



Tool: Community Asset and Needs Culturalgram

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Tiffany McDowell, PhD is a community psychologist and thought leader committed to identifying and eliminating systems that push people to the margins of society. She understands the multiple ways that our current structures create barriers to wellness. Tiffany serves as Director of the Equity Institute at the YWCA Evanston/North Shore, and is co-founder of the Chicagoland Equity Network, where she convened a diverse membership to advance a common equity agenda across Cook County. Tiffany's

passion for social justice and equity drives her approach to ensuring that all voices are valued. Much of her work is focused on building capacity of organizations, community residents, and other stakeholders to develop strategies and action plans toward equity and inclusion. Tiffany holds a PhD from The Ohio State University in Human Development and Family Science, specializing in couple and family therapy. She received a MS in Child and Family Studies from Miami University, Oxford, Ohio and a BS in Psychology from Southern University and A&M College, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

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Introduction

Needs and asset assessment are intended to identify gaps/deficits within the organization of people with the goal of developing specific interventions to target the existing needs and bolster the current assets (Gelles & Ludeman, 2009; Lazarus et al., 2014; Tice, 2009). Most needs/asset maps are static in that they look at what the needs and assets are of the community at the current time frame.

Community residents, researchers, public health care workers, and activists have the opportunity to use the Community Asset and Needs Culturalgram (CANC) as an alternative approach to assessing the needs and assets of a community. Often, in traditional methods the needs and assets of community are assessed in the present, therefore viewed as static rather than dynamic. Consequently, the historical needs and resiliency of a community are left unassessed. Pulling from Bowenian family systems model, which looks at intergenerational patterns over time, the CANC was developed as an assessment approach to review needs and asset patterns of communities over three generations (Bowen, 1993).

Bowen (1993) postulated that the features of a family such as strength of relationships between family members, enduring traumas, and family processes such as keeping “secrets within the family” or openness to outside influence can get transmitted across generations. Many of the same features and processes seen in families are applicable to describing communities as well; for instance, community members can be described in terms of the strength of their relationships (close, cooperative, distant, strained) and the process for how open/closed a community is to change. Bowenian Family theory looks to see how and why these processes and features have remained the same or changed over time. Therefore this assessment model assumes that community resources, features, and processes are dynamic.

The aim of the CANC is to help residents, public health workers, researchers, and activists develop sustainable programming that better accommodates the specific needs and assets of a community. The CANC seeks to understand how the needs and assets, gender composition, racial/ethnic composition have changed over time and how community members have related to each other and worked together in the community. Additionally, the CANC brings awareness to the overall impact social determinants of health have on a community; where individuals work, live, and play can reduce or increase health disparities/quality of life. Users of the CANC review community needs and assets through domains of social determinants of health, including education, health & healthcare, social services, neighborhood & built environment, disease burden, community composition, social & community context (Marmot, et al., 2008; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011).

The CANC may also be used as a tool for community stakeholders and program developers to understand community capacity when developing programs. For example, a user of the CANC may find through interviews with residents that food deserts and food swamps have been an issue in the community for three generations or that community policing has been an issue for the last five years. (Generations on the CANC is represented in 10 years increments.) When working with community members to determine which issue to address first, looking at these two issues and the length of time they have been a problem opens up questions that would not normally arise in a traditional needs assessment. For instance, a user may ask what interventions have been attempted over the past 30 years and why is the issue still chronic over time? With community policing, questions may involve what events have arose that created mistrust of police and what interventions have been

attempted. Also the user may inquire as to what strategies sustained positive relationships with the police for the last two generations and whether these strategies can be used to address the current mistrust between police and the community. These process questions prioritize needs while taking into consideration historical context, including how the demographics of the community have/have not changed over time, the relationship between community members across generations, and how open/closed community is to change. They allow the user to create better, more informed strategies.

