

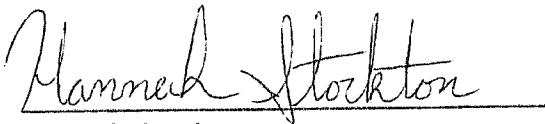
Learning why Robeson County Residents are Unaware of Guardian ad Litem [GAL]
in their own county and Recruiting Community Members to become GAL Volunteers

Senior Project

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
The Esther G. Maynor Honors College
University of North Carolina at Pembroke

By

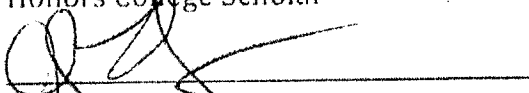
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April 28, 2017



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4/17/17

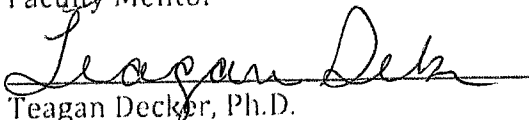
Date



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4/10/17

Date



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Abstract

GAL is a child advocacy program where trained volunteers speak for abused and neglected children in court (National CASA Association, 2017). A major issue with Robeson County's GAL is they lack volunteers (L. Ivey, personal communication [pc], January 30, 2017). I wanted to understand why many people in this county are unaware of this program, so I conducted my own research that involved me carefully formulating an effective survey and extensively preparing for efficient survey distribution. I distributed surveys throughout the county and either quantitatively or qualitatively synthesized and analyzed data. I conducted a Chi Square Test of Independence for quantitative information and carefully examined and utilized participants' qualitative information. After conducting the research, I identified multiple limitations that are educational tools for future research efforts. Not only did I want to understand why people are unaware of the program, but wanted to recruit them to become volunteers. I attended community collaborations that helped me speak with people about GAL. My overall project goals were potentially helping the program gain job positions and volunteers.

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Introduction

As a senior and social work major at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke, I was required to complete an internship at a qualified agency. I chose GAL, a program that advocates for abused and neglected children, since I adore children and care for them dearly (National CASA Association, 2017). After much collaboration with Michelle Ivey, the program administrator, we concluded that a necessary project would be for me to conduct research on why many Robeson County residents are unaware of GAL. The research would help office workers know where to focus their recruitment efforts and how to strengthen their apparatus.

Overview

The program works with the court system, but is a special program where trained volunteers focus only on the children's wishes and best interests, not other case parties like the mother or father. Volunteers speak for children by writing recommendations based on critical information obtained from case records and interviews with the child and other involved parties. They endeavor to write recommendations that favor children's best interest and wishes. Their goal is to work toward a plan that will help abused and neglected children have permanent, safe homes. Last year, over 76,000 volunteers helped over 251,000 child victims find safe, permanent homes. However, the program does not have enough volunteers to help all the children who face abuse and neglect. Every year, 700,000

children face abuse and neglect with 452,000 having no volunteer (National CASA Association, 2017). Robeson County's GAL has an unbalanced children and volunteer ratio with 166 children having no volunteer only 43 active volunteers in 2016 (L. Ivey, pc, January 30, 2017). I want to understand why Robeson County residents are unaware of GAL. Does a person's specific ethnicity and/or location dictate whether or not they have heard about the program? My goal was to help the county's GAL gain volunteers and job positions considering the unbalanced scale between abused and neglected children and volunteers.

Project Methodology

Conducting my own research was an extensive and complex process that required rigorous efforts. I endeavored doing my best regardless of how time consuming it was. The next few sections specifically discuss project procedures in chronological order.

Survey formulation

I wanted to ensure survey responses were pertinent to my project motive, so I tried constructing simple, precise close and open-ended questions. Because my hypotheses revolved around whether participants ethnicity and/or location dictated if they have heard about GAL, I asked them their ethnicity, specific residential location, and whether or not they have heard about the program. I also asked participants, who have not heard about the program, to write down why they think they are unaware.

