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Diversity and Civil Leadership Programs: Is there a window of opportunity for equity and inclusiveness in the City of Portland's public involvement?

by

Khanh Le

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APPROVED:

Hua-Yu Li, representing Political Science

Patti Sakurai, representing Ethnic Studies

Robert Thompson, representing Ethnic Studies

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Khanh Le, Author

ABSTRACT

Civic participation has been perceived to be an important aspect in the City of Portland. Portland's civic engagement model and the high level of public participation from Portlanders have drawn praises. Not all communities, however, have been included in the democratic process, which should be accessible to all Portlanders. Communities of color, immigrants and refugee groups (underengaged communities) have historically been excluded from many decision-making processes. This research project applies a qualitative research method to study the recent development and implementation of the Diversity and Civil Leadership (DCL) programs by the City of Portland to address the disparities in civic engagement of underengaged communities. Social Construction of Target Populations theoretical framework and the concept of equity were employed to understand if there is a window of opportunity for equity and inclusiveness in the city's public involvement. The results from this research indicate that the decision to implement the DCL programs have begun the process towards creating a more equitable and inclusive engagement of civic involvement. Other findings, however, illustrate that barriers continue to persist for underengaged populations in regards to accessing the City of Portland. The data collected from the personal interviews reveals that additional efforts are needed by the City of Portland to sustain and meet their commitment to create a more equitable and inclusive civic engagement.

Keywords: diversity and civil leadership programs, civic engagement, public involvement, underengaged communities, City of Portland, social construction framework, equity.

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Diversity and Civil Leadership Programs: Is there a window of opportunity for equity and inclusiveness in the City of Portland's public involvement?

“Portland: A Positive Epidemic of Civic Engagement”- Robert Putnam
“Good citizens are the riches of a city”--The inscription on the Skidmore Fountain in downtown Portland

The quotes above illustrate the commitment that the City of Portland has for public engagement. Portland's civic engagement model and the high level of public participation from Portlanders have drawn praises by various prominent public engagement scholars and activists. Robert Putnam and Lewis M. Feldstein (2003) researched Portland's civic engagement and found that from 1973 to 1994 Portland participation rose steadily from 21 to 30-35 percent in terms of individuals attending civic meetings, while engagement had declined in other metropolitan areas across the nation. Even though Portland's public participation is perceived to be high, the reality paints a different picture. Various marginalized communities were not reflected in the participation growth. This exclusion illustrates the city government's failure to engage and represent the interests of growing segments of the population.

Recently, the City of Portland implemented the Diversity and Civic Leadership (DCL) programs to promote equity of opportunity and reduce disparities in Portland's civic life and governance for communities of color, and refugees and immigrants¹ including Slavics, Africans, Latinos, Middle Easterners and Asians (DCL Grant Proposal). This paper applies a qualitative research method to examine the work and impacts of the DCL programs on civic participation. The research analyzes the DCL policy through employing the Social Construction of Target

¹ The term underengaged communities was used throughout the essay to refer to communities of color, and refugee and immigrant groups.

Populations theoretical framework and equity concept to understand if there is a window of opportunity for equity and inclusiveness in the City's of Portland public involvement. The points below outline the main objectives of the research project:

- To understand if the DCL programs have improved equity and inclusiveness in the City of Portland's public involvement for the underengaged population.
- To examine the effectiveness of the DCL programs in increasing engagement of members of the underengaged populations in Portland's civic life.
- To understand if underengaged communities' perceptions of the City of Portland have altered after the implementation of the DCL programs.

The first section provides an overview of the history of public involvement in Portland and background of the DCL programs, which is followed by a literature review on Portland's racial history, civic engagement of underengaged populations, and the concept of equity. The subsequent section covers the methods that were used when interviewing the DCL stakeholders. The final section discussed results, policy recommendations and suggestions for future research.

History of Public Involvement of Underengaged Communities in Portland

There has been numerous surveys and reports produced by the City of Portland as well as private organizations including the City Club of Portland on the status of underengaged communities in Portland's civic life. General findings from across these studies suggest that underengaged communities have been excluded from many important policy making processes. However, the city's efforts to engage and involve underengaged Portlanders in past years have not been very successful (Mayor Adams' 2010-2011 Budget Recommendation; City Club of Portland Report, 1968, 1991; Community Connect Final Report, 2008). There have been few concrete opportunities for these communities to fully participate in the city's civic activities or

decision-making processes. Underengaged communities continue to lag behind the general population in participation of civic engagement in Portland.

A recent survey produced by the Office of the City Auditor finds that thirty-two percent of Portlanders describe themselves as being involved in a community project or have attended a public meeting between one to five times in the past 12 months. This data proposes that engagement is strong in Portland, which is true to a certain extent. However, the statistic can create a fallacy because it fails to explain which communities are represented in the data. When applying the same question with a cross tabulation of race/ethnic variable, the percentage of communities of color who attended a public meeting was significantly lower compared to the general population (see table 1) (City Audit Report, 2008). The findings solidify previous reports and research that describe the same phenomenon.

The City Club of Portland produced two studies in 1968 and 1991 on racial and ethnic relations in Portland. The results in both reports conclude that the city has provided little effort to recruit and engage underengaged Portlanders in decision-making positions and processes. The 1991 report cites, “minorities are significantly under-represented on City of Portland citizen advisory committees” (p. 84). A dissertation written by Steven Johnson (2002) provides an analysis of civic institutions and practices in Portland. Johnson’s research shares similar conclusions of the City Club of Portland’s reports. The author identifies the disparities in public involvement of underengaged communities. Johnson writes (2002), “While it would be difficult to exhaustively analyze membership of the civic bodies at this time in terms of geographical, demographic, or minority representation, it is a safe assumption that there were very few minority representatives. In fact a 1967 City Club (City Club, 1967) report on race in Portland identify (sic) only one civic body, other than the emerging Model Cities Program that had Black

representation” (n.p). This statement portrays the reality of current underengaged communities in the city. Betsy Hammond (2009) from the Oregonian found that little has changed and identified the epidemic of disparities and inequity of political representation. In the article “Refugees and Immigrants Today, Citizens and Leaders Tomorrow” she explains, “Among the hundreds of mayors, city council members and state lawmakers representing metro Portland, there are just four Latino city councilors, one African-born council member and a lone African American state senator” (n.p.). Therefore, many policies have not addressed nor reflected the needs and concerns of underengaged populations.

Figure 1: 2009 Resident Public Involvement Results

2009 Resident Survey Results

Number of total respondents are in parentheses

		NW/ Downtown		NE Inner Central		SE	E	City Total	Prior City totals				
		SW	N	Inner	Central				2008	2007	2006	2005	
22	OVERALL, how do you rate the livability of:												
	• Your neighborhood?												
	Very good	50%	53%	28%	53%	40%	42%	18%	41%	38%	33%	35%	32%
	Good	44%	41%	57%	41%	48%	46%	52%	47%	48%	48%	49%	49%
	Neither good nor bad	5%	4%	11%	5%	9%	10%	22%	9%	11%	13%	12%	14%
	Bad	2%	1%	2%	0%	3%	2%	6%	2%	3%	4%	4%	5%
	Very bad	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	3%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
		(534)	(462)	(419)	(407)	(439)	(474)	(395)	(3,130)	(3,219)	(19,726)	(2,681)	(21,388)
	• The City as a whole?												
	Very good	33%	35%	28%	42%	32%	34%	13%	31%	31%	28%	25%	24%
	Good	51%	54%	54%	47%	53%	49%	54%	52%	51%	51%	54%	52%
	Neither good nor bad	12%	8%	15%	9%	12%	12%	24%	13%	14%	15%	15%	17%
	Bad	4%	2%	3%	1%	3%	3%	9%	3%	3%	5%	5%	6%
	Very bad	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%
		(519)	(451)	(400)	(403)	(426)	(458)	(372)	(3,029)	(3,127)	(19,225)	(2,586)	(20,718)
23	In the past 12 months, how often have you been involved in a community project or attended a public meeting?												
	Never	61%	64%	61%	60%	64%	65%	70%	63%	-	-	-	-
	Once or twice	29%	27%	26%	28%	27%	24%	23%	26%	-	-	-	-
	3 to 5 times	7%	5%	6%	9%	6%	6%	5%	6%	-	-	-	-
	6 to 10 times	1%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	-	-	-	-
	More than 10 times	2%	2%	4%	2%	1%	3%	1%	2%	-	-	-	-
		(523)	(452)	(412)	(402)	(435)	(469)	(382)	(3,075)				

