

Community Building Workshop Survey Report: Youth Groups

Community Building Milwaukee

December 2018 through March 2020



Prepared by The University of Tennessee College of Social Work Office
of Research and Public Service (UT SWORPS)

January 2021



Community Building Workshop Survey Report: Youth Groups

December 2018 through March 2020

PREPARED FOR

Community Building Milwaukee

BY

LINDA DAUGHERTY, MPA

CHRIS SISSIE HADJIHARALAMBOUS, PHD

AMY WILSON HARDY, MSSW, BS

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

College of Social Work Office of Research and Public Service

Lori Messinger, Dean

Shandra Forrest-Bank, Director

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, is an EEO/AA/Title VI/Title IX/Section 504/ADA/ADEA institution in the provision of its education and employment programs and services. All qualified applicants will receive equal consideration without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, pregnancy, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, physical or mental disability, or covered veteran status.

This project was funded through a contract with the University of Tennessee College of Social Work.

Project #: 21017

Contents

Background.....	1
Purpose and Methodology	1
Training participants	2
Delivery of the workshop	3
Facilitators	3
Process	4
Impact on participants.....	5
Conclusion	7

Background

Community Building is a facilitated, experiential group development process that provides an environment that encourages participants to collaborate with peers as they explore and let go of past experiences, attitudes, and behaviors that impact their potential to lead a more meaningful life. The process allows each individual member time to reflect on their own. Key to the transformative experience is listening deeply to peers, as well as collaborating to build and maintain a genuine sense of community—not a “pseudo community.” A genuine community is characterized by the acknowledgement of and respect for individual differences, an extraordinary level of safety that allows possibility of healing, and a sense of belongingness.¹

Purpose and Methodology

Community Building Institute (CBI) conducted 14 Community Building Workshops with youth between December 2018 and March 2020 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. All workshops were sponsored by Wisconsin Community Services (WCS). Activities for each of these workshops spanned 3 days and all workshops were in person. A survey was administered at the conclusion of each workshop and was partially or fully completed by 132 participants. CBI contracted with the College of Social Work Office of Research and Public Service (SWORPS) at the University of Tennessee to analyze and report on the findings from the responses to the surveys.

The survey instrument consisted of 35 questions and included:

- 3 demographic questions
- 2 questions to measure progress toward building relationships with other workshop participants
- 12 retrospective pre/post questions on resiliency and belonging
- 14 questions to measure satisfaction with and impact of the workshop
- 4 questions about potential impact on different segments of the participant’s life

The demographic questions were limited to asking about gender, age, and race.

Retrospective pre/post methodology was used for three sections of the survey instrument. These types of questions are presented at the conclusion of the training. Participants were asked to reflect about what they have learned during the training by indicating “where” they would place themselves on the scale before the training and at the end of the training. For one section, participants were presented with a diagram depicting six stages of relationships and asked to identify which stage they assigned their relationship with other workshop attendees before and after the workshop. Responses to this exercise were analyzed to measure the amount and direction of movement on the relationship-building spectrum.

For the two other sections utilizing retrospective pre/post methodology, seven-point Likert scales were used for sets of statements or questions designed to measure different constructs. The set of statements designed to measure resilience included 6 statements about problem-solving. The anchor endpoints for this set of questions were “Never” and “Always”. The second set consisted of 5 questions

¹ [CB-WHITEPAPER-1.pdf \(communitybuilding.com\)](#)

about sense of belonging. This section of questions used “Not at all” and “A lot” for the endpoints. A last section of the survey, focusing on the Workshop experience, presented the participants with 14 statements about how the workshop was conducted. This section used “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree” as the endpoints. For ease of reporting, the seven-point scales were collapsed into 5 categories. Definitions for the 5 categories are shown in Table 1 below. Responses to this exercise were analyzed to measure the amount and direction of movement on the scales.

