Civic Engagement Capacity Building: An Assessment of the Citizen Planning Academy Model of Public Outreach and Education

Journal of Planning Education and Research
2015, Vol. 35(2) 174–187
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DOI: 10.1177/0739456X14566869
jpe.sagepub.com

Lynn Mandarano¹

Abstract

Planning organizations have recently initiated planning academies to increase citizens' capacity to effectively engage in city and local planning activities. Yet, the success of these programs is largely unknown. This article seeks to address this gap in knowledge by proposing an assessment framework to identify increased civic engagement capacity using three tiers of outcomes. The results of a multicase study suggest that this model of public outreach and education programming is successful at realizing improvements in individual human and social capitals that translate into effective citizen engagement measured as actions taken by participants to improve community conditions.

Keywords

civic engagement, human capital, social capital, community capitals, public outreach and education

Introduction

Contemporary planning practice places a strong emphasis on public participation. This emphasis is rooted in the enactment of the Urban Renewal Act of 1954 through which the federal government made a clear commitment to citizen participation in policy decision making. What followed was a surge of public participation requirements in programs at state and local levels of government (Roberts 2004). While Arnstein (1969) criticized early attempts to engage citizens as being “empty rituals” of participation, a more recent finding deemed citizen participation as having been institutionalized in the planning process; unfortunately, the rates of participation and quality of opportunities for engagement vary (Rohe 2009).

Arnstein's higher levels on the ladder of civic participation afford the public “real power needed to affect the outcome of the process” (1969, 216). However, achieving direct citizen participation, “the process when members of a society (those not holding office or administrative positions in government) share power with public officials in making substantive decisions and in taking actions related to the community” (Roberts 2004, 320), is compromised by many factors. Putnam (2000) in his research on social capital identifies decline in trust in government and “decrease in confidence that civic engagement makes a difference” (p. 341) as key challenges to civic participation. Assessment of engagement in community development and environmental planning pinpoint a basic lack of understanding of issues, policies, decision-making processes and citizens' roles as inhibitors

(Beierle 1999; Robinson and Green 2011). A prevailing sense of conflict stemming from increasing diversity and inequality in communities are other factors public participation processes must overcome (Robinson and Green 2011).

This research reveals that several planning departments are attempting to address some of these barriers through citizen planning academies (Academies), a form of public outreach and education programming, to increase citizens' understanding of the planning and development process and the number of individuals engaged in community and city planning. For example, the mission of Philadelphia's Citizens Planning Institute, which was established in 2010, is “to empower citizens to take a more effective and active role in shaping the future of their neighborhoods and of Philadelphia, through a greater understanding of city planning and the steps involved in development projects” (Philadelphia City Planning Commission 2010). Planning Academies mirror community leadership (CL) and community capacity building (CCB) programs, which have been used in the community development field to build individual, group, or

Initial submission, March 2014; revised submission, November 2014; final acceptance, November 2014

¹Temple University, Ambler, PA, USA

Corresponding Author:

Lynn Mandarano, Department of Community and Regional Planning,
School of Environmental Design, Temple University, 580 Meetinghouse
Rd, Ambler, PA 19002, USA.
Email: Lynn.mandarano@temple.edu

organizational knowledge, skills, networks, and resources to enable participants to better serve their communities with the long-term goal of improving community conditions (Chaskin 2001; Majee, Long, and Smith 2012).

Common to all three types of public outreach and education programs is a need to understand the factors that contribute to their success. Because of the relative newness of the planning Academy model, research on its effectiveness has yet to be undertaken. There is, however, a rich body of literature that documents the impacts of CL programs on improving individuals' knowledge and leadership skills (Apaliyah and Martin 2013; Apaliyah et al. 2012; Emery and Flora 2006; Etuk et al. 2013; Majee, Long, and Smith 2012; Scheffert 2007). CL programs typically engage cohorts of participants from a community and are based on the premise that community change results from improving human capital (e.g., knowledge and leadership skills), which then facilitates improvements in a community's capacity to take action, enhance its resources, and ultimately effect change (Emery and Flora 2006; Etuk et al. 2013). It follows then that a key to understanding the effectiveness of CL programs is the assessment of actions taken by participants and the resulting impacts on the community. Yet, there are only a few studies (Apaliyah et al. 2012; Majee, Long, and Smith 2012) of CL programs that seek to assess individual-level outcomes (i.e., knowledge gained), actions taken by participants, and the associated impacts on community. On the other hand, assessments of CCB programs, which focus on building the capacity of organizations or cohorts of participants in a community, document success in terms of the projects implemented (Chaskin 2001; Laverack and Thangphet 2009; Mason et al. 2011) but lack assessments of individual-level outcomes. Overall, there is a need for research that attempts to understand how improvements in individual-level capacities influence actions to improve their communities as well as how the actions positively impact community conditions.

Toward this end, this article introduces an assessment framework that facilitates documenting and assessing program effectiveness in increasing civic engagement capacity using three tiers of outcomes to measure immediate to long-term effects. For the purposes of this study, civic engagement capacity building is defined as a program that seeks to build knowledge, skills, networks, norms, and trust with the goal of increasing and enhancing individual involvement in informal and formal planning processes to improve community (neighborhood, city, or county) conditions. The framework was used to construct a survey to collect data from participants of five Academies and to assess the three tiers of civic engagement capacity-building outcomes. What follows is an overview of the Academies assessed in this study and the study's research methods, which present the context for the description of the evaluation framework and results of the multicase study assessment. The article closes with a discussion of the results that sheds light on how such educational programming increases citizens' capacity to act.

