Training Neighborhood Residents to Conduct a Survey

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Abstract

As a requirement for a federal neighborhood revitalization grant, the authors trained resident interviewers and coordinated the conduct of more than 1000 door-to-door interviews of a stratified random sample. The targeted area was a multiethnic, lower income neighborhood that continues to experience the effects of past segregation. Monitoring and pivots to the training procedures are described within the context of community development and capacity-building theory. Including local participation in the interview process yielded enhanced collaborative participation in decision making on the part of interviewers and interviewees. Resident contribution to community development is described within the framework of advocacy and consultative participation.

Introduction

*I*n 2012, Texas Tech University received a Promise Neighborhoods grant from the U.S. Department of Education and became one of 12 implementation award recipients. According to the Department of Education *(Applications for New Awards, 2012)*, a Promise Neighborhood is both a place and a strategy: It is a physical community, and it is a strategy that mobilizes active participation of community members in coordinating neighborhood and external resources for the purpose of community revitalization. In the present context, *community revitalization* is defined as "the strategic process of transforming neighborhoods and communities (or sub-areas within them) that lack vitality into places of choice through collaborations of residents, organizations and other stakeholders" *(Holland, 2014, p. 1)*. Holland further elaborated on this process, indicating that it is an

> integrated, coordinated effort to increase the quality of a neighborhood's (1) educational and developmental, (2) commercial, (3) recreational, (4) physical and (5) social assets, sustained by local leadership over an extended period, to improve resident well-being and the community quality of life. *(Holland, 2014, p. 3)*

Targeted services for improvement and coordination included education for prekindergarten through post–high school graduation; children's health, recreational, and nutritional services; family services; parent education starting before birth; and college preparatory activities for students and parents.

Promise Neighborhood grantees are required to conduct neighborhood surveys at the initiation of the grant to establish baseline data. Subsequent surveys are required in Years 3 and 5. In this article, we describe lessons learned while training residents to collect the required baseline data. Prior to the formal surveys, however, the grant proposal process itself required that applicants gather and submit preliminary baseline data. Due to time and fiscal constraints during proposal preparation, it was not possible for Texas Tech to devise a sampling plan and conduct a survey of a scientific sample of the neighborhood. As an alternative, the present article's senior author coordinated a team effort to identify data from existing sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau; county, state, and national health records for the area; and housing, crime, and school data. These data provided the background information used for proposal submission. Upon receipt of the award, a door-to-door survey of the neighborhood was conducted.

With this article, the authors present a rationale for the active participation of neighborhood residents in conducting the one-on-one interviews as well as the previous background information on the setting for the survey. Also included is a description of the scientific survey that was conducted. Training procedures are described, as well as difficulties encountered along the way, the types of interventions offered to ensure survey consistency, and lessons learned from both the training and survey processes that may be of use for others wishing to involve stakeholders in neighborhood research.

Literature Review

As noted above, a major purpose of a Promise Neighborhood grant is to involve community members in a process of active engagement in community revitalization that includes improvement of education, health, and social services in coordination with nonprofit groups and individual volunteers. Stagner and Duran *(2014)* highlighted the importance of encouraging active participation by community residents in planning, designing, and implementing initiatives. This approach achieves success through "the strengthening of the capacity of neighborhood residents" *(p. 135)*.

Mills *(2005)* pointed out that residents of low-income inner-city communities often feel disenfranchised, and the process of community revitalization should empower them to take a stronger role in sustainable revitalization efforts. Roth *(2011)* noted that collaborative revitalization efforts should involve multiple stakeholder levels, including the involvement of residents in dialogue and identification of specific areas of focus.

Beyond enhancing community capacity-building, involving residents in a community survey as both interviewers and interviewees contributes to the validity of the data collected. Wallace and Teixeira *(2014)* found that cooperating with resident team members led to enhanced data collection in a neighborhood survey. King and Cruickshank *(2012)* pointed to the value of a systematic approach to problem identification and solution development and the need to gather information in a culturally sensitive manner.