Resiliency scale		Sense of belonging scale	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 and 2 categorized as <i>Never</i> • 3 categorized as <i>Rarely</i> • 4 categorized as <i>Sometimes</i> • 5 categorized as <i>Frequently</i> • 6 and 7 categorized as <i>Always</i> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 and 2 categorized as <i>Not at all</i> • 3 categorized as <i>A little</i> • 4 categorized as <i>Sometimes</i> • 5 categorized as <i>Most of the time</i> • 6 categorized as 7 became <i>A lot</i> 	
Level of agreement scale			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 and 2 categorized as <i>Strongly disagree</i> • 3 categorized as <i>Disagree</i> • 4 categorized as <i>Neither agree nor disagree</i> • 5 categorized as <i>Agree</i> • 6 and 7 categorized as <i>Strongly agree</i> 	

Table 1: Scale definitions

Training participants

Youth who participated in the workshops were invited from three groups: Youth in the Milwaukee County Accountability Program (MCAP), Milwaukee County Juvenile Detention Center, and residents of the Rashid House. These programs serve at-risk youth.



- All of the survey participants were male.



- The participants ranged in age from 13 to 18.
- The average age was 15.6.



- More than three out of four participants (78.4%) were African-American.
- 6.0% were Hispanic/Latino.
- 3.4% were Native American.
- 9.5% were White .
- 2.6% selected “Other” for their race.

Figure 1: Demographic characteristic of participants

Delivery of the workshop

A successful workshop requires a significant investment of time for planning and attention to detail. These details must include thought on where the workshop is held, the materials that will be used, and what refreshments will be served. Creating an environment that is comfortable facilitates learning and sharing. Lack of attention to such details can easily derail the success of a workshop. Workshop participants were asked a series of questions to seek feedback about the workshop's implementation. The feedback provided was generally positive. About two out of three participants indicated they *strongly agreed* the workshop provided healthy and satisfying snacks and meals. While still positive, a slightly lower percentage indicated they *strongly agreed* the workshop was well organized and the provided material was helpful. Of some concern is the low level of agreement that the workshop was held in a desirable location. Less than half of the participants (46.8%) strongly agreed it was held in a desirable location and 14.3% strongly disagreed with the statement (see Figure 2). These responses about low desirability are likely due to many of the participants who attended the workshop are living in a detention center.



Figure 2: Workshop execution

Facilitators

Facilitators play an integral role in the success of the Community Building Workshop. The facilitators' role is to guide, not direct, the workshop by using skills drawn from Motivational Interviewing. These skills include "reflection, evocation, empathy."² Successful facilitators must provide clear instructions for

² [CB-WHITEPAPER-1.pdf \(communitybuilding.com\)](#), (p 8).

the workshop to ensure that all participants understand the activities. They must also be sensitive to the needs of the group and have the skillset that will allow them to adapt to the needs of each group in an ethical and responsible manner. Most importantly, the facilitator must provide a safe environment for participants and ensure that all members feel that they are treated in a respectful manner.

Based upon feedback from the participants, the facilitators were successful in their roles. Overall, more than two out of three participants *strongly agreed* the facilitators showed respect for participants, conducted themselves responsibly, were knowledgeable, and provided clear instructions during the workshop. The portion of participants who strongly agreed the facilitators were sensitive to the needs of the group was somewhat lower (see Figure 3).



Figure 3: Facilitators

Process

The purpose of a Community Building Workshop is to guide workshop participants through four stages of Community Building – from Pseudo Community through experiencing Community. While there is no guarantee at the outset that each group of participants will reach the goal of the final stage, those who experience that final stage - Community - will often feel more connection to and an increased level of trust of other participants in the workshop. There were high levels of agreement that participants experienced the process and experienced Community (see Figure 4). A key component of the workshop design – the debriefing exercises – was instrumental in supporting the journey resulting in attainment of the final stage. There was a strong and positive correlation ($r = .744$, $n = 924$, $p = .000$) between those

who indicated that the debriefing exercises were helpful for understanding the process and those who reported they experienced Community.

