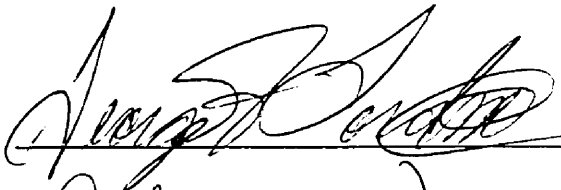
A STUDY OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN SELECTED SCHOOL-BASED COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCILS FOR BETTER NEIGHBORHOODS

by

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First Reader 

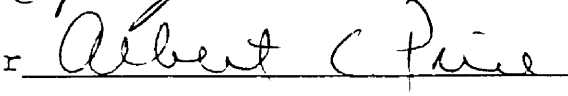
Second Reader 

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INTRODUCTION

Only a limited number of people are activiely involved in the decision-making process which impacts the life of the greater community. While there is some research that demonstrates increased participation in decision-making when there is a community school (Faust,1988:4-5), (and most school districts do have some type of community outreach), few actually maximize all of the community resources (Decker,1988:28). To encourage self-actualization and promote ownership in the life of the neighborhood it is important for individuals to be active participants in their community . Individuals can make a difference in the good or bad that occurs in their immediate neighborhood. Involvement of councils and neighborhood groups is a key to healthier and more productive cities (Decker, 1988:64).

If it is true that given a significant amount of citizen involvement in public decision-making that the quality of life in a community improves, the city of Flint, Michigan should be an ideal subject to study the effects of the process. The Flint community has been a laboratory for experiments in community education for more than fifty years (Cady, 1988). Through partnership efforts between the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation

and the Flint School system major intiatives have been implemented to involve citizens who live in this city to express their opinions and activate their ideas.

In concept citizen councils, whether named community councils, advisory councils, steering committes, coordinating councils or any of various combinations, have existed in this country throughout its history. We are a nation of people who believe in participatory democracy. Our founding forefathers fought and died for our rights. Thomas Jefferson may have been the most outspoken individual who shaped the United States government and is quoted by Good in context toward his belief in people.

> "Men by their constitutions are naturally divided into two parties: 1) those who fear and distrust people, and wish to draw all powers from them into the hands of the higher classes; 2) those who identify themselves with the people, have confidence in them and cherish and consider them as the most honest and sane...In every country these two parties exsist, they will declare themselves." (Good,1980:91)

The revolutionary leaders of the country argued and debated the issues involving citizen participation in governmental processes. The citizens won. In declaring our independence from England, citizens were charged with the right, and responsibility, to assess whether a government fulfills its perscribed purposes, and if not, to alter that government or abolish it and institute new rule. This issue threads throughout

the history of the United States. Indeed, whenever democratic self-governance has exsisted throughout time, worldwide, we find citizens participating in the ruling process; all the way back to 600 B.C. where the Council of Elders sat in consultation in the Republic of Greece.

One of the earliest formal community councils in the United States was found to exist in 1880 at the Penn School, located on an island off the coast of South Carolina. Other councils of documented existence reinforced and perpetuated the ideal of participation of the governed in their government (Clark, 1981:34).

Thomas Jefferson in shaping the democratic foundation of our nation suggested that people learn self-governance and participatory democracy by participating, debating, joining causes and committees, and pursuing an active role in government. Citizen participation and involvement become increasingly more important as we experience rapid change. The acceleration of forces creates an ever moving field of social, political, and economic reality necessitating the sharing of information and understanding and consumption of a significant and direct role in shaping decisions at every level. Groups of citizens organized informally as in pressure groups of an ad hoc nature, and organized formally as citizen councils, provide an important opportunity to impact on today's issues. Effective participation in the form of councils constitute yet another victory for citizen involvement in the democratic process.

Before councils are activated critical questions must be

addressed by the community and the sponsoring organizations in order to be successful..,questions such as: Why do citizen's want to be involved? Does the organization want citizen involvement? What organizational support for citizen involvement exsists? What barriers exist to effective citizen involvement? How will citizens be involved in assessing their needs and establishing means to meet those needs (Missouri State Department of Education,1982:154)?

Using the Flint community as a model for research I have examined what has happened to community involvement via school/community advisory councils and why some councils are more effective than others. There has been a proliferation of new projects in Flint whereby only a limited number of community members have provided direct input into the composition and implemetation of services. In order for the people of Flint to be more active participants in the life of this city there should be more efforts made to develop and administer processes to increase community participation.

Old line attempts to organize local communities have been successful to a degree but the expectation for more representative members have come up short (Zerchykov, et al, 1980:21). The Flint school system has attempted to address this problem by instigating a process to encourage community involvement at the local school. This process has been evolving over the past fifty years. The Parent/Teacher

councils of the 1970's (Cady, 1988). This change has enabled the city of Flint to tackle many issues at the neighborhood level through council leadership. While some issues may deal directly with K-12 problems, a considerable amount of time is geared toward "non-school" related concerns. Using the school administrators and buildings for resources, councils have the potential to greatly impact the quality if life in their communities.

By determining the successful characterisics of a strong council which has significant community involvement and comparing the findings to research that has been done in the past a new theory may emerge for key characteristics in community decision-making and action.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The concept of community has been discussed by theologians, philosophers, political scientists, sociologists and educators. For many, the concept of a local community is no longer viable. Some people believe that technical change has pressed society toward greater industrialization and urbanization with little consideration of the effects on social relations or local community. The local community is characterized as being populated by isolated individuals suffering from alienation, depression, disillusionment, anomie and a lack of community identity. Strong advisory councils can provide control over the life of a neighborhood. Community involvement through strong councils leads to better communities.

