AN ABSTRACT OF THE ESSAY OF

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Many communities emphasize participatory involvement in local development or reinvention efforts. Recognizing barriers among specific groups could help community leaders identify what may be constraining underrepresented groups from joining in. Utilizing data from the Social Capital Benchmark Survey, this research examined identified "barriers" to community involvement among individuals in rural and urban areas. Results indicated that while rurality reduced perceived obstacles among the general population, particular characteristics uniquely impact the way individuals identify barriers to community involvement within rural and urban places. This analysis not only identifies targeted barriers for communities to address, but also highlights areas where further place-based research could be beneficial.

Barriers to Community Involvement across Rural and Urban Communities

by

Melissa Torgerson

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APPROVED:

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Mark Edwards, representing Sociology

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Bruce Weber, representing Agricultural and Resource Economics

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Katherine MacTavish, representing Human Development and Family Sciences

I understand that my essay will become part of the permanent collection of the Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my essay to any reader upon request.

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Melissa Torgerson, Author

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Barriers to Community Involvement across Rural and Urban Communities

Bordering the Umatilla National Forest in Northeastern Oregon, the town of Elgin is best known for its Historic Opera House, natural scenery and tribal history. Similar to other rural communities across the Northwest, agriculture and manufacturing have historically served as cornerstones of the local economy. However the closure of lumber mills and decline in farming means Elgin has not been able to compete with the rapidly growing service, manufacturing and government sectors in more populated, surrounding areas. As a result, Elgin's 1600 residents rely heavily on industry from larger economies for employment—in this case Eastern Oregon University and Boise Mill in nearby La Grande.

People of Elgin migrate out of the area to gain education and skills in more diverse communities. Those residents who remain in town purchase goods and services from neighboring areas, resulting in fewer dollars flowing through Elgin's local economy. Families who commute back and forth to nearby cities for employment often find themselves left with little time to participate in local projects and even less time to organize community or economic development efforts (Northwest Area Foundation, 2007).

Local mill closures, outward migration and dwindling economies have moved many rural community leaders to begin creating organized, resident-driven reinvestment efforts. Members of the community created "Elgin 2010" with a targeted community development plan for the future—as well as Elgin Edge, a group that focuses solely on diverse economic development. More recently, Elgin residents spurred widespread local involvement on issues including community safety and well-being, education and literacy as well as renewal of facilities through a program called "Horizons," sponsored by the Northwest Area Foundation (NWAF, 2006).

The *Horizons* program, offered in various towns across the Northwest, is reflective of the push for broad participatory involvement happening in communities, rural and non-rural, across the country. Rural community planning efforts no longer revolve around scheduling parades or fund-raising for new softball fields; rather, residents are grappling with issues of economic development and poverty—matters normally relegated to more formal institutions such as municipal government or non-profit, community action organizations.

The academic literature around community involvement efforts, such as *Horizons*, focuses primarily on individual benefits and community outcomes. A common critique of these approaches is that they are largely optimistic in nature—failing to look at potential challenges and limitations of community efforts. For example, volunteers who engage in civic service are more educated and have higher than average income levels (McBride, 2006; Brown, 1999; Clodfelter, 1999; Husbands et al, 2000). Furthermore disadvantaged individuals may find it difficult to engage in intensive, long term or uncompensated community involvement. McBride et al. (2006) suggest that further research be conducted to examine the potential barriers that limit participation across groups.

Another critique of the current literature is that studies tend to be descriptive in nature, telling us more about "who" is likely to participate than "how" communities can encourage representative participation. Furthermore, Perry and Imperial (2001) assert that much of the research is fragmented in terms of scope, failing to take the kind of cross disciplinary approach necessary to make policy related decisions. As a result, communities or civic service programs looking to academia for guidance may find a shortage of pragmatic or prescriptive, well-rounded ideas from which to draw.

This paper contributes to the existing literature by beginning to fill in these gaps. Utilizing data from the Social Capital Benchmark Survey, this research examines identified barriers to community involvement --particularly among those individuals who could find themselves at a disadvantage in terms of the type of long-term, uncompensated commitment associated with civic service opportunities.

This research will also explore barriers to community involvement among individuals in rural and urban areas. As rural communities such as Elgin are increasingly looking toward more organized, civic programs to face development issues, analysis at the individual level will identify targeted barriers for rural communities to address. Moreover, this study may also help explain why some groups are not proportionately represented in organized civic efforts.

Literature Review and Hypotheses

This literature review begins with a brief overview of community involvement research including historical background, definition and measurement challenges. The larger part of this section focuses on the literature which examines characteristics which might impact individuals' likelihood of serving. This emphasis upon servers, as well as demographic and resource based correlates, is used to further explore patterns in community involvement choices and behaviors.

The Challenges of Studying Community Involvement

Over the past decade, the study of "community involvement" has been largely embedded within broader theories of social capital. According to Putnam (1995) and others, social capital is defined as "features of social organizations such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefits." One dimension of social capital is community involvement, which can be considered both a method for obtaining social capital (e.g. becoming involved in one's community improves social ties) as well as an outcome (e.g. increased social networks lead to more opportunities for community engagement). However, as the number of neighborhood, community and civic based organizations increase across the globe, many believe that community involvement theory merits examination of its very own (Hodgkinson, 2004).

The role of Community Involvement in areas such as development, education and conservation has evolved as priorities and needs change in communities across the United States. Perry (2004) highlights examples of civic service efforts including the Civilian Conservation Corps (Great Depression), the Peace Corps and VISTA programs (War on Poverty) and AmeriCorps (government budget crises). Perry also identifies the historical

transition of community involvement in the 1970's and 1980's from "centralized, federally administered programs to more decentralized cooperative programs." Rather than focusing on national priorities, federal institutions coordinated with local programs to meet specific regional needs. Policy issues currently addressed by communities likely reflect priorities where government funding and efforts may be insufficient--with education, community development and human needs being the most prominent areas of involvement (Perry and Imperial, 2001).

How individuals get involved varies dramatically, and defining the line between formal service and informal volunteerism has remained an "area of vigorous debate" (Perry and Thomson, 2004). The definition of community involvement has evolved as both practitioners and researchers recognized the unique dynamics setting long-term or organized community involvement apart from informal, occasional volunteering or "neighboring." Research reflects this tug of war.

One example is the recent research on civic service, which has focused on the kind of intensive, structured participation best associated with national and international programs. In the first published global study of civic service, McBride, et al. (2003) limit their sample to programs that require a long term commitment on behalf of the server (at least one week, full time) with defined server "roles" or positions. Utilizing this restricted definition, the authors found that 49% of established programs were international (the server volunteering outside their country of residence), 35% were national (volunteers serving their own country), 10% were transnational (two or more countries working in partnership) and only 6% were "local" in nature.

McBride et al. (2003) acknowledge that this limited scope does not capture the true breadth of programs existing in communities across the United States. With the common characteristic of individuals "performing an action that is presumably of benefit to some group or cause…in the spirit of improving living conditions or general welfare" (McBride, et al, 2003; Monon et al, 2002) civic service could feasibly fall along a broad continuum of community involvement.

Community Based Organizations (CBO's) are one example of organized community involvement likely overlooked with restricted definitions. Although individuals involved with community based organizations maintain long term commitments are often uncompensated and significantly contribute to community—their efforts slip under the radar of researchers sampling organizations that are run by large scale government or non-governmental organizations. This oversight is important to note as grassroots, community based organizations have grown significantly in number, and "are beginning to organize themselves much more at the national and international level" (Hulme and Edwards, 1997). Their presence has been most recently felt within rural communities, as CBO's have become a force in dealing with issues of development and improving living conditions for residents of rural areas (Opare, 2007).

In light of definitional challenges, one approach is to blur the lines of formal versus informal, and look at community involvement that is generally geared toward community improvement (Liu and Besser, 2003). Stephan (2005) writes "community involvement, in sum, involves a cluster of activities, all with the goal of influencing administrative decisions and actions." Wilson (2000) adds that "volunteering is part of a general cluster of helping activities" including neighboring, informal caring and activism. Methodologically, these

generalizations can pose a challenge for researchers looking to examine how specific types of service contribute to community development. Nonetheless, a broad scope may be advantageous in capturing barriers for local organizations creating participatory programs that vary broadly in capacity and commitment.

Regardless of the organizational formality or manner of objectives prescribed by community agendas, a primary goal of civic efforts includes providing beneficial educational and employment opportunities for the server (Perry, 2004; Wolf et. al, 1987). Such benefits are documented in the current literature. Perry and Imperial (2001) state that the most prominently researched outcomes for servers include academic performance, attitudes, career development, personal development and self-esteem. McBride (2006) adds that there are consequences for individuals and families who do not get involved in their communities, including decreased tolerance, lost opportunity for civic skills and foregone chances for parents to teach by example.

