

OMG Linkages

OMG Center for Collaborative Learning SPRING 2003

Using SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS as an Evaluation Tool

By Marcela Gutiérrez-Mayka

When Marcia and her four children came from Nicaragua to East Little Havana, Miami in the mid 1990s, they had no money, no fixed place to live, and no friends. They knew no one in the neighborhood and the fear of being deported made Marcia lock her young children up all day long in the room where they were staying. Marcia didn't have a job and was so desperate and depressed that she was actually considering killing her children and herself.

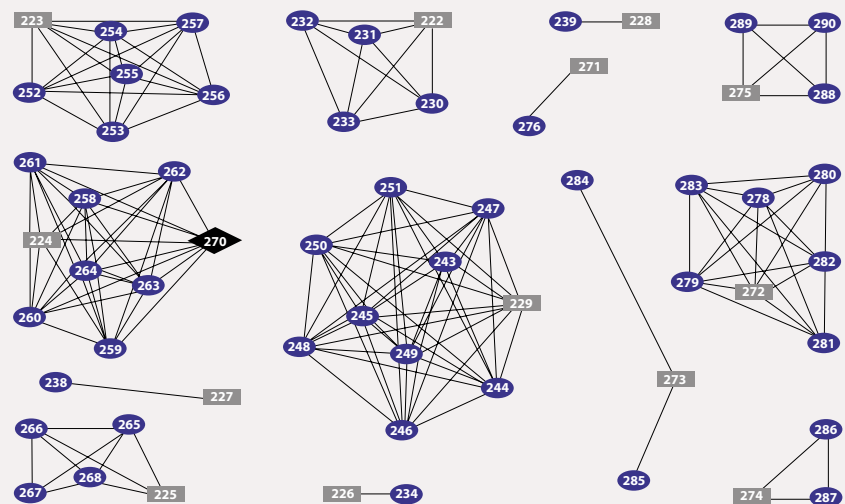
But then she met Maria, a neighbor and trained "natural helper" in the EQUIPO program who worked at the Abriendo Puertas Family Resource Center. As a natural helper, Maria had been taught to identify families in crisis and provide the first line of intervention in the community by gaining their trust and slowly connecting them to the formal resources available at the Family Resource Center. In fact, what Maria was doing was helping isolated immigrant families re-create the natural support networks they had left behind when they left their native countries.

Marcia is one of many residents of the East Little Havana section of Miami who benefit from the EQUIPO Familiar del Barrio (or Neighborhood Family Team), a team of professionals and community members who help families in need. EQUIPO uses informal or natural helpers to develop relationships between potential service recipients and human service professionals who otherwise would not be interacting together. It was funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Mental Health Initiative for Urban Children.

WHAT'S A SOCIAL NETWORK?

Simply put, a social network is a set of individuals, known as "nodes" in the network lingo, connected by a set of ties, or relations of emotional support. The connections they establish with each other vary in strength, direction (reciprocal versus non-reciprocal), density (how closely knit the network is), centrality (what position the person occupies in the network), and content (the nature of the connection: emotional, financial, informational, etc.). According to Wellman (1981), the concept of social networks was first used by anthropologists in the 1950s in describing ties that develop across cultural groups or social categories. Sociologists took up the study of networks from a different perspective, their interest focusing on describing the structure of networks as precisely as possible. For this purpose, they developed sociometric techniques that translated into "pictures" of the network, and matrix algebra methods to quantify the density of ties.

ANALYSIS OF PRE-EQUIPO SOCIAL NETWORK



The pre-EQUIPO network is composed of 13 sets of disconnected clusters (dark grey rectangles represent participants, purple ovals represent members of their support system, and the black diamond represents a service provider). Neither costs nor benefits move easily across the whole systems. Social capital is generally confined within each cluster.

The configuration seen in both figures (above and on p. 3) is arrived at through a mathematical modeling program that defines the distance between clusters and participants.

