critical discovery period of measuring MYA’s case data and interviewing key funders, service providers, and clients. With all of MYA’s impactful work, the title “Disrupting Poverty” just made sense.

The first phase of the study began as a summer research project, starting with an interview with MYA’s executive director and founder, Dora Jones, who articulated MYA’s history in great detail. When I asked to see the data to support this information, Jones pointed me to a locked storage bin with lots of file boxes. “There it is, every piece of paper from the last nine years, because I do not throw away anything,” she explained. With the help of a student worker, five years of data were organized, entered into a database, checked, and statistically modeled to add intelligence and measurement to the study’s conclusions. Mentoring Young Adults’ work was disruptive, but the organization needed some grounding in process and data; for example, with MYA’s disruption in finding housing for clients who are stabilized in jobs yet left unable to provide a home for their families because of an unlawful detainer on their records, by partnering with independent landlords. This partnership model enabled MYA to reduce the homeless population 272% from 2013 to 2014.

The organization is in the business of giving second chances. The CURA-supported impact study was able to put measurement to Jones’s existing programs to show their impact on the lives MYA helped.

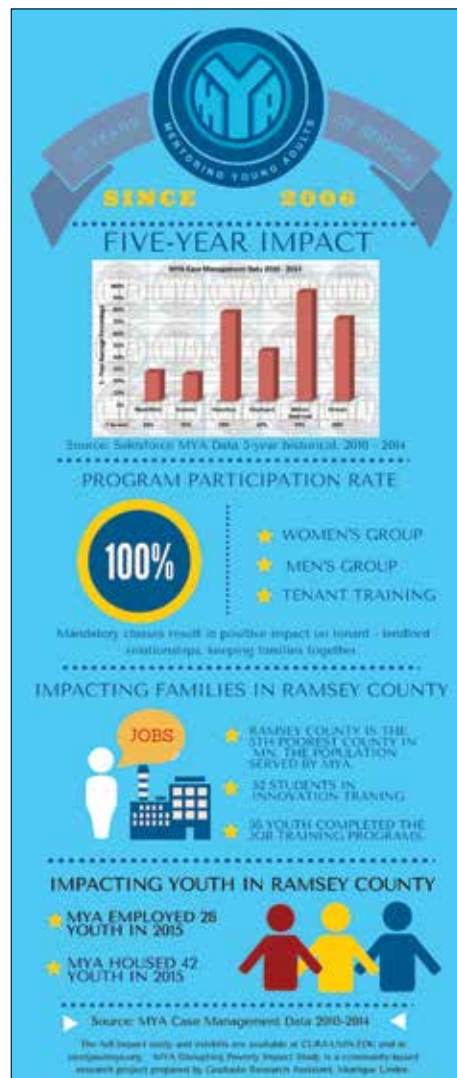
“Disrupting Poverty” focuses on MYA’s impact using qualitative and quantitative data collected over a five-year period. The study shows that leaving the root causes of extreme poverty and inequality unchecked, without social service programs run by strong community leaders, threatens a community’s health and welfare

as a whole. Poverty is extreme when it is concentrated in an area where the poverty rate falls 40% below the national poverty threshold. Ramsey County is the sixth poorest county in

the United States according to the 2013 American Community Survey, with five-year estimates at 16.9%. That’s approximately 90,000 people in this county served by MYA.

The research tells the story of how Minnesota’s key socioeconomic indicators are completely different when viewed from a poverty and racial inequality lens by county. The data collected include first-person interviews with key funders, partners, landlords, youth, MYA’s founder/executive director, clients, program facilitators, and the MYA board chair to provide a broad scope and depth. The study also looks at demand and capacity with a sophisticated data model and statistical analysis, which revealed a 97% increase in MYA’s 2014 cases over 2013 and an additional 63% increase from 2014 to 2015 (see Table 1).

In one of her first in-person interviews, Jones provided deep insight into the reason MYA must bring the family together when managing the organization’s youth cases. “When a homeless youth walks through MYA’s doors for help, almost always there’s a homeless family story attached,” says Jones. The crisis nature of these cases requires an efficient intake process that digs deep into the family’s status in order to help the youth. Often, the circumstances of the case extend beyond the issue of homelessness and include many other scenarios, such as an incarcerated parent, drug and/or alcohol abuse, mental illness, or sexual assault, requiring protection for the child. Data analysis provides a comprehensive view of effectiveness rates of MYA in disrupting poverty, one youth at a time, by mentoring and supporting the whole family.



CURA support helped Mentoring Young Adults comb through and analyze years of data and develop an impact study.

Table 1: Number of Cases and Year-over-year Change in Caseload for Mentoring Young Adults

MYA CASE DATA	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
Total Applications	540	341	173	108	97	50
YOY Change (%)	63%	97%	60%	11%	90%	

The impact of MYA in Ramsey, Dakota, Washington, and Hennepin Counties is measured by layering American Census Survey data with the data from actual MYA cases. The study gives detailed results of how MYA has successfully generated progress and change in disrupting poverty while operating an extremely underfunded organization for nine years.

The Origins and Importance of MYA

Mentoring Young Adults is a nonprofit organization founded in 2006 just a stone's throw away from the state capitol in St. Paul. The organization positively impacts the community with programs focused on helping young adults in initial crisis situations with training, counseling, and group support. The core programs are:

- ▶ Housing for homeless youth
- ▶ Financial assistance for low-income youth and families
- ▶ Second-chance reentry to support transition back into society from juvenile detention centers or prison, depending on age and circumstance

Mentoring Young Adults seeks to close the extreme inequalities in communities of color on the front lines fighting homelessness, high-school dropout rates, unemployment, and the disproportionate number of young adults caught up in the criminal justice system. The organization serves Ramsey, Dakota, Washington, and Hennepin Counties.

The impact study puts MYA's important history of community-based work into context by examining other studies, such as "Ramsey County's Understanding Areas of Concentrated Poverty" and DEED's Cost of Living Survey 2015 to analyze the relationship with MYA's clients in the top services requested—housing, employment, and youth probation monitoring. For example, the research showed 27% of MYA applicants were homeless and employed, though the research showed a correlation between education level attained and homelessness.

The impact study tells the story of a Minnesota that does not have a poverty issue when viewed on a national poverty map. However, the view is completely different when poverty is viewed by county and then overlaid with information on communities of color: extremely impoverished areas were predominately communities



Mentoring Young Adults volunteers serve meals to seniors at Rondo Days 2015.

of color. The Center for Urban and Regional Affairs used U.S. census data mapping of the counties served by MYA to illustrate the high poverty rates in communities of color.

The "Wilder Research 2012 Homeless Study" (<http://z.umn.edu/13z8>) showed that children under age five are the most vulnerable of the age cells evaluated. In the counties served by MYA, children under the age of five are 2.6 times more impoverished than the total population of Minnesota.

During the data entry phase of the impact study, MYA's mentoring, support group, and education programs were observed. Interviews were recorded (<http://z.umn.edu/11ys>) that gave life to the data and the belief that MYA's affordable housing partners, youth mentoring, job training, and placement programs positively impact the community and cause disruption to poverty in the extremely impoverished communities it serves.

The study examines youth in the criminal justice system in a candid discussion with Richard McLemore of Ujamaa Place (<http://z.umn.edu/11yu>), who described the "juvenile detention centers" as "pre-incarceration"—essentially a gateway for youth into prison. Mentoring Young Adults' youth programs keep youth off the street and out of the criminal justice system.

Conversations with experts on housing and poverty provided critical fact checking of the research. Following

are a few comments that helped shape the study's research, key findings, and conclusions.

Even though the impact of MYA in crisis management for homeless youth is high, the state of affordable housing is dismal in Minnesota. According to Dr. Ed Goetz, director of CURA:

I'm afraid that I feel that we have not made much progress in meeting affordable housing needs. They seem pretty intractable, whether due to the disincentives for the private sector to build more affordable units, the opposition of communities to more housing opportunities, continued discrimination, lagging wages for lower- and working-class people, etc. The challenges are as great now as they have ever been.

Jerry Timian (<http://z.umn.edu/11yv>), program manager for the St. Paul Foundation, discussed the reasons the foundation supports MYA:

The Northend neighborhood of Saint Paul is not rich in services. Many of our neighborhoods have services organizations available in the community to get their needs met. In the Northend, we don't have as many service organizations helping out the community. We don't have that deep underground organization touching people that other people struggle serving. Dora Jones, MYA, does a great job with helping the hardest to serve population, serving

them in a way that helps them find their own human dignity again. That's a really big part of why we support MYA.