Murray G. Ross states that:

> The processes of urbanization have almost destroyed man's feeling of belonging to a community...The problem of developing and maintaining common or shared values (the basic ingredient for cohesion) is made vastly more difficult by industrialization and urbanization ...Democracy will weaken, if not perish, unless supporting institutions are supported and new institutions (to meet the new ways of living) are developed. (Ross,1955:80-81)

Ross summarizes his basic assumptions regarding the contemporary community situation:

> This is the problem of man's loss of his essential dignity. For surely man is being overwhelmed by forces of which he is only dimly aware, which subjugate him to a role of decreasing importance and present him with problems which he has no means to cope. Aspects of this central problem are the difficulty of full expression of a democratic philosophy and the threats to mental health of individual members of societies (Ross,1955:83).

As one reads of the dissolution of community, one is forced to ask what exactly is it that is dissolving? Various working definitions have been offered in an attempt to define community. For example, according to Yeager,

> An understanding of the community may be approached from two points of view: (1) its structural nature, (2) its functional nature. The structure of a community may be described in terms of its geographical location, its legal boundaries, its occupation, service institutions, historical past, face-to-face contacts, centers of interest, certain primary and supporting institutions, such as churches, schools, and certain political autonomy. The structural description does not, however, convey the inter-active nature of community living. This can best be explained functional, that is, through the interactions and associations of individuals and groups as they live together. (Yeager,1955:439)

William Biddle writing in his book, defines community, not in terms of physical attributes, but in terms of functions. Only when the definition is shifted to a functional concept (realistically based upon the citizens' awareness of community) is a common basis found to understand the structural varieties. He futher states that "... community is whatever sense of local common good citizens can be helped to achieve (Biddle,1966: 148)."

Just as different authors have different perceptions of community, so also do most community members. They see different

communities for different purposes, and view their own home as the focal point for each. Alan A. Altshuler states that communities of "greatest concern are quite tiny; the few closest houses to one's own, one or several blocks, an elementary school district (1970:124)."

Suzanne Keller reports finding four distinct types of definitions for community in the literature: (1) those based on natural geographic boundries, (2) those based on evidence as too the users of the neighborhood facilities, (3) those based on the cultural characteristics of the residents, and (4) those based on resident perceptions (Keller, 1968:87).

Robert Nisbett writes that community refers to ties that are "characterized by a high degree of personal intimacy, emotional depth, moral commtment, social cohesion and continuity in time. The most common basis for such ties in contemporary America are family, religion, ethnicity, race occupation, and income class." For Nisbett, community is "founded on man conceived in his wholeness rather than in one or another of the roles, taken seperately, that he may hold in a social order... it achieves its fulfillment in a submergence of individual will that is not possible in unions of mere convenience or rational assent ... its archetype both historically and symbolically is the family... (Nisbet, 1966:47)."

Richard A. Brosio approached the problem of defining community from a different perspective. He defined community by stating what it is not.

> Community is the anthesis of the segmented, atomized, contractual nexus of Manchester liberal theory... community is not a fixed end, but a plan for intelligent action. The work of conversion of physical association into a community, which is regulated by mutual interests and shared meanings, does not occur all at once nor completely... We are born in association with one another, but we are not born members of a community... There are degrees of community, just as there are degrees of education.

Brosio still later defined community as:

> when men have worked cooperatively in a common way, there stands community (Brosio,1972 : 65-88).

Ernest Melby (1969:4) has stated that an educational community is all people of the community being involved in educational policy determination, educational leadership, and day-to-day programs. Community is a concept basic to human group. The above examples indicate the considerable variation in the percise definiton of the concept of community among various groups. From all of these definitions, some generalizations can be drawn.

Community is not fixed; it changes as the result of the experience or purposeful effort. It may even shift according to the problem that catches the attention of the citizen.

Community is organic, ecological and flexible. Community is more than a set of rational, mystical, inherited, particularistic commitments. It is in effect, an ecological order. The members of a community not only reside and act together, they share some common concern.

For the purposes of this study, a community is that identifiable local group living within the attendence area of an elementary school. The community is more than the children and

parents of the area. It is also non-parent couples, single people, senior citizens and business people who pay taxes for the support of the school, and are interested in and benefit from the school.

S. John Eggleston defines this group as a "catchment area." More than a fortuitous geographical grouping of individuals who happen to live in an area which a local educational authority has allocated to a particular school, an artifact of educational administration. Eggleston points out that there is "evidence that many catchment areas have more in common than just the availability of a particular school and have distinctive features which differentiate the schools that they serve (Eggleston, 1967 :113)." The discussion of what is implied by the word "community," leads to an examination of the second part of the topic under discussion, "involvement".

Just as one encounters difficulty in defining "community", one encounters a similar situation when one attempts to define involvement. The literature shows that involvement, participation, influence and control are often used interchangeably.

In defining citizen involvement, three essential elements emerge. James V. Cunningham identifies these elements as : (1) common amatuers, (2) power, and (3) decisions.

> Common amatuers are members of the community without paid office, wealth, special information, or other formal power source beyond their own numbers. They are the nonelite citizens whose gaining of some control springs from the participation process itself. By community it is meant a body of people interrelated by locality or

> organization. Power is control, the ability of a person to get others to think and act as that person wants them to think or act. Involvement occurs when such control comes into the hands of the common amateurs and is exercised over decisions that affect several members of the society. Decisions are significant, substantive choices. They are the action element of the involvement process. Common amatuers can possess power, but if they do not exercise it, there is no involvement. "Significant and "Substantive" here indicate that the matter being decided upon directly affects a number of persons in important ways, and generally, would exclude merely going into a polling booth and casting a ballot to help choose an offical who would later make decisions on behalf of the public (Cunningham,1972:592).

According to Cunningham, citizen involvement is defined as a process wherein the common amatuers of a community exercise power over decisions related to the general affairs of a community. Cunningham's conceptualization is an advanced process that can only be actualized when large numbers of nonelite persons extend their involvement beyond the traditional representative democracy role of voting in elections. They must participate in greater depth in the process.

