

**Creating Community**

*A Case Study of Community Developmental Organizations in Knox County, Ohio*

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## ABSTRACT

*In 1992 three-quarters of the United States workforce said that “the breakdown of community” was a serious problem in America (Putnam 2000: 25). Since then it is recognizable that our world has only become more civically disengaged and distant from the traditional idea of community. At the same time, there has been a noticeable rise of philanthropy, non-profits, NGOs and grassroots initiatives that aim to bridge these social gaps created by this civic disengagement. The giving rates and charitable contributions remain consistently high (within America) yet trends of civic disengagement, increased liberation from community bonds and individualism continue to rise. This notion of community stems from the combined theoretical work of Ferdinand Tonnies, Emilia Martinez-Brawley, Jesse Bernard and pioneer of micro-credit Muhammad Yunus. Yunus provides the premier model of a successful program that views community and people as multi-dimensional entities. This research attempts to understand one of the answers our society has relied on to fix this problem of civic disengagement and community breakdown: small-scale grassroots programs. How can small-scale grassroots programs impact community? I employ a case study of the Mount Vernon & Knox County Community Foundation and three Knox County organizations that received start up grants from this foundation to start their own social business. I analyze the potential impact these organizations have on fostering community development through interviews, along with Martinez-Brawley’s measurement model of security, solidarity and significance. I argue that opportunities of impact are only attainable through catering to the needs of the community which necessitates an understanding of that specific community and their particular interests. Development in a community can be successful through certain identifiable measures such as: a collective sense of belonging, active participation, common understanding and intimate interaction within the community.*

## INTRODUCTION

Despite a time of enormous economic upheaval, such as we saw in 2009, Americans provided \$303.75 billion in total charitable contributions (Giving USA Foundation 2009: 5). Although this is a slight decrease in giving from the previous year (3.6%), the fact remains the same: people give. While Americans are estimated to be doubly involved in philanthropy and volunteering compared to other citizens of other countries, caring for others is a global trend (Putnam 2000:117). The embodiment of this altruistic mentality has moved beyond transnational borders, taking on a similar pattern of globalization. The literal meaning of philanthropy is “love of mankind”, which can be expressed through acts of fiscal and communal aid without a quid pro quo for services (Acs & Phillips 2002: 190).

Yet as giving rates remain high, the breakdown of community, civic disengagement, increased liberation from community bonds and individualism have become recurrent truths in our current world (Putnam 2000: 24). Just as the philanthropic mindset transcends borders, the de-centralization of strong community character is a severe global reality and concern. Although philanthropic giving and community might seem interchangeable, it is important to understand the difference: philanthropic giving is fuel or an avenue for community and community development. If there have been potential components to nurture and revitalize communities, why do we still struggle to? Can small enterprise and philanthropy inspire long lasting and large-scale community development in a hurting world? This is the macro issue this paper will explore through an examination and exploration on a micro level.

Social enterprises are socially driven organizations that aim to achieve a social purpose through specific strategic and market driven endeavors. The goal of social enterprise is some form of social improvement or empowerment modeled after a business-like structure. The goal

of social change remains central whether the enterprise is not-for profit or profit based. Altruistic driven businesses can be seen locally as well as globally, as I experienced in Tanzania, Africa this past summer. I worked in different schools that had completely different infrastructures, funds and means of connecting with the community that directly dictated the schools' success and progress. Monetary aid to start these structures was necessary, but I became fascinated with what it really took to enable tangible, lasting change within these desperate communities. What creates a self-sustaining structure is that "it brings the advantages of free-market competition into the world of social improvement through pride, establishing teams and achieving the social objective" (Yunus 2007: 27). These are the ideals of Muhammad Yunus, the pioneer and father of micro credit who has devoted his life to answer the problems of poverty through social business and visionary leaders.

Although the focus of this paper is not the elimination of poverty or micro-finance, Yunus provides a strong theoretical model of communal solidarity and growth through social enterprise and business. His method is micro-finance which is the provision of financial services to the poor through solidarity lending (Yunus 2007). This idea is equivalent to the idea of teaching a man how to fish instead of giving him a fish, where the emphasis is on the skill and person rather than product. In 1976 Yunus informally began the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, one of the most successful micro-credit movements. It started with him giving \$27 out of his own pocket to 42 villagers so they could purchase craft making materials and manages today to reach 2.4 million of the poorest people in Bangladesh (Mann 1999: 1). Women are gaining independence, the trust and camaraderie among people is strengthening, and there is excitement about the possibility of opportunity and change. The success has been great, but Yunus was not the first entrepreneur for charity or humanitarian action in our world. The concepts of moral

virtue and generosity trace back to the fundamental understanding and early thinking of Aristotle and Nichomachean ethics. The use of money, charitable giving, the virtue of spending and receiving are not innovative ideas. In America, the care and help of others is a central tenet of all of our faiths and has been a long distinguished tradition (Putnam 2000:117).<sup>1</sup> Yunus' model isn't actively different, but he found a way to put these ideals into practice.