The elevated role of the individual in community involvement is reflected in the research, with the server being the most common unit of analysis (Perry and Imperial, 2001; McBride, 2004; Liu and Bessar, 2003). Exploring individual choices and perceptions shifts some focus away from the definitional challenges discussed in this section, allowing respondents to self-define community involvement in its broadest sense. While this may be problematic for researchers evaluating benefits to community, understanding the motivation and benefits associated with individual service is necessary for community planners--not only to provide meaningful experiences for individuals, but to develop processes that utilize participant strengths for effective community improvement.

Who Participates?

In exploring patterns of community involvement among individuals, the current literature tends to highlight characteristics of the individual. The most prominent attributes in the research include demographic and resource based correlates, both which directly affect a person's motivation or capacity to become engaged in their community. One area that is understudied is the effect of "place" on volunteering preferences, and Wilson (2000) suggests more work be done to specifically examine neighborhood and regional dynamics when researching community involvement patterns. This review will consider how individual attributes and available resources may influence civic participation within both rural and urban areas.

Age

Among the studies focusing on community involvement, age is the most commonly researched attribute among individuals. This could be because many organized civic service opportunities revolve around youth and education. Studying youth also offers researchers an opportunity to longitudinally explore volunteering effects on life outcomes. Conversely, the lack of mobility among retired individuals who tend to "settle down" in one place (with no full-time work commitments) make elderly servers valuable resources to communities who need committed volunteers for longer-term projects. Hence, they are meaningful research subjects.

The literature regularly underscores the benefits of community involvement for both youth and elders. Youth learn how to create community change, become more confident and gain meaningful work experience (Frank, 2006). Among elders, community involvement contributes to the process of "productive aging" which can positively affect

both mental and physical well-being (Burr, et. Al, 2002; Wilson, 2000; Musick et. al, 1999; Stephan, 1991).

Most of the research, however, concludes that age has a curvilinear effect on community involvement--with volunteer activity being lowest at the beginning and end of the life cycle and increasing during the middle years. While some elders have more free time and may volunteer to fill a gap left from leaving full-time employment, some researchers assert that this same gap may distance elders from the social networks necessary for involvement in community processes (Wilson, 2000). Liu and Bessar (2003) also find that those seniors who are tied to "formal" service efforts are more likely to be involved with their communities. Implicit in all of these findings, according to the authors, is the need for elders to feel "invited" and important before they engage in community processes.

While many formal organizations provide youth with civic opportunities (service learning, VISTA), very few communities actively recruit youth to be part of larger planning processes. Franks (2006) finds that among the current case study literature, youth display both the desire and capacity to productively contribute to community processes. Children have expressed an interest in being able to voice concerns to local officials (Malone 1999) and have asserted their rights to be consulted on "neighborhood matters" (Speak, 2000). Furthermore, when given the opportunity, youth are likely to jump at the chance to participate in hands-on, real world learning opportunities that community involvement provides —particularly those who do not thrive in a standard school setting (Baldassari, et al. 1987 and Lorenzo, 1997 *as cited in* Frank, 2006).

The primary barriers to youth involvement, as identified by the literature, are largely structural; planning processes are not geared for youth involvement and youth contributions

are not valued. These issues have the potential to be exacerbated in rural areas, where older

residents and retirees dominate the economy and youth have difficulty maintaining

individuality under the scrutiny of tight social circles (Schucksmith, 2004).

Among the case studies, only a few of the authors note issues with maintaining youth

volunteers—most related to transportation or time commitments. Rural youth may be even

more likely to face practical constraints, such as limited mobility, than their urban

counterparts (Edwards, et al., 2006).

H1: In general, younger respondents are more likely to display practical barriers such as transportation or time commitments, whereas elders are more likely to indicate motivational barriers such as "not feeling needed."

H2: Because transportation infrastructure is less established in smaller communities, findings among younger respondents (in terms of "practical barriers") are likely to be more exaggerated in rural areas. There is nothing to suggest that the motivational barriers among elders would be different between rural and urban individuals.

Homeownership, Income and Employment

Many of the theories surrounding community involvement are resource based,

suggesting that individuals' volunteer choices are directly related to their access to available

capital. Verba et al. (1995) draw a distinct line between motivation and "wherewithal." For

example, owning a small business may *motivate* individuals to participate in community

decision making as a stakeholder, whereas someone who is less connected may not feel as

invested in such efforts. Conversely, financial resources provide individuals the

wherewithal they need to participate in community processes--including paying for daycare,

obtaining transportation or taking time off of work to actively participate in weekday

meetings.

Homeownership is a well-supported example of asset motivated participation in

community involvement activities. Studies indicate that people who own their homes show

patterns of increased citizen participation (Verba et al. 1995)—suggesting that people who are more committed to a community are more likely to have a stake in local decision making activities. Stephan (2005) also found that roots established through homeownership make it more difficult for residents to exit the civic process, as they have both a financial and psychological investment in the outcomes.

While it is widely accepted that assets such as homes or small businesses may motivate individuals to participate in community processes, the role of income is less clear. Studies suggest that as income rises, volunteering decreases due to opportunity costs (Wolff, 1993; Freeman, 1997) whereas others assert that as income rises, volunteering does too (Menchik and Weisbrod, 1987). This latter theory coexists with others who insist that individuals must have not only the desire to participate, but the resources as well (Verba, et al., 1995). Wilson (2000) concludes that most quantitative studies contradict each other, and that any "net effect of income" among individuals must be tempered by moderating or mediating variables.

The discussion of income also finds its way into the literature through the context of neighborhoods and trust. While tighter social networks in rural communities (e.g. "knowing all your neighbors) may alleviate some safety concerns, low-income individuals in poorer, central city neighborhoods are less likely to participate in voluntary organizations (Wuthnow, 1998) as residents feel less safe and less trust within their communities (Wilson, 2000). However, other research indicates that living in low-income communities can serve as both a resource and motivation for collective action. Stephan (2005) found those neighborhoods with higher poverty levels were more likely to engage, as a neighborhood, in administrative decision making. He suggests that individuals in poor neighborhoods are

more likely to have relationships with their neighbors, and can quickly initiate action through strong informal networks. He takes a step further to propose that the pattern of high neighborhood involvement may be reactive in nature; in other words, much of the injustice that would require community activism (e.g. gentrification, environmental hazards) tend to disproportionately affect individuals living in poor neighborhoods.

More recent qualitative work may be able to offer additional insight in regard to income and civic participation. McBride (2006) was among the first to qualitatively look at barriers to community involvement—finding that among low-income individuals, income most strongly affected the capacity to volunteer in terms of daycare and transportation. Low-income individuals were also more likely to work multiple jobs, in addition to family commitments, making it difficult to find time to volunteer in their communities.

The evidence of "Role Overload" is particularly relevant among employed families. Regardless of income, individuals who are only employed part-time volunteer more than those who have full time work commitments (Wilson, 2000). However, Taniguchi (2006) points to several studies that indicate "no clear-cut inverse relationship between hours employed and hours volunteered" (Freeman, 1997; Becker and Hofmeister, 2000). In fact those who work are more likely to volunteer than their unemployed counterparts (Stubbings and Humble, 1984). This may be because individuals who are unemployed find themselves busy with maintaining livelihoods (Putnam, 2000) and many unemployed individuals have less free time than those with formal jobs (Mattingly and Bianchi, 2003).

Individuals who are tied to the labor force may also be more integrated into society. Research links increased hours of employment to higher rates of volunteer work. Wilson (2000) suggests that increased working hours may be indicative of job prestige, which has a

positive effect on volunteering (Stubbings and Humble, 1984). Similarly, the more

autonomy and decision making ability an employee has, the wider range of activities they

are likely to volunteer for (Wilson, 2000). The compilation of these findings suggest that

while employment may prove constraining in terms of time, working may also provide the

social networks individuals need to get involved in their communities.

H3: Homeowners are less likely to indicate motivational barriers than those individuals who do not own their homes. This relationship will be consistent across rural, urban samples.

H4: Those with lower relative incomes will likely identify more practical barriers, such as transportation, work or day care commitments than those individuals with middle or higher relative incomes. With increased access to transportation, employment and daycare resources in densely populated areas, these "resource based" barriers will be less prominent among low-income, urban individuals.

H5: Concerns for safety will be most notable among urban, low-income individuals. Smaller networks (e.g. "knowing all of your neighbors") within rural communities will make safety less of a barrier among rural individuals in general.

H6: Since employment serves as both a means and motivation for volunteering, individuals who are employed will be less likely to indicate barriers in general (resource or motivational).

Gender and Familial Status

Putnam (1996) identifies women's entry into the labor force, the rise of non-

traditional families and divorce as major offenders in the decline of community

involvement over the past twenty years. His findings reveal two underlying tenets: that

women are more inclined to volunteer than their male counterparts, and that time-

consuming family obligations likely constrain community involvement. While research

has found that gender and familial status are important factors in individual choices, the

relationships between these variables and community involvement are not as clear cut as

Putnam's statement suggests.