The Process

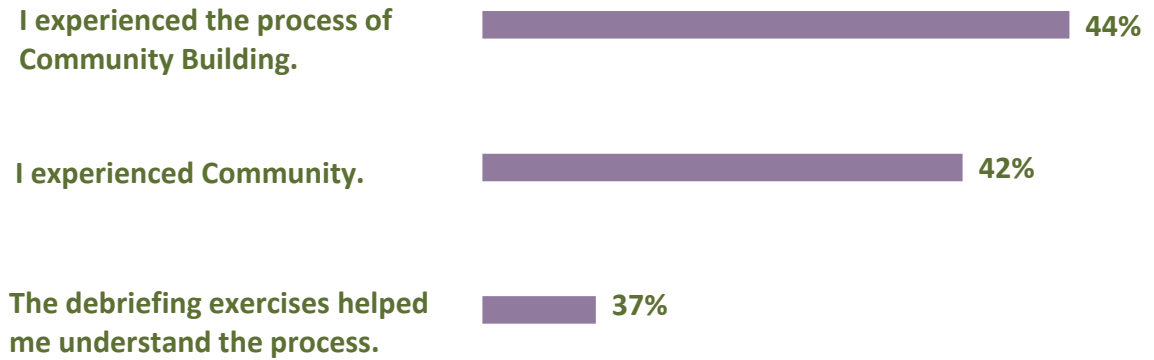


Figure 4: The Process

Impact on participants

The ultimate goal of Community Building Workshops is to foster long-lasting change for those who participate. The hope is that participants can apply what they have learned and experienced during the workshop to other areas of their lives. An overwhelming majority of participants indicated they foresaw future changes in various aspects of their lives. Specifically, more than three out of four participants reported they thought there would be changes in their personal life, school life, on-going group, and spiritual life because of workshop attendance (see Figure 5).

Future change due to workshop experience

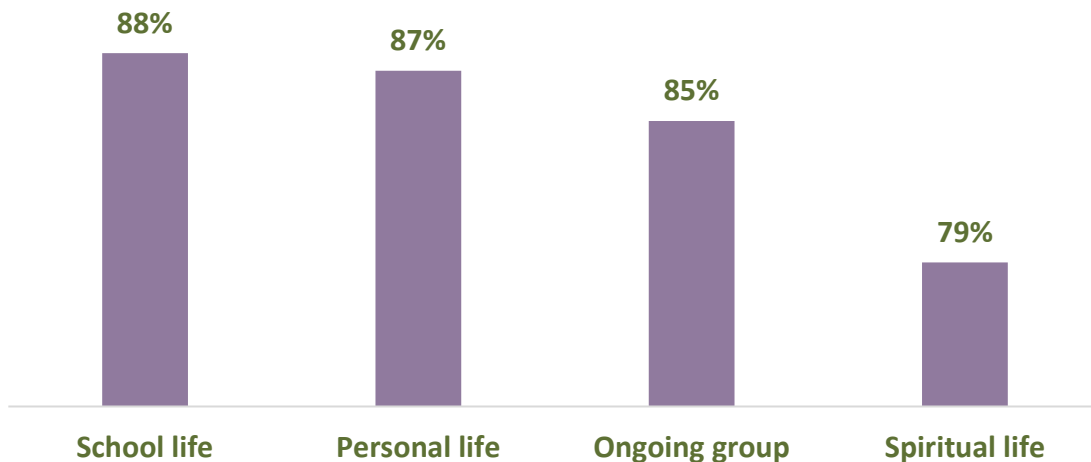


Figure 5: Anticipated future change

Youth participants were also asked to respond to a series of six statements that are designed to measure resiliency and efficacy in problem solving. They were asked to provide a retrospective reflection by selecting how they would have responded prior to the workshop and the appropriate response after the three-day workshop. Consistently the participants indicated there had been positive movement on the scale as a result of the workshop (see Table 2). The most dramatic change was for the question “I think I’m doing pretty well.” This positive change is particularly impressive considering the situation for these at-risk youth.

	Pre workshop	Post workshop	Change
% whose response is “always”			
I think I’m doing pretty well.	25.8%	57.0%	+31.2%
When I have problem, I can think of many ways to solve it.	37.7%	66.1%	+28.4%
What I’ve done in the past will help me in the future.	35.2%	62.3%	+27.1%
Even when others want to quit, I know that I can find ways to solve the problem.	48.8%	72.7%	+23.9%
There are many ways to get what’s most important to me.	35.5%	55.4%	+19.9%
I am doing just as well as other kids my age.	27.9%	47.1%	+19.2%

Table 2: Movement in responses to resiliency scale

Another set of five questions was used to measure the participant’s sense of belonging. While the magnitude of change was lower than those for the above scale, there was still significant and positive change reported for all questions (see Table 3). It is worth noting that one question, “How much do you feel others would miss you if you went away?” had the highest level of “a lot” for pre-workshop responses. This is not surprising given that most of the participants are currently incarcerated and may have witnessed how much they are missed by family and friends.