NETWORK RESOURCES

CONNECTIONS. The Official Journal of the International Network for Social Network Analysis (see website: <http://www.sfu.ca/~insna/indexConnect.html>)

SOCNET is a listserv for network researchers around the world to discuss research and professional issues, make announcements and request help. (To join, send a message to listserv@lists.ufl.edu. In the first line of the body of the message type: SUBSCRIBE SOCNET <your name>)

Books:

Albert-Laszlo Barabasi, *Linked: The New Science of Networks*. Perseus, 2002.

Mark Buchanan, *Nexus: Small Worlds and the Groundbreaking Science of Networks*. W.W. Norton, 2002.

Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. Little, Brown, 2000.

Benjamin Gottlieb, ed., *Social Networks and Social Support. Sage Studies in Community Mental Health, Volume 4*. Sage Publications, 1981.

Peter Marsden and Nan Lin, eds., *Social Structure and Network Analysis*. Sage Publications, 1982.

Stanley Wasserman, Katherine Faust and Dawn Iacobucci, *Social Network Analysis: Methods and Applications*. Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Articles:

Albert-Laszlo Barabasi and Eric Bonabeau, "Scale-Free Networks." *Scientific American*, May 2003.

Mark Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties." *American Journal of Sociology* 78: 1360-80, 1973.

The multi-year evaluation of EQUIPO was brought to OMG by Gutiérrez-Mayka in 2002. It focused on outcomes for the families receiving services, an analysis of the new neighborhood networks resulting from program participation, and the impact of participation on team members.

The work of the sociologists further developed into the study of *personal networks*, or the network of ties of a central individual or a sample of individuals, and led researchers to look at how the ties of an individual to the larger social system affect his/her access to resources. *Whole network* studies went further by looking at all ties of a certain sort (e.g., informational) among all members of a population (e.g., management team members in a large organization). In addition to anthropologists and sociologists, others such as epidemiologists, communication scientists, and political scientists have approached research questions from a network perspective, studying how structural characteristics of the network (e.g., how tightly bound the group is) affect the flow of things, such as information or disease, through a population. (Some of the professionals on the SOCNET listserv have just begun a network analysis of the spread of the SARS virus.)

NETWORKS PLAY A VALUABLE ROLE IN COMMUNITY BUILDING

As an anthropologist who has worked in the human services field for the last 15 years, my interest in studying social networks started when I met Marcia, the Nicaraguan mother of four at the beginning of this story. After encountering Maria, Marcia connected with the tightly knit network of providers and volunteers at the family resource center, and with their help, turned her life around. When her family

life stabilized, she began to volunteer at the center, and became a trained natural helper like Maria. Marcia and her peers became the focus of an evaluation of the role of natural helpers in building social support networks among families in need. My research showed that through interaction with natural helpers, nicknamed "Madrinas" or Godmothers, in Miami, the average number of ties or connections that families had prior to becoming involved with the program grew from 5 to 17. My qualitative interviewing of program participants revealed that in addition to expanding a family's network of support by connecting them to service providers and other families, the natural helpers also helped improve their emotional health and self-esteem. The transformation from recipients of help to providers of help, such as the one Marcia experienced, was further evidence of the role that support networks play in building overall social capital in a community.

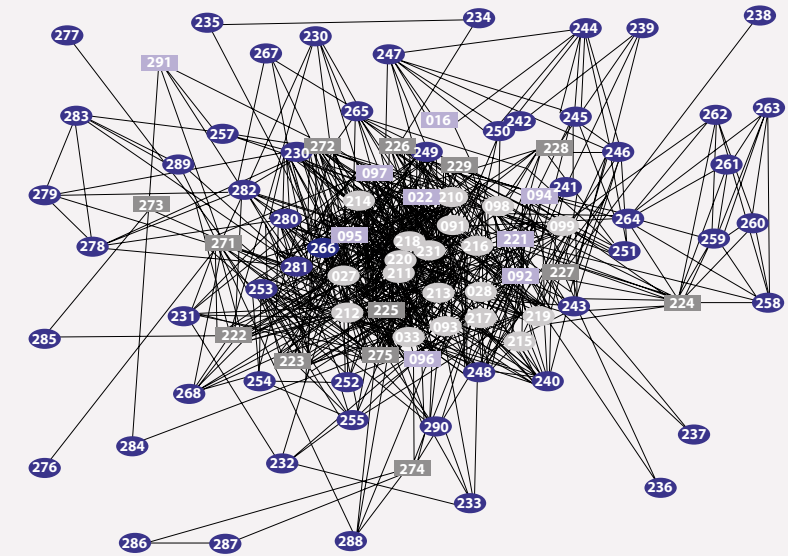
HOW WE'RE USING SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS

When I joined OMG three years ago, I brought my research interest in networks as sources of support with me and expanded it to a new population. A grant from the Philadelphia Department of Human Services has allowed me to work with youth who are ready to leave the foster care system and become

"When people need help, they can either buy it, trade for it, steal it, get it from governments and charities, or obtain it through their personal communities: supportive ties with friends, relatives, neighbours and workmates. Such ties supply 'network capital,' the form of 'social capital' that makes resources available through interpersonal ties. It is widely available, usually specialized, and unevenly distributed among people, ties and networks. Network members provide emotional aid, material aid, information, companionship, and a sense of belonging. Their 'social support' is one of the main ways that households obtain resources to deal with daily life, seize opportunities, and reduce uncertainties." — Barry Wellman, *"The Persistence and Transformation of Community: From Neighbourhood Groups to Social Networks: Report to the Law Commission of Canada"* (2001).

independent. As part of the evaluation of a new one-stop service center program designed to work with youth leaving the foster care system, OMG will be conducting a network analysis with a sample of program participants. The goal is to compare the structure of their networks before and after obtaining services from the center to see if the program has helped them establish connections that will assist them when they become independent. A companion study funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation will look at how young people who have left the foster care system and have been

ANALYSIS OF POST-EQUIPO SOCIAL NETWORK



In the post-EQUIPO network, there are many more relationships, so the network has a much higher density than the pre-EQUIPO network. Costs are bound to be higher, but the benefits are far greater. While there is more interaction among the participants themselves, sharing of information and resources, there is clearly increased involvement of the professional providers (dark grey rectangles represent participants, dark purple ovals represent members of their support system, violet rectangles represent natural helpers, and light grey ovals represent professional service providers).

successful in maintaining their independence build and use social networks to their advantage.

The latest addition to the network studies we are conducting at OMG comes from a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The Foundation's Networks for Rural Policy Development initiative (NRPD) is an attempt to help small rural development organizations, a regional coalition and a set of regional and national strategic alliances (such as the National League of Cities, the Council of State Governments, and the Appalachian

Regional Commission) develop communications strategies that will effectively influence and inform rural policy on a national level. The network analysis, as part of the larger evaluation, will look at how stakeholders at local, regional, and national levels connect with each other, how strong their ties are, who are the information gatekeepers in the network, what type of information is exchanged, what are the most effective communication channels, and whether the information generated at the local level ultimately finds its way to the national level. ■

A Project Director, Marcela Gutiérrez-Mayka is a researcher and program evaluator who joined OMG with a background in human services to children and families, with a particular emphasis on mental health issues and minority populations. Her work has focused on social service delivery issues, at-risk children in rural and urban settings, and children's mental health services and system reform. To contact Marcela, email her at marcela@omgcenter.org.

REFLECTIONS on Practice

Don't Spread It Thin

Funders undermine their strategic philanthropy goals when they give too little for indirect costs.

by Kennard T. Wing

This article originally appeared in the November/December 2002 issue of *Foundation News & Commentary* (www.foundationnews.org) and is reprinted here by permission.

Many foundation people will tell you they focus on strategic grantmaking and its outcome. But I've noticed that the foundations they work for often still have indirect-cost guidelines that are mired in a mode that I call "peanut butter philanthropy."

