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Outcomes of Two Construction Trades Pre-Apprenticeship Programs: A Comparison

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Jobs in unionized construction trades are among the few forms of employment that provide significant, rapid, upward mobility to people who fall into the category of “hard to employ.” However, such jobs have also historically been racially exclusive. In many cities, community-based organizations have acted as workforce intermediaries to address this issue of access. Judging the success of these programs is difficult. This paper compares and offers explanations for the different outcomes of two construction trade pre-apprenticeship programs that targeted a hard-to-employ demographic. Both were run by the Building Bridges Project of Arise Chicago. Both were intended to increase minority access to unionized building trade apprenticeship programs, and ultimately to union work in construction. The self-selection process, the high level of support provided to participants in one class but not the other, and a close organizational relationship to the United Brotherhood of Carpenters (UBC) at a time when that union explicitly linked training with organizing made the critical difference in outcomes. These factors should be considered when planning future jobs programs. A jobs program designed to open up access to good jobs for the hard-to-employ should proceed by self-selection, substantial support, and viable links to the

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entities that control access to the work such as, in this case, union apprenticeship programs.

KEYWORDS apprenticeships, job training programs, construction trades unions, minorities, hard-to-employ, workforce intermediaries

OUTCOMES OF TWO CONSTRUCTION TRADES PRE-APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS: A COMPARISON

To address locally the complex problems of unemployment and poverty, community-based organizations (CBOs) have emerged that serve as workforce intermediaries (Giloith, 2003) often bridging a particular population and a particular industry. These CBOs may be private-public partnerships involving churches, school systems, community colleges, private entities such as banks, and, in an industry where training is done via an apprenticeship program, as in construction, unions, contractors, and community development corporations. They may operate with grant funding, state or federal funding, or donations and volunteer labor. As organizations, they tend to be vulnerable to changes in the political context because the enactment of their mission places the organization directly into the heart of the politics of the industry. If, in the upcoming period, a major new infusion of funding for jobs creation occurs, organizations like these will have an important role to play. If they function as a mirror of the general labor market, by applying traditional criteria and selecting by sorting and eliminating, they will only repeat and reinforce legacies of discrimination.

Anecdotal reports suggest that CBO-based workforce intermediary programs are successful. However, systematic evaluations of outcomes of these programs are hard to obtain for many reasons, among them the limited budgets, low overheads, and dependency on soft money that makes doing training and case management a much higher priority than evaluating outcomes. In the case of programs where the goal is to gain access to the unionized construction trades, gathering outcome data is made more difficult because the process of applying to an apprenticeship program may take up to two years, several times longer than the training itself. Therefore, any information that can help answer the question, Does a program like this work? is valuable.

A unique opportunity enabled the Building Bridges Project (BBP) of Arise Chicago to research and compare the outcomes of two of its training programs, both pre-apprenticeships that prepare participants to apply to unionized construction trades apprenticeships. The three core lessons that emerged from this research were the positive results of the selection strategy, which relied on self-selection rather than elimination; the importance of financial support which included stipends for participants and wages for

journeymen instructors; and the importance of having a close relationship with a union apprenticeship program, in this case, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters (UBC).

DEFINITION OF OUTCOMES, GOALS AND LESSONS

For this study, a successful outcome is defined as acceptance of a graduate of a class into a unionized construction trades apprenticeship program. The outcomes of two different classes are compared. From the first of the two classes, called the Night Class, about one third (32%) of those who graduated and applied to an apprenticeship program appear to have been accepted, although tracking these graduates was problematic, for the reasons mentioned above and others to be explained. From the second of the two classes, called the Carpenters Class, 29 out of 29 (100%) of those who graduated and applied were accepted. What follows includes explanations of the reasons for this difference as well as cautions about its implications.

The goal of both these classes was to increase minority employment in unionized construction. The two classes recruited from the same population. They were both projects of the BBP, one of the over 60 affiliates within the national network of the non-profit Interfaith Worker Justice. The authors are a member of the BBP Advisory Board and the Director of the BBP, respectively. The classes differed in funding, recruiting, selection strategy, instructional design, relationships with building trades unions, curriculum, types and quality of case management, and other support for participants, and outcomes.