Instead of focusing on the business, the structure or the money, Yunus urges us to focus on people's roles in and within the business. "People are not one-dimensional entities; they are excitingly multi-dimensional. Their emotions, beliefs, priorities, and behavior patterns can best be compared to the millions of shades we can produce from the three primary colors" (Yunus 2007: 19). Three hundred billion dollars can be charitably given, but unless we look at who and how we are giving, social trends, and the multi-dimensionality of individuals and communities, we will continue to disengage and devalue the importance of collective effort and civic engagement. While existing research may address the issue at large, it doesn't explain the detailed dynamics of the people within a working community and how opportunity for social enterprise can directly correlate to positive community development. Can small-scale grassroots programs impact community? How do these social enterprises and the community relate, if they even do at all and why? These are the questions I aim to answer in this paper.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Answering these questions necessitates an understanding of and relationship with the specific community in which change is being initiated. Thus, my paper examines the Mount Vernon & Knox County Community Foundation (MVKC Foundation). This organization's goal

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<sup>1</sup> "Andrew Carnegie, one of the new millionaires who emerged from the period of rapid growth following Civil War, proclaimed in his 1889 essay 'The Gospel of Wealth,' wealth was a sacred trust which its possessor was bound to administer for the good of the community" (Putnam 2000:17).

is similar to that of Yunus': to focus on the people and their needs. The research revolved around the MVKC Foundation and three organizations that they financially supported to get off the ground to reach a need they saw in the community. Interviewing active members who held leadership positions and were involved with the starting of the enterprise as well as the grantor, fostered a legitimate understanding and analysis of the community, the community needs and ultimately the opportunity for impact. Lessons, patterns and themes to community development will not be drawn from looking at the issue from afar, which is the perspective current literature presents. Hence, this attention to one localized example has the potential to provide insight on developmental issues that go beyond Knox County.

Before understanding development, it is first necessary to understand *what community is*. My definition of community is drawn from three main social theorists that set the groundwork for what community is and means. Ferdinand Tonnies' sociological groupings of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, Emilia Martinez-Brawley's perspective on small communities and Jessie Bernard's theory of interaction of family and community will inform my research.<sup>2</sup> *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*.

The classical German sociologist Ferdinand Tonnies distinguishes two types of social groups, *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. The distinction is found in the translation of these groups into community and society. *Gemeinschaft* is often translated as "community" with the idea of people associating with a larger grouping over an individual interest instead of focusing on togetherness. *Gesellschaft* is often translated to "society" or "association", referring to individuals acting in their own self-interest over the larger association, fostering less individual loyalty to society (Bernard 1973: 91-96).

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<sup>2</sup> Schumacher – Small Is Beautiful (contrasting idea to "bigger is better" through sustainable and small development)

Bernard compares the conflict in community development to that between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, stating that understanding community is understanding all the differences of those within community. She writes, “some relish the ‘rugged individualism’ of the paradigm of capitalism, others reject the alienation it leads to, preferring the security of communitarianism” (Bernard 1973: 30). This model will strengthen my concept of community and the conflict that is inherent within community development because of the different motives and mindsets behind individuals and organizations operating within.

#### *Small Community Perspective*

Emilia Martinez-Brawley’s work increases awareness and recognition of small towns that oftentimes get neglected. Her work is valuable to my research in offering understanding of the nature of small community relationships, practice and complexities (Martinez-Brawley 1990: XV). Martinez-Brawley outlines the importance of personal identity, local leadership and size in making a community “a personally meaningful sociological unit” (xxi).

Martinez-Brawley assesses community development through specific qualifications: solidarity, significance and security (4). She offers specific ways of identifying these qualifications such as measuring the emphasis of the “we” within solidarity, significance through the return or sparked interest in a place, and security through the mutuality of communal relationships and friend support (14). Based on these well established standards and areas of assessment, I am able to standardize my assessment of each organization and their impact initiative within the community.

#### *Community Theory*

Jessie Bernard is a notable sociologist and feminist scholar whose relational work focuses on the interaction of the family and associations within the community. Her work examines

several classic models of community through assessing the nature of power and change in conflict and competition within a changing society. Bernard defines community as, “an ecological organization and structured systems of status and of power, contrasting these with a complex or mass society” (Bernard 1973: Foreword).

Bernard’s definition provides a standard for comparing my research interviewees’ perception of community. It is also important to recognize the reality of current day community in an age when technology seems to override the physical and original concept of community that once held true. Despite the changes in our society, Bernard stresses the importance of locale and how certain structures within society are internalized. This “internalization” refers to the more traditional sense of a neighborhood community, with face to face recognition and contact breeding a certain level of intimacy. This allows me to analyze these organizations in reference to today’s world and their specific environment yet recognizing that outside structures might be changing, there is some persistent internal concept of community that holds true.

From these three sociologists of community theory, I was able to define community in my own terms. Relying largely on Bernard’s definition, the definition of community that I have constructed is: a social group existing in a specific ecological organization and structured systems of status and power with a shared sense of cultural heritage, solidarity, security and significance. This is the definition of “community” that I imply throughout this paper.

Development of this “community” refers to the expansion, growth or maturation of the processes and systems within this structured social grouped organization. Assessing “community development” consists of analyzing that specific communities’ past, present and future. This includes analysis of the implemented systems and evaluating how beneficial (or detrimental)

they have been to the life of the community and all the structures, systems and people within that community.

## CURRENT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

With community and the problems within the structure of communities clearly defined, it is important to recognize what has been done thus far. Globally, this altruistic mentality has been exemplified and embodied through the creation and increased interests in philanthropy, non-profits, charities, grassroots programs and NGOs.

In briefly explaining two organizations, KIVA and The World Bank, I hope to outline how different organizations can have like-minded intentions yet manifest in entirely different ways with different processes and goals. KIVA is the “the first online peer-to-peer microcredit marketplace and one of the fastest-growing nonprofits in history” (Coates & Saloner 2009: 1). KIVA describes themselves as being a “community of lenders” enabling impact as a team (KIVA.com). While KIVA lenders loan for a multitude of reasons, ranging from religious motivations to wanting to create opportunity for entrepreneurship or tackling poverty, they believe fostering community is possible through this virtual action.