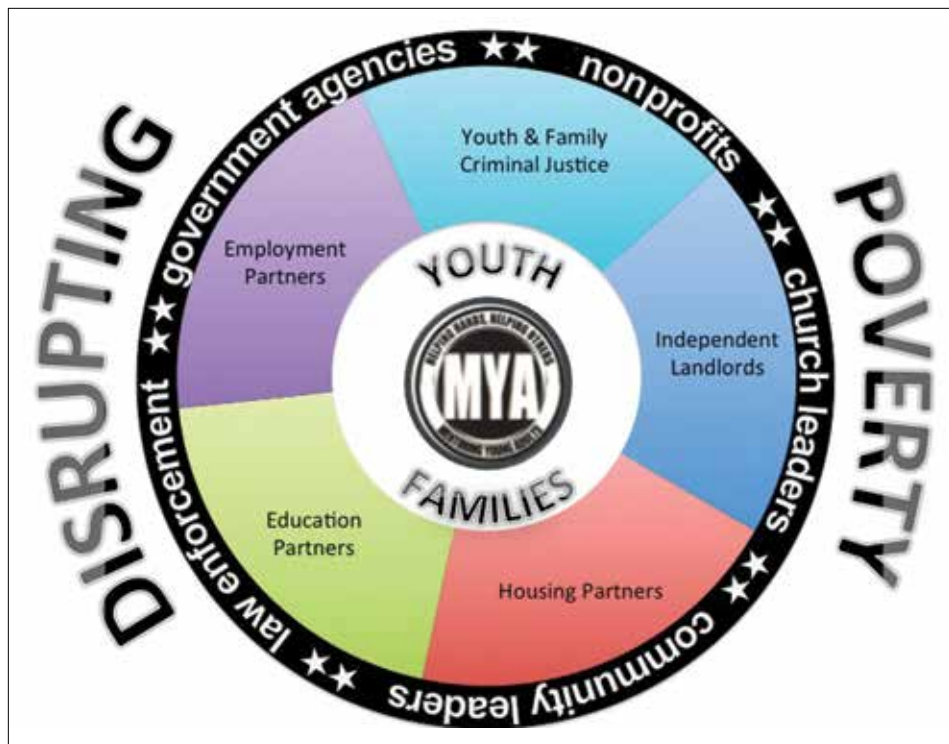
Timian further explained that MYA is a powerful network led by a strong leader. The organization is a network where resources are shared in an effort to help one another climb out of poverty together, in a way that causes disruption to poverty.

Mentoring Young Adults' "Disrupting Poverty" impact study serves as a call to action to support community-based organizations with the funding necessary to provide critical services that educate and provide housing and jobs for communities of color living in extreme poverty. Dora Jones discussed the importance of the impact study:

This study is critical for activating emergency crisis management in Ramsey County to increase capacity for community-based organizations like MYA serving youth and families who are located in the extreme concentrated poverty zones. MYA is located a stone's throw away from the state capitol and this county is in crisis when it comes to serving the poor. The hope is that this study raises the awareness of policy makers, funders, local, state and national government entities that we exist in the poverty war zone with programs in place to disrupt poverty.

As economist Thomas Piketty wrote in his book *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, poverty and inequality left unchecked will cause harm to America's economic system as a whole. Bill Gates wrote a blog on "Why Inequality Matters" (<http://z.umn.edu/13za>) after reading Piketty's book and had the following response:

Extreme inequality should not be ignored—or worse, celebrated as a sign that we have a high-performing economy and healthy society. Yes, some level of inequality is built into capitalism. As Piketty argues, it is inherent to the system. The question is, what level of inequality is acceptable? And when does inequality start doing more harm than good? That's something we should have a public discussion about, and it's great that Piketty helped advance that discussion in such a serious way.



The Mentoring Young Adults model for disrupting poverty.

Community action plan for "Disrupting Poverty" based on MYA's model:

- ▶ **Action:** Education is the key to disrupting poverty. Education reduces homelessness and increases low wages. Affordable housing and education programs are top priorities.
- ▶ **Basis:** MYA developed strong cooperation from independent landlords who trust Dora Jones and work with MYA clients who may not have a perfect record. The organization's tenant training class educates the client on tenant rights and responsibilities and care of the home, and how to develop and maintain a good relationship with the landlord.
- ▶ **Action:** Community leaders should be identified to develop a strategic network and sharing of data that promotes collaboration and innovation.
- ▶ **Basis:** MYA joined Sprockets, a secure database network of information input by education providers, to aggregate data that will be used to manage and evaluate performance for youth after-school programs and paid internships. Sprockets will enable MYA to make critical decisions and enhancements to its programs, as often as necessary. MYA took advantage of an opportunity provided by Salesforce to set up a cloud-based account, at no charge, to approve 501(c)3s nonprofits to manage their client cases.
- ▶ **Action:** A strategic business model that promotes process and creates change. Poverty research is useless without a conclusion and an action plan to create change and promote progress. Partners in mental health, education, and technology are essential to disrupting poverty by providing valuable education and training for youth and staff.
- ▶ **Basis:** MYA has partnered with other community leaders to support youth mentoring and is looking forward to focusing on building an expanded network of mental health, education, and technology partners.

Conclusion

The goal of this study is to spur a discussion in every community in the United States. "Disrupting Poverty" cannot wait. Job creation, affordable housing, and education programs are needed to keep youth off the street and out of the criminal justice system. "Disrupting Poverty" serves as a resource for opening discussion and educating the public, as well as a template for supporting community-based organizations with the funding necessary to provide services for youth who are homeless and jobless.

An enormous amount of data are available that show the extreme poverty and race inequality that exists in the communities served by MYA, but what is lacking is an action plan. This study is meant to engage communities in the creation of an action plan that empowers them with the concept of

"climbing one's self out of poverty," resulting in extreme disruption to poverty.

A network of access to jobs, affordable housing, education, and resources that support a population's climb out of poverty is needed for the well-being of the community at large.

This study provides a conclusion based on qualitative and quantitative data that recommends supporting community-based social services agencies such as MYA that promote progress and change by causing major disruption to poverty on the front lines of communities, where positive change must be led by the people themselves. Putting these recommendations in place with measurable goals and outcomes will best serve the health and well-being of the entire population in communities of color.

The most efficient and effective path to change is to empower the community leaders who have a proven track record of results in delivering the critical services that reduce poverty. These agencies must monitor performance and have sound accountability practices that are "for the people they serve." They must be resilient, fearless, and unapologetic when it comes to serving the people.

Monique Linder is a graduate research assistant at the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) and a 2016 executive MBA candidate of the Carlson School of Management at the University of Minnesota. For more information on Monique's work with MYA, contact her at linde702@umn.edu.

Project Assistance Available from CURA

The Center for Urban and Regional Affairs supports research and technical assistance through a number of individual programs, each with their own deadlines and application procedures.

■ **The Community Assistantship Program (CAP)** matches community-based nonprofit organizations, citizen groups, and government agencies in Greater Minnesota with students who can provide research assistance. Eligible organizations define a research project, submit an application, and, if accepted, are matched with a qualified student to carry out the research. For more information, to discuss potential projects, or for assistance with applications, contact CAP coordinator Jeff Corn at 612-625-0744 or jcorn@umn.edu, or visit www.cura.umn.edu/cap.

■ **The Community Geographic Information Systems (CGIS)** program provides technical assistance in

mapping, data analysis, and GIS to community-based organizations and nonprofits in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Staff at the CGIS program specialize in parcel-level mapping, demographic analysis, and Internet-based GIS technologies. The CGIS program has no formal application process or deadline to apply. Project requests can be made by phone, e-mail, or online at z.umn.edu/cgishelp, and generally can be turned around within two weeks. For more information, to discuss potential projects, or for assistance with data needs, contact CGIS program coordinator Jeff Matson at 612-625-0081 or jmatson@umn.edu, or visit www.cura.umn.edu/cgis.

■ **The Kris Nelson Community-Based Research Program** (the Nelson Program) provides student research assistance to community and neighborhood-based organizations and suburban government agencies in the Twin Cities seven-county metropolitan

area. Priority is given to groups serving diverse communities. Projects may include any issue relevant to a neighborhood or community's needs and interests. For more information, contact CURA community programs coordinator Jeff Corn at 612-625-0744 or jcorn@umn.edu, or visit www.cura.umn.edu/nelson-program.

■ **Community Visualization** offers design and visualization assistance to community partners, with the goal of democratizing complex information (such as data, policies, and other processes). We typically partner with community-based organizations, community organizers, and other leaders who are working with people on the margins of policy development, including communities of color and low-income communities. For more information, contact Kristen Murray at 612-625-7560 or kmurray@umn.edu or visit www.cura.umn.edu/communityviz.

Raising the Standard of Living for Workers While Raising the Standard of Care for Clients

By Kaela Dickens

In 2014, Chou Moua was studying for a Masters in Development Practice (MDP) at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs. Although MDP degrees usually focus on international development, Moua chose to focus on local community development to apply later in new contexts. One local context Moua was very familiar with was home healthcare. He had worked as a Personal Care Assistant (PCA) for eight years, and was passionate about making his local community a better place one life at a time. In his last year of graduate school, Moua got the

chance to benefit fellow PCAs and their patients through a unique CURA partnership with SEIU.

Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Healthcare Minnesota is a large statewide healthcare union that represents more than 15,000 healthcare workers from homecare, nursing homes, hospitals, and clinics. In 2013, PCAs won a huge legislative victory, giving them the right to organize for the first time under Minnesota labor law. SEIU provided the framework for those workers to form their own statewide union to advocate for better wages, working conditions, and quality, affordable healthcare for all.

The new unionized group of more than 20,000 PCAs (also known as home healthcare workers) was set to negotiate a contract with the state in 2015, and needed reliable data to justify their concerns and issue positions. But there was a dearth of information about PCA workers not only in Minnesota, but also nationally.

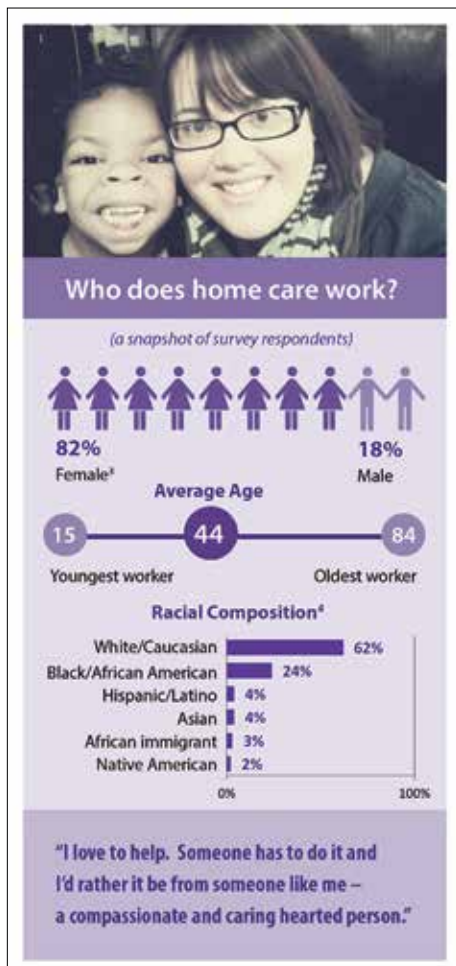
The home healthcare industry experiences famously high turnover rates, which makes gathering information about its employees extremely difficult. Additionally, many individuals working as PCAs are largely living in poverty; the vast majority are women, and they are disproportionately foreign born or ethnic and racial minorities. These groups are often underrepresented in traditional methods of research due to language, technology, and access barriers. Interestingly, the job sector is predicted to grow 48% from 2012–2022, the fastest of any sector. Nevertheless, wages have stayed stagnant.

SEIU knew that raising employment standards for the PCAs would not only elevate the standard of living of workers, but also the standard of care of clients. Healthy and happy workers are less likely to leave, and can therefore provide better for both their clients and their own families. SEIU needed to make up for this shortcoming of good data in order

to present a solid case during the upcoming union contract negotiations. Camille Roberts, an organizer for SEIU, decided to seek the help of a CURA Research Assistant in gathering this data, which is where Chou Moua came into the picture.

Moua's skills in research, his experience in home healthcare, and his passion for giving underserved communities a voice lined up perfectly with this undertaking. He and University of Minnesota Sociology professor Lisa Park set out to form a committee with representatives of CURA, the University of Minnesota, and SEIU PCAs to design the research process for the study. Together, the team came up with four main areas to investigate to glean as much targeted information as possible about the experience of PCAs (see sidebar).

Over the summer, Moua and Park worked with key PCAs from SEIU to design and test the principal survey questions. That fall they mailed out



An excerpt from the home healthcare handout that CURA produced in partnership with SEIU Healthcare Minnesota.

SEIU wanted to know:

- ▶ What is the gender, ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic makeup of Minnesota PCA workers?
- ▶ What sorts of challenges do PCAs encounter because of the nature of the work and the industry?
- ▶ Is the training PCAs receive adequate? How does that affect the quality of services they provide to clients?
- ▶ What workplace and industry bargaining issues are PCAs most concerned about?

thousands of surveys to PCAs all over the state. They also held focus groups with ethnic minority PCAs, who were underrepresented in the survey responses, in order to gain a well-rounded representation of the population. Moua's fluency in his native language of Hmong was an enormous asset in these focus groups, as he was able to erase the language barrier in interviews with Hmong PCAs.

Not everyone in the home health-care industry was pleased with the 2013 union victory and this subsequent research. The widespread distribution of the survey was "hitting a political nerve" with some community members, causing them to lash out. "Although I was the target of racial and political aggression, I felt that my team members at CURA, SEIU, and the University of Minnesota were 100% behind me," said Moua. Despite the support he felt from his team members, Moua maintains that this was one of his most challenging times as a graduate student.

With 978 surveys and 21 focused interviews completed, the data collection was done. Moua, Park, and a few other University students spent the following weeks analyzing the data, writing a full report of the findings, and creating an engaging information packet with the most important findings that SEIU wanted to share.

SEIU utilized the report and related packet as an advocacy and education tool throughout the negotiation process. Members began the negotiations with the state of Minnesota by sharing the findings and providing data to back up demands. The research offered clear evidence of the issues facing the homecare industry and, ultimately, supported the solutions suggested by homecare workers to state officials and decision makers.

In 2015, the negotiations ended with some huge victories for the union: a base wage increase from \$9.00 to \$10.75, paid time-off benefits for the first time, a clear grievance process for unpaid wages, better and more

consistent training opportunities, and a \$250,000 fund for training. These addressed some of the biggest concerns raised in the research, and also elevated the industry standards in the state of Minnesota, which could stand as an example for other states as the PCA industry continues to grow.

Moua and Roberts were pleased with how the study turned out, and with the impact it had on the lives of PCA workers like themselves. Moua noted that the concerns of PCAs "are no longer just anecdotes...this community-driven study has been digested by the academic machine and spat out with legitimacy." That legitimacy will go a long way as more people become involved in the home healthcare industry, as both clients and home healthcare workers.

Moua's work on the project not only contributed to the success of SEIU's negotiations, but also to his own educational pursuit to serve others. Throughout the study, he had lots of opportunities to apply tools he was learning in his graduate school classes directly to his work. "There were times when I learned one lesson one day and used it the next onsite." The real-world application of his learning also amplified the human element of his academic pursuits. "Working in the community cemented my belief that cooperation, dialogue, and empathy go a long way to span boundaries between different groups of people."

Moua is now continuing his work advocating for communities in China through a fellowship sponsored by both the U.S. and Chinese governments. He no longer works as a PCA, but he certainly attributes a lot of personal growth to his experience with the industry, both personally and academically. "I think both aspects fed into each other; me being a PCA gave me a personal understanding of this sector within the community and my work as a graduate researcher for CURA and the academic side gave me a lens to focus my work."

Main Findings of the CURA/SEIU Study of Minnesota PCAs

- ▶ 82% of MN PCAs are women.
- ▶ Nearly a quarter of MN PCAs are Black/African American, which is much higher than the statewide population.
- ▶ On average, MN PCAs work 29 paid hours, and 21 volunteer hours per week.
- ▶ They would prefer to increase their paid work hours to 36 hours per week.
- ▶ The top three biggest challenges for PCAs included: emotionally taxing labor, difficult client behavior, and low wages with no raises or benefits.
- ▶ The most rewarding thing about their job was, for most, a strong, positive relationship with their clients.
- ▶ The biggest collective bargaining priorities included: higher wages, health insurance, and sick days/paid time off.

Kaela Dickens is a graduate assistant working on community visualization and communications for CURA. She is pursuing her Masters Degree in Public Policy, with a concentration in Administration and Leadership. After graduation, she plans to stay in the Midwest and make a positive impact in local government.



Neighborhoods Now!: Plotting a Course for change

By Andrew Tran

In 2014, CURA staff met with six community-based organizations to better understand their priority issues. Among these issues, we identified four overarching topics: collaborations; people and places; systems change; and organizations. As part of CURA's mission to support place-based organizations to successfully take on local issues by developing the skills of community organizers and leaders, we developed an extensive training program called Neighborhoods Now! This program was

designed to be an innovative community educational series to strengthen the work of individuals and organizations working in neighborhoods to:

1. Organize to win issues for people and places.
2. Build power to change systems for racial equity and economic justice.
3. Build organizations whose leadership is reflective of the community.
4. Build diverse and effective cross-cultural collaborations.

To deliver these objectives and address the four overarching topics, the training program was divided into four courses: 1. Neighborhood Issues Organizing; 2. Neighborhood Systems Change; 3. Building Representative Neighborhood Groups; and 4. Cross-Cultural Collaborations. The program was launched with the first course in the summer of 2015. The Neighborhood Issues Organizing course engaged in discussions around the basics of neighborhood organizing.



