

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES THROUGH COMMUNITY CAFÉS: AN EVALUATION  
STUDY

By

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To my family and friends

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSSP	Center for the Study of Social Policy
TANF	Temporary Aid for Needy Families

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Community Cafés are a conversational approach to promoting the Center for the Study of Social Policy Strengthening Families Protective Factors, which include parental resilience, concrete support in times of need, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, and fostering social and emotional competence of children. Since this is a new approach to strengthening families, no rigorous evaluation has been conducted to date. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the benefits of Community Cafés.

The evaluation was conducted using Concept Mapping (Kane & Trochim, 2007). Data collection occurred in three steps – brainstorming, sorting, and rating. First, sixty-six participants brainstormed ideas based on what they believe are benefits of Cafés. This list was refined to eighty-three benefits. Participants then conducted a card sort based on how they thought the benefits should be grouped into conceptually similar categories. In the final step, participants completed questionnaires rating each benefit on a scale of one to five based on the importance of the occurrence of each benefit and whether the benefit was achieved as a result of participation.

Data analysis was completed using Concept Systems Software©. Through a similarity matrix and multidimensional scaling a point map was created placing the statements on the map based on how often they were sorted together. Then through hierarchical cluster analysis, nine-clusters of benefits were identified. The clusters related to the environment of respect and equality, personal expression and discovery, and parenting consistently had the highest mean ratings in both achievement and importance. Overall, each cluster of benefits was rated highly in terms of importance and achievement.

There are several limitations to this study that suggest caution in interpreting the results. Despite these limitations, there are several implications for future research and Community Café leaders. For future research, the results can be used to develop a standardized measure to evaluate Cafés based on the clusters of benefits. For leadership and others who host Cafés, the results may help to better understand the strengths and weakness of Cafés and focus their energy on the benefits that were rated as important, but were rated less strongly as achieved.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Parents play a vital role in child development. Research shows that parenting is greatly affected by psychological distress (Kotchick, Dorsey, & Heller, 2005; McLoyd, 1990; Parke, Coltrane, Duffy, Buriel, Dennis, Powers, French, & Widaman, 2004). Psychological distress can develop due to high levels of stress caused by both normative and non-normative stressors. Normative stressors consist of everyday stresses such as working and paying bills, whereas non-normative stressors, such as a death in the family, are events of change (Patterson, 2002). Although all families deal with stress in some capacity, some are at a greater risk for elevated distress that may lead to an increase in risk for lack of involvement, neglect, and abuse of children (McLoyd, 1990).

Positive parenting and reducing distress are essential to healthy child development. Research shows that when parents serve as positive role models, are involved and show high concern for their children, areas of social competency, avoidance of risky behavior, and school performance improve (Moore, Whitney, & Kinukawa, 2009). It is also shown that warmth and affection in child-parent interactions can positively influence self-esteem, academic performance, and communication (Child Trends, 2003). Although families may be under stress and these attributes may not be visible, there are ways to promote and increase positive parenting.

One way to encourage and strengthen parenting is to increase and promote protective factors. Protective factors are those assets, characteristics, and people that help buffer the affect of risk (Masten & Wright, 1998). According to family stress theory, protective factors can moderate the effects of stress in families and lead to healthier

coping (Kotchick et al., 2005). Various protective factors have been identified in stress theory research that can contribute to an increase in positive outcomes (Masten & Wright, 1998). The Center for the Study of Social Policy developed a framework of five factors that have been shown to strengthen families and prevent child abuse and neglect (Horton, 2003). This framework has been used as the foundation of the CSSP's Strengthening Families Initiative and United Way Strengthening Families. It is seen as a preventative framework that can help to reduce child abuse and neglect. The framework incorporates four factors that focus on parents and one focused on children. The parental factors are parental resilience, social connections, concrete support in times of need, and knowledge of parenting and child development (CSSP, 2008). The fostering of social and emotional competence in children is the fifth factor in this framework. Family research supports the use of protective factors, and family stress theory provides evidence of the benefits of these factors. The CSSP framework aligns with theory and research and is therefore a strong foundation to build upon (Horton, 2003).

Various methods are used to develop protective factors and strengthen families (Horton, 2003). One such technique is the Community Café approach, which is a strengths-based practice that can be used to promote protective factors and positive parenting (National Alliance of Children's Trust & Prevention Fund, 2008). In a community setting, parents participate in a series of guided conversations that emphasize protective factors. Cafés are a means to intervene and further healthy family development (National Alliance of Children's Trust & Prevention Fund, 2008). Cafés foster growth and development of protective factors in parents and families through conversations. This conversational approach encourages relationship building, support,

and leadership. Cafés encourage parents to connect with others and become more involved in the community. Parent leadership is promoted, with each café being hosted by two parent leaders. The goal of the Community Café is to foster leadership and to promote protective factors to strengthen families within communities (National Alliance of Children's Trust & Prevention Fund, 2008). The Community Café approach stemmed from the Illinois Parent Cafés, both of which are based on the integration of the World Café model and the CSSP Protective Factors framework (National Alliance of Children's Trust & Prevention Fund, 2008). The World Café model is an approach to engaging people in conversation through which knowledge is shared (Brown, Isaacs, and World Café Community, 2005).