On a larger scale, The World Bank is an international financial establishment that aims to improve the economic development and capital stability in developing countries through loans (World Bank 2011). Although the Bank is NOT a form of philanthropy and started in response to a break out of foreign debt from the early 1980s, the Bank continues to address the world’s everlasting problems of unbalanced capitalism and desolate poverty (Pereira 1995:1). The World Bank in large part has received a lot of criticism for their endeavors, intervention strategies or lack thereof. Yet it is important to recognize how frustratingly large and global the problem of

community development is; the attempt to tackle such an intangible issue inevitably receives criticism, as reflected in the literature.

While KIVA and the World Bank are two totally different enterprises, one operating from a grassroots level and the other through large governmental funding, they both represent similar goals. A primary understanding of these organizations, their mission and their idea of positive impact exemplifies the attempt, success and sometimes failure of development initiatives.

Robert Putnam, a political scientist, surveys the decline and revival of American community in his book, Bowling Alone. Serving as a quasi-sociological detective, Putnam explores the plausible causes of this civic disengagement, broken bonds and lost fundamentals of social structures. These serve as plausible and real reasons to what inhibits development and progress within community and ultimately can hinder communal bonds. Part of understanding how civic development happens is understanding why civic disengagement takes place and if and how apathy can change social structures. He attributes the change of education, health, enrichment, trust in our government and overall societal morale to the decay of one on one social intercourse (Putnam 2007).

While Putnam offers provocative insight about social and political behaviors of twentieth-century Americans, he also recognizes altruism, volunteering and philanthropy as key players when measuring social capital and community. “Social capital refers to networks of social connection – doing *with*. Doing good *for* other people, however laudable, is not part of the *definition* of social capital” (Putnam 2000:117). Belonging to formal and informal social networks is directly correlated to our level of involvement and likelihood to give time and money to good causes compared to those who are socially isolated (Putnam 2000:117). The significance of social networking, community size, different motivations of volunteerism, timing and

direction of trends in philanthropy are all idiosyncrasies of community explored by Putnam.

Locality, leadership and accountability hold considerable importance within small community development. Sociologist Jessie Bernard speaks to the “massification” of society due to mass media and the role of technology aiding the erosion of community, questioning whether “community” can exist without locale (Bernard 1973: 180). Furthermore, Putnam emphasizes the benefits and necessity of size control as well, keeping communities small, local and personal (Putnam 2000: 119).

Along with locality, the influence and quality or skill of leadership has been observed. Sociologist Emilia E. Martinez Brawley pushes us to move past the simple interpretations of leaders as ‘born’ and realize what potential emerging, developing and transforming leaders in small communities have (Martinez-Brawley 2000:166). Her work highlights not only the importance and mechanisms of leadership but also the problems and issues of power, influence and stamina that develop as well (Martinez-Brawley 2000:167).

Lastly, accountability has been recognized as a main concern for community development initiatives. *Efficiency* and *effectiveness* are two measurements Martinez-Brawley has identified as important criteria for community-oriented work. Political Science professor and author Jonathan Fox also addresses the issue of accountability in his book, The Struggle for Accountability, assessing the efforts of NGOs, grassroots movements and governmental coalitions in hopes to make them more publicly accountable.<sup>3</sup>

While many of the themes identified in the literature will play into the analysis of community development, I want to understand how these components play out on a micro level in a specific community in hopes to shed new light on this topic. Individual endeavors and personal stories are important information that is presently overlooked in the literature. This

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<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Fox’s The Struggle for Accountability (for further information)

approach is valuable because while many scholars have postulated theories of community development, it is very hard to assess development across communities because each one is specific to its own. The development that occurs within one community is specific to its own past and present which I believe needs to be understood by talking and working directly with the people of the community.

## METHODS

This case study of Knox County involved two different groups, those who grant money and those who received the grants. The study involved gathering qualitative data through individual interviews of those who directly had experience in the process of giving or receiving grants.

The “grantor” was selected through researching local community funding organizations in Knox County and talking to residents and professors who are well versed and involved with Knox County life and knowledgeable of philanthropically driven movements. Researching in an area that I am not originally from nor know intimately limited my choices and knowledge of organizations, yet an effort was made to choose a well-established and known organization within the community. Based on recommendations and advice from locals, I selected the Community Foundation of Mount Vernon and Knox County as a viable and meaningful establishment that has had recognizable community impact. The Foundation is defined as,

A collection of individual philanthropic funds established by Knox County residents for a wide variety of charitable purposes. For many people, establishing a personal, philanthropic fund in The Community Foundation of Mount Vernon & Knox County is an attractive and economical alternative to setting up their own private foundations”  
(<http://www.mvkefoundation.org/About/introduction.html>).

After identifying this foundation, I arranged an interview with the Executive Director, Sam Barone. The case study necessitated an organization with strong communal ties and accessible

clients that could be contacted, interviewed and ultimately assessed according to their initiative for communal impact. Mr. Barone offered ample reason and tangible evidence (including an impressive edition of the 65<sup>th</sup> annual report of MVKC Foundation) that they were well invested, involved and acknowledged within Knox County. He recommended a handful of startup organizations that received initial grants from MVKC Foundation, assuring me of their willingness to talk and walk through their process of getting their organization off the ground.

Before becoming involved with these different small business enterprises that stemmed from the MVKC Foundation, I needed further knowledge of the Foundation, their mission, aid requirements and interest. The method of in-person tape-recorded interviews allowed me to gain a depth and breadth of knowledge.<sup>4</sup>

While assessing themes across these three grantee groups, a comparison that was valuable was between the organizations, and the MVKC Foundation. Understanding MVKC Foundation's expectations and ideas for a plausible grant case and seeing how that manifested through these organizations made me understand the importance of this hand in hand partnership and how essential that is in creating an opportunity for impact.