Context: Citizen Planning Academies

Five Academies sponsored by city or county planning departments are the focus of this study. The process to identify the Academies included an Internet search and telephone interviews with Academy administrators. An Internet search was conducted in June 2012 to identify citizen planning Academies that fit the following criteria: offered by or in partnership with the local planning agency; focused on training emerging or established community/citizen leaders; and active within the past three years. The Internet search identified nine potential candidates. Between June and July 2012, follow-up telephone interviews with the Academy administrators collected information on format and content of the programs. As a result, one was eliminated because it was focused on educating planning officials and two were eliminated because they were based on a cohort model, which limits participation to individuals from the same organization or neighborhood and, thus, were not compatible for analysis with an open access model. Of the six remaining programs, only five were authorized to participate in the study. The five remaining Academies sponsored by city or county planning departments are the focus of this study.

Motivators such as intense conflict over development (Rockville, Maryland), a development boom (Orange County, Florida), a comprehensive plan and zoning code update (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), and others brought to the planning agencies' attention the need to demystify the development and planning processes for citizens in order to foster more effective citizen engagement in the city's formal planning and development processes as well as both formal and informal neighborhood planning. The agencies offered the Academies as part of their outreach and educational programming to reach mainly emerging and established community leaders, with some open to all individuals regardless of prior participation in planning activities. Table 1 highlights information on the Academies, including purpose, motive, format, topics covered, when programs were offered, and number of participants. The format of the Academy ranges from the formal semester-based sequence of courses as in Las Vegas, Philadelphia, and Sacramento, which offer five to ten required courses for a total of 15-27 hours to the informal as in Rockville, which offers independent three hour workshops. The Orange County Academy falls in between the two extremes having previously offered a sequence of six required courses before it switched to independent two hour courses and full day workshops. Although there is variability with respect to contact hours, all Academies offer courses on the basics of the planning and development review process. Academies offering a series of courses provide modules on a range of other planning topics such as sustainability and walkability. The more formal Academies target existing and emergent community leaders and are based on the assumption that individuals already engaged in their communities are better poised to put into practice what they learn at the Academy.

Table 1. Planning Academies.

Academy	Purpose	Motive	Format	Topics	Offered	Participants
Las Vegas, Nevada	To give community members an overview of the planning process.	Initiated as a new program to engage stakeholders	Formal: 10 courses required for graduation; 1.5-hour, nights. Annually	History of Planning; Master Plan; Unified Development Code; Applications; Permit Process; Special Area Plans; Walkable Community Plans; Public Hearing Process; Planning Commission Meeting; Website Resources; Historic Preservation	2011–present	40
Rockville, Maryland	To educate public on zoning, planning, and development review process	Initiated in response to citizen reaction to a development project in 2010	Informal: 3-hour workshops	Development Process; Comprehensive Master Plan; Zoning; Applications and Permit Review	2010–present	20
Orange County, Florida	To educate public on growth management and development process	Initiated in response to a housing boom	Informal: 2-hour night courses; 1-day workshops. Previously Formal: 6 courses required for graduation; nights.	Land Development Process; Citizen Participation; Neighborhood Planning; Zoning; Growing Green	2005–2009 ^a	76
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	To empower citizens to be more effective in city and neighborhood planning through better understanding of planning and development process	Initiated in tandem with zoning code reform and Comprehensive Plan update	Formal: 3 core courses and 2 electives required for graduation; 3-hour; nights. Biennially.	Planning 101; Land-use & Zoning; Development Process; Urban Design; Transportation/TOD; Neighborhood Planning and Development; Preservation; Sustainability; Commercial Corridor Development; Healthy Communities and Environmental Justice	2010–present	120
Sacramento, California	To help public be more engaged in planning process and effective community advocates via better understanding of planning and development process	Initiated in tandem with developing a new smart growth element of the General Plan	Formal: 9 courses required for graduation; 3 hour; nights. Annually	Planning 101; The General Plan; Regional Planning; Smart Growth; Sustainability; Land-use and Transportation; Health and Livability	2002–2009 ^a	270

Source: Telephone interviews and material provided by Academy administrators.

a. At the time the research was being conducted, the administrator was getting ready to restart the Academy in 2013.

Academies include some form of course evaluation; however, assessment of what participants are doing in their communities post-Academy is lacking. Administrators use surveys or course evaluation forms as an important feedback tool to evaluate, restructure, and update content. Only the administrator of the Philadelphia program attempts to track what participants do after graduating through focus groups, but this effort is limited and ad hoc. Other administrators randomly learn about how participants are applying what they learned in their communities through chance encounters or telephone conversations over a planning issue.

Study's Evaluation Framework

The framework to evaluate the effectiveness of the Academies at increasing participants' civic engagement capacity is based

on recent assessments of CLE and CBB programs (Apaliyah et al. 2012; Emery and Flora 2006; Mountjoy et al. 2013) that demonstrate the utility of using community capitals, an asset-based model, to define and develop measures of community capacity. Assessments using community capitals stem from Ferguson and Dickens's definition of community development as a process that "produces assets that improve the quality of life for neighborhood," in which the assets are physical, intellectual and human, social, financial, and political capitals (1999, pp. 4–5). The community capitals framework (CCF), established by the National Rural Funders Collaborative, builds on this conception of community development and provides a system to measure increases in "seven different components of community capital: natural, cultural, human, social, political, financial and built" (Emery and Flora 2006, p. 20). The CCF framework provides a

sound foundation to build a rubric for assessing Academy outcomes because it includes capitals routinely used to measure impacts of capacity building on individuals. The four community capitals measureable at the individual level include human, social, cultural, and political.