Carole Pateman (Pateman, 1970:34), a theorist whose work has chiefly been in the area of industrial and political organizations, identifies three types of involvement: (1) full, (2) partial, and (3) pseudo. She defines full involvement as exsisting when all members of the body have equal power over decision; partial involement exsists when some members have power and others have only influence; and pseudo is when some members have no power (Pateman, 1970:34).

The concept on involvement is based on the contention that the sense of being unable to control one's fate stems largely from a perception of a lack of control of one's destiny. The literature notes that "linked to the belief in chance as a solution to one's problems is a generally passive orientation. The feeling among individuals of an inability to control their destiny because they perceive external forces to be too strong or too vague to maipulate, may act to curtail substantial endeavor among them (Weinman, 1970:5).

Community involvement through grassroots in effect has been paradoxically increased by mandates from the Federal and State government. Not until the Federal government became concerned about poverty and urban unrest in the mid-1960's did policymaking address the issue of citizen involvement.

The Economic Opportunities Act, for example, created both the Head Start and Follow Through programs. Head Start sought to compensate children from three to five years old for preceived home and community deficits in health, nutrition, and educational development. Follow Through sought to continue special support for low-income children into the early public school years, and to develop new and more effective models for teaching children. Both programs were reformist in spirit and both included parents and citizens in decision-making concerning the program.

As the Federal government increased the amount of financial

support directed to local public education , schools became more tuned into regulations expressed for programs. In 1965 the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was established and in effect was the beginning of the titled programs (eg. Title I, Title VII). New intiatives were instituted to direct assistance to target populations of disadvantaged and diverse populations.As part of the requirements, in 1970, Federal policy-makers began mandating formal channels for parent and community representation in planning and implementing Federal programs. By 1977, Federally mandated parent advisory committes exsisted in nearly every school district in the nation (Davies, et al, undated:117). Federal participation requirements were part of, and may have helped to percipitate, the growing recognition that citizens have certain right to education. The articulation and reaffirmation of those rights, specificaly by Federal courts, has opened new avenues for citizen involvement.

In most of the desegregation decisions since 1971, the courts explicitly recognized that citizen involvement is a vehicle for gaining community support for school desgregation and for enlisting citizens' help in implementation of court orders. In Flint , for example, the advisory councils developed the magnate program which encourages but does not force racially balanced schools. The court mandated committees usually have been granted legal standing to challenge school authorities on their implementation of desegregation plans. Similarly, Federal courts

have bolstered legislatively created parent and citizen advisory committees by granting them standing in court (Baxter, 1979:61).

As public officals become more concerned about hearing from community members new approaches have emerged to encourage community involvement. Urban leadership networks have sprung up to increase contacts between races as well as alter old networks and create new ones (Brown and Detterman,1987:68). Partnership programs have become fashionable across the country to bridge the gap between public and private organizations (Decker,1988:26).Computer and communications technology has decentralized large systems and made exchange of ideas among groups more common (Russell and Ferejohn,1979:173-189). Citizens panels start new ways to increase citizen participation by randomly selecting participation for balancing deficiency in participation (Cosby,1986:170-178). During the last ten years the United States has "begun to change from a top down model of leadership to a bottom up grassroots model of collaboration.

Recently there have been intiatives by States to incorporate advisory councils in the decision-making process. In Florida, South Carolina and California the government has mandated that there be community involvement through school councils. At first glance it appears the mandate has not generally been effective, but that depends on your unit of measure. Some councils have worked while others have never left the school district's Board room. Given the nature of a volunteer body of citizens they may truly be making a difference that is hard to quantify. These

councils have proven to be an important component to begin the evolution of greater participation whereby people act more like partners than watchdogs.

During the 1980's efforts have been attempted to promote models of co-production to convince non-belivers in the importance of collective action. Burdney's research of municipal productivity establishes three potential models which determines delivery of services.

> 1.Cost efficency, the effect of changes in service inputs on the outputs of service delivery; 2 cost effectiveness, comparison of alternative service delivery arrangements with respect to cost and quality and/or quantity of outputs achieved; and 3. program worthiness, evaluation of service delivery programs according to legal, moral or political criteria (Burdney, 1984:465).

Co-production is a process of public employees and citizen consumers who can make a collective effort at community betterment and promote ways in which voluntary efforts can impact the need for and cost of government services (Rich,1981:59-76). While people continue to complain about rising taxes with little return this process gives urban residents an opportunity to be a part of changing the system. As individuals ask what they get for their tax dollars, co-production explores the equitable distribution of production costs in relation to personnel and property security (Warren, 1984:447-464). Some examples of co-production are community anti-crime efforts such as Neighborhood Watch, curbside instead of backyard pickup of trash, self-examination to identify indicators of breast cancer, or parents

working with their children at home to supplement school instruction.

The case for co-production can be made on either economic or quality of services grounds. Co-production can contain or reduce the costs of public service. In a time of declining resources and heavy competition for public service dollars, the potential economic benefits of co-production have received some attention by analysts. Preventive early identification of children's health or learning problems by those in the home can reduce the severity of subsequent in-school problems and the need for costly remedial services. However cost reduction is not the strongest position for co-production.

Co-production can best be supported on the grounds that the resources, skills and motivations brought to bear by the client are intimately connected with the level of achieved output. In fact, high quality services may only be possible when there is a reasonably high level of co-production. The view that professionals in education and other fields who deliver services to passive actors that make little significant contribution to the process is challenged by common sense.

Co-production is not giving advice or even lay people offering advice to school administrators about school policies or administrative practices. It is participating directly in collaborative planning and in producing educational services including such activities identifying and correcting problems

which may interfere with learning in the school.

Furthermore, co-production is different from usual programs of accountability in which goals are set up by the school and an external group monitors and assesses. Co-production requires mutually agreed upon goals and shared responsibility. Accountability is internal, not external. Co-production is also different from most activities in which school officals identify problems, determine goals or program needs, and ask the parent for help on the schools' terms. It is also different from the approach in which educators assign most of the problems to the characteristics or the failings of the community and the family. The model rejects blaming any individual and requires sharing both power and blame (Davies,1980: 61).