The 2006 Volunteering in the United States report found that women volunteered at a higher rate than men across all groups, regardless of education, income and other major characteristics (BLS, 2007). The literature suggests several reasons for this difference. Women are more altruistic, feel more responsibility to fulfill caring roles (Wilson and Musick, 1997) and see volunteering as a natural extension of their mothering and care-giving responsibilities (Negry, 1993, *as cited in* Wilson, 2000). Additionally, men are likely to see volunteering as complementary or secondary to their "real work" whereas women are less likely to give precedence to compensated employment over voluntary roles. This is particularly true in rural communities where women are expected to volunteer, and therefore, community involvement is an essential source of social acceptance and power (Little, 1997).

While women may feel more inclined or obligated to volunteer, family care-giving roles can constrain them from being as active as they might like to be. This is particularly true for single parents and families who work long hours or multiple jobs, and wish to spend limited free time with their children (McBride, 2006). However parenting obligations among individuals also serve as both a motivator and resource. Households with children often have more incentive to participate in community decision making that directly affects the well-being of their families. Parents of school age children are also more likely to be involved in volunteer activities that revolve around their children, such as field trips, athletic events or PTA. Besides motivation, parents of school age children also have "built in" resources through their child; namely, a social network made up of other parents, teachers and their children's peers.

McBride (2006) suggests that families who wish to spend free time with their children, yet also feel inclined to get involved in community processes, often become involved in "family friendly" forms of voluntary participation. This type of involvement empowers families, improves the community and has the important benefit of teaching children positive civic behaviors through example. However, these family oriented opportunities are not common, particularly in rural communities. Tanaguchi (2006) and others encourage more policy work in this area.

H7:   Women are more likely to identify practical barriers such as daycare or work commitments, and less likely to indicate motivational barriers than their male counterparts.

H8:   As rural women are more inclined to feel obligated or expected to volunteer in their communities, the effect of gender on barriers to community involvement will be less apparent in rural areas.

H9:   Individuals with children in the household, regardless of gender, are more likely to identify practical obstacles like daycare or transportation; because of their increased social networking they are also less likely to indicate informational or motivational barriers to community involvement. This effect may be more obvious in rural areas, where transportation and "daycare" resources are likely more limited.

Education and Race

It is widely accepted that education is a robust, positive factor in community involvement choices among individuals. In 2006, college graduates volunteered at twice the rate of non-graduates, and at four times the rate of those who did not graduate high school (BLS, 2007). According to Wilson (2000), education "heightens awareness of issues," increases the chances of individuals being asked to volunteer and positively influences capacity in terms of civic skills and leadership. The latter finding is particularly relevant for communities organizing participatory processes. Verba et al. (1995) indicates that capacity, particularly in the form of civic skills, is an essential factor in community

involvement choices. Without this aptitude, individuals may be less motivated to contribute

to local processes—particularly if they believe that others can meet the need. This poses

additional challenges in activities that require advanced or technical knowledge such as

environmental issues or political processes (Stephan, 2005).

While education may be a strong factor regardless of other characteristics, the effect

of race must be examined in the context of other variables. In 2006, whites volunteered at a

higher rate (28.3%) than blacks (19.2%) and Asians (18.5%). Among the Hispanic/Latino

population, only 13.9% volunteered. While these numbers align with research suggesting

higher rates of community involvement among whites, they should be tempered by the

numerous studies that indicate no difference among racial groups when controlling for other

factors such as income (both individual and neighborhood), education and occupational

status.

Whereas race may not be directly related to community involvement choices, the

literature does suggest differences in the way racial and ethnic groups choose to participate.

For example, studies have found that racial groups are more likely to volunteer in activities

that directly affect their neighborhoods and communities, particularly in the realm of social

justice. Adeola (1997) and Stephan (2005) found that low-income, racially segregated

neighborhoods were disproportionately influenced by environmental hazards--serving as

impetus for community activism. Other examples of collective action in the face of social

injustice abound in the literature, including Latino parents who want better education for

their children and segregated neighborhoods fighting against gentrification.

H10:   Those with higher levels of education are less likely to indicate barriers to
community involvement compared to their less educated counterparts. There is no
reason to believe that this relationship would be different among rural and urban
individuals.

H11: When controlling for other variables such as income, education and employment--race should not be a significant factor when considering barriers to community involvement within urban areas.

H12: Due to a lack of diversity, we could anticipate that the "cohesive patterns" leading to community involvement amongst racial groups may not be as evident in rural areas. Therefore we could anticipate that there may be an effect of race on barriers to community involvement among rural respondents.

Data and Methods

Data for this research was obtained from the 2000 Social Capital Benchmark Survey, compiled by the Saguaro Seminar at Harvard's Kennedy School. Surveys were conducted by the Ford Foundation, as well as regional organizations (e.g. Northwest Area Foundation) across 41 communities within the United States. The overall sample size is ~29,200, with respondents providing information on a wide range of variables including community involvement, neighborhood trust, racial tension, religious participation, and basic demographic characteristics. This study will utilize a representative sub-sample of respondents (n = 14614) who were randomly selected to answer questions regarding challenges to community involvement.

This research examines two models. The first will look at barriers across groups within the entire population, while the second model will separate the respondents into rural and urban sub-samples. While many people have perceptions of what urban and rural places might look like, defining and measuring "rural" is a challenge with many considerations--including population density, commute times, distance from metropolitan areas and economic diversity (Crandall and Weber, 2005). For the purpose of this study, rural and urban sub-groups were determined using Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA).

The urban sample includes those communities that include, or are within close proximity, of a Metropolitan Statistical Area. Those respondents not in, or near a Metropolitan Statistical Area, were placed in the rural sub-sample. The disadvantage of this classification is that it overlooks the "mixed" characteristics of some counties. For example, larger counties may have a metropolitan center, while the outskirts of the county could be considered rural. While this classification allows for a great deal of heterogeneity

among "metro" and "non-metro" areas, it still allows us to capture characteristics of rural

places that may affect barriers to community involvement, including geographical breadth,

transportation concerns, limited access to community processes, "small-town" norms and

restricted opportunities for local engagement.

The dependent variables for this analysis are *Barriers to Community Involvement*.

Respondents were told that "many barriers keep people from being as involved with their

community as they'd like to be" and then asked to identify particular obstacles as follows:

- An Inflexible or Demanding Work Schedule or Inadequate Childcare
- Inadequate Transportation
- Feeling Unwelcome
- Concerns for your Safety
- Lack of Information or Not Knowing how to Begin
- Feeling that you can't Make a Difference

Responses were placed into categories of "very important," "somewhat important," "not

important" and "not applicable." For this analysis, a dichotomous variable was constructed,

collapsing data into non-barrier ("not applicable" or "not important") and barrier

("somewhat important" or "very important") responses.

It is worth noting that "community involvement" is self-defined by the respondent,

and could include any number of activities. As discussed above, this definitional challenge

is well-noted in the literature. However, while respondents and analysts might disagree

over what constitutes community involvement, the focus of this study is on how

characteristics of people and their communities impact individual perceptions of barriers

that may keep them from being involved in local processes.

The independent variables in this analysis include Age, Gender, Education, Race,

Employment, Income, Familial Status and Housing. **Age** in years has been collapsed into

dummy variables labeled "young" (18-29 years), "middle-age" (30-64 years) and "elder"

(65+). In this model, the "middle age" observations will be used as the reference group.

Gender has also been recoded into a dummy variable (male=0, female=1).

Education has been placed into three categories: High School Diploma or less (this includes those respondents with a GED), some college and college graduate. Those with "some college" represent a broad scope of educational experience, including those individuals with only one term of community college all the way to one term short of college graduation. These respondents will be held out as the reference group. **Race** has been constructed into four nominal variables, taking into account those respondents of Hispanic ethnicity. Non-Hispanic White respondents will be held out as the reference group, to which are compared to Asian, Non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic individuals.

Employment was collapsed into two categories: not employed (including temporarily laid-off, retired, homemaker, student and permanently disabled) and employed. **Relative Income** was computed utilizing household income levels as well as respondents' community median income. The concept of "relative income" suggests that individuals' behavior is guided more by their income relation to others, rather than an abstract standard for living (Duesenberry, 1949). Income data for each respondent household was provided as follows:

> 1 = $20,000 or less
> 2 = $20,000 but less than $30,000
> 3 = $30,000 but less than $50,000
> 4 = $50,000 but less than $75,000
> 5 = $75,000 but less than $100,000
> 6 = $100,000 or more

The median income category for each community was determined, and then respondent income category (in relation to their community median income level) was computed and collapsed into 3 categories as follows:

- If (individual income category < community median -1 income category) = low income
- If (individual income category = community median ± 1 income category) = median
- If (individual income category > community median + 1 income category) = high income

While this methodology may be unconventional, it serves to capture "relative" income with

limited data, particularly for those respondents at the top and bottom of the income scale.