Survey distribution methodology

Deciding where and who to distribute surveys to was challenging, but an educative process. My goal was to have an unbiased sample by distributing surveys to community stake holders and common folk by visiting major and perimeter communities in Robeson County. I thought by having elite and common community members involved I would gain unique perspectives on their responses. I felt their diverse insight would provide me with good arguments as to why GAL needs more volunteers and job positions. I educated myself on the county's major communities and researched stakeholders and common, popular places in each of those locations. I typed up names, physical and/or email addresses and/or phone numbers for each specific location, so I would be prepared when distributing surveys electronically or physically. While distributing surveys, my original plan was no longer my plan. I followed my plan at my undertaking's beginning, but due to some people being uncooperative, some locations being vacant, my time restraints and availability, and an attendee's unavailability, I had to continuously change portions of my original plan. These changes resulted in my research having a biased sample because I basically distributed surveys where opportunities surfaced. I did, however, still have both stakeholders and common folk participants. Even though my goal was unaccomplished, I learned how I can improve my future research endeavors. The survey responses were definitely not excluded. The data I gathered was significantly helpful while doing quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Survey organization

After collecting surveys, I carefully organized them so I could efficiently synthesize information. I first separated them by ethnicity/race because there were

far fewer ethnicities than locations. I then categorized locations within each ethnicity/race type. For example, one Caucasian participant may have stated he or she is from Pembroke whereas another Caucasian participant is from Lumberton. After these tasks, I could then count how many participants said yes or no within the specified location and ethnicity. I also categorized each response, as to why they think they are unaware of GAL based on their ethnicity.

Survey data synthesis

After organizing surveys, I examined their data and identified two ways to analyze it. Quantitative analysis deals with numerical values or information that is convertible to numerical values. Qualitative analysis deals with subjective, open-ended responses (Bluman, 2009). I organized quantitative data in Excel sheets for analytical procedures while qualitative data required extensive critical thinking and interpretation in Word documents.

Quantitative

Chi Square Test of Independence

A Chi Square Test of Independence is a statistical test used to determine if a correlation exist between at least two categorical variables. Categorical variables are comparable elements based on the specified frequency with each element. The current study's variables are the participants' ethnicities and locations because at least two of each variable type exist and I compared them to how many participants said yes or no based on their ethnicity and location. Participants who said yes or no in one variable is compared to another variable (Bluman, 2009). My goal was to determine if a correlation exists between the participants' ethnicity and specific

location regarding if they have heard about GAL. Specifically, my null and alternative hypothesizes for both comparisons are:

Participants' Ethnicity

- **H₀:** There is no difference between the participants' ethnicity and whether or not participants said yes or no regarding if they have heard about GAL
- **H₁:** There is a difference between the participants' ethnicity and whether or not participants said yes or no regarding if they have heard about GAL

Participants Location

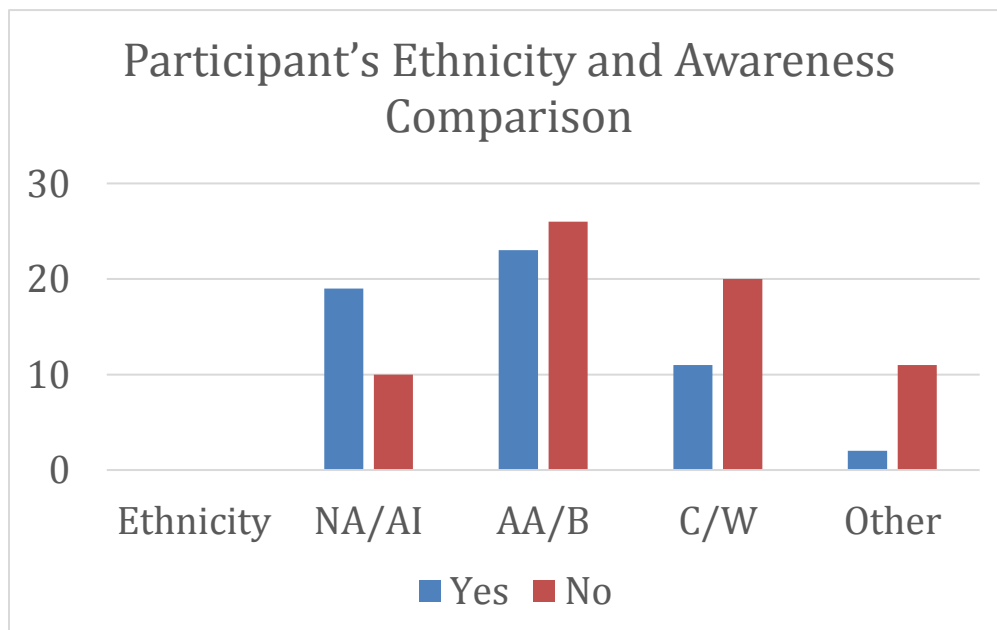
- **H₀:** There is no difference between participants' residential location and whether or not participants said yes or no regarding if they have heard about GAL
- **H₁:** There is a difference between the participants' residential location and whether or not participants said yes or no regarding if they have heard about GAL

