R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 017 812 AC 002 023

HELPING COMMUNITIES LEARN HOW TO HELP EACH OTHER. PAPER PRESENTED AT THE NATIONAL SEMINAR ON ADULT EDUCATION RESEARCH (CHICAGO, FEBRUARY 11-13, 1968).

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PUB DATE FEB 68

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.64 14P.

DESCRIPTORS- *REGIONAL PLANNING, *SUBURBAN PROBLEMS, *COMMUNITY LEADERS, *INTERGROUP RELATIONS, *COMMUNITY CHANGE, OBJECTIVES, COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, CHANGING ATTITUDES, PROBLEM SOLVING, SEMINARS, CASE STUDIES (EDUCATION), INVESTIGATIONS,

A TEST WAS MADE OF THE THEORY THAT THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN A REGION OF COMMUNITIES WOULD BE MORE HEALTHY AND PRODUCTIVE AS THE CONDITIONS OF INTER-COMMUNITY ACCEPTANCE, TRUST, INTERDEPENDENCE, AND COOPERATIVENESS INCREASED. TEAMS OF THREE TO FIVE LEADERS FROM EACH OF 18 SUBURBAN COMMUNITIES ATTENDED SEMI-MONTHLY SEMINARS, DIAGNOSED CHANGES NEEDED TO GAIN CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT, AND PLANNED STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE. GOALS WERE DEFINED AS A MORE ADEQUATE FLOW OF INFORMATION BETWEEN COMMUNITIES, MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRAINING, AND INCREASED INTEREST AND PARTICIPATION OF CITIZENS. AN INTER-COMMUNITY TEAM WAS FORMED AND ASSUMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR INITIATING MOVEMENT TOWARD THE REGIONAL GOALS. IT WAS FOUND THAT THOSE CITIZENS WITH A HIGH LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN THE PROJECT DEVELOPED MORE POSITIVE AND OPTIMISTIC PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR OWN COMMUNITIES AND INCREASED THEIR READINESS TO WORK WITH CITIZENS FROM OTHER COMMUNITIES. (APPENDED ARE TABLES, CHARTS, AND QUESTIONNAIRES.) THIS PAPER WAS PRESENTED AT THE NATIONAL SEMINAR ON ADULT EDUCATION RESEARCH, CHICAGO, FEBRUARY 11-13, 1968. IT ALSO APPEARS IN LETTER TO SCHOOLS, VOLUME 20, NUMBER 4, MARCH 1968, PUBLISHED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, BUREAU OF SCHOOL SERVICES. (RT)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Helping Communities Learn How To Help Each Other

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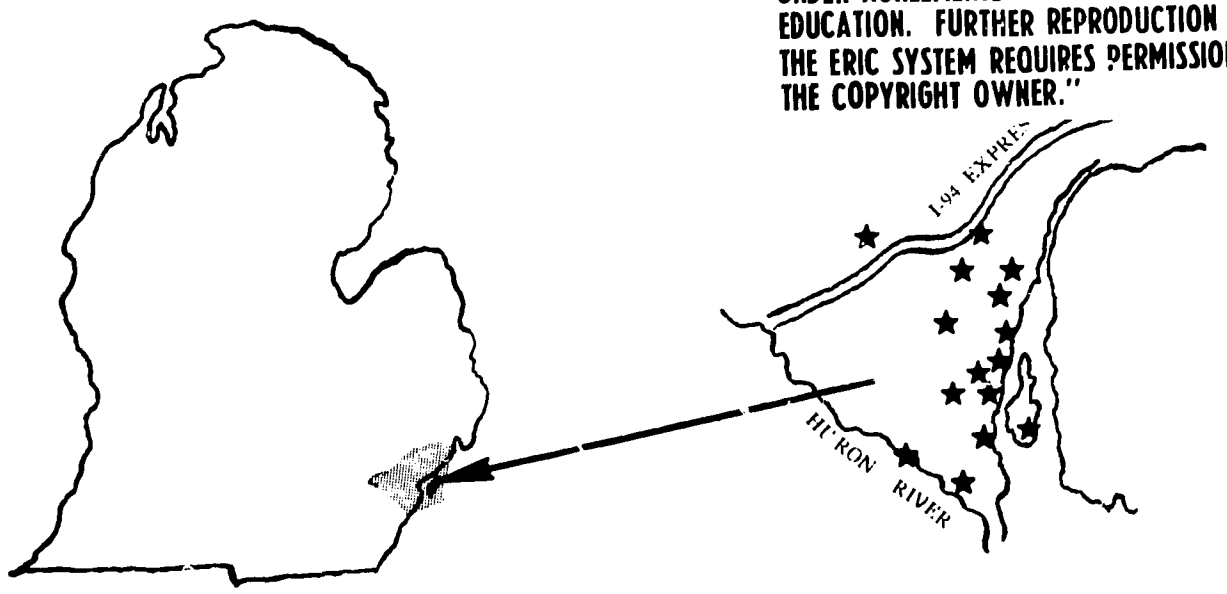
by
Allen Menlo
School of Education