A further benefit of the data collection method chosen for the survey is its role in community advocacy. Crocker *(2007)* made a distinction between passive and consultative participation. He defines passive participation as being a member of a group and attending events such as meetings. Consultative participation is more active in that individuals provide information and give their opinions to those in a position to make a difference. Lopez-Baez and Paylo *(2009)* found that having residents contribute to community development is itself a component of advocacy. Likewise, they cite effective listening and identifying strengths and weaknesses as also contributing to advocacy.

Community Description

Lubbock, Texas, population 233,740, is located in a rural section of northwest Texas that is one of the world's leading cotton-growing areas. The area's colleges and universities also contribute to a robust economy. Nevertheless, one area, East Lubbock, does not benefit from the surrounding economic vitality. With the mechanization of the cotton industry, many area African Americans moved to the city, where they were confined by city ordinance to the eastern end of town *(Amin, 1989)*. Although the geographic barrier for residency was eventually lifted, schools remained segregated long after the U.S. Supreme Court 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* desegregation decision.

East Lubbock is no longer primarily African American: 49.2% of residents are now Hispanic, and only 28.5% African American. The effects of previous segregation remain, as reflected in a median

family income of only $25,355. The area has high rates of unemployment, crime, poverty, and ill health, and schools demonstrate low academic achievement. In 2011, Lubbock was classified as having the sixth highest crime rate per capita in the United States, primarily due to youth becoming involved with drugs and gangs *(Giuffo, 2011)*. East Lubbock youth account for more than 80% of juveniles in Lubbock County detention facilities *(McKenzie, Johnson, Vasquez, & Nelson, 2010)*.

The state's child abuse fatality rate exceeds that of any other state *(Austin Children's Shelter, 2014)*. Within Texas, the Lubbock area has the highest rates of child abuse and neglect *(United Way, 2014)*. Some of the highest rates of teen pregnancy in Texas occur in zip codes corresponding to East Lubbock; Lubbock ranks eighth of 254 Texas counties in sexually transmitted diseases *(Gonzalez, 2013)*.

According to the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration *(2012),* Texas has the highest rate of uninsured individuals in the United States, and East Lubbock is a "Designated Health Professional Shortage Area." Childhood and adolescent obesity rates in Texas are the sixth highest in the United States, and East Lubbock is considered to have significantly limited access to healthy foods *(County Health Rankings, 2014)*.

Requirements for Promise Neighborhoods Grantees

In accord with the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993, each agency within the federal government must produce performance plans and indicators of progress. The GPRA indicators for the Promise Neighborhoods initiative include the following, which must be measured in Years 1, 3, and 5 of the grant period:

- Number and percentage of children, from birth to kindergarten entry, who have a place where they usually go, other than an emergency room, when they are sick or in need of advice about their health.

- Number and percentage of children, from birth to kindergarten entry, participating in center-based or formal home-based early learning settings or programs, which may include Early Head Start, Head Start, child care, or publicly funded preschool.

- Number and percentage of school-age children who participate in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily.

- For children birth to kindergarten entry, the number and percentage of parents or family members who report reading to their children three or more times a week.

- For children in kindergarten through eighth grade, the number and percentage of parents or family members who report encouraging their children to read books outside school.

- For children in the ninth to 12th grades, the number and percentage of parents or family members who report talking with their child about the importance of college and career.

The U.S. Department of Education provided previously validated survey questions that grantees could use to collect baseline data on the above GPRA measures. The Data Resource Center and the National Center for Education Statistics had validated specific items drawn from the previous studies. These previous surveys included the National Survey of Children's Health *(Data Resource Center, 2010)*, the Early Childhood Longitudinal National Nine-Month Parent Questionnaire *(NCES, 2002)*, and the National Center for Education Statistics' Educational Longitudinal Study *(NCES, 2002)*. In addition to the required questions, the authors added one question at the end of the interview in which respondents were asked if there was anything they would like to see change in their neighborhood.

