

University of Nevada Reno

Community Enrichment Evaluation

Operationalizing community enrichment for evaluation practices

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
Sociology

By

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Abstract

Community is a widely contested concept, and what positive or negative outcomes of community exist are highly subjective. This research proposes community enrichment as a process to assess and evaluate the state of the community, its outcomes as well as its investments. In this body of research, community enrichment is organized into an originally composed five-dimensional framework. I parameterize community to the concept of social space and emphasize the social constructions of community. I put less emphasis on traditional community needs surveys which inquire about the perspectives of individuals residing within the community. Instead, I put the lens on community as the space to which individuals belong, and I use community enrichment assessment and evaluation to demonstrate attributes of the community. The core purpose of this research is to propose an operationalized conceptualization for community enrichment as a body of theoretical ideas that would work in evaluation practices. Community enrichment evaluation contributes to the framework of sociological valuation and draws inspiration from social impact assessments. These five dimensions work well to exhaustively organize variables that would influence community enrichment. Each dimension is a theoretical concept that is widely explored and used within social science literature. These dimensions are universally present in all communities, the composition of the variables from each dimension defines the community. The five dimensions of community enrichment are: sense of belonging, community resilience, solidarity, social sustainability, and culture/identity. This research is a pilot study that establishes the groundwork for assessment and evaluation practices in community enrichment.

Dedication

For my wife, who kept me alive while I got lost in my brain, and reminding me that food and water are as much a necessity as community enrichment.

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Content Summary

Introduction- In this section, the research issue is framed, community enrichment is introduced, and the research questions are stated. Some background is provided with the Three Reliances, the preliminary study to the present research. A summary of community enrichment as an operationalized framework is included.

Literature Review- In this section, all important literature that helps to comprise the research of community enrichment is included. The section includes a brief history of the community center in the U.S., proposes organizing community enrichment within the framework of sociological valuation, showcases some instances of community enrichment in literature, and defines five dimensions of community enrichment.

Methodology- In this section methodological approaches to the research are covered. Both a community enrichment assessment and a thematic analysis of community centers comprised the data for the study. In addition, the section addresses some afterthoughts on the methods used to design the community enrichment assessment.

Results- In this section, findings from the thematic analysis and community enrichment assessment are interpreted. In addition, some correlational work helps to lay out potential hypotheses and research questions for future studies.

Discussion- In this section connections to all parts of the thesis are made. This section discusses both the theoretical importance of the work as well as the significance of evaluation and assessment practices.

Conclusion- In this section, the research questions are returned to and final remarks are made. This section addresses both the research implications as well as the research limitations. In addition, this section lays out some plans for future work in community enrichment assessment and evaluation.

Introduction

A sort of ethical dilemma which has always complicated outcomes of community involvement has been the perception of value. Currency is a powerful tool, and its value comes from the infinite ways in which you can spend it. How do you then, determine the value of something that you cannot buy? Every dimension of this evaluation work that establishes the framework for community enrichment is priceless. You cannot buy a volunteer, because that exchange by definition, makes them into something else. It is easy to take for granted the things that are free, but often the things that are free are also priceless. Community enrichment is a multidimensional framework which helps to remove confusion surrounding the value of community. As a framework community enrichment is carefully organized as a body of theoretical ideas which is split into five dimensions which best capture the value of community for society. Community enrichment acts as a process which improves the value of community. The five dimensions of community enrichment are: sense of belonging, community resilience, solidarity, social sustainability, and culture/identity.

The purpose of this research is to operationalize community enrichment for assessment and evaluation practices. Community enrichment is a concept often spoken of but not well understood. Operationalizing the concept would help to open doors for research, and evaluation. I established community centers as the primary group of interest for this research. The history and the state of community centers help to understand how they would benefit from the operationalization of community enrichment. Community is most commonly defined for individuals and their relationships to one another. One Oxford definition of community is 1. A group of people living in the same place or

having a particular characteristic in common. I grew most interested in the aspect of community which denotes, same place. Rather than emphasize the individuals I develop a definition for community enrichment which targets the improvement of the space shared by those individuals. The definition of community enrichment which I have coined for this research accounts for the space shared by individuals. Community enrichment is when the quality of space collectively shared by individuals within is improved. Throughout this research, I will build from this definition of community enrichment, which is its most simplified form. I also interpret community enrichment as a body of theoretical ideas, and a process of evaluation.

I developed research questions to help facilitate the organization of this research process. I list the research questions in a logical order which helps to best navigate this research process.

1. What are community centers and what do they do?
2. What do we currently know which would allow us to operationalize community enrichment?
3. What sociological concepts exist which might help to explain community enrichment?
4. How might we assess a community so that we can later evaluate the community for the effect of community enrichment?
5. What do we need to reach a point where we can measure the impact of community programs, such as community centers, on community enrichment in the community?

Community centers are an integral piece of this research, and the operationalization of community enrichment is intended to help community centers further demonstrate what they achieve. Before making those connections I first ask what community centers are and what they do. When initially thinking about community enrichment I first asked what community enrichment was and if there was existing research on it. I asked at what stage it was operationalized and determined where I had to begin. In the third research question, I asked which of many sociological concepts could help to accompany my understanding of community enrichment. My response to this question is influenced by the answers to the second question. If I would have found operationalized frameworks for community enrichment with their concepts, then I would have considered them in the research. I chose sociological concepts because I wanted to promote more application of them in evaluation practices. I wanted to explore ways in which I could apply an operationalized framework for assessing and categorizing types of communities. It was important for me to consider an assessment that allowed room to consider various types of communities. I never wanted to establish one golden standard for community that all others should strive to replicate. The last research question is one I was able to touch on but was not able to address in this research. To determine if programs have impacted community enrichment, I would first need to develop reference points, which can be developed with more robust data collection methods.

The Three Reliances

The decision to operationalize community enrichment was a response to the findings from my previous work, *The Three Reliances*. The Three Reliances is a proposed system of knowledge, or body of theoretical ideas that presents three pillars of

support a rural community can become reliant on when the means to obtain social capital becomes static (Besser 2021). The three pillars of support are churches, local businesses, and the internet. Static social capital is highest in rural communities where these three reliances tend to develop. In my study, I interviewed key informants to get their take on why the town of Hays Kansas chose to forgo a community center. I found that there was a fair amount of confusion surrounding what community centers did. I discovered that whatever the community believed they could get from a community center, could be found in other existing infrastructure within their community. The issue challenged me because I strongly felt community centers were vital assets, based on my own experiences with them. I thought about the relevance of these community centers, and I began to think about how individual needs could be addressed by community, from a psychological stance.

Maslow's Hierarchy of needs was an integral piece of the study. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a model which demonstrates various needs, which lead to self-actualization. Those needs include physiological, safety, love, belonging, esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow 1943). Theoretically speaking, up to belonging, the various needs can be satisfied solely by the individual's efforts. Love, belonging, and esteem are needs that rely on social forces, or community. The purpose of integrating the hierarchy of needs was to showcase the inherent value in the outcomes of community, for individuals, on their psychological well-being. How a member has any hopes of realizing self-actualization might become dependent on what community programs exist. I proposed that community programs are scarcer in rural communities and as a result, they tend to lean towards the three reliances as a means to satisfy community involvement and

to some extent, this later proposed conceptualization of community enrichment, which I believed community centers were responsible for cultivating.

In some ways, *The Three Reliances* acted as a preliminary study for this work on community enrichment. Six key informant interviews helped to better understand why the town of Hays Kansas had agreed to forgo a community center in 1994. Their responses led me to believe that there was a lot of confusion surrounding what should be expected from community centers. Perceptively my respondents shared the idea that what could be offered through a community center was already provided within their community. I ended my research on *The Three Reliances* by concluding that organizations like community centers lacked a core function that would establish them as essential infrastructure. I suggested that the idea of community enrichment could be that core function, but the concept was not yet operationalized or measurable for success.

Introducing Community Enrichment

Theoretically, it is possible to determine dozens of strong concepts which might help to operationalize a contested concept like community enrichment. Assuming you follow the same methods that are being proposed in this thesis, then you still might consider alternate dimensions of community enrichment.¹ Many of the concepts which relate to community enrichment also have contested meanings. This complicates the research because in selecting a concept, it also becomes necessary to determine which of the many contested meanings to use. Occasionally, it becomes advantageous for the sake

¹ In this research dimensions is just the ambiguous term used to describe the categories of community enrichment. For instance, in mathematics, these dimensions would be called Axis. Varying disciplines may have their own unique ways to categorize variables and I hope by addressing that here it illudes confusion.

of clarity, to synthesize multiple meanings for one concept. As a general rule of thumb, new concepts should only be proposed when necessary. For instance, Durkheim wrote in *The Rules of the Sociological Method*, “that if the difference is too considerable, if the common notion mixes up several different notions, the creation of new and special terms becomes a necessity” (Durkheim 1895: 84). The limitation I set for myself was to only select the most reliable concepts. I determined that a concept is reliable when it contributes to the operationalization of community enrichment as a process of assessment and evaluation. In addition, every dimension and most concepts which comprise community enrichment can be found in theoretical writing which is sociologically disciplined. In this way I interpret community enrichment as a body of theoretical ideas. It was important that in all stages of the research the incorporated theoretical concepts and the operationalization of community enrichment aligned.

I established three rules for myself when I selected concepts throughout the process of the literature review 1). Only select the concepts which have gone through a process of standardization 2). Only select the concepts which have been thoroughly explored and would return search results in a variety of contexts. 3) Select concepts which have been theoretically explored in social sciences. A process of standardization implies that the term has been operationalized, and then defined so that significant relationships can be drawn between the dimension and variables of interest. I did a literature review for dimensions and explored studies which returned data from significantly large sample sizes required for hypothesis testing. These studies must be readily available so that there is a reference point for when rigorous statistical testing can begin with community enrichment work. It will be easier to standardize community

enrichment as a process of assessment and evaluation when the dimensions are standardized in existing studies.

Secondly, there was enough literature on these five dimensions: sense of belonging, solidarity, social sustainability, community resilience, and culture and identity that I could reliably find studies that correlate to any of the dimensions. In the future, when I begin to invite collaboration on this research, I want other researchers to have creative liberty. The five dimensions of community enrichment will return thousands of search results, more over time, and hopefully over time researchers will frame these concepts in their studies as they relate to community enrichment. Then more work will be available which can be incorporated to improve community enrichment as a process of assessment and evaluation. By piloting the research for this community enrichment work I looked at what correlated to any of the five dimensions. For instance, I investigated the correlation between nature and wildlife and a sense of belonging. I questioned if there was research that already did the hypothesis testing for such a relationship, and when I found several, I included a question on access to nature in a community enrichment assessment. In the future, I envision researchers following a similar process for finding and proposing variables for the five dimensions of community enrichment.

To populate data for community enrichment, an assessment was made which included 6 sections in total. Most of the research questions were adapted from reliable studies, which did a hypothesis test for the variable and dimension of interest. If I drew influence from existing research questions I typically had to rewrite and repurpose the question. Many of the questions I drew influence from were written in surveys intended

for large sample sizes. Most of those questions are perspective or opinion based, and I wanted the community enrichment assessment to move towards objectivity. There are limitations to this, the assessment takers will not return reliable results if they are not properly trained for filling out the assessment. Because no trained community enrichment evaluators exist, I identified the next best thing, community professionals. I consider the community professionals more reliable than the common citizen for capturing an image of community enrichment because they surround themselves with the needs of their community and would have a higher awareness of the space and resources of their community.

My goal is to make small strides away from something like a community needs survey, to move towards a system of evaluation that could be conducted by one person. To achieve this, I need to think about more objective measures, which is why I replaced perspective-based questions with questions focused on the space of the community. An example question is, “Do any of the following nationally recognized organizations have a physical location in your community? (Please select all that apply).” Typically, a question like this would not be appropriate in general public surveys, but if the recipient is assumed to have the knowledge then more complex questions can be asked. When possible, I rewrote questions so that they emphasized accounting for the space of the community, rather than simply asking for the assessment takers’ opinion of the community. An example question is, “How effectively are the underused and abandoned spaces utilized in your community? (Please select all that apply).” When designing questions for the assessment, I led with the assumption that community professionals were best suited to take the assessment. I decided I could ask more difficult questions, for

instance, ones about the programs, or organizations, which existed in their communities. I assumed that when the assessment was performed by a community professional that it would return a more accurate representation of the community than if performed by someone who was not. In addition, if the evaluator was trained for community enrichment assessment, then they could capture an even more accurate representation of the community. After conducting a community enrichment assessment, a trained evaluator could then develop better, and more targeted questions for community-based surveys, and even help to improve questions for community needs surveys. If one person can capture an accurate representation of their community, then it would save a lot of time and money versus having to deliver a community needs survey, and I consider this a major goal with the research. I advocate for both the community needs assessment and community enrichment assessment, but if a community is financially limited and unable to perform annual community needs assessment then community enrichment assessments will become more viable alternatives. The best course of practice would be to use both and to use the results from the community enrichment assessment to write better questions for the community needs assessment.

I sent the assessment to community center directors around the United States as well as some directors from other non-profits or community-related organizations. The sixth section of the assessment includes two qualitative questions, which allow the respondent to give feedback on the assessment. In consideration of those response questions, I pulled inspiration from engineering feedback forms for user testing found on the website Qualaroo. I wanted to create an experience where the professionals felt like the assessment was comparable to trying out a new tool. My approach to the assessment

was to treat it as though I were proposing a new prototype rather than a finished product. It was important to me that the assessment taker felt that they were contributing towards the creation of the product they were testing. To achieve this, I sent email invitations which communicated this message. I provided feedback questions within the assessment and encouraged suggestions. I also made sure that every assessment taker was properly compensated for their time by delivering them an assessment report of the data. I felt so strongly about this that I promised to return a personalized assessment report for every completion of the assessment. This was an optional commitment, but I value community centers and directors enough to want to provide them with something in return.

The Community Enrichment Framework

The primary objective of this study is to address a way in which community enrichment could be operationalized for assessment and evaluation practices. I propose a new and original framework as a body of theoretical ideas that comprises five carefully selected dimensions: sense of belonging, solidarity, community resilience, social sustainability, and culture/identity. This is a pilot study into community enrichment as a process of assessment and evaluation. I believe my contribution to this research is fundamentally the theory and foundational work. To build the framework for community enrichment I drew influence from the work of Rabel J. Burdge in social impact assessments (Burdge 2004). Community enrichment contributes to the sociological framework of sociological valuation by utilizing sociological concepts, specifically the five dimensions of community enrichment as they apply to a process of assessment and evaluation, and the theoretical concept of social space which surrounds the operationalization of community enrichment.

To help develop feasible measures for community enrichment I added parameters. By adding parameters to community, I assert the limitations to what is being shared.² In this body of research, I explain community as a category of social space. I draw influence from the French philosopher and sociological theorist Henri Lefebvre, who coined his interpretation of the concept of social space (Lefebvre 1991). His interpretation of social space is widely used in urban space studies. Sociologists as well as architects have referred to his conceptualization of social space to better understand the social constructions manifested by society and their relationship with the spaces they share. Social space takes on many forms, it can be the office space shared amongst workers, and there are even social spaces within social spaces, but here community is treated holistically by the observed city or town.

² Here parameters are being used in a theoretical sense and should not be confused for the statistical interpretation. Here I mean to say that parameters are elements whose values determine the characteristic of something. I treat these theoretical parameters as limitations for ideas.

Literature review

To facilitate the literature review, I address four stances on community enrichment in a somewhat logical order. These are my stances on community enrichment given my interpretations of the literature. The first stance I take is that community enrichment should be the primary function of community centers. I take this stance on the premise of the history and development of community centers. The second stance I take is that community enrichment evaluation should be organized within the sociology of valuation. The sociology of valuation is gaining more attention within the discipline of sociology, and I believe community enrichment evaluation ties in well with the sociological framework. The third stance I take is that community enrichment has not been formally operationalized in academic writing. I demonstrate this by sharing literature that illustrates how the concept has been approached through existing programs. The fourth and final stance I take is that this proposed system for community enrichment and its five dimensions are unique and that there is a logical reason to incorporate these given dimensions. I do this by recognizing a few bodies of literature that explore each of the five dimensions individually and then tie them back to community enrichment.

The History of the Community center

A community center is a multifaceted piece of infrastructure. At its core, the community center lacks any sort of concrete or standardized identity. I propose that there is subjective debate surrounding whether community centers are essential infrastructure because they lack a single core function. I was first exposed to this debate when I asked about why the town I attended for my undergraduate studies decided to forgo a community center. I found trending responses from the interviews I conducted, which

indicated that whatever a community center did was already offered by other types of infrastructure. In the findings section, I further illustrate the diverse functionality of community centers through a thematic analysis. I believe that the history of the community center helps to explain why it assumes so many roles, and why it becomes difficult for the best community centers to assume one core function. There is less debate surrounding the core functions of the most well-recognized essential infrastructures, schools provide education, and hospitals provide health-related services. History demonstrates plausible reasons as to why the community center assumes so many forms today. History would also help support the argument that community centers are essential. Buildings purposed for community functions date back ten thousand years or more, but the community center we understand today is only a little over 100 years old.

The earliest evidence for what might have acted as community centers has been traced to the Neolithic era. Some of the earliest Neolithic villages dated 11,700 years ago, possibly made their first buildings for community functions (Anon 2022). Researchers have argued that monolithic structures in Göbekli Tepe Turkey were used as ritual centers (Balter 2022). The core functions of those ritual centers were to organize members of the community to face adversaries. Then in 600 B.C.E Athens constructed the Agora (Mark 2021). Within the Agora, public meetings, political meetings, rituals, and philosophical conversations were held. Democracy in Athens developed around 500 B.C.E. (National Geographic Society 2022). Democracy was enforced strictly, and all adult men were expected to participate in the democratic processes. The Agora would act as a center to ensure that these members were educated on the current affairs of Athens. Many parts of the U.S. political system were initially modeled after Athenian democracy,

and the first community centers would assume similar roles to what the Agora in Athens offered.