It is a fairly well-accepted notion among educational psychologists that relationships between persons that are characterized by such conditions as cooperativeness, open communication, trust, inter-dependence, acceptance, and affection are emotionally healthier and more constructively productive than relationships that are colored by competitiveness, restricted communication, suspicion, withdrawal, rejection, and dislike.

This surely seems to be true for classroom groups. In fact, teachers can assess the health of relationships between pupils by sociometrics and other questionnaire and observation procedures. When teachers find that the relationships are unhealthy, they may even attempt interventions to purposely increase the amount of acceptance, affection or distribution of power between pupils by such methods as re-grouping, shared planning, leadership training, mutually respectful confrontations, team work, and setting super-ordinate goals for the whole class to work toward.

Experimentation in intergroup relations appears to justify the same notions that undergird interpersonal relations. Emotionally healthy and constructively productive relationships among groups appear to be higher when the conditions of security and harmony exist and lower when tension and disharmony are the case. Professionals concerned with increasing the health and productivity of relationships between groups make interventions that are very similar to those made by teachers in their attempts to increase the health of relationships between students.

Two of my colleagues and I held these same beliefs about communities—that the relationships between a region of communities would be more healthy and constructively productive as the conditions of inter-community acceptance, trust, interdependence, and cooperativeness increased. About two years ago, we were provided with an exciting opportunity to test the extent to which this belief was embedded in reality and the extent to which it could actually be implemented.

Leaders of four geographically adjacent suburban communities came to us[1] and inquired if we could help them work together at increasing the amount of collaboration between their own four, plus fourteen other communities in their region of the state. They believed that the enhancement of inter-community communication and acceptance would lead to greater sharing of resources and problem-solving skills, which would increase the richness of many aspects of life within the total region. In our terms, we heard them asking us to help them improve the psychological health of the relationships between their communities so their total region of communities as a single human system could behave more integratively and competently. At once, we were confronted with opportunities both to provide an important social therapeutic service and to reality test our assumptions about achieving psychological health changes in a very large human system (region) with inter-related human sub-parts (communities).

Our initial efforts were spent in sharing planning with this help-seeking group on exactly how we could initiate a sequence of learning activities that would achieve their hoped-for changes in durable form and, at the same time, would encourage the creation of an internal mechanism for on-going regional self-help, self-renewal, and self-actualization. In the plan that emerged,[2] we first invited the collaboration of occupationally visible people in each community in identifying just who the people were who were in the mainstreams of communication. We then sought the consultation of these "in-the-know" people to help us identify citizens who were interested in bettering their own

(continued on next page)

[1] Allen Menlo, associate professor of education, Howard Y. McClusky, professor of education, and Louis M. Feigelson, Extension Service consultant in community development, all representing the Community Adult Education Program of the School of Education and Extension Service, The University of Michigan.

[2] This total project has been supported by a Title I grant (Project 27A), Higher Education Act of 1965, State of Michigan, Department of Education.