The "middle income" respondents will be used as the reference group within our equation.

A dichotomous variable was constructed to identify **Families with children under**

17 (=1) and those with no children under 17 living in the household (=0). **Homeownership**

was also measured with a dummy variable--separating those respondents who own their

homes (=1) from those who rent (=0).

Table I examines univariate distributions for both dependent and independent

variables. An analysis of correlation indicates no issues with covariance or

multicollinearity between the variables utilized in our models.

Findings

Both bivariate analysis and multivariate logistic regression were employed to estimate parameters for the above mentioned variables. The theoretical equation for this research model is as follows:

$$\hat{L}\,\text{BARRIERS}_t = \beta_1 + \beta_2\text{ELDER}_t + \beta_3\text{YOUNG}_t + \beta_4\text{GENDER}_t + \beta_5\text{HSLESS}_t + \beta_6\text{COLLEGE}_t + \beta_7\text{BLACK}_t + \beta_8\text{ASIAN}_t + \beta_9\text{HISPANIC}_t + \beta_{10}\text{EMPLOYMENT}_t + \beta_{11}\text{LOWINCOME}_t + \beta_{12}\text{HIGHINCOME}_t + \beta_{13}\text{CHILDREN}{<}17_t + \beta_4\text{HOMEOWNERSHIP}_t + e_t$$

Table II demonstrates bivariate relationships, while Table III displays multivariate findings between the independent variables and barriers to community involvement.   Table IV presents multivariate results within rural and urban communities.   All results in Tables III and IV have been converted to odds ratios (e^L).

Hypothesis 1: In general, younger respondents are more likely to display practical barriers such as transportation or time commitments, whereas elders are more likely to indicate motivational barriers such as "not feeling needed."

Hypothesis 2: Because transportation infrastructure is less established in smaller communities, findings among younger respondents (in terms of "practical barriers") are likely to be more exaggerated in rural areas. There is nothing to suggest that the motivational barriers among elders would be different between rural and urban individuals.

The results in the bivariate analysis (Table II) partially support the first hypothesis, that younger respondents are generally more likely to identify barriers to community involvement than their middle age or elder counterparts. While around 24% of youth indicated transportation barriers, the most perceived barrier among respondents aged 19-29 was work or daycare issues ($\sim$ 41%) followed by a "lack of information or knowing where to get started" ($\sim$ 37%). Conversely, elders were the least likely to indicate barriers in all areas, including motivational obstacles such as not feeling welcome ($\sim$ 12%) or feeling as though they couldn't make a difference ($\sim$ 18.9%).

The multivariate analysis in Table III suggests that when controlling for other variables, elders are still generally less likely to identify barriers to community involvement than their middle age counterparts. As expected, this is particularly true regarding issues of work demands or daycare, with elders 64 percent less likely to identify these factors as constraints (p< .01). Although it was anticipated that elders would be more likely than others to identify "motivational" barriers to civic participation, the data reveal that even after controlling for other factors, elders are 47 percent less likely than middle age respondents to feel unwelcome and 32 percent less likely to feel that they cannot make a difference in their communities (p<.01).

Similar to bivariate outcomes, younger respondents are still more likely to acknowledge barriers to community involvement than their middle aged counterparts when controlling for other characteristics. As anticipated, younger individuals are 15 percent more likely than middle-aged respondents to identify transportation as an obstacle to becoming involved in their communities (p<.05). However, younger participants also indicate other barriers including a lack of information and feeling like they cannot make a difference. These findings support the literature that asserts youth are often not invited or empowered to participate in community decision-making processes.

With a lack of rural infrastructure and resources, it was expected that factors such as transportation could disproportionately constrain younger, rural respondents' community involvement opportunities. However, the data in Table IV (Rural/Urban) suggests that there is relatively little difference in patterns among rural and urban individuals. In fact, both the bivariate and multivariate analyses suggest that younger, rural respondents may be slightly less likely to identify certain barriers like information and work or daycare

Table I: Univariate Distributions (including Rural, Urban sub-samples)

	Entire Sample Set		Rural		Urban	
	n=	%	*n=*	%	*n=*	%
Age						
Elder	*2156*	15.1%	*378*	18.8%	*1778*	14.5%
Middle Age	*9224*	64.7%	*1307*	64.9%	*7917*	64.6%
Young	*2885*	20.2%	*328*	16.3%	*2557*	20.9%
Gender						
Male=0	*5969*	40.8%	*791*	38.6%	*5178*	41.2%
Female=1	*8645*	59.2%	*1260*	61.4%	*7385*	58.8%
Education						
≤ HS	*4869*	33.7%	*936*	46.0%	*393*	4.4%
Some College	*4754*	32.9%	*651*	32.0%	*4103*	46.3%
College Grad	*4812*	33.3%	*448*	22.0%	*4364*	49.3%
Income*						
< median	*2071*	16.7%	*328*	10.1%	*1743*	16.4%
Median	*7697*	62.2%	*1165*	36.0%	*6532*	61.5%
> median	*2599*	21.0%	*1741*	53.8%	*2351*	22.1%
Work						
Unemployed	*4986*	34.1%	*777*	37.9%	*4209*	33.5%
Employed	*9628*	65.9%	*1274*	62.1%	*8354*	66.5%
Race						
Black	*1763*	12.7%	*102*	5.2%	*1661*	13.9%
Asian	*358*	2.6%	*4*	0.2%	*354*	3.0%
Hispanic	*1259*	9.1%	*81*	4.1%	*1178*	9.9%
White	*10498*	75.6%	*1781*	90.5%	*8717*	73.2%
Family						
No Children	*8777*	60.3%	*1235*	60.3%	*7547*	60.4%
Children < 17	*5767*	39.7%	*814*	39.7%	*4953*	39.6%
Housing						
Do not Own	*4448*	30.6%	*365*	17.9%	*4083*	32.7%
Own	*10081*	69.4%	*1677*	82.1%	*8404*	67.3%
Barriers *(n and % of respondents identifying barrier)*						
Work Schedule	*5188*	35.7%	*622*	30.5%	*4566*	36.5%
Transportation	*2700*	18.5%	*359*	17.6%	*2341*	18.7%
Feeling Unwelcome	*3002*	20.7%	*384*	18.9%	*2618*	21.0%
Safety	*3663*	25.2%	*442*	21.6%	*3221*	25.7%
Information	*4503*	31.0%	*568*	27.9%	*3935*	31.5%
No Difference	*3535*	24.3%	*476*	23.4%	*3059*	24.5%

constraints than those younger adults in urban areas. As anticipated, the data in Table IV

demonstrates very little difference in identified barriers between rural and urban elders.

Hypothesis 3: Homeowners are less likely to indicate motivational barriers than those individuals who do not own their homes. This relationship will be consistent across rural, urban samples.

Homeownership figured prominently in the literature as a "resource based

motivator" for community involvement. As a result, it was expected that homeowners

would be less likely to indicate motivational barriers than those individuals who did not

own their homes. The results from the bivariate analysis support this finding, with only

22.6% of homeowners indicating that they can't make a difference, and only ~ 19% feeling

unwelcome (compared to ~ 28% and ~ 25% of renters, respectively).

This relationship was largely consistent across rural and urban respondents within

the bivariate analysis, although slightly fewer rural renters and homeowners indicated work

or daycare issues, and rural renters were about 4 percentage points less likely to identify

safety as a concern (compared to urban renters).

The findings in Table III indicate that when controlling for all other factors,

homeownership continues to decrease the likelihood of identified barriers to community

involvement. This is true across all areas, including motivational factors such as feeling

unwelcome and not knowing where to start, as well as practical obstacles such as

transportation and work or daycare constraints ($p < .05$). This relationship remained

consistent in Table IV, indicating that homeownership reduces the likelihood of barriers

regardless of geographic context.

Hypothesis 4: Those with lower relative incomes will likely identify more practical barriers, such as transportation, work or day care commitments than those individuals with middle or higher level incomes. With increased access to transportation, employment and

daycare resources in densely populated areas, these "resource based" barriers will be less prominent among low-income, urban individuals.

The bivariate analysis indicates that respondents with low relative incomes were more likely to indicate barriers in all areas, except work or daycare constraints, where ~29% of lower income respondents indicated a barrier compared to middle income individuals (~38%) and respondents with higher relative income (42.3%). As expected, inadequate transportation was identified as a barrier among more low income respondents (~ 31%) than their middle (~18%) and higher income (~13%) counterparts. This disparate pattern is also evident in the area of "safety" in which 34.8% of lower income individuals identify concerns for safety as an obstacle to community involvement, versus higher income respondents in the sample (18.7%).

