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Advancing Toledo's Neighborhood Movement through Participatory Action Research: Integrating Activist and Academic Approaches

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ABSTRACT

This paper first develops the methodology of participatory action research as a research process originating from community-defined needs, involving community members in conducting the research, and leading to community-based action. Within this research model, we discuss the difficulty of integrating the roles of activist and researcher. Secondly, the paper describes the outcomes of the coordinated efforts of an activist academic and a professional community organizer who have engaged in a series of research projects to increase the organizational effectiveness and urban redevelopment capacity of community-based development organizations in Toledo, Ohio. Thirdly, the paper evaluates our project, discussing how we addressed the problem of integrating activist and researcher roles.

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Introduction

Community-based development organizations, or CBDOs, are the new hope for successful urban development. Efforts to conduct urban redevelopment through centralized government and corporate controlled planning processes have often not met the needs of citizens, and have even been met by citizen resistance (Henig, 1982; Worthy, 1976). The community-based organizations which emerged in the 1970s in an attempt to halt projects, from high-rise construction in Minneapolis (Stoecker, 1988) to highway expansion in Toledo (Melvin, 1986), have given rise to proactive community-based development organizations in the 1980s. The proactive CBDOs are often as successful in creating development as the reactive organizations were in preventing it (Giloith & Mier, 1989). The Federally-established National Commission on Neighborhoods (1979) concluded that authority could be better exercised, programs could be better administered, and public funds could be better spent at the neighborhood level. Ten years later the national non-profit Center for Community Change (1988) provided examples of multiple cases where CBDOs were viable alternatives to centralized urban redevelopment planning. Finally, the 1990 National Affordable Housing Act endorsed CBDOs and set aside funds for CBDO projects (Center for Community Change, 1991).

Yet, these organizations do not always succeed. Many fail even to organize effectively, and many who do organize end up accomplishing very little. The burdens borne by CBDOs are tremendous—they must act as realtors, bankers, developers, and politicians all rolled into one as they attempt to refurbish their community housing and reinvigorate their local economies. The work they do is highly technical, filled with political and financial trap doors, and is extraordinarily expensive. Thus, CBDO members require access to highly specialized skills and to funding in order to purchase those skills.

When one CBDO fails to meet its goals, the tragedy is manageable, as other organizations often rise to take up the slack. When an entire city lacks effective CBDOs, however, the tragedy multiplies.

Can academic researchers play a direct role in improving the chances of success for CBDOs? If so, what is the role of the researcher in community-based development organization, and what is the relationship between the academic and the activist? This paper describes the outcomes of the coordinated efforts of an activist academic and a professional community organizer who have engaged in a “participatory action research” project to increase the organizational effectiveness and urban redevelopment capacity of community-based development organizations in Toledo, Ohio.

Participatory Action Research

The concept of participatory action research is drawn from the fields of community psychology and community development. Community development specialists have continued to refine what they have variously referred to as "community research" (Kelly, 1979; Kelly, Muñoz, & Snowden, 1979), "community-based research" (Snowden, Muñoz, & Kelly, 1979), "social action research" (Voth, 1979), and, most recently, "action research" (Lorion, Hightower, Work & Shockley, 1987; Truman, et al., 1985). Brown and Tandon (1983) distinguish the differing traditions of "action research" and "participatory research", and argue that participatory research provides community members with more control over the research process and emphasizes structural change, as opposed to the individualistic approach of action research. The variant of "action research" used by community development activists is much closer to Brown and Tandon's "participatory research." In the latest attempt to bring the field into focus, Whyte (1991) has adopted the term "participatory action research" and applied it generally to projects which fall along the entire continuum from action research to participatory research. Thus, because we emphasized community control of the research process, even though structural transformation is a far-off goal, we will refer to our process as "participatory action research."

Voth (1979, p. 72) has developed the most complete definition of this research process using the term "action research:"

Action research is research used as a tool or technique, an integral part of the community or organization in all aspects of the research process, and has as its objectives the acquisition of valid information, action, and the enhancement of the problem solving capabilities of the community or organization.

Voth (1979, p. 73) goes on to emphasize that this research process "almost always involves a commitment to problem solving and decision making *with* people instead of for them" [emphasis in original]. The ultimate goal of participatory action research is "helping community people to become subjects instead of objects, acting on their community situation instead of simply reacting" (Voth, 1979, p. 75).