Photos by Andrew Tran



More specifically, participants engaged in neighborhood organizing as a form of leadership that works to help a constituency to turn its resources into the power to make change. We provided knowledge, skills, and tools as part of the training. Participants learned how to think critically and strategically about potential organizing pitfalls and challenges before they happen; how to identify, recruit, and develop the leaders of others; build community around that leadership; and build power from the resources of that community. Most importantly, participants grappled with the concept of relationships as a way to build community and develop leaders.

“One of the most important parts that I learned about organizing is building relationships,” said Princess Titus, the Director of Education and

Training. Princess attended the first Neighborhoods Now! course and also noted that it allowed her to engage with the youth population whom she works with and helped them realize the voice they have in their community. “We know that we actually have a voice to speak in our community. No matter how old we are, we have the voice to bring our community together,” said Daeja Bryant, a youth volunteer at Appetite for Change.

In the Neighborhood Systems Change course, we explored the broader institutions and systems that fuel the issues, disinvestment, and racial disparities within and across neighborhoods; and examined the complexities of structural racism and other “isms” through local historical analysis. We also explored how systems can be deconstructed, followed by community organizing

from the neighborhood level to catalyze social, racial, and economic justice.

In each of the two courses we held in 2015, we had twelve participants in each attend and complete the courses. The program was customized to issues and scenarios for individuals and groups that work with place-based organization. However, we had participants affiliated with a wide range of issues such as food justice, early education, and transportation.

Andrew Tran is currently a program coordinator for the Minnesota Center for Neighborhood Organizing. He recently received his master’s degree from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs in Urban and Regional Planning where he focused on the intersection of design, racial equity, and planning and policy-making in immigrant communities.

Developing the New Barn-Raising Concept— An Englishman’s Visit to Minnesota

By Gareth Potts

In 2012, I took the summer off from my post as a policy advisor in the U.K. government’s Office for Civil Society and came to the United States with the support of a German Marshall Fund Fellowship. I wanted to see how U.S. cities (local government, nonprofits, foundations, and business) were sustaining community and civic assets such as parks, libraries, and art museums. The Twin Cities was one of my three case study metro areas through a visiting fellowship at CURA arranged by Jay Clark. (I also visited Baltimore, Maryland, and Detroit, Michigan.)

The United States has much higher levels of philanthropy, volunteering, and local government autonomy, and it was how these were applied to assets that I was looking to see up close—within the United States the Twin Cities stands out for high levels of voluntarism and corporate social responsibility. Aided by Jay and others, I managed to pack some 60 interviews into my month-long stay in Minnesota.

The core product has taken the form of a toolkit entitled *The New Barn-Raising*. The title refers to the ways in which a range of community stakeholders can all play a role in sustaining assets.

The toolkit focuses upon three key areas:

1. Raising Awareness: The United States shows the value of getting away from 11th-hour protests against cuts and instead building a sustained evidence base for assets—with funders, voters, and users. Examples from Twin Cities nonprofits, Minneapolis Swims, and Frogtown Gardens figure prominently in the toolkit, as does the role of university support with building the evidence base (needless to say CURA gets a mention here).

I also saw the array of marketing techniques directed at existing and potential users. Methods range from eye-catching freeway billboards for the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA) to home-made signs. I do not ever recall having

Rose Holdorf, Plowshares Press, Oregon



Frogtown Gardens in St. Paul sold buttons/badges to raise money and awareness for a planned 13-acre park, nature sanctuary, and urban farming demonstration center.

seen roadside signs advertising assets to me in U.K. cities. The DIA’s Inside-Out program also installs replicas of its paintings at strategic city locations. There are apps (of Minneapolis public art) and maps (of Baltimore’s Druid Hill Park). In Baltimore kids are engaged through a zoomobile that visits schools and I-Spy booklets on parks. Asset managers can also draw people in—the Detroit Red Wings hockey team hosting a practice at a park rink or the bar-disco in Baltimore’s Walters Art Museum.

Important in all this is that not everything has been expensive. Nor has it all been done by government—companies, friends groups, and others have been involved. A Detroit marketing firm’s genial hoax “book-burning” campaign helped save the Troy Library and advanced the firm’s reputation.

2. Raising Money: Whilst not immune from asset spending cuts and restraints, U.S. cities have various dedicated taxes to help—on residential and

commercial property, on income, and on sale of goods, services, and property. On top of this are powers to use public bond financing and tax credits for donations to nonprofits.

For a Brit this is hard to believe—taxation is heavily centralized and municipal bonds almost unheard of. Powers were announced recently whereby the only real local tax (a property levy known as Council Tax) can be raised by over 2% if a local referendum votes for it. Amongst the most impressive U.S. examples was the Legacy Amendment in Minnesota. This had not only provided money that is outside annual budget procedures but had also provided large-scale, if periodic, debate; so money and awareness get raised simultaneously. That the measure was the result of collaboration between supporters of different types of assets was also important; different asset types need to lobby together.

I was also struck by how numerous city-owned assets are now leased to, and managed by, charities and social enterprises, creating potential for new sources of funding and greater freedoms for managers. This is definitely a desired direction of travel for the United Kingdom, and a few local authorities are dipping their toes in the waters. In St. Paul, for example, Joy of the People has taken on a city recreation center and runs an innovative soccer program; it accesses various grants and fees (balanced with bursaries) to sustain itself. Some U.S. transfers, however, are rushed alternatives to closure, making external funds especially hard to come by even with the United States’s much bigger foundation scene. Prosperous Baltimore County has the best of both worlds; its recreation centers are taxpayer funded but management is contracted to a (nonprofit) Y.

3. Raising Help: Volunteers can enhance assets in many ways; my research helped bring home the distinction between supplanting and supplementary volunteering. In Detroit, 100 or so smaller city parks are now tended



Minneapolis City Council bought four major downtown theaters (including the State Theatre - pictured) that were either closed or moribund. The city issued bonds to fund improvements and then handed management to a new Hennepin Theatre Trust.



Soccer sessions run by Joy of the People, the city of St. Paul's nonprofit service partner at the South St. Anthony Recreation Center

by local groups and businesses (a few even run programs such as yoga and sports). In Baltimore the Power in Dirt initiative has seen more than 700 vacant city-owned lots taken on for use as small gardens and parks. Despite the similarities, the former is filling in for cuts (supplanting), whereas the latter is doing things not previously done (supplementing).

Supplanting is limited by the skill needs of many posts; many asset management roles require at least a specialist university degree such as park management or museology. Baltimore's wonderful nonprofit-run Village Learning Place, which grew out of a closed city branch, has its share of volunteers but still needs a professional librarian.

Supplementing is more about willingness: serving on user panels or as docents in museums; tenants co-managing recreation centers; coaching and refereeing in park sports leagues; helping with friends groups; assisting reading in local libraries; helping the elderly at local senior centers to Skype relatives.

All types of volunteering need managing, which means investment. The Power in Dirt initiative is overseen by a Chief Service Officer who, aided by a small team, enlists support from key city departments on all initiatives in Baltimore's Cities of Service program. A draft of my report included recommendations that this be copied in U.K. cities but it was announced a week before my report came out that this concept was being implemented.

New Barn-Raising

The involvement of lots of actors, over and above local government, was shown to have additional benefits in terms of greater scrutiny and awareness of assets and, ultimately, therefore, their quality. In addition, fundraising activity can often be very social in nature—social capital is drawn upon and built.

The toolkit offers a useful framework for thinking about sustaining assets and lots of practical examples of how to go about this. The broader framework can even be applied to other public services such as policing and education. I hope it is of use to those in the Twin Cities, in the United States, and in my own home country.

Since my own fellowship concluded, my (American) wife and I have now relocated from London and I am trying to develop the assets work. Last year this development meant a webinar program with 28 presentations from 10 countries – including the afore-mentioned Hennepin Theatre Trust and Joy of the People. More details of the toolkit and webinar recordings are available at www.thenewbarnraising.com.

Gareth Potts can be contacted at garehpotts@newbarnraising.com or on Twitter as @garehpotts1. The author would like to thank CURA's Jay Clark for his assistance with his research and Will Craig for his ongoing dialogue around the toolkit.

Artist Neighborhood Partnership Initiative & Neighborhood Partnership Initiative 2015 Grantees

The Neighborhood Partnership Initiative (NPI) makes technical assistance and small grants (up to \$10,000) available to community-based, neighborhood or other place-based organizations located in communities of color and low-income communities in Minneapolis and St. Paul and surrounding suburbs. NPI supports community-based

efforts that build partnerships that lead to increased engagement, power, and influence of community members affected by racial, social, and economic disparities. NPI grants are made possible through the generous support of the McKnight Foundation.