When controlling for other factors, higher income levels continue to reduce the likelihood of identified barriers to community involvement. While findings for income and work or daycare constraints were statistically insignificant, the data indicates that lower income individuals are more likely to indicate barriers in all other areas. Table III reveals that this is particularly true in the area of transportation, where those with lower than median income are 54% more likely than middle income individuals to identify transportation as a barrier.

In addition to "practical" barriers like transportation, Table III also indicates that lower income individuals are 30 percent more likely to feel unwelcome, 16 percent more likely to identify an information hurdle and 20 percent more likely to feel like they can't make a difference. These data support findings in the research that suggest individuals must have both the capacity and motivation to be involved with their communities—and that lower income individuals are likely at a disadvantage in both areas.

Table II: N and %, Bivariate Analysis (Rural, Urban and Entire Sample)

		Work or Daycare Issues			Inadequate Transportation			Feeling Unwelcome			Concerns for Safety			Lack of Information			Can't make a difference		
		Rural	Urban	All	Rural	Urban	All	Rural	Urban	All	Rural	Urban	All	Rural	Urban	All	Rural	Urban	All
Age	Elder	9.3%	10.7%	10.5%	17.3%	16.3%	16.4%	12.4%	12.2%	12.2%	20.5%	23.0%	22.7%	19.0%	18.1%	18.3%	18.3%	19.1%	18.9%
	Middle Age	35.4%	40.9%	40.4%	17.0%	17.5%	17.4%	19.5%	21.2%	21.0%	20.7%	25.0%	24.4%	29.7%	32.7%	32.2%	24.9%	24.9%	24.9%
	Young	35.7%	41.7%	41.0%	19.9%	24.3%	23.8%	22.9%	26.4%	26.0%	25.9%	29.9%	29.5%	31.1%	38.2%	37.4%	23.8%	27.1%	26.7%
Gender	Male=0	25.5%	34.1%	32.9%	13.9%	17.1%	16.6%	15.8%	19.8%	19.3%	17.1%	21.6%	21.0%	22.2%	28.7%	27.9%	20.5%	23.2%	22.8%
	Female=1	33.6%	38.2%	37.6%	19.9%	19.8%	19.9%	20.8%	21.8%	21.6%	24.5%	28.6%	28.0%	31.4%	33.5%	33.2%	25.2%	25.4%	25.4%
Education	≤HS	26.3%	29.0%	28.5%	21.8%	23.4%	23.1%	20.1%	22.0%	21.6%	25.4%	29.2%	28.5%	30.3%	29.9%	30.0%	27.2%	26.4%	26.5%
	Some College	33.2%	38.6%	37.8%	16.4%	21.1%	20.4%	20.7%	23.7%	23.3%	21.5%	29.5%	28.4%	27.6%	34.7%	33.7%	22.6%	26.5%	25.9%
	College Grad	35.5%	41.9%	41.3%	10.5%	12.3%	12.2%	13.2%	17.6%	17.1%	13.4%	19.2%	18.7%	23.3%	30.4%	29.7%	16.5%	21.2%	20.7%
Relative Income	< median	27.0%	29.5%	29.1%	28.8%	31.1%	30.7%	23.7%	27.1%	26.5%	29.0%	35.9%	34.8%	33.3%	34.9%	34.6%	28.1%	30.6%	30.2%
	Median	32.8%	39.5%	38.4%	16.0%	18.9%	18.4%	19.2%	22.2%	21.7%	20.9%	26.7%	25.8%	28.5%	33.8%	33.0%	24.2%	25.5%	25.3%
	> median	35.5%	43.0%	42.3%	12.5%	12.6%	12.6%	13.8%	18.5%	18.1%	14.1%	19.2%	18.7%	22.2%	30.1%	29.3%	16.7%	21.7%	21.2%
Work	Unemployed	17.0%	20.5%	20.0%	19.4%	21.1%	20.8%	17.5%	18.8%	18.6%	23.3%	26.8%	26.3%	26.4%	26.3%	26.3%	23.8%	23.4%	23.4%
	Employed	38.7%	44.5%	43.8%	16.5%	17.5%	17.4%	19.8%	22.0%	21.7%	20.6%	25.2%	24.6%	28.8%	34.1%	33.4%	23.1%	25.0%	24.8%
Race	Black	26.7%	35.7%	35.2%	26.0%	26.9%	26.9%	22.8%	26.3%	26.1%	27.7%	33.6%	33.2%	25.7%	34.2%	33.7%	23.8%	27.7%	27.4%
	Asian	0.0%	40.5%	40.0%	0.0%	27.4%	27.1%	0.0%	29.4%	29.1%	0.0%	34.6%	34.2%	0.0%	37.9%	37.5%	0.0%	31.4%	31.1%
	Hispanic	30.9%	33.1%	33.0%	19.8%	24.9%	24.5%	22.2%	24.3%	24.1%	24.7%	31.0%	30.6%	29.6%	31.4%	31.3%	24.7%	26.9%	26.8%
	White	30.8%	37.0%	36.0%	16.7%	15.6%	15.8%	18.2%	19.0%	18.8%	20.7%	23.1%	22.7%	27.9%	30.8%	30.3%	23.0%	23.1%	23.1%
Family	No Children	23.7%	30.7%	29.7%	16.8%	17.3%	17.2%	17.7%	18.8%	18.7%	20.7%	24.2%	23.7%	24.6%	28.2%	27.7%	21.8%	22.8%	22.6%
	Children <17	40.9%	45.5%	44.8%	18.7%	20.9%	20.6%	20.8%	24.3%	23.8%	23.1%	28.1%	27.4%	32.9%	36.8%	36.3%	25.7%	27.2%	27.0%
Housing	Do not Own	33.2%	38.6%	38.2%	23.7%	25.6%	25.4%	21.6%	24.8%	24.5%	26.2%	30.9%	30.5%	33.6%	36.3%	36.1%	26.6%	28.5%	28.3%
	Own	30.0%	35.6%	34.6%	16.3%	15.4%	15.5%	18.4%	19.2%	19.0%	20.7%	23.3%	22.8%	26.7%	29.2%	28.8%	22.7%	22.5%	22.6%

As anticipated, the relationship between income and barriers remains largely stable across both rural and urban areas, although there are exceptions. While the bivariate analysis indicates that low-income rural individuals are marginally less likely to identify transportation as a barrier, this pattern changes when controlling for other variables. Table IV suggests that low-income rural individuals are 85 percent more likely than their higher income counterparts to identify transportation as a barrier (compared to low-income urban individuals, who are only 49 percent more likely than middle income urban respondents to identify the same barrier). This supports the hypothesis that "practical" barriers could be more constraining for low-income individuals in rural areas due to lack of resources and/or infrastructure.

Hypothesis 5: "Safety" barriers will be most notable among urban, low-income individuals. Smaller networks (e.g. "knowing all of your neighbors") within rural communities will make safety less of a barrier among rural individuals in general.

As more recent literature begins to look at place-based dynamics, neighborhood has become one way to measure income effects on individual engagement in community processes. "Safety" has been a notable factor, as the research suggests that low-income individuals in "central city" neighborhoods tend to feel unsafe and therefore less likely to volunteer in their communities. Therefore it was expected that safety barriers would be more evident among low-income respondents, and that this relationship would be exaggerated in urban areas. The results in Table II partially support this hypothesis, as lower income respondents are more likely to indicate safety obstacles than individuals with median or high income levels. This is supported when controlling for other factors among the entire sample: low-income individuals are 31% more likely than middle income respondents to identify a concern for safety as a barrier to community involvement (p<.01).

It was also expected that concerns for safety would be more readily evident in urban (central-city) locations than rural areas. The bivariate analysis in Table II supports these findings, indicating that 29% of lower income rural respondents identify safety as a barrier, compared to 36% of low income urban individuals. However when controlling for other factors, differences in safety concerns between rural and urban individuals are not as obvious. According to Table IV, low-income individuals in urban areas are 30 percent more likely than urban middle-income respondents to identify safety concerns as an obstacle; whereas rural individuals are 40% more likely than middle income rural respondents to identify safety as a barrier to community involvement.

While this is not a substantial discrepancy, it does raise questions about "relative safety" within rural communities. Do some individuals view safety as an issue in terms of bodily harm, while others' concerns for "safety" include more abstract ideals such as family reputation or preservation of self-esteem? How do these concepts of safety differ between rural and urban areas? This unexpected finding suggests that further work could be done in this area.

Hypothesis 6: As employment serves as both a means and motivation for volunteering, individuals who are employed will be less likely to indicate barriers in general (resource or motivational).