The modern-day community center developed in the U.S. and emerged from repurposed social centers. Social centers emerged as a response to the effects of the third-wave immigration movement around 1880-1914. Campaigning in the U.S. for social centers would later become the traction for the first community centers. Presbyterian minister, Edward J. Ward, was amongst those who would advocate for the construction of community centers in the United States (Anon 2022). Before the formally recognized community center came to fruition social centers existed. Social centers had limited functions and at face value were for recreation and adult education classes (Smith 2002). However, those who would advocate for social centers had intended them to help promote the process of Americanization (Smith 2002). Parts of the social center movement were influenced by Christian socialism and an agenda to decrease segregation between the classes (Smith 2002). Efforts to manifest social centers had lasting impacts that influenced all corners of the world. In 1911 the social center would begin to undergo a significant transformation. This happened because of a national conference led by the Wisconsin Bureau of Civic and Social Development on the use of schools as social centers (Smith 2002). The conference garnered the kind of attention that would make the U.S. government more invested. This conference would lead to serious government intervention, because while the idea of Americanization was encouraged political leaders were fearful that social centers would teach alternative political ideologies they disagreed with. To standardize the social center in 1916, just five years after the conference, the

community center association was formed, and social centers were renamed community centers (Smith 2002).

Similar to the Agora, early U.S. community centers appeared to share the same primary function of civic involvement. It was also important to create centers that introduced outsiders to the political structure, continuing the work of social centers. Globally, U.S. Democracy was relatively foreign and not well understood, and the community centers helped to ease the process of Americanization. Invested parties saw a need to address a formal way to introduce incoming immigrants to the civic and political values of the country. Much of the United States' understanding of democracy was adapted from Greek philosophy (Wilkinson 2022). Community centers were initially intended to be used by all parts of the community and discouraged segregation by religion. Before standardization, many social centers offered cultural, religious, and ethnic services which helped to ease immigrants' concerns about leaving home. The new community centers took the approach of ripping the band aide off quickly. History demonstrates that there were many invested parties in the affairs of these centers but that they never really saw eye to eye with one another. The community center association stepped in and declared their intervention as a means to bring everyone on the same page regarding the purpose of these centers. The outcomes of the community center association were poorly planned. Given the short time frame in which the association was established the new model for community centers was riddled with flaws.

Community centers were flawed because they were often run by professional organizers who disregarded the needs of the community (Smith 2002). The lack of

intervention in their bureaucratic takeover hurt the initial goal of the social centers which was to improve networking and encourage more social inclusion. The community center association was way less involved than it should have been, and there was a severe lack of accountability from the administration. Professional organizers would abuse their power and act on their own guided interests. The history of the community center association is fuzzy, and is not well documented. It seems as though the legitimacy of a nationally recognized community center association was not well received. Proof of this lies in a quick google search of community center associations which returns no results. Instead, you will find results for the community health center association which emerged in 1972. Search for Jewish Community Center Association and you will find that they have continued to operate. In essence, the U.S. government stepped in and took control of the social center, rebranded it, and then later abandoned them. Once abandoned they were picked back up by the invested communities which benefited from them. The product of this is that after the community center association was abandoned, the identity of community centers in the U.S. were fragmented and have been in an operating but somewhat irreparable state since.

Work involving community centers never slowed after the disappearance of the community center association. Throughout the world, community centers were emerging. The U.K. adopted its community center association and followed suit in the movement to create stronger networks among their communities. The New Estates and Community Councils published a paper definition for a community center. A Community Centre may be defined as a building that (1) serves a community organized in an association that is responsible for the management of the building, and (2) provides facilities for the

development of the recreational, cultural and personal welfare of members of that community, and (3) constitutes a meeting place for voluntary organizations or other groups in the community which need accommodation (Smith 2002). These working definitions would be accurate for most observed community centers throughout the world today.

Community centers assumed a variety of roles in the U.S. after the disappearance of the community center association. One important perceptive role of the centers became community engagement. The popular book on community disengagement, *Bowling Alone* by Robert Putnam drew attention to a declining sense of community. Putnam identified television as a significant indication of disengaged individuals (Putnam 2000). Community centers that continued operation in the U.S. were addressing issues based on the feelings of those who ran them. Some community centers would be volunteer operated, while others would continue to be handled by government officials. In some wealthy communities, professional organizers were hired to continue operating their community centers. Volunteering and integrating members of the community in its affairs continues to be a primary role for some community centers today. Community centers were acting reflexively to trends and issues concerning the community.

While the community centers were already fragmented, the concept of community engagement further fragmented community centers. Community engagement could be addressed in numerous ways, and even amongst the centers which sought to improve community engagement, there were varying opinions over how to achieve this. The role of technology played its hand in disengagement. Putnam identifies television as having

played a role in disengagement; in addition, I would propose the internet. Community issues were complicated when technology allowed individuals to be connected to extended communities. More individuals began to find their needs met through online communities and over time fewer individuals were invested in community centers. Many community centers around the country would be diminished to rental centers, while others would grow into massive multipurpose centers, addressing a vast array of community needs. Many of the community centers which once operated have permanently shut down. Emphasis was placed on how nice the center was because success was correlated to the quality of the building (Smith 2002). The nicer the building is the higher the costs are to upkeep it.

Given the rather tragic history of the community center, I form a proposition. I propose revisiting what the community center association attempted. I believe that for community centers to survive they will need to adopt formally recognized measures. The fragmentation of the community center has been problematic for the perceived outcomes of these centers. The community center should never be rebranded or repurposed again. I propose that community enrichment is a malleable function, with its five dimensions structured so that it covers universally understood components of community. My operationalized conceptualization of community enrichment accounts for all proposed functions of community centers. It is the first proposed function for community centers that respects the wishes of all interested parties for over a hundred years of community center history. I feel that community centers should embrace this idea of community enrichment as their primary function. Emphasizing community engagement is important, but also backward. Community engagement implies that the community needs the

individual. I believe the message should be that healthy, empowered communities benefit individuals. Community centers would prioritize strengthening the community so that members within could benefit. The way I have operationalized community enrichment will be more useful for addressing the areas in which a community center can impact the community. Community enrichment was operationalized using statistical analysis and modern social science methods. These improvements will help community centers and community-based programs to reliably assume a primary function, for many years to come.

Sociological Valuation

The theoretical work which went into operationalizing community enrichment was inspired by classical sociological readings. Classical sociology aids as a starting point to move forward. Neither classical nor postmodern theories of sociology appeared to incorporate evaluation work. I began to settle on this conclusion after first thoroughly reading James Farganis, *Readings in Social Theory* a collection of sociological theories from the classic tradition to postmodernism (Farganis 2008). Having read the book it was apparent that evaluation studies were not widely mentioned in classical sociological theory. Evaluation work in its most pure form assesses the value of something and then later reassesses it when some impact or change is implemented. To determine what is either a positive or negative impact the valuation portion of the evaluation imparts the values we determine to be most appropriate for determining if the impact led to a change. Classical Sociology was not concerned with developing new values, instead emphasized using new empirical methods of research to try and capture a more realistic snapshot of what the state of society was. My operationalization of community enrichment was

formulated in a way that it could be more easily welcomed in sociological writing. I strengthened my research with sociological theory and take a stance that evaluation practices benefit from sociological theories. My goal is to contribute to the existing body of literature around sociological theory and evaluation work as a means to help promote an emerging sociological framework, the sociology of valuation.

The sociology of valuation is emerging as a framework and is gaining more attention today. The literature is still scarce, but Anne K. Krüger and Martin Reinhart make a point that well-recognized classical sociologists: Durkheim, Simmel, and Dewey had thought of valuation as a “constitutive element of the fundament of the social” (Krüger and Reinhart 2017: 263). Theorizing of value to valuation and class to classification was pondered by these theorists in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. However, this work began to diminish in popularity in the second half of the 20th century (Krüger and Reinhart 2017). Kruger and Reinhart cite Michele Lamont who had “called for more theory building based on the numerous and heterogeneous studies on valuation” (Krüger and Reinhart 2017: 264). Kruger and Reinhart identify two challenges that would make it more difficult to integrate valuation into sociology. The first is that there are so many different interpretations and understandings of valuation. Boltanski and Esquerre’s conceptualization of economical enrichment and how the value of goods that are either cultural or collectible have increased value is theoretically comparable to how I approached community enrichment (Molotch 2022). I explore the changing value of community, and how the five proposed dimensions can impact the perceived value of community. Both the theories of valuation and the theoretical framework of community enrichment fit well together. Community enrichment interpreted as a theoretical body of

ideas organizes values of the community, and emphasizes those five dimensions/values for measurement. The community enrichment framework strengthens values of community by identifying more specific areas, five dimensions and variables within for improvement. This limits uncertainty and ambiguity when discussing community and what it does for individuals. The second challenge Kruger and Reinhart identify further aligns with the concerns I have made for classical theory incorporated into modern evaluation practices. They state that valuation work has drastically changed from earlier theoretical works to a point where classical sociological theory might be less relevant to modern-day works in valuation (Krüger and Reinhart 2017). Which further presses a need to incorporate modern theory and invest in emerging frameworks such as the sociology of valuation.

It is becoming increasingly important to become data literate in a data-driven world. There are ideas of what a community-based culture of evaluation might look like. Researchers have speculated that through evaluation capacity building. Members of communities can become equipped with the resources and tools necessary for gathering data in their communities (Janzen et. al 2017). In my work, I propose that community enrichment evaluation becomes open for collaboration. I would want all data from community enrichment work to be provided for open access. I believe in the premise of a community-based culture of evaluation and contribute further to that by suggesting that methods and tools for data collection are made readily available. In the future, I would like to build workshops and provide all the necessary templates and frameworks necessary for others to utilize community enrichment assessment and evaluation in their communities.

My argument is that of the existing sociological frameworks, community enrichment evaluation is best suited for the framework of sociological valuation. While sociological valuation appears new, classical theorists as mentioned by Kruger and Reinhart, have mentioned valuation in their works. While I was able to draw inspiration from some of the recognized classical sociological theorists, I was never able to find sociological studies on enrichment work until I began looking for it in my graduate studies. I believe that by building more literature around sociological valuation that it will grow to a point in which it will be more commonly welcomed in sociology classrooms. Therefore, I propose community enrichment evaluation as a theory that could be framed under sociological valuation.

Community Enrichment in Literature

My third stance is that community enrichment has not been formally operationalized in academic writing. I am presenting three studies that include organizations and institutions which considered or mentioned community enrichment in their research. These studies either used community enrichment as the focus of the research, as a keyword, or loosely used community enrichment. Drawing attention to these studies helps to explain how community enrichment has been used in studies but has not been operationalized. Some of the research I have identified for this analysis include the *Urban and Rural Community Enrichment Program*, *The Story of the Highfield Community Enrichment Project*, and *Music Enrichment Programs*. Of these three studies *The Story of the Highfield Community Enrichment Project* will represent the closest study for the framework of community enrichment I propose in this research. As a tool for reference *figure 1* below will help to address ways in which these three studies

address variables for any five dimensions of community enrichment proposed for this research. These dimensions will be further explained in the next portion of the literature review.

The first study presented was conducted with NASA and they were involved in the *Urban and Rural Community Enrichment Program*. They considered community enrichment by delivering programs to schools in underrepresented neighborhoods. Their goals aligned with intervention tactics in evaluation work. By inspiring youth between

Sense of Belonging	Community Resilience	Question Key for Community Enrichment
Leadership opportunities	Response to family emergencies	Sense of Belonging
Integration with the youth	Covid-19 response	Culture/Identity
Integration with the elderly	Food banks	Community Resilience
LGBTQ representation	Local business support	Social Sustainability
Affordable housing	Entry level job opportunities	Solidarity
Meeting groups	Frequency of new startup businesses	
Job opportunities	Developmental State of community	
Socializing diverse groups	Types of businesses most likely to succeed	
Trust	Creative use of available space	
Culture/Identity	Social Sustainability	Solidarity
Farmers market	Hiring talent	Engagement of Locals
Spaces to celebrate cultures	Preparing youth for life	Local government involvement
Volunteering popularity	Community synergy	Local education system and policies
Long standing cultures	Local business deals	Church cooperation
Supports activism	Inclusive to diversity	Local law enforcement as a role model
Waste management	Communication between organizations	Voter turnout over local issues
Cultural exchange	communication between institutions and individuals	social movements frequency
Cultural influence	Community's level of self reliance	Likelihood members contribute financially
Symbols and expressions	Available social sustainability institutions	Learn from past mistakes

Figure 1: Question key for community enrichment

grades 5-8 they hoped to encourage more youth from those areas to take that inspiration into higher education and potentially acquire a career in an area of science (United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration Education Division 2004). They followed proper research methods and had measurable outcomes for their intervention practice. They could have even followed up years later with students from the program to see if the students still felt that the program had an impact on why they went to university

or chose their field. The program had a measurable and mechanized outcome, for community enrichment, which was to ensure that more youth were inspired to go to higher education in an area of science, but that understanding of community enrichment is too unidimensional. Using (Figure 1) I can connect the study to correlations associated with the five dimensions of community enrichment. These five dimensions will be further explained in the next section of the literature review. Figure 1 is helpful because it organizes relationships explored in existing studies. If we compare the NASA study following figure 1, I could speculate that their goals aligned primarily under the dimension of social sustainability. While their efforts have an impact on community enrichment, it is also important to establish more precisely, how, and then in what areas of community enrichment. This is problematic and helps to explain why it becomes difficult to talk about community enrichment at the program level. For programs to be evaluated using a framework of community enrichment then more macro-level measures for the community should first be developed. The community programs will be able to rely on a baseline to compare to and determine if the intervention had an influence on the community enrichment scores for the community.

The study on *Music Enrichment Programs* was included to demonstrate the diversity of studies that utilize community enrichment in their keywords. The program was framed in a similar way to the NASA study, which was to implement an intervention to enhance the lives of at-risk youth. For this study the intervention was music. The purpose of the study was to demonstrate the effects of a community music program and its enhancement of the neural processing of speech in at-risk children (Kraus et al. 2014). A latent function of the program was displacing destructive behaviors in exchange for

more creative behaviors. Just like the NASA study both were designed with measurable outcomes that work for evaluation. In this study, community enrichment is mentioned as a keyword but is not focused on the study. Instead, the study would imply that the program would contribute towards community enrichment. Just like the NASA study, they would utilize the word but likely did not pursue it further because there are no operationalized frameworks of community enrichment for evaluation practices. Using figure 1 I would organize this study under the dimension of community enrichment. Programs like this, which reduce risk rates in populations contribute to more resilient communities. There is an improvement in the quality of life for all individuals and promotes stronger neuro physiologies. I am including this program to show how even a less perceptively related program, centered on music, could be connected to this operationalization of community enrichment. One day, I could evaluate for programs like this, using the community enrichment framework and I could demonstrate the degree to which the program impacts community enrichment using the five-dimensional framework.

The Highfield Community Enrichment Project was created to improve the lives of school children and families, from low-income suburbs of Toronto, Ontario. The program sought to achieve this through a combination of intervention and prevention tactics (Hayward 2016). Of all the studies I reviewed the Highfield Community Enrichment Project appears to come closest to operationalizing community enrichment. The project focuses on three major hubs: in-school, family resources, and community development. In addition, a family resource center provides toys, materials, and programs for parents and children. The Highfield Community Enrichment project aimed for long-term effects

for low-income families. They achieved results by identifying the risk factors which impacted families, and they addressed ways to intervene and prevent similar risks in the future. Prevention tactics can be organized and defined in many ways, but the Highfield Community Enrichment project draws from the Institute of Medicine and the Institute of Mental health, which organizes prevention tactics by universal and selective preventative action. Universal applies to the entire population or general public, while selective applies to subpopulations and individuals (Hayward 2016). The Highfield Community Enrichment project addresses universal prevention tactics.

The first two studies presented emphasized intervention tactics which are more commonly used in evaluation practices. Intervention tactics are often the simplest tactic for reliably measuring outcomes because they plan for clear intended outcomes. Prevention tactics complicate the ability to reliably account for successful outcomes because they add resilience to the equation. Prevention tactics emerged during the eighteenth century in response to misconceptions about diseases (Hayward 2016). For instance, a cholera outbreak in London England was prevented by removing an unsafe drinking well and implementing an alternative source of water (Hayward 2016). Prevention tactics aim to protect long after the intervention is implemented. Intervention tactics can be implemented separately, but prevention tactics act jointly with intervention tactics. The Highfield Community Enrichment project goes a step further and begins to approach what could be theoretically considered as the most complex evaluation tactic, which is centered around enrichment.

Enrichment tactics are complex because they are considered to be holistic. enrichment tactics address a wider, and more all-encompassing range of issues. They not only aim to prevent further risks from occurring but additionally aim to improve the qualities of the target group or individuals. Successful outcomes for enrichment tactics lay somewhere between a range of values. Rather than ask whether the target was enriched you would instead ask by how much, or to what degree. As an example of enrichment, a student could do poorly in a class, and they can receive tutoring to do well on the next test, that would be intervention. Enrichment happens when the tutor imparts skills that the students continue to use long after the tutoring ends so that they continue to find success on their tests. In addition, other latent issues could be unmentioned, such as the student learning better sleep habits for test taking, which additionally improves their quality of life.

