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Session 2 – Community well-being surveys

Led by Mark Abraham – New Haven

Notes by Katya Abazajian

Present: John Killeen, Courtney Denton, Stephanie Parry, Jennifer Bert, Jay Colbert, Anthony Galvan, Steve King, Josh Wheeling, Ryan Gerety, Mark Abraham, Denise Groesbeck

Notes:

**Population survey**

* Mark: Was in the middle of designing the survey when session was proposed, but the survey is underway now. What other partners are working on primary data (population not property surveys)? Not necessarily about physical environments. Wanted to build on community surveys that have been done and combine into the state survey like California Health Initiative Survey (?) and other Ohio survey. Can get administrative data to work with from Census, etc. but the most useful is from community engagement research and community surveys.
* Ryan G., Open Tech Institute: Missing piece that is really expensive to fund, and it would be great to hear what questions other groups are asking. Have done surveys over retail redlining and people’s access to stores and local grocery stores. Open Tech doesn’t do any survey work, except for some literacy and library surveys which are computer based which happens when people log into library computers.
* Josh, CamConnect: A lot of surveys are usually secondary work; interested in learning more about asking the right questions. How to streamline them also.
* Steve, Oakland: Don’t have anything lined up at the moment, but see the need for creating own data.
* Anthony, Dallas: Have a few things lined up, yet to happen. Have a small city, ex-urban, that is interested in doing a community survey redoing the master plan for the city. Have an organization in a neighborhood where the Ebola outbreak was, high transient, lot of refugees which is undercounted by the Census. Interested in investing in the community to get a gauge of who’s there and what’s happening. Trying to figure out how to get at people illegally squatting, etc.
* Jay, Indianapolis: Typically only use phone surveys from the university, and not necessarily thinking of doing a survey. What are the first steps? Want to get something that approaches a random sample. How do you go about doing a random sample?
* Jennifer Burt, Pittsburgh: Has a project lined up using survey data. Has done it in the past and some are better than others but would like some advice about the future.
* Stephanie, Newark: Don’t do surveys. Would probably support someone else financially to do another survey (Rutgers), but want to listen in on ways to start. For example, asthma rates would help to have survey data. Who is already doing those health surveys?
* Courtney, San Antonio: Want to know why people aren’t using various resources or a few different survey instruments. It is very personal information so it’s difficult. Using residents to collect PII and PHI on people. Need to know how to ask in a sensitive way to generate kind of information that is needed.
* John Killeen, City of Durham: How to get community valuable information out of the survey process. Last year, dept based in did a survey door to door for information in six broad topics related to poverty reduction. That was one effort, but it was pretty exhaustive. Took political leadership and block captains to start conversations and relationships with people. It’s an opportunity to get information about program eligibility. Gathers information that would be really relative to helping people. Could bridge some gaps and start relationship fresh. Starting another project to do small business (study) like questionnaire or maybe survey going into a specific neighborhood. What are some lessons learned about how that has panned out.
* Denise, Juvenile Welfare Board: Don’t do a lot of community surveys. Do more topical surveys for childcare providers which is a set group of people and the know how to get to them. Looking to pick up information on behavioral health challenges for children 0-5. What are some of the behaviors that make that happen. Last presentation was interesting because have another initiative called Adopt-a-Block, helps sponsor a faith-based collaborative, have gone into a neighborhood to help with cleanup and brush removal, also meeting people and developing relationships for future ventures. Not using that to do any data collection, may be missing an opportunity.
* Jennifer: Survey being started is not the Pittsburgh well-being survey. Lookup name.
* Mark: Surveys of captive audiences. Sometimes survey data is out there, but the county data is out there for multiple years, so sometimes town-level data is more helpful for providing data background? Sometimes can take the data yourself, but sometimes it exists.
* Stephanie: What are unique indicators that measure quality of life or well-being?
* Mark: Designing the well-being survey learned that the “how healthy are you” question is a quality of life indicator because it’s predictive of future health care costs and self-reported. It’s a national health indicator, because people compare themselves to people of their own age. Predicts future emergency room use and hospitalization, so that’s a really common one that isn’t in the Census data. Others are whether you own a home or whether you commute to work.
* Denise: Did a proximity to park, closeness to green space. More of a community health perspective because had a CPPW grant. Have an agency in the region called the Tampa Network to End Hunger presenting a lot of information about food deserts -- Where food distribution sites are.
* Mark: Administrative data (e.g., measuring distance to park) could be unreliable as a measurement of access. People may live within a block or two of a park, but you need a survey to ask people whether they feel that they have access to it, how often they use it, etc.
* Dallas: Safety perceptions survey for the new trails system. Asked people about the perceptions of safety last time went to a park, in which city, how safe did you feel, what made you feel safer, etc. Was supposed to be an intercept survey stopping trail users and they didn’t do it. The city dropped the ball, did just a web survey, got no traffic. Dallas ended up buying the sample/distributing it. Modeled questions after several other safety surveys. Other dallas researches did perceptions of safety in South Dallas that it was modeled after. But door to door would be a great opportunity to do door to door work and develop trust issues.
* Mark: There have been millions spent to engage community members to knock on doors, even if there are knockers and gift cards and mailers. Not sure how to address that, but the non response bias issues are universal across all surveys. Compare different surveys across methods to see if they produce the same results. If there is a bias, at least the bias is similar to what the Census is getting, maybe could get around the non response bias. Community research brings credibility, are there best practices.
