

Community Engagement and Community-based Research on Cooperatives

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CASC: Researching the Role of Co-ops in
Community Research

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Why Attending Today?

- Interest in communities and cooperatives— share knowledge, create new knowledge for comm dev
- Values we bring
- Challenges and Hopes

Community Development

- A multi-faceted comprehensive process.
- Aimed at qualitative positive change, involving economic, political, social, psychological, spiritual, cultural goals; and
- Based on local control, increasing residents' capacities, financial equality and independence.
- To develop and maintain prosperity and sustainability for the entire community.

Purpose of Community-based Research

- To enable genuine community development and positive social change
- To engage and embed our scholarship to solve community problems and enhance community assets
- Apply Knowledge
- Create new knowledge
- Specifically: Understand role of cooperatives

Community Engagement at the Grassroots- Best Practices

- Connect with local residents and stakeholders – beyond the regulars and the community elites
- Listen and Listen with Respect
- Asset approach – appreciate and build on assets
- Bring and share knowledge
- Develop leadership
- Enable residents to do their own research, solve problems, create policy.
- Do No Harm

Barriers?

- Adequate and proper training
- Misguided and elitist attitudes and practices
- Ideologies
- Distrust and excessive competition
- Policies

Researching Co-ops

- Be seen – attend meetings, take study tours
- Talk to people - ask questions
- Do the background research
- Understand your methodology – qualitative? Ethnographic? How include quantitative, stats?
- Ask co-op members to help you – with research, collecting information, thinking about the questions, formulating questions
- Understand and explore the cooperative value added – what is unique

What is the Cooperative Value Added?

- Grassroots participation and democracy
- Economic democracy
- Transparency
- Address market failure, provide alternative model of development and doing business
- Anchoring
- Leadership development
- Multiplier effects

How and Why do Co-op Members Participate?

- Explore together
- Help them to solve or address internal issues
- Contribution to knowledge
- Movement building
- Need/want social metrics
- Win-win strategy: balance your needs with their needs; give them something in return.

My Research

- Credit Unions' Impacts on members and community – asset builders? Increase wealth? Support for low-income low-wealth communities? How to measure impacts
- African American cooperatives and in co-ops—marginalization, market failure, discrimination: how address? Part of long civil rights movement
- Compare Black co-ops with Canadian Aboriginal co-ops
- Role of Education in worker coop participation.

Thank You!

- Questions or Comments?
- Contact me: Jessica Gordon Nembhard, Ph.D. - jgordonnembhard@gmail.com