

## Simply the Best

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### **EXPLORE**

#### **Question**

##### **What questions is your inquiry contingent upon?**

Although we have not yet formally typed a methods section, here is how we plan to assess group processing and learn about the community-based learning initiative....

\* To assess group processing, we will interview one another during the project. The interview questions will pertain to how we worked together to develop and complete the project. We will discuss how we are working together as a unit and address any concerns about the group process. We will also use observation notes taken in the field to determine how effectively the group is working together to implement the project.

\* To determine how and what we're learning about the community based learning initiatives, we will conduct interviews with administrators about the initiative. Since group members are split up, we will learn from each administrator and bring that information back to the entire group. Using this information, as well as information we gather during class, we will learn about the community-based learning initiative.

Here is the information I have on the health related physical fitness benefits of dance

#### ***Files:***

[kines 494\(2\).doc](#) (Tue 09/19/2006 3:13)

#### **Plan**

##### **How will you go about answering your inquiry?**

Group Member Interview Questions

- 1) What do you feel you contributed to the group? (i.e. what role or roles are you assuming within the group)
- 2) What have you learned about the University by completing this project?
- 3) What did you learn by completing the University IRB form and learning about the IRB approval process?
- 4) How does this course compare to your experiences with lecture or lecture-discussion based courses?
- 5) Would you recommend a community based learning project or a course similar to this to another student?
- 6) What was the hardest part about working on a project with a group?
- 7) How do you think you will use your experience with this project in the future?
- 8) After interviewing a University administrator, what did you learn about the

## University and its community based learning initiative?

### Administrator Questions:

1. How do you define community?
2. How do you hope that community-based learning will be understood by faculty and students across campus?
3. What specific issues are you hoping to address as a result of the community-based learning initiative?
4. What kinds of support (financial or other) is the university giving to facilitate the success of the initiative?
5. How does community-based learning initiative support the university's overall mission?
6. In relation to the other initiatives that are emphasized in the Strategic Plan, how important is community-based learning?
7. Describe how community-based learning will enrich the students' educational experience while at the University of Illinois?
8. Does the "Ethnography of the University" initiative facilitate the community-based learning initiative, or are they separate entities?
9. The strategic plan emphasizes community-based learning and strengthening relationships with the public schools. How do you think that the two initiatives could support each other?
10. How is the community-based learning initiative similar to or different from initiatives that are emphasized at other universities?
11. How are you using your role as \_\_\_\_\_ to facilitate and support the community-based learning initiative?
12. What successes and failures have you had in the implementation of this initiative?

## **OBSERVE**

### **What observations, or findings are you encountering in your research?**

#### Results

#### Group Dynamics Project

#### Theme Finding time for group meetings

Throughout the project, a major problem for the group was finding time to meet. The investigators were busy with other classes and had different class schedules. Because of

this, coordinating a good time for everyone to meet outside of class time was always a difficult obstacle to overcome. However, the group came up with a time that was good for a majority of the group members. If someone could not make it to the community project, then they would do something else to make up for missing that day. Some investigators had to take off work to attend the community project, which was another dilemma for a few students.

Theme Equal effort put forth by everyone

Sub-theme Dividing work up evenly

All students in the group were very helpful in dealing with one another. Although it was difficult at times because the group was so large, work was usually divided evenly. Every week, during our meetings, assignments were distributed to everyone so that each group member had something to do for the next week. One group member stated, "assigning who was going to do what was difficult because you didn't want to do too little, but you didn't want to do more than anyone else." Another group member stated, "The hardest part was organization," referring to problems with dividing the workload evenly.

Sub-theme Group worked well together

Overall, the group worked very well together because everyone put forth effort. In addition, the group was so large that not one person was doing all the work. In addition, as the semester went along, the students became more comfortable with each other and became more themselves. One group member said, "I really got to know all of the girls...not even just academically but personally as well." Furthermore, as stated above, the group took notes every week and tried to evenly divide the work for the following week. Each group member took a turn taking notes during the class meetings and posting the notes online.