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communities, who were likely to be listened to by other community members, and who did have organizational relationships with others who, indeed, would be inclined to listen to them. We then formally invited these "listened-to" people to commit themselves to semi-monthly attendance at a series of regional seminar sessions in which they would be helped to learn "how to achieve change in their communities." We aimed for a three-to-five person team from each of the eighteen communities.

What followed was a sequence of highly participative evenings in which citizens worked diligently at increasing their adequacies in diagnosing needed changes, gaining citizen involvement and support, and utilizing modern behavioral science knowledge in planning strategies for the achievement of change. Community team members had immediate opportunity to test their learnings and receive feedback on their attempts to translate their learnings into actual practice through action-research projects they were helped to initiate in their own "back home" communities. While all teams did not meet with the rewards of success, many participants began to report that they were perceiving themselves in ways they had never perceived themselves before—as being able to have a visible influence on the destiny of some aspect of the life in their community and as being more optimistic about the possibilities for social change in general. While the problems on which the different community teams decided to work were quite different (e.g., apathy, inadequate sewers, ineffective school programs, unsympathetic government officials, uncoordinated sex education programs, pollution), they became aware of the processes of shared, rational problem solving that are applicable to any distress situation, and the extent to which teams from neighboring communities could be important sources of consultation and support.

At the end of eight months of study and work on separate community problems, the citizens were ready to turn their attention to the meeting of needs which transcended all eighteen communities. The desire to meet these needs became super-ordinate goals—goals that were highly compelling for all community teams, but that neither team could achieve without participation of the other teams. After much discussion, these goals were finally defined as: (1) a more adequate flow of information between communities regarding current issues, problems, activities, resources, and knowledge, (2) more extensive and adequate opportunities for training in group, organizational, and community leadership, and (3) increased interest and participation of citizens in community and regional affairs.

Community teams that were interested in this new regionally-focused venture contributed one or more members to constitute a new inter-community team. This newly-formed group assumed responsibility for initiating movement toward the three major regional goals and for stimulating broad citizen interest, involvement, and support. This inter-community team is still in existence. Some of its accomplishments are: the publication of a regional newsletter, as one means of facilitating the flow of information between communities; the establishment of leadership training courses and workshops either open to the total region or in response to a particular community's request; and the planning and conducting of region-wide meetings and forums to help stimulate citizen interest and intelligence regarding regional issues. Also still in existence are a few of the original community teams, or their off-shoots, continuing their work on "back home" problems.

Research data collected through inter-community sociometric instruments and community self concept inventories, both at the beginning and at a much later stage of the project, provide very interesting findings. For instance, those citizens who had a high level of participation in the work of the project developed more positive and optimistic perceptions of their own communities, increased in their readiness and desire to work with citizens from other communities, and increased in their awareness of how much more there was to discover about each of the other communities of which they were previously unaware. Citizens who had minimal contact with the work of the project became less positive in their perceptions of their own communities, less desirous of working with members of their communities, and less aware of the attractive, hidden resources in the other communities. What is especially interesting is data that appears to indicate that as contact became more open between communities, under conditions of super-ordinate goals, inter-community trust and better feelings about one's own community seemed to increase.

To summarize briefly, I have informally theorized that: (1) we can describe the health level of the relationships between communities in a strikingly similar fashion to the way we describe the health level of relationships between groups and even individuals, and (2) the strategies for assisting communities to become more helpful toward each other and more productive are governed by the same socio-psychological principles that advise us how to assist groups and individuals enrich their relationships and their resultant productivity. Then, I described an actual case in which this theory was translated into practice.

Communities can be purposively helped to grow and develop, like individuals and groups; but this requires the consciously planned utilization of knowledge and skills relevant to this growth and development process.