Survey Method

Desiring a high participation rate for purposes of validity of results, the present team chose to conduct door-to-door interviews rather than conduct the interviews by telephone. Furthermore, we decided to hire and train neighborhood residents to conduct the survey. The rationale for this decision was based on several factors: (a) resident interviewers were familiar with the neighborhood, (b) they had a high likelihood of being accepted by residents, and (c) a major purpose of the project was to facilitate active engagement of the residents in the community revitalization effort. Crocker *(2007)* asserted that only those who are within a context understand it.

By employing neighborhood residents, the authors were utilizing the strategy noted by King and Cruickshank *(2012)* of involving community members in creating their future in a manner that is culturally and linguistically sensitive. Actively involving the community in systematic identification of problems and solutions has been noted by King and Cruickshank *(2012)* as an effective means of community engagement and creation of shared meaning. The senior author of this article served as survey director and oversaw all aspects of recruitment and hiring of interviewers, as well as the conduct of the survey.

Grantees were instructed by the U.S. Department of Education to gather the data in a survey of a stratified random sample of households with children. The authors hired a statistician who constructed the sampling plan. Due to the size and stratification of the neighborhood, it was necessary to complete 10 interviews for each of the 93 blocks included in the stratification. Thus, the goal was to complete 930 interviews. The sample was derived from 2010 U.S. Census data and took into consideration the number of single-family dwellings and apartment buildings in the target area. The sampling strategy consisted of random selection of 93 city blocks, followed by convenience sampling of 10 interviews per block. Interviewers were to knock on doors and determine whether there were children in the household. If the resident declined to participate or if there was no answer, the interviewer would go to the next house. This would continue until 10 interviews were completed.

The university Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the project as an anonymous data-gathering project. In addition, the IRB approved the statement that was read and handed to all residents explaining the confidentiality of their responses, noting that they could terminate the interview at any time, and providing a telephone number for them to call if they had questions or comments. In order to ensure confidentiality, names and addresses were not recorded on the questionnaires. Instead, a record was kept of addresses contacted on a separate form. This record made it possible for us to return to the block to complete a total of 10 interviews without going to households previously interviewed, those without children, or those which had declined to participate. The address record forms were stored in a locked file cabinet separate from the completed questionnaires.

Recruitment and Training Method

The process of recruitment of interviewers started with the senior author consulting with the university Human Resources Department about hiring part-time, temporary interviewers from the target neighborhood. The department advised that to advertise and hire these positions through the university would take considerable time. Unfortunately, time was of the essence since it was necessary to collect the baseline data prior to initiation of the project. Human Resources recommended an employment agency as the more expeditious choice. Simultaneously, the authors had identified several residents who were thought to be good interviewers.

The senior author contacted an employment agency and negotiated an agreement whereby the project paid the agency $15.14 per hour for work performed. The agency handled all payroll responsibilities and paid interviewers $11 per hour. The authors arranged for a 1-day group hiring session at the agency to which the authors referred candidates. In addition to these candidates, the employment agency identified several other candidates. The agency conducted an orientation on its ethical principles and time sheet requirements, had the candidates complete an application package, and conducted the necessary background checks according to agency procedures.

As a result of this process, the project hired 28 interviewers. In addition, two full-time university employees and two graduate research assistants were assigned to work on the project 20 hours per week as coordinators to assist with training, coordinating data collection, and reviewing completed questionnaires for compliance with the research protocol.

Initial training. The project negotiated a contract with a local community center to use its facility to conduct a 1-day interview training session, beginning at 8:00 a.m. and ending at 4:30 p.m. Arrangements were made for both breakfast and lunch to be served. The presence of food and coffee, together with get-acquainted activities, generated a warm and hospitable atmosphere.

After breakfast, the new hires' first activity was pairing up with someone they did not know and "interviewing" that person. Next, each person had to "introduce" his/her partner to the group. It was pointed out that this was an exercise in the importance of listening during an interview. Because the interviewers would eventually work with partners as a small team, it was useful for them to become familiar with one another as soon as possible.