The evaluation framework developed for this study, shown in Table 2, furthers our ability to conduct comprehensive assessments of the effectiveness of capacity-building programs to result in increased civic engagement. The framework includes criteria from the planning and community development literature to define and measure program outcomes. In response to strong emphasis in the literature on understanding the role social capital plays in enabling individuals and communities to act, the framework includes three sets of measures to facilitate evaluating its main components. While Putnam (2000) defines social capital as having three primary components: relationships, social norms, and trust, most studies do not assess the components separately. This evaluation framework proposes separate measures for social capital's structural and attitudinal components (Lelieveldt 2004) respectively, networks of relationships that connect actors, and norms and trust. The framework makes further distinctions within the structural component to reflect the fact that planning and community development activities are geographically bounded and involve individuals within a community, peers in other communities, and individuals in influential positions or organizations outside of the community but active in the community or in a related way. Typically, structural social capital is defined as being composed of bonding and bridging networks of relationships. Bonding social capital reflects relationships among peers, individuals sharing similar characteristics such as race, education, social status, etc., and bridging social capital represents the links between others or those having different attributes. While bridging social capital is defined by some (Rohe 2004; Briggs 2004) as being vertical social capital because the relationships enable individuals to leverage resources they may not have, this study assumes both bonding and bridging relationships are horizontal structures of relationships in that they are linkages among a range of peers. This distinction allows the evaluation of an important potential outcome of capacity-building programs, the ties formed with peers that link communities facing similar challenges. Research has shown that this type of bridging relationship provides opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and for peers to serve as role models that help advance self-confidence, norms of community responsibility, and action (Gress 2004; Briggs 2004). Vertical structures of relationships then become limited to the ties with individuals in influential positions outside of the community. While Woolcock (2004) suggests calling this type of relationship linking social capital, I define it as political capital because these relationships link individuals with politically powerful actors and institutions such as the planning department and other government agencies located outside of the community.

Social capital's attitudinal components, norms and trust, are categorized as cultural capital in this study. Cultural capital is the community's established culture, the shared norms and values that facilitate collective action including such norms as a sense of responsibility to others and responsibility to one's community (Briggs 2004). In the framework, trust is characterized as having two components, which is based on Rohe's (2004) claim that trust like other measures of social capital is composed of community and external elements, respectively, social and institutional trust. This reflects how community development and neighborhood planning activities engage not only community members and community-based organizations but also government agencies such as housing authorities, planning departments, or economic and community development departments. Because the Academies focus on educating citizens about the planning process, the framework includes trust in the planning process to reach fair outcomes as the primary measure of trust instead of trust in the planning agency, which is a more generalized form of institutional trust.

Finally, the evaluation framework includes three tiers of outcomes. First-tier outcomes, improvements in individual-level capitals, are the most direct and immediate effects of participating in a capacity-building program and include improvements in: human, social, cultural, and political capitals. Second-tier outcomes, actions taken by participants, characteristically are indirect effects as they occur after a program concludes when participants employ their enhanced capacities to implement initiatives to improve their communities. Finally, third-tier outcomes, also indirect effects, are the longer-term measureable improvements in the community-level capitals corresponding to actions taken by program participants. It is important to note that there are major obstacles to evaluating third-tier outcomes. It is very difficult to identify causal relationships between an action and its outcomes as there are many factors that can contribute to community change. In addition, assessments of changes in community capitals take years to be realized and require longitudinal assessments of pre- and post-action conditions.

Survey Results

While the administrators of five Academies were willing to participate in this study, they were reluctant to provide the author with participants' e-mail addresses. Thus, the announcement of the fifty-question web-based survey and weekly reminders were e-mailed to each Academy administrator to forward to their participants. The survey was executed between September and October 2012.

The five Academy administrators were successful at reaching 416 former Academy participants. A total of 163 survey responses were received, representing a 39 percent average response rate. Response rates by Academy are presented in Table 3. Because of the small sample size and response rates from some Academies, a cross tabulation of

Table 2. Civic Engagement Capacity Assessment Framework.

Capital	Definitions and Measures	First-tier	Second-tier	Third-tier
Human	<p>Individual's knowledge, leadership skills, education, attitudes and other characteristics that enhance productivity (Putnam 2000) and when created enable individuals to act in new ways (Coleman 1988).</p> <p>Knowledge: Awareness of community problems and needs, and knowledge of community development or planning processes, programs, and policies (Apaliyah and Martin 2013; Apaliyah et al. 2012; Chaskin 2001; Scheffert 2007).</p> <p>Leadership Skills: ability to mobilize others and catalyze action (Chaskin 2001); to negotiate, to solve community problems/address needs (Apaliyah et al. 2012; Chaskin 2001; Mountjoy et al. 2013; Scheffert 2007).</p> <p>Leadership Traits: sense of personal efficacy, self-confidence and sense of empowerment (Apaliyah and Martin 2013; Apaliyah et al. 2012; Majee, Long, and Smith 2012) and personal motivation (Mountjoy et al. 2013).</p>	<p>Individual-level outcomes directly resulting from participating in outreach and education program include improvements in individual level human, social, cultural, and political capitals.</p>	<p>Postprogram actions taken by individuals that represent increased civic engagement capacity resulting from participating in outreach and education programs. Initiatives may include new programs and projects that increase community capacity to act and target one or more of the seven community-level capitals. Individuals may act alone or in collaboration with others from within and outside the community as well as other outreach and education program participants.</p>	<p>Community-level outcomes are noticeable changes in one or more community-level capital resulting from actions taken by outreach and education program participants. Participants' perceptions of improvements in community conditions are indirect measures of community change.</p>
Social	<p>Networks of relationships that enable individuals and communities to build other capitals and to advance their interests by accessing resources (Coleman 1988; Green and Haines 2012).</p> <p>Bonding: relationships among members of the same community that build community cohesion (Emery and Flora 2006).</p> <p>Bridging: relationships with peers external to the neighborhood that form bridges with other communities (Apaliyah et al. 2012; Chaskin 2001; Emery and Flora 2006).</p>			
Cultural	<p>Sets of cultural norms and values that make relationships feasible and productive and enable collective action (Briggs 2004; Ferguson and Dickens 1999; Putnam 2000).</p> <p>Norms: sense of community or duty, commitment or responsibility to serve and improve the community (Apaliyah and Martin 2013; Briggs 2004; Chaskin 2001; Lelieveldt 2004; Mountjoy et al. 2013).</p> <p>Social Trust: trust in other neighbors (Rohe 2004; Etuk et al. 2013), trustworthiness of neighbors (Lelieveldt 2004), and trust of neighborhood organizations (Rohe 2004).</p> <p>Institutional Trust: trust in government agencies (Rohe 2004) and trust in the planning process to reach fair outcomes (Gray 1989).</p>			
Political	<p>Ability to access power brokers and resources (Emery and Flora 2006) or capacity to access or to influence decision making affecting quality of life (Green and Haines 2012).</p>			
Financial	<p>Relationships with external individuals and organizations with political power and resources (Emery and Flora 2006).</p> <p>Monetary resources available to invest in the community (Emery and Flora 2006; Ferguson and Dickens 1999).</p> <p>Financial resources may include funds resulting from fundraising, grant writing or related activities (Emery and Flora 2006; Mountjoy et al. 2013), or community-level economic indicators such as local businesses and entrepreneurship (Emery and Flora 2006).</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>		
Built	<p>The physical assets, infrastructure, real estate, and equipment, that support a community (Emery and Flora 2006; Ferguson and Dickens 1999).</p> <p>Built capital may include housing, signage, bike racks, lighting, etc. (Etuk et al. 2013).</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>		
Natural	<p>The natural resources, amenities, and natural beauty of place (Emery and Flora 2006).</p> <p>Natural capital may include, for example, water resources (Etuk et al. 2013), green space (Emery and Flora 2006), and recycling programs (Etuk et al. 2013).</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>		

