Teacher Ed
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EXPLORE
Question
What questions is your inquiry contingent upon?
See Methods

Plan
How will you go about answering your inquiry?
Group Member Questions
1. What did you struggle with the most when completing the project?
2. Do you think that another population would have worked better for this project?
3. Describe what contributions you made to the group.
4. After completing the project how would identify your role in the group?
5. What have you learned about your group members after completing this project?
6. Describe the relationships that you have developed through completing these projects.
7. Describe the ethnography of the University of Illinois.
8. How have group members in your group changed throughout the project?
9. If you were to change one thing about the way your group went about conducting this research what would it be?
10. What was your favorite aspect of the project and why?
11. What were the three most important things you learned about the University?
12. Describe your experience interviewing the university administrator.

OBSERVE
What observations, or findings are you encountering in your research?
Results
The purpose of this project was to analyze the group dynamics of eight undergraduate students as they implemented a community-based physical activity program. The purpose of this project was also to examine the participants in the community-based learning project as well as examining the University of Illinois through interviewing administrators and completing the project. The results are presented in three major categories: the participants (teachers) in the community, the group processing and the University of Illinois.
Theme II: Group processing
The first theme that emerged was the fact that it was difficult for everyone to finally settle on an exact project. It took a great amount of time and several meetings for the group to finally develop exactly what was going to be done and who the target participants were going to be. It was also difficult to decide who was going to be in charge of the different parts of the project
The second theme that developed was the idea that different individuals were able to step

into the role of leader at different parts during the implementation of the project. This both benefited and hindered the group at times. It was beneficial since there was no shortage of people who were willing to organize and coordinate events; however the group was often disorganized at times because the leadership role was not clearly defined.

A third theme that was discussed was the frustration with having to do the transcription of interviews with the faculty members. It was hard to determine where this sub-theme fit in, but it was important to note the time effort that each group member went through in typing the transcriptions. It also had an effect on the amount of time that each individual could put into the project considering a great deal of time was invested in the transcription of these interviews. It definitely took a toll on the groups' dynamics.

Theme III: The University of Illinois

The first theme that emerged was the idea that the administrators who were interviewed gave very political responses to the questions. This was no surprise since these individuals were knowingly being recorded and everybody expected these persons to "walk the party line".

A second theme that developed was the idea that each administrator had different degrees of knowledge and interest in the community-based learning initiative dependent upon their department and level of responsibility within the university. The department head expressed much more sincere interest in the community-based projects which is evidence by him wanting to turn off the recorder and discuss specifics of the project with the individuals conducting the interview. The dean of the College of Applied Health Sciences seemed to have little knowledge of the community learning initiative and though she gave encouraging responses it was obvious that she knew little of the community projects that were being completed.

REFLECT

<u>Link</u>

Connect with other resources and materials.

Group Dynamics

Group work rather than individual work has been shown to be a powerful tool around big industries. In the article titled, "Team self-management, organizational structure, and judgments of team effectiveness," looked at the dynamics of a team (Tata & Prasad, 2004, pp. 246-248). The use of self-managed teams has become a popular strategy for the business world today (68% to 70% of Fortune 500 companies are using teams). Some studies have shown that self-managed teams increase effectiveness while others show it decrease (p. 248). The study examines the relationships between structural variables, management, and judgments on team effectiveness. A sample of 176 team leaders (64% male, 36% female), volunteered to complete a questionnaire during their lunch break for the study (p. 253). Participants with an average age of 36 were asked to complete a packet of materials. A follow-up survey was done six months later. Conclusions gathered from this study were that self-management was more likely to increase team effectiveness. Self-management refers to members working collaboratively to make team decisions, scheduling, and determining operating procedures.

When working in groups, what is it that makes someone want to step up and become a

leader? What are the considerations one takes when wanting to lead, rather than just simply participating? As shown in most cases, people who want to take the lead most commonly express very strong feelings about their work and the topic at hand. They see this as an opportunity to do their work better and to aid in the "team" doing better. It has been shown that taking a leadership role is a very emotional choice that leaders take very seriously. When you look at a group the chief distinction lies in the way that identities are developed. According to the article, "Groups can become teams, but teams are aren't always groups." There are three important aspects that develop when creating a group: size, workload, and status (Martin, 2006). Relationships that are developed within groups can also become a very stressful situation for people, especially in large groups. Many people will sometimes find it hard to participate because their voice isn't heard. In the case that a leader is chosen in a group, their power can become very significant over others and hamper other group members' ability to contribute. The best way to avoid this conflict is to create a group that is likely to bring diversity in each of their own views. When joining a group/team, there are several considerations why people prefer this type of environment: for affiliation, to gain a sense of identity, to help each other make sense of the world, to protect their own interests and to get things done.