Theme Group felt this project would help with future careers

Overall, this project helped the group work together and taught them how to work with a bigger group. Everyone agreed that they would need this skill in the future, regardless of what career they will go into. A group member said, "I think that now I know how to work with people better and know that everyone has something to contribute." At first, the group was hesitant to trust each other, but near the end realized that in order to work well as a group, they would need to trust the other members to do a good job.

Ethnography of the University of Illinois

Theme Protection (The University goes to great lengths to protect itself, students, and surrounding community.)

Sub-theme IRB (Institutional Review Board) Protection

All research done at the University must follow all UIUC IRB-approved protocol. In order to obtain permission to start a research project, an IRB form must be completed and approved. This allows the University to be fully aware of all the aspects of the research project. It allows the University protection for itself, the researchers, and for all the subjects involved in the process. For this project an IRB-1 form was required. This is an application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects. The IRB-1 is very detailed. It requires full detail about what the research is about, what procedures will be used, where it will be done, how data will be collected, who will be involved, what equipment will be used, etc. If any details change throughout the process, it also has to be changed in the IRB.

#### Sub-theme Consent Form Protection

Informed Consent must be obtained from all subjects participating in the research project. The consent forms must include information about what the project is about, and how data is going to be collected such as video or audiotaping. The consent forms help to protect the university. This way if something goes wrong, the University has documentation stating that the subject agreed to the terms, and was fully aware of what was going on. There are three sections in the IRB called Informed Consent, Type of Consent, and Consent Process that help to explain more information about getting consent, such as the different kinds of consent forms, and how consent should be obtained.

Theme Community is a very important component of the University of Illinois.

To learn more about the Community-Based Learning Initiative at the University of Illinois, many leaders at the University were interviewed. Chancellor Richard Herman, Vice Provost Ruth Watkins, Dean Tanya Gallagher, and the Head of Kinesiology Wojtek Chozko-Zajko. Some of the Administrators seemed to know more about the Community-Based Learning Initiative than others, however they all stressed how important community is to the University. By becoming more involved in the community, the University becomes more diverse and is able to reach out to more people. By reaching out to the community, it will help enrich the experience for students at the University.

#### Sub-theme Goal of Community-Based Learning

The Administrators interviewed all stressed the importance that they felt about having a type of learning at the University that involves the community. A successful community is one that integrates the groups of different people rather than segregating them. This community can be defined as something as broad as a group of individuals that may or may not share similar view points, or as Dr. Chozko-Zajko said, “a social kind of organization system usually defined geographically but that has a number of different constituents represented in it that interact in some degree.” Dr. Chozko-Zajko also touched on the basic premise of the University which is trying to prepare students for the “real world” and that the idea of community-based learning underscores this idea. One of the important experiences to take from the University experience is learning how to function with other people in the “real world.” The goal of the Community-Based Learning Initiative would transform the curriculum to include traditional setting of lecture-based classes along with community experiences such as internships and student-based programs. As Dr. Chozko-Zajko stated, community-based learning could “bridge the gap between the curriculum, between research and public engagement in realistic world settings.”

Dr. Ruth Watkins discussed the way that the initiative has taken shape and become something much stronger than just an academic endeavor with the community. The Community-Based Learning Initiative has grown into what is referred to by some as the Chancellor’s Civic Community Task Force, whose focus is on how the community and the campus interact.

#### Sub-theme Enriching the Students’ Educational Experience

Dean Gallagher described community-based learning as an opportunity that will broaden the horizons of the students and give them an occasion to work together with a vast number of individuals that will help enhance their learning experience. She sees the experience of learning in a community, with the community, like a “living laboratory,”

where one can explore their environment and different ways of learning to create “depth in their learning.”

One important aspect of enriching students’ educational experience is through the team-based programs they encounter in community-based learning. The students interact with different people from a variety of different backgrounds, which are outside of their college major. This forces students to learn how to work with people and cooperate to solve problems using their different skills. The experience gained from this type of learning environment is one that can prepare students for their future work environment where there will be more than likely a strong focus on teamwork.

Vice Provost Dr. Watkins also discusses how this initiative will enrich the students’ educational experience. She believes that the main driving force behind community-based learning is to enrich educational experiences of the students at the university. She stated, “that the hope is that community-based learning helps students make meaning out of classroom knowledge and it provides an opportunity to apply principles and knowledge and to see it in action, to adapt learning to use it in a real context.”