The Highfield Community Enrichment Project addresses the enrichment portion, for evaluation practices but also addresses the gap in research for the measures of community. They state that they were unsure of the relationship between community, and capacity building for the benefit of their target population (Hayward 2016). This statement is consistent with what I have seen in the literature and was one of the reasons for pursuing this research on community enrichment. Many pieces of the puzzle were considered, and they addressed some of those pieces, resilience, and social capital are just a few of those integral pieces they address. The work I do on community enrichment puts the pieces together combining the literature, the theory and the research, and organizes it into a five-dimensional framework for community enrichment.

The Five Dimensions of Community Enrichment

I present the five dimensions of community enrichment, conveying the work that went into understanding these five dimensions. Every question in the evaluation for community enrichment can be traced to the results and findings from these bodies of literature. Some interpretations of the material were influenced by my understanding of sociological theory. I include in (Figure 2) below to map out the five dimensions and the relevant concepts as well as the areas of theory that will be covered in each summary of the five dimensions. To organize this literature, I made an effort to first include the theory and then the literature on the methods, and acquisition of ideas for the framing of assessment questions.

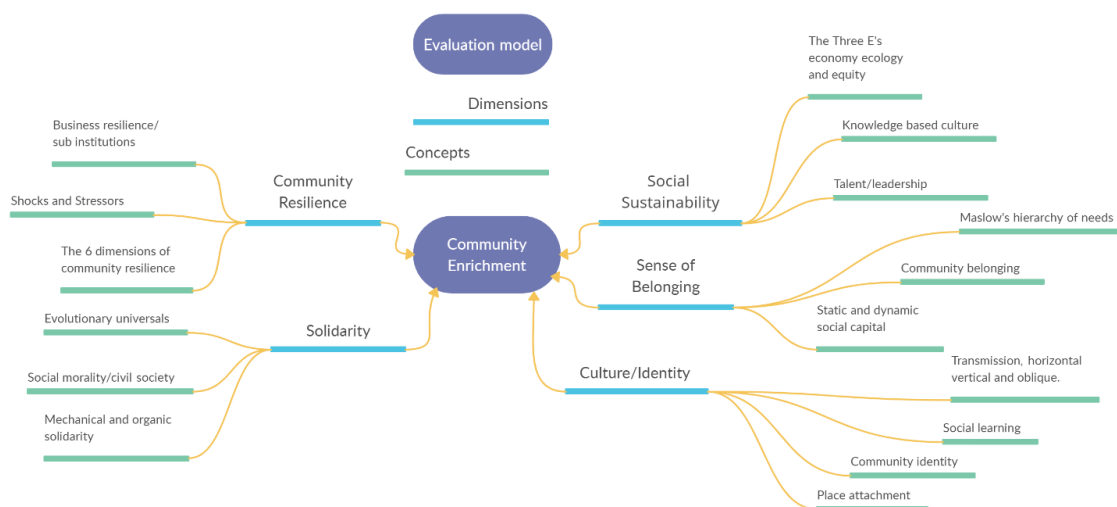


Figure 2: Conceptual Model for the Framework

Sense of Belonging

Sense of belonging is a concept that I became invested in after learning about Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Maslow Identified five stages of needs, physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow 1943). Of the existing needs-based models, Maslow's hierarchy of needs is likely the most familiar to the general public. There are contested ideas and theories as to how the model should

be most effectively organized, as well as whether aspects like spirituality should be added. My theoretical contribution is just to consider belonging, love, and esteem as needs that require community. I argue that community enrichment can increase the likelihood of producing self-actualized members within communities. Sense of belonging is a process toward fulfilment and is on a comparable level to love (Lambert et al. 2013). Sense of belonging is essential for leading a meaningful life (Lambert et al. 2013). It is simpler to conceptualize belonging by itself because a sense of belonging almost begins to imply a sort of divine element. The sense attaches a sort of symbolic meaning to belonging, in which there is a sort of spiritual connectedness that one experiences with others. By having a sense of belonging one can begin to feel bigger than themselves, sensing their connection symbolically, to a much bigger entity (Lambert et al. 2013). Tying into a sense of belonging is the social capital of the individual. Capriana and Hystad cited and synthesized work from Bourdieu, Coleman and Portes to define social capital as a resource that is embedded in social networks (Carpiano and Hystad 2011). Individuals that are invested in their communities and are embedded in these social networks have a higher sense of belonging. When individuals gain access to these social networks, they open doors that aid them in individual and sometimes collective action (Carpiano and Hystad 2011). Bourdieu's interpretation of social capital was later advanced with the introduction of the distinctive characteristics, of static and dynamic social capital. Static social capital is characterized by increased trust and rigidity towards diversity. Dynamic social capital lacks inward trust but is more open to diversity (Boeck 2011). These interpretations further help to explain how individuals can lose their sense

of belonging when they leave and enter new communities, or even when they return to their communities.

The Canadian national health survey has the largest data collection on the sense of belonging. How the questions in the survey were framed became important for considering questions for the assessment. Research has demonstrated that you can only partially explain the relationship between a sense of community belonging and health through social capital (Carpiano and Hystad 2011). This could be a result of poorly operationalized concepts. Social capital is still being refined in academic studies. A deeper understanding of socio-geographical settings³ might also help to better understand variability in a person's sense of community belonging as it then relates to social capital. It is recommended that when conducting studies with a sense of belonging as it correlates to social capital that the type of social capital is specified. (Carpiano and Hystad 2011). Because there are so many types of social capital it becomes important to use one of its many contested interpretations. In this framework, I utilize the static and dynamic social capital interpretations mentioned in Boeck's work.

Solidarity

As a concept, solidarity theoretically demonstrates a sort of ouroboros effect⁴, on one hand, it may help to promote democracy by increasing individual agency, but on the other hand, it can also lead to social disobedience if the leadership is authoritarian (Pasko

³ Socio-geographical setting is a term used to encompass rural, urban, and suburban, with respects to the social impacts of each setting, towards the socialization of individuals.

<https://besserpublishing.com/socio-geographical-settings/>

⁴ Ouroboros is a mythical snake from Egyptian and Greek culture. It depicts a serpent devouring itself and being reborn over and over again. An ouroboros effect in solidarity is just the idea that members within a group are constantly challenging leadership and actively evolving the system over and over again.

and Korzhov 2019). There are varying theoretical understandings of solidarity as it relates to political ideologies but holistic approaches to solidarity are encouraged (Pasko and Korzhov 2019). Durkheim proposed solidarity in two parts, the mechanical and the organic (Durkheim 1893). Mechanical solidarity was meant to describe the kind of collective action which existed before the division of labor that manifested from the industrial revolution. Durkheim believed that generating a surplus gave individuals more agency and free time to take on new roles and termed that organic solidarity (Durkheim 1893). It is important to consider Pasko and Korzhov's suggestion to find more holistic approaches to solidarity and I would add that the separate interpretations for mechanical and organic solidarity would help to achieve that. The varying interpretations of solidarity produced some controversy around the concept and those many interpretations often lead to confusion (Laitinen et al. 2014). I make no effort to achieve any form of synthesis for mechanical and organic solidarity in the research, I only draw influence from both concepts for this research's dimension of solidarity. Solidarity is fundamentally rooted in moral principles but to adopt universal solidarity it is necessary to revisit individual ideas of morals and question existing beliefs and patterns (Laitinen et al. 2014). In the social world, there are evolutionary universals which are actions to replicate successful advancements that are made within (Laitinen et al. 2014). Depending on what, and who makes the advancement, the characteristics of the social world are altered. Women's rights are an example of a growing evolutionary universal and are connected to solidarity. In countries where women do not have the right to vote they may look to other countries where it has been realized and solidarity is promoted amongst the women around the world who are pushing that evolutionary universal.

Some of the questions for solidarity were inspired by Fessler's research. Fessler established community profiles which were represented by radar graphs "with 8 distinctive points: community spirit, interpersonal relationships, family responsibility, schools, churches, economic behavior, local government, and tension areas" (Fessler 1952: 144). I was inspired by Fessler's use of the community profile and drew inspiration from it, when conducting the community enrichment assessment I added a community enrichment score and discuss plans for a community profile. I considered Fessler's index, but his questions were directed toward individuals' interpretations and opinions of their community. Moving away from perspective-based questions for the assessment, I incorporated elements of the socio-spatial perspective. By focusing on the social space of the community, it became easier to identify the areas to identify and if possible, I could repurpose questions from Fessler's index which were reframed for social space.

Social Sustainability

The existing literature on social sustainability gets perceptively muddled due to its varying theoretical interpretations which detract from its practical applicability. Classically, social sustainability has been divided into the three E's economy, ecology, and equity. Perceived success in measuring social sustainability seems to be highly dependent on what parts of sustainability are being emphasized for specific research, but equity and equal access distribution appear to influence all three E's in some way (Liao, Warner, and Homsy 2019). The existing literature on the Three E's was somewhat daunting, and what was most frightening was that every bit of collaboration into the Three E's only seemed to complicate social sustainability further. Practically, it seemed

to make more sense to study each component of social sustainability separately. Components and indicators of the three E's relate to community, but it would be a forced effort to try and bunch them with community enrichment. In mulling over these interpretations of the literature the Western Australian Council of Social Service appeared to have the most holistic definition of social sustainability with the room to incorporate the necessary components of the three E's, as they relate to community enrichment. "Social sustainability occurs when the formal and informal processes: systems, structures, and relationships actively support the capacity of current and future generations to create healthy and liveable communities. Socially sustainable communities are equitable, diverse, connected and democratic and provide a good quality of life" (WACOSS).

A final characteristic that seemed quintessential in defining social sustainability was sustained use, or performance. A study on sustainable performance conditioned by the organizational culture in the maritime industry revealed correlations between four types of talent, four types of leadership styles, and five dimensions of sustainability (Pantouvakis and Vlachos 2020). Literature shows that there is little debate around the concept of talent wars and recognizing talent as a limited resource (Pantouvakis and Vlachos 2020). Successful performance in social sustainability should be evident in communities with strong leadership and talent that are concerned with these issues.

Community Resilience

Community resilience is the dimension that is concerned with the ability of the community to be able to prepare and plan for, absorb, recover from, and more

successfully adapt to adverse events (National Academic Press 2019). Much of the existing data on community resilience originated in natural disaster studies. How small businesses can overcome the outcomes of disasters, and how well business owners are able to react to these unforeseeable disasters, is connected with the efforts of the communities they belong to. This is effectively a relationship between community resilience and business resilience (Adekola and Clelland 2020). Community resilience is tested by both shocks and stressors. Shocks are events that occur over a short period, and stressors are long-term pressures that have no clear beginning or end (National Academic Press 2019). You could quantifiably measure community resilience, by designating members of the community to account for the local shocks and stressors. For instance, local business owners could be advised to keep a journal of these shocks and stressors. Local businesses can mutually aid the community by covering the perceived vulnerabilities, for instance; volunteering their time and effort, any contributions of the business's capacity, such as services they offer, they may offer shelter, or assist with clean up after emergencies (Adekola and Clelland 2020). Collectively, local business owners could account for the risks, stressors, and shocks, as well as the solutions they provide to handle those risks. In addition, they can account for the perceived risks they are unable to resolve, and they may look for resources that might otherwise resolve those risk factors.

There are varying community resilience indexes, and it has been suggested that upwards of 156 variables could exist which operationalize community resilience (National Academic Press 2019). Of the explored correlations of community resilience, the six most commonly represented are: natural (or environmental), built (infrastructure),

financial (economic) human and cultural, social, and political (institutional or governance) (National Academic Press 2019). By considering a synthesis of these six most significant correlations, and then accounting for local data on shocks and stressors it would be feasible to operationalize community resilience as a dimension of community enrichment.

Culture & Identity

The dimension of culture and identity or cultural identity is concerned with the makeup of a community and how the members can attach meaning and culturally identify within. Community enrichment evaluations will consider the transmission of culture through horizontal vertical and oblique. These concepts of transmission are how people adapt to social learning. Vertical transmission occurs between parent and child, horizontal occurs between peer to peer, and oblique transmission occurs between a child and any other adult, aside from the parents (Allen 2019). Some behaviours are better adapted for social learning; however, stimuli can occur that triggers the individual to adopt new behaviours, possibly adapting new behaviours which would improve social learning (Allen 2019). As an example, any behavioural changes which help to improve communication could positively impact the capacity for social learning. Social learning leads to culture, once the socially learned trait is maintained and practiced over time (Allen 2019). This is a very simplistic way to explain the origins of culture, but the addition of social institutions and symbols will complicate the conceptualization of transmission since it refracts social learning in many directions. Cultural participation across events and social institutions can be monitored. Some types of social capital can

be manifested from cultural participation, such as personal relationships, social network support, civic engagement, trust, and cooperative norms. A popularized string of studies has been performed on urban communities to track the likely hood of individuals helping others in an emergency situation.

Xin and Ling developed a community identity scale composed of two dimensions, functional and emotional identity (Yang and Xin 2016). The community identity scale offered significant findings toward understanding the relationship between community identity and emergency aid, but the dimension of functional identity might be reworked for a stronger relationship (Yang and Xin 2016). The last component of culture and identity that should be considered for community enrichment evaluations is the concept, of place attachment. These five dimensions place identity, dependence, nature bonding, family bonding, and friend bonding should be considered (Raymond, Brown, and Weber 2010). The concept of place attachment could help to answer why behaviours are maintained and potentially how people solidify themselves through culture. Some impacts on the community can be traced to members' involvement in cultural events (Sakalauskas et. al 2021). Fairs, festivals, and events that encourage social participation can be linked to the manifestation of social capital. The number of cultural activities hosted within a community can be an indicator of strong cultural capital (Sakalauskas et. al 2021).

Methodology

Community enrichment as a five-dimensional framework was operationalized, packaged through a community enrichment assessment, and delivered to community professionals. Most of those community professionals were directors of community centers, the primary stakeholders for this research. In addition, a thematic analysis was conducted over community centers within the United States. The thematic analysis helps to address the functions and programming of community centers throughout the country. The thematic analysis also demonstrates a community enrichment score which was calculated from community centers that were identified for impacting community enrichment. These findings are proposed to open the door for research into community enrichment as a process of assessment and evaluation.

Further improvement toward the operationalization of community enrichment assessments would be dependent on the increased involvement and practice of these assessments. The assessment model I developed for this research still allows for too much variability in answer selection. A primary goal I set for the community enrichment assessment was to establish a more affordable and less time-consuming alternative to community needs assessments. I wanted to propose an assessment which could be conducted by one trained representative from a community. An assessment model for this type of work would require considerable standardization including guides to complete the assessment. However, the model I developed for this research was appropriate given the time constraints to complete this stage of the research. The assessment data generated in this research was necessary because it provides vital preliminary data to move forward

with context. Following the methods laid out in this research, studies could be produced with the five-dimensional framework of community enrichment to indicate the negative and positive correlations which impact it. Methodological considerations for developing community enrichment assessments can be used to strengthen community needs assessments. Data from community needs assessments can be used interchangeably with community enrichment assessments to improve the questions from both assessments. In both the results and discussion section I will expand on the methods which would be required to improve the current state of this community assessment work.

Developing and Conducting the Community Enrichment Assessment

A thorough literature review of the five dimensions of community enrichment helped to develop the starting point for community enrichment assessment. Assessment questions were written concerning existing research that considers community enrichment and any of its five dimensions. These five dimensions work well to exhaustively organize variables that would impact community enrichment. Each dimension is a theoretical concept that is widely explored and used within social science literature. Because these concepts are well used, it is possible to find studies that report significant findings.

There are five dimensions in the assessment and each dimension is separated into two parts, the matrix questions, and the categorical questions. The results from the matrix questions are interpreted for correlational analysis and are influenced by studies with significant findings. The results from the categorical questions are interpreted differently because they come from studies that either did not produce significant findings or they

produced significant findings but not in a way that could easily be connected to the dimension. One of the assessment questions is organized under sense of belonging and correlates access to nature and wildlife. I found several studies which framed the correlation differently. I determined the relationship would work best for the categorical section because the literature indicated different conclusions for the relationship depending on its framing. Access to nature in an urban study reported (n=1,930,048) for 95% confidence intervals that for each 1% increase in the variable Accessible Natural Space within 500 meters there was a 5% increase in the odds to report a very strong Sense of Community belonging (Rugel et al. 2019). In a similar study with an (n= 204) researchers found that the variable needed to belong had a negative association with nature relatedness. They report a negative association between nature-relatedness and a need to belong, a very weak raw coefficient score (b) = -.07 and was significant $p < 0.001$. Results indicated that individuals with higher nature-relatedness scores had a lower need to belong (Li, Liu, and Ito 2021). Because it was difficult to assume a directional relationship between sense of belonging and access to nature across different types of communities, I organized the question into a categorical section.

For the assessment and framework of community enrichment, community is understood as a social space observed within socio-geographical settings whether rural, suburban, or urban. This community enrichment evaluation respects the work laid out by Rabel J. Burdge in social impact assessments (2004). In addition, this evaluation work was written to contribute to the sociological framework of sociological valuation. This evaluation was provided to knowledgeable community leaders, but the main target group for this study was executive directors from community centers. These executive directors

were identified as professionals who have extensive knowledge of their communities. Some of the assessment questions ask about different programs and other socio-environmental questions about the community. Only recognized community leaders in professional roles would be able to reliably provide the data necessary for the evaluation. The assessment was intended to take no more than 15 minutes, to populate data that would improve the success of future studies on community enrichment evaluation. According to Cause IQ, there are 2,871 community recreational centers in the United States which are registered for their tax information as 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations (Cause IQ 2022). This data was retrieved on January 1, 2022. Of those 2,871 community centers, the majority of those would be considered recreational centers, and would not be considered for the assessment. Initially, I considered using the data provided by Cause IQ to construct the contact list. I chose not to use the data because they charge users to access their data files and because this research was unfunded, I opted to retrieve my data.