The survey director showed slides that began with the overall context of the study, including the nationwide Promise Neighborhood objectives and how the local project was part of a much larger program. She emphasized the need to collect data from the community and indicated that it would ultimately be combined with data from other communities. This was done to communicate to the interviewers a sense of their importance in a national program. Topics covered in the slide presentation, in question-and-answer format, appear in Table 1.

Table 1. Training Topics

Questions	Description
What is a survey?	An instrument to collect information on specific characteristics of a population
What is the population we are studying?	We are interested in the population of adults with children 0-18 years of age residing in East Lubbock.
Will we be collecting information from all adults in the community with children 0-18 years of age?	No. We will be collecting information from a randomly selected, representative sample of blocks in the community. Certain U.S. Census blocks have been chosen as representative of the population.
How many households will we be studying?	In order for us to be sure we have a truly representative sample of the neighborhood, we will need to conduct surveys at 930 households.
How long will this take?	It will take approximately 10 minutes to actually ask the list of required questions at each household. However, we are allowing time for you to introduce yourselves and explain the purpose of the survey. We will provide you with a copy of the introduction you will use at each household.
Do we have to ask all the questions in exactly the way they appear in the questionnaire?	Yes. This is because all the other Promise Neighborhood grantees around the country will be conducting the same exact survey in their neighborhoods and the federal government wants to take all the responses from all over the country and combine them into a report which will be presented to the U.S. Congress. So we cannot deviate in any way from the questionnaire. The questions must be asked using the wording on the questionnaire and in the order that appears on the questionnaire

Do we have copies of the questionnaire in Spanish?	Yes, those of you who are fluent in Spanish will administer the questions in Spanish. We will send out teams to each census block. Some teams will have at least one fluent Spanish speaker.
How will we know what households to interview?	Each day, you will be given the census blocks assigned to your team. Basically, you will attempt to interview a certain number of households on each block. You will start with one household and if there is no answer there or if someone refuses to be interviewed, you will go to the next house and the next. Once your team has completed the required number of interviews on that block, you will proceed to the next block.

All interviewers were given a handout containing these questions and answers. Another handout contained tips on what to do if residents did not want to respond. During the session, participants who had served as telephone solicitors in the past suggested methods of coercing people into participating in the survey. The survey director provided corrective guidance, indicating that the project did not want to use any type of coercion and that this was not a sales pitch. However, it was acceptable to remind residents that the survey was for a worthwhile cause and that responses would be kept confidential and reported only in the aggregate. Should interviewers be unable to overcome a resident's objections to participate, they were to accept the refusal as courteously as possible and thank the person for his or her time.

Review of survey questionnaires. For the next step in the training, the survey director went over the introduction procedures at the beginning of an interview, which included brief statements about the project and the purpose of the interview. These items had been approved by the university's Institutional Review Board. The survey director then went over the questionnaire, reading each question and explaining that it had to be asked with that exact wording. The importance of maintaining confidentiality was also covered.

Both English and Spanish versions of questionnaires were presented at the training session. The trainees who could commu-

nicate in fluent Spanish would be assigned to the Spanish census blocks in order to achieve valid responses to questions.

During a break, each person's picture was taken in order to make name tags that they would wear during the interviews. All the interviewers and coordinators were required to sign a confidentiality agreement and to maintain the confidentiality of those participating.

The trainees were given 2 hours to practice introduction procedures and administer questionnaires to each other. Thus, the trainees experienced both administering the survey and responding to it. One of the trainees had previously worked as a U.S. Census interviewer and offered helpful interview techniques such as being courteous and thorough.

Survey rehearsal. Once trainees had interviewed each other several times, they were then required to "interview" one of the regular staff members on the project. This quality control step was useful in identifying trainee errors and providing correction. Project staff reported back to the director on types of errors, which included the following:

- Using language other than that provided in the questionnaire.