Once upon a time, the central idea for most grantmakers—foundation, corporate and public sector funders alike—was to spread money around. Two \$50,000 grants were better than a single \$100,000 one; better still, ten \$10,000 grants. The object was to help as many of the needy as possible. This "spreading around" was achieved in part by minimizing the portion of each grant used for indirect costs.

The result has been the current profusion of fragile nonprofit organizations. I've recently seen a 300-person agency where employees don't even know how much vacation they get, because there's no human resources staff; a social service agency that can only produce financial statements when a volunteer board member prepares them in his spare time; and an arts organization that stops marketing when the roof leaks or the network goes down, because one employee does three different jobs.

STRATEGY VS. SPREADING

Although the peanut butter principle once dominated—and it remains alive and well—there has always been a completely different grantmaking paradigm, known as strategic philanthropy. This paradigm holds that foundations ought to be having an impact on the broader world. To achieve outcomes that affect an individual's life prospects, a community's desirability as a place to live or a nation's democratic process, foundations must make fewer, larger longer-term grants and develop expertise in a focused area. And they must invest to create organizations capable of achieving such outcomes; thus the interest in organizational capacity building.

Yet one vital aspect of peanut butter philanthropy remains sacrosanct—minimal funding for indirect costs. Unfortunately, it has the power to undermine all the other changes that have occurred.

To see why, look at how so-called "capacity-building" grants are being used: an \$8 million consumer advocacy agency fielding 7,000 hotline calls per year is getting voice mail and an upgrade to its phone system so calls will be routed to an extension that's not busy; a \$2 million agency serving the homeless is buying computers, so each of their current computers aren't shared by two full-time case managers; a 75-person agency that deals with

the mentally retarded is paying staff to attend required annual recertification training.

Most striking about those examples is how ordinary and basic to running an organization they are. Private-sector corporations expect, as a normal part of operations, to train staff, upgrade phones and computers, engage in strategic planning and do a host of other things for which nonprofit organizations must seek out special funding.

Why? It's because of that one clinging aspect of peanut butter philanthropy: the limitation on "wasteful" administrative costs. A search of foundation websites turns up allowances of 10 percent, 5 percent and even 0 percent of each grant for indirect costs. According to The Foundation Center, capacity-building funding made up less than 3 percent of foundation giving in 2000. At that level, it can never bridge the gap between current indirect-cost guidelines and what strong organizations will need on an ongoing basis to deliver the outcomes sought by strategic philanthropy.

The message is clear: Foundations that are serious about strategic philanthropy, outcomes and the need to help create effective grantee organizations must revisit and revise their administrative cost guidelines.

Until then, they're trying to operate a strategic philanthropy machine with peanut butter stuck in the gears. ■

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Ken Wing is a Project Director at OMG with interest and experience in organizational development and effectiveness. His project work includes an organizational assessment and follow-up organizational development assistance to the Mid-Bronx Senior Citizens Council, and assessments of Neighborhood Progress, Inc. and the Organization Development Initiative of Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC). Ken will be hosting a roundtable on the topic of strengthening funding for administrative costs of nonprofits at the annual conference of the Alliance for Nonprofit Management in June (for more information see www.allianceonline.org).

effective
grantee organizations

OMG People



Presenting at the National Planning Conference of the American Planning Association (APA) were OMG Co-Director Gerri Spilka and Blaine Bonham, Vice President of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, Philadelphia

Green. Held in Denver in late March and early April, the conference drew 5,000 planners and other attendees. Along with Darl Rastorfer, Gerri and Blaine co-authored *Old Cities, Green Cities*, published by the APA in 2002, which was the subject of their presentation. (For more information on the book, see www.omgcenter.org/learning1.html.) To contact Gerri, email her at gerri@omgcenter.org.