The CANC builds upon accepted models of conducting a needs/asset map of a community by integrating systemic methods in the approach, including not only aspects of family systems theory, but also the community based participatory research approach. From a community based participatory research (CBPR) approach, the main intention is to recruit community members from local community, social, and spiritual organizations as partners rather than participants within a study (Agency for Healthcare Research Quality, 2003; Komaie et al., 2017; Lazarus et al., 2014; McDowell et al., 2014). The CBPR approach believes that in order for community members to directly benefit from community interventions, they must be directly involved in the problem solving and planning. Collecting information through first-hand accounts via community members through CBPR aids in not only understanding community health problems but also developing thoughtful programs and interventions to target specific needs of a community (McDowell et al., 2014; Zamudio, 2004). The CANC honors this CBPR approach by involving the direct community members in gathering information both on the needs and strengths/assets of a community (Gelles & Ludeman, 2009; Lazarus et al., 2014). The format of the CANC pulls from a widely recognized family systems intervention

called the genogram. The genogram is a tool used originally by family therapists, specifically from a Bowenian theoretical perspective to collect information about a family across generations (Bowen, 1993; Frame, 2000). Genograms highlight that family processes such as biological, spiritual, emotional, social demographics and resources are not static. Therefore it is essential to examine familial patterns including the transmission or extinction of traditions/behaviors/beliefs over time across generations. With a genogram, family members can see their functionality over time, including how they function as a system and how they make meaning. Other factors that are considered include incidence of cutoff, conflicts, or alliances over the course of generations.

In an effort to treat community needs and asset mapping similar to conducting a family genogram (Bowen, 1993; Frame 2000), the CANC looks at the needs over three generations, thus interviewing key constituents current and retrospective perspective of issues and those who had retrospective issues from 20+ years ago. The CANC then compares the needs/asset from 20 years ago to what the needs and assets are today.

The CANC

Development

Due to the first author being a licensed clinical psychologist/community psychologist with a background in family systems, she thought that using a family systems approach would help to integrate and make meaning of the present issues of education, banking, housing, and food, above and beyond what current standards of needs and asset mapping lends itself to (Gelles & Ludeman, 2009; Lazarus et al., 2014; Marmot et al., 2008; U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011). Therefore, the first author wanted to have a way to visually depict the

data collected and analyze the data through a family systems lens by asking what are the strengths of these communities over generations and what are the relations between community members over generations. The first author also consulted with other family therapists, clinical and community psychologists at Adler University and sought their input and experiences with needs and asset mapping of different communities.

Using the Tool

Specific directions for successful use of the CANC are located at the bottom of each Community Asset/Needs Culturalgram form (see Appendix A). A completed sample CANC form is also provided to users as a guide and to follow as needed. Domains by which to assess community needs and assets are provided on the CANC form. These domains are recognized to be rooted in the social determinants of health within communities. The form provides areas of investigation under each domain; however it is not an exhaustive list, and users may choose to add others. The user will need to interview people who have been a part of the community for various length of time. In the context of the CANC, we break these time intervals into "community generations." The user should first delineate if they are interviewing a youth or an adult (18 and older). If the community member is an adult, the user will need to assess if they are a first generation community member, has lived/worked in the community as an adult for up to ten years. A second generation community member has lived/worked from 10-20 years, third generation, 20+ years. If the respondent is a youth, they will be recorded under first generation. If finding members from three generations is difficult, this could also be diagnostic and can raise more important questions about community migration history. The following are the primary steps to completing a CANC:

Step 1: Determine the purpose for creating the CANC.

Ideally, community partners should determine the goals for the project as they most likely have identified some common challenges. Understanding the purpose will help you to focus on the type of information you want to collect from key informants within the community. The CANC can focus on a number of patterns and issues that have emerged over time, and serves as a visual document that tracks the history of current assets and challenges within a community.

Step 2: Collect information on community domains.