A focus on improvement through co-production has several benefits. From the point of view of State policymakers and local school boards the idea is responsive to strong demands by elected officals and citizens for increased results from increased public investment. From the point of view of parents it is a way for a cost-effective method to influence the nature and quality of educational services. By definition, there is a shared power base by being directly involved in planning and producing the services. There is also the opportunity for negotiating levels of involvement depending on the co-producers time, interests and skills. The joint ownership that can come as a part of co-production can also stem erroding political and economic support

for all public services.

John Dewey (the "Father" of modern day education), believed that the school was the rightful institution to bring people together and make change. Dewey wrote that... "The educational system is part of the common life and cannot escape suffering the consequences that flow from the conditions prevailing outside the school building"(Dewey, 1897:65-88).He believed that through cooperation of the school and community children and adults could live better. If the school built barriers to work with families the school would never reach it's full potential and the community would suffer. Early in Dewey's life he identified the interrelationship of school and community. In one of his first published writings he wrote, "I beleive that the school must represent present life - life as real and vital to the child as that which he carries on in the home, in the neighborhood, or the playground "(Dewey,1897:37). This belief was actually carried out by Frank Manley in 1935 with the Flint Schools.

Frank Manley believed that the schools could provide leadership to change the poor conditions that exsisted in Flint. By opening the schools to the community he hoped to provide a safe environment for social and recreational needs of children and adults. Through Manley's guidance a new term emerged called community education. At the foundation of his belief in community education was a process involving citizens which became know as community advisory councils.

While there has been disagreement about the definition of community education, most authors write about a few common elements. The book most frequently recommended by professors for students in community education was written by Jack Minzey and Clyde LeTarte. In this book they define the concept and illustrate it's components.

> "Community education is a philosophical concept which serves the entire community by providing for all of the educational needs of all of it's community members. It uses the local school to serve as the catalyst for bringing community resources to bear on community problems in an effort to develop a positive sense of community, improve community living, and develop the community process toward the end of self-actualization. (Minzey and LeTarte,1972:9)

The Flint community first had Parent Teachers Associations in the 1950's and 1960's before evolving into formal community advisory councils in the eary 1970's. As policy of the Flint Board of Education specific guidelines for the formalization and operation of councils was enacted. The Flint Board demonstrated their belief in nurturing a strong community and school by mandating that each community school have a working council. As part of the guideline school administrators are participants in council meetings but they can not preside over the meeting. Only community citizens can be the president or leader of council action. The council can not partake in any partisan political activity but can arrange for impartial town hall meetings for citizens to hear the views of canidates. While the focus of the

council is often on school improvement, it is well within their mission to address issues beyond the four walls of the school. In the case of dealing with outside issues they must act independent of the Board of Education.

An added benefit of the Flint structure is the citywide advisory council. The citywide advisory council consists of one representative from each local council. It acts as a spokesperson to communicate and coordinate comcerns with the school system, community agencies and the overall community.

Membership in the council is open to any resident in the school attendence area. The bylaws for the advisory council are determined by the citywide council. In most cases voting membership at the school-based council is restricted to individuals who have attended a minimum of three consecutive meetings (Cady, 1988).

The commitment of the Flint Board of Education to achieve greater community involvement was implicitly noted in it's goals adopted in 1972:

> Citizenship in a Democracy - The Flint Community Schools must present a program of instruction and an internal climate which will incubate and exemplify the values of democracy in action, and which will be conducive to the development of responsive and responsible citizenship and the potential for leadership.
> Parental and Community Involvment - It is essential that individual parents as organized groups, and other community organizations and agencies be involved in a meaningful way in the planning and implementation of school programs at all levels. Mechanisms which now exist for such involvement and other means and mechanisms should be supported and further refined. Not only is it desirable that parents, students, and other lay citizens be involved

in the activities of the schools, but that educators be meaningfully involved in community affairs.
(Goals of the Flint Board of Education, 1972)

These goals have been reworked since 1972 but the essence is still carried out in 1988. In fact a new commitment was addressed in 1987 to bring community education and council activities out front by promoting the Director of Community Education to the Cabinet level of the Flint School administration.

The Flint community has steadily evolved and improved their community advisory council's. But, has it been for the betterment of the community and has it increased community involvement? The primary gap that I see in the research that has taken place is that it has been either taken over one short period of time or over the course of a few years. Dramatic changes have occured within the city of Flint over the course of the past ten years. Strong councils should continue to play an important role in the change process. A practice that affects so much of the population should be tested over time to determine what are the key elements of community involvement and how can less strong councils become strong again in community affairs. By building on previous research and questions I believe new theory may emerge. It appears from research cited in this section that strong community involvement depends on a process carried out in part by leadership from individuals and organizations to move neighborhoods along to a better quality of life. Thus if a

school-based community advisory council is in operation the degree of it's success in improving the community should depend on leadership.

RESEARCH METHODS

In order to determine the elements for successful community involvement, I attempted to complete research longitudinally and crossectionally on a sample of Flint community advisory councils. Through guidance of Dan Cady,(Director of Community Education and supervisor of community advisory councils) we chose six councils to study. These sites were choosen because of the appearance of having strong or less strong council involvement and to represent different income and ethnic populations. The purpose of this mixture is to demonstrate the positive effects of community involvement no matter what the socio-economic diversity. Each school is a neighborhood elementary school with a community education director and community advisory council. It was the orginal intent to collect information that could be correlated with the data collected from the 1977-81 City of Flint projects entitled The Flint Process and Project SNAP. A core of knowledge was used from these studies to enhance the research and additional information was collected beyond the Flint Process questions to better understand the depth and width of involvement produced by the advisory councils to determine why some are stronger than others. However, due to limited personnel and financial resources this research was unable to provide as great an understanding as these previous massive studies.