The null hypotheses are tested and either rejected or accepted depending on if the alternative hypothesis is validated. If the null hypothesis is rejected, the alternative hypothesis is validated. If the null hypothesis is accepted, the alternative hypothesis is not validated (Bluman, 2009).

Participants

Ethnicity	Yes	or	No	Total
NA/AI	19		10	29
AA/Black	23		26	49
C/W	11		20	31
Asian	0		3	3
Hispanic	1		2	3
AA/Hispanic	0		1	1
NA/Mexican	0		1	1
C/Asian	0		1	1
C/Hispanic	0		1	1
NA/AA	0		1	1
NA/Hispanic	0		1	1
C/AI	1		0	1
				122

To conduct the statistical test efficiently, I identified four main ethnicity categories. The variables with many participants I categorized individually whereas the fourth category combines ethnicities with fewer participants.



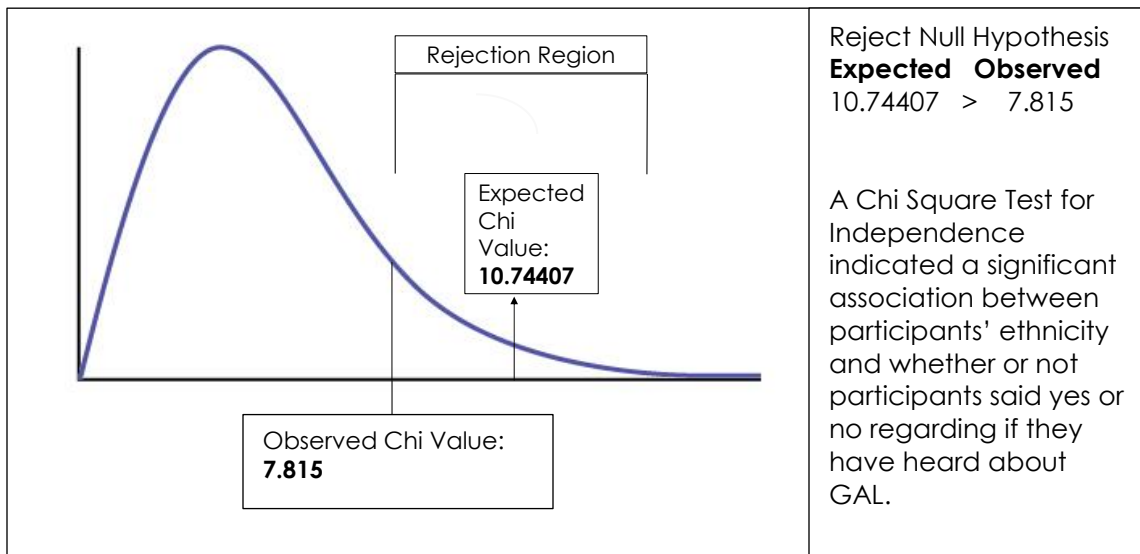
Participants' Ethnicity and Awareness Comparison: Chi Square Test