The next piece of literature states that a solution worked out by a group is much more acceptable to the group than one imposed by an "authority figure" or "leader." Although this is the case, this chapter in this book also argues that despite the fact that groups usually are superior in thinking as compared to individuals, working alone may sometimes be superior to that of group work (Maier, 1952, p. 474). It all depends on the relationships that are developed, diversity of thoughts and complexity of issues. Coincidentally, those who choose themselves to be leaders in groups are usually those who can find more success when working individually as compared to group work. Those who are selected as leaders in a group are usually chosen because they are considered to have a rich background and multitudes of experience in this area. Which can then lead to certain situations where the leader is expected to "group think" by himself. This can lead to less creative thought because the leaders ideas are accepted, and group members accept his/her ideas to gain acceptance from the group with complete disregard to their own ideas. It was also noted that highly creative ideas are sometimes made mediocre through group discussion when surrounded by less creative people. The creative ideas get "dumbed" down by the input from other group members when the individual who came up with the idea can make perfect sense of it if put into an individualistic situation.

This article discusses that a team is more than a group of people in the same space (Van den Bossche, 2006, pp. 490-521). In recent years, increasing amounts of attention has been devoted to the social bases of cognition, taking into consideration how social processes in groups and teams affect their performance. This article investigates when and how teams/groups engage in building and maintaining mutually shared cognition, which then leads to a perception of increased performance. In doing so, this research looks for conditions in the interpersonal relationships that contribute to engagement in these knowledge-building practices. The results in this study were measured with the Team Learning Beliefs & Behaviors Questionnaire. The results showed that both interpersonal and sociocognitive processes have to be taken into account to understand the formation of mutually shared cognition, resulting in higher perceived team performance.

A study done examined the influence of team norms on the cohesion and performance results. The title of the study was, "The influence of team norms on the cohesion- self-reported performance relationship: a multi-level analysis" to look at the cohesion-team success relationship (Patterson, Carron, & Loughead, 2004, p. 481). For the study, a sample of 298 athletes from twenty-four, "university and club level interactive and coactive sports teams," completed a Team Norm questionnaire, the Group Environment questionnaire, and the Rating of Perceived Exertion Scale for competitions, practices, and off-season workouts (p. 480). Based on the results gathered from these three tests, athletes on teams that perceived to have stronger norms for social interactions and higher team social cohesion reported the best performance in the physical activity task (p. 493). Among research that is focused on the group dynamics itself, there has also been research on what factors play into running a succesful exercise program in the community. Team building was looked at in a physical activity setting with relation to the impact of participation of an elderly population. In the article, "Team Building in an Exercise class for the Elderly," the study examined the effectiveness of a 12-week team-building experience on improving cohesion and attendance at an exercise class (Watson, 2004, p. 35). A sample of twelve elderly people in a group exercise class were monitored before during and after team-building experiences, based on their cohesion. The results indicated that after the team-building experiences there was an increase in class attendance and evidence of cohesion (p. 44). These findings suggest the importance of group participation with increasing elderly exercise behaviors. Another study that involved examining the relationship between group dynamics and physical activity looked at neighborhood (group) walking activities. The article titled, "Neighborhood walking and health status in older adults: A multilevel path analysis," involved studying the relationship between neighborhood walking activity and health status in older adults (Fisher & Li, 2004). For the study, a community of 582 residents was surveyed on a number of measures including health status and frequency of neighborhood walking. Based on the data gathered from the surveys, a positive correlation was found between the health status and neighborhood walking. In addition to this, perceptions of social cohesion and other factors were also found to be highly correlated with neighborhood walking. The results of the study indicated the importance and ease at which walking was found to improve the health and physical activity at the neighborhood level rather than at the individual level.

<u>Implications</u>
Could your findings have broader implications beyond this inquiry?
Conclusions
The project gave an interesting and insightful view of how group dynamics can play a role in the implementation of a program and the amount of success that program may obtain. The success of the program can be measured in different ways including the amount the undergraduate students learned while experiencing the successes and failures of the project. The major theme that was found to have the largest effect on the project was the group dynamics for the project. The other themes including participants in the community and the University of Illinois had an effect on the project but to a lesser degree. The project only lasted three sessions giving just enough time to begin the implementation.

The first theme found that the administrators gave political responses to questions and each had a different degree of knowledge about community-based learning projects. The interviews show that the amount of knowledge could be based on the amount of affiliation and the degree of importance the projects were to each administrator. In the article by Martin, the results show that the people who usually take lead of a project express stronger feelings about a topic (2006). The Head of the department is more passionate about these projects. This is evident by the amount of information and insight that was given by each administrator.

The group dynamics became a large role in implementing the project. The team was very similar in interest and developing leaders became a difficult task. The similarity in the group's interests can help or hinder the process of running a project. Research on this topic has shown that the leader usually has a strong feeling about the topic and work, but having a group with the same interests hinders the task of developing leaders. This can cause group members to find it hard to participate because they feel their voice is not heard (Martin 2006). Another article stated that the leaders usually have a rich background in the project at hand (Maier, 1952). The problem with the lack of diversity is a good indication on why a leader did not emerge from the group. The similar interests of the group made each of the members equally enthusiastic about the program. One other interesting article showed that after a team-building experience there was an increase in class attendance and evidence of cohesion for the participants in the study (Watson, 2004). The increase in productivity after a topic was selected and the program began shows that the more the group worked together the more they would socialize and the more comfortable the members of the group were to give ideas for the project.