Once you have determined the purpose and goals of the CANC you can organize how information is collected, who can be interviewed as a key informant, and how many key informants will be appropriate to accurately represent the community. The Interview Guide provides a guide for organizing the information. Relevant information to be collected includes:

- Name of community
- Date of interview
- Number of interview out of the total
- Description of the key informant: Ask the key informant to self-identify their community role, age, gender, racial/ethnic identity.
- Community generation membership: Ask the key informant how long they have been a member of the community since adulthood (18 years and older): 3rd generation: 20+ years; 2nd generation: 11-19 years; 1st generation: 0-9 years. Key informants 17 years of age and younger should be classified as 1st generation.
- Domains of community process: Examples of domains to explore include education, health & health care, social services, neighborhood and built environment, disease burden, community description, social & community context, economic stability.

- It would be important to ask key informant participants the following questions across each domain:
 1. Have the needs/assets increased or decreased over time?
 2. Are there needs/assets that have remained constant over several generations?
 3. What is the relationship between identified generations in the community?

Step 3: Depict responses from key informant interviews on the Culturalgram.

After you have gathered all of the data from multiple stakeholders, you will need to look at common themes that exist across interviews. It would also be important to work with the community to make sense of the data. You will begin to create the visual culturalgram.

- Each generation will be depicted in levels, similar to a family tree. The circles on the culturalgram represent the assets of the participating community. Next to the circle list how many assets were identified. Be sure to assess the numbers of assets over the years (i.e. have the assets increased, decreased, or remained the same over the generations and why). It would be important to be mindful of long term assets of the community, as the asset may be an important resource to utilize for developing community interventions/prevention. In the circle you should also include demographic information (i.e. ethnic/racial identity, age of community breakdown, gender breakdown of the community, etc.) based on census data for the years reviewed if necessary for the purpose of the assessment.
- The squares on the CANC represent the needs of the participating community. As was done with the assets, list the needs next to the

square for each level of community generation. Once again it is important to assess if the needs increased, decreased, or remained the same over the course of generations. When conducting the CANC, be mindful of what has been identified as a longstanding need(s) of the generations over the years as these may be more difficult to address.

- At the bottom of the culturalgram is a legend to decode how you may depict the responses from key informants in diagram form. The legend also shows how to depict close and cooperative relationships or distant and strained relationships across community generations.

Step 4: Validate findings and create recommendations.

After completing the CANC, the patterns of needs and resources that are more chronic or have recently developed will become more apparent. The historical data in the CANC should shed light on to why some of the needs and assets may have either persisted over time or recently developed. It would be important to validate the findings and develop recommendations for initiatives, programs, and/or interventions with participating community members on the needs/asset mapping team to reflect the CBPR principles.

Use Case Examples

Case 1: Chicago Community Needs

Around 2010, the first author partnered with two community based nonprofit organizations serving two distinct communities on the south and west sides of Chicago. This partnership was centered around finding solutions or interventions to address issues such as: education, health outcomes, banking, housing, and food security within each community. The aims of the project were:

- 1) Prioritizing the needs in each community that could be addressed
- 2) Use effective strategies and assessment tools for community collaboration
- 3) Train students on socially just community practice

In order to achieve the project aims, the first author and her students engaged with liaisons in both organizations in a number of ways. 1) The community members visited the community psychology class to discuss community history and to provide information about the community's needs and assets. Community members talked with the students about how to enter into the community respectfully, engaging the students in discussions of privilege and the community's history with researchers not always respecting community values or seeing the strengths of the community. Additionally, the community members provided the students with shared expectations of how to collaborate on the project. 2) Students went into the community on a later date with the community partners and interviewed key constituents, focusing on the domains captured in the CANC and the relationships across generations in the community. 3) Over the course of the semester, the students and first author interviewed over 20 people in each community. This involved attending community meetings with politicians and other community leaders. Once the the data needed for the CANC was acquired the students and first author met with the community partners to check the accuracy of the data and to co-construct the analysis. This involved meeting at the community agency and working together to identify themes across the participant's interviews and making meaning of community relationships, needs and assets over time. 4) Through analysis of data collected in the CANC and a constant feedback loop between the first author, students, and community partners, initiatives were developed to meet the

identified needs through utilizing the strengths of the community. Examples of these initiatives included: collaboration on fundraising, community 5k race, sports programming, and policy recommendations (Adler University, 2011).