Table 3. Survey Responses by Academy.

Academy	Participants	Valid e-mails	Respondents to Survey n (%)
Las Vegas, Nevada	40	39	21 (54)
Rockville, Maryland	20	17	9 (53)
Orange County, Florida	76	37	5 (14)
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	120	114	63 (55)
Sacramento, California	270	209	54 (26)

survey results could not be reliably calculated. Therefore, survey results are presented in this and subsequent sections at the aggregate level.

Survey responses indicate that the Academies are reaching their target audiences. The large majority of individuals identified themselves as emergent and existing community leaders (47 percent) and as citizens (32 percent). In addition, 75 percent of respondents were active with a community based organization (CBO). Many respondents were active in one (28 percent), two (30 percent), three (30 percent), or more (12 percent) CBOs. Most individuals (87 percent) active with a CBO reside in the community served by the CBO. This suggests a strong personal interest in the community's quality of life, which likely is the primary motivator to participate in an Academy. In addition, respondents served in a range of leadership and supporting roles in CBOs with board member (68 percent) and volunteer (56 percent) being the most frequently reported. The total percentage for this survey question exceeds 100 percent because respondents were asked to indicate all roles that described their affiliations with CBOs.

First-Tier Outcomes: Improvements in Individual-Level Capitals

The immediate goal of the Academies is to strengthen the ability of program participants to be effective participants in planning processes and community leaders. To this end, the Academies seek to enhance participants' human, social, cultural, and political capitals as they pertain to community planning and development.

To assess increased human capital as an outcome of the Academies, the survey included three sets of questions, using a four point scale ("none" to "a lot"), to evaluate improvement in an individual's knowledge of the planning process, planning skills, and leadership skills and traits. The results shown in Table 4 indicate that at least 94 percent of the respondents reported that their knowledge of planning improved some or a lot for all seven components. Between 60 and 80 percent of respondents indicated some or a lot of improvement for six out of seven types of planning skills queried. The lowest score is for learning how to develop an asset map for a community. With respect to leadership skills and traits, between 81 and 95 percent of respondents indicated

some or a lot of improvement for all seven measures. The highest score is for developing the ability to explain to others the importance of neighborhood planning.

Improvements in an individual's social, cultural, and political capitals were assessed using a five-point scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree) with results reported in Table 5. To assess changes in bonding and bridging social capital, respondents were prompted to respond to two statements: "The Academy enabled me to form new relationships with others in my neighborhood" and "The Academy enabled me to form new relationships with peers in other communities." At least 71 percent of respondents indicated agree or strongly agree to the first statement related to bonding social capital, and 81 percent responded agree or strongly agree to the bridging social capital statement. The fact that Academy participants were from various neighborhoods and not a cohort of individuals from one community or organization likely attributed to the higher score for bridging social capital.

Improvements in an individual's political capital were measured by two statements: "The Academy enabled me to form new relationships with planning staff" and "The Academy enabled me to form new relationships with persons of influence outside of the community." Forming new relationships with planning staff experienced a higher rate of improvement (80 percent indicated agree or strongly agree) in comparison to new relationships with other persons of influence (67 percent chose agree or strongly agree). The new relations formed with persons of influence outside of the community are likely attributable to the Academies' use of individuals from other city agencies and external organizations, in addition to planning staff, to deliver program content.

To assess improvements in an individual's cultural capital, the two attitudinal components were measured separately. Norms were assessed using the statement "The Academy increased my sense of duty to be involved in neighborhood planning activities," with a minimum of 84 percent of respondents indicating agree or strongly agree. The primary measure of institutional trust was "The Academy increased my trust of the planning process to reach fair outcomes," with a minimum of 70 percent of respondent indicating agree or strongly agree. Because scholars (e.g., Hardin 2002; Coleman 1990) recognize that trust evolves over time

Table 4. First-Tier Outcomes: Human Capital (Percentage Respondents).