There are three basic components to participatory action research. First, community-defined needs must generate the research design—not capitalist needs, not government needs, not the researcher's needs, but needs as defined by the community (Snowden, Muñoz & Kelly, 1979; Voth, 1979). Sometimes this is accomplished through surveys of the community (Goudy

& Tait, 1979; Truman, et al., 1985), and sometimes through community meetings (Jason, et al., 1988; Meeks, 1989). The researcher's role may often be to help community members to define their needs, and to balance the researcher's resources with the needs of the community.

The second basic component of participatory action research is that community members must be involved in carrying out the research itself by helping to design the research questions (Truman, et al., 1985), and by becoming involved in data-gathering (Goudy & Tait, 1979). "Basic sociology" researchers working in Marxist and feminist traditions have, in fact, been at the forefront of this "collaborative" research practice. Lather (1986) reviews examples of "research as praxis," showing how various researchers have involved the "subjects" of the research in the research process itself, both to check accuracy and to elicit further information. Luxton (1980) solicited help from the women of Flin Flon in designing her interview procedures in that community. Willis (1977), in his work in a British working class community, went back to community members themselves to review and comment on their work. This served both to elicit further information and to provide confirmation of the researcher's work.

This research collaboration is often taken one step further by community activists to include an additional level of "action"—community participation through political action with information as the goal. Barry Greever (n.d.) refers to this as "making the information the issue." He argues that oppressed people gain ownership of information by demanding it, and gain strength vis-a-vis their opposition by forcing power holders to give out information that is detrimental to their continuing abuse of power.

The third basic component of participatory action research is that the community must become involved in actually using the research results. In Sac City, Iowa, community leaders used a survey of residents in 27 rural towns to educate residents about their collective perceptions and to organize them to plan action programs and establish action priorities (Goudy & Tait, 1979). In Lansing, Michigan, the initial results of the action research were distributed and discussed at a neighborhood meeting. The reactions to that research resulted in a longer draft of the results, and led to plans for a neighborhood watch program, an expansion of the food co-op, the development of a health clinic, and other services and future research plans (Truman, et al., 1985).

One issue that has not been clearly addressed by those writing in the broad area of participatory action research is how the roles of the researcher, who takes responsibility for carrying out the research, and the activist or organizer, who takes responsibility for community control of the research process and its action outcomes, relate to or clash with one

another. Should the researcher, as an expert, ever advocate a position, or do they serve as only a technician? Should the researcher and activist roles ever be combined?

There are two main problems facing the participatory action researcher in the community which seem to point to the importance of the organizer role. First, community members must be convinced that it is in their best interest to give this researcher their time, to answer what may appear to be a lot of stupid or irrelevant questions, and to trust that the answers will be used wisely. Participatory action researchers widely agree that one of the initial problems facing the researcher is overcoming community members' distrust of outsider experts (Jason, et al., 1983; Kelly, 1979; Kelly, Muñoz & Snowden, 1979). To the extent that the researcher develops a solid knowledge of the political and social dynamics of the community (Kelly, 1979; Kelly, Muñoz & Snowden, 1979), is sponsored by recognized legitimate community leadership, creates a community-based research program guided by the community, and conducts the research with the participation of recognized leaders, however, he or she will be able to overcome some of this distrust. The organizer can sponsor the researcher into the community in a way the researcher might not be able to accomplish on his own.

A second major problem concerns the role of the researcher in the decision-making process surrounding the research. The researcher may be called upon to engage the community in the research, interpret research results, and evaluate various action options in light of the research findings (Jason, et al., 1988). Favero (1937) classifies community decision making into three different styles, based on the role which the community development specialist plays in the decision-making process. "Informed decisions" may be made through any of a number of processes, but the specialist provides only knowledge and does not make any recommendations or advocate any positions. When the specialist organizes a democratic decision making process but does not advocate any position in that process, "democratic decisions" occur. "Just decisions" occur when the specialist advocates a particular position. Favero recognizes that it's almost impossible for the specialist not to advocate any position, but argues that the specialist should work toward democratic decisions rather than taking a conscious advocacy role. For the participatory action researcher, the more involved the researcher in interpreting the research and directing the decision making, the greater the danger that they may advocate a particular interpretation of the research results and ultimately subvert participation. An organizer, however, can help build strong local leadership and develop a process which maintains the researcher's voice while also balancing it with the community voice.

What follows is a description of how an academic researcher and a community organizer joined forces in a participatory action research project. We will follow this description with a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the project, giving special attention to the advantages and disadvantages of separating the roles of activist and researcher.