To find community centers I analyzed community centers in the U.S, using Google Maps. The key search included “community center”, “community enrichment center”, “community action plan center”, or “community action program.” In total, I constructed a contact list for 258 potential assessment takers. Of those 258, 246 were recognized as community centers, and 12 were recognized as organizations with similar operations to community centers, such as community action centers and community enrichment centers. The limitation of my free Google search data was that there are centers that do not show up in a Google search or do not have a website. Those hypothetical centers could have been included. To decrease any likely oversight, every

search result from the first ten pages of a Google Map search from all fifty states was considered. Some framing was done to ensure that the right kinds of community centers were included, those requirements in descending importance were has a website, has a physical location, provides an email, offers programs that improve community living, and if possible any of the five dimensions of community enrichment, and provides a phone number, should advertise the contact info for the executive director, or person in a similar role.

Of the few thousand websites that were visited, 258 met the requirements in the above list. Initially, the plan was to only include community centers. Community centers were given priority to cover the initial goal of 250. I can assume that there are community centers that would have worked for the contact list but either did not appear in the Google search or were not advertised as community centers. Some parts of the assessment were influenced by calls I made to community centers. I found that on some of the websites I visited that they did not share contact information. I called those centers to find a reliable contact for email. During those calls, I made an effort to also ask if they had ideas for what they might want to see on the assessment. It would have been possible to put together a larger contact list which expanded to communities without community centers. That would have increased the sample size and it would have been worthwhile to have a control group. I decided I was not ready to settle with the model I developed for the assessment, and chose to move forward with a smaller sample size, and devote more time to other areas of the research.

Initially, I had planned to conduct 3 waves of invitations for the assessment over the course of 3 months. I followed advice from both Qualtrics and Ithaka S+R which was consistent with what I understood from research and survey methods, that after the third wave of email invites, responses drastically decrease. To improve the response rate, I promised a free assessment report which I hoped would be appealing to the community center directors. Following advice from an article in Ithaka S+R I made sure to send email invites early in the week (Wolff-Eisenberg 2015). Later on, I would discover that I was not well informed about my sample population. I came to realize that my timing was poorly planned and that I would receive the least number of responses during the months of October and November. A community enrichment assessment participant suggested I send a fourth wave of invitations during the month of January. They suggested that the later months of the year are bad for community center directors because of tax season, and extended holidays. In total, I sent four waves of invites. The first was on October 7, the second was on October 18, and the third was on November 8. I then made phone calls to see if I could improve the contact list and on January 31, I sent the fourth and final wave of invitations.

The assessment was administered through Qualtrics and delivered through email in four waves. Opt-outs were replaced with organizations/community centers that met less of the contact list requirements. Those were the cases that were not considered after five organizations were initially selected for that state, in the original contact list. They might not have filled all the requirements to be included in the contact list, or five other organizations/centers were prioritized over them. In total 964 emails were sent out and of

those 964, 714 were resent. Unless the receiver opted out; they would receive multiple invitations for the assessment.

There were ten bounce-backs in the first wave. Each email that bounced back was replaced with a new email address from the same organization. Completions were recorded and excluded from the second wave. In the second wave, 239 organizations/centers were contacted and in the second wave, only two emails bounced back. In the third wave, 234 organizations/centers were contacted and only one email bounced back. One community in Alaska returned two assessments. This happened because in some of the communities sampled there are sometimes more than one community center. I had hoped to get some assessments back which came from the same community to test for variability. During the process of sending invitations a participant suggested that the timing may not have been right due to tax season and end-of-year reports consuming a lot of time from the directors of community centers. I acknowledged the advice and sent a fourth wave sometime later after the third wave on January 31, 2022. On the fourth wave, I received the most completions out of any of the previous waves with 13 completions. I could have continued to administer the assessment with a minor amendment to the IRB proposal. I chose not to because I decided to devote attention to other areas of the research. I also had not yet settled on the community enrichment assessment model and was not prepared to invest more time into it.

In total 57 assessments were started and of those 57, 34 had agreed to give consent. Of those 34, 21 completed the assessment, and two partially completed the assessment. The 23 returned assessments represent data from 18 different states. Eleven

Did not progress after giving consent to take the assessment. Only one participant answered, “No I do not wish to participate at this time” to the consent question. The assessment was typically delivered to executive directors of community centers and sister organizations. Occasionally a government official was listed as the contact for the center/organization. The likelihood that many of these emails never reached the intended recipient, is high. After the third wave, I contacted recipients to find what I could do to increase the response rate. I discovered that a combination of firewalls and timing was preventing a higher response rate. This is also when I discovered from an assessment participant that another wave of invitations would help. It is highly likely that with a physical mail invite the response rate would have been improved but was not considered because this research was unfunded. I would also suggest that after February is a more appropriate time to reach out to directors from community centers and that between October and January are very difficult times to get responses.

Thematic Analysis of Community Centers

Because I had the time to invest in other areas of the research I chose to return to the contact list and perform a thematic analysis of community centers. Because community centers were a stakeholder for this research I needed data which best represented what they offered. I also connected what I had learned from the literature review for community enrichment and its five dimensions to determine community centers that perceptively impacted community enrichment. I returned to the contact list I created for the community enrichment assessment and added new sections, “Programs”, “Functions”, and “Mission statement” and indicated whether the community center “impacted community enrichment”, “kind of impacted community enrichment” or, “did

not impact community enrichment.” In the thematic analysis of community centers using the mentioned categories, I visited every search result returned for all fifty states, using the key search “community center in (the state).” I visited roughly ten thousand websites and carefully selected 500 community centers, ten from each state. My goal was to find ten community centers that could be identified for positively impacting community enrichment. If I could not find ten, I would include centers that “kind of impacted community enrichment.” If neither were found, I would include centers that did not impact community enrichment.

I limited my bias for identifying centers that impact community enrichment by identifying community centers that held programs and displayed functions that were not limited to recreation and rental. I considered the mission statement first. Occasionally the website for the community center would mention community enrichment in its statement. If the community center offered programs which followed up on its mission statement, declaring community enrichment then it was considered for impacting community enrichment. If the community center wrote in the mission statement intentions to improve the community then the statement aligned with community enrichment. However, if the programs did not reflect the mission statement, then I would not consider the center to impact community enrichment. For instance, a center could declare in its statement that they impact community enrichment but then the only service they offer is rental space for events and parties. I would then consider the programs and the mission statement to identify the core function of the community center. Some of the centers identified for positively impacting community enrichment emphasize target populations. Community centers with primary functions for ethnic services, disability services, and LGBTQ

services, are prime examples of this, but their enrichment, could also enrich the whole community. Therefore, centers which had target populations were still considered for impacting community enrichment.

There were some notes I wrote during the process of collecting this data which I believe is important to convey if this study was to be replicated. First, the states with either national parks or Native American reservations, typically have fewer community centers. I did some research on the community centers that were on Native American reservations, and some of those centers are included in the thematic analysis. In the state of Tennessee, I was unable to find a community center that was not owned and run by parks and recreation. When a community center is owned and operated by parks and recreation, in most cases it is a recreational center. One technique I used to go through websites quicker was to identify which centers were operated by parks and recreation. Parks and recreation typically utilize the same website for all their community centers, and they usually offer amenities over programs. Community centers which emphasize the amenities they offer are typically recreational, rental, or events centers. These centers will advertise training equipment, pool, games area, etc., with no mention of programs.

I found that the best way to utilize Google map search for analysis was to hover over the entire state and then search for the community centers in that state. I would find results that were returned from bordering states, but I would also reliably get all the results for that state as well. I developed a process where I loaded roughly 50 websites at a time and then I would quickly scan them making sure they were not either recreational, rental, or event centers. By simply processing out the recreational, rental, and event

centers 50 turns into 5. I would then perform a much more thorough review of those remaining five and determine whether to include them. Google map search can help to identify community centers that do not include community centers in their name. Registered sites can include a description that includes the type of business and community centers that are recognized organizations in google search. A limitation of this research is that there are community centers that do not call themselves community centers and therefore do not come up in the search results, the “Third Street Center” is an example.

Methodological Considerations for the Assessment

Here are some considerations of the methods proposed in the community enrichment assessment and the thematic analysis. I believe there are numerous ways in which the methods could have been improved for both the assessment and the thematic analysis. A challenge in completing this research was to limit the number of responsibilities I put on myself to complete the project. This thesis research was completed within two years and there are many areas of research and data analysis I hope to improve on over the years to come. I strongly believe that the best practices for the methods of community enrichment can only be achieved by a community of researchers, with diverse backgrounds that satisfy a wide spectrum of talent and skill. In these methodological considerations, I will address some of the gaps in both the community enrichment assessment and the thematic analysis.

If I had pursued significant findings with the assessment, then I would have required a sample size of 92. It would have been possible to achieve a power of .8 for the community enrichment assessment. To achieve a power of .8 for several predictors = 5 a sample population of 92 is needed and this result was calculated using G Power (Figure 3). At 92 the sample would have

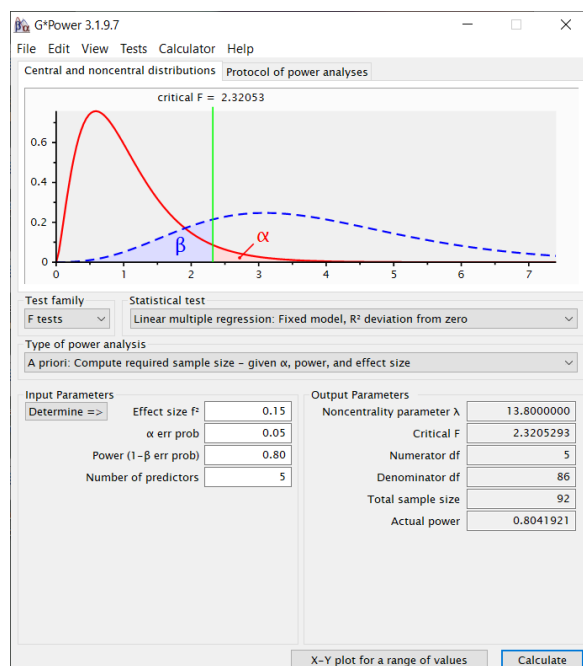


Figure 3: G Power Analysis

been large enough to meet an alpha at or less than .05. Given the size of the contact list at 268, a target response rate would have to meet 34.3%. This would have been achievable by either sending the assessment through physical mail, following up with more phone calls or sending more invites during better parts of the year. A control group could have been added to the study, which would have included communities without a community center. Control group data would have helped to increase the sample size.

Because this was a pilot study, I had not yet considered hypothesis testing. Instead I use the research to indicate direction for future studies, and indicate hypotheses for future work in community enrichment. Hypothesis testing will be more approachable for future studies but was not considered for this research. The methodological approaches I take are appropriate given the constraints of the research but are not ideal. The research,

was unfunded, had time constraints, and was completed by one person. The methods will be improved as these limitations are lifted.

I was ultimately unsatisfied with the community enrichment assessment model. I wrote and developed assessment questions which helped to pilot the assessment and retrieve some data. Those questions were developed using existing data that correlated to the assessment, community enrichment, and its five dimensions. I rewrote questions that may have been intended for individuals to reply to with their opinions and reconstructed those questions to be more objective. I would want to further improve the way the literature is organized for incorporation into the assessment. I would also like to spend more time refining questions and improving the system I use to score the community enrichment profile. I would do this by scoring the questions differently depending on how strong the relationship was reported in existing studies, more on this in the findings section. It also became increasingly important to decrease the variability of responses and emphasize the theoretical approaches to community enrichment proposed in the research. Community as a social space and its five dimensions should be the focus of the assessment and the questions can better reflect that.

Not every question in the assessment is correlational. Every matrix question was written to develop a community enrichment profile for correlational studies. The matrix questions are 5 questions, labelled "1.1-1.5", "2.1-2.5" and so on for every dimension, etc. Then each dimension includes four additional questions per block in the assessment, and in total, 9 questions per block. The questions which are not correlational are written to build an understanding of the state of the community and are the categorical questions.

In the analysis, the data for those questions will just appear to take up space, and I only report on frequencies. I had planned to categorize types of community by establishing community profiles, but I have not yet started that work. This was my plan to eliminate some of the statistical bias, with the scoring system. I did not want a community in a rural area with a lack of funding to be scored the same way as a metro city.

Initially, I believed that community center directors who took the assessment would return more accurate interpretations of their community, then of the general population. I assumed they would be less biased and more informed of their community, which would allow them to answer more difficult and objective questions in an assessment. The assessment reliability can be further improved through a process of standardization. If assessment takers are trained to complete the assessment, then variability would be decreased. Trained assessment takers need to be able to perform the assessment and their results should be almost identical if they assess the same community. I sent a few assessments to communities which had multiple community center locations. I was able to get assessment results from one of those areas and the assessment scores were too different. Bias can be assumed for questions which are perception based. A biased perception of community will affect the variability of responses. In the future I will remove the perception-based questions to eliminate bias. In the discussion section I will elaborate on plans to improve the assessment.

Results

The data from this section came from the community enrichment assessment and the thematic analysis of community centers. Some secondary data was collected from the U.S. Census Bureau and the American Community Survey, which was used to complete the correlational findings. For the community enrichment assessment, I report an (n=23) and completed assessments (n=21.) For the thematic analysis of community centers, I report an (n=500).

The Community Enrichment Assessment Data

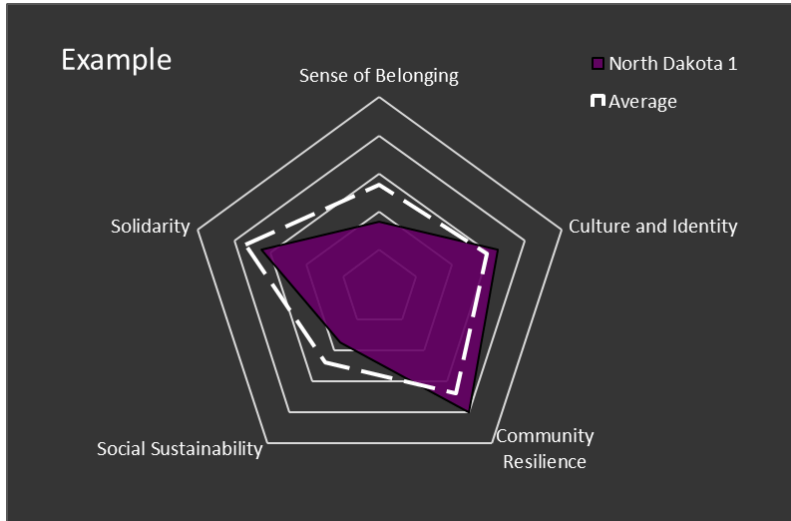


Figure 4: Radar Graph Example

The radar graph above (Figure 4) represents data from the 5 matrix table questions from the community enrichment assessment. These radar graphs represented the community enrichment score indicated by the assessment taker. Each matrix included five questions and allowed five answers, “Definitely True,” “Somewhat True,” “Unsure,” “Somewhat Untrue,” and “Definitely Untrue.” Scoring was calculated by assigning a value to all five answer options: “Definitely True= 1,” “Somewhat True= .5,” “Unsure=

0,” “Somewhat Untrue= -.5,” and “Definitely Untrue= -1.” The scores from each dimension were added and the composite score represents the dimension score. The white dotted line represents the sample mean and the purple pentagon represents the unique case score. The range of possible values were between -5, and 5. Most of the matrix questions indicate positive relationships, except questions 4.1.2 and 3.1.5 which indicate negative relationships, and for those questions, the scoring was flipped so that: “Definitely True= -1,” “Somewhat True= -.5,” “Unsure= 0,” “Somewhat Untrue= .5,” and “Definitely Untrue= 1.” Existing peer-reviewed studies help to determine whether the relationships would be either positive or negative. The scoring system can be further improved by assigning values that are indicative of the strength of the relationship. For this assessment, I just assigned consistent generic values to each answer pattern. The following questions were used to gather the data which made the radar graphs for the data reports.

Sense of Belonging

1. There are plenty of leadership opportunities for members of my community
2. The youth are encouraged to share ideas in the community and have a space to do so
3. The elderly are an integral part of our community
4. Community members are aware that there is an LGBTQ group in the community
5. There is affordable housing in this community

Culture and Identity

1. Our community has a well-attended farmers market.
2. We offer spaces for members of this community to celebrate a wide spectrum of cultures.
3. Volunteering is popular in this community.
4. There are long-standing cultures that are prevalent in this community.