In my formal interview with Mr. Barone I asked questions regarding the grant application process and necessary qualifications for receiving loans. I asked how he has seen these creative ideas become self-sustaining, socially progressive establishments and how they ultimately are a positive force and necessity in Knox County. After establishing rapport with Mr. Barone and an understanding of the MVKC Foundation and their mission, I was able to access the actual organizations that I originally classified as the "grantees".

I intended to interview three different organizations that have gone through this process of grant receiving and project initiating with the MVKC Foundation. My expectation was to

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix A for interview written consent form

work with organizations that have proven to have had substantial success with their business initiative and among the community. Three seemed to be a reasonable sample size because it allows opportunity for comparing and contrasting yet is also attainable for myself as a solo researcher in a limited amount of time.

The three organizations recommended were the Sew Special Network Incorporation of That Place on the Market, Touch Pointe Marriage and Family Resources, and The Early Learner's Scholarships Fund of the School of New Hope. These three organizations offer diversification in their initiative and focus within the community as well as geographical diversity within the county. All three organizations received grants of different amounts for different initiatives, but have completed the same goal of somehow succeeding in giving back and providing to the solidarity and positive community structure. I know this because these are the reasons Mr. Barone recommended these specific organizations as models.

My hopes in connecting with these organizations was to interview someone within the organization who had a hand in the start up, grant proposal process and has had a significant role in the business endeavor. Through copies of the actual grant applications I received from MVKC Foundation, I was able to progress my study.

I kept the structure of the interviews and questions consistent across all three organizations in order to fairly assess the information received and justly compare and contrast. Some questions catered to the specific initiative of the organization. My questions focused on the idea of the organization, the grant approval process, their initiative to reach the community, and their personal evaluation of their success in regards to community impact.<sup>5</sup>

After performing the interviews I was able to transcribe the conversation through the use of the tape recording and my notes, thus allowing me to compare and contrast themes, ideas and

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix B for interview outline

patterns among the organizations. Instead of looking for particular wording or analyzing these interviews through a specific coding process, it was more pertinent to look for overarching patterns or differences among the groups such as how they assess success.

It is important to address the limitations that come along with the methods used. These organizations were just the known “successes” and although it might have been difficult and improbable to work with an organization that didn’t have as much success or didn’t quite carry through as they promised, would have provided further insight. Mr. Barone was clear that few organizations “failed” yet it is important to recognize the limits of my sample. Because I was working with an extremely limited sample it is crucial to not make my results generalizable. This sample is just pulled from Knox County and although the philanthropy and social business mentality might be larger social phenomena that have global implications, this is just one case study at a local level. These limits will be addressed further in the conclusion.

## RESULTS

The first “grantee” interview was with the starters and facilitators of Touch Pointe Marriage and Family Resources, Dan and Barbara Humphrey. Touch Pointe is a non-profit cooperation located in Fredericktown serving Knox County that strives to strengthen the quality of life by working to improve relational health, support and life of individuals, couples and families through support and training. Their mission is to encourage, by providing listening ears, thought provoking questions, tools, classes and one on one insight to enhance relationships (Touch Pointe 2010). Touch Pointe was founded by Dan and Barbara Humphrey in the Spring of 2010 out of the need and hurt they saw in the community fostered by broken homes and family issues. Neither Barbara nor Dan claim to be trained therapists, but combined have significant

experience in the public school system and mentoring. The program's mission is not to counsel but to mentor and provide support for those in need by meeting people where they are at.

The second organization I researched was The Sew Special Network Incorporation of That Place on the Market: A Social and Creative Center Shop located in Danville, OH. I interviewed Marsha Frantisak, CEO of the Sew Special Network who nurtured this project from an idea, to individual action, to a group of ladies in her basement to a working non-profit. The Sew Special Network is an innovative volunteer non-profit organization where people gather to exchange ideas, learn and give back to the community by sharing and using their talents. The Network provides a unique volunteer opportunity for the community by promoting arts and crafts to a generation that in large part has grown up in a technological age. The incentive is to pass a skill, value and knowledge down to people who haven't had exposure to these skill sets, promoting intergenerational bridges. Besides taking intergenerational action, the Network provides meaning and an outlet for senior citizens within the community to feel more attached and worthwhile after retirement.

The third and last organization I interviewed is the Early Learners Scholarship located in Mount Vernon, OH. I interviewed Fran Rodstrom and Jennifer Highnam who are both teachers and two of the main starters of this foundation. Because national surveys and studies have shown the tremendous value in early education as a predictor of young adults' success later on in life, these ladies saw a need in the community for preschoolers to have this access that otherwise couldn't afford it. The incentive is purely to get more kids in school, and not just "typical" children but children, with special needs or from a lower socio-economic class as well.

Some overall trends and themes from the interviews of these organizations are worth noting. Below there are a few charts that help organize certain responses received from the

interviews. The charts help visualize and enable comparisons between organizations and also general overall observations.