Table 1: Community project/public meeting * Ethnic background Cross tabulation

		Ethnic background						Total	
		White	African-American	Asian or Pacific Islander	Native American	Hispanic	Other		
Community project/ public meeting	Never	Count	1,635	50	100	13	33	71	1,902
		% within Community project/pub meeting	86.0%	2.6%	5.3%	0.7%	1.7%	3.7%	100.0%
		% within Ethnic background	63.4%	65.8%	71.9%	56.5%	62.3%	64.0%	63.8%
	Once or twice	Count	688	17	27	5	12	26	775
		% within Community project/pub meeting	88.8%	2.2%	3.5%	0.6%	1.5%	3.4%	100.0%
		% within Ethnic background	26.7%	22.4%	19.4%	21.7%	22.6%	23.4%	26.0%
	3 to 5 times	Count	158	6	8	2	3	8	185
		% within Community project/pub meeting	85.4%	3.2%	4.3%	1.1%	1.6%	4.3%	100.0%
		% within Ethnic background	6.1%	7.9%	5.8%	8.7%	5.7%	7.2%	6.2%
	6 to 10 times	Count	45	2	2	1	2	3	55
		% within Community project/pub meeting	81.8%	3.6%	3.6%	1.8%	3.6%	5.5%	100.0%
		% within Ethnic background	1.7%	2.6%	1.4%	4.3%	3.8%	2.7%	1.8%
	More than 10 times	Count	54	1	2	2	3	3	65
		% within Community project/pub meeting	83.1%	1.5%	3.1%	3.1%	4.6%	4.6%	100.0%
		% within Ethnic background	2.1%	1.3%	1.4%	8.7%	5.7%	2.7%	2.2%
Total		Count	2,580	76	139	23	53	111	2,982
		% within Community project/pub meeting	86.5%	2.5%	4.7%	0.8%	1.8%	3.7%	100.0%
		% within Ethnic background	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The City of Portland made some efforts to “involve” underengaged populations on various projects. However, during these attempts, individuals from the bureaus and the City of Portland have generally initiated and led the work rather than community members. Three specific projects attempted to involve different segments of underengaged communities on civic participation. One of the programs was the Project Interwoven Tapestry (PIT), which specifically aimed to engage immigrants and refugees with neighborhood associations and to develop leaders and encourage participation in the political process (National Conference of State Legislatures). PIT was funded by a federal initiative of the Office of Refugee Resettlement for a pilot project from 2000-2003 (Office of Neighborhood Involvement (ONI) Website). The second program was the Refugee & Immigrant Program that was managed by ONI and ran by staff member Paul Duong, who worked and advocated for immigrant and refugee communities.

However, during early 2000, the position and program were eliminated due to budget cuts. The last initiative was the Neighborhoods Without Boundaries. The City Council passed the Neighborhoods Without Boundaries policy in 1998, which allowed non-profit organizations that served marginalized communities to be eligible for services and/or support through ONI. The organizations would be able to access services including land use or transportation information (Neighborhoods Without Boundaries, 1998). However, this program has not gained traction within the marginalized organizations due to the lack of resources and support (Stakeholder A, Personal Interview, April 19, 2010).

Another crucial program to consider is the Neighborhood System, whose objective is to represent the concerns of all the communities in Portland. The Neighborhood System was established by the City Council over 30 years ago to increase community involvement and maintain formal relationships with the government (Ordinance 137816). However, the Neighborhood System has failed to engage and involve underengaged communities. Therefore, the needs, interests and voices of underengaged groups have not been included (Community Connect Report Final Report, 2008; Alarcon de Morris & Leistner, 2009). Many underengaged community members have been frustrated with the structure and therefore do not participate through this system (Community Connect Final Report, 2008). Alarcon de Morris, the Director of ONI, and Paul Leistner (2009), the Neighborhood Program Coordinator, explain, “Groups representing people of color and immigrants and refugees say that neighborhood associations do not talk about the issues they care about... many people of color in Portland still see the existence of a subtle racism that leads people in Portland to ignore or minimize the needs and perspectives of diverse groups in the community” (p. 49). The Community Connection Final Report (2008) produced by the City of Portland also cites from the Slavic Coalition who shares

their frustrations of the neighborhood structure, “the current system doesn’t make room for the Slavic community to participate. Nor does the Slavic community understand how the system works” (p. 8). The neighborhood system does not have the capacity to provide volunteers and individual associations the tools, trainings or cultural competency to engage and promote the involvement of underengaged populations.

Background of Diversity and Civic Leadership Programs

Given the lack of diversity within the Neighborhood System coupled with pressure from underengaged leaders and the City Council, culturally appropriate outreach programs were developed to increase participation of underengaged communities (Alarcon de Morris & Leistner, 2009; Office of Neighborhood Involvement’s (ONI) Website; Stakeholder B, Personal Interviews, April 16, 2010). These ideas that later became the DCL programs were advanced from the neighborhood district level rather than the city level. The engagement programs were first initiated through a coalition including underengaged community organizations, Southeast Uplift, a City of Portland funded neighborhood district coalition, and ONI. Due to the efforts of this coalition, the Diversity and Civic Leadership Committee (DCLC) was formed in 2004. The DCLC began to expand the preliminary goals of targeting neighborhood structure to the governmental levels and request the Portland City Council to fund a citywide initiative in 2005. The goals of the project were to strengthen the civic leadership and increase participation of underengaged communities in neighborhood associations (DCL Programs ONI Website).

The goals advocated by the DCLC resonate with one of former Mayor Tom Potter’s campaign goals, which is to reengage and involve community members in more of the City of Portland’s decision-making processes. Potter stated in his campaign statement during the 2004 mayoral election, “Those most affected by city hall’s decisions must be involved in making

them. I will re-engage neighborhood associations and ensure meaningful community involvement in the guidance of each city bureau” (Multnomah County Election, 2004). The DCL proposal was adopted by the City Council under the leadership of former Mayor Potter with the support and advocacy of the DCLC and community groups (DCL Programs, ONI Website). Between 2006 and 2007, the Leadership Academy and Organizing Project were developed and implemented under the broader DCL concept. These programs are newly developed by the City of Portland and currently in their third year.

Background of DCL Organizations

For the first time in history, ONI, a city bureau, allocates funds to six non-profit organizations including Urban League of Portland (ULP), Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA), Latino Network-Verde, Center for Intercultural Organizing (CIO), Oregon Action (OA) and Immigrant Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) to work with underengaged populations in developing leadership capacity and community organizing programs (Alarcon de Morris & Leistner, 2009). The funds provide opportunities for the organization to expand or begin leadership development to their members and community participants. Most of these organizations are mainly social service agencies that provide safety net services that range from housing, rental assistance, food, education to energy assistance. Thus the populations that the agencies serve are racially, ethnically and socioeconomically diverse. The agencies are also diverse, for example OA advocates for communities color, while NAYA focus on urban indigenous communities and ULP supports the African Americans community. Three organizations including IRCO, CIO, Latino-Verde specifically provide services, support and advocacy to immigrants and refugees that comprise of Slavic, Asian, Middle Eastern, African, and Latino who were forced to flee or migrate to the U.S. due to

political prosecutions, wars, and poverty. Many of the community members that the six organizations work with typically are not involved or have access to the City of Portland.

Diversity and Civic Leadership Academy and Organizing Projects

The general objectives of the Leadership Academy and Organizing Projects are to broaden diverse participation of underengaged communities in civic involvement and governance of the City of Portland. The grant proposal for both programs defines civic governance as city advisory committees, boards and commission and activities that relate to the City of Portland (DCL Grant Proposal). Both projects have different missions therefore offer separate trainings relevant to their specific objectives (ONI Website). Through these trainings, participants will develop leadership skills and gain knowledge of the processes and structures of the government.

The Leadership Academy has a budget of \$210,000 while the Organizing Project has an allocated budget of \$567,000 (ONI Website; Alarcon de Morris & Leistner, 2009). The Organizing Project granted \$60,000 to each grantee while the Leadership Academy allocated \$70,000. The fund for each DCL program is insignificant compared to the budgets of some of the organizations. Funding for these programs is not permanent but rather annually reviewed therefore the programs could easily be eliminated. Recently, the current Mayor, Sam Adams, released his budget recommendations for the 2010-2011 fiscal year. In this recommendation, the DCL programs were recommended to be funded at the same level for the 2010-11 fiscal year (Mayor Adams' Budget Proposal; Organizer B, Personal Interview, May 11, 2010).

Leadership Academy

The Leadership Academy was first initiated in 2006 and aims to develop leadership within underengaged communities. The City of Portland funded Latino Network, Center for

Intercultural Organizing and Oregon Action to develop twelve-month trainings for participants, which has resulted in the creation of Pan-Immigrant Leadership and Organizing Training (PILOT) (Leadership Academy Report, 2007-2008). The project provides various workshops including introduction to the city, meeting planning, turnout and political education, and volunteer recruitment (Grant Proposal, p. 3-4; Leadership Academy Report Grant Proposal; Alarcon de Morris & Leistner, 2009).