5. This community values and supports activism.

Community Resilience

1. In case of a family emergency, the community can provide the resources to help the family bounce back.

2. In my community we responded to Covid-19 well.

3. We have plenty of operating food banks in the community.

4. This community is supportive of local businesses.

5. There are no employment opportunities for young people in our community.

Social Sustainability

1. The community has no problem hiring talented individuals for challenging community positions.

2. Online/app-related work is vital for many of the working individuals in this community.

3. People work well together and get things done for the community.

4. The local businesses in my community offer deals to locals.

5. The community environment helps prepare our youth for life.

Solidarity

1. Local businesses help to advertise community events.

2. Members of the local government are active in attending community events.

3. The local education system has programs for student involvement in the community.

4. The churches in this community cooperate well together.

5. Local law enforcement is expected to be role models for the community.

Data from the table to the right (Table 1) demonstrates both the mean sample scores, as well as the assessment scores for “North

Community Enrichment	ND 1	Average
Sense of Belonging	-1.5	0.43
Culture and Identity	1.5	0.93
Community Resilience	3	1.79
Social Sustainability	-1.5	-0.18
Solidarity	1.5	2.38

Table 1: Community Enrichment Scores Example 1

Dakota 1". Table 1 and figure 4 communicate the same data for the case "North Dakota 1" self-reported scores: "Sense of Belonging= -1.5," Culture and Identity= 1.5," "Community Resilience= 3," "Social Sustainability= -1.5," and "Solidarity= 1.5." The sample mean scores are: "Sense of Belonging= .43," Culture and Identity= 0.93," "Community Resilience= 1.79," "Social Sustainability= -0.18," and "Solidarity= 2.38." My interpretation of the scores is dependent on the results of the self-scored assessment. For every assessment, regardless of how high the scores are, I indicate the areas which can be improved. The purpose of the assessment is to indicate the areas which should be prioritized for improvement. I mention the mean sample assessment scores for each report as a reference point but do not indicate what necessarily constitutes a good or poor score. There are also limitation in using the mean as a reference point because it won't help to take into consideration the variation generated by communities of different types. In the data reports, I wrote small analytical summaries for the community enrichment score, and below I include examples.

Looking at the scores from "North Dakota 1" we find that "Sense of Belonging," "Social Sustainability," and "Solidarity" reported scores are below the mean of all reported scores while, "Culture and identity," and "Community Resilience" reported scores are above the sample mean of all reported scores. The results would indicate dimensions that would most greatly benefit from improvement. When considering programming to impact your community look for the scores which deviate furthest from the sample mean. If the scores fall well below the sample mean, then that could indicate an area that should be prioritized for improvement. Here the mean simply provides a reference point

Interpretations for the data varied depending on the assessment taker’s self-reported scores. There was not a single participant which scored their community perfectly for the community enrichment scores, but if they did it might have been more difficult to write an interpretation. Regardless of how high the scores were, I would always indicate the areas that could be improved. The purpose of these scores is just to assess areas community can be enriched, given the five-dimensional framework, and utilizing only some correlational variables for each dimension. Five questions for any one dimension will not provide a clear picture of the state of any community, but it can be a snapshot. I want to include a few more examples that show how I interpreted these scores. First, I will show an example of an interpretation for very high scores, and then I will show an example of an interpretation where the scores fit closely to the sample mean scores. Each of these examples can be perceptively challenging to interpret for different reasons.

Looking at the scores from “Minnesota 3” we find that overall, the self-reported scores are significantly higher than the average assessment scores. Similarly, to

Community Enrichment	MN 3	Average
Sense of Belonging	3	0.43
Culture and Identity	4	0.93
Community Resilience	3	1.79
Social Sustainability	2	-0.18
Solidarity	4	2.38

Table 2: Community Enrichment Scores Example 2

other assessment takers, you responded with lower scores for social sustainability, but still well over the mean. With higher self-reported scores, we look at the scores which are closest to the mean reported scores and say that that dimension would most greatly benefit from improvement for community enrichment. Based on your responses, the dimensions which would most greatly benefit from improvement are community

resilience and solidarity. When considering programming to impact your community, consider programs that impact community resilience and solidarity.

Looking at the scores from “Wyoming 5” the scores provided closely fit the mean community enrichment scores for all assessment

Community Enrichment	WY 5	Average
Sense of Belonging	0	0.43
Culture and Identity	1	0.93
Community Resilience	0.5	1.79
Social Sustainability	0	-0.18
Solidarity	2.5	2.38

Table 3: Community Enrichment Scores Example 3

takers. Of all the assessments recorded your self-reported scores were the closest to the mean reported scores for all assessments. The purpose of community enrichment assessments is to determine which dimensions of community enrichment would most benefit from improvement. Based on your self-reported scores we would look at the dimensions which negatively deviate furthest from the mean reported scores and those dimensions are, community resilience and sense of belonging. When considering programming for your community consider programs that impact the dimensions of community resilience and sense of belonging.

The remaining data from the assessment is reported below. The data represents the findings from the categorical questions. In the future, the findings would be used to develop more complex community profiles. This data is conveyed by simple frequencies, just the total number of responses for each question. I will later develop categories for types of communities, which will help to determine more robust community enrichment assessments. Some of these questions are still useful for correlations and were developed from existing studies that returned significant findings.

Sense of Belonging Q1.2-1.5



Figure 5: Bar Graphs for Sense of Belonging

The four bar graphs above (Figure 5) represent the results from the remaining four questions from the first block “Sense of Belonging.” When asked about which group types have meeting places provided by local businesses? respondents reported highest for the categories, “volunteering = 22.9%” and “bible study groups =21.3%.” The lowest reported group was “women’s or men’s circles = 9.8%” and only four respondents provided an additional group in the other category. When respondents were asked if they perceptively felt there were enough activities for new members of the community to integrate, about half of all respondents reported, “It is somewhat easy to integrate because there are some things to do = 47.8%” When asked to what extent respondents believed their community capable of developing more job opportunities, a unimodal relationship was demonstrated in the data. “Capable = 26.1%” and “moderately capable = 30.4%” represent the peak then “Very capable = 21.7%” and “Not very capable = 21.7%” represent the lower responses, and no respondent reported “Not capable” When asked

about opportunities to access nature, most respondents reported either “Nature trail/hiking = 32.7%” or “local parks = 32.7%.”

Culture and Identity Q2.2-2.5



Figure 6: Bar Graphs for Culture and Identity

The four bar graphs above (Figure 6) represent the results from the remaining four questions from the second block “Culture and Identity.” When asked which of the following waste management operations were active in the respondent’s community, the highest response was “Recycling = 43.9%.” When asked to provide opportunities to share and exchange cultural ideas and practices, most either reported “culture fair festivals = 30%”, or Big Brother club/mentorship programs = 24.2%.” A smaller portion of respondents, reported having “Spaces for international students to share experiences = 9.1% and “Cultural practices classes = 15.2%.” When asked about activities within the community that invites outsiders to visit, most respondents reported “Entertainment events ex. Concerts, art shows = 35.9%,” or “Sporting events = 33.33%.” When asked if

the community has symbols and expressions of memberships such as local clothing, art, and architecture, most respondents reported “Features local artists in the community = 47.2%.” Only one participant reported “Other.”

Community Resilience Q3.2-3.5



Figure 7: Bar Graphs for Community Resilience

The four bar graphs above (Figure 7) represent the results from the remaining four questions from the third block “Community Resilience.” When asked, to the respondent’s knowledge, how often new local businesses are created in the community, most said “Multiple times a year = 45.5%.” Only one respondent “answered once a year”, only about 27% of respondents reported “Hardly ever” and “Never = 4.5%.” When asked about the current state of the respondent’s community, most reported on the neutral response “Maintaining the community = 45.5%.” About 32% reported developing communities, and about 23% reported communities requiring repair. When evaluating the efficient use of space by the community, just 12.1% reported having abandoned unused buildings but 21.2% reported remodeling or repurposing abandoned buildings for new

use. Just 10.1% of the respondents reported having no unused lots whereas 30.3% reported having unused lots. When asked about which local businesses are perceived to have the most success in the community most respondents reported, “Food and Drink = 40%”

Social Sustainability Q4.2-4.5



Figure 8: Bar Graphs for Social Sustainability

The four bar graphs above (Figure 8) represent the results from the remaining four questions from the fourth block “Social Sustainability.” When asked about effective communication between organizations in the community, most respondents answered, “Somewhat effective = 50%.” On the extreme values, only one respondent either reported “Very effective”, or “Very ineffective.” When asked about effective communication between organizations and members of the community respondents mirrored their responses from the previous question but one respondent changed “Neutral” to “Somewhat effective.” When evaluating the independence of the community about 41%

reported being independent, while 36% reported dependence. No respondents selected the “Very dependent category.” When asked which nationally recognized organizations have physical locations in the community, about 18% of respondents selected only one organization, about 77% selected two or more, and one respondent reported; “Unsure.”

Solidarity Q5.2-5.5

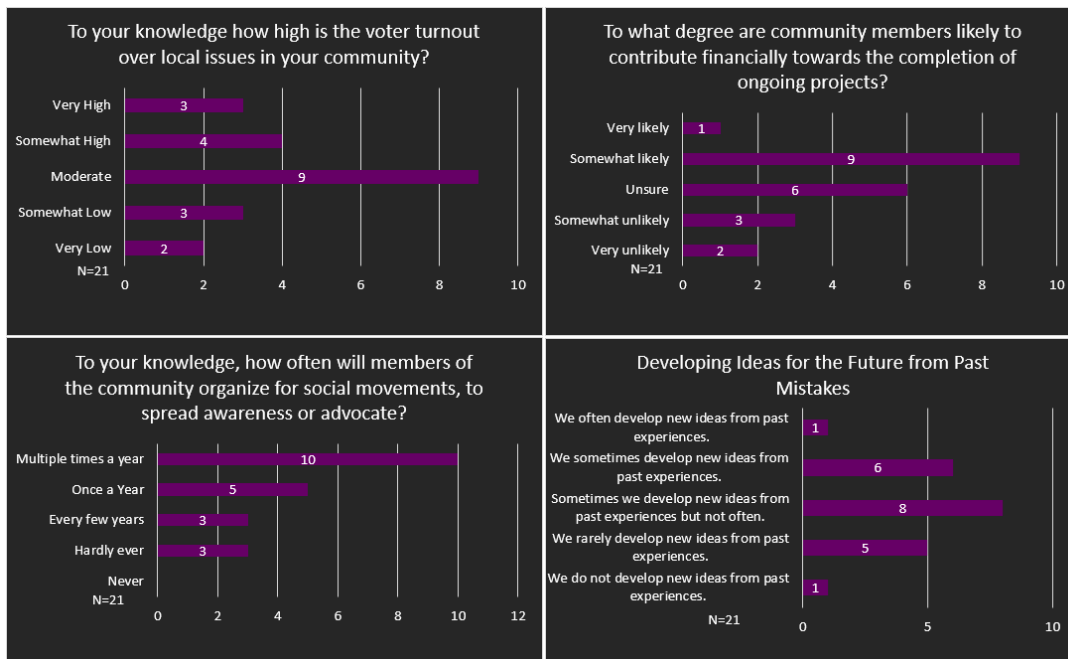


Figure 9: Bar Graphs for Solidarity

The four bar graphs above (Figure 9) represent the results from the remaining four questions from the fifth block “Solidarity.” When asked about voter turnout in the community most responded “Moderate = 43%.” The data is somewhat equally distributed, but moderate voter turnout is by far the highest response. When asked to what degree community members are likely to contribute financially to projects, about 45% reported “Very likely,” Somewhat likely = 42.9%.” About 23% of respondents believed it was unlikely that community members would contribute financially to projects in the community, “Somewhat unlikely = 14.3%,” and “Very unlikely = 9.5%.” When asked

how often members of community organizations for social movements, spread awareness or advocate. Most respondents answered, “Multiple times a year = 47.6%,” the data is then negatively skewed to “Hardly ever = 14.3%,” and no respondents answered, “Never.” When asking respondents how often ideas were developed from past mistakes a very normal distribution of data across responses was observed with most of the data 90% being centrally dispersed.

Most questions for the categorical questions included an “Other” option. If a graph did not include an “Other” category, then it was either because no respondents selected “Other” or the question was exhaustive without an “Other” answer option. There is a typo on 3.4 that went into the survey. The “Nonprofit organization involvement” category was auto-populated from a survey draft and should have been removed, that was an oversight, but 4 respondents selected the category. On question 3.5 the answers provided were in the open text, I coded the answers and came up with those categories. Hopefully, respondents did not think that 4.2 and 4.3 were the same question but assuming they understood both questions, surprisingly, the respondents believed the communication between organizations and the communication between organizations and the members of the community to be the same. I would want to know more about why respondents believe there is no difference and if communication between organizations is strong then can you just assume the communication between organizations and the community members is also strong? On question 4.5 I provided an “Other” category, but it was never used.

Practical Purposes for the Community Enrichment Assessment Work

The Community enrichment assessment work is explorative research which followed an originally composed theoretical framework. I designed the assessment so that a community professional could take it and I wanted the assessment to be a tool for capturing accurate representation for the social space of community. My theoretical and data driven goals split, and I grew less confident in the results of the assessment. Rather than continue, I chose to stop and present what I had collected. I am going to demonstrate how the data can be treated as preliminary data to form hypotheses for future studies. I am also going to share the feedback and compare two assessments which were completed from the same community. The feedback and the two assessments from the same community will help to explain my own justification for wanting to try a different model for the assessment. In the discussion section I will elaborate more on the idea of constructing an assessment which decreases variability in answers.

There are many ways to take the data and develop hypotheses for future studies. These results are significant for determining direction. I prepared a correlational analysis of the five-dimension scores, and I chose five variables from secondary data to correlate. The correlations will not be statistically significant for forming conclusions, but they provide some statistical context which is better than what I started with when writing questions for the community enrichment assessment. These correlations will give some indication of directional relationships which would help to write hypotheses for future studies. It is also possible to predict the model of best fit by looking at the residuals from

the residual plots. In the future, I would like to do a smaller study where I do some hypothesis testing with the questions included in the assessment. It would be possible to calculate the mean response of a question and then compare the means of one question to the mean of the dimension score. This can be useful for combing out irrelevant questions, but I have plans to do more validity testing like this soon. In that study, I plan to begin refining the results of this assessment and work towards a more finalized product. So, for just this section on developing hypotheses for future studies, the goal is to take some secondary data and compare secondary data to the mean community enrichment scores for each unique assessment. The most localized data I could attain for all assessments was county data. If it was possible to get more localized data, then the results of the Spearman rho test are likely to be more significant. In the contributions and limitations section, I will clarify more about the limitations of this analysis.

Six variables were selected from secondary data for correlational analysis. The variables included are, religious diversity score, mean travel time to work, access to exercise, persons in poverty, social associations, and a sixth variable risk factors, which are correlated to just the community resilience scores. Religious diversity comes from a data set that contains interviews with 459,822 Americans across all 50 states from 2013 to 2019 (PRRI 2021). A score of 1 represents a perfectly diverse religious population, where every religious group is of equal size, while a 0 would represent a population with no religious diversity and is represented by only one religion. Data for mean travel time to work was collected from the U.S. Census Bureau. The mean travel time to work is calculated in minutes. Access to exercise is calculated by the percentage of individuals from a county who live reasonably close to a location for physical activity. Locations for

physical activities include parks or recreational facilities (County Health Rankings 2022). Persons in poverty are calculated by the percentage of families whose total income falls below the threshold for poverty, and data was retrieved from the U.S. Census Bureau. Social associations are calculated by the number of membership associations per 10,000 population. The rates measure the number of events in a period typically one or more divided by the mean number of people at risk from that period (County Health Rankings 2022). The data on risk factors comes from the U.S. Census Bureau. Risk factors assess the percentage of vulnerable populations and include variables of income-to-poverty ratio, single or zero caregiver household, crowding, communication barrier, households with full-time, year-round employment, disability, no health insurance, age 65 +, no vehicle access, and no broadband internet access. Risk factor estimates are for the percentage of the population with 0 risk factors, 1-2 risk factors, and 3+ risk factors.

Dimensions	Spearman's rho	Religious diversity	Mean travel to work	Access to exercise	Persons in poverty	Social associations
Sense of Belonging	Correlation Coefficient	0.211	-0.273	0.199	-0.285	-0.284
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.335	0.207	0.363	0.188	0.188
	N	23	23	23	23	23
Culture and Identity	Correlation Coefficient	0.293	-0.181	0.331	0.01	0.097
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.186	0.42	0.132	0.965	0.667
	N	22	22	22	22	22
Community Resilience	Correlation Coefficient	-0.015	-0.147	-0.019	0.313	-0.16
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.948	0.524	0.934	0.168	0.488
	N	21	21	21	21	21
Social Sustainability	Correlation Coefficient	0.048	-0.15	0.145	0.159	-0.209
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.833	0.506	0.521	0.48	0.351
	N	22	22	22	22	22
Solidarity	Correlation Coefficient	0.152	-0.1	0.385	-0.168	-0.057
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.512	0.666	0.085	0.466	0.806
	N	21	21	21	21	21

Table 4: Community Enrichment Scores Correlated with Secondary Data

The table above (Table 4) demonstrates five dimensions of community enrichment and the mean scores for each assessment by dimension. I retrieved some secondary data from U.S. Census Bureau, the American Community Survey, and County Health and Rankings Roadmap. This is a demonstration of five somewhat nonrelated

variables and their correlation to the five dimensions. By nonrelated I mean that these variables were 1) not included in the assessment 2) the secondary data is county level, and the assessment data is local. I selected these five variables simply because I thought they would be interesting to correlate.

None of these correlations are significant at $p < .05$ but for preliminary testing getting a p -value $< .05$ is less relevant. The research question is just asking, "Is this worth investigating?" This study could be replicated using other secondary data. These correlations help determine new variables for community enrichment assessment. It is possible to get more significant results by localizing the county-level data. This can be achieved by including similar questions found from the secondary data for future community enrichment assessments. The next step would be to conduct hypothesis tests to see if a statistically significant relationship was held for the assessment. I would also suggest that this can be a technique for determining what variables might not be worth investigating. It's not worth investigating variables when their correlation is close to zero because there is almost no relationship. It's worth investigating when the correlation is .3 or higher because something can be revisited to improve the significance, like localizing the county data or increasing the sample size. The strength of the relationship will also likely become stronger with those modifications. It is also possible to indicate direction because a -.3 or .3 correlation can provide some confidence that either a positive or negative relationship ought to exist.