ACHIEVING PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH CHANGES

WITHIN AND BETWEEN COMMUNITIES*

Some Illustrative Materials

and

Some Research Findings

*Project 27A
Title I
Higher Education
Act of 1965

DOWNRIVER POPULATION DESCRIPTIVE DATA AND PROJECTIONS

Community	Socio-Econ. Rank	Socio-Econ. 5th	Areas Sq. Miles	Mean Family Income	% with 8 Years School or Less	Non-Caucasian	% of Growth	1960 Cens.	1970 Proj.	1980 Proj.
Allen Park (2)	2	5	7.16	8,493	23.5	196	19	37,052	44,000	52,000
Brownstown Township(3)	15	2	28.12	6,028	52.1	167	14	7,257	19,000	32,000
Ecorse	17	1	2.74	5,480	51.7	6,769	6	17,328	17,000	19,000
Flat Rock	3	4	1.57	7,529	28.4	2	2	4,696	6,000	8,000
Gibraltar	6	4	4.35	7,218	29.6	0	52	2,196	4,000	7,000
Grosse Ile	1	5	10.44	10,076	13.7	34	25	6,318	10,000	16,000
Huron Township	16	1	35.86	6,030	53.2	0	12	6,884	10,000	14,000
Inkster (3)	11	3	6.28	6,664	34.1	13,569	15	36,119	40,000	48,000
Lincoln Park	8	3	5.93	7,065	35.6	62	7	53,933	59,000	61,000
Melvindale	11	2	2.72	6,657	43.1	64	12	13,089	15,000	16,000
River Rouge	14	1	2.80	5,325	49.4	5,898	4	18,147	18,000	18,000
Riverview	8	3	4.44	7,023	29.7	5	35	7,237	16,000	28,000
Rockwood	11	3	2.70	6,649	33.6	11	51	2,026	4,000	6,000
Southgate	4	4	6.84	7,269	28.9	27	9	29,404	48,000	56,000
Taylor	7	3	23.63	6,804	33.3	23	19	49,658	76,000	135,000
Trenton	4	4	7.35	8,048	21.6	31	17	18,439	28,000	40,000
Woodhaven(3)			6.30							
Wyandotte	10	2	5.54	7,036	40.6	48	3	43,519	45,000	45,000

(2) Final revised 1960 population figures released by the U.S. Bureau of Census for Allen Park, 37,494.

(3) 1960 figure adjusted for post-census annexation or incorporation.

COMMUNITY OF _____

What are our more serious community problems?

Please help us find out. Some problems that we see are already listed below. Here's all you need to do:

1. Glance at those already listed.
2. Add on any problems which you think our community has that are not already listed.
3. Look back at the entire list and indicate which problems you think are the three most serious. Place a 1 in the line next to the first most serious, a 2 next to the second most serious, and a 3 next to the third most serious.

Many thanks.

PROBLEMS	SERIOUSNESS

PRIORITY PROBLEMS

Allen Park	--Form of City Government
Brownstown Township	--Sewers
Ecorse	--Civic Improvement
Flat Rock	--Schools
Gibralter	--Schools
Grosse Ile	--Naval Air Station
Huron Township	--Water and Sewer Lines
Inkster	--Education
Lincoln Park	--Central Business District
Melvindale	--Coordinated Sex Education
River Rouge	--Achieving a Quality Education Program
Riverview	--Traffic & Pedestrian Safety Control
Rockwood	--Sewers
Southgate	--Apathy
Taylor	--Inequitable Tax Assessments
Trenton	--Apathy
Woodhaven	--Annexations
Wyandotte	--Community College

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PERCENTAGE GAINS OF TEAM MEMBERS AND NON-TEAM MEMBERS ON ATTITUDES TOWARD AND PERCEPTIONS OF OWN AND OTHER COMMUNITIES

	Know About Other Communities	Like to Work With Other Communities	Positiveness of Perception of Own Community
Team Members (N = 60: Average attendance = 6.45 meetings)	Mean % gain = -2.93	Mean % gain = 4.65	Mean % gain = 3.85
Non-Team Members (N = 84; Average attendance = 1.53 meetings)	Mean % gain = 4.82	Mean % gain = -3.92	Mean % gain = -2.26
	t = 3.367 P = .001 (two tailed test)	t = 2.957 P < .01 (two tailed test)	t = 1.240 P = N.S. (.20) (two tailed test)

COMMUNITIES IN COLLABORATION
The University of Michigan
School of Education and Extension Service

Dear Community Member:

One of the reasons that we have been able to invest the human, material and financial resources in the Communities in Collaboration project is that we learn as much as possible about how to help communities. One way of our doing this is by asking participants to express their opinions about things at different stages of the project. Would you be kind enough to contribute to our learning at this point by responding to the four brief questionnaires on the following pages? They are labeled "Questionnaire A,B,C and D." They should take about 20 minutes to do. Since they ask strictly for your own opinions, there are no "best" answers and they should be done quickly. You need not write anything, but need only to make check marks.

