"We don't only grow vegetables, we grow values": Community-Based Participatory Research Projects with gardeners in Flint and Detroit, MI

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WHAT DO WE MEAN BY COMMUNITY GARDEN?

• Collective action: obtaining the land, cleaning the garbage-strewn, overgrown lots, clearing the lots for plowing, acquiring water access, and planting and maintaining the garden.

• Cooperative spaces: gardening was done collectively, rather than by individuals on segregated plots.

• Food shared communally: among neighbors regardless of whether they participated in the work of the garden.

• Physical and social appropriations of space: gardens overtook property that had been abandoned and transformed “unowned” to “owned” and used space.

• Beauty: beautification of vacant lots

• Youth programs: provided adult supervision for young gardeners to participate in gardening activities.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY COMMUNITY GARDEN?

FLINT, MICHIGAN

Research Partners:
• Flint Urban Gardening Land Use Corp
• Neighborhood Violence Prevention Collaborative
• Prevention Research Center of Michigan/University of Michigan School of Public Health
• Michigan State University

MISSION

The mission of the Storytelling Subcommittee is to share stories and gain knowledge about community gardens in the Greater Flint area. With this knowledge, we intend to:

1) create documents and publications in order to gain resources for FUGLUC, community gardens, land use and beautification projects;

2) advocate for garden-friendly city policies and supportive community norms and mindframes; and

3) help the Greater Flint area be seen in a more positive light.

QUALITATIVE METHODS

• Case Studies of Four Community Gardens
• Storytelling with Community Gardeners
• Photography
• Inventory of Community Gardens and Beautification Projects in Flint

STORYTELING COMMITTEE

Flint Urban Gardening and Land Use Corporation
Connie Cobley, Ashley Atkinson, Craig Farrington, Edna Chaney, Pat Legg, Jennifer Farrington, Erma Pugh, Julie Parsons, Breminniss Carnes-Ferguson

Lakewood Village Block Club
Ella Aubrey, Dorris Elam

East Bishop/East Flint Park Block Club
Elizabeth Perry

East Eldridge Block Club
Lillie Neal, Fannie Odom

Neighbors Block Club
Mary Alyce Stickney, Co-chair

Neighborhood Violence Prevention Collaborative
Pete Hutchison

Neighborhood Roundtable
Lee Bell

University of Michigan/MSU
Katherine Alaimo, Co-chair
Tom Reischl, Julie Allen

University of Michigan-Flint
Stephanie Shumsky
CASE STUDIES

- Interviews with garden leaders, other adult and child gardeners, non-gardening neighbors, community police officers (60 interviews with 54 respondents)
- Participant observation at meetings and gardening activities (42 written descriptions)
- Photos of gardens and gardeners
DATA PREPARATION

• Interviews were transcribed word-for-word
• A selection of interviews and observations were read to look for patterns and topics related to the research questions
  ➔ a standardized "codebook" was created
• Interviews and observations were “chunked” into segments of text representing distinct concepts and coded accordingly by research assistants trained in qualitative methods

DATA ANALYSIS

• In a systematic and collaborative process, analytical categories were assigned to text and organized based on theory and themes that emerged from the text
• Content analysis
• Comparative analysis between case study neighborhoods
• Illustrative quotes were selected to describe each theme

FINDINGS: SOCIAL CAPITAL

What is Social Capital?

• Social capital = features of the social structure, including social interactions, networks, norms, values, and beliefs, that act as resources for people and/or enable people to work together for mutual benefit
• Higher social capital is associated with better health, fewer crimes and violence, and civic engagement

SOCIAL CAPITAL THEMES

Due to community gardening, beautification, and/or presence of neighborhood organization

Social Interactions and Networks

Bonding social capital
  • General social interaction
  • Intergenerational interaction
  • Meeting neighbors
  • Relationships
  • Trust
  • Tension

Linking social capital

Neighborhood Norms, Values, and Beliefs

Neighborhood involvement
Helping others
Charity
Reciprocity
Collective efficacy
Sense of community
Neighborhood morale
Neighborhood identity