	None	Little	Some	A Lot	N
Planning knowledge					
Awareness of the importance of neighborhood planning	0	5	27	68	124
Planning agency's responsibilities and actions	0	1	23	76	126
Comprehensive plan	0	2	22	76	125
Land use and zoning	0	2	29	68	126
Development review process	1	2	34	64	124
Citywide planning process	1	2	27	70	125
Neighborhood planning process	1	5	31	63	125
Planning skills					
Organize a neighborhood meeting/workshop	6	18	50	26	125
Conduct a neighborhood needs assessment	9	18	40	34	125
Develop an asset map	18	23	29	31	124
Develop a goals and strategies report, or similar report	14	16	38	32	125
Prepare a neighborhood plan	13	15	42	30	123
Review a development proposal	9	12	40	40	124
Discuss community concerns with developer	6	15	33	47	123
Leadership skills					
Self-confidence with respect to neighborhood planning	2	10	41	48	126
Sense of empowerment to address community needs	2	9	42	47	126
Ability to explain to others the importance of neighborhood planning	0	5	27	68	124
Ability to express my ideas and opinions clearly	3	11	45	41	125
Capacity to develop a shared vision for the community	3	7	44	46	124
Ability to address a conflict in the community	5	15	46	35	125
Ability to work with others on a group project	2	11	45	42	124

through repeated interactions and some Academies offered standalone workshops, the survey included two questions to measure precursors to increased trust of the planning process. Factors identified as precursors to trust in the process include transparency of the process (Lachapelle and McCool 2012) and receptiveness of the process to public input (Putnam 2000). Responses to the corresponding statements show 82 and 80 percent of the respondents, respectively, agree or strongly agree that the Academies increase participants' opinions regarding these aspects of trust in the process. This study assesses changes in institutional trust but not social trust, that is, trust in others in the community, because the Academies did not provide opportunities to increase social trust. The Academies did not recruit cohorts of stakeholders from targeted communities to participate in the training program together.

Second-Tier Outcomes: Actions Post-Academy

One of the key measures of the effectiveness of the Academies to increase civic engagement is actions taken by participants to improve their communities. The full set of assets included in CCF provides a basis to systematically assess actions taken by program participants to improve a community's human, social, cultural, political, financial, built, and natural capitals.

To assess actions taken by participants associated with Academy programming, the survey prompted respondents to indicate whether or not they had taken actions to improve each of the seven community capitals. The capitals with the highest rates of activity, see Table 6, are cultural capital: actions taken to improve neighbors' sense of duty to improve the community's quality of life (80 percent); social capital: actions taken to increase neighbors' participation in community activities (78 percent); and human capital: actions taken to increase neighbors' awareness of the importance of neighborhood planning (66 percent). The amount of time needed to plan physical projects or to apply for funding are likely factors influencing the observed lower implementation rates for these three community capitals.

The survey also included comment boxes to capture brief descriptions of the actions taken for each capital. An illustrative sample of the responses is provided below.

Human capital: "We are preparing to host a mini citizens planning academy in our community." "Organized a training session for residents on zoning and vacant land."

Social capital: "Distributed flyers and knocked on doors for meetings and events." "Door to door canvassing for community events." "Post activities to Facebook page." "Planned community events."

Table 5. First-Tier Outcomes: Social, Political, and Cultural Capitals (Percentage Respondents).

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	<i>n</i>
Social capital						
Bonding: relationships within community	2	4	23	49	22	125
Bridging: relationships to peers in other communities	2	0	17	56	25	125
Political capital						
Relationships with planning staff	2	3	15	47	33	125
Relationships with persons of influence outside community	3	4	26	43	24	126
Cultural capital						
Norms: sense of duty to serve community	2	3	12	41	43	126
Trust: of planning process to reach fair outcomes	1	10	19	40	30	125
Transparency: of planning process	2	4	12	53	29	125
Receptiveness: of planning process to public input	2	5	14	44	36	126

Table 6. Second-Tier Outcomes: Actions to Improve Community Capitals (Percentage Respondents).

	Yes	No	<i>n</i>
Human capital	66	35	119
Neighbors' awareness of the importance of neighborhood planning			
Social capital	78	22	124
Neighbor's participation in community activities			
Cultural capital	80	21	122
Neighbors' sense of duty to maintain or improve the community's quality of life			
Political capital	57	43	122
Neighborhood's connectivity to influential persons outside of the community			
Financial capital	52	44	116
Funding for community activities			
Built capital	59	41	117
Neighborhood's built environment			
Natural capital	58	42	118
Neighborhood's natural environment			

Cultural capital: "Created new programs . . . to increase ownership of community problems." "Talking to neighbors to encourage them to take part in the citizens planning institute." "I've drafted letter to editor touting benefits both personal and to the community of becoming engaged civically, and calling residents to action." "Our group has engaged some community members to take an interest in the development of our community by being part of a resident taskforce."

Political capital: "Inviting government agencies to community meetings." "I have set up meetings with elected officials, businesses and faith based institutions." "Formed a Neighborhood Watch in my immediate area to improve relations with the Police Department."

Financial capital: "Organized a major fundraising event to support establishing a new charter school." "Hosted a "crowd-funding" style dinner for a neighborhood sustainability project." "Received a start-up grant for neighborhood association." "Advocating for more funding for recreation center."

Built capital: "We developed a plan and saw it implemented to rid our neighborhood of a destructive housing project." "Started a business and residential façade improvement program." "Successfully advocated for an abandoned building to be replaced with housing." "Working with officials to enforce codes with respect to maintaining the exterior of neighborhood homes, yards, etc."

Natural capital: "Coordinated neighbors to transform a vacant lot that was trash strewn and overgrown into a green oasis that is used by the community for recreation and connecting with each other." "We have started a community garden." "Plans in the works to landscape a paved traffic triangle."