Participatory Action Research for Toledo CBDOs

Toledo, Ohio, has poorly weathered the economic decline of the late 1970s and 1980s, and the Reagan restructuring. Much of the basic industry on which Toledo depended has left or is in the process of leaving. As a consequence, poverty is widespread, as are the problems which go hand in hand with poverty—abandoned and deteriorating housing, vandalism, crime, empty commercial storefronts, an absence of dignified and well-paying employment, and a lack of response by city government to the needs of low income neighborhoods.

In the absence of official recognition of community problems at either the local or the national level, CBDOs have sprung up across the city. Eleven have formed since the beginning of the Reagan administration. Sometimes this has involved the revival of an inactive organization, and sometimes it has involved the establishment of a brand new organization. Much of this CBDO activity has been haphazard, with little coalition or umbrella group planning.

In 1987, the University of Toledo Urban Affairs Center hired a half-time community organizer. Dave Beckwith was a long-time Toledo community organizer who was also working with the Washington D.C.-based Center for Community Change. In 1988 the Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work department at the University of Toledo and the Urban Affairs Center jointly hired Randy Stoecker to work half-time in each unit. Randy had just finished a Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota, and had written a thesis on an activist neighborhood in Minneapolis which had successfully enacted a community-controlled urban renewal plan. Dave and Randy both came to the Urban Affairs Center, then, with a commitment to community-based urban revival.

The Initial Research

One of Dave's first acts at the Urban Affairs Center was to collect recommendations from Toledo CBDOs for needed research projects. The list which was generated included about twelve items ranging from an envi-

ronmental survey to a survey of daycare needs, and included a recommendation to conduct a needs assessment of Toledo CBDOs. Partly because of the match with Randy's skills, the CBDO needs assessment became the first community-based research project to be conducted as part of the new Urban Affairs Center program.

There were four strategic advantages to selecting a systematic review of Toledo neighborhood groups as a priority project. First, it would provide a 'bridge' between the Urban Affairs Center and these groups in a way that touched every group. This is similar to the weekly newspaper that lists the cub scout awards and the PTA attendance roster—people identify with a product that mentions their group. Secondly, the review would serve as the first step in bringing order and purpose into the disorganized world of Toledo community-based development and advocacy organizations. Thirdly, such a study could begin to focus public attention on the role that community groups already played in Toledo, building political power behind the effort to enhance this role. Finally, the study would quantify the unmet funding needs of Toledo's community-based development groups, a necessary first step in developing a strategy to meet these needs.

The participatory action research model guided the project. Randy drafted a preliminary interview guide and sent it to five central members of the Toledo CBDO movement who had been identified by Dave, and revised the draft based on their recommendations. Twenty-two community-based development groups (the complete population) in Toledo were identified through the recommendations of these central CBDO activists, and invited to participate.

The smallest had no operating budget and no staff; the largest had a \$237,000 operating budget and three staff. We sent letters to either the board chairs or the executive directors of each of the CBDOs inviting them to a meeting to discuss the study. Those who attended the meeting then had the opportunity to comment on the interview guide. Those who did not attend were mailed a copy of the interview guide and were asked to comment on it. Randy collected all comments and rewrote the interview guide one last time.

Members of twenty of the twenty-two CBDOs were initially surveyed, and most were then followed up with a phone interview to better determine training needs and inter-organizational links. All research was completed between November, 1988 and February, 1989. A two page summary of the interview responses for each CBDO was prepared and mailed to the original contact to check for omissions and errors. A preliminary draft of the research results was then circulated to representatives of all CBDOs for

their comments, and a final draft was completed based on the corrections provided by CBDO members.

The findings of this research project were distressing. First, there was a terrible shortage of funding. The CBDOs identified \$2,153,100 as the total core budget support which was needed—more than double their total actual funding level. The sources of funds available for core budget funding were extremely limited and there were fears among neighborhood groups that both city and private sources were drying up. There was also resentment between groups that CBDO funds were not distributed fairly, though the research showed that city funds to CBDOs generally corresponded to the level of need as measured by boarded-up housing and poverty rates.

Secondly, the geographic areas served by CBDOs often overlapped, usually without the knowledge of members of either organization, and there was very little inter-organizational coordination. Finally, many of the organizations barely existed. They had offices but no signs, only occasional newsletters, few or no staff, intermittent phone service, and generally lacked the skills to accomplish significant redevelopment or even to influence the course of redevelopment in their neighborhoods.