Organizing Project

The Organizing Project's objective is to increase involvement of their members in civic governance of the city. The program was established in 2007. Four organizations including ULP, NAYA, Latino Network-Verde, and IRCO received funding for this project (Alarcon de Morris & Leistner, 2009). The initiative offers workshops and opportunities to learn about the governance process and interact with city leaders. Alarcon de Morris and Leistner's (2009) research provides a summary of the program's first year. The authors write, "The program focused on community organizing, helping participants feel more comfortable with government and developing their leadership skills" (p. 52).

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is insufficient literature regarding civic engagement of underengaged communities. Much of the scholarship on refugee and immigrant populations and communities of color in respect to civic engagement are analyzed separately. In addition, there is no published research on equity and public involvement. Thus, this research project comprises and employs literature from other academic fields to develop a foundation to understand underengaged communities and civic engagement.

Literature on systematic and historical racial and ethnic exclusion provides a context of underengaged communities in Portland. The contemporary but limited literature on public engagement stops short of analyzing the relationship of civic engagement and underengaged communities. However, the scholarship identifies and describes the potential problems that will occur when the demographics change in the City of Portland. In addition, the research displays possible outcomes and contributions that occur when underengaged communities are encouraged to participate in civic activities and/or decision-making processes. Furthermore, previous research provides general frameworks to understand the potential implications of the DCL policy. Finally, scholarship on equity provides a definition to understand how the term interacts with civic involvement. This project will expand on limited but growing scholarship on civic engagement of underengaged populations.

Racial History in Portland

Racial history in the State of Oregon and City of Portland is reflective of the history of many other states and cities in the U.S. The depth of racial conflict from overt racist practices and discriminatory policies in Oregon for many years has left scars and entrenched disparities for underengaged communities in various sectors, which has prevented political advancement

among these populations. While the City of Portland has reinforced national and state legislations, discriminatory policies that restricted civil rights of communities of color and early immigrant groups were also implemented on the local level.

Each marginalized community has encountered different levels of severity of discriminatory practices. Immigrants and communities of color have been denied access to political participation through anti-citizenship policies (Dash, 2007). Thompson (2007) and Dash's (2007) research chronicle the history and political legacy of communities of color in Oregon. They explain that the population of indigenous communities drastically declined after the contact with European settlers. Prior to Oregon becoming a part of the union, the settlement and migration of European people displaced and impacted indigenous people in the area. The General Allotment Act and termination policies contributed to the process of eradication of the native communities' cultures and values (Dash, 2007; Thompson, 2007). Thompson writes, "In 1954 the United States government passed the Termination Act. One hundred and nine indigenous tribes were terminated, with sixty-two of those tribes in Oregon alone" (p. 19). Prior to the Indian Citizenship Act in 1924, indigenous communities who resided on reservations or Native Americans who were unable to prove that they abandoned their tribal affiliation were prohibited to vote. Thus, indigenous communities were disenfranchised in a political process. Other marginalized groups also encountered similar racist practices. For example, the U.S. restricted Chinese immigration when the federal government passed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. Under this act, Congress banned the State and Federal Court from granting citizenship, thus prohibiting Chinese immigrants from participating (Dash, 2009 & Chinese Exclusion Act, 1882). Recently, the Urban League of Portland produced the report "The State of Black Oregon," where Dr. Darrel Millner (2009) describes the different legislations that have been

employed to prohibit African American settlement and restrict civil rights for the community (Millner, 2009; Dash, 2007). Millner explains (2009), “When Oregon became a state in 1859, its original constitution included an articles that banned African American from residence, employment, owning property or voting” (p. 4).

The City of Portland has supported national and state discriminatory legislations. In addition, various local ordinances were implemented that have had adverse impacts on communities of color and marginalized groups. For example, in 1873, the Portland City Council passed a “550 cubic feet of air” ordinance that targeted Chinese immigrants. Griffith (2007) explains that this ordinance allowed and required the chief of police “to arrest all persons living in a building that contained less than 550 cubic feet of air for each occupant” (p. 70). Other laws that attempted to limit rights for Chinese immigrant communities include prohibition of “carrying of swill or other ‘offensive material’ without being properly covered or a prejudicial tax on Chinese washhouses in 1863 and 1865” (Griffith, 2007, p. 70). Finally, there were other discriminatory practices such as the enactment of the 1919 Code of Ethics by the Portland Board of Realty that prohibited “realtors and bankers from selling property in white neighborhoods to people of color or providing mortgages for such purchases” (Portland Auditor Office). The enactment of these polices have politically and economically impacted communities of color and immigrant groups.

The Roles of Diversity of Leadership Programs

Since 1970s, the City of Portland has had a high level of public participation from its citizens, however underengaged communities have not been part of this growth (Portland City Club Report, 1968; Johnson, 2004). Since the current engagement model has not effectively

served underengaged communities, the DCL programs have been developed and implemented to provide opportunities for engagement.

The City of Portland has mainly been controlled and managed by elites and professionals, which primarily comprises of white men (Johnson, 2004). Johnson's (2004) study identifies the discrepancy in Portland's public engagement model. The author explains that marginalized communities were underrepresented. For instance, in 1960 men represented 71 percent of the boards and commissions. Marginalized communities did not hold many influential positions during that time (Johnson, 2004; Alarcon de Morris & Leistner, 2009). Today, forty years have passed the problem continues to persist. Underengaged communities continue to not be represented and are even prevented from participating in various decision processes and leadership positions (Curry-Stevens, Cross-Hemmer & Coalition of Communities of Color, 2010).

The traditional participation model will need to be modified as Portland's demographics continue to diversify (Alarcon de Morris & Leistner, 2009; Putnam & Feldstein, 2003; Johnson, 2004). Putnam and Feldstein (2003) and Johnson's (2004) research stresses that the change in demographics will bring different and new perspectives that may not reflect the status quo, thus creating conflicts with traditional views. Putnam and Feldstein (2003) state, "Similarly, many observers have suggested that Portland's relative homogeneity in term of race, ethnicity, and wealth made instituting and maintaining participatory structures easier in the 1970s. More recently the movement of new immigrants into outlying neighborhoods seems to have exacerbated conflicts" (p. 280). Alarcon de Morris and Leistner (2009) suggest that the current model reflects the homogenous racial and ethnic city in the past, thus does not accommodate to

the newcomers and cultural changes. Under the current engagement model, various barriers hinder underengaged populations from participating.

A new system of engagement was developed and implemented under the DCL policy. The DCL programs appear to have some positive outcomes. Alarcon de Morris and Leistner (2009) briefly describe the progression of the DCL programs in addition to the impacts they have on underengaged populations. The authors explain that the programs have graduated many participants who have become involved with various City of Portland projects and served on different city commissions, boards and budget workgroups. The programs have supported numerous participants who have never been involved with the government or even imagined the possibility of participating. Thus, due to the DCL programs, the City of Portland has gained more active citizens who have traditionally been unrepresented in the city's civic activities. By involving these groups, the City of Portland is attempting to strengthen the community and commitment to its democratic process. The literature illustrates some of the initial outcomes appear to have positive results. However, more in-depth analysis is needed to understand the impacts these programs have on civic engagement of underengaged communities.

When Citizens Are Engaged in Decision-Making Processes

The literature and research illustrate potential benefits and positive outcomes when underengaged individuals are encouraged to participate in civic activities. The involvement of underengaged populations will ensure their voices are represented in future critical decisions and prevented further exclusion and disenfranchisement. In addition, public participation leads to a manifestation of social capital, which will help strengthen democratic processes and the performance of government institutions (Putnam, 2000; Knack & Keefer, 1997; Booth & Richard 1998; Fukuyama, 2001; Knack, 2002; Moulder & O'Neill Jr., 2009).

When underengaged communities are more involved and have knowledge of government affairs then they are able to hold the government accountable to address the interests of the general public rather than a few individuals. Moulder and O'Neill Jr. (2009) cite that when community members, including underengaged groups, are allowed to participate in all stages of the decision-making processes, the problems and burdens from a policy are distributed among the citizens rather than targeting one group (Moulder & O'Neill Jr, 2009). When these populations are disfranchised, however, the burdens will often be overscribed to a group who was not involved in the decision process.