EXTERNAL FACTORS THAT SHAPE OUTCOMES

Circumstances specific, if not unique, to the building trades influence outcomes. These include the historic exclusion of minorities from construction unions, the number and type of minority hire requirements embodied in project labor agreements for publicly funded construction projects, the relationships between local elected officials, their constituents, and the processes by which building projects get approved, the opportunities for non-union work, and the contractions and expansions of the construction labor market. These not only shape opportunities for advancement through the apprenticeship period to journeyman status by accumulating on-the-job training hours, but also the commitment of participants to the program.

Minority Exclusion

The problem of access of minorities into the unionized trades in the United States has long seemed intractable (Fletcher & Gapasin, 2008; Goldfield,

1997; Paap 2008). After Bacon's Rebellion in 1676, Blacks were explicitly prohibited from being allowed to learn mechanical trades (Allen, 1994). Philip S. Foner wrote:

But from the time the first trade unions were formed by white workers in the 1790's to the Civil War—in which period the free black population grew from 59,000 to 488,000—no free Negro wage-earner was a member. To be sure, the trade unions of the 1850's were exclusively craft unions composed of skilled mechanics. Unskilled workers found it impossible to join most of these unions, and several such as the printers, hotel waiters, shoemakers, and tailors, excluded women as well. But not one of the unions allowed a black worker, skilled or unskilled, male or female, to join its ranks. (Foner, 1974 p. 5)

In *Black Reconstruction*, W.E.B. DuBois (1935/1998) told how White workers in organized trades opposed the abolitionist movement for fear that free Black workers would underbid and compete for jobs held by White workers. After the Civil War and up through the Civil Rights movement, Jim Crow trade unions abounded (Frymer, 2003). After the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, changes in the procedures for litigating made possible a wave of lawsuits that charged discrimination. Initially, the focus of litigation was on voting rights and integration of schools, but then it turned to employment, and the building trades were in the crosshairs. Between 1965 and 1985, the civil rights litigation against building trades unions was so relentless that some went bankrupt (Frymer, 2003). In Chicago, in the mid 1980s, some of the major building trades apprenticeship programs were placed under consent decrees as a result of civil rights lawsuits. Among these were the electricians, plumbers, pipefitters, ironworkers and insulators. The consent decrees stipulated and oversaw minority access.

In those same decades, the 1980s and 1990s, studies of the construction labor force predicted a shortage of skilled workers (Allen, 1997) partly because of an oncoming wave of retirements. When there is a skills shortage, organizing becomes easier. Not coincidentally, construction in the 1990s was the only private sector industry that experienced significant union growth (Belman & Smith, in press). In 1999 there was so much construction going on in the Chicago area that according to the President of the Chicago Federation of Labor, the hiring halls were “empty from Chicago to Arkansas” (D. Turner, personal communication, October 1999). In Chicago, when the consent decrees were lifted in the early 2000s and oversight ceased, community-based organizations attempted to fill this shortage with training programs directed toward minorities. In 2007, construction was still identified as a sector that was steadily increasing its share of the total employment picture. But that same year, according to the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability, African American workers constituted only 4% of the

construction workforce in Illinois, as compared to over 8% for Latinos (a high percentage of whom are in non-union work), less than 1% for Asians, but 78% for Whites (<http://www.stateofworkingillinois.niu.edu>).

Political Advocacy for Increasing Minority Access

In 2004, community organizers approached leaders of the Illinois legislature, in particular the Illinois Black Caucus, for help. The goal was framed aggressively, as in “break open the unions,” or “force the unions to open up.” This strategy included intensive committee work in which the BBP and another Chicago non-profit, Chicago Women in the Trades (CWIT), participated as well as reports, proposals, and newspaper publicity. This effort underwent transformation as several years passed, but it consistently got support from the Black leadership of the Illinois legislature.

Finally, in January, 2007, \$6.25 million was set aside by the legislature in a straight party line vote to fund a program that would create a pipeline to bring minorities into the building trades. The funding would be disbursed as grants to community-based organizations (CBOs) and closely overseen by the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). The fact that general funds money (as compared to federal job training money such as funds distributed to states under the Workforce Investment Act) could be set aside for this program at a time when the budget of the state of Illinois was troubled and state workers were being laid off is an indication of the political effectiveness of its advocates. Characteristics of the DCEO program are described below.