The Research Conference and the Working Group on Neighborhoods

In order to accomplish the study's goals, Dave proposed that the results should be presented at a spring conference. One objective of the conference would be to mobilize city officials, foundation representatives, and CBDO members to restructure and reinvigorate community-based development in Toledo. The key to accomplishing this was to structure the conference around the question "What are WE going to do about this problem that WE have?" to emphasize that foundations, the city, and CBDOs each had a role to play. Dave organized meetings with the editor of the only newspaper in Toledo, with our U.S. Congresswoman, and with the Toledo city council in order to "buy in" various interest groups in a non-threatening way.

Randy's participatory research practice helped to mobilize CBDO members. Each time we sent out drafts of the research results for CBDO members to critique we revealed more of the conference plans, to attempt to build interest and stress the conference's importance.

The conference, in June of 1989, was attended by government officials ranging from U.S. Congresswoman Kaptur to city housing officials (though the conservative mayor and most council members were absent), by a number of foundation officials, and by representatives from nearly all of the CBDOs. We began the conference with food, followed by short speeches,

a brief discussion of the research results (by this time most participants had read or been told the results two or three times), and then a brief question-answer session. The second part of the conference was organized to develop strategies to meet the challenges posed by the research results. We sent the CBDOs to one room and the government officials and funders to another, and asked each to develop a list of demands—what they wanted from the other group—and a list of what they would provide in return. A member of each group was recruited by Dave and Randy to facilitate their group, after consultation with CBDO members and city leaders, to ensure that potential facilitators were seen as being above hidden agendas or favoritism.

When we brought the two groups together at the end of the conference, there was amazing agreement. The CBDOs wanted long-term, stable, increased funding for operating expenses, in contrast to the short-term, unpredictable, low funding focused on project support which was currently available. In return, the CBDOs were willing to increase their skill levels, and were willing to create and submit to accountability mechanisms to prevent money from being wasted. The government-foundations group recognized the need to provide a different quality of financial support than was presently available, and the foundations, in particular, agreed to develop funding plans to provide for longer term, more predictable, and higher funding levels for operating expenses. In turn, they demanded that measures be developed to ensure that the money they were providing was actually having an impact.

With the great deal of energy generated by the level of agreement from the two groups, a core group of eight members (four from each group), along with Dave and Randy, agreed to meet to develop a plan to address the funding, interorganizational coordination, and development issues. With this core group eventually expanded to twelve to better represent the diversity of Toledo neighborhoods, the “Working Group on Neighborhoods” (WGN, pronounced “we gone”) was formed from the original conference participants. The core group was responsible for scheduling meetings and agendas, and the members of this group eventually became the chairs of the four WGN subcommittees. One subcommittee was formed to develop an extensive training model for CBDO members, another was formed to develop and distribute a resource guide to all sources of technical assistance available to Toledo CBDOs. The third subcommittee was formed to organize and plan a study of the funding patterns and decision-making processes of all of the major Toledo foundations. The fourth subcommittee was formed to look at how CBDOs were funded in other cities and to eventually develop a plan for Toledo.

By the spring of 1990, all of the subcommittees had accomplished their tasks. The technical assistance subgroup, with funding and staff assistance from the city of Toledo, created, duplicated, and distributed a guide to technical resources for Toledo CBDOs. The funding model subgroup, led by the director of the Toledo Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) and a neighborhood activist, created a plan to distribute funds to Toledo CBDOs in such a way as to maximize fairness and CBDO accountability.

Another neighborhood staffer, heading up the training subgroup, got a basic training program up and running in early 1990. Randy, co-chair of the funders study subgroup, began a new research project designed to increase understanding of Toledo-based philanthropic foundations and to increase foundation officials' understanding of CBDOs.

The last project, the foundation study, proved to be the most difficult. The goal of the study was first to understand the distribution of philanthropic money between community-based development and other activities, and second, to understand why foundations chose to distribute their monies in that way. The core committee of WGN went over the proposal and made recommendations on both the issues Randy was addressing and how to conduct the research. We also worked with members of three large foundations with Toledo offices, who educated Randy in the philanthropic culture of Toledo and who helped him gain access to insider information.

Aside from those foundation officials who had already begun to participate in WGN, however, the foundations refused to participate in the design of the study and refused to be interviewed. CBDO members helped to design the interview guide in order to elicit the information which would be most helpful to them, but the research "subjects" simply refused to participate.