Sub-theme Administrators use their position to build on the initiative

Each administrator was asked how they were facilitating and supporting the initiative through their administrative position. It is important to note that the administrators ranged from a Department Head to the Chancellor of the University. Each administrator’s role in facilitating the initiative is different and should be because they are on different levels. Their overall goal is the same and that is to continue to progress the idea of community-based learning at the University of Illinois. The Kinesiology Department is focused on interacting with the community in regards to community health and fitness. They have several programs that bring the outside community to the university to participate in health and fitness programs. These programs, which are run by students, provide them with an enriched educational experience by working in a team and with the community. The College of Applied Health Sciences is set up as a structure to support and facilitate the programs that the Department of Kinesiology and Community Health have initiated. The Provost office supports the initiative by being involved in grant proposals and other things that are submitted that would continue the initiative on an academic level. The Chancellor’s idea of a community-based learning has transformed into a broader project or task force to create a symbiotic relationship between the community and the campus.

## **DISCUSS**

**Discuss your inquiry, taking care to separate speculation from fact or data**

110106

\* Talked about Diamond taking the dance session tomorrow.

\*we are going to talk about home exercises that the participants are able to do by themselves. Ariel is responsible for this info.

\*We are continuing with the same theme for next week. Star and Mercedes are in charge.

\*Someone has to buy juice

- \* the question to each other are posted on the i-lab website.
- \* We are breaking up the rest of the essay in three parts. Group dynamics-Kitty and Candy. Community project- Star, Diamond. IRB- Mercedes.
- \* We decide to meet the Wednesday when we don't have class before thanksgiving.
- \* The interviews is suppose to be done before next wednesday.
- \*We have one male and one female participant to interview. the questions is set, written by Kitty
- \* We are meeting tomorrow to go by car at 6,30pm.

Written by Diamond

Class notes 10/25/06 by Candi

- Kitty has interview questions ready for participants
- This week in the community:
  - Find two possible interviewees (some group members already have 2 in mind). Interviews will be non-audio taped, informal. Possible two or three group members per interviewee???
- Surveys were collected last week, 16 total
- In the community this week:
  - Possibly have more group members observe and less participate in activity
  - Diamond will bring refreshments
- We are ready to start typing the methodology section
  - Typed in the past tense
- Update lit review with Dr. Graber's suggestions and with an additional 1-3 page section discussing group dynamic
- Talk to Kines. Office staff regarding monetary reimbursement for project
- Group developed interview questions for interviews with each other
  - Interviews will be taped, approx. 30 minutes long
  - Question ideas:
    - 1) What do you feel you contribute to the group? (i.e. what role or roles are you assuming within the group)
    - 2) What have you learned about the University by completing this project?
    - 3) What did you learn by completing the University IRB form and learning about the IRB approval process?
    - 4) How does this course compare to your experiences with lecture or lecture-discussion based courses?
    - 5) Would you recommend a community based learning project or a course similar to this to another student?
    - 6) What was the hardest part about working on a project with a group?
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- 8) After interviewing a University administrator, what did you learn about the University and its community based learning initiative?

•For class next week:

- Everyone will look for an article pertaining to group dynamics or functioning to add to the literature review

09/06

Discussed different ideas for the semester project. Group decided on implementing dance class with emphasis on Physical Activity for adults.

Topics Addressed:

\* Instruction: Bring in a dance instructor or someone who knows proper steps and form

\*Location: probably a community center with an activity room

\*Frequency and Time: Meet once a week and do a total of 4 sessions. More than likely on Thursday evenings (depends on schedule)

\*Other Ideas: make sure to include activities for participants with Physical impairments (wheelchairs)

\*Purpose of project:

To teach adults different dance styles as a means of physical activity. May give opportunity for them to teach us dance moves. This will create an open and fun atmosphere. Emphasis will be placed on the need for Physical Activity. We will need to talk with them about benefits of physical activity and help them understand guidelines for their age.

\*Initial and Exit Surveys: a qualitative survey that will allow the participant to subjectively gauge their improvement over the four sessions. This will entail questions that will address mental and physical well being including mood, balance, social aspect, etc.