Project summaries for our 2015 Neighborhood Partnership Initiative grantees are listed below

Appetite for Change

Project Title: Good Food Advocacy Campaign and Northside Growers Collaborative

A goal of Appetite for Change is to create a local-food, value-based supply chain that contributes to greater food equity and is owned, built-by, and for the benefit of, low-income members of the African American community in North Minneapolis. This project organizes African American urban farmers in North Minneapolis, and builds capacity of local food-justice organizers to implement food-based policy, systems, and environmental change. Food Ambassadors will lead the Good Food Advocacy Campaign, while the growers will organize with technical assistance from partner organizations. Planned outcomes are to build the power of African American community members to advocate for food policy, systems, and environmental changes; increase North Minneapolis urban farmers capacity to work collaboratively together to market and distribute locally grown produce; and increase organizational ability to develop and train community leaders in the food movement.

Cleveland Neighborhood Association

Project Title: Neighborhood Street Forum

Community engagement with underrepresented communities has been unsuccessful and ineffective in giving community voices a space at the decision-making table. The use of technology can create innovative strategies that more equitably represent the community's voice. This project seeks to create a platform to enable broad strategies for connecting residents in a meaningful way to decision makers and promote their voice in decisions that

impact their community. Specifically, the goal is to provide a new concept for what community engagement looks like in a way that prioritizes engagement of previously underrepresented groups.



Neighborhood Street Forum

The Neighborhood Street Forum platform will be an online tool accessible both via the web and mobile devices that aggregates any submissions via numerous social media platforms into one central website that can geotag and categorize topics and issues. Marketing materials from wallet cards to posters with the Street Forum branding and hashtag (#streetforum) will prompt residents to submit their own voices via the platform. The primary users will be residents in North Minneapolis, particularly underrepresented populations. These groups currently face more barriers to meaningful engagement through traditional channels and could greatly benefit from a new model of engagement.

District 1 Community Council

Project Title: Your Vote is Your Voice

The Your Vote is Your Voice project involves a partnership between St. Paul artist/organizer Chia "Chilli" Lor, St. Paul East Side district councils (1, 2, and 5), and the Summit University Planning Council. The work will engage diverse youth between the ages of 16 and 20 to develop a variety of art-based tools and activities to engage potential and future voters in understanding the impact of city and county government on their daily lives and increase voting rates. Specific activities include exploration of other democracies' efforts at voter education, identifying specific locations for targeted outreach, art gatherings to explore issues people face, exploration of how the voting process works and voter registration, spoken word events built from identified issues, and development of art-based public service announcements. Planned outcomes are to develop a set of art-based tools and activities for engaging potential voters, complete a voter education event in each of the participating district councils, and develop a framework for a public service announcement campaign in a variety of media.

East Side Neighborhood Development Company

Project Title: Railroad Island Eco Village

The East Side Neighborhood Development Company formed the Railroad Island Redevelopment Team in 2014, consisting of the East Side Arts Council, Project for Pride in Living, Dayton's Bluff Housing Services, Habitat for Humanity, and Rebuilding Together. The purpose of forming this group is to accelerate the redevelopment of Railroad Island,



Railroad Island Eco Village

where previous planning, combined with its emergence as a prime commercial and residential redevelopment opportunity, has given rise to creating a locally led, and very capable, redevelopment partnership. This effort is being framed as the Railroad Island Eco Village. The goal is to adapt the North Minneapolis Hawthorne Eco Village to Railroad Island while also doing a number of environmentally sensitive things that enhance the livability of Railroad Island. This builds off recent community-based planning that seeks to transform Railroad Island into a whole neighborhood that is more green and better connected with Swede Hollow Park. Planned outcomes are to create a diverse community planning process for the Met Council-funded Bush Payne site and lay the base for the participation and leadership of people and businesses of color in the overall Eco Village concept and ultimately the wider community.

New American Academy

Project Title: Equitable Development for Town Center Station

For the past several years, the New American Academy (NAA) and its Executive Director have been involved in a number of transit-related community engagement efforts and organizing efforts around specific development policies and projects in Eden Prairie and other communities along the Southwest Light Rail Corridor. It was through these engagement efforts that NAA became

aware that affordable housing, jobs, and other economic opportunities were not being incorporated into the station area planning that was being undertaken by local municipalities. Currently, there is a significant lack of affordable housing

in the area and the City of Eden Prairie has been reluctant to make any commitments regarding affordable housing for the future development around the Town Center Station. NAA plans to scale up its community organizing efforts to ensure equitable development principles are applied and housing and other economic opportunities that meet the needs of the East African community and other underrepresented groups are included in the Town Center Station plan. NAA will work with its allies to hold leadership circles with East African elders, women, and youth to provide opportunities for residents to gain knowledge and build policy and issue advocacy skills, host community meetings on the issue of equitable development in the Town Center station area planning, and work with community members and partners to develop formal policy recommendations for inclusion in the station area plan. Planned outcomes are the inclusion of affordable housing and economic opportunity goals into the Town Center Station Area Plan, the amendment of zoning codes to allow for greater affordable housing development, and the enhancement of partnerships with allies to further elevate equitable development issues in the Southwest metro.



Equitable Development for Town Center Station

Northside Educational Alliance

Project Title: Educational Access

Educational Access is a partnership between the Northside Educational Alliance (NEA) and the Northside Child Development Center (NCDC). Specifically the project will provide Northside parents and high school youth with the keys to educational access and then success. The work involves two specific initiatives. The first is the existing NEA initiative to help Northside parents learn more about the educational options available to their children, how to navigate different application processes, and



then how to determine the best environment for their child's and family's needs. The NPI grant will fund a strategic partnership between NEA and NCDC to educate NCDC families on the school choice process and to ensure that the children and their families graduating from the NCDC preschool program are ready for success at the kindergarten level and beyond. The second aspect to the NEA/NCDC partnership involves developing programming to assist Northside high school youth transitioning to college and beyond. Planned outcomes are to improve understanding of NCDC families' educational options and their children's academic needs, to develop an enrollment application plan and improve youth test scores.

Lyndale Neighborhood Association

Project Title: Minneapolis Renters Project

The Minneapolis Renters Project will develop a neighborhood- and renter-centric plan for neighborhood organizations in Minneapolis to work together with like-minded partners to improve the condition and stability of rental housing in Minneapolis. The project will also serve to increase renters' participation in neighborhood organizations and civic participation in general. The partners involved in this project are the Lyndale Neighborhood Association, Powderhorn Park Neighborhood Association, and Corcoran Neighborhood

Organization. The partners will start by engaging community members who are experiencing these issues to help develop the plan. They also will reach out to other neighborhoods, community leaders, policy makers, and funders. The purpose of this outreach will be to identify potential partners, develop strategies and ideas on how to engage renters and community members from traditionally underrepresented communities, and build the capacity of community members and neighborhood organizations. Planned outcomes are to improve livability and housing conditions for renters, drive policy change to improve how multi-family housing units are regulated, and build individual and neighborhood organization capacity.

Isuroon

Project Title: Somali Ethnic Food Shelf

This project will engage community members in the creation of a culturally specific Somali community food shelf in South Minneapolis. Currently, there are 300 food shelves in Minnesota, but due to dietary restrictions, most Somalis cannot access mainstream food shelves. This project will allow Somali community members to engage in the development of a food shelf that makes culturally appropriate food more readily available. Isuroon will work closely with the Somali community to design and implement the food shelf, collaborating with ethnic businesses, faith-based organizations, and people of all ages. Isuroon received a NPI grant in 2014 that began the campaign to organize the Somali community and the process of raising awareness of the need for a culturally appropriate food shelf

in South Minneapolis. With the assistance of CURA, Isuroon learned how to accomplish grass roots engagement of Somali immigrants and got the organization involved in the process of how to give voice to their issues and start to make changes in their own community. Many community meetings took place; fundraising in the amount of \$26,000 was accomplished through the Seward Co-op, Whole Foods, and a major gala event in November of 2014. A large rally at the Hennepin County Government Center received a good deal of media attention. The second round of NPI funding will support Isuroon hiring a Somali community organizer to work 10 hours a week with the community and continue to engage people in the food shelf campaign and process of civic engagement.

St. Paul Smart Trips

Project Title: Frogtown Neighborhoods Program

St. Paul Smart Trips' Neighborhoods Program works with community members and local organizations to overcome barriers to healthier, more affordable modes of transportation. The Frogtown Neighborhoods Program is a partnership between St. Paul Smart Trips and the Kitty Andersen Youth Science Center at the Science Museum of Minnesota. The partnership has two ultimate goals: to develop a group of youth leaders in the Frogtown neighborhood and to increase walking and biking trips in the community through youth-led outreach. Drawing upon each organization's area of expertise, the program focuses on working with 10 to 12 Frogtown youth to provide



Frogtown Neighborhoods Program

them with the tools and training to creatively advocate for better transportation options in their neighborhood. The Frogtown Crew will build upon their experiences from last year by showcasing what they've learned through summer capstone projects. These projects will be designed to create solutions to transportation barriers in the Frogtown community. In partnership with the Frogtown Neighborhood Association, the crew will host a series of engagement activities. Their goal is to engage more than 10 percent of Frogtown residents through their capstone projects.