Even with these problems, however, the research yielded information which could be used to the advantage of CBDOs. While it was clear that Toledo foundations gave very little money to Toledo CBDOs, it was also clear that they gave large sums of money to similar social service organizations, and to the United Way to distribute to other social service organizations. Thus, the research results not only provided hope that CBDOs might increase their share of the funding pie, it also supported the creation of a "coordinated appeal" funding model, which the funding model subgroup had begun to work on. It became clear from Randy's conversations with the few foundation officials with whom he was able to speak that foundations were reluctant to fund risky activities and were often unable to determine that risk. A United Way type of organization helped to reduce the risk. Thus, the creation of a coordinated appeal for CBDOs would reduce their "riskiness." As with the first research project, the results were distributed to elicit feedback on their usefulness and accuracy.

The second annual WGN conference, in June of 1990, brought together the work of these subgroups in a powerful pitch for increased funding for Toledo CBDOs. Shortly before the conference, we had received word that we were likely to receive nearly \$500,000 from the federal government, which would be matched with \$100,000 in local money and \$150,000 from the national LISC, to create a pool to provide operating budget support to Toledo CBDOs. The conference then came to be as much a celebration as a push for change. A central part of the conference was a presentation of the research results from the foundation study, though this latest round of research did not create the immediate action that the first round did. The conference also, finally, provided a chance to focus and evaluate the group's efforts over the past year, and to begin discussions of an evaluation/goal-setting process that would begin in the fall of 1990.

So what have we to show for our efforts? first, we have been able to create an issue for participatory action research and have made some progress toward solving that issue. By focusing on the lack of funds available to CBDOs, we have been able to increase the flow of resources to community-based development. WGN has created the "Toledo Fund for Neighborhood Development," which assures multi-year funding for at least some of Toledo's CBDOs. The training program uses these resources and will hopefully also generate resources in terms of greater skills for CBDO members. The development of a funding model, and the availability of research to support it has provided room for the involvement of both the federal government and local foundations to provide potentially large sums of money to fund the Toledo CBDOs.

Secondly, the recommendation that CBDOs need to work together has been realized in three joint projects. In one case, three existing neighborhoods have combined to form their own CBDO. In another case, two existing CBDOs—one emphasizing advocacy and another emphasizing development—have combined their talents in a housing rehabilitation program. In a third case, two adjoining organizations have begun to discuss the possibility of developing some joint projects to maximize the use of staff talents. The original research project, and the strategy for carrying the results into practice, then, have set into motion a variety of projects, given them guidance and goals, and generated subsequent projects.

Activist and Academic Roles in the Toledo CBDO Project

This project is an effective example of participatory action research. The original research was generated out of community-defined needs, hav-

ing grown from a "Community Research Agenda" compiled by Dave Beckwith with the assistance of local organizers, was designed and carried out with researcher-community collaboration, and has been used by community activists. The degree of involvement by individual CBDO activists has varied tremendously throughout this process. A core group of five or six took this project very seriously, but others lacked either knowledge of the research process or trust that the research would help them. The second research activity—the foundation study—also fit the participatory action research model. Because the foundation study was an attempt to expose the barriers to funding CBDOs, it was partly "adversarial research" (Brown & Tandon, 1983), attempting to expose the structural sources of the problems which CBDOs faced.

The interesting aspect of this participatory action research project has been the relationship between the main researcher, Randy, and the main organizer, Dave. We have practiced a sharp division of roles throughout this process. This has been due partly to the hectic pace of each of our lives and partly to our different skills and backgrounds. Dave has been participating in community organization in Toledo for many years, and does not have formal training in social research. Randy has well-developed research skills, but is a newcomer to Toledo and has very little community organization experience. In some ways, then, Dave has provided the motivation and guidance for the project, while Randy has provided the technical expertise and the labor for the research projects which Dave has used as a basis for organizing the CBDOs. What are the benefits and difficulties of dividing the labor of researching and organizing, and how does this division provide solutions to the issues of gaining community legitimacy for the research and maintaining a community-based decision-making process?

One benefit of this division of labor is that it is efficient and practical. For each of us to do the other's tasks as well would require much more time and energy, and would probably produce many more mistakes. Neither one of us would be able to accomplish this entire project ourselves, since both the research aspects and the organizing aspects are very time consuming. It is unlikely that Randy would have still been able to engage in this research at all without Dave's sponsorship. Dave may have been able to organize the CBDOs, but would have lacked an understanding of the issues, and the effect that academic research has in legitimizing the issues.