Observed			Expected		
Ethnicity	Yes	No	Ethnicity	Yes	No
NA/AI	19	10	NA/AI	13.07377	15.92623
AA/B	23	26	AA/B	22.09016	26.90984
C/W	11	20	C/W	13.97541	17.02459
Other	2	11	Other	5.860656	7.139344
	55	67			122
DF= 3	Observed Chi Value		Yes or No		
Alpha0.05	7.815		2.68631	2.20518	
			0.037474	0.030762	
			0.633474	0.520016	
			2.543173	2.08768	Expected Chi Value
			5.900431	4.843637	10.74407

Computing the Chi Square Test required observed frequencies to determine expected frequencies. Observed frequencies are what is physically obtained whereas expected frequencies are what is expected if the null hypothesis is true. If no association exists between participants' ethnicity and awareness then an individual would understand that expected values show frequencies expected for each ethnicity. To determine the observed chi value, I needed the degree of freedom and alpha values. A degree of freedom shows how many values a statistic can vary. An alpha value is the probability that a null hypothesis is rejected which is generally 0.05 or 50% meaning there is a 50% chance the null hypothesis is rejected. In the current study, I subtracted one from the column total (2) and subtracted one from the row total (4) and multiplied the two values to get 3. I chose 0.05 for the alpha value and referred to the Chi Square Distribution table a statistics textbook. I used 0.05 alpha value and 3 degrees of freedom to determine the observed chi value stated on the table. To determine expected values, I multiplied the column

frequency total (highlighted in blue) by the row total (highlighted in yellow) and divided by the overall frequency total (Bluman, 2009). I did this for each ethnicity and frequency type. I then subtracted each observed value from its associated expected value and squared the result. I then divided that number from the associated expected value (Bluman, 2009). For example, 19 NA/AI were observed for stating yes and 13.07377 NA/AI were expected for stating yes. I subtracted the expected from the observed value and divided that number by the expected value. I did this for each observed value. I then added each answer to get expected value totals which resulted in 10.7707 for the expected chi value (Bluman, 2009).

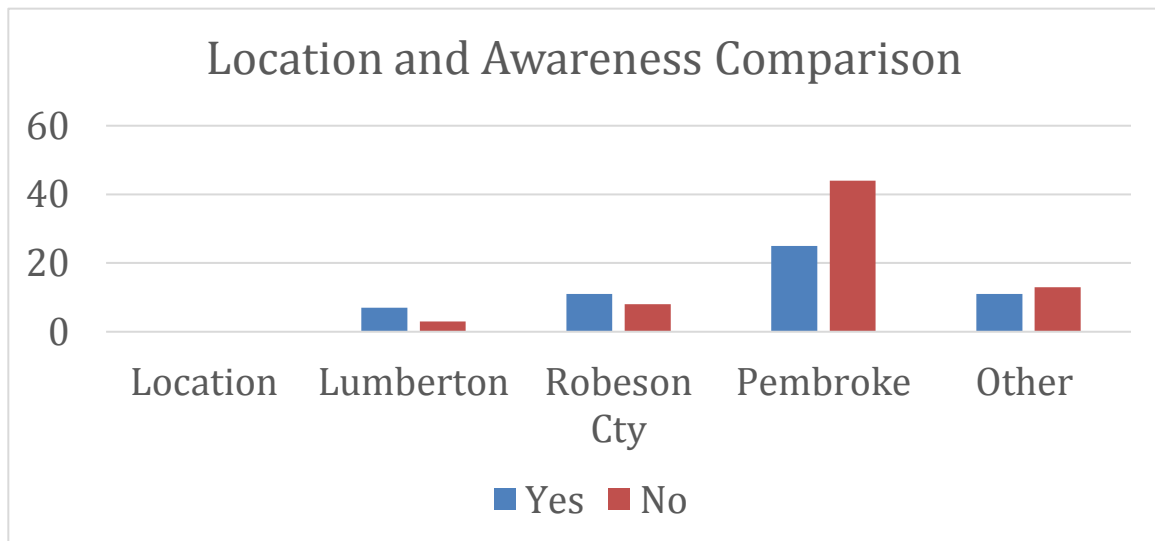
Ethnicity: Chi Square Right-Tailed Test



The right-tailed graph visually shows the observed and expected value difference and rejection region. Having a significant association requires the expected value being in the rejection region. The rejection region is always the area above the observed chi value. Because the expected chi value is greater than the

observed chi value, a significant association exists between participants' ethnicity and whether or not they have heard about GAL (Bluman, 2009).