West Broadway Business and Area Coalition

Project Title: Setting the Table Market Meals

The West Broadway Business and Area Coalition's (WBC) mission is to create an inviting and vital West Broadway Corridor and to transform the Northside into a thriving economic community. The WBC will use the West Broadway Farmers Market (WBFM) as a platform to better engage North Minneapolis residents around a holistic vision of health that includes healthy eating, preventive medicine/healthcare, active living, social well-being, positive cultural identity, and public safety. Specifically, the WBC and its partners will host five monthly, pay-what-you-can Setting the Table Market Meals at the WBFM. The Setting the Table meals will create a positive outdoor gathering space where community members will be able to work on a holistic approach to health. The market meals will also build the capacity of partner community organizations and grow the WBFM customer base.

Artist Neighborhood Partnership Initiative

CURA's Artist Neighborhood Partnership Initiative (ANPI) provides small grants (up to \$10,000) to artists working in partnership with community-based, neighborhood, or other place-based organizations located in communities of color and low-income communities in Minneapolis and St. Paul and surrounding suburbs. ANPI grants recognize the valuable role that the arts and artists can play in community revitalization efforts and are intended to support the involvement of artists as key actors and leaders of community development. This grant program

is particularly focused on supporting efforts where art, art making, and the artist(s) are at the center of the project. ANPI grants are made possible through the generous support of the McKnight Foundation.

Trust for Public Practice

Artist: Mike Hoyt

Mike Hoyt is an independent artist and also works as a facilitator of artist support and community development programs. The Trust for Public Practice (TPP) is a new platform for sustained neighborhood-based engagement in the arts. Artist Mike Hoyt will facilitate a cohort of cross-sector community stakeholders to test and disseminate learning and knowledge about how artists and communities of color can engage in the processes of acquiring property, visioning and designing processes, equitable physical development, the neighborhood determination of a creative community benefit, and the shared stewardship of the ongoing management and artistic programming at the site. The TPP will be developed through an arts-based framework that is less linear and more of a continuous practice of learning, discovery, and re-envisioning. The project will focus on a parcel of land that the artist

acquired in the Central Neighborhood that is, essentially, a blank canvas. The artist, in partnership with his neighbors, will be able to establish a permanent, open, and shared public space for artists and non-artists from the immediate community to engage in participatory art practice that engages and advances the visions, dreams, and creative interests of the Central Neighborhood.

Letters to Our Grandchildren

Artist: May Lee-Yang

May Lee-Yang is a Hmong American writer, performer, and teaching artist. In 2014, Lee-Yang conceived, co-taught, and co-produced Letters to Our Grandchildren (LTOG), an initiative to engage Hmong elders in the process of telling their stories. Working with Hmong elders now is vital because many of them are passing away. Additionally, Hmong elders have had limited opportunities to engage in theater, video, and mainstream leadership opportunities because of gaps in language, culture, age, and access to culturally competent teaching artists. LTOG resulted in intergenerational dialogues, a public performance by the elders, and a short documentary. Over six months, Lee-Yang will curate



Trust for Public Practice



Letters to Our Grandchildren

artmaking workshops at Hmong Village, a highly frequented shopping center in St. Paul's East Side. She will conduct intergenerational workshops using theater, poetry, video, as well as partner with visual artists and Hmong elder artists to lead workshops and public artmaking activities. The goals of all these workshops are to provide a fun and creative way for Hmong elders and the younger generation to interact, learn about each other's stories, and create work in collaboration. They are meant as a catalyst for larger conversations in public spaces as well as private homes about learning each other's stories.

Signature Latino Cultural Events in East Phillips

Artist: Mary Anne Quiroz

Mary Anne Quiroz is a social practice artist with more than 10 years of experience serving various cultural and socio-economic backgrounds through the arts and other community engagement opportunities. Her project will provide a series of 4 to 8 signature Latino cultural events that will showcase strengths, talents, diversity, and community connections in the East Phillips neighborhood in partnership with Cooperativa Mercado Central. The goal of these cultural events is to

empower the Latino community to reclaim the economic revitalization models and discussions that have been prescribed for them by providing a fresh lens of arts and culture as a means to promote economic success. The additional resources will also build the Mercado's capacity for arts and cultural

work and bring more diverse people together to learn about each other and support one another in our common social justice interests.

Living Arts Outreach

Artist: Bryan Thao Worra

Bryan Thao Worra is an award-winning writer who is the first Lao American writer to receive an NEA Fellowship in Literature. He is partnering with the Lao Assistance Center of Minnesota to develop a cohort of storytellers in North Minneapolis to grow neighborhood memory while finding innovative ways to share and express that journey. The core constituents are Lao American refugee families who have historically been underserved by the arts. The Lao Assistance Center has served refugees for 30 years in Minnesota. Among the outcomes the Living Arts Outreach project hopes to achieve are regular live reading/presentation of various community stories, a small publication and online gallery, and videos and other interconnected arts media in response to the stories that emerge. A key part of the process is asking the participants to work with Bryan Thao Worra to examine what Lao values were, are, and should be in the coming decades. The project also includes a monthly workshop series covering many parts of the Lao Minnesotan journey in North Minneapolis.



Living Arts Outreach

Staff and Program Updates

In October of 2015 the **Hennepin-University Partnership (HUP)** hosted a mixer event at the University of Minnesota's Weisman Art Museum that engaged about 60 University staff and faculty and Hennepin County staff around issues of mutual interest. This event was designed to encourage University faculty and County staff to apply for a **Hennepin-University Collaborative Grant**.

After the mixer, attendees with an idea for a collaboration were invited to submit a letter of interest to qualify them for a \$30,000 Hennepin-University Collaborative Grant (HUCG). Of those who submitted a letter of interest, six grant proposals were received. HUP's Management Team, composed of leaders from both Hennepin and the University, selected the final awardees and chose to fund two proposals. One grant will fund a survey of homeless youth, and the other will develop processes to address Adult Corporate Foster Care services.

Hennepin County's Center for Innovation and Excellence held an **Innovation Day** on November 17 at Hennepin County's Government Center. This event highlighted the innovative work that various Hennepin County departments are doing. The HUP hosted a table with information to inform Hennepin County staff about how the HUP can serve them.

The **Hennepin County Elections Division** contacted HUP to explore a possible collaboration with the University on the topic of increasing voter participation. As a result, a Graduate Research Assistant will be hired to collect and analyze information about strategies used in other parts of the region and the country to increase voter registration. **Claire Psarouthakis**, a first-year Master of Public Policy student at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs, was chosen and will be working with **Ginny Gelms** in the Elections Division over the fall and spring semesters to complete a project outlining recommendations to increase voter registration in Hennepin County.

The **Resilient Communities Project's (RCP)** current academic-year partnership with Carver County kicked off in September with a celebration at the University of Minnesota Landscape



Jeff Matson, CURA CGIS (back in green shirt), and other members of Minnesotans for the American Community Survey (MACS) meet with congressman Keith Ellison (holding paper) to discuss the importance of fully funding the 2020 Census and continuing to support a mandatory American Community Survey.

Arboretum attended by 60 faculty, students, and Carver County staff. The year-long collaboration is providing hands-on learning opportunities for hundreds of undergraduate, graduate, and professional students who are working on more than 30 sustainability-related projects identified by Carver County and its partners. The City of Brooklyn Park has been selected for RCP's 2016–2017 academic year partnership (see announcement on page 41), which will launch in fall 2016.

Carissa Schively Slotterback has stepped down as director of RCP to focus on her growing duties as director of research engagement in the Office of the Vice-President for Research at the University of Minnesota. **Mike Greco**, who has served as RCP's program manager since he and Slotterback cofounded the program in 2012, has assumed the role of director. RCP welcomed two new program assistants this fall to help administer the program: **Bridget Roby**, a master of public health student in the School of Public Health, and **Maria Wardoku**, a master of urban and regional planning student in the Humphrey School of Public Affairs. Roby

and Wardoku bring energy, enthusiasm, and a wealth of communications and project management experience to RCP.

In September, **Mike Greco** led a session at the annual Minnesota Chapter of the American Planning Association Conference in Bemidji on "Crossing Community-University Currents to Advance Sustainability." The session highlighted RCP's recently concluded partnership with the City of Rosemount, and included presentations by Rosemount Community Development Director Kim Lindquist, Parks and Recreation Director Dan Schultz, and Planner Jason Lindahl. In October, **Greco** moderated a panel on "Climate Change: State and Local Government Responses" at the 31st Annual Minnesota Policy Conference in St. Paul. Panelists included Kristin Raab from the Minnesota Department of Health and LisaBeth Barajas from the Metropolitan Council. The session considered current and anticipated impacts of climate change in Minnesota, and what state and local governments are doing to adapt to effects on natural resources, built infrastructure, and human health.