**CHART 1: General Interview Responses**

Organization	<b>Touch Point Marriage and Family Resources</b>	<b>Sew Special Network Inc. of That Place on the Market</b>	<b>Early Learner’s Scholarship Fund – New Hope School</b>
Individual interviewed and position held	Dan and Barbara Humphrey (starters and prepare/enrich facilitators)	Marsha Frantisak (CEO)	Fran Rodstrom and Jennifer Highnam (starters and teachers of New Hope School)
Motivation for organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need in the community to strengthen, prepare and enrich relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passion for sewing and helping others</li> <li>• Saw intergenerational gap</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children weren’t getting early ed and national research shows early ed is a huge predictor of success</li> </ul>
Start up grant amount (asked for and received)	\$3,000 asked and received	Two grants: \$2,800 and \$2,400 asked and received	\$8,00 asked and received
Mission Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To serve as an encourager by providing listening ears, thought provoking questions, tools, classes and one on one insight to enhance relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where people gather to exchange ideas, learn and give back to the community by sharing and using their talents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing early education for pre-schoolers that couldn’t afford it</li> </ul>
Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classes offered (couple/money talk)</li> <li>• Leadership classes</li> <li>• Guidance sessions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classes offered</li> <li>• Open for volunteerism</li> <li>• Exhibits/shows</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• scholarships</li> </ul>

Level of community support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• solid</li> <li>• people with the same passion/vision</li> <li>• receptive</li> <li>• pastoral, church, religious support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• supported in theory but not in action</li> <li>• few volunteers and little interest yet 90% donations – very good</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• solid</li> <li>• funds kept coming (more than goal of \$100,000)</li> </ul>
Community Target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• families, couples, anyone invested in relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• retired senior citizens</li> <li>• ideally targeting younger generation as well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pre-k and uneducated youth (families with children)</li> </ul>
Biggest Struggles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• people not seeing a need for this</li> <li>• getting the word out</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• publicity and getting interest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• getting word out, getting themselves to get the word out</li> </ul>
Measuring Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no current system of evaluation set</li> <li>• looking to do “pre” and “post” testing of classes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• evolution of organization</li> <li>• devoted volunteers (even if there are a few)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• level of recognition in community</li> <li>• kids getting education, filling classrooms with not just “typical” students</li> </ul>
Future of the program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unsure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unsure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unsure</li> </ul>

**CHART 2: Identified Common Themes among the Start Up Process**

<b>Common Themes on the Start of the Organizations</b>
Stemming from personal, emotional, experiential ties or investment
Positive experience with Community Foundation
Received as much money as asked for in initial grant
Involved at least one woman
Lived in community in which organization was situated
Already involved and invested before asking for grant

**CHART 3: Similarities/Differences in Key Concepts and Definitions**

	<b>MVKC Foundation</b>	<b>Touch Pointe</b>	<b>Sew Special</b>	<b>Early Learner's</b>
<b>Community</b>	<b>Knox county – nothing outside</b>	<b>Knox County Families</b>	<b>Knox County Senior Citizens and older volunteers</b>	<b>Mount Vernon/Knox County (families)</b>
<b>Development</b>	Improving the <b>quality of life</b> of those within community	Strong families build strong communities	Bridging intergenerational gap and providing purpose	Early Education
<b>Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>hearing about it in the community</b></li> <li>• <b>seeing it!</b></li> <li>• People coming back for more funds</li> <li>• “doing philanthropy”</li> <li>• seeing <b>leadership</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pre vs. post testing</li> <li>• strong infrastructure</li> <li>• including and inviting more people</li> <li>• <b>leadership</b> from strong families</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• amount of donations</li> <li>• evolution</li> <li>• <b>people coming</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ability to help as many as possible</li> <li>• <b>being known and recognized in the community</b></li> </ul>
<b>Future</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• set up for continual growth</li> <li>• community learning importance of philanthropy and giving mindset</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>no plan</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>no plan</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>no plan</b></li> </ul>
<b>Struggles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>trying to change the perception of CF in community not just “will”</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>publicity</b></li> <li>• funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>publicity</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>publicity</b></li> </ul>

#### CHART 4: Overall Identified Common Themes Among Organization’s Outlook

Overall Common Themes Among Organization’s Outlook
Problems with publicity and getting the word out
Fair amount of community support when cause is known
Minimal to no future plans (focus is on the present)
Success is viewed as peoples involvement and recognition within community
Development is about improving the quality of life (specifying with certain cause)
“Community “ did not expand beyond Knox County
Passionate and personally invested and excited about their work and cause

These groups vary in the criteria of success they employ. Marsha Frantisak of the Sew Special Network evaluates their success based on the growth of the organization itself, the level of community involvement and awareness of the program and the amount of donations received. In speaking to assessing success Mrs. Frantisak said, “I think success can be just seen by looking at the evolution of our organization. We started in my basement, moved to one room, two rooms and now we are out of my house and public. We include the public, in any shape or form anyone wants to get involved.” This assessment is similar to Dan and Barbara Humphrey’s evaluation of Touch Pointe in that they too find credibility in the evolution of infrastructure and the fact they now have a lot of the logistical blocks built such as a website, phone line, advertisement, etc. The Humphrey’s vision of success differs in the sense that they are looking to instill an actual measure of pre and post testing to measure success but ultimately pouring into the lives of others through support and guidance is going to have a positive impact. Fran Rodstrom and Jennifer Highnam of the The Early Learner’s Scholarship Foundation, evaluate their success based on the level of recognition within the community and also more simply by filling the desks in the classrooms with children from the community that otherwise wouldn’t be there.

My previous notion of “successful development” was somewhat changed after the responses received from the interviews. I previously defined development as the expansion,

growth or maturation of the processes and systems within the community. Naturally, the words expansion and growth foster a “bigger is better” mentality which I thought would be part of the motivation behind these small organizations. Interestingly enough, their desire to “grow” is to become more known and rooted in the community, to secure more funds and to stabilize, not necessarily to expand their organization in size or numbers. Each organization expressed a similar importance in remaining local which was due to the prerequisite of their funder, the MVKC Foundation. In assessing development in terms of the community Mr. Barone responded, “I would say because of our small size and we remain small for a purpose, because we want to keep our over head low, one because instead of funding more staff through our dollars we fund projects and two because we are able to touch base with each project.” Oftentimes the word “entrepreneurship” or “development” implies the need or want for extreme expansion and success in terms of numbers, yet the quality and value of remaining small and local, that Mr. Barone presented, is not a lack of development but in fact can be used as a mechanism for success (which was found among all three organizations as well).

