Do Now

1. What reflections do you have about yourself or your academic interests after yesterday's lecture or activities?

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2. Where do you see examples of research in your everyday life?

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Real-World Research[1]

Executive Summary

Since 1944, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (CCC) has engaged colleagues in government, philanthropy, and direct service in data-driven discussions about the needs of children and families in communities throughout New York City and the practical solutions to address those needs. For more than two decades, we have maintained the nation's most comprehensive database tracking the well-being of the city's children and families, and we make that information available to the public through a free online tool called Keeping Track Online. We analyze this data in CCC's Community Risk Ranking and Keeping Track of New York City's Children publications. Together, these data tools have helped CCC describe the conditions faced by New York City's children citywide, across each borough, and in each of the city's 59 community districts.

Historically, much of the data used to describe the status of children and families has focused on needs and risk factors, and these indicators are commonly collected through a variety of state, local, and federal government sources. For example, CCC's *Community Risk Ranking* examines data related to child poverty, family homelessness, infant mortality, educational test scores, teen idleness, and violent felony rates among others. Yet we know that children's outcomes are defined by a complex interplay of both risk factors *and* the assets or resources that exist to help children and their families overcome barriers to well-being. We also know that in order to effectively improve outcomes for children and families, we must target our solution-seeking at the most local level and engage community stakeholders in our efforts to unearth the opportunities that are present.

For these reasons, CCC has undertaken a comprehensive effort to establish a method through which to identify assets or resources in New York City communities, starting with the neighborhood of Brownsville in Brooklyn. We began by leveraging our Keeping Track database to provide a foundation for our understanding of the needs of Brownsville's children and families. We then met with colleagues in government, nonprofit, and academic organizations to identify data on key assets or resources that should be present at the community level. Asset data were then collected from a wide range of local government agencies to illustrate the services, supports, and infrastructure that exist in Brownsville.

To ensure we presented a complete picture of the challenges, strengths, and opportunities present in Brownsville, we engaged residents and organizations working in the community throughout our process. These conversations helped to identify issues that were revealed through the data that required closer examination, raised additional areas of concern for which data needed to be explored, and provided a deeper understanding of the story the data was telling from the perspective of those living and working in the community. This was instrumental in gaining insights on issues such as a lack of sufficient resources, conditions within the community that limit access to services, and concerns about quality that may drive residents away from available resources.

1. How did this organization conduct their research?

Brownsville

The neighborhood of Brownsville in Brooklyn is home to over 61,000 residents, including nearly 19,000 children. Brownsville is one of several communities in New York City where outcomes along traditional measures of well-being are consistently well below the city average, with children and families experiencing high rates of poverty, crime and homelessness, and poor outcomes in health and education. In the 2016 edition of CCC's annual *Community Risk Ranking*, the Brownsville-Ocean Hill community district ranked 4th out of 59 community districts in overall risk, making it one of the highest ranked communities in terms of cumulative risk to well-being. Our analysis illustrates the extent to which children in Brownsville are not faring as well as their peers across the borough and city.

We also found there to be a shortage of many fundamental resources that should exist in any New York City community. Public transportation options, banks, food retail, housing support services, and after-school and summer programs for older youth are just some examples of resources that appear to be lacking. In other areas—such as childcare and medical care—issues related to convenience and quality, respectively, seem to serve as a deterrent to resource utilization. And the fear of crime and violence in the community means that fewer people are using the resources—from parks to libraries to youth services—that do exist.

Throughout our conversation with community-based organizations and residents, it became very clear that the greatest asset to the community of Brownsville are the individuals who live and work there. The residents we spoke to expressed great pride in their community and are looking for ways to improve the prospects of their neighborhood. In many cases, they echoed the findings of our research, pointing to a lack of resources in the community as a significant hurdle to meeting basic needs.

Many residents cited a lack of childcare and insufficient transportation options as impediments to finding and holding a job. They took issue with the quality of medical care facilities and schools in the area and expressed a willingness to travel whenever possible to access higher quality healthcare and education options. A lack of affordable housing and support services designed to keep residents in their homes were also frequently mentioned by residents as resources that were lacking in the neighborhood. And the absence of productive activities for older children was cited as a possible reason for high crime rates, which is the number one concern for many community members.

Importantly, there is ample opportunity for targeted, strategic interventions that can help the community overcome the many challenges it faces. And making an impact in one area can improve outcomes in others. More employment opportunities for older youth might make the community safer. Increased safety could lead to more young people taking advantage of existing parks and/ or after-school or summer programs, which could improve their health and education outcomes. Increased licensed childcare capacity could lead to higher rates of employment among parents, and increasing household income can, in turn, lead to improved housing stability for young children to grow in.

Much work is already underway in Brownsville, both through public sector programs and the dedication of many nonprofit organizations and individuals. However, we are hopeful that this assessment of needs and resources will inform continued advocacy in the Brownsville community and work with the City administration and New York City Council.

From our data collection and analysis, in-district meetings and focus groups, CCC has developed 14 broad recommendations of areas where there is opportunity for government, philanthropic and community based organizations, and residents to work together to improve outcomes for children and families in Brownsville.

Exit Ticket

Name of Sample Study:

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Summary of Study:

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Connection to Academic Interests:

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