Rick Baron recently published a paper, "Accounting for Unemployment Among People with Mental Illness," with co-author Mark S. Salzer, Ph.D. It appeared in the journal *Behavioral Sciences and the*

Law - 20:585-599 (2002). An abstract is available online at Wiley Interscience (www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/abstract/101520815/START). Look for a full-text PDF to appear on OMG's website soon. To contact Rick, email him at rick@omgcenter.org.



Ken Wing's commentary at left won the Silver Award in May from the Society of National Association Publications. The award will be presented in June. To contact Ken, email him at ken@omgcenter.org.

strategic
philanthropy

OMG Projects and People

An assessment of the **Next Generation Leadership** program (NGL), funded by the **Rockefeller Foundation** and launched in 1997, was begun very recently by OMG. Now in its fifth year, the NGL program is an intensive leadership development program intended to help build a network of leaders in the US who are committed to working together and in their respective communities toward a shared goal of strengthening and sustaining democracy. Each year since NGL's inception, a cohort of 24 fellows has been selected to work together over two years on community change strategies, network building, and joint project implementation. **Manuel Gutiérrez** is directing the program assessment which will conclude in the Fall.

For the **Ford Foundation**, OMG in partnership with Community Development Associates (CDA) is developing and implementing the **Listening Project**, supported by a grant from the foundation's Media Policy and Technology program. The project grew out of the Ford Foundation's long and rich history of providing support to the field of media policy, and is intended to be a resource for practitioners and academics working in the US communications policy arena. An evolving project, it has been shaped by the input of a number of diverse stakeholders, including policy practitioners, researchers, advocates, and funders focused on advancing a communications policy agenda reflecting public concerns, involvement and accountability. In this 18-month

engagement, the OMG team (led by Project Director **Lisa Nutter**) and CDA are documenting the issues that policy practitioners and others in the field define as critical and strategic. The project will also use convenings to provide a space for reflections, learning and development of concrete objectives for the future of the field.

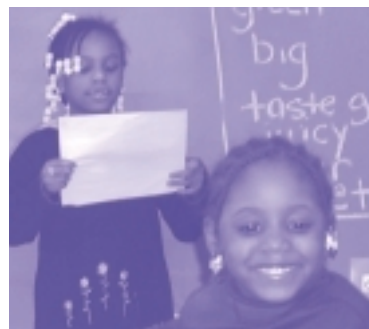
Also for the **Ford Foundation**, OMG is conducting an assessment and documentation study of the **State Fiscal Analysis Initiative** (SFAI). The initiative was begun ten years ago to strengthen the capacity of state-level nonprofit organizations with commitments to lower-income and vulnerable populations to undertake reliable analysis of budgetary and tax issues, as well as contribute to debates affecting these populations. Rather than evaluating the performance of individual grantees, OMG's assessment is focused on understanding the initiative's broader goals and accomplishments, and identifying and sharing practical lessons from SFAI.

For the **Kellogg Foundation**, OMG is conducting a cluster evaluation of the **Networks for Rural Policy Development Initiative** (NRPDI), which helps rural development organizations and regional coalitions devise effective communications strategies to shape rural policy on a local, regional and national level. Using a case study methodology under the direction of **Gerri Spilka** and **Marcela Gutiérrez-Makya**, OMG's evaluation is focusing on four levels of analysis—local, regional, national, and strategic alliances. These will involve individual members of the Central Appalachian Network (CAN) at the local level; the Appalachian

Regional Commission (ARC) and other government agencies, non-profits and businesses at the regional level; another group of NRPDI grantees such as the National Association of Counties, Council of State Governments, and National League of Cities, at the national level; and finally, at what we could call a "systems" level, the Foundation will support and build at least 10 strategic alliances which will involve institutions such as the US Department of Agriculture, the National Rural Development Partnership, the Delta Regional Authority and others.

OMG recently concluded the first phase of a cluster evaluation of the **Non-School-Hours Literacy Program** for the **Heinz Endowments**. The program focuses on increasing literacy for children in kindergarten through third grade and complements the literacy initiatives of the Pittsburgh School District. The evaluation assisted Heinz program officers with identifying emerging strong models and in refining a systemic, regional strategy for future grantmaking.