Another finding to unpack is how the organizations specific target (i.e.: pre-k children for Early Learner’s) is related to the response from the community. When I asked Mr. Barone to define community he responded, “Community means Knox County, we aren’t looking for anything outside, that is how we define community. Probably the bigger question for us is how can we define quality of life within that community?” The aim of all three organizations is to improve this “quality of life” yet they all have a different target. Touch Pointe targets families; Sew Special Network targets Senior Citizens and the elderly population, while the Early Learner’s is focused on pre-k and young children.

The Early Learner's Fund showed tremendous impact and influence just based off of the sheer number of students they have enrolled (estimated affecting 50-60 families in a few short years). The pace of this organization compared to the other two was much faster and well received by the community. These conclusions are based off of how much support, continued funding, donors and interest the foundation received from the community which I was told in the interview. Through their newspaper articles, requests for events and constant support, the amount of impact was evident, which leads me to look at the target population as a possible root reason. Children hold promise because they are young and have endless opportunity for development which is why it would make most sense for the community to take interest in improving the quality of life of the young rather than the old (who may need it just as badly). Clearly, this is not the *only* variable that effects or enhances impact but it is notable because it clarifies what and who the community values as important which is ultimately going to be an important factor when searching for effective avenues to pursue impact.

## DISCUSSION

As I previously mentioned the goal of this project was not to assess community development from an outsiders perspective yet focus on the intangibles by getting to know the people of a community, their organizations and their experiences. While the literature provided key overarching themes such as social networking and the value of relational ties as identified by Putnam and Martinez-Brawley, I gained an understanding of development from personal stories and individual accounts.

The results from my interviews highlight the importance of *locality and geographical size*, which also were influential factors in the literature and theory (Putnam 2000, Bernard 1973, Martinez-Brawley 1990). Each interviewee, including Sam Barone, stressed the importance of

knowing people within the community in order for these ideas and businesses to succeed.

Knowing people and social connectivity is made possible by “keeping your heads low”, and remaining within Knox County lines. Face to face recognition enables the gain of support which in turn opens the door for impact. My research illustrates the importance of face-to-face connection.

My data revealed two thematic problems, *accountability and future planning* as previously discussed in the literature by Martinez-Brawley and Fox. In the response to my question about measuring and assessing progress Mr. Barone said,

“You know it is difficult, and accountability and measurement are big buzz words in business, education and in our industry and although it is not our most robust function it is an important piece. When we fund a project, I usually try and go out, take a picture, do a little report and follow up.”

Although the recipe for remaining accountable may not be consistent or concrete across organizations and has shown to be an area in need of improvement, in both the literature and my research, the problem can be discounted if you are personally connected to the project and have the opportunity to physically oversee it, as Mr. Barone does.

*Future planning* was another area that elicited limited to no real response across all organizations. While these organization initiators may have poured their heart, soul, time and money into getting their business off the ground, the prospect of these groups looks grim (excluding MVKC Foundation). Although somewhere woven in their motivation behind their business was to develop the community or an area within the community in some way, the development of their own infrastructure and plan wasn't figured out. These overarching problems of accountability and ability to measure personal success were two areas that were left fairly open-ended and uncertain, and I will discuss possible solutions to these problems in the conclusion of this paper.

The last similarity I will mention is the commonality of individuals involved with these organizations, highlighting exactly who is taking leadership roles. Putnam's observations that philanthropy and volunteerism increase with age is relevant to my findings (Putnam 2000: 127). Aging increases the likelihood of individuals to take action because their level of knowledge and sense of communal connection is intimate. This holds true in all of the individuals I interviewed. All of them were over the age of 55, spent ample time in the place they were advocating for change (if not born there), have had previous experiences working with the community and know Knox County which enabled them to recognize the need and take action in fixing it.

#### MARTINEZ BRAWLEY'S SUCCESS MEASUREMENT MODEL

By applying Martinez-Brawley's success measurement model with my findings from my research I am able to revisit my original question: how can small-scale grassroots programs impact community? As mentioned earlier, Martinez-Brawley assessed communal impact with three identifiers: *solidarity*, *significance* and *security*. Each organization strongly exemplified one of these identifiers, ultimately bringing theory to life theory through practical application among these measures.

The Sew Special Network best exemplifies Martinez-Brawley's model of *solidarity*. Her way of assessing *solidarity*, is through the cohesiveness or "we-ness" that perpetuates a collective behavior that helps enable the idea of community (Martinez-Brawley 1990: 14). The Sew Special Network's mission spoke clearly to this cohesiveness or "we-ness" through their aim of bridging the inter-generational gap and establish community through creativity and craftsmanship. Although the support of the community for this organization was clear through the fact that they are 90% supported from donations alone, they did not have an immense amount of participation or interaction within the community. These are not assumptions but valid

conclusions based off of Marsha Frantisak's honest interview and the fact that they have few consistent volunteers and expressed the hard and problematic task of getting attention, especially from the younger population. The MVKC Foundation did not reject Sew Special's initiative (because they were given the grant) and neither did the community (because the organization is existing) yet it is evident that establishing solidarity among the elderly was not the most urgent agenda for the people, hence their organization has a little less zest and zeal compared to the others.