\*Inform participants: Flyers in the facility that the dance classes will be held. We may even need to go to the facility or center and hand out flyers to the residents so that we can meet people and encourage them in person to come.

\*Initial Class: Incorporate intro and small session on importance of PA for their age group. Screen individuals for ability to engage in PA. Have Tango demo with very talented couple demonstrating. Gets them in the spirit of dance. (Kiki has an aunt that is into the dancing community and can Tango well)

Literature Review Topics:

Lack of PA in adults: Lack of PA in adults, Reasons for adults not to adhere to an exercise program/new activity (accessibility, physical health)

PA for adults: Tests for Improvement in Physical Health of adults (posture, balance, strength)[may be too quantitative for this project], Guidelines for PA in the adults (FITT), Expectations for changes in health physical and mental

Dance as PA: Benefits, any studies on adults and dance as PA, expected improvements or problems

Assignments for next week: Everyone will find at least 3 good articles for their subject  
Kiki and Bambi: Lack of PA in seniors

PA for adults: Physical benefits focused-Diamond, Ariel, Kitty Mental benefits focused-Candi

Dance as PA: Star and Mercedes

October 12

Suggestions for credibility

- Peer Debriefing
- Triangulation (multiple sources)
- Multiple investigators

Need methods and lesson plans for first session. Need to conduct surveys.

Interviews

- One group member (taped)
- two interviews with community members (not taped)
- University official taped ~ why does the University support initiative?

Who will observe during sessions? Star

Who will compile the survey questions? Bambi

Candi will put the first presentation together discussing physical benefits of exercising.  
Stephanie will send bambi facts about physical benefits of exercising.

October 18

- Discussed where and when we'll meet on Thursday before our observation-decided on 6 at Freer
- Chose fictitious names
- Discussed our initial survey with the teacher
- we want to do a follow up survey, so participants will write their birthday and we will match up their initial and ending surveys by that
- Kiki talked with the dance instructor and she will be teaching three of the classes and she will get a sub for the one she can't do
- Decided to hand out the surveys before the class
- 60s style dancing will be taught
- Decided to have one notebook, Star and Bambi will take observation notes while Kiki and Mercedes participate in the class
- Kiki will bring the survey
- Mercedes will bring refreshments and names tags for us
- We will do the surveys each time in case new people come
- We will wear Illinois t-shirts and work out pants

Oct 4

-During pink paper assignment Mercedes and Kiki not allowed to talk, and Star and Diamond are new leaders.

-Go over everyone's rough copy of review of lit.

-Went over everyone's sources and determined we had enough

-figured out how to arrange review of lit topics. We are thinking the order should be

health benefits, psychological info, dance as physical activity, barriers and benefits, and the how to implement PA.

-Candi will bring everyone's lit reviews together and put together the final review of lit. Everyone will email her the information.

-We got back our IRB form 10/10.

-Bambi came up with survey questions to ask the adult community

- 1) age
- 2) background
- 3) amount of PA they participate in
- 4) Do they live alone
- 5) diseases/health problems
- 6) how they feel about PA

-group will email questions to Kitty about interviewing participants

-Diamond brought up the idea about people in wheelchairs/walkers

- Trixie found a person to help us with dance instructions

-The group discussed what information we would present at the weekly meeting and how long we would present. We concluded we would talk for around 10 minutes at the end of each session.

9/27

Present Projects on November 29 at the conference

\*Mercedes

\*Kiki

Flyer is done!

Thinking about doing 2 dances so that the participants feel that they accomplished something.

Star is still working on dance instructors.

NEXT WEEK:

\*Have rough draft of review of lit.

\*Bring in 2 questions for the interview of the participants

Survey: Give one at first session and last session with about 5 questions on each survey.

9/21 by Candi

Hey guys! Just an update on the IRB. Mercedes and I finished it in the computer lab last night and had the professor check it out. She offered some suggestions and changes in the wording. I already edited our form, so as far as I know it's done and ready to print. Since we aren't posting all info. online, I'd be happy to e-mail it to you guys if you'd like to see it before class.

One other change - she suggested changing from 25 to 30 subjects. So that's a change you'll see on the form that's different from what was discussed in class. Let me know if you'd like an e-mail copy of the IRB or anything else.