At this same time, we would like to help you become further acquainted with available readings in the field of adult education. On an enclosed card, you will find listed the titles of eighteen 48 page booklets published by the Adult Education Association of the U.S.A. for community leaders. If you wish, we shall be happy to send you any two of the booklets you check.

The envelope in which this material is enclosed can be used for mailing. Thank you very much for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Allen Menlo	Louis Feigelson	Howard McClusky
Project Director	Project Field Director	Project Consultant

INSTRUCTIONS FOR

QUESTIONNAIRE A: ⟹

After the name of <u>each</u> community, place a check (v) in the box that indicates how much <u>you</u> <u>feel</u> <u>you</u> <u>know</u> about that community. Please try not to skip any communities, even if you have to make a guess. Draw a line through your own community.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR

QUESTIONNAIRE C:

After the name of each community, place a check (v) in the box that indicates how much you think that you and other people in your community would like to work with that community. Please try not to skip any, even if you have to guess. Draw a line through your own community.

QUESTIONNAIRE A

How much do you feel you know about each of the following communities -- what the people are like who live in them, what goes on in them, what their problems and needs are, etc.?

	A GREAT DEAL	A LOT	A FAIR AMOUNT	SOME	A LITTLE	ALMOST NOT AT ALL
Allen Park						
Brownstown Township						
Ecorse						
Flatrock						
Gibraltar						
Grosse Ile						
Huron Township						
Inkster						
Lincoln Park						
Melvindale						
River Rouge						
Riverview						
Rockwood						
Southgate						
Taylor						
Trenton						
Woodhaven						
Wyandotte						

QUESTIONNAIRE B

Below is a list of segmented lines with opposite adjectives at the two ends of each line. First of all, please write in the name of your community. Then, with your community in mind, go right down the list and quickly place a check (v) somewhere between each pair of adjectives. The check (v) should always indicate how you would describe your community, and it should always fall in one of the segments between the two opposite adjectives. Please try not to miss any.

MY COMMUNITY _____

stable	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	unstable
sincere	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	insincere
active	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	passive
slow	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	fast
unfriendly	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	friendly
honest	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	dishonest
dull	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	bright
strong	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	weak
closed	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	open
warm	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	cold
sour	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	sweet
healthy	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	sick
stale	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	fresh
clear	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	hazy
unattractive	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	attractive
clean	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	dirty
interesting	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	uninteresting
uninviting	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	inviting
cooperative	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	competitive
static	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	dynamic
ugly	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	beautiful
good	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	bad
pessimistic	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	optimistic
successful	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	unsuccessful
pleasant	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	unpleasant

QUESTIONNAIRE C

If your community was asked to work together with one other community on some regional project, how much do you think you and other people in your community would like to work with each of the following communities?

	A GREAT DEAL	A LOT	A FAIR AMOUNT	SOME	A LITTLE	ALMOST NOT AT ALL
Allen Park						
Brownstown Township						
Ecorse						
Flatrock						
Gibraltar						
Grosse Ile						
Huron Township						
Inkster						
Lincoln Park						
Melvindale						
River Rouge						
Riverview						
Rockwood						
Southgate						
Taylor						
Trenton						
Woodhaven						
Wyandotte						

INSTRUCTIONS FOR

QUESTIONNAIRE C:

After the name of each community, place a check (v) in the box that indicates how much you think that you and other people in your community would like to work with that community. Please try not to skip any, even if you have to guess. Draw a line through your own community.

QUESTIONNAIRE D

1. With whatever your experience has been with this project and with what you know about it -- how do you feel about the project? (Please circle one answer).

