

Report on Experience with the Institute for Community Research (ICR), Hartford Connecticut

Dates: April 26-30, 2000

Participants: Ginny Boudreau, Bill Crossman, John Kearney, Flora Murphy

• Primarily the interviewers of a study attended the meeting. The study conducted by the network focused on school readiness of children between the ages of 0-5. Many of the interviewers were parents interested in Action Research.

Summary of Visit
Evaluation stage of the study.

• Focus groups came together and contributed to the design of the survey.

Wednesday, April 26

• Debrief interviewers and collect annotated information that may have arose during the interviews.

1) 6pm - 8pm: Attend meeting of Hartford Parent Network, facilitated in part by ICR.

Purpose and background leading up to meeting:
Experiences and Methodology of the study:

- Parents reluctant to participate. Suspicious of the intent of the survey and questioned the affiliation of the interviewer with government officials from Dept. of Children and Families. Necessary to stress what the parents surveyed would benefit from this study.
- Focus on respecting the parents interviewed privacy, and responses being kept confidential.
- Keep the interview to a reasonable time, or risk losing effectiveness.
- Training of the interviewers on survey techniques.
- Questions that are understandable, taking into consideration that may be working with varied population.
- Interviewers need to be aware of the social context in which they are working.
- Questions that serve as indicators to and of a wider and broader subject.

Parallels with our project:

- People approached to participate in survey were reluctant until provided with the relevance and importance of their participation (pizza coupon helped to increase participation).
- Survey participants suspicious and hostile towards government department.
- First time most of those surveyed had been asked for their input and ideas on the subject (bottom-up approach).

Applications to the SRSF:

*May want to look into their idea of the free pizza coupon presented as an incentive and thank you for parents who participated in the survey.

2) 9pm -11:45pm - Dinner and overview and introduction to the next two days.

- Dinner at J. Schensul's home with two other staff members from ICR. Dinner provided for an excellent opportunity to debrief the Parent Network meeting and to introduce and discuss the SRSF and the ICR's work, as well as an opportunity to exchange with each other on a personal level.

Thursday, April 27

1) 10am - 1pm: Orientation to ICR projects and discussion of the SRSF

Staff present for orientation and discussion:

Robert (Bob) Dushay - Ph.D, Data Analyst
Kim Radda - M.S., RN, Project Coordinator, High Risk Sites
Robert - Social Worker, High Risk Sites
Raul Pino - M.D., Field Outreach Interviewer
Jose - Participatory Observer in night clubs

Bob Dushay

- Discussed their Aids and Aging (50+) project: Potential that aging people living in subsidized housing contacting aids from accepting the solicitation of prostitutes. Very little data exists on this particular area.
- The research involved a study of the population of the building residents, versus a sample. We may want to consider avoiding only conducting a sample as well.

Kim Radda

- Needle exchange program, needle tracking and visiting high-risk sites (squatters).
- Community Alliance for Aids Program (CAAP).

Robert

- Social dynamics of high risk sites.
- Training of peers to train others on basic HIV education.
*The aspect of training peers to train others or to convey information or collect data may be worth considering.
- Collaboration between the ICR and the Hispanic Health Center on this project.

Jose

- Study on the use of Club drugs (rape drugs) of people between the ages of 16-24.

- Phenomena of street drugs moving into the club scene. Study of who is using the drugs.
- Project funded by the Federal government.

Raul Pino

- Pathways Program, studying the transition from soft drugs to hard drugs.
- Conducted 2-hour interviews exploring the social networks and the impact that those networks have on their decision to make the transition.
*Ethnographic component, a research methodology applicable to the SRSF.

2) 1:30pm 2:00pm

Brief meeting with J. Schensul to discuss the morning session and to prepare for the afternoon.

3) 2:00pm - 2:30pm - Short discussion concerning arts program at the ICR

David

- Assisted in the initiation of the arts program at ICR. ICR saw a deficit in the National Endowment for the Arts, and began a program.
- Field Work- Work with people in the arts to identify artist, particularly those who are isolated, but a mixture of people with talent.
- Research lasts 3-6 months. ICR has the techniques and supports to conduct the research. They also provide the option for video taping of interviews for those who are not comfortable doing written submission for support of their work.
- The goals of this program are:
 - Career development; have been more successful with individuals than organisations.
 - Institutional support for groups that are working with artists.
 - Community-based artist leadership.
- 16 week training on career development for artist. After which they are partnered for 3 years with mentors that will assist with career development (mentor may change during the 3 years).
*Similar to the SRSF in that we hope to create links with researchers that will continue the duration of the project.
- Exposure to exhibitions and others in the arts.