9/20 Field Notes by Bambi

Candi and Mercedes worked on IRB.

Kiki wrote the consent form and Bambi proofread it.

Kiki will contact the community center where we will perform our project.

Ariel and Kitty will work on flyer

On the flyer:

- "Course for learning how to put project together"
- benefits of exercise
- tell them where to sign-up for the dance class
- 2 different styles of flyers?
- Bambi can print the flyers on colored paper at work

We are thinking about 25 participants!

- better to set high and depends on the capacity of the facility

We are going to do an initial survey and exit survey!

- ask how they are feeling both times to see if dancing had an effect.

As of now, Thursday's are the dates we will put the project on at the senior center. There will be approx. 4 sessions.

The first session will be a demonstration and we will talk to them about what we are doing.

- length- 1/2-1 hour
- dancing style- ballroom

Talked about finding teachers

- Kiki aunt teaches tango
- Star is going to contact her old Kin dance teacher to see what they teach and how much they will charge.

Talked about our literature review

- discussed our different articles
- how we may orgnaize
- post abstracts on the ilab page
- come up with some questions based on our articles for next class
- Rough draft due by Oct 4th, so we can proofread and tie them all together, so it flows

and sounds like one person wrote it.

-print out your summary of your lit review for everyone else in the group

-at least 2 pages or whatever you think will work

09/13

\*The group was shown how to fill out IRB report.

\*Discussed when group was going to fill out IRB form and decided it would be done on 09/20 after class.

\*Everybody brought in articles they found for the review of literature. The group discussed how the lit review would be set up and what topics would go where. Some different ideas were expressed, but no exact conclusion.

\*Group split up into smaller groups. People got together with others who had the type of articles for the lit review (ie. dance and PA benefits, PA Guidelines, PA and the elderly). Within smaller groups the articles were looked over and narrowed down.

\* Contact the community centers once we get approval.

Comments:

Kim Graber (Wed 09/20/2006 2:38)

Try to be as specific as possible when taking notes concerning the group process.

Describe the specific comments and suggestions that are made by group members.

## **REFLECT**

### **Link**

#### **Connect with other resources and materials.**

##### Group Dynamics

Group dynamics is a term used to define “behavior of individuals within groups: the interpersonal processes, conscious and unconscious, that take place in the course of interactions among a group of people” (MSN Encarta, 2006). The manner in which group members interact with one another can greatly impact the success of the group.

Numerous research in a variety of settings has led to a better understanding of the many advantages and disadvantages of working in a group as an alternative to individual group work.

In 2005, Sutton, Zamora, and Best analyzed group dynamics and the benefits of working in groups in the classroom setting. In this research, Sutton provides a personal account of classroom experiences with group work as well as an account provided by a fellow professor, Dr. Mia Zamora. Zamora states that she introduced group work into her classroom to aid in the development of students’ critical thinking skills. She found that group work increased students’ awareness of multiple answers available for a fixed problem. Individual work yields only the thoughts and opinions of one person. Group work will elicit a wide variety of responses to a single question. Within a group, many individuals come together to develop a wide array of perspectives and interpretations to a problem or task presented to them. Zamora also believes that group work will help students understand the connection between their formal education and their own personal experiences. Strong skills in team-work and communication are important in students’ lives (Sutton, Zamora, & Best, 2005).

Sutton further discusses the concept of group dynamics. He believes that this term

encompasses aspects of group work such as recognizing and using conflict, coming to a consensus, understanding group behaviors, and developing roles within the group. Sutton notes that groups of students in his classroom generally develop into support systems for the group members. His students look to their fellow group members for help in understanding new concepts or developing the group assignment. Individuals may primarily seek out help from the professor. Group members, on the other hand, will primarily look to one another for help with difficult situations. Sutton believes that the problem-solving skills developed by working in a group is important for their future professional lives. Knowing how to be an effective and strong group member will greatly benefit the student when they enter the professional world. After studying group dynamics in his own classroom and in Dr. Zamora's classroom, Sutton noticed several important benefits of group work. Students are able to learn from one another, develop leadership skills, understand and deal with diversity, and further develop their own personal identities (Sutton et al., 2005).