Third-Tier Outcomes: Changes in Community-Level Capitals

The ultimate measure of effectiveness of increasing civic engagement would be improvements in the range of community-level capitals targeted by participants' actions. This

Table 7. Third-Tier Outcomes: Perceptions of Changes in Community Capitals (percent Respondents).

	None	Little	Some	A Lot	<i>n</i>
Human capital	19	28	38	15	117
Neighbors' awareness of the importance of neighborhood planning					
Social capital	14	31	37	19	118
Neighbor's participation in community activities					
Cultural capital	14	26	44	15	118
Neighbors' sense of duty to maintain or improve the community's quality of life					
Political capital	20	30	40	10	116
Neighborhood's connectivity to influential persons outside of the community					
Financial capital	30	40	23	8	112
Funding for community activities					
Built capital	27	23	40	10	116
Neighborhood's built environment					
Natural capital	20	30	40	10	117
Neighborhood's natural environment					

study uses participants' perceptions of improvements as an indirect measure of change in community conditions. Direct assessments of change in community conditions were hampered by a lack of Academy monitoring of participants' actions in their communities and assessments of community-level outcomes. The study also was limited by a lack of resources to conduct direct assessments of community change, which would have entailed extensive interviews with program participants, other community members, and Academy administrators to document the intent, scope, and quality of actions taken as well as indicators of change in community capitals across the five cases.

Participants' perceptions of changes in the seven community capitals are presented in Table 7. Perceptions were assessed by prompting respondents to indicate if each of the seven community capitals improved in response to the actions they indicated they had taken in the previous question. The question used a four-point scale (none to a lot). Perceptions of improvements seem to parallel actions taken, with a majority sensing some or a lot of improvement in the communities' cultural (59 percent), social (56 percent), and human (53 percent) capitals. However, it is important to note that for all seven capitals, the percentage of respondents that perceived improvements exceeds the percentage of respondents that took actions to improve each capital. For example, 81 percent of the respondents indicated that human capital improved (little to a lot), but only 66 percent took actions to improve human capital. While research has shown that actions taken to improve one community capital can have spillover effects on other community capitals (Apaliyah et al. 2012; Emery and Flora 2006), the percentage of respondents that perceived changes is consistently much greater than the percentage that took actions. This is troubling in that it suggests the survey respondents' perceptions inflate potential changes in the communities. For this reason, correlations between first- and second-tier outcomes and perceptions (third-tier outcomes) are not assessed in the following section.

Understanding Factors That Contribute to Civic Engagement

The primary aim of this study is contribute to our understanding of when Academies can be expected to result in more effective civic engagement, measured as actions taken to improve community conditions. This entailed identifying the associations between first- and second-tier outcomes, respectively, improvements in individual capitals and post-Academy actions taken to improve community capitals. Before presenting these results, it is important to note the limitations of this approach. The primary limitation is the need to rely on a survey instrument to collect self-reported outcomes because of the impracticalities of directly testing participants to assess improvements in individual-level capitals. The limitations related to obtaining more direct measures of community-level impacts' association with the actions taken were noted earlier. The survey enabled the collection of ordinal data (Likert-type scale responses), for which the best quantitative assessment that could be done is a bivariate correlation using Spearman rank-order correlations. The results, shown in Table 8, are described in the following paragraphs. Correlations marked with double asterisks are significant at the 0.01 level and those with a single asterisk are significant at the 0.05 level. The correlations are calculated over all respondents. Subsamples for each Academy are unable to be reported because of insufficient subsample sizes.

Influence of Improving Individual-Level Capitals on Actions Taken

Before assessing the three components of human capital, it is important to note that the overall set of measures exhibits linkages with actions to enhance five out of seven community-level capitals. These results suggest improving an individual's human capital plays a significant role in increasing

Table 8. Correlations Individual Capital Outcomes and Actions.

	Human	Social	Political	Cultural	Financial	Built	Natural
Human capital: planning knowledge							
Awareness of the importance of neighborhood planning	.266**	.218*	.201*	.168	.092	.151	.151
	.117	.119	.119	.120	.117	.116	.116
Planning agency's roles; responsibilities	-.037	-.069	.048	.002	-.048	.056	.124
	.119	.121	.121	.122	.119	.118	.118
Comprehensive plan	.139	.027	.130	.100	.091	.060	.050
	.118	.120	.120	.121	.118	.117	.117
Land use & zoning	-.066	.073	.213*	.020	.076	.112	-.007
	.119	.121	.121	.122	.119	.118	.118
Development review process	-.025	-.008	.162	-.026	-.103	.036	.035
	.117	.119	.119	.120	.117	.116	.116
Citywide planning process	.161	-.056	.221*	.066	.103	.202*	.078
	.118	.120	.120	.121	.118	.117	.117
Neighborhood planning process	.023	-.074	.180*	-.020	.029	.187*	.066
	.118	.120	.120	.121	.118	.117	.117
Human capital: planning skills							
Organize a neighborhood meeting	.104	.265**	.200*	.212*	.116	.199*	.121
	.118	.120	.120	.121	.118	.117	.117
Conduct a neighborhood needs assessment	.151	.303**	.239**	.305**	.154	.172	.085
	.118	.120	.120	.121	.118	.117	.117
Develop an asset map	.160	.325**	.219*	.280**	.148	.242**	.115
	.117	.119	.119	.120	.117	.116	.116
Develop a goals and strategies report	.181*	.305**	.137	.264**	.084	.236*	.094
	.118	.120	.120	.121	.118	.117	.117
Prepare a neighborhood plan	.234*	.327**	.237**	.251**	.041	.234*	.127
	.116	.118	.118	.119	.116	.115	.115
Review a development proposal	.119	.199*	.187*	.145	.131	.205*	.131
	.117	.119	.119	.120	.117	.116	.116
Discuss community concerns with developer	.039	.266**	.184*	.103	.130	.148	.093
	.116	.118	.118	.119	.116	.115	.115
Human capital: leadership skills							
Self-confidence with respect to neighborhood planning	.113	.121	.129	.218*	.043	.093	.076
	.119	.121	.121	.122	.119	.118	.118
Sense of empowerment to address community needs	.087	.156	.219*	.156	.136	.051	.136
	.119	.121	.121	.122	.119	.118	.118
Ability to explain to others the importance of neighborhood planning	.185*	.105	.114	.093	.119	.150	.117
	.119	.121	.121	.122	.119	.118	.118
Ability to express my ideas and opinions clearly	.078	.160	.241**	.119	.048	.151	.056
	.118	.120	.120	.121	.118	.117	.117
Capacity to develop a shared vision for the community	.098	.136	.227*	.040	-.021	.241**	.027
	.118	.120	.120	.121	.118	.117	.117
Ability to address a conflict in the community	.014	.075	.253**	.093	.076	.113	.053
	.118	.120	.120	.121	.118	.117	.117
Ability to work with others on a group project	.079	.050	.066	.032	.001	.083	.116
	.118	.119	.119	.120	.118	.117	.117
Social capital							
Bonding: relationships with a community	.199*	.225*	.279**	.335**	.166	.178	.202*
	.118	.120	.120	.121	.118	.117	.117
Bridging: relationships with peers in other communities	.132	.261**	.279**	.171	.247**	.211*	.098
	.118	.120	.120	.121	.118	.117	.117
Political capital							
Relationships with planning staff	.247**	.240**	.207*	.260**	.052	.311**	.211*
	.119	.121	.121	.121	.119	.118	.118