When the City of Portland promotes civic norms, a manifestation of social capital occurs (Knack & Keefer, 1997; Putnam, 2000). The term social capital is associated with “trust, cooperative norms, and associations within groups” (Knack & Keefer, 1997; Putnam, 2000). Trust, civic cooperation, and high levels of civic engagement associate with better government performance (Knack & Keefer, 1997; & Knack, 2000). Knack and Keefer (1997) cite Putnam’s (1993) work, “regional governments in the more-trusting, more civic-minded northern and central parts of Italy provide public services more effectively than do those in the less-trusting, less civic south” (p. 5). When underengaged citizens are involved in decision-making, government is forced to be accountable and will respond to the needs of underengaged communities more effectively (Knack, 2002; Knack & Keefer, 1997; Putnam, 2000).

Equity in Public Involvement

Research on civic involvement for underengaged communities in Portland has indicated an existing disparity. The development of the DCL programs was an attempt to create equity in public involvement and increase public participation of these groups. Thus, equity in civic engagement is a topic that requires more attention and research. Currently, there is little

examination on these concepts. The term equity is still relatively new and there has not been few research studies and analysis regarding public involvement completed. Thus, in order to understand how the term equity would be operationalized in civic involvement, an analysis of existing research in various academic fields is required.

The term equity has multiple significances. London (2003) describes the varieties of definitions ranging “from an aspirational concept embracing values of fairness and justice to attempts to operationalise equity in terms of unnecessary, avoidable and unfair differences in health status...” (p. 7). However, the general term is vague. Both London (2003) and Litman (2002) employ two specific concepts of equity including horizontal equity and vertical equity. Each concept of equity has different significance and implications.

Horizontal equity argues that resources and impacts should be distributed equally among every individual (Litman, 2002 & London, 2003). Litman (2002) writes, “resources, bear equal costs, and in other ways be treated the same. It means that public policies should avoid favoring one individual or group over others” (p. 3). In the context of public involvement, horizontal equity would argue that everyone should receive equal engagement, interaction from the city and seats at the table during any decision-making process. However, this suggestion is presumptuous and has not been the case for underengaged populations in Portland.

Unlike horizontal equity, vertical equity views allocation of resources and impacts based on the individuals and groups with the greatest needs. This concept requires an institution to take in account historical and potential future disparities that will be inflicted on disadvantaged populations. John Rawls (1999) helped establish the theoretical framework for vertical equity. Rawls (1999) explains this theoretical basis under the Principles of Justice. He states, “In order to treat all persons equally, to provide genuine equality of opportunity, society must give more

attention to those with fewer native assets and to those born into the less favorable social positions” (p. 86). However, the author does not assume that society should “even out handicaps as if all were expected to compete on a fair basis in the same race” but rather allocating more resources to the disadvantaged populations to improve their lives in the long term (Rawls, 1999, p. 86-87). Similar to Rawls, London (2003) and Litman (2002) define vertical equity as distributing and allocating greater resources to disadvantaged groups. Litman (2002) writes, “Vertical equity requires that disadvantaged people be identified and prioritize to insure that they are not made worse off, and that their needs are accommodated” (p. 14). Vertical equity will help provide a guideline and framework to analyze the work of the DCL programs in creating equity and reducing disparities in public involvement.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methods

For three years, the DCL programs have been engaging participants from diverse backgrounds in regards to culture, language, race and ethnicity. The project uses a flexible design research and a case study approach to provide multiple methods of data collections to understand the impacts of the DCL programs (Robson, 2002). Robson (2002) cites Robert Yin’s (1981 & 1994) work on case study approach, “Case study is a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence” (p. 178). A qualitative research method was employed rather than a quantitative approach due to the complexity of the programs and difficulties obtaining all the participants’ information for data collection. One reason that prevented quantitative method from being employed for this project was tracking past participants who have changed their residence locations. A qualitative research approach

provides an in-depth analysis to understand the underlying meanings and potential relationships that may not be permitted in a quantitative study.

Sample Population

There were three populations interviewed for the research including program participants, organizers of the DCL programs and stakeholders. Only English speakers were interviewed. The program participant sample was stratified into two categories: participants who became involved in Portland's civic life after their participation in the DCL programs and participants who did not become involved. Organizers interviewed were staff from the six participating organizations (Latino Network/Verde, OA, ULP, IRCO and CIO). Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, such as city officials, who were involved in the development, implementation and coordination processes of the programs.

Recruiting Participants

Participants for the interview were selected by using a non-probability purposive and snowball samplings. The purposive sampling is utilized to identify participants who were knowledgeable and would satisfy the research topic (Robson 2002). This technique allowed the researcher to identify individuals who were critical in the development and implementation processes. By using the snowball sampling, these individuals could help identify other participants. Robson (2002) explains snowball sampling as, "the researcher identifies one or more individuals from the population of interest. After they have been interviewed, they are used as informants to identify other members of the population" (p. 265). Program organizers and employees of the City of Portland referred the researcher to past participants in the DCL programs.

Due to confidentiality, the researcher worked with a city employee who manages the DCL

programs and program organizers to recruit potential subjects. The recruitment letter, which included information about the project, was forwarded by email to potential subjects. If the subjects were interested in participating in the research project they contacted the researcher. Contact information that was provided by the subjects was used when coordinating the interview. The researcher developed and used a recruitment script when contacting the participants which was either done by email or over the phone. The contact information for public stakeholders who were critical in the development, implementation and coordination processes of the DCL programs, such as city officials or employees, were retrieved from the City of Portland's website. Also, the contact information for the program organizers was accessible to the public through the City of Portland's funding proposals and documents. Through email the researcher asked these individuals if they would like to voluntarily participate in the research study.

Data Collection

The timeline to conduct the interviews began in March 2010 and ended in May 2010. For this project, the researcher conducted a semi-structured and in-depth interview with participants who were involved with the DCL programs (Robson, 2002). Before each interview, the objectives of the study were explained and an informed consent document was provided to ensure individuals understood their rights as voluntary participants. After answering any questions from the subjects, participant signatures were obtained on the informed consent form. The interviewees were informed that their information would be kept private and confidential to the best of the researcher's abilities. To protect individual's identity, each interviewee was assigned with a pseudo name, therefore no names were associated with the interviews. The researcher did not disclose information in the research relating to particular organizations or content that would compromise the relationships between the organizations, individuals and the

City of Portland. Each interview varied due to different number of questions for each classification of interviewee (see appendix). Every question was answered in each interview.

Secondary Data

Along with the personal interviews of different stakeholders, secondary sources including the two-year report submitted by the organizations, video documentary, newspaper articles, personal narratives and other research documents were utilized for the project. The collection of information from the reports and documents were used to analyze the results and impacts that the DCL programs have on civic engagement in the City of Portland.

Data Analysis

After the 14 hours of interviews were transcribed, the subsequent phase was coding the data. Applying the three objectives of the project, the researcher analyzed the data to identify themes, patterns and relevant information. In a case study method, different approaches can be used to analyze the data (Robson, 2002). Although there are various coding techniques, only open coding was employed to analyze the collected data for this research. Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin (1990) write, “During open coding the data are broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, compared for similarities and differences, and questions are asked about the phenomena as reflected in the data” (p. 62).

Limitations

One objective of the research is to examine the issue of equity in public involvement. Therefore, the researcher attempted to acquire a representative and diverse perspectives of all the organizations. As mentioned earlier, only English-speaking participants were interviewed due to limited resources and time. Two organizations, Latino Network/Verde and CIO, provided their trainings and workshops in languages other than English. More comprehensive interviews

require resources for translation, particularly since the populations involved speak several languages. Therefore, future research and analysis will need to include non-English speakers. In the current research, efforts were made to ensure that perspectives from these populations were included. For example, English-speaking interviewees from organizations who trained and organized their workshops in language(s) other than English. Another limitation that is affiliated with employing the snowballing method was having more participants from a few organizations and fewer participants from the other organizations. Most of the findings could be generalized to understand and address the objectives of the research. Some participant responses emphasized a particular organization rather than on the general matter of the DCL programs. These responses were excluded in the findings unless there was a significant pattern across interviews.

RESULTS

The result section includes a description of the number of participants that were interviewed. The findings from coding the comments and responses of individuals have been examined and analyzed to understand if the DCL programs accomplish and meet the main objective as well as the three goals of the research project. Furthermore, a summary of other applicable and appropriate information from the interviews is discussed below.

Data Collected

The researcher was able to contact and interview program participants and organizers from various organizations in addition to city officials. There were a total of eleven participants involved in the research including: two critical stakeholders, five program participants (three are engaged and two have not been engaged) and four organizers. The participants interviewed came from diverse backgrounds in terms of race, ethnicity, culture and gender. Furthermore, interviewees who were involved with the research participated in different years and programs of

the DCL. There was one organization that was contacted, but no participants expressed interest to partake in the research project. Due to the nature of the snowball research approach, there was an over representation of two organizations in the program participant category.