The literature largely indicates that employment serves as both a means and motivation for volunteering. Consequently, it was expected that being employed positively affects volunteering choices. However the findings in both Tables II and III do not consistently support this assertion. As could be expected, Table II indicates that people who work are twice more likely than their unemployed counterparts to see work hours or

Table III: Barriers to Community Involvement (Logistic Regression)***

	Work and/or Daycare Issues	Inadequate Transportation	Feeling Unwelcome	Concerns for Safety	Lack of Information	Can't Make a Difference
Age						
Elder	.338**	.774**	.531**	.809*	.569**	.685**
Young	1.059	1.145*	1.180**	1.112*	1.176**	0.984
Gender						
Female=1	1.418**	1.129*	1.148**	1.4**	1.307**	1.120*
Education						
< HS	.735**	1.071	0.906	0.964	.848**	1.032
College	1.113*	.622**	.744**	.648**	.890*	.795**
Relative Income						
< median	0.967	1.541**	1.299**	1.307**	1.153*	1.201**
> median	0.999	0.813**	.847**	.790**	.839**	.862*
Work						
Employed	2.062**	0.850**	1.051	0.984	1.176**	1.013
Race						
Black	.871*	1.536**	1.287**	1.410**	0.984	1.058
Asian	0.934	1.853**	1.661**	1.781**	1.159	1.418**
Hispanic	.799**	1.214*	1.092	1.204*	.853*	0.977
Family						
Children < 17	1.499**	1.132*	1.152**	1.118*	1.294**	1.153**
Housing						
Own	.873**	.698*	.892*	.804**	.798**	.819**
χ^2	1132.516	519.428	273.671	425.728	340.297	168.472
n:	*12,092*	*12,109*	*12,082*	*12,114*	*12,087*	*12,091*

*p<.05, **p<.01

***All estimates have been converted to Odds Ratios

**** Middle Age, "Some College." Median Income Level and "White" are reference groups

Table IV: Barriers to Community Involvement (Logistic Regression, Rural/Urban Comparison)***

		Work and/or Daycare Issues		Inadequate Transportation		Feeling Unwelcome		Concerns for Safety		Lack of Information		Can't Make a Difference	
		Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Age													
	Elder	.347**	.335**	0.72	.785*	.496**	.536**	0.7	.828*	.539**	.573**	.544**	.718**
	Young	0.99	1.065	1.055	1.157*	1.121	1.188**	1.233	1.096	0.961	1.204**	0.896	0.995
Gender													
	Female=1	1.953**	1.356**	1.430*	1.093	1.464**	1.111*	1.453**	1.397**	1.682**	1.263**	1.319*	1.094
Education													
	<HS	0.826	.733**	1.357*	1.033	0.956	0.904	1.189	0.942	1.149	.810**	1.274	0.993
	College	1.207	1.089	0.758	.604**	0.718	.739**	0.705	.631**	0.914	.873*	0.79	.787**
Relative Income													
	<median	1.134	0.943	1.855**	1.494**	1.369	1.286**	1.424*	1.301**	1.282	1.133*	1.205	1.203**
	>median	0.955	0.99	0.875	.803**	0.719	.855*	0.712	.784**	0.739	.836**	.675*	.879*
Work													
	Employed	2.372**	2.023**	0.937	.838**	1.101	1.044	0.939	0.99	1.101	1.175**	0.934	1.027
Race													
	Black	0.878	.845**	1.032	1.525**	1.384	1.260**	1.485	1.361**	0.845	0.97	1.158	1.041
	Asian	n/a	0.92	n/a	1.879**	n/a	1.659**	n/a	1.769	n/a	1.147	n/a	1.422**
	Hispanic	0.992	.765**	1.032	1.222*	1.164	1.067	1.046	1.182**	0.954	.837*	1.061	0.968
Family													
	Children <17	1.383**	1.531**	1.022	1.157**	0.988	1.185**	1.061	1.133*	1.186	1.325**	1.051	1.179**
Housing													
	Own	0.95	.877**	0.819	.685**	1.007	.884*	0.907	.807**	0.81	.805**	0.97	.804**
	X^2	180.351	954.514	59.315	472.758	42.31	239.027	52.624	379.602	61.304	299.219	41.778	142.584
	n:	1,709	10,383	1,713	10,396	1,705	10,377	1,713	10,401	1,710	10,377	1,708	10,383

*p<.05, **p<.01

***All estimates have been converted to Odds Ratios

**** *Middle Age, "Some College," Median Income Level and "White" are reference groups*

daycare as a constraint to community involvement. However, within the bivariate analysis, 21.7% of employed individuals also identified feeling unwelcome, 33.4% noted a lack of information and 24.8% said they didn't feel like they could make a difference (compared to 18.6%, 26.3% and 23.4% of unemployed respondents, respectively).

Controlling for other factors, the effect of employment was still varied (Table III). While employed individuals are still twice as likely to indicate work or daycare constraints as an obstacle, they were also 18 percent more likely to identify lack of information as a barrier to engaging in their communities. Furthermore, the data indicates that the relationships between employment and barriers to community involvement are consistent across rural and urban areas.

These findings do not support the notion that employed individuals have increased opportunity or invitation to be involved in local processes. Indeed, we could speculate that employment alone does not increase opportunities for civic engagement--but rather the nature of the job or the particular individuals one works with.

Hypothesis 7: Females are more likely to identify practical barriers such as daycare or work commitments, and less likely to indicate motivational barriers than their male counterparts.

Hypothesis 8: As rural women are more inclined to feel obligated or expected to volunteer in their communities, the effect of gender on barriers to community involvement will be less apparent in rural areas.

The well-researched relationship between voluntary activities and gender led to the expectation that females would be more likely to identify practical barriers to community involvement such as daycare or work commitments, and less likely to indicate motivational barriers than their male counterparts. The findings in our bivariate analysis partially support

this outlook, indicating that women were more inclined to identify practical barriers than men. For example, 37.6% of women noted work or daycare issues and 19.9% indicated transportation as an obstacle to community involvement, versus 32.9% and 16.6% of men (respectively). However, women indicate motivational barriers as well, with women respondents more likely than men to identify "feeling unwelcome" (21.6%) or "not being able to make a difference" (25.4%).

The results from the multivariate analysis in Table III support these bivariate results. When controlling for other factors, women are more likely than men to identify obstacles to community engagement in all areas. As expected, the most prominent of these relationships relates to a more "practical" barrier: women are 42 percent more likely than men to identify work or daycare as a constraint to their participation in community (p<.01). However, other noted hurdles include concerns for safety, lack of information and the feeling like one can't make a difference—women are over 20% more likely than men to identify each of these as barriers to community involvement.

The research indicates that expectations and inclinations to volunteer are greater for rural women, so it was expected that the effect of gender would be less apparent in the rural sub-sample. However, the findings demonstrate that the effect of being a woman (on all noted barriers to community involvement) may be stronger among rural respondents. Table IV indicates that rural women are almost twice as likely to have work or daycare barriers as rural men and 43% more likely to note inadequate transportation as an obstacle. In addition to practical constraints, women in rural areas are over 30 percent more likely to identify barriers in all areas than rural men—including concerns for safety (45%) and lack of information (68%).

Table V: Barriers to Community Involvement (Logistic Regression, Entire Sample)*** *

	Work and/or Daycare Issues		Inadequate Transportation		Feeling Unwelcome		Concerns for Safety		Lack of Information		Can't Make a Difference	
	Model I	Model II	Model I	Model II	Model I	Model II	Model I	Model II	Model I	Model II	Model I	Model II
Age												
Elder	.337**	.338**	0.774**	.775**	.531**	.531**	.808**	.808**	.568**	.569**	.685**	.685**
Young	1.057	1.058	1.144*	1.145*	1.179**	1.180**	1.110**	1.110**	1.174**	1.175**	0.983	0.984
Gender												
Female=1	1.418**	1.359**	1.129*	1.094	1.148**	1.112**	1.401**	1.395**	1.307**	1.260**	1.120*	1.092
Education												
<HS	.744**	.746**	1.074	1.077	0.912	0.915	0.977	0.977	.856**	.858**	1.036	1.038
College	1.103*	1.102*	.620**	.620**	.740**	.739**	.641*	.641*	.883*	.882*	.793**	.792**
Relative Income												
< median	0.973	0.971	1.544**	1.542**	1.303**	1.301*	1.317*	1.317*	1.158**	1.156**	1.204**	1.202**
> median	0.988	0.988	.810**	.810**	.842**	.842**	.779*	.779*	.831**	.831**	.858**	.858**
Work												
Employed	2.063*	2.071**	.851**	.853**	1.051	1.054	0.985	0.985	1.163**	1.167**	1.013	1.015
Race												
Black	.849**	.850**	1.525**	1.526**	1.268**	1.270**	1.366**	1.367**	0.963	0.964	1.048	1.049
Asian	0.911	0.909	1.840**	1.837**	1.637**	1.635**	1.727**	1.727**	1.135	1.133	1.407**	1.404**
Hispanic	.780*	.779**	1.205**	1.204**	1.076	1.076	1.166*	1.166**	.835*	.834*	0.968	0.967
Family												
Children <17	1.505**	1.359**	1.133*	1.133*	1.155**	1.155**	1.123*	1.123*	1.298**	1.298**	1.155**	1.155**
Housing												
Own	0.887*	.888*	.701**	.702**	.9*	.901*	.819**	.82**	.808**	.809**	.823**	.824**
Rural = 1	.807**	.652**	0.943	0.805	0.882	.746*	.763**	.746**	.834**	.689**	0.926	0.821
INTERACTION TERM												
(Rural * Gender)		1.406**		1.276		1.298		1.035		1.346*		1.211
χ^2	1145.619	1153.594	520.127	552.941	277.146	280.662	443.472	443.539	349.772	355.633	169.695	172.22
n:	12092	12092	12109	12109	12082	12082	12114	12114	12087	12087	12091	12091

*p<.05, **p<.01

*** All estimates have been converted to Odds Ratios

**** Model II includes Rural/Gender Interaction Term; Middle Age, "Some College," Median Income Level and "White" are reference groups

To see if there is something uniquely influential about being a rural woman, an interaction term (rural * gender) was included in a logistic regression model utilizing the entire sample (Table V). The results show that the interaction between gender and place is significant for two of the six barriers. Rural women are more likely than others (urban women, urban and rural men) to perceive work or daycare and lack of information as constraints to community involvement. No gender and place interactions were found for the other barriers.