The organizations that received grant money to carry out recruiting and training included the BBP, CWIT, New SkillBuilders (which made common cause with CWIT and set up its own training space in a warehouse on the South Side), two programs run out of the Chicago Public Schools, two programs that worked in the desperately poor far South suburbs, a program from Peoria (one hundred and fifty miles south of Chicago), and United Services. These organizations formed a consortium of partners to exert continuing pressure to advocate for their programs. The pressure was directed both at the political establishment and at contractors who might consider hiring their graduates.

The Challenge Facing the DCEO Grant Recipients

The partners faced two challenges. They were not only to train and prepare applicants but to recruit them from a demographic of the most hard-to-employ: ex-offenders, people who had been on public aid, people who had been homeless, youth aging out of foster care, ex-drug addicts and alcohol abusers. Then they were to track these recruits not only into apprenticeship programs, but also through completion and into regular work as journeymen.

Only survival of a significant cohort through the whole process would count as “breaking open the unions.” How the CBOs would continue their tracking and case management after the 18-month funding ran out was not addressed. This has always been one of the weaknesses of funding training programs run by small community-based advocacy organizations; budgets based on soft money mean that sustaining overhead past the accomplishment of the immediate goal of a grant rarely if ever gets accomplished.

THE BBP NIGHT CLASS AND THE CARPENTERS CLASS OUTCOMES

The \$500,000 awarded to the BBP as one of the partner grant recipients came at a time when the BBP had already been running another class, called the Night Class, for six years. This was the program that had built the credibility of the BBP as a training provider. The request by the DCEO that grant recipients track recruits all the way from initial contact to journeyman status, if achieved, caused the BBP to try to track all participants in their Night Class, since a database of 587 enrollees (as of 2008) going back to 2003 existed. Short-term tracking had been done each year but long-term tracking would shed light on the effectiveness of the program and the experience of their graduates over time. It would also identify problems anticipated in the tracking challenge set by the DCEO. Therefore, at the same time that the DCEO grant was awarded, the BBP, working with the University of Illinois, started doing phone interviews with its entire list of Night Class Graduates. The phone interview process was completed within a few months (November 2008) of the graduation (September 2008) of the last group from the DCEO-supported program, which was called the Carpenters Class because of its close linkages to the UBC.

A summary of the tracking results of the Night Class is shown in Table 1. This table can be read as follows: of the 587 individuals who originally attended at least one BBP Night Class meeting, 184 (90 + 94) were reached by phone. One hundred and twenty-nine phone numbers reached either an

TABLE 1 Tracking Results of the BBP Night Class

In database	No telephone number originally given or number given is wrong	Phone number correct and possible to reach	Called, not reached	Called, reached, but did not graduate from program; no interview	Called and interviewed	Applied to apprenticeship program	Accepted into apprenticeship program
587	274	313	129	90	94	63	20

TABLE 2 Tracking Results of the BBP Carpenters Class

In database	Accepted into carpenters class	Attended carpenters class	Graduated from carpenters class	Applied to apprenticeship program	Accepted into apprenticeship program
100	41	38	29	29	29

answering machine belonging to the person sought, or a person who knew the person sought, but the person was never reached. Of the 184 who were reached, 90 had not graduated. Of that same 184 who were reached, 94 had graduated from the BBP Night Class and were interviewed. Of those interviewed, 63 or about two thirds, had proceeded with the apprenticeship program application process, and 20 had been accepted, for an acceptance rate of about 32% of those who graduated and who applied. An explanation for the extremely high dropout rate, from 587 to 94, follows below.

These results are to be compared with the results of the class funded by the DCEO, called the Carpenters Class, in Table 2. This table can be read as follows: of the 100 individuals who originally were potential candidates (see below for explanation of first level of selection), 41 were accepted into the Carpenters Class, 38 attended, 9 dropped out or were expelled during the class, and 29 graduated. All those who graduated applied to the UBC apprenticeship program and all were accepted, following an additional test.

These very different success rates should be evaluated in the light of the different selection strategies and levels of support provided to both the BBP and to individual participants in the program.

THE NIGHT CLASS AND THE CARPENTERS CLASS: DESCRIPTIONS

The Night Class

The Night Class is a 14-week once-a-week evening class that takes place in church, community, and fellowship rooms in various low-income Chicago neighborhoods (Worthen & Haynes, 2003). It is ongoing as of this date. About 10 Night Classes are in operation every year. It is a walk-in program: there is no selection process. Anyone, no matter what age, ability, gender, or race, is welcome. This means that among the 587 individuals in the database there are people who would never physically be able to do the work of the building trades, or who do not have the high school diploma, birth certificate, immigration documents, or driver's license that would be required. Some attend simply to learn the basic math skills that are being taught. But the principle of the class is to exclude no one.