To conduct the statistical test efficiently, I identified four main location categories. The variables with many participants were categorized individually whereas locations with fewer participants were categorized together.

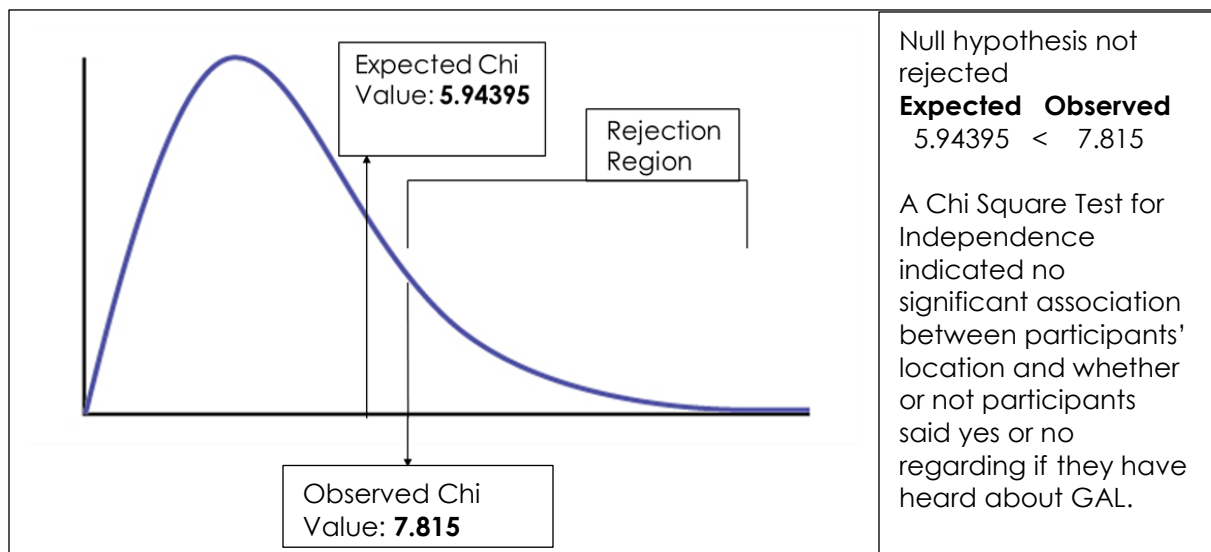


Participants' Location and awareness Comparison Chi Square Test

Observed			Expected		
Location	Yes	No	Location	Yes	No
Lumberton	7	3	Lumberton	4.42623	5.57377
Robeson Cty	11	8	Robeson Cty	8.409836	10.59016
Pembroke	25	44	Pembroke	30.54098	38.45902
Other	11	13	Other	10.62295	13.37705
	54	68			
		122			
				Yes	No
DF= 3		Observed Chi Value		1.4966	1.188476
Alpha0.05		7.815		0.79775	0.633508
				1.005288	0.798317
				0.013383	0.010628
				3.313022	2.630929
					Expected Chi Value
					5.94395

In the current study, I subtracted one from the column total (2) and subtracted one from the row total (4) and multiplied the two values to get 3. I chose 0.05 for the alpha value and referred to the Chi Square Distribution table a statistics textbook. I used 0.05 alpha value and 3 degrees of freedom to determine the observed chi value stated on the table. To determine expected values, I multiplied the column frequency total (highlighted in blue) by the row total (highlighted in yellow) and divided by the overall frequency total (Bluman, 2009). I did this for each location and frequency type. I then subtracted each observed value from its associated expected value and squared the result. I then divided that number from the associated expected value (Bluman, 2009). For example, 7 participants from Lumberton were observed for stating yes and 4.42623 participants from Lumberton were expected for stating yes. I subtracted the expected from the observed value and divided that number by the expected value. I did this for each observed value. I then added each answer to get expected value totals which resulted in 5.94395 for the expected chi value (Bluman, 2009).