Just looking at the sig (2-tailed) nothing on the table returns a sig $< .05$. If alpha was assumed for .05 then none of the correlations to the secondary data retrieved here

would reliably return a significant result to reject a null hypothesis. Alpha is a level of significance that is determined to be the benchmark for interpreting significant results. Typically, an alpha of .05 is set, and so the interpretations here are made of non-significant findings because none of the p values returned $<.05$. This is stating that we must be at least 95% confident of a relationship otherwise we reject the results, and do not assume a relationship to exist. I am treating the results as preliminary findings and developing interpretations for the framing of hypotheses for future assessment work. Alternatively, the question from the secondary data could also be reframed to return better results. For instance, the question could be framed in a way that access to exercise could be more relatable for solidarity. A survey question for this could ask when you exercise are you more likely to exercise at home or do you prefer going out to exercise? The next question could ask why the respondent prefers exercising away from home. I would hypothesize a positive correlation between exercise and a longing for attachment. Individuals who go to community centers for recreation are more likely to form social bonds than at other recreational locations. There are many ways to begin interpreting this but for community enrichment assessment it would be best to find out specific locations which individuals use to exercise to bond with others, and this process is mechanization. Mechanization in statistical methods is a tool that allows us to write hypotheses for relationships that are often difficult to measure. With more data, a community enrichment assessor could determine the organizations in their community that offer access to exercise, but additionally positively impacts the dimension of community enrichment. If for instance, in a survey individuals said that they went to the community center to meet with people from the center rather than the local gyms, then we might begin to

hypothesize that something about the center fosters solidarity through exercise. This example is mechanized because it is a measurable phenomenon and we have indicated a way in which we can collect data for this type of study.

A list of potential variables worth hypothesizing for Sense of Belonging include, “Mean travel time to work $r = -.273$,” “Persons in poverty $r = -.285$,” “Social associations $r = -.284$,” The first two correlations seem to follow some logical pattern. When you commute long distances from home it would make sense that your sense of belonging would decrease. It would also seem logical for higher poverty rates to hurt sense of belonging. The social association’s correlations seem the least logical. Social associations calculate the number of associations per 10,000 population. A potential hypothesis is that it has to do with there being too many options for the social association. When the options are limited, then more people in the community belong to the same or similar groups, and sense of belonging increases. The relationship is likely to not be a linear one⁵ but either a quadratic or logarithmic one, because not having enough social association should also decrease sense of belonging.

The variables worth hypothesizing for culture and identity include “Religious diversity $r = .293$,” and “Access to exercise $r = .331$.” A positive correlation between religion and culture and identity is expected. I include measures on religious elements in the culture and identity block. Religion is often used as a way to describe culture, which adds to its correlation. The religious diversity score has been mechanized by determining

⁵ A less certain way of determining the model of best fit is to look at the formation of the residuals in the data plots. I have included the residual plots for this data in the appendix B. I would need more residual points to be more certain of any model fits.

the number of churches or religious practices in an area and finding the number of members from each. If all religious groups are about equal in size, then the religious diversity score is 1. The Spearman rho results is suggesting there could be a weak relationship when religious diversity scores are higher and positively impact the dimension of culture and identity. Like the social associations variable, I would want to pay attention to the residuals to determine if the model is either linear, quadratic, logarithmic or if a better model of fit exists. The second correlation is between access to exercises and culture and identity. The correlation is a stronger weak relationship, $r = .331$ with a $p = .132$. The variable access to exercise is the percentage of individuals who are considered to have access to parks and recreational facilities in a given area. If the county variable of access to exercise was framed in the culture and identity block for the assessment it is likely to return a positive correlation, without any additional changes. The variable could be reworked slightly to include more types of exercise and then later a hypothesis on which types of locations for exercise have a positive impact on culture and identity can be written. There are instances where exercise is cultural, dance, and music, as examples, would locations with cultural exercise programs contribute further towards a positive culture and identity score?

The Spearman rho test returned one perceivable variable to consider hypotheses for community resilience. The Spearman rho results would suggest that there could be a weak positive relationship for “poverty $r = .313$.” Communities with higher poverty rates are more frequently tested for finding solutions to resolve issues surrounding poverty. I would advise caution in constructing hypotheses around this relationship. It is helpful to know that communities can be less resilient when they are not accustomed to larger risk

factors, but it would be dangerous to assume that a community must be at risk to be resilient.

Dimension	Spearman's rho	0 Risk Factors	1-2 Risk Factors	3+ Risk factors
Community Resilience	Correlation Coefficient	-0.15	0.058	0.17
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.517	0.803	0.462
	N	21	21	21

Table 5: Community Resilience Score Correlated with Risk Factors

In addition, I wanted to test findings from existing studies which would suggest that communities with more risk factors are more resilient. The table above (Table 5) demonstrates the results of a Spearman rho test for community resilience and risk factors. The U.S. Census Bureau included the following risk factors to generate their risk factor scores, aged 65 and above: low-income household, single or no caregiver household, household communication barrier, employment status, disability status, physical crowding, lack of health insurance, respiratory disease, heart disease, and diabetes (U.S. Census 2022). These results are consistent with the literature on community resilience. There is a tendency for community resilience to be higher in areas that are challenged to be resilient. The Spearman rho test shows that when risk factors equal zero there is a very weak detected relationship as more of the population has 0 risk factors. When more of the population has 1-2 risk factors the relationship starts to completely flatten out. As more of the population has 3+ risk factors a very weak positive relationship is displayed. The challenge with writing hypotheses for community resilience should be to attain results that not only show what may improve resilience, but also when resilient actions improve conditions to decrease future risks.

The Spearman rho analysis returned no interesting correlations for social sustainability. The highest correlation for social sustainability was “social associations $r =$

-.209.” An interesting correlation is having some confidence that if retested a similar or more significant results could be returned. If you read this and felt stubborn enough to test the very weak negatively detected relationship between social associations and social sustainability, then, of course, you could. Other options could include investing time in one of the more significant results mentioned or even testing new variables of interest, and their correlation to the community enrichment scores. The purpose of the analysis is not to discourage potential research but to give some ounce of statistical confidence to invest the time to do any studies surrounding these dimensions of community enrichment.

Community Enrichment Assessment Decisions

One of the main reasons I chose to not expand the contact list to communities without community centers was that my theoretical goals and data driven goals split. My goals for the assessment were not appearing to align well with what I was trying to theoretically achieve. One of my research goals was to propose an inexpensive but effective alternative to a community needs assessment. I wanted data that was replicable so that in any community regardless of who took the assessment the answers would significantly match up. Burdge discussed the idea in his book that you could conduct community leader needs assessments. He wrote that uniform responses could be attained from standardized surveys and that leaders could be more knowledgeable for answering questions on complex issues required for making policies (Burdge 2004: 230). I wanted to test and see if I could write an assessment that could be taken relatively quickly, “15” minutes by a community leader and decrease the need for a large sample size.

I sent some invitations for the assessment to duplicate communities with different recipients, to test for variability, and in one community I received two assessments. I determined that the responses from that community varied too much for me to consider the results significant. On “Sense of Belonging” the first respondent self-reported a score of 1 while the second respondent self-reported 3. On “Culture and Identity” the first respondent self-reported a score of 2.5 while the second respondent reported 1.5. On “Community Resilience” the first respondent self-reported 3 and the second respondent reported 2.5, of their scores this score had the least variability. On “Social Sustainability” the first respondent self-reported a score of -1 and the second respondent self-reported a score of 2. On “Solidarity” the first respondent self-reported a score of 2 and the second respondent self-reported a score of 3.

I could have been rash in my decision-making, I could have sent out more assessments to duplicate communities as well as ones without community centers, and those could have been returned with less variability, but I was not willing to take the chance. Some of the feedback returned from the assessment showed me that assessment takers were also skeptical. When asked, “Were the questions in this evaluation difficult to answer? Please share your experience.” One respondent wrote plainly, “Somewhat difficult.” Another respondent added more clarity as to why it was difficult. “Some of them were difficult because different people have different perspectives about the same issues and community involvement (like the question about police being role models). Although these questions were framed to be factual, most of these would be answered differently based on each person's background and perspective of the community.” Another response further stresses context and perspective, adding their concern for

individuals who might take the assessment and have perceptively different awareness of the problems in their community. “Yes, it was hard to answer without context. Situations are specific to a community, so having a national survey is not easy. In our agency, none of the staff who serve our community can even afford to live in the area because it is so expensive. So, it is ironic that the ones providing the service cannot avail of the services themselves. There is a big racial divide as well. Despite it being a highly educated community, the majority are very conservative and don't understand their privilege.” I respected the feedback even though I only received some responses, and some were positive. These respondents wrote, “No. they were appropriate.” and “The questions were not difficult to answer.”

Before investing further in community enrichment assessments, I would want to first improve the standardization of these assessments. To do this I will need to improve the way data is collected to decrease variability. I need to develop guides which will help assessment takers to navigate the assessment questions. In the future I would not want to request assessment completion. Instead, I will accommodate representatives from their communities who would like community enrichment assessment work. I would be willing to work with any representatives from their communities who reach out to me. I would not limit this service just to communities with community centers. I will provide them with workshop material so that they can be trained to do these assessments, giving them added context, that was requested in the feedback from the first assessments sent. In addition, I am going to remove all the perspective-based questions. The new assessment will require community representatives to spend more time on it, but at the expense of limiting variability. My goal is to organize the data they will need to complete the

assessment so that it is easy to navigate. I will both collect and organize the data required for the assessment. The assessment will help to ensure that what they are looking for are good predictors for the intended outcomes of the five dimensions of community enrichment. The greatest challenge with this, will be to keep the time of the assessment short so that it is still convenient to complete. Over time I will build up a database of community enrichment assessment data which will be for open access.

Community Centers and Community Enrichment

The community center and community enrichment study was a web search of 500 carefully selected community centers with diverse programs that could positively impact dimensions of community enrichment in ways not limited to rental, recreation, or events. Most community centers are either rental, recreation, or event centers. This data shows that community centers are ambiguous. The categories for this study include community center programming, core functions, and community enrichment scores. Community enrichment scores were determined from the mission statement, goals, and programs advertised on the website of the community center. In total, close to ten thousand websites were visited for the completion of this study. From those search results, the ten centers from each state which perceptively appeared to impact community enrichment were included. Despite the exhaustive web search following the conditions laid out for gathering data, no state had ten or more community centers that perceptively impacted the dimensions of community enrichment.

From a study of 500 carefully sampled community centers, the table to the right (Table 6), 15 most frequently occurring core functions of community centers, with an “Other” category of 31. Of the community centers observed in this study, 49% were perceived as either recreational, rental, or both recreational and rental centers.

The highest reported core function of community centers is recreation 29.2%. The true population of community centers would represent a much higher percentage of recreational centers, rental,

and event centers. In total 108 community centers were identified as multipurpose centers. The multipurpose centers can offer any combination of the functions listed in the table, in addition to all functions included in the other category. Multipurpose centers offer two or more functions, but “recreation and rental,” and “rental and events” are categorized separately. The highest percent of community centers identified for impacting dimensions of community enrichment were multipurpose centers. By design multipurpose centers can offer functions that work in tandem for community enrichment. For instance, recreation by itself is not identified as impacting community enrichment, because it is so unidimensional, but a recreational cultural center could. If a community center is limited to one core function, then it is restricted to that function. I advocate for a core function of community centers which is multi-dimensional and less restrictive to its role. I elaborate further in the implications and limitations section.

Center Function	Frequency	Percent
Recreation	146	29.2%
Multipurpose	108	21.6%
Rental	66	13.2%
Recreation & rental	33	6.6%
Social services	29	5.8%
Religious services	22	4.4%
Events Center	17	3.4%
Youth services	14	2.8%
Ethnic Center	8	1.6%
Activities	7	1.4%
LGBTQ	6	1.2%
Rental & events	5	1.0%
Family services	3	0.6%
Office spaces	3	0.6%
Culture	2	0.4%
Other	31	6.2%
Total	500	100.0%

Table 6: Community Center Functions

The table to the right (Table 7) represents the 50 highest occurring programs of the 500 sampled community centers. Some of those 50 categories have been merged such as senior center and senior services. After merging programs with similarities, the table on the right demonstrates the remaining 44 programs. In total, 1107 programs were recorded in this study. Of those programs the most frequently reported programs included “rental” = 20.1%,” “fitness” = 18.8%,” “classes = 10.6%,” and “events = 10.5%,” These four programs make up 60% of the represented programs. The data here represents just the programs that are advertised through the center’s website. It is important to emphasize that more programs could be offered by the centers and are not advertised on their websites. The data would suggest that the population of community centers offers a

Program	Frequency	Percent
rental	223	20.1%
fitness	208	18.8%
classes	117	10.6%
events	116	10.5%
senior services	47	4.2%
volunteer	27	2.4%
youth services	26	2.3%
summer camp	25	2.3%
food pantry	24	2.2%
youth program	22	2.0%
volunteering	19	1.7%
meeting room	18	1.6%
afterschool program	17	1.5%
farmers market	16	1.4%
school program	14	1.3%
food assistance	13	1.2%
community garden	12	1.1%
teen program	12	1.1%
social services	10	0.9%
community events	10	0.9%
computer lab	9	0.8%
games room	8	0.7%
adult program	8	0.7%
special events	8	0.7%
youth team sports	8	0.7%
summer day camp	7	0.6%
summer program	7	0.6%
family services	7	0.6%
educational class	6	0.5%
family program	6	0.5%
office space non-profit	5	0.5%
art and culture	5	0.5%
food bank	5	0.5%
holiday events rental	4	0.4%
art & crafts	4	0.4%
free play	4	0.4%
character building	4	0.4%
multipurpose room	4	0.4%
core services	4	0.4%
musical expression	4	0.4%
thrift store	4	0.4%
social development	4	0.4%
health & wellness	3	0.3%
early childhood education	3	0.3%
Total	1107	100.0%

Table 7: Community Center Programs

wide array of programs, but most community centers can be contained to just those top four programs.

Community Center Community Enrichment Scores									
New York	0.85	Hawaii	0.4	Oregon	0.3	Arizona	0.15	North Dakota	0.1
Washington	0.65	Rhode Island	0.4	Florida	0.25	Arkansas	0.15	South Dakota	0.1
Wisconsin	0.65	Texas	0.4	Virginia	0.25	Colorado	0.15	West Virginia	0.1
Connecticut	0.55	Indiana	0.35	California	0.2	Georgia	0.15	Kansas	0.05
New Hampshire	0.55	Louisiana	0.35	Illinois	0.2	Idaho	0.15	Minnesota	0.05
South Carolina	0.55	Vermont	0.35	Maine	0.2	Iowa	0.15	New Mexico	0.05
Delaware	0.5	Alaska	0.3	Mississippi	0.2	Maryland	0.15	Oklahoma	0.05
Massachusetts	0.5	Michigan	0.3	Nebraska	0.2	Alabama	0.10	Missouri	0
New Jersey	0.5	Montana	0.3	Ohio	0.2	Kentucky	0.1	Tennessee	0
Pennsylvania	0.45	Nevada	0.3	Utah	0.2	North Carolina	0.1	Wyoming	0

Table 8: Community Center Enrichment Scores by State

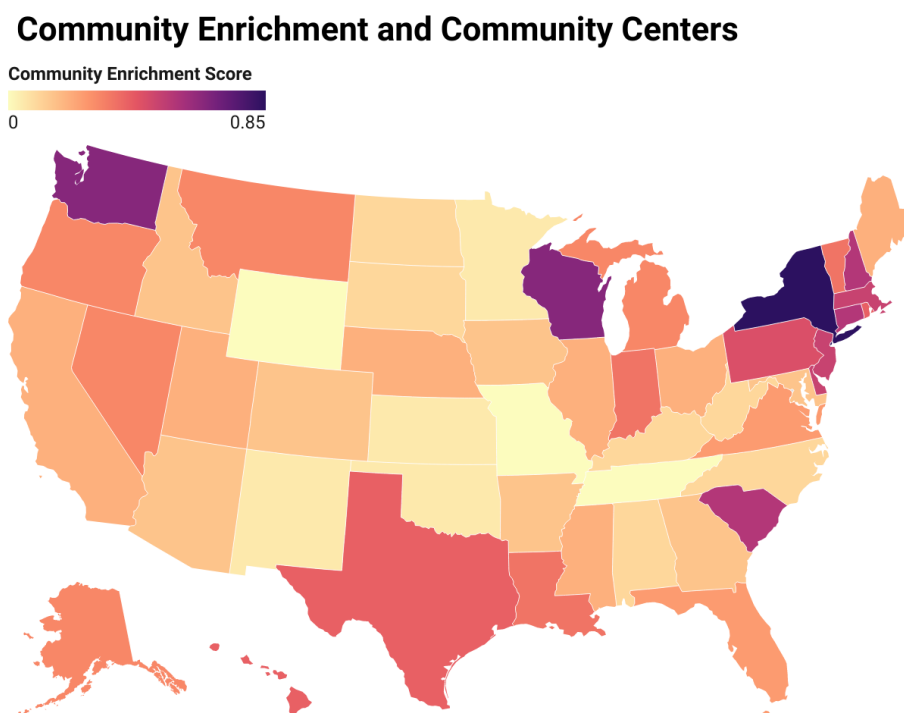


Figure 10: Community Enrichment and Community Centers

The map (Figure 10) and table (Table 8) above represent the scores from an exhaustive web search of community centers within the United States. A perfect score would be 1, which means that there are ten or more community centers in that state which appeared to impact at least two or more dimensions of community enrichment. I coded

the data so that “Yes impacts community enrichment = 1,” “Somewhat impacts community enrichment = .5,” and “Does not impact community enrichment = 0.” If the center was identified as impacting community enrichment, then two or more dimensions of community enrichment were perceptively impacted by the community center. If the center was identified as somewhat impacting community enrichment it was because one dimension of community enrichment was perceptively impacted by the community center. To determine if the center impacted dimensions of community enrichment, I considered the mission statement and the programs offered by the community center. I exhaustively scanned every search result in Google Maps, using “Community center in”, and “the state.” To calculate the score, I averaged the ten scores from each state. To determine whether the community center appeared to positively impact community enrichment I looked for community-focused programming. I excluded from the search, rental centers, recreational centers, and event centers. I only considered community centers to impact community enrichment when their mission statement, programs, and core functions, positioned them to make community impacts more holistically. Centers that do impact community enrichment appear to target at least two or more dimensions of community enrichment based on what is advertised through their websites.