The findings in Table V indicate that rurality decreases the perception of obstacles; however, within rural areas, particular characteristics impact the way individuals identify barriers to community involvement. Both the findings in Table IV and Table V indicate that this is particularly true for women. One possible explanation may be confusion over the term "community involvement." Little (1997) indicates that many rural women take on more informal caring roles within their neighborhoods. While this may contribute significantly to the well-being of a community, many rural women may not identify these activities as community involvement. Regardless, in light of heightened expectations for rural women to volunteer in their communities, these perceived constraints warrant further discussion.

Hypothesis 9: Individuals with children in the household, regardless of gender, are more likely to identify practical obstacles like daycare or transportation. Because of their increased social networking they are also less likely to indicate informational or motivational barriers to community involvement. This effect may be more obvious in rural areas, where transportation and childcare resources are likely more limited.

Individuals with children in their household have both the challenge of time and daycare constraints, as well as opportunities for increased social networks and motivation. Therefore it was expected that while individuals with children were more likely to indicate

work or daycare schedules as a barrier, they were less likely to specify motivational or informational barriers. Bivariate data indicate that those respondents with children were more likely than individuals without children to identify barriers to community involvement in all areas. The most disparate finding, as expected, was in the area of work or daycare constraints: 44.8% of respondents with children identified this as a barrier, compared to 29.7% of those individuals without children.

The findings in Table III suggest that after controlling for other variables, individuals with children under 17 are still more likely than respondents without children to indicate barriers in all areas. The most prominent of these constraints remained with work and daycare issues; individuals with children under 17 in the household were 50% more likely than those without children to identify work or daycare needs as a barrier to community involvement. However, the expectation that parents may have more access to social networks and opportunities for involvement was not supported by this data. Individuals with children were 29 percent more likely to identify a lack of information or "not knowing where to start" as a barrier to community involvement. Similarly, parents were 15 percent more likely than non-parents to feel that they "could not make a difference" in their communities. This relationship was fairly consistent across rural and urban areas.

Hypothesis 10: Those with higher levels of education are less likely to indicate barriers to community involvement compared to their less educated counterparts. There is no reason to believe that this relationship would be different among rural and urban individuals.

Education is well-established as a positive factor in community engagement among individuals. Within the bivariate analysis, college graduates are less likely than other respondents to identify barriers to community involvement, with the exception of work or

daycare constraints. This relationship was exaggerated in rural areas, with rural college grads less likely than urban college graduates to indicate barriers in all areas. Among the bivariate findings, the gap between those respondents with a high school diploma or less and "some college" is less distinguished, regardless of rural/urban context.

The data in Table III supports that with the exception of work or daycare constraints, college graduates are less likely to identify barriers than those respondents with less than a college degree. It is important to note that within certain areas, those with low levels of education (a high school diploma or less) were also less likely than respondents with "some college" to indicate obstacles to community involvement. For example, respondents with only a high school diploma as well as those with college education were both ~15 percent less likely than respondents with some college education to identify lack of information as a barrier to community involvement. We can plausibly reason that those with a high school diploma or college degree could be more "settled" in terms of employment choices; however without more specific data (and with a largely heterogeneous reference group) it is difficult to confirm such a speculation.

When controlling for both location and other key variables, the relationships between college education and barriers to community involvement remain largely the same; those respondents with higher levels of education are less likely to identify barriers. However, the relationship looks different among those with lower educational levels. In general, those with lower education in rural areas are more likely to indicate barriers to community involvement than rural respondents who have some college education. In urban areas, the inverse is true—individuals with only a high school diploma are less likely to

identify barriers than urban respondents with some college. While only some of these

findings are statistically significant, the pattern justifies further study.

Hypothesis 11: When controlling for other variables such as income, education and employment-- race should not be a significant factor when considering barriers to community involvement within urban areas.

Hypothesis 12: Due to a lack of diversity, we could anticipate that the "cohesive patterns" leading to community involvement amongst racial groups may not be as evident in rural areas. Therefore we could anticipate that there may be an effect of race on barriers to community involvement among rural respondents.

The bivariate data in Table II demonstrates that non-white individuals are more

likely to indicate barriers to community involvement in all areas, with the exception of

work or daycare issues. Furthermore, these relationships are consistent among both rural

and urban respondents. While it was expected that after controlling for other variables, race

alone would have little effect on individuals' choices surrounding community

engagement—Table III indicates that among the general population, non-white individuals

were generally more likely to identify barriers to community involvement than white

respondents.

The most consistent barriers among these groups were inadequate transportation

and concerns for safety. Asian, Black and Hispanic respondents were 85, 54 and 21 percent

more likely (respectively) than white respondents to identify transportation as a constraint.

Similarly, black respondents were 41 percent, Asians were 78 percent and Hispanics were

20 percent more likely than white respondents to indicate concern for safety as an obstacle

to community involvement. There were only two statistically significant exceptions in

these patterns; first, Black and Hispanic individuals are less likely than whites to indicate a

barrier in terms of work or daycare issues. Second, Hispanic respondents were less likely

than their white counterparts to identify "lack of information" as a hurdle to community involvement.

Small sample sizes made it difficult to address racial differences among rural and urban communities. However the patterns in the data indicate that these relationships remained largely consistent across rural and urban areas

Discussion

Anyone who has volunteered in their community has come across at least one of those individuals who constantly has their hand raised, are on all of the committees in the county or have held every position on the local school board. They are the people who have car bumpers full of stickers, reflecting the multiple organizations they belong to--and they walk around proudly wearing t-shirts that exclaim "somebody stop me from volunteering!"

Voluntary groups, coalitions and committees rely heavily on this type of committed individual to fund-raise, lead meetings and recruit other members—all while carrying out the mission of the organization or community. However explaining who is already involved may not be as important as identifying which groups are missing in local decision making processes. Too often, the people sitting around the table are the same well-intentioned people who volunteer for everything, regardless of how much they know or care about the social problems they are gathering to solve.

These same committed volunteers can also grow resentful or bitter about carrying more than their fair share. Wilson (2000) indicates that both volunteer burnout, as well as mis-matching of skills and assignments, are primary reasons individuals walk away from volunteer activities. As certain abilities may be more conducive to particular service roles, having a broader pool of "experts" would not only aid community organizers with their cause, but also assist in retaining valuable volunteer resources through better distribution of workload.

As communities emphasize participatory involvement in development or reinvention efforts, recognizing barriers among specific groups will help local leaders

identify what may be constraining underrepresented groups from joining in—and more importantly, may help communities strategize to bring these groups to the table.

By Invitation Only

Two examples of under-represented groups may be elders and youth. The current literature provides an important message for community planners: while youth and elders have significant time and effort to contribute, their skills are largely underutilized. Liu and Bessar (2003) assert that the large aging-in-place population in rural communities could be a valuable resource for local development efforts. Similarly, as many rural communities face out-migration of younger populations, youth participation in planning could provide the necessary insight for areas aiming to "reinvent" themselves. Identifying the potential barriers for youth and elder community involvement may help communities effectively recruit and maintain these valuable groups.

The findings in this study may lend some insight for community planners, both rural and urban. Results from our data indicate that older respondents identified fewer barriers to community involvement than younger individuals, which begs the question, "why are there not more elders participating in their communities?" The literature suggests that elder volunteers may be more inclined to engage in formal or organized efforts, particularly those in which they are invited to attend (Liu and Bessar, 2003). One could also speculate that while elders do not identify lack of information or feeling unwelcome as barriers to community involvement, many may not trust newer forms of communication such as the internet. Rather, elders could prefer "face-to-face" invitations from friends or other volunteers (Midlarsky and Kahana, 1994). This recruiting style may be considered too time

intensive for some organizations, particularly in less dense, rural areas where it may be required to drive from house to house, rather than walking door-to-door.