- Asking all questions, not just those for the ages of children in the household. For example, if the oldest child in the household was 6 years old, interviewers were to skip the questions pertaining to middle school and high school youth. Several trainees asked all the questions in the survey, including those for specific ages that were not represented in the household. Several questions involved decision trees, indicating that if the respondent answered "no" to a question, the interviewer was supposed to skip the following two questions. However, some trainees asked all the questions on the questionnaire.

- In a question that required a response of either *Often*, *Sometimes*, or *Never*, the interviewer would sometimes write in *Yes* or *No*.

Without identifying those making errors, the survey director went over these examples and explained the proper procedures once again. An additional component of the intensive training session was a rehearsal of the complete procedures as they would be practiced in the field. This step included practicing sign-in, receiving

the assignment of blocks to interview, picking up a clipboard and large manila envelope with all necessary supplies, and returning to the facility to sign out. The rehearsal of these procedures during the intensive training helped prepare for a streamlined sign-in and sign-out process once the survey actually began.

Survey implementation and ongoing training. Thereafter, each weekday at 5:00 p.m., the interviewers and the coordinators were required to gather in a local community center that acted as a staging area for the interview neighborhood and sign in. Interviews were conducted 3 hours per day, from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. On those days when the intense Texas heat prohibited going door-to-door until it was later, the authors had the interviewers go over the previous day's questionnaires, checking for errors. This process took place under the supervision and in full view of project staff. In addition, the time was spent on plotting future routes that would maximize the number of blocks covered in an evening.

Usually, however, each interviewer was given a clipboard with blank survey questionnaires, copies of introductory statements and thank you cards to distribute to residents, maps identifying the specific blocks assigned for that evening, blank Block Forms (see Table 2) for each city block assigned, and a Master Completion Form (see Table 3). In addition, the coordinators distributed bottled water and granola bars.

Table 2. Block Form

		Accept				
			Incomplete			
No.	Address	Complete	No	Return	Declined	N/A

Block #	
Date	
Name of the Interviewer	

No.	Address	Complete	No	Return	Declined	N/A
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						

Table 3. Master Completion Form

Block #	Address	Completes (√)
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
Fill in address ony after complete		

The Block Form was used to determine which households were not to be revisited. In addition, teams completed Master Completion Forms to help keep a running count of up to 10 completed interviews per block. Questionnaires were randomly assigned code numbers, which enabled coordinators to review questionnaires the day after the interviews to determine if there were mistakes in coding or number of questions answered. If so, the project arranged for someone to return to the correct address to complete a survey if necessary. To ensure confidentiality at the end of each evening, completed questionnaires were stored in a locked file cabinet at the university, separated from the forms that contained addresses.

Interviewers were separated into several teams, each of which contained one coordinator and two interviewers. Every day, the census blocks to be interviewed were assigned to the individual teams. The coordinator in each team was responsible for driving the interviewers to the section of East Lubbock where they would be conducting interviews that day. The coordinator also watched over the interviewers' safety and contacted the staging area if, for example, the interviewers had completed the assigned blocks but still had time to cover others. One coordinator always remained at the community center ("Action Central") to respond to these questions and make new assignments as needed.

Review of completed questionnaires. After the day's interviews were finished, the survey director packed up all questionnaires and materials. The following afternoon, the director and coordinators reviewed all questionnaires and Block Forms to check

for errors. For several weeks, numerous errors persisted. The categories of errors were noted in a project lab notebook. Several difficulties arose: The coordinators and the interviewers were sometimes confused about the census blocks and went to the wrong addresses, some interviewers would skip important questions, some made wrong marks on the response items, and some forgot to write down the visited addresses on the Block Form.

The project quickly fell behind in the process of reviewing questionnaires and eventually paid some of the better interviewers to join the coordinators in the project office at the university at 1:00 p.m. each day to help spot errors and keep track of which blocks needed to be revisited. When it was suspected that some addresses did not correspond to the assigned blocks, the coordinators used Google Maps to confirm the location of specific addresses. Whenever the locations shown on Google Maps were also confusing, the survey director drove to those blocks in person to make certain the coordinators and the interviewers were given accurate directions at the beginning of each day's staging session. The discovered problems were pointed out, and instructions were clarified at the beginning of each survey evening so that the interviewers would not repeat previous mistakes. If any questionnaire was found to be incomplete due to interviewer error, the interviewers were asked to go back to the household and collect the missing information. If the interviewers went to the wrong addresses the first time, they were required to visit the correct addresses.