Location: Chi Square Right-Tailed Test



The right-tailed graph visually shows the observed and expected value difference and rejection region. Because the expected chi value is less than the observed chi value, no significant association exists between participants' location and whether or not they have heard about GAL (Bluman, 2009).

Qualitative

Many participants responded to "Why do you think you have not heard about GAL?" Their perceptions were insightful providing significant information that could potentially help GAL gain job positions and more volunteers. I perceived their thoughts as gaps that, if community members and state legislators integrate and collaborate on innovations, could tremendously impact the program. After carefully reviewing survey responses, I identified five main potential barriers that can hinder Robeson County residents from hearing about GAL: Program Promotion, Geography, Community Resources, Personal, and Politics. The following are participants' perceptions based on their ethnicity:

Program Promotion: NA/AI, AA/B, C/W, A/H, and W/H

NA/AI-

- Participants mentioned that GAL does not do enough outreach.
- Participants mentioned that GAL is not advertised enough.
- Participants mentioned that GAL staff and volunteers does not communicate enough or efficiently and effectively about the program.

AA/B

- Participants mentioned there is not enough available information about the program.

- Participants mentioned that gal is not advertised/marketed enough.
- Participants mentioned that gal staff and volunteers do not communicate enough or efficiently and effectively about the program.
- Participants mentioned they feel students and employers do not advocate for GAL.

C/W

- Participants mentioned no one in court system has mentioned GAL.
- Participants mentioned that GAL is not advertised enough.
- Participants mentioned that GAL is not exposed enough to the community.
- Participants mentioned that current GAL volunteers are not involved in .community activities which could help people hear about GAL.
- Participants mentioned that GAL staff and volunteers do not communicate enough or efficiently and effectively about the program.

A/H

- Participants mentioned that GAL staff and volunteers do not communicate enough or efficiently and effectively about the program.
- Participants mentioned that GAL is not exposed enough to the community.

C/H

- Participants mentioned that GAL does not do enough outreach.
- Participants mentioned that GAL is not advertised enough.

Geography: NA/AI, AA/B, C/W, A/H

NA/AI

- Participants mentioned that Robeson County's location contributes to GAL deficiency.

AA/B

- Participants mentioned that Robeson County's location contributes to GAL deficiency.
- Participants mentioned that due to Pembroke being a small community, GAL lacks volunteers.

C/W

- Participants mentioned that Robeson County's location contributes to GAL deficiency.

A/H

- Participants mentioned that due to Pembroke being a small community, GAL lacks volunteers.
- Participants mentioned that due to Pembroke being a bare community, GAL lacks volunteers.

Community Resources: NA/AI, AA/B, C/W, A/H, M/NA, NA/H

NA/AI

- Participants mentioned that community members lacking education contributes to GAL volunteer deficiency.
- Participants mentioned that community members lacking money contributes to GAL volunteer deficiency.

AA/B

- Participants mentioned that community members lacking education contributes to GAL volunteer deficiency.

C/W

- Participants mentioned that community members lacking education contributes to GAL volunteer deficiency.
- Participants mentioned that community resources are not exposed enough in the community.

A/H

- Participants mentioned the community lacks communication tools that could connect them GAL.
- Participants mentioned that community members lacking education contributes to GAL volunteer deficiency.

M/NA

- Participant mentioned the community lacks resources.

NA/H

- Participant mentioned the community lacks resources.

Personal: NA/AI, AA/B, C/W, A/H, NA/AA, NA/H, W/A

NA/AI

- Participants mentioned they do not have time to volunteer.
- Participants mentioned they do not have opportunities to help individuals needing service.
- Participants mentioned their family influences their knowledge deficiency on GAL.

AA/B

- Participants mentioned they are not uninterested.
- Participants mentioned they are not involved/active in the community.
- Participants mentioned they do not search for programs that involve court.
- Participants mentioned they do not have time to volunteer.