Questions were adapted from previous research to collect longitudinal information and there will be similiar questions answered by all areas so a comparison will be made cross-sectionally. Longitudinal questions were drawn from "The Flint Process: A quality of Life Report" done in 1978 and "Project SNAP completed in 1982. Unfortunately specific comparison can not be applied with this new research since the sample of people differ in composition. New questions were also asked to provide more knowledge about the process of community involvement.

The community advisory councils participating in the study represented location from four different quandrants within the city of Flint. The questionnaire was designed to be completed by all the members who attended one particular council meeting. Hence, we could say that the results come from a convenience sample and great care should be taken in generalizing results beyond those sampled. While there was a chance of having higher or lower attendance no prior notice was given to the members, only the council chairperson, school principal and community school director were notified. The professional school staff that were present for the meeting were asked not to complete the questionnaire since in many cases they did not live in the immediate neighborhood and they could contaminate the study.

As discussed with the Director of Community Education the first step in gaining permission to administer the questionnaire was to contact the council chairperson. After a minimum of three

attempts to reach the chairperson by phone (leaving a message on their answering machine or talking to another family member) I was able to talk directly to the council chairperson in four cases. In two of those cases they gave me permission however, in the other two cases they needed to talk with the school principal or community school director before allowing me to administer the questionnaire. The other four councils which I was unable to reach the chairperson I called either the principal or community school director. These school officals were most helpful and all agreed it would be fine to have the council fill out the questionnaire. While this process appears simple on the surface it took all of January, February and March of 1989 to complete.

The next step was to attend the council meetings and administer the instrument. In some instances I had conflicts in being able to attend the scheduled meeting but I asked the principal or community school director to administer the form (I gave them careful directions on the process of administering). After all of these well thought out plans I was able to collect questionnaires from only four of the eight councils. Two of the councils I did not receive data from I asked for help from their community school director and for whatever reason they did not follow through on their word to administer the questionnaire. For two other councils I went to their meetings in February and March and no community members showed up. Fortunately there were four councils I was able to collect information from to complete the

research. The four I did collect from represented two strong and two less strong as identified by the Director of Community Education. These four councils represent 12 percent of the 33 councils operating within the city of Flint in 1988-89.

The questionnaire that was administered to the four community advisory councils is presented as Appendix A to this document. The responses are presented in two steps. First, descriptive statistics are presented. Second, more detailed analysis and hypothisis testing is done.

STATISTICS

The statistical results of the questionnaire provide valueable information about these four councils as well as insight into the entire Flint community advisory council process. The following represents a descriptive examination of the data collected.

Question 1. Number of children attending elementary school.

```
Number of responses ... 28
Number of children  ... 0 children - 4
                    ... 1 child    - 10
                    ... 2 children - 12
                    ... 3 children - 1
                    ... 4 children - 0
                    ... 5 children - 0
                    ... 6 children - 1
Mean number of children.. 1.536
Standard deviation  ... 1.170
```

For the most part councils have a majority of members who are parents of children that attend their council's elemenary school. From observation four people who did not fill out this question may have omitted a response since they were senior citizens that did not have children attending school.

Question 2. The council members age.

```
Number of responses ... 30
Age 25-30 years ..... 3
Age 31-35 years ..... 10
Age 36-40 years ..... 6
Age 41-45 years ..... 4
Age 46-50 years ..... 1
Age 51-55 years ..... 0
Age 56-60 years ..... 2
Age 61 and older ..... 3
Mean age  ..... 41.633
Standard deviation .... 12.280
```

This mean score and standard deviation was taken from the exact age given by repsondents and indicates that the members tend to be past usual child bearing age. It also demonstrates the potential turnover of members as their children move on to upper grade levels in school.There is a continual need for new members to replace the people who may drop out as their children move along.

Question 3. The gender or sex of the council member.

Males..... 8
Females .. 24
Total..... 32

This data shows that for every male represented on the council there are three females.

Question 4 and 5. The race of the council member.

Number of blacks....12
Number of whites....18
Number of Spanish origin...1
Number of other 0

While the number of blacks to whites are fairly balanced it is interesting to note that only one of four councils was actually integrated. Furthermore, it is of note that as reported by the Flint school's more than 60 percent of students attending kindergarten through 6th grade are black.

Question 6. How long have they been a member of the community advisory council.

Number of responses 32
0 - 2 years .....11 people
3 - 6 years .....9 people
7 - 10 years .....7 people
11 or more years .....5 people
Mean years 6.167
Standard deviation 4.647

This information shows that the majority of council members have been on the council for a number of years. If we correlate that with questions one and two we see the potential of members declining in the near future. It also indicates that a number of those who become active in the council remain involved for an extended number of years.

Question 7. How often do they attend council meetings.

Number of responses 32
Very seldom 2
Sometimes 4
Almost always 13
Always 13

This data indicates that members attend on a regular basis. It appears that there must be some motivation that keeps them returning once they attend a meeting of the council.

Question 8. Has the individual engaged in any activities related to the council in the past six months and if yes what the activity was and it's degree of success.

Number of responses 32
yes 26
no 6

Question 8a. List and rate the three major activities the community council has been involved in during the time they have been a member.

Activity 1.	Number of yes responses	28		
	Rate: unsuccessful	1.....	2	
		2.....	2	} 20%
		3.....	2	
		4.....	0	
	successful	5.....	5	
		6.....	0	
		7.....	0	
		8.....	1	} 80%
		9.....	1	
	very successful	10.....	15	
Activity 2.	Number of yes responses	24		
	Rate: unsuccessful	1.....	2	
		2.....	2	} 17%
		3.....	0	
		4.....	0	
	successful	5.....	5	
		6.....	0	
		7.....	1	
		8.....	1	} 83%
		9.....	1	
	very successful	10.....	11	
Activity 3.	Number of yes responses	19		
	Rate: unsuccessful	1.....	2	
		2.....	1	
		3.....	1	} 26%
		4.....	1	
	successful	5.....	3	
		6.....	0	
		7.....	1	
		8.....	1	} 74%
		9.....	1	
	very successful	10.....	7	

While activities tended to be rated more than successful it became difficult for people to remember three activities they were involved in during their tenure. The most frequent activites that were reported included: 1. Halloween and Christmas parties

(20), 2. fund raiser or sales of some kind (19), miscellaneous projects (ie. Thanksgiving baskets, beautification projects, parenting classes, Christmas baskets.., 18), or some special event (ie. family night, community dance, community education day parade.., 14).