The first author assessed whether the aims of the project were met by utilizing feedback from community partners on viability of initiatives, rubrics measuring knowledge, skills, and attitudes to assess student presentations on project outcomes to community partners, and written analysis of student projects. The student learning outcomes from the project were rich as students received verbal feedback from partners on strength of their ability to maintain a collaborative relationship with community partners that demonstrated respect, flexibility and willingness to learn. The community partners expressed how important it was for them to teach the students how to maintain and build a collaborative relationship built on trust and integrity. The community members also provided feedback to the students about their ability to capture concerns and voice of the community and develop viable projects from the CANC analysis.

Case 2: The Multiple Systems that Impact Health

An example of the impact of the CANC outside the classroom is when it was used in the health impact assessment as a tool for researchers in the Institute for Social Exclusion at Adler University to better understand the multiple systems that impact health. The first author trained the research team, led by the second author, to complete CANC. Over the course of 6 months the research team collected the data using the CANC tool. This allowed the research team to work with community partners to detail the many ways that environment, systems, and structures intersect, without pathologizing residents in a predominately LatinX

community. Residents and organizations in this community were actively decrying proposals that could exacerbate levels of gentrification that had already displaced many residents who had migrated there from Mexico. The CANC was designed to be sensitive to these issues of demographic changes and relationships between multiple generations in a community when making meaning out of the needs and assets of the community over time. This process was also useful for training research assistants to conduct socially responsible research, in that they had to learn how to enter into the community respectfully and value the lived experiences of the community residents while being mindful of their own master statuses. The research team collected information about the community from multiple perspectives, and then co-analyzed the data with community partners to outline a profile of the community. Data gathered from the CANC was used in making recommendations to Chicago city officials for increasing open space access in a community with huge inequities in safe, accessible recreation facilities. These recommendations would support positive mental and physical health outcomes in the community.

Discussion

The CANC is useful as a community assessment tool because it allows for a broader analysis of community assets and barriers by incorporating family systems theory. The CANC is a tool that elucidates processes, resources, and features of the community through which the user creates a diagram that displays needs/assets over time. Many of the same features and processes seen in families are applicable to describing communities as well. In the CANC, it is also important to look at the relationships amongst the different key constituents/ community members. This extends beyond the current literature of needs/asset maps and pulls in systemic methods. To the authors' knowledge, family systems

techniques have not been integrated into asset mapping previously. Thus, when working with a community and looking at relationship between community members across community generations it would be important assess strength of those relationships (i.e conflictual, distant, collaborative).

Questions that community activists, psychologists, and researchers typically would need to answer may include, but are not limited to: 1. Have the needs/assets increased or decreased over time? 2. Are there needs/assets that have remained constant over several generations? 3. What is the relationship between identified generations in the community? Community practitioners may want to access the strongest relationships across generations to support any intervention.

The CANC was created as a part of a collaborative process with communities in Chicago as an evaluative tool. The CANC is available free of charge for anyone who is interested in using it. Included in Appendix A are directions for how to use the CANC. If interested users need more guidance, contact the authors at the email provided in their bios. A limitation of the CANC is that while the tool will be accessible it requires the user to have basic understanding of community participatory research and experience conducting a needs/asset assessment. In addition the CANC might require some experience thinking about community relationships and the impact on the community's needs, assets, and priorities. The CANC tool is one of many procedures utilized in conducting a full assessment of a community and their priorities.