*Security* is derived through "the mutuality of communal relationships, from the familiarity of the environment, and more obviously, from the affection and support of friends and neighbors" (Martinez-Brawley 1990: 14). This is precisely the mission of Touch Pointe, aiming to establish trusting, supporting and mutual relationships within the community. The initiation of Touch Pointe was made possible because of the affectionate support of community pastors, churches and familial facilitators. Touch Pointe was not only initiated by these principles yet remains functioning based off of the fact that they attempt to establish *security* through communal relationships and mutuality. If we view security as a needed component to a community as Martinez-Brawley does, then Touch Pointe serves as a legitimate example of how a program *can* cause impact. Dan and Barbara Humphrey of Touch Pointe said, "This is a parallel service to the community to make it all a little more sustainable. We want to facilitate strong families because that is what we believe fosters strong communities". Touch Point exemplifies how seeking to strengthen and secure structures within a community is a legitimate avenue for communal impact because they too have shown organizational growth and have evoked a community response.

The search for *significance* and the return and spark of interest in community citizens is not only a celebrative measure of one's contributions but manifests a sense that permeates a collective behavior and perpetuates the idea of community (Martinez-Brawley 1990: 14). Martinez-Brawley makes the point that perhaps the current return of citizens to small towns and villages is because of the un-dramatic and casual contributions the community makes towards their fellow citizens that perpetuates such a collective sense of significance and value (14). The Early Learner's Scholarship Fund relied on the community to be responsive to the significance of people "in need", which they saw the uneducated pre-school children. As expressed earlier, the weight of a child has enormous *significance* within a community because the future of that child is so malleable and dependent. A sense of significance is exemplified as a very persuasive element to perpetuate communal involvement because people are constantly feeling needed, such as adults and families to help those in need (the un-educated children) and actually doing something to help because the opportunity is there (such as foundations like Early Learner's). In Early Learners, the continual funds and explosion of scholarships has shown the sense of *significance* felt and also bred by this program ultimately showing the value of this component of community life.

## CONCLUSION

This research highlights the significance and impact a small-scale grassroots program *can* have within its community. While my original intention was to assess the impact these organizations had, I recognized I was unable to make these claims as my project progressed because my research was focused on the understanding organizations from their standpoint as opposed to researching the actual effects felt in the community. Instead my research revealed

insight on how small-scale organizations see their opportunity for impact by catering to the needs of the community.

Assessing impact would be a much larger project, but this research lays the necessary groundwork of understanding *how* impact can be attempted and manifested from the perspective of these specific social enterprises. Research regarding the community members' perspective and the ways in which they are or are not affected by these programs would be a complementary follow up project, asking how *do* they impact community? This would entail observations of these organizations in action or interviews with those in the community who were involved and had experience with the organization yet were not part of it or had firsthand experience in founding it.

All of these organizations were prompted by a need that these individual initiators saw in the community, which were also paralleled to a large-scale global problem. The overarching problems they aimed to fix were the national breakdown of familial life and structure (Touch Pointe), providing early education for pre-school children that would otherwise be inaccessible (Early Learners) and bridging the intergenerational gap and social cohesiveness (Sew Special). An intrinsic purpose of these organizations is to keep up with the global problems at a local level, and if there is not a *need* at the global level for such reform perhaps the *need* is not as heavily felt in the community.<sup>6</sup> Although I did not hypothesize finding a connection between these local programs and global concerns, this was clearly a necessity and also legitimized the work of the organization.

Previously mentioned was the value of Martinez-Brawley's measurement of *significance*. Through my research, it has been revealed that once something is created, if it is important enough, a need for it among the community will form and therefore gain significance. Overtime

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<sup>6</sup> Schumacher – Small is Beautiful – local to global

the necessity of such a program or extrinsic giving or attention to that claim will be a significant factor to the social cohesiveness and engagement within the community. How these small-grassroots programs *can* impact the community is through their effort and ability to bridge gaps: intergenerational, marital, educational or social gaps. They are able to have this impact because of the intimate and face-to-face relational community they are all operating within.

This research is applicable to how people talk about *community* in general in the sense that if we want successful community programs to enhance community development, *community* must be understood as a group of people that share a sense of belonging and purpose within certain physical boundaries. While it is worthwhile to give virtually (such as KIVA) and have “global communities” or organizations (World Bank), the duty to act and sense of real *solidarity, significance and security* is only bred through hands on interaction and belongingness. This was a finding in my research because each organization was very adamant about restraining their “community” strictly within Knox County and they were not looking to get involved past those borders. Transcending global lines in this age of technological and informational advancements cannot replace the sense of civic engagement and collectiveness that is only fostered by this type of physical community.

I previously mentioned a potential future scope of research, yet furthermore future research should also tackle the problems of accountability and future planning. This is where I find difference between micro-finance institutions and programs like the MVKC foundation that are purely based on grants. The essence of micro-finance embodies this idea of lending with the necessity of giving back what you received, which forces these institutions to be automatically be accountable and have some sense of responsibility. Perhaps, this is the direction that small-grassroots programs need to move towards.