Another advantage of this division of labor is that it protects the legitimacy of both of our roles. Randy's work is perceived as "objective" and "scholarly" partly because Randy is not seen as pushing an agenda. Dave can organize around the issues generated by the research without being

strongly associated with the creation of the research findings. This was especially true in the first round of research, which painted such a grim picture of Toledo CBDs. Dave did not have to deal with accusations of having generated an agenda, and could be seen as responding to issues generated by others.

Finally, perhaps the most important advantage of our division of labor is that it reduced the role ambiguity for both of us. Randy could avoid the difficulties associated with an outsider pushing an agenda and undermining community control. The problems of evaluating potential action strategies (Jason, et al., 1988), overcoming community distrust (Jason, et al., 1988; Kelly, 1979; Kelly, Muñoz, & Snowden, 1979), and advocating community positions (Favero, 1987) are reduced by having local activist sponsorship of participatory action research.

Overall, then, our role separation has allowed us to successfully avoid a number of dilemmas a single individual occupying both the organizer and the researcher roles would have faced. But this division of labor also creates two disadvantages. First, both the organizing and research activities have been in our hands. We originally prioritized issues, and defined the most effective process for resolving those issues. The research framed the issues, and ultimately emphasized that before CBDs could accomplish anything substantial they needed to drastically improve funding. The WGN subcommittee structure reflects the issues framed by the research. Randy worked hard to make sure that the first round of research reflected the input and needs of community members, and Dave worked hard to make sure the subsequent organization reflected the issues raised by the research findings, but the actual work of creating the research findings and organizing around those findings remained primarily in our hands. It has been encouraging, however, that the funding model subgroup created a model for funding Toledo CBDs without much intervention from either Dave or Randy. And the second year of WGN, begun with a goal-setting retreat, decentralized influence even further and revived WGN membership involvement.

Another disadvantage is that our present division of labor inhibits the development of critical theorizing. Randy's academic perspective is informed by neo-Marxist urban theory and social movements theory. While Dave's organizing perspective reflects those theories, he is much more interested in the practical Alinsky-type concerns of redistributing power to communities than in exploring and employing grand theory. In organizing the CBDs, then, Dave's perspective has prevailed, and probably for good reason, since it is unlikely that attempting to employ more critical abstract academic theory would yield any results. Toledo CBD members do not operate from a radical world view and are much more focused on solving

their immediate problems, making them unlikely to be sympathetic to a critical theorizing process.

Conclusion

Even though there is a long road to travel to create effective community-based development organizing, we are still hopeful about the role to be played by action research. There is a continuing commitment among a healthy core of Toledo's CBDOs to make this process work. People are continuing to show up for meetings, they are accomplishing the activities which they have agreed to take responsibility for, and every mass meeting of WGN shows clear steps toward meeting the groups' goals. There are occasional difficulties in getting subcommittees to meet, or making sure that subcommittee representation is not skewed against CBDOs or certain kinds of neighborhoods, but there is a continuing sensitivity to those issues by WGN members, and ready accommodation.

Our experience with this process shows that there are no formulas to follow in designing and carrying out participatory action research, and all the guidance of community development experts must be qualified. Favero's (1987) fear that the professional who acts as an advocate might disempower communities is well founded. Yet, if Dave and Randy had not acted as advocates in the initial organization of WGN, the group would likely not have formed. Snowden, Munoz, and Kelly's (1979) and Voth's (1979) emphasis on organizing action research around community needs is also important. Yet, had we not set out on our own in choosing one of the community-generated research projects and its dimensions, there would be no WGN. Indeed, Dave's response to this problem is that "my job as an organizer has always been to push, to prod, to suggest, to test out, to listen actively, to pressure folks to move rather than talk—not to decide for them but to make sure they decide!" The community agenda is created through the mutual involvement of the researcher, the organizer, and the community—it can be no other way. The very act of research will necessarily highlight certain issues, and which issues are to be highlighted are necessarily affected by the research design, which, in turn, is necessarily affected by the researcher.

Ultimately, there is a role for researchers to play in showcasing and publicizing needs within communities, similar to projects in Lansing, Michigan (Truman, et al., 1985) and Sac City, Iowa (Goudy & Tait, 1979). In these projects, however, there was clear initial sponsorship by community organizations and/or leaders. In our case, there was initial support of only a

few CBDO organizers which we then had to further develop. We can, then, conduct descriptive research to show communities that they have needs and that possibilities exist for change. It would be presumptuous of us to prioritize those needs, or to propose solutions, since that is the community's task. But researchers' reluctance to provide even a forum for citizens' needs to be made visible often contributes to inaction and continuing difficulties.

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