Equity and Inclusiveness in Public Involvement

The interview questions inquired if the DCL programs advanced equity in civic engagement for underengaged communities. The interviewees generally agreed that the development and objectives of the DCL programs were to address the issues of equity and inclusiveness. Through all the responses, there were two visible themes in respect to equity. The first theme was equity in accessibility to education and knowledge regarding the City of Portland's civic processes. The second noticeable pattern was equity of opportunity for engagement, meaning underengaged community members are slowly breaking through barriers to gain access to more civic engagement opportunities. These themes demonstrate that the DCL programs have had a positive impact towards creating equity in Portland's civic engagement. Table 2 provides comments of various interviewees on these two themes.

DCL programs appear thus far to effectively create more accessibility and reduce inequity in civic education. The participants shared that due to their participation in the DCL programs, they acquired significant information and knowledge on various issues, in particular the city process, structures, resources and civic opportunities. Furthermore, participants felt empowered after their involvement. The interviews along with reports submitted by the organizations and other documents demonstrate the impacts the DCL programs have had on communities and individuals. Participant E was involved in the first Organizing Project in 2008 and described the program to "allow you to see the foundation of the city hall...by far the best tools for me to personally learn how the city operates and how citizens should engage with public

officials” (Personal Interview, April 6, 2010). Program participant B, who has not been involved with the City of Portland activities after the Organizing Project in 2009, has begun to participate with community organizations and school issues. During the interview, the participant explained that as a college student he already had knowledge of the structures and process of the City of Portland prior to his participation however the trainings helped refine his skills. He describes, “I had all that (skill) come in...but I enhanced it more... it made me more involved, I definitely got more involved in the community” (Program Participant B, Personal Interview, April 20, 2010). In the 2007-2008 Organizing Project report submitted by IRCO, there was an article written by Gosia Wozniacka from the Oregonian that shares three experiences of immigrant participants who participated in the DCL programs. Wozniacka writes about Rukia Mohamed’s experiences, “Engage’ 08 transformed Rukia Mohamed, A Somali Bantu refugee, giving her the confidence to deal with government officials” (n.p). These narratives and experiences are a small representation of influences that the DCL programs have had in creating accessibility to civic education. Table 2 provides other responses that support this theme.

Comments from program participants, a stakeholder and an organizer (in table 2) discuss the theme of equity of opportunity. The DCL programs appear to empower former participants to engage themselves more in civic involvement activities because they have acquired sufficient skills, tools and knowledge of the city processes. As participant C explains, “It empowers us to start creating equity and inclusion, rather than waiting for someone else to do it and always feeling marginalized” (Personal Interview, April 12, 2010). Wozniacka (2009) shares a story of a participant who was involved with the PILOT program. She writes, “When Bondarchuk moved to the United States in 2000, she knew only two words in English – ‘yes’ and ‘no’. After training at CIO, she met with the mayors of Portland and Beaverton. This year, she helped

Russian youth secure Portland city funding for an outdoor concert” (n.p.).

Table 2: Equity and Inclusiveness in Public Involvement Interview Responses

Question: How have the DCL programs addressed the issues of equity and inclusiveness in public involvement for underengaged communities?	
Stakeholder B	“We teach them through the trainings...how to present before city council, how to lobby, how to ask for the things you need, how to be a part of a committee. The DCL folks are getting \$10,000 each to help with the Portland Plan. We are getting a lot of steps closer and yet we still have a long way to go” (Personal Interview, April 16, 2010)
Program participant D who has not engaged in a civic activity prior to the DCL programs	“The DCL programs addressed the issues of equity and inclusiveness in public involvement for underengaged communities in the way of verbalizing and articulating that the reason why we have these programs is because we are not at the decision table... at least acknowledging that” (Personal Interview, April 5, 2010)
Program participant C who has engaged in a civic activity prior to the DCL programs	“This program teaches us how things operate, and that we have a right to sit on City committees, commissions, boards, apply for City positions, and even run for office. It empowers us to start creating equity and inclusion, rather than waiting for someone else to do it and always feeling marginalized. Us just being at the table and making the decisions is going to change the equity and inclusiveness...because we will be at the table, we will have the analysis and we will be able to start affecting the processes and the operations to improve for all of us” (Personal Interview, April 12, 2010)
Organizer C	“I think the program is beginning to highlight the issues. I don’t think that the project has been able to address the systemic inequity. I think that the beginning is where we are at ...creating the awareness on the system side and on the communities side of how deep the disparities are” (Personal Interview, April 14, 2010)

Barriers to Equity in Public Involvement

Despite the general positive feedback on the DCL programs in making an impact on civic engagement within underengaged communities and the potential to reduce inequities, many of the interviewees continued to be cautious. These individuals recognized that the DCL policy was one small initiative that is making an effort to reduce the disparities in the City of Portland’s civic engagement. However, the interviewee’s responses show recognition that the DCL

program cannot completely eliminate the historical disparities that have amassed from exclusionary practices. Two logical themes the participants identified that need to be done in order to advance equity in civic engagement include:

- More work is needed to achieve an equitable civic engagement.
- Underengaged communities continue to be underrepresented in the final decision-making processes of many public policies.

The path to create and sustain equitable civic involvement will require more effort to erase and repair exclusionary policies and past discriminatory practices. Organizer C and D discuss how the DCL program have started to address the structural problems of discrimination. However, organizer D also clearly expressed that, “The DCL project is just one of Jeri William’s projects...that’s not going to repair the problems with 150 years of racialized city governance. Is a good start but it can’t end there” (Personal Interview, April 3, 2010).

Five of the interviewees, including four program participants and one organizer, went further than the other interviewees to identify that underengaged communities continue to be underrepresented in the final decision-making processes. Eventhough underengaged members are now being invited more frequently to the decision-making tables, their engagement at the decision-making levels has not increased. Program participant A who has engaged with City of Portland civic activities explains, “It seems that the city is trying to engage people, but we are not yet engaged on the decision making level” (Personal Interview, May 10, 2010). The reflections of these individuals concur with the recent report produced by the Coalition of Communities of Color which found that the elected public officials does not reflect the entire population, especially in the City of Portland (Curry-Stevens, A., Cross-Hemmer, A., & Coalition of Communities of Color, 2010). This equity of opportunity theme also reveals an

important concept, which is the equity of outcome. Litman (2002) defines this concept as, “Society insures that disadvantaged people actually succeed in these activities” (p. 5).

Underengaged communities cannot be successful because they are not at the final decision-making table to ensure that the policies reflect the interests of the underengaged populations.

Thus, equity in civic engagement would be protracted from being achieved in future unless this problem is addressed efficiently.

Perception of the City of Portland

The relationship between underengaged communities and the City of Portland has often been surrounded by conflict and mistrust due to historic racial problems and exclusionary practices. The attitudes and perceptions have appeared to reverse in a more positive manner after the implementation of the DCL programs. However, nine interviewees strongly expressed that the city has significant work to do in order to lessen the reservations that underengaged communities have for the government.

The City of Portland is making a positive effort to outreach and involve underengaged communities, which is reflected in some of the interviewees’ responses. The attitudes of underengaged community members are changing gradually. Organizer B explains,

My opinion after the 2007 Diversity and Civic Leadership Academy totally changed and I say that this is because before they tried to engage the communities by using the neighborhood associations, which is a total failure. When you look at the demographics of the leadership of the neighborhood associations they were all white so, people of color, if they did not have a loud voice or come with a strong coalition of folks, they were not heard. When they move to this process of engaging community based organizations of color, immigrant based organizations and diverse population idea, I thought it was wonderful. I have to give the City of Portland kudos for making that happen and taking it seriously. (Personal Interview, May 11, 2010).

However, building a relationship with the City of Portland will not come easy for

underengaged populations due to past working relationships. The city needs to continue to prioritize engagement and involvement of underengaged communities in order to develop and sustain relationships. Currently, the efforts to involve underengaged communities continue to be perceived by many community members as an after thought, which can be unproductive in relationship building. As a result, the credibility of the city is questioned which leads to diminishing future efforts to engage underengaged communities. The tables below provide the different sentiments and perceptions that are shared by the community members.