4) 2:30pm - 4:00pm Casey Foundation visit

- The Casey Foundation provides support for families in poverty. Their visit to the ICR was to discuss the dynamics in the Hartford community, and the approaches that the foundation should take when looking to make contributions and connections in Hartford.
- The meeting provided for us an opportunity and insight into Foundation interests and concerns when providing funding for community organisations.

5) 4:00pm - 5:00pm - Introduction to youths and the youth programs

- The first group we met with were addressing the concerns of teen sexual activity. They were preparing for a conference they would be attending the following day. Teens explained their work with the institute as facilitators of "action research" among their peers.
- The second youth group dealt with the issues of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transsexuals and their allies. The group had been together for just over a month, with meetings three times a week. Presently they were addressing the issues of their social relationships and defining and evaluating the role each component of their social network played in their lives.
- The ICR appeared to target individuals whom they felt would serve as peer action researchers.

Friday, April 28

1) 9:00am - Breakfast at the ICR with staff, providing further opportunity to meet staff.

2) 9:30am - 10:30am - Meeting with J. Schensul and two youth staff.

- Short discussion of the youth staff's roles and projects in which they are involved.
*Discussion with J. regarding ICR documents that should be useful for SRSF work, in particular teen training manuals which can be modified for other contexts, Ethnographers Toolkit, book by Theresa Trainer on environmental training.

3) 11:00am - 12:30pm - Tour of Hartford with youth staff member (Pablo) of ICR.

- The tour provided us with a view of the areas that ICR work and the projects that we had been told about.
- Providing us also with a feeling or sense of the inner city of Hartford, as well as the personal description of the experiences Pablo has had growing up in Hartford and with his work at ICR.

4) 1:30pm - 3:00pm - Meeting with the Aids and Aging Project members

Substantial amount of research done up to this point, the focus will now move toward education of those people who have been involved in the research studies.

Presently they are making presentations concerning health issues to the people studied. Part of that process was to ask participants what they wanted

presented to them.

Hopefully working toward having seniors presenting to their communities.

*This should hopefully be fulfilled by the CRCs in the communities.

They have learned to keep the training and presentations under 2 hours if they want seniors to respond and stay attentive.

*We will want to consider this when setting up workshops.

5) 3:00pm - 4:00pm - Meet with Lorie Broomhall, Ph.D., Ethnographer

- Discussion of the applications and functions of ethnography.
 1. Exploring the research questions.
 2. Developing a hypothesis from which a survey can be developed.
- She sees great value in teaching members of the community to do ethnography.

6) 4:00pm - 4:45pm - Visit to Art Gallery and discussion with Lynne Williamson, Associate Director, Arts Program

- ICR has incorporated Art into its vision and agenda as a research institute. The gallery is housed within the institute and is seen as an equally important facet of the institute.
- Discussion of incorporating art into a community project, and how to take steps to incorporate it into community-based programs. *Start with a broad focus group to encourage greater participation.
- Contact information provided for purposes of investigating the incorporation of the arts.

7) 5:30pm - 8:00pm - Supper with J. Schensul and wrap up of the visit

8) 8:00pm - 11:30pm - Ginny, Flora and J. attend Drag Show fundraiser at the Hispanic Health Center. Opportunity to see the great value of community and family support for a project and way of life.

Saturday, April 29 - Boston: John, Bill and Ginny visit the Museum of Fine Art

Sunday, April 30 - Return home.

Areas of Consideration

Areas to consider of the institutes work:

1. No extensive community-based organisation partnership, may be a reflection of the types of groups they are working with (aids/HIV victims and drugs users).
2. No sharing of data, they view the sharing as lending to advocacy purposes. Data is power and must be careful who has access to the power.
3. Not enough dissemination of information. How is the greater community benefiting from the research that is and has been conducted?
4. Participation of other community researchers: very selective invitations to work with them.