VERY POOR	POOR	FAIR MINUS	FAIR PLUS	GOOD	VERY GOOD

2. How much of a positive effect do you think the project might have on the attitudes and behaviors of the persons who participated in most of it?

VERY POOR	POOR	FAIR MINUS	FAIR PLUS	GOOD	VERY GOOD

3. How much of a positive effect do you think the project might have on things in the Downriver region?

VERY LITTLE	LITTLE	SOME MINUS	SOME PLUS	MUCH	VERY MUCH

4. Do you know of any effects the project has already had on any issues, plans, or actions in any community or in the region?

YES { AND IT WAS A HELPFUL EFFECT _____
YES { AND IT WAS AN UNHELPFUL EFFECT _____

NO, I DON'T KNOW OF ANY EFFECTS _____

5. Do you think it would be a good thing if the project were continued, in some form, into the next school year?

NO, FOR SURE___ NO___ YES___ YES, FOR SURE___

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN COMMUNITY TEAMS' CHANGES IN ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS OF ~~OTHER~~ OWN AND OTHER COMMUNITIES AND THEIR OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

	Positiveness of Evaluation of Project	
% Gain in Knowing About Other Communities (Questionnaire A)	r = .01	P = N.S.
% Gain in Liking to Work With Other Communities (Questionnaire C)	r = .42	P = .05
% Gain in Positiveness of Perception of Own Community (Questionnaire B)	r = .04	P = N.S.

N = 10 Community Teams

QUESTIONNAIRE D

1. With whatever your experience has been with this project and with what you know about it--how do you feel about the project? (Please circle one answer.)

.03	.06	.06	.19	.50	.19
VERY POOR	POOR	FAIR MINUS	FAIR PLUS	GOOD	VERY GOOD

2. How much of a positive effect do you think the project might have on the attitudes and behaviors of the persons who participated in most of it?

.01	.02	.10	.19	.48	.20
VERY POOR	POOR	FAIR MINUS	FAIR PLUS	GOOD	VERY GOOD

3. How much of a positive effect do you think the project might have on things in the Downriver region?

.05	.06	.11	.60	.04	.14
VERY LITTLE	LITTLE	SOME MINUS	SOME PLUS	MUCH	VERY MUCH

4. Do you know of any effects the project has already had on any issues, plans, or actions in any community or in the region?

YES { AND IT WAS A HELPFUL EFFECT .40
YES { AND IT WAS AN UNHELPFUL EFFECT .01

NO, I DON'T KNOW OF ANY EFFECTS .59

5. Do you think it would be a good thing if the project were continued, in some form, into the next school year?

NO FOR SURE .03 NO .06 YES .54 YES, FOR SURE .37

(N = 153)

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE EVALUATIONS OF THE PROJECT BY TEAM MEMBERS AND NON-TEAM MEMBERS

Question		Mean	t	P
With whatever your experience has been with this project and with what you know about it -- how do you feel about the project?	TEAM	4.96	2.56	< .02
	NON-TEAM	4.49	H.P.S. = 6	L.P.S. = 1
How much of a positive effect do you think the project might have on the attitudes and behaviors of the persons who participated in most of it?	TEAM	4.95	2.13	< .05
	NON-TEAM	4.58	H.P.S. = 6	L.P.S. = 1
How much of a positive effect do you think the project might have on things in the Downriver area?	TEAM	4.15	.517	N.S.
	NON-TEAM	4.05	H.P.S. = 6	L.P.S. = 1
Do you know of any effects the project has already had on issues, plans, or actions in any community or in the region?	TEAM	2.56	5.31	< .002
	NON-TEAM	1.73	H.P.S. = 3	L.P.S. = 1
Do you think it would be a good idea if the project were continued, in some form, into the next school year?	TEAM	3.50	3.27	< .002
	NON-TEAM	3.13	H.P.S. = 4	L.P.S. = 1
All the above five questions combined.	TEAM	20.00	3.87	< .002
	NON-TEAM	16.70	H.P.S. = 25	L.P.S. = 5

(N= 55 Team Members; 98 Non-Team Members (Two tailed tests of significance

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