In "Groups That Work," Blair discusses the benefits of group work and the manner in which groups develop and function. Group work allows members to develop a sense of cooperation and coordination. Blair believes that in a successful group, there is a feeling of mutual support among the members. In a group, members can combine talents and offer more solutions than a single individual could develop alone. A group with a wide knowledge base and skill set will have a large advantage over an individual working alone (Blair, 1991).

Blair also addresses the development of groups. He uses four stages to explain this development: Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing. During the forming stage, the group comes together quietly. Few individual opinions are shared due to the fact that most group members are still reserved. During the storming stage, sub-groups form as opinions begin to differ between group members. In the norming stage, the group begins to work together and discuss variations in personal beliefs. It is during this stage that a stronger sense of cooperation is developed. During the final stage, performing, the group freely exchanges views and supports one another. As a group moves through these stages, they develop the skills presented earlier. These skills will be valuable to individual group members later in the present context and later in life (Blair, 1991).

Based on research regarding group dynamics, it is clear that strong group members are valuable assets to the professional world. Working in groups helps individuals not only learn about their place within the small group, but also within larger groups like a corporate institution or an entire university. The skills learned by individual group members will make them valuable assets to any groups they find themselves in.

## **Implications**

### **Could your findings have broader implications beyond this inquiry?**

Conclusion

Group Dynamics Project

The results from the group dynamics portion of this investigation are very similar to those presented in published research. Several of the studies discussed in the literature review on group dynamics present themes similar to those presented in this manuscript. For example, research published by Sutton, Zamora, and Best in 2005 discussed the idea of group work eliciting multiple interpretations of a single problem. Our group members

offered eight unique approaches to the project. When designing and implementing the project, these unique approaches to research allowed the group to complete the project with the highest level of success possible. In this same research article, Sutton et. al. also discusses the concept of group dynamics. The ideas of using conflict, developing roles in the group, and coming to a consensus were all themes mentioned in the research published by Sutton, Zamora, and Best. These themes clearly emerged in our investigation as well.

The development of groups is a primary topic in the research published by Blair in 1991. The stages discussed in this research were very apparent in the development of our own group. Blair mentions that groups primarily come together with quiet, reserved conversations. By the end of the group process, there is a free exchange of thoughts and ideas. This evolution of the group as a unit was very apparent in the development of our group.

All of the published research regarding group dynamics used for the review of literature in this manuscript describes themes very similar to the themes developed by the investigators of this project. Studying group dynamics can yield a great deal of information about the success or failure of a project. Overall, in this investigation, the group functioned successfully to complete a final project.

However, some suggestions could be made for future attempts at a project such as this. One of the major themes that emerged was the issue of the size of the group. A large group can make it difficult for all members to find a role within the group and make equal contributions to the project. Working in a slightly smaller group may facilitate equal sharing of responsibilities. A smaller group would also decrease the likelihood of scheduling issues, since there would be fewer group member schedules to work with. Future investigators may also consider the idea of a longer research/project time frame. If a longer period were available for group work, there would be less pressure to adjust schedules to meet with the group. Another benefit of a longer research period would be that the group would have more time to develop a sense of comfort with one another.

#### Ethnography of the University of Illinois

Many themes and sub-themes emerged dealing with the Ethnography of the University of Illinois. These themes mainly revolved around the IRB and the interviews that were conducted with the different administrators around campus. The interviews with the Administrators concentrated on the Community-Based Learning Initiative set in place on this campus. In these interviews, the University of Illinois Strategic Plan was the basis for a lot of material that was referenced. The Strategic Plan discusses different goals that the University is working toward and trying to achieve. Getting involved in the community is a major part of the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan discusses the plan for community involvement, "To prepare students for the community responsibilities demanded of them in an increasingly diverse, rapidly changing world, we will establish Illinois as the leading public research institution that engages students in civic commitment and community-based learning experiences. We will expand internship programs and add "professors of practice" to assist us in realizing this goal."

The IRB also played a very important part in this Ethnography Research Project, and several of the results can be referenced back to it. The IRB is so important to the research process because it protects everyone involved in the project. If any information regarding

the research process is needed, the IRB can provide it. Overall, both the IRB and the University Strategic Plan can be very helpful resources when completing a research project like this one.