The form of invitation may not be as important for younger individuals as simply getting invited. Our study indicates that younger individuals are *more* likely to indicate barriers to community engagement than their middle age counterparts. While transportation and work obstacles are likely culprits (particularly in rural areas), younger respondents also identified lack of information and not feeling welcome as constraints to community involvement. This supports Franks (2006) and others who claim that the current structure of participatory democracy does not allow for younger participants, even though there is ample evidence to support that youth have both the capacity and desire to engage in their communities.

Bringing the Family Along

The findings in this analysis indicate that parents with children under the age of 17 in the household are more likely to indicate barriers to community involvement in all areas. Studies indicate that while parents would like to be engaged, they feel it more important to spend time with their children. This is particularly true for those parents who work full-time, including low-income households with multiple jobs. However, it has also been repeatedly concluded that children with parents who participate in their community are more likely to learn critical leadership skills through example, and also more likely to become civically engaged adults.

One strategy to bring parents into community processes is "Family Volunteering" which the Points of Light Foundation defines as community participation processes that engage both adults and their children. An example is the Studio 2B project offered by the

Girl Scouts of Metro Detroit, where adults and children work together to identify needs in

their communities then carry them out as families. One instance involved a small group of

families who identified a lack of safe recreational places for adolescents within the city.

The girls and their parents drew in other families, school personnel and prominent

businesses to build an operational plan and construct a grant proposal. During the course of

the project, families built stronger ties with one another and gained important leadership

skills along the way (Family Strengthening Policy Center, 2006).

Family volunteering strategies may also bridge the gender gap, as females are more

likely to indicate barriers to community involvement than males, particularly in the area of

work or daycare constraints. The literature strongly indicates that women see volunteering

as an important social networking tool; furthermore, there is an expectation in rural

communities that women will participate in community efforts (Little, 1997). The results

from our study which reveal women struggling to overcome challenges to engage,

particularly in light of expectations and inclination, is concerning and should be considered

when designing family volunteering or other community level strategies.

Consulting the Experts

One of the goals of family volunteering is to bring low-income households into

participation processes normally reserved for those with extensive resources or networking

ties. Implicit in this tenet is the assumption that certain groups may be excluded from

citizen involvement efforts, even though they could likely lend the most experience or best

solutions to particular social problems. One example can be found in a recent study

regarding rural youth homelessness in which Edwards et al. (2006) suggested that:

Table VI: Summary of Hypotheses and Findings

Hypothesis 1: Younger respondents are more likely to display practical barriers whereas elders are more likely to indicate motivational barriers	Younger individuals are more likely to display barriers in all areas—particularly in terms of work or daycare constraints and transportation.
Hypothesis 2: "Practical barriers" among youth are likely to be more exaggerated in rural areas. There will be no difference in motivational barriers among elders in rural and urban areas.	There is very little difference in terms of barriers among youth in rural or urban areas. The same is true for elders.
Hypothesis 3: Homeowners are less likely to indicate motivational barriers than those individuals who do not own their homes. This relationship will be consistent across rural, urban samples.	Homeowners are less likely to indicate barriers in all areas (compared to those individuals who do not own their home). The findings indicate this to be true regardless of rural/urban context.
Hypothesis 4: Those with lower relative incomes will likely identify more practical barriers than those individuals with middle or higher relative incomes. These barriers will be less prominent among low-income, urban individuals.	Individuals with lower than median income are more likely to indicate all barriers, with the exception of "work demands or daycare obstacles." The effect of income on transportation barriers was more apparent among rural individuals.
Hypothesis 5: "Safety" barriers will be most notable among urban, low-income individuals. Safety will be less of a barrier among rural individuals in general.	Low-income individuals are more likely to note safety as an obstacle to community involvement. The effect of income on safety was unexpectedly exaggerated among rural respondents.
Hypothesis 6: Individuals who are employed will be less likely to indicate barriers in general	This finding was largely true with two exceptions: employed individuals were more likely to indicate work or daycare constraints and "lack of information" as barriers to community involvement.
Hypothesis 7: Women are more likely to identify practical barriers and less likely to indicate motivational barriers than their male counterparts.	Women are more likely than men to indicate barriers to community involvement in all areas.
Hypothesis 8: The effect of gender on barriers to community involvement will be less apparent in rural areas.	The relationship between gender and barriers to community involvement is more apparent in rural areas.
Hypothesis 9: Individuals with children in the household are more likely to identify practical obstacles, and are also less likely to indicate informational or motivational barriers to community involvement. This effect may be more obvious in rural areas.	Those individuals with children under 17 in their household were more likely to indicate barriers to community involvement than those individuals without children
Hypothesis 10: Individuals with higher levels of education are less likely to indicate barriers to community involvement compared to their less educated counterparts. There is no reason to believe that this relationship would be different among rural and urban individuals.	Those with college degrees are less likely to indicate barriers, except for work and daycare constraints." The findings among respondents with "some college" and high school diplomas are less clear.
Hypothesis 11: When controlling for other variables such as income, education and employment-- race should not be a significant factor when considering barriers to community involvement within urban areas.	In general, non-white individuals are less likely to identify barriers to community involvement. Two exceptions are black and Hispanic respondents who are less likely to indicate work or daycare constraints, and Hispanic individuals who are less likely than whites to indicate "lack of information" as a barrier.
Hypothesis 12: There may be an effect of race on barriers to community involvement among rural respondents.	Small sample sizes made it difficult to assess the effects of race in rural areas.

"The lack of common understanding of the problem, and of the solutions between homeless youth and those who wish to assist them demonstrates that well-intentioned help from active community members can be misguided or misunderstood by the people they seek to help."

Efforts for broad representation are most commonly directed toward low-income individuals who are more likely to indicate barriers in all areas—including feeling welcome or needed. The findings in this report indicate that recruitment may not be enough to maintain local engagement. Instead, more focus should be placed on efforts to retain individuals in community processes. This is particularly true for those with less education and lower income levels, who may not feel they can effectively contribute to processes that require extensive technical knowledge or civic skills (Stephan, 2005). Neglecting retention efforts among "disadvantaged" individuals can lead to "disappointed participation," which not only leaves local participants disempowered, but may also affect their overall well-being (Dinham, 2006).

People get involved with their community, in part, to gain meaningful experience. They also volunteer because they want to make a difference. Consequently, if volunteers do not see opportunity to learn something new, use their skills or have a lasting impact—they are likely to walk away from community driven efforts. The idea of "disappointed participation" does not simply apply to disadvantaged individuals who feel out of place, but to any volunteer who finds their services misused or unnecessary. A lack of retention within community programs not only diminishes the power of local efforts, but could also reduce the likelihood of a burnt-out or underutilized volunteer from becoming engaged again.

Matching interests and volunteer roles is relevant for all community efforts, not just those driven to solve human needs or poverty. As with Elgin, and many other rural

communities, economic or community development goals are at the heart of participatory

processes. In these cases, it would be advantageous to both recruit and maintain prominent

business persons and local leaders in community involvement efforts. This study indicates

that while more highly educated respondents may be less likely to indicate obstacles to

becoming involved in their communities, the inverse was true for employed respondents

who were more likely to identify "lack of information" as a barrier to community

involvement than their unemployed counterparts. Providing educated, employed residents

with the necessary information to get involved, then matching their skills with the

appropriate tasks, could help communities like Elgin boost their local development efforts.

Suggestions for Further Research

This analysis offers insight for community planners; however, it also opens the door for further study. While starting to explore the dynamics of rural and urban community involvement, it is clear that more work is needed to examine the influence of "place" on individual choices. This is evident in the findings, which suggest that while rurality alone reduces the likelihood of perceived barriers to community involvement, characteristics of individuals within rural places impact both the magnitude and types of constraints identified.

One example may be the relationship between race and community involvement in rural places. While the sample size in this study was too small to make any generalizations, we could anticipate that the same factors motivating urban minority groups (e.g. environmental injustice, gentrification) are not as universally present in many rural places. Additionally, a lack of diversity in these areas would suggest that the "cohesive" involvement patterns that move minorities in urban areas to action may look different in rural communities.

Besides larger geographic contexts (such as rural and urban), the literature suggests more work needs to be done to examine neighborhoods and communities. Some of the findings, particularly those that indicated safety concerns among low income individuals in both rural and urban areas suggest that there are likely neighborhood or community dynamics that directly influence resident choices regarding community engagement.

While the quantitative studies all tell us something different, most suggest that numbers alone cannot capture the full range of factors that go into individuals' decisions to become engaged in their communities. McBride (2006) and others have recognized that in

order to continue the development of community involvement theory, it is necessary to look

beyond survey data and examine the "real life" challenges facing families, and what

strategies community leaders can employ to overcome them.

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