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APPENDIX A: Community Asset and Needs Culturalgram

Moore, N. & McDowell, T. (2021)

Community Name: _____ Date: _____ Interview #: __/ __

1. Description of community member interviewed:

Resident/Employee/Church Member/Other:

Age Range:

60+

50-59

40-49

30-39

20-29

15-20

Gender:

Ethnic/Racial Identity:

Additional Demographic Data (i.e religious affiliation, political affiliation, etc.):

2. How long have they been a member of the community since adulthood (18 years and older):

3rd generation: 20+ years

2nd generation: 10-19 years

1st generation: 0-9 years, 17 years of age and younger

Domains: Examples of Assets/Needs to Assess (you may add others):

Education: quality schools, university partnerships, language and literacy, early, childhood education, graduation rates, job training, etc.

Health and Health Care: primary care, access to local hospitals, mental health clinics, health literacy, access to vision and dental services, outpatient, etc.

Social Services: Services for youth, elderly, recreational activities, religious/spiritual, services for ESL, access to the arts, etc.

Neighborhood and built environment: access to local parks, maintained streets, beautification, libraries, transportation resources, quality housing, clean environment, access to banks, access to healthy foods, etc.

Disease Burden: Rates of HIV, infant mortality, heart disease, depression, asthma/respiratory, crime/violence, cancer, drug use, obesity, etc.

Community Description: Race, gender, language, religion, adequate income, households with children, health insured, migration history, length of time in community

Social and Community Context: Levels of activism, civic engagement, social cohesion, rates of incarceration, perceived discrimination, neighborhood clubs, community social events (i.e festivals), resources in community provided by the community

Economic Stability: Employment Rate, poverty, home ownership, food security, housing cost burden, length of time to travel for work

Needs and Asset relevant to the last ten years:
State the time period this cover _____ - Present

Needs and Asset Relevant to 10-19 years ago:
State the time period this cover _____ - _____

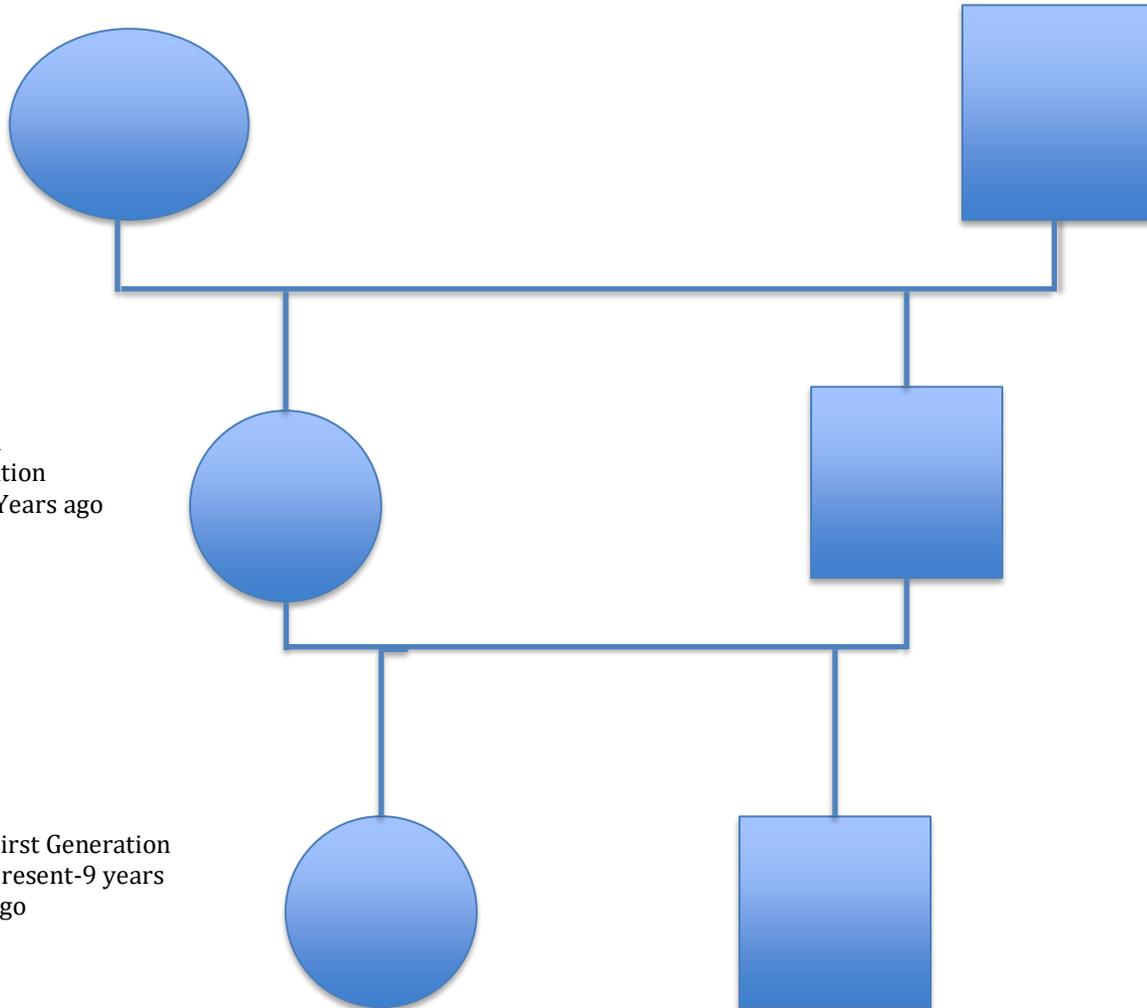
Needs and Asset relevant to 20+ years ago:
State the time period this cover: _____ - _____