In the early years of the program the Night Class was, outside of one paid staff member, a virtually all-volunteer, all-donation program, relying

heavily on the good will of the UBC to cover photocopying and sometimes provide journeymen or organizers as teachers, and to allow participants to tour their training facility. The UBC at that time had explicitly strategized training, including this type of training, to be part of organizing and increasing minority presence in their membership (D. McMahon, personal communication, December 2005). Journeymen from other unions (e.g., plumbers, bricklayers, laborers, electricians) also came to classes as guest speakers and hosted tours. As the program built relationships with unions, minority contractors, and minority developers in order to place graduates in on-the-job training opportunities, and the program grew, ten classes per year were graduated, teachers became paid, a textbook was written and printed for use in the class, and a small fee was paid to churches for the use of their premises. By 2007, the point at which the DCEO grant was awarded, the budget for each Night Class, including in-kind donations, was estimated to be between \$20,000 and \$25,000, covering teachers, staff, and office administration, which came to about \$1,000 to \$4,000 per participant given a class of 20–25 participants and depending on requirements set by funders for a specific class, such as drug testing. Funding came from a combination of donations and grants.

The Night Class involves no hands-on construction training. Instead, classroom sessions are devoted to basic math, some reading comprehension, and financial literacy. Time is also spent providing the kind of information that a person already familiar with the world of unionized construction might have internalized informally: what the different trades do, how to interview, and above all, the complex multi-deadline application process itself which varies from one trade to another.

The Night Class has a modest degree of case management. The director and one case manager are available by phone. Participation is the criterion for graduation; there are no tests. Upon graduation, participants are expected to take advantage of contacts at various union apprenticeship programs and keep informed of dates of different stages in the apprenticeship program. A jobs club for graduates who have not obtained work meets bi-monthly and hosts visits from prospective employers. But the initiative for making the application to the apprenticeship program and following through on the process is in the hands of the applicant.

The Carpenters Class

The terms of the \$500,000 DCEO grant awarded to the BBP both enabled and required a program with a much higher level of support. State Representative Marlow Colvin, a member of the Illinois Black Caucus, saw the grants as addressing the various obstacles that face minority applicants to the building trades apprenticeship programs directly. He said, “We’ve removed all the obstacles to success. We’ll get a group of people, remove

the obstacles, and see what they're capable of doing" (M. Colvin, personal communication, January 17, 2008). The grant would provide support for child care, a bus pass, text books, tools, and a much higher level of case management. Specific requests for items such as car repair could be made by grant recipients. Participants would receive stipends of \$300 per week, or Illinois minimum wage, so that they would not have to survive the 11 weeks without income.

Given these stipulations, it was determined that for \$500,000 the BBP could run three classes of 12 students each. It would be an 11-week full-day program that included hands-on carpentry training. The class would take place in the Carpenters Training Facility and would be taught by journeymen carpenters who were paid union scale including benefits. Most of the costs, which included building materials, stipends, a physical exam, workman's compensation insurance and textbooks, were not flexible. Compared to the Night Class, the Carpenters Class was an expensive program, at \$14,000 per participant. Therefore the BBP strategized carefully about its selection process, as each failed participant would in effect waste a \$14,000 slot.

The Selection Process

The selection process began like the Night Class with open meetings in low-income neighborhood churches. Over the course of four meetings, 100 applicants filled out an application form and showed that they had a birth certificate, high school diploma or GED, and a driver's license. Many who attended these meetings could not produce these documents. When the BBP staff reviewed the application forms, it became apparent that no individual could be accepted or eliminated on the basis of the information they provided: even the best-written applications were scanty and uninformative. Therefore a decision was made to rely on self-selection and sequence of hurdles was created to measure commitment through action. The first hurdle was to appear at a distant, unfamiliar address (the UBC apprenticeship program site) at a specific time three weeks later. Half the applicants did not pass that hurdle. The second hurdle was to take an hour-long math test that included addition, subtraction, fractions, decimals, measurements, geometry, and some mechanical reasoning, followed by an hour-long reading comprehension test. A third test put applicants together in groups of three and asked them to use magic markers to draw maps of Chicago. This tested social skills as well as awareness of the major highways they would need to take to get to construction sites.