Question 9. Determine the degree to which the individual feels a part of the issues and problems the entire community faces.

Number of responses	30
Not at all	2
A little	9
A fair amount	11
A great deal	8

In general, it appears that the individual council members feel they have a fair amount of interaction with the city at large.

Question 10. Does the individual vote in local elections.

Number of responses	32
Never	0
Sometimes	2
Almost always	30

The typical council member almost always votes in local elections.

Question 11. How long has the council member lived in the neighborhood.

Number of responses.....	32
0-5 years	7 people
6-10 years	9 people
11-15 years	5 people
16-20 years	6 people
21 or more years	6 people
Mean	14.438 years
Standard deviation	11.348

While the standard council member has lived in their respective neighborhood fourteen and a half years there is a relatively large range.

Question 12. When thinking of the council member's neighbors are they interested in neighborhood problems.

Number of responses	31
Not at all interested	1
Somewhat interested	27
Very interested	3

The vast majority of council members believe that their neighbors are only somewhat interested in the problems facing their immediate area.

Question 13. Has the individual attended a meeting of any city or community wide organization or agency.

Number of responses	32
Yes	18
No	14
Unsure	0

More repondents answered yes than no but it was very close to being equally split.

Question 14. Would the person move out of the neighborhood if they could.

Number of responses 31
Yes 8
No 13
Unsure 10

While the mode of the people indicated they would like to remain in their current neighborhood it appears the majority (58%) would consider moving if the circumstances changed.

Question 15. Did the neighborhood change in the last four years and if it did was it for the better or worse.

Number of responses 32
A more desirable place to live ... 1
Stayed about the same 22
A less desirable palce to live ... 9

While the members indicated they felt the neighborhood had remained about the same during the last four years, there is a sizeable number of people (28%) who felt things were getting worse.

Question 16. What kind of organizations do advisory council members belong to and if they attend regularly.

	Church	Union	Service Club	School Council	Block Club	Neighbor Assoc.	Other
Belong to..	22	10	3	29	4	4	10
Regularly attend ..	16	6	2	27	3	2	9
Does not regularly attend ..	6	3	1	2	1	2	1

While this was an attempt to gather an overall picture of council member involvement this question only touches the surface of what they do with other organizations. While it is difficult to extrapolate from these statistics people who are council members appear to be involved with organizatons other than the school-based community council. The most common organization a member is affiliated with is church.

Question 17. This question indicates the highest level of education completed.

Number of responses	32
Elementary	0
Some high school	2
High school	13
Some college	14
College	2
Post college	2

Nearly all members completed high school and a large percentage went on to complete higher educational learning.

Question 18. Has the advisory council taken any action to improve the neighborhood during the past indicated number of years.

	1 year	2 years	5 years	10 years
Number of responses	23	18	17	18
Yes.....	13	9	5	6
No	3	3	3	2
Don't know	7	6	9	10

There appears to be a tendency for no action or unknown amount of action when one considers that 32 members had the opportuntiy to answer this question.

Question 19. How the individual rates the general performance of the advisory council during the past year.

Number of responses	28
Not very good	2
.....	0
Good	14
.....	6
Exceptional	6

It appears that the council members feel the council was a little above good when the performance of the council was taken into consideration over the course of the past year.

FINDINGS

The other purposeful way to analyze the information from this research is to break the data into strong councils versus less strong councils. Since two councils which participated in this study were subjectively determined to be strong and two less strong some interesting comparisons can be highlighted. The following statistical tests shed some light on the difference between the two types of councils.

For the following T-tests the data is seperated into two groups. Group number one is the less strong and group number two is the strong group. The T-test was conducted for number of children, age of member, number of years individual has been member, evaluation of activity one, evaluation of activity two, evaluation of activity three, and how long the member has resided in the neighborhood.

When comparing the number of children each group member has atttending elementary school there is no significant difference between group one and two.

Group	N	Mean number of children	SD
1	11	1.364	0.809
2	17	1.647	1.367

Seperate variances	T = .689	DF = 25.9	PROB = .497
Pooled variances	T = .619	DF = 26	PROB = .541

When comparing the number of years served by a group member on a community advisory council there is a no significant difference between group one and group two.

Group	N	Mean years served	SD
1	13	7.000	4.619
2	17	5.529	4.695

Seperate variances	T = .858	DF = 26.2	PROB = .399
Pooled variances	T = .856	DF = 28	PROB = .399

When comparing the age of the group members there is a significant difference between group one and two. Group two is nine years younger than group one.

Group	N	Mean age	SD
1	13	46.846	15.334
2	17	37.647	7.615

Seperate variances T = 1.984 DF = 16.5 PROB = .065
Pooled variances T = 2.158 DF = 28 PROB = .040

When comparing the number of group members indicating if their community advisory council engaged in any activities there is no significant difference.

Group	N	Member activity past six months	SD
1	8	1.000	0.756
2	15	1.000	0.756

Separated variances T = .000 DF = 14.4 PROB = 1.000
Pooled variances T = .000 DF = 21 PROB = 1.000

When comparing the successfulness of activities of group one to group two there is a significant difference. Group one evaluated each of their activities lower than group two. The number of group one's rating also decreases as they tried to remember a second and third activity .