Redirection. In addition, each evening a mini training session was conducted, at which common errors and appropriate procedures were covered. Nevertheless, the same errors persisted for several weeks, and a few interviewers consistently did not note blocks and addresses on forms or did not ask the appropriate questions for an age group. Those who made the most serious errors were eventually terminated. One interviewer refused to adhere to the safety protocol of periodically calling in from the field. On the second evening of the study, he returned to the staging area 45 minutes after the community center closed, just as we were beginning to organize a search party. He was given one more chance to participate, with the stipulation that he adhere to the supervision of a coordinator. He refused this direction and quit on the spot.

In less serious cases, those in which the errors were sporadic, the survey director designed an intervention in which she asked a community pastor to make a compassionate presentation to interviewers about how he was sure they would be able to succeed. This was coupled with the survey director's stern message that there

would have to be more attention paid to detail. Thereafter, a noticeable improvement in questionnaire completion and block coverage was noted.

"Lessons Learned" Method

The authors gradually developed an understanding of factors pertaining to the training and survey implementation methods through an iterative process of noting errors made by the interviewers and subsequent trial and error of interventions to maximize the validity of data collected. A variation of naturalistic design was employed to the extent that behavior of interviewers was observed and recorded by the trainers and coordinators who were present in the training sessions and in the field as they followed interviewers through the neighborhood. In the interest of ensuring that interviews complied with the interview protocol, the coordinators who were accompanying the interviewers in the field began to capture processes and note variations from the survey protocol.

At the end of each evening, the coordinators reported errors to the survey director. In addition, during each day after the evening interviews, the coordinators reviewed completed questionnaires for errors and omissions and brought these to the attention of the director, who used this information to plan introductory comments at the beginning of that evening's meeting prior to assigning blocks to the interviewers. Thus, the team employed an inductive process of gradually identifying patterns of behavior that could be addressed in ongoing training and coaching.

These observations could not be classified as purely naturalistic, however, in that they were not detached from the data-gathering process *(Bernard & Ryan, 2010)*. Subsequent intervention was meant to alter interviewer behavior. Therefore, the method employed closely paralleled that of the Chicago school: a social interactionist perspective in which the research approach is flexible, diverse, and inductive *(Berg & Lune, 2012)*. The process was inductive in that meaning was derived from observations of interviewers and review of completed questionnaires, which in turn led to descriptions of patterns to be addressed; flexible in that the trainers and coordinators interacted with the interviewers in order to alter their behavior; and diverse in that several different interventions were tried and observed.

Another characteristic of the social interactionist method that emerged in our work was the development of author sensitivity to the viewpoint of the resident interviewers. This empathic under-

standing has been noted by several methodologists as a strength of the social interactionist approach in that it can result in deeper understanding of the meaning of the social behavior being observed *(Berg & Lune, 2012).*

Results of Training

Originally, it was anticipated that the survey would be completed within 4 weeks. In fact, it took 3 months and 1 week. Several factors contributed to the prolonged data collection: (a) numerous errors were made in the first few weeks, which resulted in unusable questionnaires; (b) revisits were made to blocks and addresses; and (c) time was spent each evening in retraining interviewers at the staging area just prior to data collection, and this further delayed actual field work.

Another factor that contributed to the extended time period was the length of time for each interview. Most residents were very pleased that someone was interested in their opinion and had much to say beyond what was asked in the questionnaire. It was not unusual for a resident to say, "Now you be sure to tell them this" or "Write this down." Many interviews took more than half an hour.

Surprisingly, we had only two incidents in which a resident did not complete an interview after it was begun. In the first case, the individual had to finish making dinner and in another, time ran out and she had to take a child to football practice. No one terminated the interview because of objection to the questions asked.