* Peter: Cognitive interviewing is an approach to evaluate your search results. Go back and interview about what answers they gave. What did you think I meant when I asked you this? So that they understand the question the same way you intended it.
* Mark: Generally work with survey research experts and NNIP partners don’t necessarily have access, so New haven works with the local university. There’s a lot of validation that needs to happen. Use question scales from QOL surveys that have been validated in some way. Triangulate the questions in some way so that the questions solicit the responses you want.
* Ryan: What’s a good resource for finding surveys that have been done?
* Mark: Roper Center databases of national public opinion surveys. Aggregated data for decades on surveys. Academic literature has information on validating surveys. Takes a survey question and compares it to how people have responded. Mining survey research literature and databases. “Validation quality of life scale” comes up with articles about various questions. Literature around parks access is still evolving. Trust for Public Land, etc. are producing more about local applications around those survey methods.
* Peter: The Sage series are short, concise, well-explained booklets like the cliff notes of survey methodology. Have on various topics how to create samples, etc.
* Anthony: Fowler book is top of the list on survey design in general, though can’t necessarily validate survey questions.
* Mark: Using surveys to validate local relationships. Are surveys part of internal projects for performance management, or are you surveying on behalf of the funder?
* Dallas: Has responded to funders on needs for safety of parks, or municipalities that want community survey for their plans.
* Peter: None of the groups doing Promise Neighborhood surveys had ever done the kind of neighborhood/school climate surveys before. Particularly using surveys as a way to connect with the community. Ones that have used community residents as survey collection teams have seen more success. Community was really into it.
* Anthony: Community meeting/presentation can get people involved to show them what kind of relationship is possible and how far you can go as far as leading them toward advocacy with their council. Say, these are things you should be advocating for so that they can see that this is doing something for them.
* Katya: Difficulty penetrating neighborhood due to community needs
* Peter: Community resident introduces the survey, then the surveyor can introduce the survey itself, another approach potentially.
* Anthony: Dallas has done that working with Dallas Whedon Seed? Worked with community members and said there would be someone from the institute and they decided to go door to door. Worked fine.
* Mark: Surveying has room for shared infrastructure the same way that NNIP shares data infrastructure. So relating to financial considerations, there needs to be cross-site work across multiple funders so that you can scale up to where financially a survey makes sense. There’s a value to expanding geographically to have benchmarks so that you have the neighborhood survey but you’re also getting the city data or the state level. Pittsburgh survey went from city to region and multiple counties. Cost is lower per interview as you grow from a city wide to a larger survey. The quality of the survey is a consideration and the incentive structures, and that can be debated endlessly.
* Peter: Have had a lot of interesting organizations around random sampling because it is more difficult, but improves quality. Is the random sample worth the effort? INteresting tension trying to resolve the need for a random sample with the conversation about financial stress and resources. One group is going to do an experiment for themselves to do a random sample vs. a more convenient sample. Doing this in the real world, trying to be more understanding about the challenges the groups face doing it the Urban Institute’s way.
* Mark: Harder to scale random samples, but it is a challenge.
* Peter: More responses aren’t always better.
* John: Can share the results in a timely way for surveys, which is baseline, but really liked the idea of sussing out the eligibility for programs that exist. Could sell that; are you eligible for something that could give you something Connect them with something they actually need. About to start working on the entrepreneurial ecosystem of the community and how that penetrates certain areas, expanding to a huge list of small businesses on the front end. Then, going to go to small businesses and provide that to them while that’s happening. So if nothing else happens, at least you got this helpful resource of business support.
* Anthony: What if you designed it where you did knock on every door and you give a benefits screening, but then you're randomization is for the survey and you just hound people for the longform. At least everyone is getting that community benefit.
* Ryan: even if your organization isn’t capable of giving the benefit, maybe you can find the organization that can give the benefit and would be willing to give the money to go door to door.
* John Killeen, Community health partners are going to deliver services in so many ways, so maybe they are the potential partners since there is an operational transaction already happening
* Ryan: It’s a very good test as the purpose of your research if it’s hard to give someone the purpose of the research and what you can give back. If we’re not prepared to do something about it, then it’s not worth it to do it. You should be evaluated if you’re not doing anything with that information.
* Mark: There should be a dissemination budget at the very least to get this data out
* Ryan: Courtney has an interesting case because the community meetings are happenings, and then she is going to actually change the process
* Courtney: It’s not data collection at all, it's just the eligibility so it’s not any means of research but it is actually only a tangible outcome
* Mark: If you had access to individual survey data, do you have the capacity to work with it?
* Jay: That might be the easiest
* Anthony: You’re doing the research but your funders are the ones doing the public good, becoming the community partners which allows you to step back and do the research
* Mark: Well that’s actually the hope, but it won’t be used immediately. It;s one to two years later that it starts to get funded. Getting funders to realize the impact of this work is difficult. It’s a disconnect.
* Peter: Working on a short thing about survey administration for Promise Neighborhoods about how to actually administer a survey in more practical ways.
* Anthony: About surveys that exist at larger geographies to take that further down the road. Center for Health Statistics in Texas gives record level data, but they don’t give sub geographies. Could maybe work with them to get a five-year sample to aggregate to a certain geographic level. Most go to MSAs, might go to counties if they’re big enough.
* Mark: If there’s a way to influence what’s asked, that’s the best
* Deise: County gives a period of time to collect input on what the questions will be for the coming year