The young students below and in the two photos at right were participants in the program.



OMG is working with the **Heinz Endowments** to help the foundation's **Arts and Culture Program** staff develop a full program logic model. In support of the Endowments' efforts to be more outcomes oriented, OMG is working closely with the Arts and Culture staff to develop appropriate indicators, and determine what clusters and programs ought to be evaluated during which time periods and how best to integrate evaluation throughout the program.

For the **Graustein Memorial Fund**, OMG is conducting a documentation study of the Discovery initiative begun in 2001. Discovery offers funding and technical assistance to 46 communities in Connecticut working to improve the quality of life for young children and their families, especially through early care and education efforts. OMG's documentation study of a sample of grantees has involved use of the Narrative Inquiry method of qualitative data collection, focusing on the foundation's learning agenda for the initiative, including evidence of collaboration among partners, leadership development, new stakeholder engagement, leveraging resources, capacity building and environmental issues.

OMG continues to benefit from the broad range of expertise that **Steve Schuler**, Network Administrator, brings to our systems. A Psychology and Sociology major when at Susquehanna University, Steve has proved particularly good at analyzing our software and hardware needs while also understanding the subtleties of keeping us all up to speed on the

systems, even though we sometimes learn them in very different ways (he must have studied Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences and we're grateful for it!). Steve has designed and managed the technical aspects of several online surveys for various projects and in all his spare time here is helping to keep our website bug-free.

Elisabeth Levy joins us as Administrative Assistant and is a very welcome addition to OMG's staff. A native of Los Angeles, Elisabeth received a BA in History with a minor in Museum Studies from Rutgers University. An avid reader and photographer, she has been actively exploring the region and is still discovering all the great assets of Philadelphia.

We regretfully say farewell to **Ki-Man Choi**, Data Analyst, and **Joel Fontane**, Project Manager. Ki-Man and his family relocated to the Baltimore area where he is a Transportation Planner IV for the Maryland State Department of Planning. Joel was offered the position of City Planner of Worcester, Massachusetts and although forewarned about the perennially snowy weather, took the job after being well acclimated by the Delaware Valley's unusually eventful winter. We wish them both the best of luck in their new endeavors.



Left: Michael Masch, Secretary of the Budget, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, illustrating a point during his recent PACE presentation (see p. 8).



All photos: © OMG Center.



The OMG Center for Collaborative Learning

The OMG Center for Collaborative Learning provides a range of consulting services to national philanthropic institutions and nonprofit organizations that address quality of life issues in mostly urban communities. Established in Philadelphia in 1988, OMG works with foundations, organizations and the public sector throughout the country to develop innovative solutions to difficult challenges through program evaluation, strategic planning, organizational development and other supports. We rely on a collaborative action research approach that builds new learning and problem solving capacities with our clients and also contributes knowledge to the fields in which we work. Areas of established expertise include community development and community building, urban open space policy, education reform, arts and culture programming, and initiatives for children, youth and families. For more information about OMG, please visit our website at www.omgcenter.org.

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website
WHAT'S NEW WITH OUR
www.omgcenter.org

OMG has added a new item to our Reports & Publications page: *Strengthening Families to Promote Youth Development: A Report of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Roundtable Discussions*. See www.omgcenter.org/learning2.html for a link to a PDF.

A summary of the latest PACE (Programs Adjusting to a Changing Environment) session will soon be available to view at www.omgcenter.org/pew/pace.html. Held on April 10, the session concerned Pennsylvania's budget for FY2004 and included presentations by Michael Masch, Pennsylvania's Secretary of the Budget; Karen Miller, Director of the Pennsylvania Economy League's State Office; and Terry Roth, an independent consultant. (PACE is sponsored by the Pew Fund for Health and Human Services; the PACE series of seminars for Pew Fund grantees is managed by OMG for The Pew Charitable Trusts.)

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