Undergraduate Research Symposium

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What Constitutes a Welcoming Community? Mankato Leaders Go Beyond the 'Welcome Wagon' for New Immigrants

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What Constitutes a Welcoming Community? Mankato Leaders Go Beyond the ‘Welcome Wagon’ for New Immigrants

Student Presenters: Sarah Lieske (Elementary Education), Sadie Leidall (Elementary Education), Philip Munkvold (Elementary Education)
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Elizabeth Sandell (Elementary Education)

Undergraduate Research Symposium
Mankato, MN - April 21, 2014
The purpose of this study was to understand how leaders responded to the community’s increasing diversity and how newcomers experienced the community response.
# 1990-2010
Blue Earth County Population Shifts
{Race as a proxy of diversity}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blue Earth County</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>% change calc. between 1990 &amp; 2010</th>
<th>% change 2010 from 1990</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>54,044</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>64,013</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>(64,013 - 54,044) / 54,044</td>
<td>+18.45</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>52,648</td>
<td>97.42</td>
<td>59,400</td>
<td>92.79</td>
<td>(59,400 - 52,648) / 52,648</td>
<td>+12.82</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minority/not-White</td>
<td>2,396</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>5,619</td>
<td>8.77</td>
<td>(5,619 - 2,396) / 2,396</td>
<td>+135.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>1,741</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>(1,741 - 251) / 251</td>
<td>+593.62</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Research Questions

- How do leaders and newcomers conceptualize the ideas of diversity and welcoming?
- What are the leaders’ goals for creating a community that welcomes non-European Americans?
- How do the leaders operationalize their concepts of diversity and welcoming?
- How do newcomers experience the welcoming efforts of the community?
Community as an Ecological Environment

“The ecological environment is conceived as a set of nested structures, each inside the other like a set of Russian dolls.”

~ Urie Bronfenbrenner
Or perhaps more like an onion...
Urie Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Theory of Human Development
Exosystem

Macrosystem
Chronosystem

Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Theory

Chronosystem

Macrosystem

Exosystem

Mesosystem

Microsystem

You

Dimension of Time

Overarching beliefs and values

Religious Affiliation

Workplace

School, Peers


Family, School, Peers, Religious Affiliation, Workplace, and Neighborhood

You

Dimension of Time

Overarching beliefs and values

Religious Affiliation

Workplace

School, Peers


Family, School, Peers, Religious Affiliation, Workplace, and Neighborhood

You
Methodology

- Review by Institutional Review Board for Research with Human Subjects (exempt status)
- Determine “convenience” sample
- Request informed consent from interviewees
- Conduct interviews with 2 community informants and 2 newcomers
- Transcribe interviews into text documents
- Code transcribed interviews according to systems identified by Bronfenbrenner
- Analyze interviews for themes, similarities and differences
Interview Questions

- What do you think of when you hear the word ‘diversity’?
- Has your understanding of that term changed over time?
- Can you point to any specific instances that have had an impact on you or changed your idea about diversity?
- Many Mankato leaders talk about making a “welcoming community” here … How do you understand that?
- What programs or images do you think community leaders have put into place that help that transition happen in a positive way?
- Do you think there was any key person or incident that changed the direction in Mankato?
- What do you think is still needed to help all residents feel welcome in Mankato?
- Can you tell me about any cultural initiatives that you are involved in?
- What goals do you have for your parts of the community?
- Is there anything you want to say that we haven’t touched on?
Informants

- “Alice,” Italian & Dutch American, female, between 45 and 55 years old, grandparent, director of private, non-profit organization

- “Clarice,” European American, female, between 35 and 45 years old, married, parent, teaches English as a second language
Newcomers

- “Irina,” Ukrainian American, female, between 25 and 35 years old, married to U.S. citizen, 2 children under age 3 years old

- “Svetlana,” Russian American, female, between 35 and 45 years old, married to U.S. citizen, naturalized U.S. citizen, 1 school-aged son
Informant Themes

- Microsystem Level Planning
  “A place where people can find housing, find a way to meet your goals, to meet your family goals to some degree anyway.” ~ Clarice
Informant Themes

- Macrosystem Level Awareness
  “We have areas where they [Mankato residents] don’t understand it [diversity], they don’t want to understand it, they are afraid of it. People fear what they don’t understand.” ~ Alice

- Exosystem Level Action
  “[When I go to] conferences and state meetings, [I notice] that in Mankato people we [agency staff members] communicate with each other. We all know what each other is doing…people are amazed that we have collaboration.” ~ Clarice
Newcomer Themes

- Microsystem Level Goals
  “Kind of survival. This is really hard part of life. Probably for many people.” ~ Svetlana

- Microsystem Level Needs
  “Providing people from different countries or different backgrounds with a support system or just supporting them in trying to make friends here or trying to find a job or trying to get a driver’s license.” ~ Irina
A Good Disconnect

“We as a nation need to be re-educated about the necessary and sufficient conditions for making human beings human. We need to be re-educated not as parents – but as workers, neighbors, and friends; and as members of the organizations, committees, boards – and, especially, the informal networks that control our social institutions and thereby determine the conditions of life for our families and their children.”

~ Urie Bronfenbrenner
Future Research Possibilities

- Conduct more interviews to see community-wide themes and possibilities
- Compare Mankato with other communities in Minnesota and across the country
- Compare university communities with communities that do not have universities
Acknowledgements

- Dr. Elizabeth Sandell, research mentor
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- MSU’s College of Education
- MSU’s Center for Excellence in Scholarship and Research
Resources


THANK YOU!!