Table 3: Summary of Perceptions of the City of Portland

Question: What are your opinions of the City of Portland's efforts to involve underengaged communities in civic activities and important decision processes?	
Organizer A	"I do not believe that they do an effective job. They are at the very beginning stages, at the threshold of doing the work that is necessary to have a more equitable community here in Portland and they are at the beginning stages of understanding how to effectively engage communities of color. The DCL program is a good start, but is way under funded" (Personal Interview, April 21, 2010)
Organizer C	"My sense of the city's efforts is that there are certain bureaus that have been really encouraged and pressured to address this and are now doing it a little better than before, but overall the city's efforts are after thoughts" (Personal Interview, April 14, 2010)

Summary of Perceptions of the City of Portland

Question: Do you feel the City of Portland is doing a good job to include underengaged communities in the City of Portland's decision processes? If so, how?	
Program participant A who has engaged in a civic activity prior to the DCL programs	"The council is trying to engage people...we are not yet engage on decision level. We need to put more people in decision making positions" (Personal Interview, May 10, 2010)
Program participant C who has engaged in a civic activity after the DCL programs	"I think the City of Portland was not doing a good job in including immigrants, refugees, and communities of color in decision process. I think in Tom Potter's administration the city did a great job then because the administration was really interest. The current administration appears to be making efforts, but it doesn't feel genuine and sincere; just more of a 'check-mark' and a reaction to the pressure that's being applied"

	(Personal Interview, April 12, 2010)
Program participant D who has not engaged in a civic activity after the DCL programs	“Ya, I definitely think the City of Portland is improving their approach on how to include underengaged communities...My personal opinion is they put more effort and money into marketing that their are including underengaged communities then maybe they actually including. My time in Portland for 8 years now, there has been a good progression of...initiatives to include underengaged communities. We are not at the table when final decisions are made. We are invited to table...but how come none us are still never at that final table?” (Personal Interview, April 5, 2010)
Program participant E who has engaged in a civic activity after the DCL programs	"The city tries, but I don't have a concrete data or have a way gagging the effectiveness" (Personal Interview, April 6, 2010)
Organizer D	“I don’t think the city of Portland is doing a good job. I think it’s fair to say that because the City of Portland just started doing this... The city has not made this effort ever. This is so interesting that Multnomah County has a longer history of engagement by newcomer communities... For the city, this is all brand-new” (Personal Interview, April 2, 2010)
Organizer C	“The planning bureau went out and conducted a number of meetings at which very few folks of color showed up...and only when they were called out for their lack of diversity did the Mayor then make make an attempt to meet with the targeted leadership of particular communities. That could happen from the get go, but again it was ‘well let's work with this process’ and ‘oh it didn't work’ or ‘oh let's back track’” (Personal Interview, April 14, 2010)

Effectiveness of the DCL Programs

Part of achieving equity in public engagement is having underengaged communities participating in civic activities. Thus, the second goal of the research project is to examine the effectiveness of the DCL programs in increasing engagement of members of the underengaged populations in Portland’s civic life. The responses from the interviews, reports submitted by organizations, and other documents demonstrate that the DCL programs have helped increase members of underengaged communities’ participation in civic activities. However, with the success of the programs, many of the interviewees confirmed that barriers to the City Hall

continue to be pervasive.

The DCL programs appear to have positive impacts on civic participation for underengaged communities over a relatively short time. There are numerous successful examples where past participants have engaged and participated in making policy changes to leading community organizations. Three of the five program participants that were interviewed are engaging in city civic activities and continue to be involved with their respective community organizations. Some of the activities that these individuals have participated in include the Portland Plan, Public Involvement Advisory Committee, ONI Budget Advisory Committee, Neighborhood Associations, and other public committees. Even though two participants reported not being involved with city activities due to work and time conflicts, they are participating with community of color organizations to work on issues such as disparities in education.

Participant A, who is a refugee and recently settled to the U.S., described the influences of the DCL programs in her life. The interviewee has participated in several activities including engaging in the budgeting process with ONI, participating on the Vision ~~Into~~[into](#) Action board, and testifying before the city council on behalf of the DCL programs. Another program participant, Program participant C, shared her involvement as participating in activities including the electoral forums, the ONI Budget Advisory Committee and testifying numerous times before City Council. During an interview with stakeholder B, the interviewee explained that in 1½ years 29 participants from different programs have joined city boards and commissions and have become involved in various civic involvement activities. Stakeholder B shared an example of an activity that numerous past program participants took part in developing was the Colored Pencils monthly event. This program provides venues for individuals and newcomers to share, promote

and celebrate cultural traditions and customs. Another policy change that one participant made was a women-only swim time to accommodate to Muslim women and girls who, according to their culture, can not be seen in swimsuits in front of men.

Along with individual achievements, there are examples of DCL partners working together to increase participation of underengaged communities. An example of this was the Portland Plan. Stakeholder B shared that the DCL partners and program participants worked with Mayor Adams' office to acquire \$10,000 for each organization to increase engagement for the Portland Plan due to complaints regarding the lack of outreach to underengaged communities. Recently, the ULP together with many of the DCL partners including IRCO, Latino Network, CIO and NAYA as well as other underrepresented organizations organized a candidate forum on May 4, 2010 (*El Hispanic News*). The forum was another project that provided opportunities for underengaged communities to participate in civic process, ask questions and hold future political leaders accountable on matters that are important to the communities. Finally, the organizations have been able to leverage private funds to implement other social programs. The participants of the DCL programs as well as the organizations are working to demand more opportunities to be involved in decision-making processes.

Barriers to Participation

Many interviewees acknowledged that the DCL programs are new efforts to reduce inequities in public involvement. Some barriers of the DCL programs have already been discussed including the lack of participation of underengaged communities at the final decision-making process. Another noticeable theme that was articulated by some of the interviewees is the institution of the City of Portland as a main barrier. The City of Portland could potentially prevent underengaged community members from participating in city civic activities due to the

culture intimidation of the language spoken by the City of Portland staff and the culture of the governmental institution.

One particular interview question asked non-engaged individuals why they have not participated in Portland's civic activities. The responses from these interviewees display similar concerns regarding the language and culture of the city. They responded that underengaged participants have been deterred from engaging due to language barriers.

Seven people, including four program participants and three organizers suggested that the culture of the City of Portland continues to be perceived as an unwelcoming environment for all underengaged communities, particularly newcomers. Participant B shared that even though he was born and raised in Portland and has achieved a high level of education, he felt that the process of participating was intimidating. While other participants supported Participant B's reactions, they further articulated that a separate language is spoken in the city hall, which would dissuade anybody to participate including English and non-English speakers. The message that the City of Portland sends to Portlanders who do not know the technical language and jargons of the city is that they are not welcomed to engage in the democratic process. As result, the voices and interests that the City of Portland often represents are the influential and activist groups who benefit from many policies due to their understanding of the process and political connections (Lunch, 2001).

Table 4: Summary of Barriers to Participation

Program participant B who has not engaged in a civic activity after the DCL programs	"I guess it is very intimidating because you have to talk a certain way and you have to dress a certain way and you don't talk a certain way or dress certain way people are not going to listen to you. Even for me, I was born and raised here in Portland Oregon I still feel scared to talk to the officials" (Personal Interview, April 20, 2010)
Program participant C who has engaged in a civic	Our new board member...is very involved with her university governance. When she came to the ONI BAC, it was pretty

activity after the DCL programs	intimidating. I also believed that's the culture of the city. I think there's a lot of work to be done in the city. I think changing the culture of how they do things makes it more welcoming” (Personal Interview, April 12, 2010)
Organizer A	“There is a different language spoken at city hall... there is a sharp learning curve as far as being a community of color for us to participate in the process...there is a language barrier” (Personal Interview, April 21, 2010)
Organizer C	"We trained a group of 20 individuals mostly women who had very limited English literacy and very limited education. They had their opinions, they had the vision of their community that they wanted to articulate and they participated in Vision PDX very effectively. We started from where they were rather than with maps and with technicalities that expected a certain level of education. We got the same information from both type of groups whether university educated or very grassroots” (Personal Interview, April 14, 2010)

DISCUSSION

Application of Social Construction Framework

The DCL policy was implemented to target underengaged communities and address the disparities in public involvement. Thus, Social Construction of Target Population theory coupled with the vertical equity concept, which was discussed in the literature section, are the most appropriate models to examine if equity and inclusiveness in the City of Portland’s public involvement is possible to achieve. However, the social construction framework is not able to accommodate or explain every aspect of local dynamics of underengaged communities, thus some modifications to the model are required (see table 6).

Background of Social Construction of Target Population Framework

The social construction of the target population theory developed by Schneider and Ingram (1993) argues that social constructions can shape and influence public officials, policy agendas, and the actual design of a policy and selection of policy tools as well as the rationales that legitimate policy choices. Furthermore, the theory helps explain why certain policies could

reinforce benefits and burdens to “target groups” or “target populations” based on negative or positive social constructions (Ingram, Schneider & Deleon, 2007; Schneider & Ingram, 1993). According to the authors, social construction is defined as, “stereotypes about particular groups of people that have been created by politics, culture, socialization, history, the media...positive construction include such as 'deserving,' 'intelligent,'... Negative constructions include image such as ‘undeserving,’ ‘stupid,’ ‘dishonest’” (p. 335). Schneider and Ingram (1993) had developed a model that has two dimensions including political power and social construction that are central to the framework (Ingram et al., 2007).