(continued)

Table 8. (continued)

	Human	Social	Political	Cultural	Financial	Built	Natural
Relationships with other persons of influence	.123 119	.245** 121	.313** 121	.257** 122	.175 119	.269** 118	.178 118
Cultural capital							
Norms: sense of duty to serve community	.174 119	.316** 121	.212* 121	.304** 122	.159 119	.216* 118	.186* 118
Trust of planning process to reach fair outcomes	.161 118	.232* 120	.235** 120	.293** 121	.294** 118	.140 117	.079 117
Transparency of planning process	.166 118	.150 120	.205* 120	.224* 121	.257** 118	.223* 117	.126 117
Receptiveness of process to public input	.189* 119	.221* 121	.145 121	.261* 122	.215* 119	.107 118	.174 118

**Significant at the 0.01 level; *significant at the 0.05 level.

civic engagement and confirm theoretical and empirical descriptions of the role human capital plays in enabling action (Putnam 2000; Coleman 1988; Light 2004). With respect to the three components of human capital, enhancing knowledge of planning policies and processes seems to be most significant to increasing actions to enhance political capital and to have limited to no influence on other actions. Improvements in planning skills exhibit more statistically significance relationships and appear to go hand in hand with actions taken to improve community capitals with the exception of financial and natural capitals. The planning skill variables with the most ties to actions include preparing a neighborhood plan (five out of seven community capitals), developing an asset map (four out of seven), and developing a goals and strategies report (four out of seven). Increases in leadership skills mainly are significant to participants engaging in activities to improve community political capital. This set of results indicates that Academies offering opportunities to develop participants' basic planning skills are more successful at increasing citizen engagement capacity to improve community conditions with the exception of taking actions to improve community financial and natural capitals. While improving knowledge of planning and leadership skills appear to be significant only to increasing community political capital, the importance of enhancing these elements of individual human capital should not be discounted because of the key role political capital plays in community planning and development. Indeed, research has shown that connections to powerful actors and public service institutions outside of the community play a special role in achieving long-term community development outcomes such as poverty alleviation (Woolcock 1998, 2004) and influencing changes in a community's financial capital (Emery and Flora 2006).

The last three sets of rows in Table 8 present correlations between increases in individual social, political, and cultural

capitals and post-Academy actions. This group of results indicates improvements in the structural and attitudinal components of individuals' social capital are relevant to participants' attempts to build all seven community capitals. This provides statistical evidence supporting claims (Green and Haines 2012) that improvements in social capital act as enablers to building other capitals at the community level. With respect to the bonding and bridging elements of social capital, Table 8 shows that as an individual's social capital increases as do efforts to increase community-level social capital. This reciprocal relationship also is evident with individual- and community-level political and cultural capitals. Both bonding and bridging relationships also support increasing community political capital. In addition, the two forms of horizontal ties with peers support each other by influencing common actions as well as actions the other does not. With respect to political capital, establishing relationships with planning staff is the most important first-tier outcome to enhancing citizens' capacity to act as it is the only variable associated with six out of seven actions. Forming relationships with other influential people has a supporting influence on four of these actions. Improving individuals norms, a measure of cultural capital, is important to five out of seven actions and is the only variable besides relationships with planning staff that is shown to have an influence on action to improve the built and natural environments. The primary measure of institutional trust along with bridging social capital are most significant to improving community financial capital with the precursor measures of trust in the planning process supporting this pattern of influence.

Looking at the correlations from the actions perspective reveals that actions to improve community political and social capitals are linked to most first-tier outcomes, 73 percent and 52 percent, respectively. A possible explanation for the more robust relationship between improvements in individual-level capitals and actions to improve community-level vertical and

horizontal structures of relationships is that as individuals increase their civic-engagement capacities as does their awareness of the need to build stronger community ties. The apparent emphasis on actions to strengthen communities' networks of relationships is consistent with the community development research that has identified strengthening local horizontal and vertical networks as "key to long-term success and community change" (Walzer and Cordes 2012, pp. 3–4) and a community's embeddedness, or its bonding social capital, as a key factor in establishing norms and trust, which are essential for motivating collective action (Granovetter 1985).