Community Assets and Needs Culturagram (CANC)

Third Community Generation
20+ Years ago

Second
Generation
10-19 Years ago

First Generation
Present-9 years
ago



Culturalgram Legend:

-  Assets
-  Needs
-  Close and Cooperative
-  Distant and Strained
- Other: _____

Instructions Section

The Community Asset and Needs Culturalgram (CANC) was developed to determine needs and assets of a community over time. The aim of the CANC is to help residents, public health workers, researchers, and activists develop sustainable programming that better accommodates for the specific community characteristics. In addition, the CANC attempts to make meaning of needs and assets by recognizing the relationships between generation of community members at present and over time. Conducting the CANC requires attention to community based participatory research principles of engaging communities. The principles are rooted in respect, integrity, collaborative spirit, and shared values. The following are the primary steps to completing a CANC:

Step 1: Determine the purpose for creating the CANC. Ideally your community partners should determine the goals for the project as they most likely have identified some common challenges. Understanding the purpose will help you to focus on the type of information you want to collect from key informants within the community. The CANC can focus on a number of patterns and issues that have emerged over time, and serves as a visual document that tracks the history of current assets and challenges within a community.

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- The squares on the CANC represent the needs of the participating community. As was done with the assets, list the needs next to the square for each level of community generation. Once again it is important to assess if the needs increased, decreased, or remained the same over the course of generations. When conducting the CANC, be mindful of what has been identified as a longstanding need(s) of the generations over the years as these may be more difficult to address.
- At the bottom of the culturalgram is a legend to decode how you may depict the responses from key informants in diagram form. The legend also shows how to depict close and cooperative relationships or distant and strained relationships across community generations.

Step 4: Validate findings and create recommendations.

After completing the CANC, the patterns of needs and resources that are more chronic or have recently developed will become more apparent. The historical data in the CANC should shed light on to why some of the needs and assets may have either persisted over time or recently developed. It would be important to validate the findings and develop recommendations for initiatives, programs, and/or interventions with participating community members on the needs/asset mapping team to reflect the CBPR principles.