Group	N	Mean Evaluation of Activity one	SD
1	10	5.600	3.627
2	18	8.222	2.962

Separate variances	T = 1.953	DF = 15.8	PROB = .070
Pooled variances	T = 2.073	DF = 26	PROB = .048

Group	N	Mean Evaluation of Activity two	SD
1	8	5.375	3.623
2	15	8.133	2.850

Separate variances	T = 1.867	DF = 11.7	PROB = .089
Pooled variances	T = 2.014	DF = 21	PROB = .057

Group	N	Mean Evaluation of Activity three	SD
1	6	4.333	2.805
2	12	7.833	3.186

Separate variances	T = 2.383	DF = 11.4	PROB = .036
Pooled variances	T = 2.279	DF = 16	PROB = .037

There is a significant difference in the number of years group one has lived in their neighborhood compared to group two. Group one has lived in their neighborhood for nearly nine years longer than group two.

Group	N	Mean years resided	SD
1	14	19.321	13.149
2	18	10.639	8.228

Separated variances	T = 2.163	DF = 20.7	PROB = .043
Pooled variances	T = 2.289	DF = 30	PROB = .029

When comparing the council performance there is no significant difference between group one and group two. However, when performance is a dependent variable and age, sex, race, membership, education or activity are the variables, then race seems to be the major factor for stronger council performance.

Group	N	Mean (1 not very good 5 exceptional)	SD
1	11	3.636	1.286
2	17	3.412	0.939

Separate variances	T = .499	DF = 16.8	PROB = .624
Pooling variances	T = .534	DF = 26	PROB = .598

DEP VAR: Performance N: 25 Multiple R: .402
Squared Multiple R:.162 Adjusted Square Multiple R:.000
Standard Error of Estimate : 1.185

Variable	Coefficient	STD Error	STD COEF	Tolerance	T	P(2 Tail)
Constant	1.105	2.163	0.000	1.000	0.511	0.616
Age	0.028	0.028	0.307	.5107	1.016	0.323
Sex	0.196	0.635	0.076	.7632	0.309	0.761
Race	-0.005	0.557	-0.002	.7341	-0.008	0.994
Member	0.034	0.061	0.145	.7110	0.568	0.577
ED	0.396	0.284	0.338	.7941	1.396	0.180
Activity	-0.658	0.688	-0.239	.7420	-0.956	0.352

This table shows the number of less strong members and strong members when stratified by race. This table indicates that those on a strong council are significantly more inclined to be of a minority race than those who attend less strong councils.

Race	Less Strong Council	Strong Council	Chi Square Value	DF	PROB
Minority	1	14			
White	13	4			
TOTAL	14	18	15.778	1	.000

There is no significant difference when council member attendance is stratified by strong and less strong groups.

Attendance	Less Strong Council	Strong Council	Chi Square Value	DF	PROB
Very seldom	0	2			
Sometimes	2	2			
Almost always	7	6			
Always	5	8			
TOTAL	14	18	2.305	3	.512

There is no significant difference between the perceived amount of connection with the city when strong and less strong council members are stratified.

City	Less Strong Council	Strong Council	Chi Square Value	DF	PROB
No response	1	1			
Not at all	2	0			
A little	3	6			
A fair amount	5	6			
A great deal	3	5			
TOTAL	14	18	3.140	4	.535

There is no significant difference between the strong and less strong councils when comparing voting habits.

Vote	Less Strong Council	Strong Council	Chi Square Value	DF	PROB
Sometimes	0	2			
Almost always	13	15			
Always	1	1			
TOTAL	14	18	1.669	2	.434

There is no significant difference of people who would move out of the neighborhood if they could when stratified by less strong and strong council members.

Move	Less Strong Council	Strong Council	Chi Square Value	DF	PROB
No response	0	1			
Yes	4	4			
Unsure	7	6			
No	3	7			
TOTAL	14	18	2.211	3	.530

There is no significant difference between attendance of council members at city wide organization meetings when stratified by less strong and strong councils

Attend Meetings	Less Strong Council	Strong Council	Chi Square Value	DF	PROB
Yes	8	10			
No	6	8			
TOTAL	14	18	.008	1	.928

There is no significant difference between the desirability of the neighborhood during the last four years when stratified by less strong and strong councils.

Desirability	Less strong Council	Strong council	Chi square Value	DF	PROB
More	1	0			
Same	3	6			
Less	10	12			
TOTAL	14	18	1.709	2	.426

These findings provide valuable characteristics about the involvement of councils as well as the difference between strong and less strong councils. Caution should be used when evaluating these findings since such a small number of people participated

in the study. However, in general when speaking about Flint school-based advisory councils a strong council averages ten years younger than a less strong council. A strong council has more minority members than white members. The number of council activites doubles from less strong to strong councils. In direct relationship to the youth of the council membership, strong councils have members who have lived less years in the neighborhood compared to less strong councils.

It was my intent to correlate the findings of this study with research done in the Flint community over the past five to ten years. Unfortunately the data that was collected for the Flint Process project included a 7,000 person survey which mixed community members with council members as well as county with city residents. Additionally, Project SNAP centered it's study on councils but did not seperate the other ten cities in a meaningful manner for this study. The Flint Process and SNAP projects were massive studies that are difficult to duplicate and build on without great deal of resources. This 1989 study can be replicated in the future without being handcuffed by financial and physical resources.

SUMMARY

School-based community advisory councils stimulate local citizen involvement and leadership to improve the quality of life in neighborhoods and schools. They are dynamic and ever changing. As members come and go so does the level of involvement ebb and flow. The strongest councils radiate a high amount of energy that seems to encourage people to take action.

Communities are establishing community advisory councils in the belief that educational resources and community resources are inter-changeable. Utilization of these resources must be a process of interaction through which the potential of both the school and the community may be fully developed. It is generally conceded by those involved in the organization of community advisory councils that by accepting the role of participation, can the power to determine community programs belong to the people.

As efforts have been made to facilitate the participation of community members in decision making process, there has emerged a model. This model is commonly referred to as a community advisory council. A community advisory coucil is a representative group of citizens who meet and plan for the social and educational development of the community.