From 500 community centers in a selective process, 65 were determined to impact community enrichment, 141 were determined to somewhat impact community enrichment, and 294 did not impact community enrichment. In three states, Missouri, Tennessee, and Wyoming, I was not able to find community centers that perceptively impacted community enrichment. In the state of Tennessee, most community centers are run by Parks and Recreation and are recreational centers. In my search, I was unable to

find ten community centers that impacted community enrichment for any single state. The highest community enrichment score I found belonged to New York with .85. The score for New York contained 7 community centers which impacted community enrichment and 3 which somewhat impacted community enrichment. Consistent with the literature and history of community centers, the earliest settlement states on the East coast, on average had higher community enrichment scores. The literature suggests this occurred because the areas with higher rates of immigration prioritized the settlement houses which later became community centers. Hypothesis testing on Immigration and community enrichment scores could be a worthwhile study. I would hypothesize that states with higher community enrichment scores are positively impacted by ethnic diversity. I would also hypothesize that states with lower community enrichment scores are negatively impacted by having more nonmetro areas, an indication of being a rural state.

Discussion

This research was an attempt at operationalizing community enrichment. The major contribution of this research is the theoretical work which organizes measurable concepts for community enrichment. I began this research during a time when community centers around the country began to shut their doors because they either had no funding or were abandoned. When I conducted the community center thematic analysis during the year 2021, I read that many of the centers I had looked for had permanently shut down during the Covid pandemic. My first research question in higher education was, why my local university town did not have a community center? I identified barriers and alternative solutions that made it seem as though community centers were maybe nothing more than trophies. Having a strong connection to community centers myself, growing up, I knew there was probably more, and it was not being addressed. I had listened to the key informants in my interviews, as well as others in academics tell me about community enrichment, but they would always use it ambiguously. It intrigued me to imagine what community enrichment could look like if we could somehow measure it. I wanted to know if we could include community enrichment in scientific research, and if community centers were responsible for taking accountability for community enrichment, would more people be invested in community centers?

There were many learning curves associated with this research. The most challenging aspect of the research was to become proficient with operationalism. Because operationalization is a large subbranch of philosophical sciences there is a large spectrum

of skills in its association. Operationalism is used in social sciences, but the methods which can be used to bring a concept to measurability are vast. Today operationalism is considered an interdisciplinary subbranch that various disciplines borrow from, and to be considered good at it you need to have a background in various interdisciplinary skills. What was most frustrating was developing ideas for community enrichment, but then having to refine, edit, and delete ideas repeatedly. This happened frequently because I would either make new methodological and theoretical discoveries or because I would develop a stronger familiarity with stats both for my mathematical background and for interpretations of the data. Having gone through the process certain realizations made it possible to begin operationalizing community enrichment. When forming these realizations, it was often because of either a theoretical or a statistical finding, or a marriage of the two, which provided clarity toward the goal of operationalizing community enrichment.

In recognizing these pivotal realizations for community enrichment, I would also draw some attention to the future. Having worked on the research long enough I have a clear idea of where community enrichment is headed and where it could go, given ideal circumstances. I will address my ongoing commitments to this research and identify potential outcomes for it. For the social sustainability of this work, all its contents will be openly published. It is my commitment to continue working on community enrichment as a system of assessment and evaluation for a long time. I plan to open the research and invite a small group of volunteer researchers to work on this with me. We will be offering free assessments using this framework of community enrichment and we will freely publish that data.

Theoretical importance

In this research, I made small strides away from purely perspective-based questions and leaned toward more of the infrastructural questions of the community. The community enrichment framework centers on the phenomenon of social space. Measures of community enrichment are interpreted in the evaluation as a process of observing the utilization of social space manifested by the people who inhabit the community. In the past, more studies through community would focus on the perspectives of individuals within but would focus less on their constructions. I built off the framework of sociological valuation to join sociological concepts and interpret reliable measures. By utilizing those operationalized concepts, I further contribute to the theoretical body of research by showcasing new areas in which those concepts can be used for evaluation practices.

I borrow interpretations of social space from the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre (Lefebvre 1991). I contain community within the walls of the phenomenon of social space. My contribution to the understanding of social space is that I focus on one of its types, the community. By identifying the community as a social space, I focused on elements that would help to better understand it as a phenomenon. Lefebvre understood social space as a product of society. Lefebvre connected social space to material dialecticism, and through material dialecticism, we can speculate that the community will forever grow adapt and change. The relationship is further complicated because there are social spaces within the community that also undergo change.

One dialectic of social space that was strongly conveyed through this research was that for community centers to survive they would need to catch up to a data-driven world. Over time there has been a greater need for data literacy in the U.S. population. Nonprofit businesses are reliant on grant funding, which is often guarded by questions that ask about the impact, and contributions of the organization. To prove the impact of the organizations the claims should typically be defended with data. The relationship between organizations and data will have lasting effects on the greater community. It puts pressure on community to be operationalized and heavily invested in. Having more data on the community will provide more chances for the organizations within to have a local source for data. There will always be a need for private research but, communities must share data when the value of data is rising exponentially. My point is that free data should be provided for organizations within communities. Additionally, this should not damage business for private researchers, it should only help smaller organizations to find more grant funding opportunities. It is comparable to how communities are now beginning to offer free Wi-Fi, realizing it can be an essential need.

Dimensions of community enrichment were in part chosen for their sustained relevance through dialectic changes in the community. I was partially concerned that more people were less invested in the community because there were new dialectics that developed new reliances, decreasing reliance on the community. Robert Putnam in *Bowling Alone* speculated television was a major factor that decreased community involvement. (Putnam 2000) I added that there are online communities that could offer more to individuals than their immediate physical communities. I did not go in-depth or touch on online social spaces, but they exist and would work in similar ways to how I

describe social space for the community in this research. You can certainly get lost in some online communities; you can invest entire days in front of a computer. You could play the same online game with friends and a community could exist around the game played by the friends. The social space could be the game but could also be the online chat groups you use, for example, Discord. I know people who have met members of their online community, one person even got their teeth fixed for free by a dentist who was in the online community. There will be individuals who feel that their needs are being more greatly satisfied by their online communities than by their immediate physical communities.

If fewer people are invested in their physical communities today, then it is important to make the realization that any dimension of community enrichment must be relevant regardless of dialectic changes within community. The dimensions I chose could be compared to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The difference is that the five dimensions are the needs of the social space i.e. community. I take on a view of organicism in my interpretation of the needs of social space. I would not emphasize the view greatly otherwise I would risk biological fallacies. A biological fallacy occurs when overreaching assumptions are made of human phenomenon and related to biological factors. Community is not a living breathing human, but you can speculate healthy vs unhealthy communities.

We need to consider the health of our community in a similar way to how we consider the health of individuals. I don't want this idea to be confused with community health science, which focuses on the health of individuals, and of community. I still

emphasize the aspect of the social space of community. We should be asking what effect drastic innovation has on the state of the community and whether those innovations have positive or negative impacts on the state of the social space of the community. Later we can translate if the impacts to social space are having significant impacts on the individuals within. There are signs which would indicate whether communities are thriving or struggling. Dimensions of community enrichment are meant to help indicate the state of the community and later the type of community. I would like to conduct a study in the future where I can identify the communities which score high in community enrichment to then see if more members are invested in the community when community enrichment scores are higher. This could easily be done, if in community needs assessments there are questions on community involvement. I would care most about variables on volunteering, accessing local resources, club involvement, shopping locally, etc. I would hypothesize that healthy communities, which are high on community enrichment scores have more invested members.

I found it important to draw inspiration from classical sociology and pay homage in the literature review. The founders helped to identify and pave the way for the discipline, and I wanted to work within those boundaries. The realization I made was that it can be too constraining to limit ideas from any one classical framework of Sociology. I proposed community enrichment as a body of theoretical ideas which should belong to the emerging framework of sociological valuation. Community enrichment evaluation in the context I frame for this research should be recognized as a process of assessment and evaluation for the improvement of community as a sociological tool and organized within the framework of sociological valuation. Containing the community enrichment work to

the theoretical framework of sociological valuation will help to ensure that it is appropriately received as tool for evaluation and a body of sociologically theoretical ideas. I have seen the priority to organize work into one classical sociological framework in modern sociological theory, and I can understand the purpose of doing so, but felt in this work it was most appropriate to identify an emerging framework and defend the placement of this work within. I developed community enrichment as body of theoretical ideas that would work for evaluation practices, further growing the work of sociologists in evaluation work and more specifically, community evaluation work.

The theoretical work which went into community enrichment has helped to produce five dimensions that organize variables to measure and determine community enrichment. These dimensions are significant because of how they tie into the framework of community enrichment. 1) These dimensions help to address the community as a phenomenon of social space. 2) These dimensions help to account for dialectic adaptations to the community and adopt some organicism to consider the state of the community as healthy or unhealthy. 3) These dimensions are well used in the social sciences and community enrichment evaluation can belong to the framework of sociological valuation.

Significance for Evaluation Practices

The process of reading and working through theoretical literature to design questions for assessments is slow and tedious. The method of triangulation helps to provide some confidence that the variables within the dimensions would act as a baseline to examine the outcome of community enrichment. There is just no way to know to what

degree the questions being asked are accurately capturing the outcome. There was not enough literature on community enrichment and its relationship to these five dimensions to borrow exact questions. Instead, I had to draw influence, write questions, and then wait to see what the data would indicate. I populated some data using the community enrichment assessments, and that data provides a reference point to move away from the theoretical into the statistical domain.

It will become easier to refine and reliably work with these dimensions as more data is populated around each and its place in community enrichment. Each dimension can be uniquely studied and correlated to community enrichment; they do not need to be studied collectively. This can help to develop more precise measures for each dimension. The methods conveyed in this study should not be completely replicated, because changes to the methodological approach will help to grow and expand the framework of community enrichment. Moving forward I would advise caution when considering removing or adding dimensions of community enrichment. Instead, I would advise limiting methods to the utilization of the five dimensions and focusing more on the variables which should or should not be included within each dimension. The theory provides enough certainty that these dimensions are justifiably placed, but the variables should be determined by the supporting data.

An important realization for the statistical advancements of community enrichment was that the assessment model was not ready for evaluation practices. I wanted to build a reliable model which could be an affordable alternative to community needs assessments but also reflected the theory. In its current state the assessment

neglects to target the social space of community which became an integral piece of the study. To improve the reliability of results I would want to move forward with an assessment model that relies on guides to grow proficient community enrichment assessment takers. If I offer guides, then I can tailor better questions and decrease the variability in responses. Well-written assessments with well guided assessment takers will help to produce the data that will pave the way for evaluation practices. I plan to conduct more community enrichment assessments after restructuring them to more accurately reflect the theoretical goals. When I do, I will devote more time to the improvement of community enrichment assessments over the course of two-year cycles. The current community enrichment framework can be used to determine which dimensions of community enrichment organizations perceptively impact. However, with the right community enrichment assessment model it will also become possible to determine the impact an organization has on the enrichment of their community. In addition, community needs assessments could include questions for individuals of the community to see if they credit specific organizations for impacting any dimension of community enrichment. This would further increase the reliability to determine the impact of organizations towards the enrichment of their community.

I mention that there is an increasing demand for organizations to become data literate for the sake of attaining grant funding. Community enrichment assessments would offer accessible data that would be relevant for small businesses and small organization needs. I also made the connection that community centers rely on creative, and multidimensional programming to achieve their efforts. I identified the issue further in the thematic analysis of community centers where I addressed that most of the

community centers which I perceived to impact community enrichment, were multipurpose centers. It can help to attain grant funding when an organization has a clear mission statement that identifies an even clearer area of a particular investment, but community centers have often been expected to fill cracks in their communities. To have a holistic impact on community enrichment it becomes vital to utilize a creative combination of programs and ideas, it cannot be unidimensional. While there are community centers that have creative, and brilliant programming, there could be more of them, if there was a better system to evaluate the impact of those programs. Multipurpose community centers with many functions can contain the diversity of their programs to the primary function of community enrichment, which is multidimensional. For the sake of evaluation practices, a program would not be required to impact all dimensions of community enrichment. They could instead identify the weaker points to then focus their resources. This allows an opportunity to identify gaps and then provides an opportunity for community centers and community-based programs to propose focused solutions. Most importantly, if utilized by grant funders would help to encourage more creative solutions for programming by community-based organizations and community centers.

In the early stages of research, it was difficult to come up with relevant hypotheses for community enrichment. It is now problematic because the list of potentially testable hypotheses is seemingly limitless. At the start of the research a greater emphasis was placed on research questions, reviewing the literature, and logically reasoning interesting areas of community enrichment to invest time in. The research has moved past the stage of purely focused research questions to where hypothesis testing can truly begin. Realizing the option to forgo hypothesis testing was important because it

allowed space to step back and ensure that everything up to hypothesis testing was ready. There can now be any number of studies that could begin hypothesis testing utilizing the framework of community enrichment.

For future studies on community enrichment, I plan to extensively practice methods of, internal and external validity testing. Through repeated studies, I will conduct analyses to determine whether changes to the assessment improved the model. Once I make the appropriate changes to the assessment, I can begin to collect data over time. The greatest statistical realization I made with this research is that data never has to be collected all at once. The most probable course of action is that every two years or so I will collect data on community enrichment assessments and then at the end of every data collection cycle I will further improve and refine questions, through internal and external validity testing.

The statistical work which went into this research has helped to pave the way for improved statistical methods for community enrichment. The findings from this research will help draw attention to community centers and hopefully grow interest in the potential of community enrichment. The statistical realizations I mentioned which to me seemed helpful for improving community enrichment included: 1) Realizing the need to address what community centers did to suggest that community enrichment evaluation could help further determine their success. 2) Needing to realize the areas which could be approached scientifically and recognize the areas that would need to be resolved in future research, such as hypothesis testing. 3) Realizing that data could be collected more than once and methods for collecting data could be improved for each new collection cycle.

Conclusion

In this body of research, the goal was to explore community enrichment and its operationalization. Community enrichment is proposed as a unique way to measure and evaluate the functions and improvements of community as a social space. Community enrichment additionally helps to assess and better understand the state of the community, organizing needs of the community in five unique dimensions, sense of belonging, solidarity, community resilience, social sustainability, and culture and identity. In this research, community centers are identified as key stakeholders for community enrichment studies. The relationship between community enrichment and community centers is illustrated within the research. A combination of thematic, literature analysis, and pilot assessment work, helped to approach the research questions and make progress toward the operationalization of community enrichment

Responding to research questions

I considered five research questions to be the most integral questions for the study. Four of the five research questions were answered, and the fifth question was partially responded to. After refining the assessment and making necessary adjustments to the community enrichment assessment model, then it will be possible to resume with the fifth research question. When I began the research, I had asked my research questions in reverse order. When I started, I wanted to know the relationship between the outcomes of community-related programs and community enrichment. I ended up working backwards, step by step until I figured out the distance between what I wanted to achieve and what was realistically achievable. To get to the fifth research question I had to

address at least four other research questions, and that is what I was able to accomplish in this research. To minimize confusion, I am responding to the research questions in the order they should be addressed, rather than the order in which I asked them.

The first question which had to be asked was, “What are community centers, and what do they do?” I address this question in two parts, through the community center history in the lit review, and the thematic analysis of community centers. In the history of community centers, I pay homage to some buildings in history which are likened to community centers, but then indicate that the modern understanding of the community center came from the United States. Community centers manifested from the combination of social centers and settlement houses. In 1916 the National Community Center Association was established, and between 1918-19 there were community centers in 107 cities (Smith 2002). Recognizing that the community center has assumed many forms, and accepted a vast array of responsibilities, I ran a thematic analysis to determine the extent to which community centers operated. I recorded from a carefully sampled selection of 500 community centers with diverse programming over 1107 programs and services. Despite carefully selecting centers that were not exclusively rental or recreational, most of the programs and services recorded were either rental or fitness, related 38.9%. When considering the core functions of these 500 centers, 57.4% of community centers primarily service rental or recreation needs. Of the 500 community centers, 21.6% were identified as multipurpose centers which offer two or more functions and not just related to recreation and rental. Additionally, I addressed which community centers perceptively impacted community enrichment.

To answer the second research question, I indicated ways to operationalize and build dimensions of community enrichment. The theoretical understanding of those dimensions was used to perceptively determine the influence of community centers on community enrichment. This was analyzed through the programs, core function, and mission statement of the community center. There are additional intersectional findings that have not yet been reported for this research, which specify whether the center perceptively impacted community enrichment and what its core function was. I may do more of this intersectional work in future studies, when considering the impact of community centers on two or more dimensions of community enrichment. From 500 community centers in a selective process, only 65 were determined to impact community enrichment, 141 were determined to somewhat impact community enrichment, and 294 did not impact community enrichment. Results would suggest that most community centers are rental or fitness centers however, there are community centers that are neither rental nor fitness centers and were perceptively made to impact community enrichment.