	Pre workshop	Post workshop	Change
% whose response is “a lot”			
How important do you feel you are to other people?	36.9%	58.3%	+21.4%
How much do you feel other people pay attention to you?	34.2%	57.0%	+22.8%
How much do you feel others would miss you if you went away?	54.9%	66.9%	+12.0%
How interested are people generally in what you have to say?	34.7%	58.3%	+23.6%
How much do other people depend on you?	34.4%	50.0%	+15.6%

Table 3: Movement in responses to scale on sense of belonging

Further evidence of increased feelings of connection is demonstrated by results of participants' perceptions of their relationship with others in the workshop. Participants were asked to place themselves on the scale below at two points of time – at the beginning and at the conclusion of the workshop.

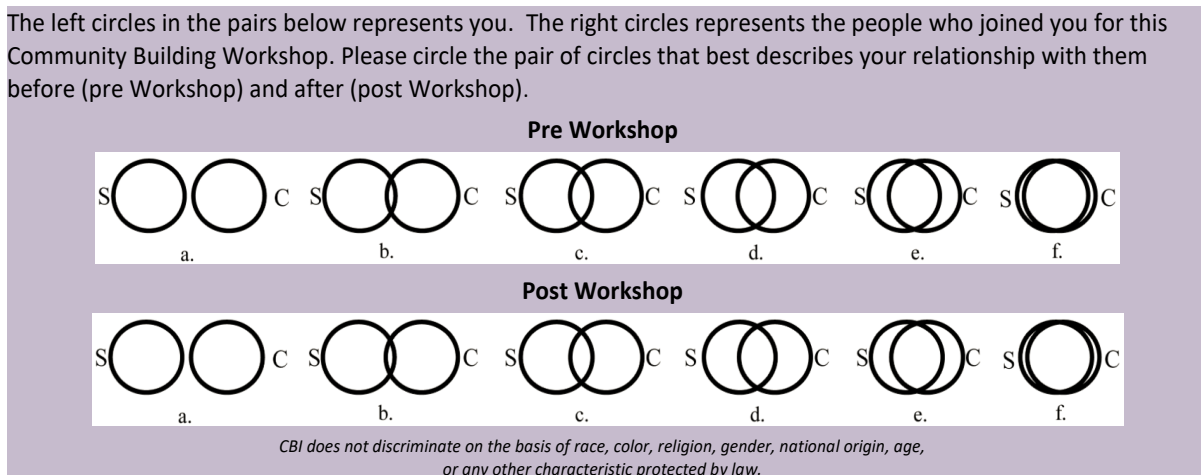


Figure 6: Pre and post workshop exercise

There was significant movement between where participants placed themselves on this chart for pre workshop compared to the placement for post workshop. Almost two out of three participants (62.0%) placed themselves in circles “a” or “b” for pre workshop indicating absolutely no relationship with other members of their group or minimal ones. Reflecting on connection with the same peers by the end of the workshop, almost the same percentage (59.3%) placed themselves in circles “e” or “f” for post workshop. This shows significant growth in the perceived strength of relationships with others in their group.

Conclusion

Community Building Institute (CBI) hosted 14 Community Building Workshops with at-risk youth in Milwaukee between December 2018 and March 2020. While the number who participated in the workshops is not known, evaluation surveys were partially or fully completed by 132 participants. The feedback from the surveys was overwhelmingly positive.

A majority of participants indicated they felt the facilitators treated them with respect and were sensitive to the needs of the group. This is particularly significant because of the background of the participants. Because of their involvement with the criminal justice system, they may be more sensitive

than others to how others perceive them. Creating an environment where youth feel they are respected and that someone is sensitive to their needs is critical for laying the groundwork for positive change.

Survey responses suggest that the workshops also provided an environment that was conducive to building resiliency and an improved sense of belonging. Furthermore, given the high number of participants who foresee future changes in their personal and school life, it is likely the workshop experience may lead to a more positive journey of psychological and spiritual growth.