C/W

- Participants mentioned they are not uninterested.
- Participants mentioned they do not have time to volunteer.
- Participants mentioned they are not familiar with Lumberton.

A/H

- Participants mentioned they are new to community.

NA/AA

- Participant mentioned they never needed GAL services themselves.

NA/H

- Participant mentioned they lack motivation to participate.

C/A

- Participant mentioned they do not have time to volunteer.

Politics: A/H

A/H

- Participant mentioned the way media portrays how community members deal with abused individuals deters Robeson County community members from becoming GAL volunteers.

I tried valuing each participants' response, so some aforementioned perceptions may be redundant. The following are potential gaps I identified while reviewing participants responses:

- How can we use available community resources more efficiently to gain volunteers?
- What can GAL do to advertise and communicate more? Be more exposed?
- How can we help community members have time to participate?
- How can we help community members get more involved in the community and have more interactive opportunities for them?
- How can we increase educational attainment in community members where it may lead them to volunteer?
- Does the community have hidden resources that can help GAL gain volunteers? If so, how can we find and use them?
- How does media portray community members dealing with abused and neglected children? Can we influence the portrayal in a way to help increase volunteers?

Limitations

Based on what I learned through college courses, I identified multiple applicable limitations for my future research projects. I noticed ambiguous wording on survey questions particularly when I asked their race and ethnicity, and location. I should have used either race or ethnicity and asked participants to specify their residential town not residential community in Robeson County. Some UNCP participants interpreted the question as what dormitory or apartment complex they

live in rather than an actual community like Red Springs or Pembroke. Some UNCP participants also stated they live off-campus which could mean they do not reside in Robeson County. I also should have asked all participants to discuss their thoughts on why community members lack GAL awareness, not just those who have never heard about the program. I also needed more time to collect a better and bigger sample.

Recruitment

I recruited at various locations on and off campus. Because many community members have never heard about GAL, recruitment is essential. Collaborating with others and presenting at classes gave me recruiting opportunities. I presented at two classes in the criminal justice department in January and presented at two classes in the biology department in February. For criminal justice classes, I presented without a power point but rather informed them about GAL in addition to what GAL's temporary recruiter presented. For the biology classes, I presented with a power point due to the program's new regulation. I went more in depth since the temporary recruiter was not with me. I gave all four classes opportunities to ask questions. I also emailed the professors GAL information they can post on Blackboard for students to see. In addition, I also went to the health fair at Robeson County's Department of Social Services where different programs and businesses set up information tables for community members. I also attended the Service Learning forum at UNCP's regional center where many service learning programs set up tables for professionals to collaborate on program enhancement mechanisms. I specifically spoke with a UNCP freshman seminar associate giving her recruitment

ideas for freshman seminar instructors to tell their students. I also spoke with other elite community members where we negotiated on potential program enhancements. I also posted flyers about GAL events throughout campus.



Reflection

Completing this project was challenging, but engaging. I have never conducted my own research, but information attained during different courses helped me. I have never completed a project that involved me formulating every task, so it was challenging. However, I believe my time management skills significantly enhanced because I had to balance my internship, job, and project tasks. I could not let myself quit during stress, but had to persevere. I believe breaking down project tasks into measurable and attainable steps helped me extensively. I think I would have had a difficult time completing anything if my tasks were not clearly defined. I was anxious and nervous before and during my project because I did not want anything done wrong or unintentionally fabricated. I also had many experiences speaking with common and elite community members which

were very insightful. I normally consider myself an introvert, but believe practicing speaking with community members helped my self-confidence. I felt really professional when speaking which helped me feel good about myself. I became aware on how social injustice is not always intentional, but is embedded within the community's historical construction. The awareness helped me become more appreciative of and empathetic toward others. I endeavored learning something from everything project task regardless of how tedious it was. I gained understanding on how extensive conducting research really is. I did not just obtain data, but hidden things such as, learning how to work with others and being able to work efficiently in unpredictable situations. I am extremely thankful that I completed this project and I hope it benefits GAL.

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