Operationalizing community enrichment was the primary purpose of this research, and in the beginning, my questions about community enrichment were purely theoretical. When considering the operationalization of community enrichment I asked, “What do we currently know which would allow us to operationalize community enrichment?” I reviewed some literature on the use of community enrichment in past studies but was unable to find research that had a working operationalized framework for community enrichment. I determined that it was necessary to construct an original framework. My approach to the research question was to look for literature that would help to address the question in parts. I knew that to operationalize community enrichment I would likely

need to combine evaluation methods and propose original measurements for community enrichment. I had to read extensively to get a sense of what I was hoping to achieve. I made it my goal to make this research question relevant in every class I took for my graduate program. I even selected classes on the basis that they would help me to address the question. This is an area of the research which could be consistently improved over time. I found direction and indicated methods to operationalize community enrichment but employing best practices for its operationalization will be a never-ending process.

Once I began to reach the familiarity I sought with research methods, I started reading literature on several concepts. I was asking, “What sociological concepts exist which might help to explain community enrichment?” Before I began to answer the question, I already had some direction because of key informant interviews from the research I did on the Three Reliances. Dimensions selected for community enrichment were either said to me in interviews or were written about in sociological theory. It was important to me to limit dimensions of community enrichment to sociological concepts which were well explored but additionally were well used by community leaders. If something I read in sociological theory was also being conversed about by invested community leaders, then I considered that a dimension worth exploring. I addressed that a multidimensional model was the first step in operationalizing community enrichment and that any combination of dimensions had to work to exhaustively encompass what community enrichment should entail. I conducted a literature review of each of the five dimensions of community enrichment. I familiarized myself with existing studies using those concepts and developed questions for a community enrichment assessment. I drew inspiration for the construction of assessment and evaluation design from the sociology of

valuation. I was able to address obstacles and find answers to problems by reading Rabel Burdge's work on social impact assessment (Burdge 2004). Social impact assessment acted as a guiding light because it most closely aligned with my intentions for community enrichment work. Some additional sociological concepts, such as social space and to a lesser extent my proposed concept of socio-geographical settings, helped to further parameterize the proposed framework of community enrichment.

The last question I was able to truly address in this research was, "How might we assess a community so that we can later evaluate the community for the effect of community enrichment?" Discovering the concept of social space was an indispensable realization for answering this question. I allowed social space to act as a major parameter for community enrichment assessment. I moved away from community-based questions which were typically perspective oriented. I began to think more about questions that account for the community as a social space. I developed the concept of socio-geographical settings. I organize larger bodies of social space, and their characteristics, both naturally as well as being influenced by human constructs to start organizing diverse communities categorically. I currently have some data which was gathered from pilot research on a community enrichment assessment. I can now distinguish some categories from this data, and I can begin to assess communities not only on a multidimensional framework but additionally by the type of community they are best organized as. I would go much deeper than simply identifying the community as being either rural or urbanized, which has been a predominant and mundane way of organizing communities in past studies. Going even further, this means that it will be possible to assess the strengths of communities while also accounting for their diverse assets, and not limiting a golden

standard community simply by its size or funding. I further addressed in the discussion section that every two years I can adjust the community enrichment assessment. I can assess and evaluate communities on a two-year cycle and determine impacts on community enrichment. I learned from the pilot study on community enrichment assessment that the best course of action is to train others to conduct community enrichment assessments. The number of assessments performed over a two-year cycle is then dependent on the investment of representative from communities to practice these assessments.

I was able to partially address the fifth question and initially, it was the first question I had asked when I began thinking about community enrichment. I asked, “What do we need to reach a point where we can measure the impact of community programs, such as community centers, on community enrichment in the community?” When I began, I wanted to propose an idea where local businesses integrated an operationalized framework of community enrichment and transcended the normal expectations for local businesses. I imagined community centers overseeing the process of assessing the local businesses for their efforts to run their businesses and address community needs. I thought of the community center as an acting resource for maintaining and ensuring high-quality programs for local businesses.

This way of thinking about community enrichment was purely hypothetical. I spent far too long fantasizing about what this would look like when there was no foundation for community enrichment. To even get at the fifth question, community enrichment must become well-established nationally. I can imagine a scenario where

communities take up this research and draw inspiration from it to try and achieve this, but I would not advise it. I do not think it would be wise to assess programs and determine their funding through this current stage of the community enrichment assessment work. I think it would be wise to do so only after the model has been refined and accounts for the points learned from this research. This research is now on a quest for investment. As more become invested in its growth, more opportunities will be presented to utilize and practice it. Before a serious approach is taken to assess and monitor outcomes of community-based programs and community enrichment, community needs assessments will also need to be reworked to better account for community enrichment. Therefore, I would currently limit the functionality of community enrichment assessment to make conclusions for the community, but not to the effect of a program within a community and its impact on community enrichment.

Research Implications

The product of this research is a stage one operationalized framework of community enrichment. This research closes some doors but opens many more. This is a declaration and a gauntlet toss for more serious research in the operationalization of community enrichment. The days are long gone in which we should cope with infinite possible interpretations of community enrichment. This body of research sought to address universal needs, components of a community that can be observed anywhere.

Much of this work is purely organizational but necessary for the first steps toward operationalization. I have organized community enrichment into a five-dimensional framework, which works well to exhaustively organize what variables of interest may

come out of conversations surrounding community. This research will help to eliminate some confusion surrounding community and can help to guide more focused conversations of community and community enrichment. I ran a thematic analysis of community centers to take account of the centers which perceptively impacted community enrichment. By running the thematic analysis, I was able to organize the centers by their functions and programs and deliver a clearer understanding of what those centers did, and if any were working towards community enrichment.

For more practical services, this research on community enrichment will be used for assessment and evaluation practices. Data from this research will be used to further develop and refine the framework of community enrichment before the resumption of data collection. The data from this research will be used to conduct internal and external validity testing for developing and improving questions for the assessment. The work in this research will make it possible for other researchers to become more easily invested. By providing reference points and pilot study data, more rigorous hypothesis testing can begin, and will be more appealing for anyone considering operationalized community measures.

Limitations

Some notable limitations prevented the study from progressing beyond a pilot study. In many ways it seems perceptively impossible that this work could have been anything more than exploratory. I believe a student needed to invest their time in this research and I would even go as far as to argue that this was more optimal than having a large research team conduct this research. I have seen in the literature examples for when

programs and ideas are heavily invested in, but because there was a lack of preparation, those investments end up failing and then they get abandoned and labeled as failed projects. I feel better knowing that I got to be the one to struggle through these learning curves and eliminate the potential for failure in the future with community enrichment research. However, some limitations prevented me from being able to use the best research practices. Those limitations include lack of funding, credibility, time constraints, and pandemic implications.

This research was unfunded and performed as a labor of love. If this research had received funding, then I would have been able to access private databank information. There is valuable information on community centers which includes all of the centers registered as nonprofit tax-exempt organizations. If the research had been funded then I would have additionally sent a physical copy of the assessment through the mail, which would have increased the number of assessments completed. I never considered the lack of funding to be a major limitation because community enrichment is relatively cheap research to conduct. In the future, I will need to invest in SEO software. SEO stands for search engine optimization. This software will help to speed up thematic analysis and decrease some of the manual labor. This software will help to go through relevant literature for community enrichment and later sort academic publications for index work. Eventually, it will become necessary to invest in software to speed up the thematic analysis process, but early on it was not necessary.

I had some credibility when I began this research, but not enough for best research practices. It somewhat helped my credibility to include the University of Nevada

email signature for the cover letters sent for the assessment. However, I had no way to ensure that my emails went through to the community centers I contacted. I know that many of the emails I sent were firewalled, but I cannot confidently report how many. I have worked on similar assessments employed through research institutions and typically these types of assessments are required to be completed by the state. I had no authority to this degree, and it would make sense if community center directors were hesitant to complete the assessment. In the future, I will develop more credibility over time as I achieve results with this assessment work. I also believe that the credibility of this research will naturally improve once this thesis is published.

The time to complete all phases of research was limited to two years, which is the length of the graduate program. Because of the time frame, it meant that parts of the study had to be prioritized, while other parts were neglected, for the sake of completion. I also firmly believe that if I had been representing an organization that was commissioned to operationalize community enrichment, then I might have had more tools and resources, to both gather contacts and acquire responses for the assessments. I frequently had to make difficult decisions regarding what I could realistically learn and adapt to the thesis over the course of my two-year program. I wanted a stronger mathematical background and to do more rigorous hypothesis testing but decided to at least forgo the hypothesis testing. I recognize that best practices for community enrichment research require invested researchers with diverse backgrounds. While I will continue to strengthen my mathematical background, I would also prefer to spend my time on more of the theoretical components of community enrichment. For best practices, I would organize tasks and work with a research team.

Covid restrictions and consequences of the pandemic may have had somewhat of a drastic impact on the number of centers that may have been included in the study. It would be difficult to find a reliable statistic that proves how many community centers shut down permanently, or temporarily due to Covid. I can, however, reliably convey that in almost every state there could have been at least one community center that would have perceptively impacted community enrichment but shut down during the Covid pandemic. If community enrichment had been operationalized sooner and recognized nationally, then I firmly believe these centers would not have closed. I believe I may have been able to include at least a hundred more centers in the contact list and thematic analysis which impacted community enrichment if I had been able to do the study before Covid.

Plans for Community Enrichment

The operationalization of community enrichment will be further improved. Updates and improvements to community enrichment will be found at besserpublishing.com. I will be seeking and inviting collaboration on this research. I will offer data on community enrichment assessment for free public use on the website but will also accept commissions for assessments in requested communities. Donations will help to fund research and bring on additional help. Over time I will develop workshops and guides to help others to become easily involved in community enrichment assessment work. My goal is to finish developing these guides and workshops over the next two years and in addition, have completed the first working assessment for community enrichment by trained assessment takers. All of this will be ready in the year 2024. In addition, over those two years, I will do a lot of cleanup work. I will have organized all

the data from this research onto the website. I made plans to clean up the references for this work and make research in this area more accessible. I want to create an open access working index of studies that can correlate to community enrichment. I will continue to develop research questions and post potential hypotheses to help progress community enrichment studies. I do not think I will ever see it in my lifetime, but I hope that at some point this body of research will become common knowledge. Reaching a point where community programs can be evaluated for community enrichment would be the long-term goal and, seeing positions open in community centers for community enrichment evaluators would be the dream fulfilled.

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Appendix A

Assessment questions

Reformatted to fit better in the appendix

Q1.1 How true are the following statements? Options: Definitely True, Somewhat True, Unsure, Somewhat Untrue, Definitely Untrue.

There are plenty of leadership opportunities for members in my community. (1)

The youth are encouraged to share ideas in the community and have a space to do so. (2)

The elderly are an integral part of our community. (3)

Community members are aware that there is an LGBTQ group in the community. (4)

There is affordable housing in this community. (5)

Q1.2 Which of the following groups have meeting places provided by local businesses in your community? (Please select all that apply)

- Bible study groups
- Parent groups
- Women's or Men's circles
- Activist groups
- Community involvement groups (such as volunteering)
- Other _____
- Unsure

Q1.3 From your perspective, are there enough activities for new members of the community to easily integrate? (Please select the statement that best applies to your community).

- It is easy to integrate because there are plenty of things to do.
- It is somewhat easy to integrate because there are some things to do.
- It is neither difficult nor easy to integrate.
- It is somewhat difficult to integrate because there are limited things to do.
- It is difficult to integrate because there is not much to do.

Q1.4 To what extent do you think this community is capable of developing more job opportunities?

- Very capable
- Capable
- Moderately capable
- Not very capable
- Not capable

Q1.5 In what ways are members of your community able to, conveniently access nature (Please select all that apply)

- Nearby nature reserves
- Local parks
- Nature trails/ hiking
- Botanical gardens
- Other _____
- Unsure

Q2.1 How true are the following statements? Options: Definitely True, Somewhat True, Unsure, Somewhat Untrue, Definitely Untrue.

Our community has a well-attended farmers market. (1)

We offer spaces for members of this community to celebrate a wide spectrum of cultures. (2)

Volunteering is popular in this community. (3)

There are long-standing cultures that are prevalent in this community. (4)

This community values and supports activism. (5)

Q2.2 Which of the following waste management operations are active in your community? (Please select all that apply)

- Recycling
- Composting
- Waste-to-energy incineration
- Reduced waste plans (Such as banning plastic bags at the grocery store)
- Other _____
- Unsure

Q2.3 Are there any programs/opportunities for members of the community to exchange cultural ideas and practices? (Please select all that apply)

- Big Brother Club/Mentorship programs
- Culture fair festivals
- Cultural practices classes
- Spaces for International students to share experiences.
- Other _____
- Unsure

Q2.4 To your knowledge, which of the following types of activities exist in your community, which invite outsiders to visit the community? (Please select all that apply)

- Workshops ex: Conventions, Trade skill workshops
- Sporting events. ex: University sports, host local competitive events
- Entertainment events. ex concerts, art shows
- Other _____
- Unsure

Q2.5 This community has symbols and expressions of membership such as: local clothing, art, and architecture. (Please select all that apply)

- We have local tailors/clothing.

- We feature local artists in the community.
- We have infrastructure that is reminiscent of this community.
- We display various cultures of the community.
- Other _____
- Unsure

Q3.1 How true are the following statements? Options: Definitely True, Somewhat True, Unsure, Somewhat Untrue, Definitely Untrue.

In case of a family emergency, the community can provide the resources to help the family bounce back. (1)

In my community, we responded to Covid-19 well. (2)

We have plenty of operating food banks in the community. (3)

This community is supportive of local businesses. (4)

There are no employment opportunities for young people in our community. (5)

Q3.2 To your knowledge, how often are new local businesses started, in your community?

- Never
- Hardly Ever
- Every few years
- Once a year
- Multiple times a year

Q3.3 From your perspective, which best represents the current state of your community?

- Rapidly developing
- Developing at a considerable pace
- Maintaining the community
- In need of repair

- o In desperate need of repair

Q3.4 How effectively are the underused and abandoned spaces utilized in your community? (Please select all that apply)

- We utilize empty spaces for community needs, such as gardening.
- We have unused lots
- We have no unused lots
- We have remodeled or converted abandoned buildings for new organizations.
- We have abandoned buildings that are not being used.
- Unsure

Q3.5 What "top three" types of local businesses have been perceived to have the greatest success in your community?

Q4.1 How true are the following statements? Options: Definitely True, Somewhat True, Unsure, Somewhat Untrue, Definitely Untrue.

The community has no problem hiring talented individuals for challenging community positions. (1)

Online/app-related work, is vital for many of the working individuals in this community. (2)

People work well together and get things done for the community. (3)

The local businesses in my community offer deals to locals. (4)

The community environment helps prepare our youth for life. (5)

Q4.2 How effective would you say the communication between organizations is in your community?

- o Very effective
- o Somewhat effective
- o Neutral
- o Somewhat ineffective

- Very ineffective

Q4.3 How effective would you say the communication is between organizations and community members?

- Very effective
- Somewhat Effective
- Neutral
- Somewhat Ineffective
- Very ineffective

Q4.4 To what degree can you get your needs met before you need to ask for services outside of the community?

- Very independent (Requires outside help once in a blue moon)
- Somewhat independent (Requires outside help on a yearly basis)
- Neither independent nor dependent (Requires outside help on a monthly basis)
- Somewhat dependent (Requires outside help on a weekly basis)
- Very dependent (Requires outside help on a day to day basis)

Q4.5 Do any of the following nationally recognized organizations have a physical location in your community? (Please select all that apply)

- Habitat for Humanity
- United Way
- Boys and Girls Club
- The Salvation Army
- YMCA
- Action Plan
- Food Security NGOs
- Other _____

Unsure

Q5.1 How true are the following statements? Options: Definitely True, Somewhat True, Unsure, Somewhat Untrue, Definitely Untrue.

Local businesses help to advertise community events. (1)

Members of the local government are active in attending community events. (6)

The local education system has programs for student involvement in the community. (2)

The churches in this community cooperate well together. (3)

Local law enforcement is expected to be role models for the community. (4)

Q5.2 To your knowledge how high is the voter turnout over local issues in your community?

- Very High
- Somewhat High
- Moderate
- Somewhat Low
- Very Low

Q5.3 To what degree are community members likely to contribute financially towards the completion of ongoing projects?

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Unsure
- Somewhat likely
- Very unlikely

Q5.4 To your knowledge, how often will members of the community organizations for social movements, to spread awareness or advocate?

- Never
- Hardly ever

- Every few years
- Once a Year
- Multiple times a year

Q5.5 To what extent are the members of your community able to come together to learn from past mistakes to develop ideas for the future?

- We often develop new ideas from past experiences.
- We sometimes develop new ideas from past experiences.
- Sometimes we develop new ideas from past experiences but not often.
- We rarely develop new ideas from past experiences.
- We do not develop new ideas from past experiences.

Q6.1 Were the questions in this evaluation difficult to answer? Please share your experience.

Q6.2 Five variables were selected as a framework for community enrichment, based on literature reviews: sense of belonging, culture/identity, community resilience, social sustainability, and solidarity. If you feel that a variable of community enrichment should have been included in this survey and was not included, then please feel free to share. If you have any additional thoughts or comments about the survey, please include those as well. Thank you for your time in taking this survey

End of Block: Final Section: Survey Summary

Appendix B

Residual Plots for Correlation Coefficients