The math and reading tests were scored immediately, onsite. Although about half the applicants could get no further than the first fraction problems on the math test, they were not eliminated by a cut-off score. Instead, they were referred to math tutoring, held at yet another location on a set of other dates. The hurdle, in this case, was attendance. The tutoring was intensive

and often one-on-one. All students who attended tutoring improved their scores enough to enter the program. Thus, the screening process was essentially self-selection by the most motivated and able applicants.

The last phase of the selection process involved an interview, a physical agility test, and a drug test. At this point there were 52 remaining applicants out of the original 100. The physical agility test, which involved carrying 4' x 8' sheets of plywood and climbing a two-story scaffold carrying a large wrench, eliminated several who were afraid of heights. Another four or five either declined to take or failed the drug test, which eliminated them. The remaining 41 were ranked and assigned to classes. As it happened, because of the sagging housing market, several others who had employment withdrew, preferring to keep a current job rather than risk an increasingly tight job market. This meant that everyone who survived the hurdles and still wanted to enter the program was accepted. Of those last 41, 38 showed up for classes. Nine were expelled for attendance, failure to do home work, or unsafe use of tools during class. Thus, 29 graduated. Because of their training under UBC journeymen, the tutoring, and intensive case management to resolve academic, family, health, and transportation problems, all 29 of these passed a final test and were indentured into the UBC.

WHO CAME TO THE TABLE?

A Snapshot of a Population

One of the intentions of the DCEO grant, expressed at an early meeting of all stakeholders, was to see who came to the table and "take a snapshot of a population." The population in question was the target demographic of hard-to-employ minorities, including previously incarcerated, unemployed, working part-time, history of drug or alcohol abuse, single parent or parenting youth, homeless, past or present public housing or public aid recipient, or youth aging out of foster care. The BBP had not kept such data on applicants to the Night Class, but it did have data for the Carpenters Class. All these characteristics were represented in the first group of 100 for the Carpenters Class. This group included 95 African Americans, 5 Latinos, and 13 women. Among the 52 who were invited to be interviewed, there were 22 previously incarcerated, 28 who had been in public housing or on public aid, 11 with a history of drug and alcohol abuse, 4 who had been homeless, and 4 who had been in foster care. Among the 29 graduates, there were 24 African Americans, 5 Latinos, 1 woman; 11 who had been previously incarcerated, 14 who had lived in public housing or had been on public aid, 5 who had had drug or alcohol abuse problems, and 1 each who had been either homeless or in foster care. In other words, the original target demographic survived into the graduating cohort; neither the selection process nor the actual class creamed out the hard-to-employ whom the grants were

intended to reach. This information has relevance for design of future jobs programs intended to avoid historic patterns of discrimination.

The applicants' original written applications also revealed information about their economic condition. Out of 100, there were 55 who were living on less than \$5,000 per year income, and only four who were living on \$30,000 to \$35,000. The majority, in other words, were living outside the formal economy. Ten out of 100 applicants reported working full-time and seven of those were making \$15,000 to \$25,000 per year. Full-time jobs were in recycling, food service, and warehousing.

Because the recruiting for the Carpenters Class took place in the same neighborhoods through the same network that the recruiting for the Night Class takes place, the participants in both classes can be assumed to be similar. This information about income levels and social situation can help explain why out of the 587 names in the Night Class database, so many had moved, left no forwarding address, had never had a telephone number, or were no longer available at the number they gave at the time.

An important question was whether the high level of support provided by the DCEO grant was necessary, adequate, or effective. The stipend was clearly the most valued type of support. Instructors and case managers for the Carpenters Class reported that among the obstacles identified by the grant, child care posed the most problems, especially for women (only one woman graduated). The child care support guidelines had not anticipated the extent to which extended family, sibling and elder care, in addition to child care responsibilities, were an obstacle. Physical fitness was also a problem, especially for women. Among other critical problems, homelessness seemed to be a strong predictor of inability to complete the program.

This is the snapshot that the Carpenters Class provided: a population of very disadvantaged hard-to-employ people among whom there were nevertheless some who, with significant support, could survive an intensive training program.