In this model, there are four classifications: advantaged (politically powerful and positively constructed), contenders (politically powerful and negatively constructed), dependents (politically weak and positively constructed) and deviant/disadvantaged (politically weak and negatively constructed). The term disadvantaged is used rather than deviant because the construction is not appropriate to characterize the underengaged communities in Portland. Furthermore, employing the term deviant would continue the perpetuation of people as outcasts of the society (Ingram et al., 2007 & Schneider and Ingram, 1993). Groups in these classifications are not static but rather fluid. Target groups can shift into different matrices depending on the political environments and the implications of the policies.

Schneider and Ingram suggest that distribution of burdens and benefits to target groups in public policy depends on the matrix (Ingram et al., 2007). The advantaged groups are considered to have political power and significant capital to influence policy, political system and policymakers (Ingram et al., 2007). According Schneider and Ingram (1993), the advantaged groups are, “Powerful segments of the population who also have relatively consensual positive social constructions (the advantaged groups) have considerable control and will find it easy to

get their issues on legislative agendas” (p. 337). Therefore, these groups receive support from different structures to ensure they are informed of the benefits. Furthermore, there are many forums for participations that will advance their issues. Hence, the advantaged groups generally receive more benefits while their burdens are undersubscribed and typically voluntary (Ingram et al., 2007).

Another group, the contenders, have similar political power but not as comparable to the advantaged populations. Unlike the advantaged groups, these groups are constructed negatively. The characteristics are analogous to these groups, which are selfish, untrustworthy, and morally suspect (Ingram et al., 2007). Even though the contender groups are negatively perceived, they still receive benefits that are often hidden. Ingram et al. (2007) writes, “Benefits to contenders are hidden because no legislators want to openly do good things for shady people” (p. 102). Burdens may be distributed among the groups, but difficult to enforce due to their political power (Ingram et al., 2007).

The third groups are the disadvantaged. These groups, according to Ingram et al. (2007), “lack both political influent and positive social construction and tend to receive a disproportionate share of burdens and sanctions” (p. 103). These groups are often blamed for many of the ill problems in society, thus viewed as unworthy to receive benefits. Often times the politicians and policymakers take advantage of the disadvantaged group to score political points through implementing policies that enforce punishments. Organizations that are willing to advocate on their behalf are limited (Ingram et al., 2007).

Finally, the dependent populations have little political power but are positively constructed. Ingram et al. (2007) explains, “Dependents are viewed as ‘good’ people” (p. 103). These groups are generally viewed as deserving, however, the allocation of benefits is more a gesture of

sympathy rather than actual investment because policymakers do not want to be mean-spirited. Even though they receive benefits, the dependent groups lack political influence and capital, which hinders them from demanding for more in the case of the advantaged groups (Ingram et al. 2007).

Social Construction and Vertical Equity Applications

The social construction model provides a framework to understand where and why underengaged communities in Portland have situated in terms of their political power and social perception prior to the development of DCL policy. Furthermore, it offers a theoretical foundation to analyze if the DCL programs have shifted and altered their political and social status.

The framework was adapted to categorize underengaged communities in Portland in the dependent and/or disadvantaged groups based on historical information described in the literature review section. Schneider and Ingram (1993) suggest, “Some view minorities as oppressed populations and argue for policies appropriate to dependent people, whereas others portray minorities as powerful special interests and not deserving of government aid” (p. 336). For this research project, to characterize underengaged communities in Portland as contenders or advantaged would not be an accurate depiction. If underengaged communities are in the advantaged or contender groups, there would be no need for the DCL programs or discussion of the importance to include these populations in public decision-making processes because they would have political power and capital. Therefore, these communities would be situated in the dependent or disadvantaged categories, which their political power has been limited due to the exclusionary practices.

The DCL programs attempt to empower underengaged communities and move them into

categories of political power. Even though there is a slight change in the political power, underengaged communities continue to be perceived or constructed in a negative manner because they are demanding more political power.

Table 5: Social Construction and Political Power: Types of Target Population

P o w e r	Constructions	
	Positive	Negative
	S Advantaged High political control Politically influential and active High political and civic participation Burdens are undersubscribed Benefits are oversubscribed	Contenders Some political control Politically influential and active Moderate political and civic participation Burdens are symbolic and overt Benefits are hidden
W e a k	Dependents Low control Politically weak and not active Low political and civic participation Burdens are oversubscribed Benefit are undersubscribed	Disadvantaged No control Politically weak and not active Low political and civic participation Burdens very oversubscribed Benefit very undersubscribed

(Adapted from Schneider & Ingram, 1993 for the DCL policy)

Social Construction and Political Power: Types of Target Population

P o w e r	Constructions	
	Positive	Negative
	S Advantaged The elderly Business Veterans Scientists	Contenders The rich Big unions Cultural elites Moral majority
W e a k	Dependents Children Mothers Disabled Minorities	Disadvantaged Criminal Gangs Flag burners Minorities

(Adapted from Schneider & Ingram, 1993 for the DCL policy)

In the social construction framework, Ingram et al. (2007) outlines six propositions, but some are not applicable to the DCL policy. Only two concepts apply to this research topic. The first proposition states, “Policy designs structure opportunities and send varying messages to differently constructed target groups about how the government behaves and how they are likely

to be treated by the government” (Ingram et al., 2007, p. 98). The development of the DCL programs has targeted underengaged communities on civic participation issues since the City of Portland views the communities who have been unfairly disenfranchised as dependents or disadvantaged. Thus, the city implemented a redistribution policy through the DCL programs to provide opportunities for engagement and empowerment of underengaged communities.

The second proposition explains, “The allocation of benefits and burdens to target groups in public policy depends upon their extent of political power and their positive or negative social construction on the deserving or undeserving axis” (Ingram et al., 2007, p. 101). The City of Portland recognizes that underengaged communities are growing, which will gain more political power in the future. Therefore, the city prefers to work with the populations and organizations in a constructive manner to address the disparities in public involvement. The development and implementation of the DCL programs initially sent a message to underengaged communities that the city hall is trying to ensure fairness and equality in respect to political and civic representation by shifting benefits. However, another interpretation could be that the city is trying to maintain the image of being progressive by providing a small gesture of funds for leadership development and capacity building.

Vertical Equity

In the past, the City of Portland employed vertical distribution of resources and impacts that traditionally favored groups including white middle and upper class, while excluding other populations. Thus, this distribution created a legacy of inequities particularly for underengaged communities. Through the development of the DCL policy, the City of Portland is attempting to reduce the disparities and create equity in civic involvement. The vertical equity concept provides the applicable framework and analysis to examine if the DCL programs help achieve or

address equity in civic engagement.

The vertical equity asserts that the needs of disadvantaged groups should be identified and accommodated (Litman, 2002). The development of DCL programs attempts to apply the vertical equity concept by identifying the needs to increase public participation for underengaged communities and allocating resources to create opportunities to participate in civic engagement activities and decision-making processes. The allocation of resources also helps reduce and distribute the burdens because underengaged communities are at least at the decision-making table to advocate.

Is there Equity in Public Involvement in the City of Portland?

The primary goal for this research project is to understand and determine if equity in public involvement is possible in Portland. The answer is not simple, but rather complex. The responses from the interviews have been articulated that the conclusion cannot be determined because the DCL programs are new concepts. Furthermore, equity is not a concept that can be immediately achieved in three years, which is the duration of the DCL programs. However, both social construction and equity concepts as discussed in previous sections would agree that the city is moving slowly to create more equity in civic education and public involvement. The vertical equity concept argues that more resources need to be allocated to the disadvantaged groups to ensure that these populations are not put in a less favorable political position and to address the disparities (Rawls, 1999; Litman, 2002 & London, 2003). The city has provided funds to address the inequity even though the amount is insignificant. The message that the City of Portland is sending to underengaged communities by approving this policy and continuing to provide funds at the current level illustrates some commitment to equity in public involvement. Furthermore, the social construction model would assert that underengaged communities are

slowly gaining political capital and power through their participation in various political and civic activities.

To address the existing disparities, which have accumulated over a century of discriminatory policies, more efforts other than implementing the DCL programs are required. Thus, the essential aspect that requires close attention is to see whether the City of Portland is committed to increasing funding to maximize the goals and capacity of the programs when there are additional funds to expand the DCL programs to meet the demands of underengaged communities in public engagement. Finally, these programs have altered and attempted to create equity of opportunity in public involvement for underengaged communities. However, equity of outcome continues to be a problem and challenge in the City of Portland. As many participants explained during their interviews, underengaged community members are invited to the discussions, however, they are not part of the final decision process. Thus, the outcomes and policies generally do not reflect the communities.

CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATIONS

Mayor Adams' 2010-2011 budget recommendation states, "The City has also recognized that historical efforts to involve underengaged groups (people of color, people with disabilities, renters, people with low income, etc.) in City initiatives have not been very effective" (184). In the statement, the city recognizes that civic participation of underengaged communities has been low due to various reasons particularly the lack of effort by the city.

Hence, if underengaged populations continue to be excluded from decision-making processes, their voices will continue to be silenced and concerns will go unaddressed. Therefore, the City of Portland cannot continue to employ the conventional engagement method. The consequences from these actions produce mistrusting and hostile relationships between the City of Portland and

underengaged communities. In addition, conflicts continue to occur that will impact the government's credibility.

Through the development of the DCL programs, the City of Portland has established a foundation for engaging underengaged populations in civic activities, which appear to be successful. In the short existence of the DCL programs, many leaders have developed and have contributed various aspects to the city including serving on committees, and partaking in various civic activities. The government's investments in the DCL programs will not only pay for itself now, but given the projected population growth in the next 40-50 years, the program will help harness the energy of underengaged communities, which will be beneficial to the future of the city. Participant A clearly articulates when the city engages and invests in underengaged communities there are positive results. He explains, "When you are dealing with immigrants and refugees when they first arrive here, spending money is a good investment because you are building good citizens, if not you will be building bad citizens" (Personal Interview, May 10, 2010).

Policy Recommendations

The DCL programs have the potential to develop leadership capacity and increase participation of underengaged communities in civic engagement. To sustain and be successful in engaging underengaged populations and accommodate to the change in population, more funding is needed to maximize the capability of the prospective of the DCL programs. Furthermore, efforts and initiatives similar to the DCL programs are required in the future in order to address the years of exclusion from participation.

The funds that are granted to the organizations may not be equal or adequate compared to the time that is consumed and invested by the community organizations to develop the DCL

programs. Thus, the funding of the DCL programs should be reexamined every five years. The City of Portland has gained many benefits through the partnerships with the DCL organizations. Currently, the community organizations are reducing the costs and time that incur when the City of Portland attempts to develop relationship with underengaged communities, which as research illustrates, has not been successful. The trusting relationships that community organizations build with their members require many years of commitment and time. Thus, the community groups have provided the initial equity and investment that the city can utilize. Another benefit the city attains from the organizations through the DCL programs is expertise in how to work with underengaged populations.

Equity in public involvement cannot be achieved by one city bureau, instead the DCL programs or similar efforts should be implemented in all the bureaus. To attain this recommendation, all public officials need to commit and support equity in civic engagement. Thus, all the councilwoman and men should encourage and provide incentives for their department managers who develop programs and projects to increase involvement of underengaged communities and work towards equity in civic engagement.

Future Research

The DCL programs appear to have some success in increasing engagement of underengaged communities. The success of the programs has encouraged other municipalities including the City of Beaverton and Multicultural Health and Services of the State of Oregon to develop similar models to engage underengaged communities. Qualitative research methods used in this research provided an analysis of the quality of the programs in promoting engagement. For future research, the City of Portland should conduct a quantitative analysis to quantify the effectiveness of the DCL programs in increasing engagement of members of the

underengaged populations in Portland's civic life. Furthermore, as discussed in the methods section, one of the limitations for this project was interviewing participants who spoke various languages. Thus, the subsequent project should attempt to encompass these populations to gain better insights. Applying the findings of this research and a cross-reference with other qualitative analyses will provide a better understanding of the relationships of the City of Portland and underengaged communities. Lastly, in order to apply future quantitative research, the City of Portland will need to collect and maintain the contact information of participants in the DCL programs.

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APPENDIX

Interview Questions

Participants who engage with civic activities after their participation with Diversity and Civic Leadership programs

1. Which Diversity and Civic Leadership (DCL) program(s) did you participate in (Leadership Academy or/and Organizing Project)?
2. What are the reasons that encouraged you to participate in the DCL program(s)?
3. What aspects of the DCL program(s) attracted you?
4. How would/did availability of translation services affect participation with the DCL program(s)?
5. Please share your reactions of the DCL program(s)?
6. What do you see are the strengths and weaknesses of the program(s)?
7. Please explain how the program(s) has increased your knowledge of the processes and governance structure of the City of Portland.
8. Has the program(s) helped you increase or decrease interaction and influence with the City Bureaus or elected officials? If so, please explain.
9. Do you feel the DCL program(s) has empowered you to engage in city activities? If so, how?
10. Which Portland civic activities have you participated with after your involvement in the DCL program(s)?
11. What are your motivations to participate in current civic activities?
12. Before your involvement with the DCL program(s), what were your opinions of the City of Portland and its relationship with underengaged communities in relation to public involvement? B) Have your opinions changed after your involvement with the DCL program(s)? If so, how?
13. Before your involvement with the DCL program(s), have you participated any City of Portland activities that connect you with the City of Portland? If no, why? If yes, what were the activities and why?
14. Do you feel the City of Portland is doing a good job to include underengaged communities in the City of Portland's decision processes? If so, how?
15. How have the DCL programs addressed the issues of equity and inclusiveness in public involvement for underengaged communities?
16. Do you have any other comments that you would like to share?

Participants who did not engage with civic activities after their participation with Diversity and Civic Leadership programs

1. Which Diversity and Civic Leadership (DCL) program(s) did you participate in (Leadership Academy or/and Organizing Project)?
2. What are the reasons that encouraged you to participate in the DCL program(s)?
3. What aspects of the DCL program(s) attracted you?
4. How would/did availability of translation services affect participation with the DCL program(s)?
5. Please share your reactions of the DCL program(s)?
6. What do you see are the strengths and weaknesses of the program(s)?
7. Please explain how the program(s) has increased your knowledge of the processes and governance structure of the City of Portland.
8. Has the program(s) helped you increase or decrease interaction and influence with the City Bureaus or elected officials? If so, please explain.
9. What reasons have prevented you from participating in Portland's civic activities after your involvement with DCL programs?
10. Do you have the capacity to be involved with city's committees, board or commission or any other City civic activities? Please answer the below option that applies.
 - a) If you do not have the capacity, would you become involved if you had the capacity or opportunities?
 - b) If you do have the capacity, please explain why haven't you become involved?
11. Before your involvement with the DCL program(s), what were your opinions of the City of Portland and its relationship with underengaged communities in relation to public involvement? B) Have your opinions changed after your involvement with the DCL program(s)? If so, how?
12. Before your involvement with the DCL program(s), have you participated any activities that connect you with the City of Portland? If no, why? If yes, what were the activities and why?
13. Do you feel the City of Portland is doing a good job to include underengaged communities in the City of Portland's decision processes? If so, how?
14. How have the DCL programs addressed the issues of equity and inclusiveness in public involvement for underengaged communities?
15. Do you have any other comments that you would like to share?

Program Organizers

1. What are your opinions of the City of Portland's efforts to involve underengaged communities in civic activities and important decision processes?
2. Do you feel the City of Portland is doing a good job to include underengaged communities in the City of Portland's decision processes? If so, how?
3. Has the City of Portland provided avenues or programs to involve underengaged communities prior to the implementation of the DCL programs?
4. How would/did availability of translation services affect participation with the DCL program(s)?
5. Please share your reactions of the DCL programs?
6. What do you see are the strengths and weaknesses of the program(s)?
7. How have the DCL programs effectively increased members of underengaged populations in Portland's civic activities?
8. How have the DCL programs addressed the issues of equity and inclusiveness in public involvement for underengaged communities?
9. According to your knowledge, have former DCL participants become engaged in City of Portland's civic activities? Please provide examples of their participation?
10. Does your organization feel that the DCL programs have helped increase or decrease interaction and influence with the City Bureaus or elected officials? Does your organization feel they have gained power?
11. Do you have any other comments that you would like to share?

Public Officials and City Employees

1. What are your opinions of the City of Portland's efforts to involve underengaged communities in civic activities and important decision processes?
2. Do you feel the City of Portland is doing a good job to include underengaged communities in the City of Portland's decision processes? If so, how?
3. Has the City of Portland provided avenues or programs to involve underengaged communities prior to the implementation of the Diversity and Civil Leadership (DCL) programs?
4. Why were the DCL programs implemented by the City of Portland?
5. Is the creation of the DCL programs the first effort by the City of Portland to allocate funds to increase involvement of underengaged communities?
6. How have the DCL programs effectively increased members of underengaged populations in Portland's civic activities?
7. How have the DCL programs addressed the issues of equity and inclusiveness in public involvement for underengaged communities?
8. Do you feel that underengaged communities are more empowered to participate and engage in Portland civic activities?
9. How would/did availability of translation services affect participation with the DCL program(s)?
10. Do you have any other comments that you would like to share?