RCP evaluation specialist **Doug Moon** presented his evaluation work with RCP at the University of Minnesota's Community of Scholars Program poster symposium in November, which was sponsored by the Office for Equity and Diversity. Moon's work on behalf of RCP has provided a firm foundation for documenting how participating in RCP projects helps students understand and apply the concepts and theories they are learning in the classroom to real-world issues and problems, while meaningfully advancing local efforts toward greater sustainability.

In November, **Moon and Greco** attended the annual meeting of the Educational Partnerships for Innovation in Communities (EPIC) Network in

San Diego. The EPIC Network includes nearly 20 colleges and universities across the nation that have launched RCP-type programs, and provides member-institutions with a platform to support newly launched programs and share best practices and lessons learned about community-engaged sustainability education.

Will Craig retired from CURA in July 2014, but continues to conduct research on topics that interest him. One of those topics is the settlement of lands in the Midwest—with a special focus on the old farmstead where he and his wife spend their summers. Two articles about this have been published recently. One is about that farm itself

in eastern Wisconsin, starting with a homestead in 1869 and covering the lives of the families who lived there over the next 100+ years. The other study takes a wider geographic perspective and looks at the settlement history of the entire community, requiring access to federal, state, and local government data sources; the methodology developed for Door County can be used anywhere in the western United States.

"Our Brick Home on Lake View Road," *Journal of Opinions, Ideas, & Essays*: Vol. 2, Article 4 (2015) is available at <http://z.umn.edu/1410>. "Mapping European Settlement in Wisconsin," Wisconsin State Cartographer's Office (2015) is available at <http://z.umn.edu/1411>.

Hennepin-University Partnership Receives W.K. Kellogg Foundation Community Engagement Scholarship Award

By *Colin Calvert*

The Hennepin-University Partnership was one of four university programs to receive the W.K. Kellogg Foundation Community Engagement Scholarship Award this year.

The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) and the Engagement Scholarship Consortium (ESC), with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, came together to recognize the collaborative work of four-year public universities and communities. The Community-University Engagement Awards Program recognizes colleges and universities that have designed their learning and engagement missions to be more involved with their communities. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation Community Engagement Scholarship Awards are given to the winner of each of four regional competitions and are presented annually.

The Hennepin-University Partnership was recognized for its work in supporting increased collaboration between the University of Minnesota and Hennepin County. The resulting collaborations have generated support for research at the University, connected faculty with Hennepin County staff to

Photo by Colin Calvert



work on real-world problems, and given students the opportunity for hands-on experience through internships and capstone projects.

"The Hennepin-University Partnership is worthy of recognition because this innovation in connecting local government and academia creates a model that can be employed by other jurisdictions across the country. The HUP not only facilitates effective public policy making, but has also been highly productive to date. With more than 144 connections initiated under the umbrella of the Partnership, the value to the larger community is evident and the HUP will continue to be an invaluable resource for both institutions," said Jan Callison, Hennepin County commissioner.

Congratulations to the Hennepin-University Partnership on receiving this important award on behalf of the University of Minnesota.

Colin Calvert is graduate assistant with Hennepin-University Partnership and a Masters of Public Health candidate in Community Health Promotion at the University of Minnesota School of Public Health.

Linking Past to Present through the Andrew Peterson Farmstead

By Maria Wardoku



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The Historic Andrew Peterson Farmstead in Carver County.

From the road, the Andrew Peterson Farmstead looks like any other small farm you might expect to pass by in Carver County, with an old red barn and a few horses wandering the fields. But as students are discovering through the Resilient Communities Project, there is much, much more here than meets the eye. The story of the Peterson Farmstead stretches back 160 years, and in some ways, is only just beginning.

A Surprising History

The story begins with Andrew Peterson, a Swedish immigrant who settled on the land in the mid-1850s. Peterson kept a journal detailing life on the farm, chronicling each day from 1855 through 1898. His journals provide a uniquely rich historical record of the period and daily activities and events on the farm.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Swedish novelist Vilhelm Moberg used Peterson's diaries as the basis for a trio of novels about Swedish immigrants to Minnesota. The novels were turned into two acclaimed movies in the early 1970s (*The Emigrants* and *The New Land*). More recently, in 2012, a musical based on Andrew Peterson's life was produced in Sweden.

Beyond providing the primary source documents for the novels, movies, and a musical, Andrew Peterson also left a legacy as perhaps the most prominent horticulturist of the period in the entire Upper Mississippi River Valley, according to the Minnesota Historical Society. Peterson was a master of diversified farming.

But the story of the farmstead didn't end with Andrew Peterson's passing in 1898. In 1978, the Farmstead was placed on the National Register of Historic

Places. When the owner of the back 51 acres, Ward Holasek, passed away in 2013, he left his property to the Carver County Historical Society. The will was contested, but a complicated settlement was reached, where a property swap was agreed upon. The Historical Society ended up owning 12.17 acres, including the original Peterson farm building site. It has since begun work to restore the property.

Restoring the Farmstead

When Carver County was selected as this year's RCP partner, Carver County Historical Society Executive Director Wendy Petersen-Biorn jumped at the opportunity to connect to expertise at the University of Minnesota to assist with planned work on the farmstead. Several University of Minnesota courses are helping to tackle the substantial task

ahead of restoring and preserving the farm, and transforming the property into an educational and tourist destination.

Alexandr Young is a student in a historic building conservation class offered through the University's School of Architecture that is working on the Peterson Farm project this fall. "Our class is doing a conditions survey report of the buildings that comprise the farmstead," explained Young. "Through careful documentation and analysis of the interior and exterior of these buildings, the class will make recommendations for treatment."

Now more than halfway through the semester, the class has made good progress toward that goal. Student Sarah Ward shared that at a recent in-class presentation, "each group gave an overview of the condition of the building materials present, such as wood trim, flooring, glass in windows, drywall, paint finishes, etc. We identified any pressing matters that, if left unaddressed, could lead to further deterioration. We also identified original materials that are in good condition."

The experience is proving to be both rich and rewarding for the students. "We all glean different perspectives and insights," said Joel Holstad, another student in the course. "I am [gaining] a profound appreciation for the craftsmanship of the structures and the creativity [involved] in their construction. Peterson built well, and yet he is only [one] example of what, at one time, was a common expectation that we would provide for ourselves. Can we imagine today a homeowner grabbing a shovel and digging out their own basement? Or dropping a tree and turning it into useful lumber?"

Beyond advancing students' professional growth, the RCP project will pay dividends for the Carver County Historical Society. "The work the students are doing will become part of the infrastructure planning for the property," said Executive Director Petersen-Biorn. "It will save us years of work and thousands of dollars."

Looking to the Future

The School of Architecture class is only the first group to dig into the Peterson



Photo by Maria Wardoku

Historic preservation students explore the site.

Farmstead, and the work so far only the first step in the Historical Society's larger vision for the Peterson farm. The site will also be the focus of a master's thesis project in the Department of Anthropology, as well as a project in a Department of German, Dutch, and Scandinavian class this spring that will investigate opportunities to market the farmstead as a tourist attraction. According to Petersen-Biorn, "the farm and historically significant diaries of Andrew Peterson will be used to encourage visitors of all ages to discover our diverse heritage and to understand how the past shapes the present and the future." The serene rural character of the site belies the ambitious goals and whirlwind of student activity that will help to write the next chapter of the Andrew Petersen Farmstead's story.

Maria Wardoku is a Master of Urban and Regional Planning student at the University of Minnesota's Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs. To learn more about the Resilient Communities Project's partnership with Carver County, please visit www.rcp.umn.edu.

Photo by Mike Greco



The interior of a barn on the Andrew Peterson Farmstead.

Announcing RCP's 2016–2017 Partnership with Brooklyn Park

By Maria Wardoku

Unique. United. Undiscovered? Not for long.

The Resilient Communities Project is excited to announce our partnership with Brooklyn Park for the 2016–2017 school year. RCP will match undergraduate and graduate courses across the University of Minnesota with the 19 potential projects that Brooklyn Park developed to advance its strategic goals.

The partnership will be one to watch closely, not only because of the innovation and creativity the projects will inspire, but because Brooklyn Park is already as diverse today as the rest of Minnesota will be by 2040. Brooklyn Park is a first-ring suburb northwest of Minneapolis, and the sixth-largest city in the state. More than half of the city's 79,000 residents are people of color, and 20% of residents are immigrants. Strikingly, 10% of residents are immigrants from Liberia, giving Brooklyn Park (when combined with Brooklyn Center) the largest population of Liberians outside of Liberia.