The Perspective of the Stakeholders

The political forces activated to move this grant through the legislature were not natural allies, but their interaction created a moment in time in which different stakeholders could be brought to the table. Viewed as a whole, the design of the DCEO program suggested that the stakeholders were at the table as much to place a bet as to see the program succeed. The bet could be expressed this way. Some stakeholders would say that apprenticeship recruitment strategies were already color blind and that outreach programs were good enough as is. Others would say that recruitment strategies were not color blind and that outreach programs and the application process itself had to be modified to remove obstacles identified as systemic features of the legacy of racism. This would mean that if outreach was modified to

reach the target demographic most likely to be deterred by such obstacles, and if key support to overcome obstacles was provided, then the partners would find good candidates who could make it through the pre-apprenticeship programs and get accepted into union apprenticeship programs. Some stakeholders were betting yes; some were betting no.

For example, the Chicago Building Trades Council (CBTC), representing the unions, declared its willingness to work with any and all minority organizations, but argued that training a candidate for unionized work took four to five years from apprenticeship to journeyman, and that especially among the target population, finding candidates who could survive even the application process, much less the rigorous apprenticeship training, would be extremely difficult. Also, the CBTC made it clear that the Council would only support a pipeline into union work. If funds were spent on training for non-union work, the CBTC warned that it would withdraw support and block the program. Chicago commercial construction ranges, depending on the trade, from 75% union on up; most work in Chicago is union. Withdrawal of union support from this program would have been fatal to the program because participants would lose their link to eventual good jobs.

The Builders Association, made up of major contractors and developers, also expressed concern about the quality of the candidates that would come through any selection process that drew from the target population. Once the grant was awarded, they distributed a list of topics such as “work ethic” that they wanted the CBO grant recipients to teach.” They warned the grant recipients that the Builders Association had not made a commitment to hire any of the graduates of the trainings. The minority hire requirement applies only to public and federally-funded construction projects; privately funded construction has no minority hire requirements.

Another stakeholder was the DCEO itself, through which the grant came. The DCEO proposed the database to track every applicant from the first moment of contact during recruiting to final status, if achieved, of journeyman, five or six years later. This database was what was described as “a snapshot of a population.” This raised the question of what kind of claim would be validated or nullified by such a snapshot. Was it the claim that there existed many good candidates for building trades apprenticeships in the “hard-to-employ” demographic, but that they were being excluded on the basis of race and could be successful if certain obstacles were removed? Or was it the claim that qualified candidates could not be found at all in that demographic?

The CBO partners were also stakeholders. They were the vehicles through which the funding would get disbursed and which would actually have to design and implement the programs. They existed because of their advocacy role. They were, of course, betting that they would be able to find good candidates and produce good outcomes. Banding together as a consortium of partners, meeting regularly, sharing strategies and practicing

collective advocacy both toward the funders and toward the contractors in the Builders Association helped the project avoid the pitfall of competition among the partners.

The various unions that have worked with the BBP are also stakeholders. In particular, the UBC first by explicitly using training as a strategy for organizing, and second by opening its resources to a program that was designed to bring in members from a hard-to-employ demographic, was betting on the success of the program.

However, a major factor that would affect the progress of program graduates in their positions as apprentices was the labor market itself. Work in construction is essentially temporary work; when the project is over, the job is over. A few workers may be carried over onto the next job, but if there is no next project, there is no next job. Making progress toward journeyman status requires accumulating the required 4,000 to 10,000 hours of on-the-job apprenticeship work (Construction Industry Service Organization, 2006). If an apprentice can't get hired, he or she can't advance. In 2008, the labor market for construction was shrinking rapidly. The jobs that depended on federal and state funding, which are the jobs that have minority hire requirements, were stalled. Therefore despite success in the BBP pre-apprenticeship program, progress beyond indenture of both the Night Class and the Carpenters Class graduates was slowed. This, however, was not within the power of any of the stakeholders to control or influence.

IMPLICATIONS AND CAUTIONS

This article is about outcomes of two community-based organization training programs. This particular set of outcomes was developed because, in the case of the Night Class, some funding became available that enabled a systematic round of telephone interviews (actually two rounds, with a third ongoing) with an entire database, and, in the case of the Carpenters Class, the cohort was recent enough and small enough so that the numbers were easy to see. In general, outcomes are costly and difficult to collect, easily misunderstood or misinterpreted, and rarely shared. Nevertheless, they are important because they help answer the question, Does this program work?