On completion of the project the group members discussed the major faults and successes of the project. The lack of diversity may have caused the lack of leadership in the group. This may have caused the start of the project to be delayed. Also being sure to find participants for the project before the topic selection is complete. Lastly try and make the project social and fun for the participants without losing sight of the goals that have been set for the program.

OTHER
A space for other notes, findings, comments, etc.
10/4/2006

The meeting started by a group member saying that she had talked to a teacher at a local school and the teacher said that she does not know if the teachers in her school will be willing to participate in a study that requires physical activity since many of the teachers in that school are older and they may not be willing to exercise after school.

Another group member mentions that the group should put together survey they could be dispersed to the teachers in this school so that we can find out what it is that most of the teachers are wiling to do and what times suit them best for doing this activity.

One individual volunteers to put together this survey and get it to the teacher that she talked with so that this teacher can disperse it to the other teachers at her school.

After meeting with the entire class for a little while the group reconvened in the meeting room that we were in and the group decided that we should get the survey out to the

teachers and that next week we should finalize out interview questions and begin to set an outline that we will be implementing with these teachers.

09/27/06

The group got together in a circle and really got down to the details determining our project. Here are some of the ideas we decided on:
-meet with groups of teachers, 4 2-hour meetings
-1st meeting can be an information seminar- obesity, health, big activities, onset diabetes, nutrition, healthy eating habits, daily activities and alternatives, being physically active improves cognitive function
-Final meeting discuss activities to be used in the classroom
-Use PE4Life packet as a source for the review of literature

-Review of Literature- group dynamics of designing a physical activity program, how physical activity effects work in the work place, phsical activity in the classroom (Wellness plans in schools)
-group 1- physical activity in the workplace
-group 2- physical activity in the classroom
-group 3- group dynamics of designing a physical activity program

Designing Interview questions
-Experience and Behavior- what types of exercises/activity do you engage your students in the classroom
-Feeling questions- describe how you feel about using physical activity in the classroom
-Sensory questions- what do you see/hear after students go to PE
-Opinion and Value- describe why activity is/isnt important, what is your opinion about working with students before or after PE
-Knowledge questions- how did you learn how to engage students into physical activity
-Background/Demographics- what is the age group of students you are working with
-Miscellanious questions- what is the extent of your knowledge in physical activity/exercise, describe what you do to alleviate stress, how do co workers influence your activity level

9/20/2006

Today the group members got a lot accomplished yet still have some important questions about the project. It was determined that we would only interview each other and not other participants. We discussed companies to use and came to the decision that going through a local school using teachers would be a good idea. We discussed that we could teach the teachers something that they could then teach their students. We distributed parts of the IRB to fill out and came up with a title: Observing undergraduate students implementing an activity program to grammer school teachers. Some concerns about our project include all the specific guidelines, enough participants, and particular activities that will be taught. We went over the phaeses of the project. We also discussed the literature reviews.

9/13/2006

Our group members got together in a circle and we started off by discussing how we wanted to think of a new topic. We tossed around many different ideas, but narrowed our topic to providing four different days where participants from a local company can come and be physically active in different sporting events. Someone came up with the different sport choices of softball, badminton, flag football, or soccer, which we will still be narrowing down. We also discussed different companies which we could find participants. After discussing companies, we talked about finding research articles and our teacher came over and gave us some ideas about topics to search under including: socialization, relationships, group participation, sendentary, implementing leisure time physical activity, and occupational physical activity were some of the ideas. She also suggested that we teach our subjects something about physical activity like, how to take your pulse rate, proper hydration, nutrition, or other topics, but we are not to evaluate their performance of these different areas, only give the participants information.

We seemed to make a great deal of progress today and understand where we are going and what we are doing for the project.

9/06/2006
The eight (8) group members got together in a circle and one group member started off by saying that everyone should state the idea that they had come up with for the research project. Everyone stated what their ideas and these ideas included:

Examining weight loss and physical activity
Providing after school activity for younger children
Provide water aerobics for the elderly
Examine the effects of physical activity on pregnant women and their mood states
Examine the specific factors that cause differences in physical activity among age groups
Watch Physical Education classes at different age groups
Examine Physical activity in different children

It is quickly noted by a number of the group members that all of the ideas involving children cannot be done due to liability issues. The group begins discussing the idea involving pregnant women and physical activity, the group then presents the idea to the instructor and the instructor tells the group that the idea is probably too "medical" and that there many health factors that come in to play when dealing with pregnant women. The instructor then lets the group know of another group's idea that involves bringing a dancing program to an elderly home. The group then begins brainstorming about what group of subjects should be used and the idea of using elderly people as well as employees of a corporation is presented. A group member suggests that we set up some sort of softball tournament and another person suggests some sort of physical activity festival. One group member then begins to facilitate discussing the use of pedometers at a company and see what happens with that. The group agrees that a large company's

employees would be good target subjects but the group was still undecided on what event to use.