Brooklyn Park's experiences today are other communities' future challenges and opportunities. What better way to prepare for the future than to follow the efforts of this pioneering community and learn from its experiences? Of Brooklyn Park's 19 projects, 11 touch on adapting to changing community demographics, so the partnership will produce a wealth of ideas in this area.

One of those projects is around developing a community kitchen. Brooklyn Park would like to support

food businesses to promote small business development as well as reduce safety risks associated with home-based food businesses. Many of those using residential kitchens for food businesses are new immigrants. A community kitchen would help support the entrepreneurial spirit of communities of color in the city, as well as provide a resource for food safety education, healthy eating, and cooking classes.

Another exciting project that is certain to have broad applications beyond Brooklyn Park is an effort to obtain more detailed demographic data than what the Census provides. In order to effectively serve its increasingly diverse population, the City needs more information about the ethnicity of local residents and where different ethnic groups live within the City. In addition to better demographic information, the project will also map the needs and assets of families in each neighborhood.

Yet another project seeks to determine whether the City can feasibly provide and maintain multi-purpose athletic fields for a broader array of sports, given new demands for facilities for rugby, lacrosse, and cricket that have come with changing demographics.

These are just three of the 19 fascinating projects that students will work on beginning in fall 2016. Our partners at Brooklyn Park are just as thrilled about the projects as RCP.

Kim Berggren, the City's Director of Community Development, will be leading the project from the Brooklyn

Park side. "We are extremely excited to partner with the University of Minnesota to advance many sustainability projects of importance to our community," Berggren said. "We believe students and faculty will bring innovative ideas that will help Brooklyn Park strategically invest in our future. Thanks to the University and to CURA for collaborating with local governments through a commitment to RCP."

Jay Stroebel, Brooklyn Park City Manager, echoed Berggren's excitement about the potential of this partnership, noting that "As one of the largest and most diverse cities in Minnesota, Brooklyn Park is a community with tremendous economic, environmental and social opportunity. Given our significant prospects for the future, we look forward to working with our community partners and the University of Minnesota to address the challenges (poverty, redevelopment, aging infrastructure, etc.) we face and fully realize our community's potential."

Stay tuned for more updates as we discover Brooklyn Park, a bold, ambitious city leading the way forward through Minnesota's changing demographic landscape.

Maria Wardoku is a Master of Urban and Regional Planning student at the University of Minnesota's Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs.

The Minnesota Prison Doula Project: Supporting Incarcerated Pregnant and Parenting Women

The Center for Urban and Regional Affairs is excited to announce that the Minnesota Prison Doula Project is now housed at CURA's offices. The Minnesota Prison Doula Project is a perfect fit for CURA because of the hands-on programmatic work by the Program Director Erica Gerrity and Program Coordinator Rae Baker combined with a strong research component added by Dr. Rebecca Shlafer. Learn more about the history and work of the Minnesota Prison Doula Project below.

Background

In the last 30 years, the institutionalization of women in correctional facilities has skyrocketed 800%. Nationwide, approximately 200,000 women are currently in prisons or jails, and about two-thirds of them are mothers. Even more staggering is that roughly 12,000 of these women are pregnant during their incarceration, and many will give birth while serving time. Incarcerated pregnant women are at risk for poor birth outcomes and costly interventions during labor and delivery.

Working in partnership with incarcerated women, Gerrity and Baker collaborated to create the Minnesota Prison Doula Project.

This unique prison doula program is dedicated to reducing poor birth outcomes and creating an environment in which incarcerated women can achieve a healthy pregnancy and birth. Teaming with University of Minnesota researcher, Dr. Rebecca Shlafer, the Minnesota Prison Doula Project strives to transform cycles of community violence and poverty through early intervention, education, and advocacy. Through the use of doulas and peer support, this project aspires to create opportunities for empowerment, healing, and social change for women and their children.

What are Doulas?

For centuries, women have been helping other women through pregnancy and childbirth. In ancient Greek, the word *doula* described "a woman who serves."



Today, doulas are trained and experienced birth professionals who provide physical, emotional, and educational support to women before, during, and after birth. It is this comprehensive support that Gerrity heard women asking for during listening sessions she facilitated at the Minnesota Correctional Facility - Shakopee, sentiments that subsequently led to the Minnesota Prison Doula Project.

Minnesota Prison Doula Project

In 2003, while volunteering at Minnesota's only state prison for women, Gerrity, a social worker and doula, heard from women a desire for more pregnancy and parenting resources. Gerrity teamed with fellow doulas and began developing a program that would offer support and education to pregnant and parenting inmates. Gerrity shared the concept of a prison doula program with Everyday Miracles, a non-profit organization providing doula support for low-income, at-risk women in the Twin Cities community. She received positive reviews and pilot project start-up

funds leading to the creation of Isis Rising. Years later, Isis Rising became the Minnesota Prison Doula Project, and is now a part of the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at the University of Minnesota.

Pregnancy - All inmates at Minnesota's only women's prison in Shakopee, MN receive pregnancy testing upon their arrival. If pregnant and expected to give birth during her sentence, a woman is offered a doula from the project who will coach her throughout her pregnancy. Initially, a woman will meet with a doula for two prenatal visits during which they discuss the progression of pregnancy, fetal development, prenatal health, a birth plan, and any other questions the expectant mother may have. She may also attend the New Moms Group.

Labor and Delivery - Once labor has started, the woman is transferred to a local hospital where she is met by her doula. Family and friends are not allowed; thus the doula becomes an essential person providing emotional support and physical comfort. She also



assists the mother in getting information she needs to make informed decisions during this process. The doula supports an environment that is calm and comfortable, helping to reduce stress on mother and baby, which can result in shorter labors, healthier births, and reduced need for unnecessary medical interventions, such as costly cesarean sections.

Separation - In Minnesota, a new mother is not allowed to take her baby to prison with her. Frequently arrangements are made to place the infant in the care of a relative. Separation is perhaps one of the most difficult parts of delivering a baby while in custody, and during this time, doulas play a critical role supporting the new mother through this emotional process.

Postpartum - An incarcerated mother, who is experiencing all the typical hormonal and emotional changes following birth, must also cope with the reality that she must return to prison and her child is going to live with someone else. These additional stressors may increase the risk for postpartum depression. During this critical time, a doula again supports the mother's health and well-being. While participating in one-on-one postpartum sessions with her doula, the new mom has the opportunity to discuss a variety of topics such as grief and loss, health issues, and coping strategies. Doulas do not provide diagnoses and are not part of a clinical visit, but they may help relieve anxiety experienced by a new mother or help her advocate for postpartum health care.

Group-Based Education & Support

Another role of the doulas is to provide education. The Minnesota Prison Doula Project developed two curriculums focused on creating opportunities for gaining valuable knowledge and skills related to mothering. Facilitated by doulas and clinical social workers, these 12-week classes are designed to increase parenting knowledge and improve strategies and support for parenting from prison or jail. Women can choose to attend the weekly sessions throughout their incarceration and often continue with the programs as their needs, and the needs of their children, change.

New Moms Group - In the 12-week New Moms Group, women spend time exploring the physiological and psychological elements of a healthy birth and discuss the process of giving birth while

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incarcerated. This type of peer group provides an opportunity for women to share their unique experiences and offer support to one another. Together they discuss topics like the importance of bonding with one's child and acknowledging the painful emotions resulting from the separation of mom and baby. This group is an opportunity for mothers to empower, encourage, and support one another in their journey together.

Mothering Inside Group - Over the first two years of the project, the number of women who wished to attend the New Moms Group grew substantially. This presented a new opportunity to provide group-based support to more incarcerated mothers. The Mothering Inside Group focuses on building strong and healthy connections between mothers, children, and caregivers. This group provides concrete skills and information, as well as a space

for mothers to share with and learn from other mothers.

Outcomes

Results from the pilot study have been remarkable. Between July 2011 and June 2014, 39 births were supported by doulas and only one of those babies was born with a low-birth weight. Only four of the 39 babies were born via cesarean section (all of which were scheduled, repeat cesarean sections), significantly lower than national rates.

Mothers who participated in this program had positive things to say about their experiences. Many echoed sentiments of gratitude for their doula and the support she provided.

Next Steps

As women in the Shakopee prison began to understand the power and meaning of this project, they suggested it be expanded to serve women in county

jails. Thus far, the project has been expanded to Hennepin and Ramsey County correctional facilities with hopes of being implemented in all jails across the state. As part of the project's expansion, Shlafer will continue conducting research and evaluation, with the goal of more comprehensively understanding the needs of incarcerated women and the project's impact on their outcomes.

In 2014 Minnesota's Governor signed into law a bill limiting the use of restraints on incarcerated pregnant women and allowing them access to a doula during their incarceration. Encouraged by these policy changes, Gerrity and Shlafer continue to work to ensure all incarcerated women in Minnesota have access to birth support, and prenatal and parenting education, with the goal of supporting women's health and the health of their children, our communities, and our state.