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this study is to increase our understanding of how effective citizen planning Academies are at increasing participants' civic-engagement capacity. To do so, this study established an evaluation framework to assess three tiers of outcomes, ranging from immediate to long-term changes, resulting from the citizen planning Academies. This article highlights the utility of this evaluation rubric in measuring these outcomes presenting a cross-case assessment. The findings demonstrate that the Academies studied are successful at improving a broad spectrum of individual-level capacities that enable participants to become more active in their communities by taking actions that may result in long-term improvements in quality of life in the communities represented.

The evaluation framework developed to assess Academy outcomes is the first contribution of this study. The rubric extends the community capitals framework (Emery and Flora 2006) to include corresponding measures of individual-level capitals as the first-tier outcomes of a capacity-building program. With respect to advancing the study of social capital, separate measures were designed to assess its structural and attitudinal components. The evaluation framework includes two forms of structural social capital: horizontal (bridging and bonding social capital) and vertical (political capital) networks of relationships to allow a more nuanced assessment of these specific types of relationships. In addition, four criteria of attitudinal social capital are included: norms, institutional trust (which is measured as trust in the planning process), and two measures of precursors to institutional trust. This evaluation framework is transferrable to others assessing the effectiveness of other common models of individual or community capacity-building programs seeking to increase participants' capacity to play a more active role in shaping the future of their communities. Scholars or practitioners seeking to use this framework to evaluate the outcomes of other capacity-building programs should modify the framework's criteria to correspond with the program's goals, structure, and community conditions, as appropriate.

Second, this study expands the understanding of how citizen capacity-building programs influence the process of community change by statistically assessing the relationships between individual-level outcomes and increased civic engagement—actions taken to improve community capitals. While others have used the CCF to assess community-based outcomes, this is the first study to use a capitals framework to assess simultaneously individual outcomes, actions taken to improve community capitals, and their interrelationships. The results show how improvements in individual capitals directly associated with Academy programming are related to increased civic engagement. The findings suggest that improvements in individual human capital, planning skills in particular, and in the structural and attitudinal components of social capital all are significant to increasing participants' capacity to take actions and to better serve their communities. Enhancing citizens' neighborhood planning skills was shown to be most relevant to taking action within one's community.

By assessing social capital's structural and attitudinal components separately, this study sheds light on how each functions with respect to increasing citizens' capacity to becoming more engaged in their communities. With respect to the structural measures, vertical social capital—an individual's political capital in the form of relationships with planning staff—is shown to be the most important individual-level outcome as it influences almost all categories of action. Both horizontal and vertical structures of social capital are of particular importance to enabling citizens to take actions to improve the built and natural environments. Norms, an attitudinal factor, also is shown to be affiliated with increasing citizen action to improve these two community capitals. Finally, with respect to institutional trust, the findings suggest increasing citizens' trust in the planning process and the corresponding precursor measures are as important to increasing citizens' capacity to act as forming new relationships with planning staff, that is, vertical social capital. The importance of improving trust in the planning process to increasing citizens' capacity to take action corroborates Putman's (2000) claim that a lack of institutional trust is a key challenge to civic participation and indicates that planning Academies are successful at overcoming this barrier.

These findings suggest that the Academies are successful at increasing the civic engagement capacity of their participants and establishing effective community builders. The Academies build capacities along the lines of the four leverage points identified by Briggs (2004) for planners seeking to build social capital that facilitates action. The Academies enabled participants to acquire "new civic skills," "build more extensive boundary spanning and resource rich networks," and "support establishing new norms," which resulted in "changes in civic behavior"—more active engagement to address community needs and problems.

Finally, this study raises several important concerns for practice and research. One is the paucity of Academies focusing on improving the civic-engagement capacities of nonprofessional citizen planners. While a study commissioned by the American Planning Association (Chandler 2000) identified 67 Academies targeting individuals in governmental and quasi-governmental roles, this study identified only six¹ active or recently active programs targeting citizens. Given the demonstrated success of the Academies included in this study, investments in the Academy model of public outreach and education are warranted to address the pressing need to increase civic engagement capacity in local planning. Planning departments that do not have resources to develop Academies should at least attempt to build citizens' political capital, relations with planning staff, and neighborhood planning skills, which were identified as the most powerful outcomes influencing participants to take action in the Academies studied. The second concern relates to the low level of activity reported by survey respondents with respect to securing financial resources to undertake projects to improve the quality of life in their respective communities. Given the necessity of financial resources to develop and undertake new community programs and projects, practitioners should address this need by including material on relevant sources of funding or developing modules to enhance local fund-raising or grant-writing skills.

With respect to future research, this article presents an example of the type of comprehensive study that is needed to understand how public or third-party education programs impact citizens' civic engagement capacity. Previous studies have contributed to addressing this gap, but the analyses have been biased toward assessments of individual or community outcomes. While this study assesses relationships between individual outcomes and action taken, its key limitation is not being able to ascertain relationships with actual changes in community capitals. Another limitation, related to the small sample size from some Academies, is the inability to assess the impact of Academy informal and formal formats on learning outcomes, which could shed light on how to design a successful Academy. However, a recent study of community leadership education programs indicates that programs with more contact hours focused on developing individual leadership skills and knowledge show significant correlations with improvements in all leadership outcomes measured (Apaliyah and Martin 2013). To address these concerns, future research on the planning academy model of public outreach and education is warranted to ascertain how the type of capacity-building program effectively improves civic engagement and ultimately leads to lasting change in our communities.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Patricia Day, a former graduate student in the Community and Regional Planning program at Temple University,

for conducting preliminary research and telephone interviews with administrators of the planning academies.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Note

1. The study only includes five of the six Academies identified because one had insufficient resources to participate in this study.

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Author Biography

Lynn Mandarano is an associate professor in the Department of Community and Regional Planning at Temple University. Her research interests include local and regional governance capacity, collaborative planning, community engagement, and sustainable development.