It would also be interesting to research the impact small grassroots programs on community development using a larger pool of communities and organizations, expanding outside of Ohio and possibly even the country. This is a much larger project that would require more time, resources and effort because each community needs to be understood and known before analysis of the development or programs instilled. This extended study would allow for a broader definition of community, enable a cross-comparison of different cultural factors that play into communal ideals and also enable research that compares development depending on geographical location. This would help dismiss the commonly held notion that communities have become entirely obsolete in today's world, recognizing that communities can continue to develop if we continue to push for engagement through entrepreneurship opportunities and participation by listening to the community needs and interests. This leaves us with the future question,

“what do we need to know about the community which will help those who are concerned about developing a kind of community life in which people feel a sense of belonging, participate in the life of the community, achieve a set of common understandings, and work cooperatively at their common problems?” (Martinez-Brawley 2000:8)

This encourages us to go back to the ideals of Muhammad Yunus, viewing the world as an arena of social improvement but only through the means of treating people as multi-dimensional entities with creative talent and choice.

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## APPENDIX A

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by myself, Taylor Lenci, a sociology major at Kenyon College. You were identified as a valuable participant in this study because you have shown committed efforts and experience in your entrepreneurial practice. The purpose of this study is to explore how small investments in locally run entrepreneurial organizations can cause community developmental change. In order to assess the impact your organization has had on the community and learn about the process you went through I am asking to conduct interviews.

With consent from you, I will perform interviews that will ask basic questions about the process and experience you have had with your organization. I do not anticipate any risks, discomforts or inconveniences while conducting interviews yet at any point in the interview if you feel uncomfortable in answering any questions you have all rights not to answer, move on or opt out completely with no penalty. If information is revealed that you wish to remain private, I will take appropriate measures to withhold this sensitive information from the public. I will only conduct one interview per subject and these interviews will last between 45 minutes and one hour and they will be scheduled at an appropriate time and place that you feel comfortable with. I will be using a tape-recorder during our interview to further my ability to transcribe what was said during our conversation. This information will be purely used for my research and educational purposes only and audio evidence will not be accessible to anyone else.

There will be no monetary incentive to participate in this study but with your participation valuable insight can be gained on this subject matter. With your help I will have the ability to assess community development at the local level, in the hopes to promote greater positive social entrepreneurship.

You choose whether or not to participate in this study or not and even after signing this consent form you still have the ability to withdraw at any point without a penalty. If you have any questions or concerns about this research please feel free to contact myself, Taylor Lenci. Phone Number: (203)-258-0875. Email: [taylorlenci@gmail.com](mailto:taylorlenci@gmail.com). I am currently residing at Kenyon College. If you have other concerns or complaints, contact the Institutional Review Board at Kenyon College, Edelstein House, College Drive, Gambier, OH 43022. (740) 427-5748.

Thank You!

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT**

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been provided a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Additionally, I agree to have this interview audio taped. I know that this conversation will be taped, transcribed and used for research and that at any point of the interview I may not answer a question or end without penalty. This audio evidence will not be used after this research and will not be accessible to anyone else besides myself, the primary investigator. By signing below I understand and accept the circumstances of being recorded during this interview.

I agree to being audio taped at \_\_\_\_\_ (place) on \_\_\_\_\_ (date and time).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR**

In my judgment the participant is voluntarily and knowingly providing informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Investigator or Designee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator or Designee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **APPENDIX B : Interview Questions**

**Interview** with Sam Barone – Executive Director of Community Foundation Mount Vernon & Knox County

1. What was the motivation of this foundation to be started here in Mount Vernon?
2. Can you describe that process? Where do your donors come from? Who is likely to give? Is the community supportive?
3. Can you talk a little about the grant proposal process and take me through what an applicant would go through?
4. What qualifications must they have?
  - a. How do you assess their “investment in the community” (as you previously stated as something important to the process)?
5. After they are given a grant, what is your role in the process after that? Are they completely independent?
6. Can you talk about specific programs that have been started that you are pleased with?
  - a. What have they done?
  - b. What made them successful?
7. On the opposing end, can you talk about programs that have not been “successful” meaning have not followed through with starting up their business or carried through with their promise with you? (Please, refrain from the names of these organizations to ensure confidentiality)
  - a. Why do you think they “failed”?
  - b. Do they pay any sort of consequence for not following through?
8. What does the community foundation expect in return from these organizations?
9. How do you assess their impact on the community?
  - a. Do you go see what they are doing or are you completely out of the process after grant approval?
  - b. Does the community have a chance to respond to your foundation how they feel about the organizations impact?
10. What changes have you made in your foundation to better the chances of positive community impact from these organizations?

11. Can you define “community” for me?
12. What is your idea of “positive communal impact”?
13. How would you change the way the foundation is being run now in order to evoke more positive social change?

**Interview** with people of leadership from Sew Special Network, TouchPointe Marriage & Family Resources and the Early Learner’s Scholarship Fund

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and where you come from?
2. What is your involvement with this organization?
  - a. What role do you play?
  - b. Has that changed?
  - c. How did you get involved?
3. Can you take me through the process of the beginning of this organization? (if the participant was around for the beginning)
  - a. Where did the idea come from?
  - b. How did you go about getting funding?
  - c. Who helped along with the process?
  - d. How did you get connected to the Community Foundation?
  - e. How long did that process take?
  - f. What was the “mission statement” of your organization?
4. In the idea for this organization, what was your intention in connecting or impacting the community?
  - a. What is your (or the organization’s) definition of “community”?
  - b. How did your idea for impact manifest?
  - c. What group/people did your organization target for change?
5. Can you take me through the planning process of this organization?
  - a. How did that change once the organization started to build?
  - b. What worked?
  - c. What didn’t?
  - d. Any surprises?
6. Was the support of the community important to you?
7. How involved was your organization with the community?
8. How does your organization evaluate your success?

- a. What improvements have you made to better your impact?
  - b. What improvements do you hope to make?
9. How do you feel you impact the community based off of what you have established and working as of now?
10. Does this match the vision you had for the program?
11. Where do you hope to go from here in the future?