SOCIAL CAPITAL RESULTS: SUMMARY

• Gardens and block clubs/neighborhood organizations generally only affect social capital of people who participate
  ➔ Increasing social capital happens one person at a time...
• The more people participate, the more their social capital increases.
• Gardens have the most impact within the backbone of an organizational structure: block club, neighborhood organization, some other form of organizing gardeners, etc.
FLINT COMMUNITY GARDENS: BENEFITS FOR YOUTH

- Constructive activity for youth
- Positive contributions to neighborhood
- Relationships and interpersonal skills
- Informal social control
- Cognitive and behavioral competencies
- Nutrition and eating fresh fruit and vegetables

ENJOY FRUITS & VEGETABLES

"I love really rich cabbage because it seems like it has oil dripping off of it, but it's good. I know it sounds gross, but it's really good, just to know there's no oil or no fat or anything. It makes me feel healthier."

"I used to be a candy freak, but now after all the vegetables that you get, they are good. They are like candy, but they're healthy."

SUCCESES OF THE STORYTELLING PROJECT

- Distribution of over 1600 copies of storybook to Flint community-based organizations, city and county officials and politicians, block clubs and neighborhood organizations, business leaders, and schools
- Key influence in securing city support and city and foundation funding for Flint Urban Gardening and gardening activities in Flint

SUCCESSES OF THE STORYTELLING PROJECT

- Research articles and commissioned book chapter
- Over 25 presentations of research results/storytelling within Michigan and nationally
- Print/media stories

Honoring of the Flint Urban Gardeners
DETROIT, MICHIGAN

+30% VACANT

FOOD SYSTEM IN DETROIT

- Gas stations, liquor stores, convenience stores are major provider of groceries to Detroit’s 920,000 residents including 56% of food stamp recipients.
- 19% of food stores in Detroit’s center city were found to carry a minimal range of products needed to assemble meals in accordance with USDA dietary guidelines.

PARTNERSHIP
Detroit Garden Resource Program Collaborative

These organizations work in partnership with over 185 other organizations and hundreds of individuals to support community gardening and urban farming initiatives in Detroit, Hamtramck, and Highland Park.

RESOURCES

Seeds & Plants
Additional Resources

EDUCATION

Urban Roots
Education Series
CONNECTION

City-Wide Activities

Cluster Activities

SCOPE OF URBAN AGRICULTURE IN DETROIT TODAY

Detroit Garden Resource Program Collaborative

517 Families
46 Schools
244 Communities

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

• 153 Detroit women
  – 99 GRP
  – 54 non-GRP
• 49% family gardeners
• 14% community gardeners
• 37% family and community gardeners

DATA COLLECTED

• Pre-post Surveys
  – Spr 2005, Fall 2005
  – Spr 2006, Fall 2006
• Produce weight
  – Monthly
• Garden Assessment
  – Area
  – Amenities
  – Structures
• Process evaluation of GRP and education programs

DATA PREPARATION

• STATA 9.0 statistical software
• Descriptive statistics (demographics)
• Comparison of group means and percentages (GRP vs Non-GRP vs Detroit women)
• Multivariate linear regression (fruit and vegetable consumption factors)
  – Controls: age, gender, race, education, employment status, marital status, number of children and adults in the household, and home ownership

POST-INTERVENTION FRUIT & VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fruit and Vegetable</th>
<th>GRP</th>
<th>Non-GRP</th>
<th>Avg. Detroit Woman (BRFSS)</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Fruit
| 5.6 (5.0–6.1)
| 4.9 (4.0–5.9)
| 3.8 (3.6–4.0) |
| Vegetable
| 2.6 (2.2–3.1)
| 2.6 (1.9–3.3)
| 1.4 (1.4–1.8) |
| Fruit
| 3.2 (2.7–3.7)
| 2.5 (1.8–3.3)
| 2.0 (1.9–2.2) |
### ASSOCIATION OF GARDEN HARVEST AND FRUIT & VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Coeff.</th>
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<th>P-value</th>
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<td>0.0001</td>
<td>&lt;0.05</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.0017</td>
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**REFERENCES**