Immediate implications from this comparison can be summarized as follows. Long-term tracking of participants in this target demographic is hampered by the high frequency of changing residences and telephone numbers among low-income populations and by the limited resources of CBOs that have to prioritize training above evaluating training. But a systematic effort, even if imperfect, generates information which can be interpreted and built upon. Two different programs offered to the same population produced different results, but both demonstrated that good candidates can be found even among the most hard-to-employ. The high

level of support provided by the DCEO grant made the critical difference. Self-selection rather than testing and use of cut-off scores to eliminate participants allowed the most committed participants to survive. Intensive tutoring accelerated recapture of basic math knowledge. As expected, targeted solutions to previously identified obstacles (Worthen & Haynes, 2003) in the form of various kinds of case management and support lowered or removed those obstacles. However, a program of this sort (the Carpenters Class) is expensive, and not all obstacles can be anticipated or addressed on a short-term, individual basis.

Challenges of Tracking

The outcomes presented for the Night Class should be taken with a grain of salt. As of this writing, a third round of phone calls is being made to the 129 phone numbers on the Night Class list where the participant was known but not available. Ultimately, time and budget will determine when these attempts cease. Therefore the result of 32% of graduates who applied to apprenticeship programs, or 20 individuals, is based on only 94 interviews. When and if the remaining 129 contacts are made, will this percentage go up? Short-term data collection (yearly) by the BBP had also indicated that about two thirds of Night Class graduates applied to apprenticeship programs. Since the application process can be a multi-year effort, those who applied one year might not show up as accepted until the next year. However, assuming the same rate of acceptance (one third of two thirds), based on 100 graduates per year for six years (600), about 120 graduates of BBP should have been expected to have been accepted as apprentices. In fact, the BBP's anecdotal records (not systematic) showed 59 graduates accepted, still in apprenticeships or working as journeymen in the building trades. This difference between the short-term, informal and the long-term systematic results may be partly a measure of the difficulty of tracking members of a transient workforce in a population that changes residences and contact information frequently.

The Value of Links to Unions

The high rate of successful outcomes with the Carpenters Program can be attributed in part to the close cooperation and support of the UBC, into which all of the graduates who applied (all of them applied) were accepted. Another Chicago pre-apprenticeship program that works closely with the electricians has had a similar rate of acceptance, if not quite 100% (M. King, personal communication, July 2008). By working closely, or being actually sponsored by, a union with an apprenticeship program, the pre-apprenticeship program not only focuses on the same curriculum and channels expectations but also becomes linked to a chain of interlocking commitments that

culminate in the contracts for employment that are negotiated at the level of master contracts. A participant, once accepted into the initial training phase, becomes connected, if only distantly, to this contract. This link does not exist in non-union construction. Generalizing from these programs to training programs that prepare people for work in fields other than construction, however, is risky. In construction, at least in states with high rates of unionization, the apprenticeship programs essentially control access to the work. This is not the case in other fields of work. For example, nursing and teaching, both heavily unionized, are not fields where the unions dominate preparation for work. In other fields there are programs where training is linked to the union that represents workers in that field (culinary workers, machinists, and healthcare workers, for example) but these are illustrations of what is possible, not the norm.

Public Funding and Union Training Programs: Thinking Ahead

Finally, this raises the overall question of strategic planning of job training programs. Job training programs may be designed to address a shortage of skilled labor or designed to find workers who can be prepared for good middle-class jobs who might otherwise face impossible obstacles to getting those jobs. Federal job training funds under the 1998 Workforce Investment Act (WIA), which supplanted the Jobs Training Partnership Act (JTPA) and served as an employment response to welfare reform, were intended to fill a labor shortage, not strengthen unions. This was made clear in the language of the act and in the design of the committees, state and local, that would disburse WIA funds, on which representation of the labor movement was usually kept the minimum of two. The opposite was the case for the Illinois funding for the Carpenters Class and the other partner classes, which was not WIA funding, and which was explicitly intended to be spent in cooperation with construction trades unions and to recruit and prepare hard-to-employ participants for union work. The contrast between a selection process that relies on sorting and elimination, and a selection process that relies on self-selection, as has been described here, should be kept in mind when designing jobs programs that are intended to avoid repeating past histories of exclusion.

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