There are some underlying assumptions that influence the degree to which one accepts the model of a community advisory council as a viable model for citizen participation. Most people who are involved in the operationalization of community advisory councils are optimistic abbout people. They believe in human potential for favorable growth. Biddle identified some additional operational assumptions commonly held by those who promote councils as viable models for community development.

1. Each person is viable, unique, and capable toward greater social sensitivity and responsibility.
2. Satisfaction and self-confidence gained from small accomplishments can lead to contending with more and more difficult problems, in a process of continuing growth.
3. Human beings and groups have both good and bad impulses.

(Biddle, 1966: 246-247)

One further assumption based on these three assumptions listed above when people are free of coercive pressures, and can examine a wide range of alternatives, they tend to choose the ethically better and intelligently wiser course of action.

According to this study Flint school-based advisory councils are, involved in community concerns. Some councils are stronger than others and provide greater leadership. There are certain identifiable characteristics that strong councils exhibit. Strong council members tend to have; more children in school, are younger, are from a minority race, and have very successful activities. Unfortunately only four councils participated in this

study. It could be possible that if all the councils participated that a more accurate compostie of a strong council would emerge.If less strong councils would like to become stronger they may consider incorporating some of these charateristics when possible.

Has Flint been able to cultivate their vast experience and substantial research findings? Yes and no. It is apparent from this 1989 study that there has not been any significant change in the involvement of the Flint councils. However, the city of Flint in general has faced economic turmoil. a loss of 40,000 people and declining student enrollment. There are more older families today than ten years ago. The level of crime seems worse and business has fled to the suburbs. These are factors that seem insurmountable for a council to address and expect immediate change.

Most councils need to focus on immediate small successes or problems that have attainable solutions. If the council is not involved with short term projects or one time programs there is a sense of futility. In some respects it is a shame that they have been unable to improve the level of citizen involvement. On the other hand it is not fair to blame one organization for the inability to advance the council process. Organizing and managing councils can be an awesome task for a communtiy let alone a school system. The Flint schools have been instruemental in creating a process to encourage greater citizen involvement. With help from other city agencies, community organizations and

greater citizen concern the quality of life in Flint neighborhoods can improve. By creating a format to conduct research over a ten or twenty year period more knowledge should be garnered to determine why some school-based community advisory councils are stronger than others. This data base should include more councils from the Flint school system as well as from other communities that may or may not have community school advisory councils. Strong councils seem to make a difference in the life of the immediate neighborhood as determined by this study. It would be a valueable experiment to have a concentrated effort following a co-productive council model to see if all the neighborhoods in Flint would improve and become more desirable places to live.

APPENDIX A

School-Based Community Advisory Council Questionnaire

This is a research questionnaire constructed to find out the way people are involved in a school-community advisory council and is being conducted for the completion of a Master's of Public Administration at the University of Michigan - Flint. For the purpose of this study the neighborhood is the area defined within the confines of the elementary school boundary. This is a measure of personal beliefs and involvement, as such, there are no right or wrong answers. This questionnaire is strictly voluntary and you may choose not to answer any or all of the questions. All answers will be kept strictly confidental no school or individual will be identified. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Shane W. Tiedeman
MPA student
University of Michigan - Flint

1. Please circle the number of children you have attending elementary school.

0 1 2 3 4 5 more than 5

2. Your Age _____

3. Your Sex male _____ female _____

4. Your Race Black ____ White ____ American Indian ____
Asian and Pacific Islanders _____ Other _____

5. Are you of Spanish origin yes _____ no _____

6. How long have you been a member of the community advisory council?

years_____

7. How often do you attend meetings of the council?

very seldom _____
sometimes _____
almost always _____
always _____

8. In the past 6 months, have you engaged in any activities related to the council ?

yes _____

no _____

Please list and rate 3 major activities your community council has been involved in during your time as a member. Then rate each activity on a scale (where 1= very unsuccessful and 10=very successful).

A. Activity NO. 1 _____

_____

1____/_____/_____/_____/5____/____/ ____/____/_____/10____/
Very unsuccessful Successful Very Successful

B. Activity NO. 2 _____

_____

1____/_____/_____/_____/5____/_____/_____/_____/_____/10_____/
Very unsuccessful Successful Very Successful

C. Activity NO. 3 _____

_____

1____/_____/_____/_____/5_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/10_____/
Very unsuccessful Successful Very Successful

9. To what extent do you feel a part of the city, that is, concerned with issues and problems relating to the entire community?

__not at all

__ a little

__ a fair amount

__ a great deal

10. How often do you vote in local elections?

never _____

sometimes _____

almost always _____

11. How many years have you lived in this neighborhood?

years _____

12. In thinking of your neighbors, would you say that they are :

not at all interested in neighborhood problems _____

somewhat interested, _____

or very interested. _____

13. In the past year have you attended a meeting of any city or community wide organization or agency such as a school board, planning council, city council or other?

yes __
no __
unsure ___

14. Would you move out of your neighborhood if you could?

yes __
no __
unsure ___

15. Do you believe in the last four years that your neighborhood has become:

a more desirable place to live, _____
a less desirable place to live, _____
or stayed the same. _____

16. To which of the following types of organizations do you belong? Also for those organizations which you attend indicate if you regularly attend their meetings.

Belong		Regularly Attend Meetings	
		yes	no
_____	Church	___	___
_____	Union	___	___
_____	Service club	___	___
_____	Community school council	___	___
_____	Block Club	___	___
_____	Neighborhood association	___	___
_____	Other (please describe)_____	___	___

17. Please indicate your highest level of education completed:

Elementary ___

some High School ___

High School ___

some College ___

College ___

post College ___

18. Has your advisory council taken action to improve the surrounding neighborhoods during the :

	yes	no	don't know
past year	____	____	____
two years	____	____	____
five years	____	____	____
ten years	____	____	____

19. How would you rate the general performance of the advisory council during the past year?

1 _____/ 2 _____/ 3 _____/ 4 _____/ 5 _____/

Not very good Good Exceptional

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