It was not possible to obtain 10 interviews for all blocks. This was partly due to the blocks having been selected based on 2010 Census data for a study conducted in 2013. In the intervening 3 years, the neighborhood experienced high mobility, and in some blocks the number of households with children diminished significantly. Families had moved, or there were no longer children under 18 years of age in the home. In addition, interviewers noted a high rate of abandoned homes.

Discussion

The process of arriving at a conceptualization of lessons learned was not one in which theory about training interviewers preceded research, nor was it one in which research preceded theory. Rather, it was a process that has been described as the "spiraling research approach" *(Berg & Lune, 2012, p. 25),* in which ideas precede theory and design but are reconceptualized as a result of data collection and analysis. In the present case, the authors' ideas about how to

train interviewers and conduct a survey were continually reformulated as a result of field observations and review of the completed protocols. Original theory concerning the importance of resident involvement in the study expanded into a deeper understanding of the resident interviewers and the respondents, and this new information was used to alter the design of ongoing training. In retrospect, the authors underestimated the time it would take to train resident interviewers. At least two entire sessions should have been devoted to rehearsal of the survey process. Also, the authors should have anticipated that most of the trainees had never participated in either a community project or university study, and that ongoing training and encouragement would be a wise precaution. The resulting training strategy was an iterative process whereby the authors tried various methods, noted errors that continued, and then implemented new training practices based on that information. Although the process did take more time than originally planned, most trainees were truly attempting to adhere to the study protocol and did eventually attain proficiency in conducting the interviews and completing all paperwork.

In addition to increased interviewer proficiency, coordinators noted a gradual improvement in interviewers' confidence. Whereas early in the study, the coordinators took responsibility for planning which city blocks were to be covered each evening, after the first month the interviewers spontaneously did this themselves. They would offer their own opinions on which blocks should be covered in what order so as to maximize the number of interviews that could be completed within the 3-hour time period.

Over the course of the study, the number of interviews completed each day increased. Interviews were taking less time, and fewer households declined to participate. The authors believe the increased confidence of the interviewers contributed to the willingness of residents to participate in the survey. King and Cruickshank *(2012)* outlined an approach to community involvement that included increasing the skills of community members in a manner that incorporates cultural and linguistic distinctions. They asserted that investing in community skills in engagement is the most expeditious strategy for change. Indeed, over the course of the study, several interviewers who had been unemployed applied for and obtained permanent employment in the community. In addition to the job training provided for the survey, the survey director assisted applicants with resume development and provided them with letters of reference. Thus, conducting the study was itself a strategy for increased employment.

Shaw *(2008)* noted that community development is most successful when coupled with people's real interests and their active engagement with policy. It was clear to all involved with the study that respondents did perceive the survey to be relevant to their interests. Many expressed a desire for the neighborhood to reach its full potential. Cornwall *(2008)* asserted that being involved in a process in a passive manner does not equal having a voice. The very act of voicing their perceptions was itself a form of engagement. Those who provided information during the interviews were engaged in what Crocker *(2007)* described as development from a state of passive participation that involves being a member of a group such as a church or being a parent of a school-aged child, to a state of consultative participation. This latter level of involvement is characterized by providing information to those who are in a position to make changes. Many participants indicated that they had never been asked their opinion about matters pertaining to the neighborhood and were very pleased to participate. Thus, although the survey was designed primarily to collect information, it also served as a venue for community participation and advocacy.

The primary lesson learned from the project was that despite the increased number of weeks devoted to the survey and the challenges encountered along the way, the process was a rewarding one for all involved. The authors began to develop an understanding of the neighborhood through the eyes of the resident interviewers and the respondents. In debriefing with the interviewers, it became clear that some of the omissions and inconsistent notation on the survey instruments were due to the interviewers becoming deeply involved in conversation with the residents. In this respect, the survey process approached the symbolic interactionist model *(Berg & Lune, 2012),* in which meaning is derived from the process of persons interacting with each other. Thus, the process was a two-way learning experience for all involved.

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