According to Robin Higathis integrated, conversational approach is a newer practice in the family setting.<sup>1</sup>Due to the newness of this method, little has been done in terms of evaluation. The recent growth and implementation of Cafés increases the need for a formal evaluation. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to evaluate Community Cafés and identify benefits that they provide for families. The outcomes are relatively unknown, apart from testimonials of participants. This study will help to better understand what truly occurs as a result of Cafés and the participants and the community benefit from the process.

The method that will be employed to evaluate Cafés is concept mapping, a structured method used to conceptualize and visually represent ideas in planning and evaluation (Trochim, 1989a; Kane & Trochim, 2007). This is a respected form of evaluation that can be used to recognize the benefits of community-based programs.

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<sup>1</sup> (R. Higa, person communication, Dec. 18, 2009)

Concept mapping is a participatory approach that gives a voice to those involved; participants actively take part in each step of the process (Kane & Trochim, 2007). There are three steps to completing the data collection process, brainstorming, sorting, and rating. During the brainstorming step a comprehensive list of concepts is generated through various brainstorming sessions conducted with participants (Kane & Trochim, 2007). The second step is a card sort in which participants sort the concepts based on similarities. Rating concludes the process and consists of a questionnaire that participants complete based on the generated concepts. The questionnaire solicits participants' beliefs on how important each benefit is and whether this benefit was achieved through their participation in Community Cafés. Through these three steps several questions will be addressed and an overall appreciation and understanding of the benefits of Community Cafés will be gained.

### **Purpose Statement**

Parenting strongly influences child developmental outcomes, yet there are many factors that impact parenting. Economic, neighborhood and other forms of stress can have a negative effect on parents and their relationships with their children. Therefore, it is important to focus efforts on strengthening families and reducing family stress. By increasing protective factors in parents, families are strengthened, healthy development is increased, and the risk of negative outcomes decrease. Community Cafés are one community-based approach to strengthening families through the implementation of protective factors. Although, Cafés have a strong foundation in the World Café model and the Strengthening Families Framework, there is a lack of evaluation of this practice. The purpose, therefore, is to evaluate Cafés through the use of concept mapping. This

process will further increase knowledge of the benefits and outcomes of the Community Café approach.

### **Research Questions**

Five Research Questions were used to guide this evaluation of Community Cafés. Research Question 1 asked, “What are the perceived benefits of Community Cafés identified by participants?” The second Research Question addressed, “How do participants structure these concepts in terms of similarity? Research Question 3 stated, “How important is it to participants that these perceived benefits occur through Community Cafés?” The fourth Research Question sought to answer, “How much are these perceived benefits achieved through Community Cafés?” The final question, Research Question 5 asked, “How do the concepts relate to each other in terms of importance and achievement?” These five questions directed the study and were answered through the use of Concept Mapping.

## CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the benefits of Community Cafés for parents and others who participate. To conduct this evaluation it is necessary to understand the theoretical foundation of the approach. Family stress theory, the protective factors framework developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy, and dialogical theory provide a lens through which to understand Cafés. The evaluation will be done through the use of concept mapping, a method that honors the spirit of the Café process. The following review of literature provides the foundation for understanding the purpose and underpinnings of the evaluation of Community Cafés.

### **Family Stress Theory**

Family stress theory is a mid-range theory that has been used to understand how families respond to stress and distress in different ways. The study of family stress began in the 1950s with Reuben Hill's ABCX model which focuses on the processes families move through in crisis situations (Smith, 1984). According to this model the demands on the family (A) interact with the capabilities and resources of the family (B) through which the family then creates meaning of the situation (C). If there is an imbalance between the demands (A) and capabilities (B) then stress results and leads to family crisis (X) (McCubbin, Sussman & Patterson, 1983; Patterson, 2002; Smith, 1984). For example, if a family experiences the death of a loved one (A), resources (B) such as dependable family relationships may help family members cope (Goddard & Allen, 1991). However, each family member may create a different meaning in order to cope with the grief and stress of losing a loved one (C). If there is an imbalance between the demands (grieving), resources (undependable relationships), and

meanings created (death should bring the family together) then crisis (X) may occur (Goddard & Allen, 1991). The ABCX model has provided a way to consider how families respond to the stress in their lives, and how resources, demands, and meanings can contribute to the avoidance or occurrence of crises.

Since its development, this model has since been tested and further developed to include other constructs, such as coping and resilience (McCubbin, 1979; Patterson, 2002). Coping and resilience are both important factors in predicting family stress. All families experience stress to some extent, but each family deals with it in different ways. It is important to understand how families adapt and cope with stress and what factors are present to overcome the obstacles they face. McCubbin (1979) reviewed various studies on families and “vulnerability” in light of family stress and coping. The results showed involvement in community or collective support groups, family stability, interpersonal relationships, and family regenerative power were all factors that contributed to a family’s capabilities and ability to cope with both normative and non-normative stressors (McCubbin, 1979).

In addition to coping family resilience has been included in the theory through the Family Adjustment and Adaptation Response (FAAR) Model (Patterson, 2002). According to Patterson (2002), resilience is competent functioning after high exposure to risk. To understand family resilience, then, the significant risk and protective factors must be taken into account. Protective factors strengthen families and help them to function competently in light of risk factors. Chronic stressors, such as living in poverty, can lead to high levels of stress in families. However, research shows that

familyprotective factors and resilience can buffer the impact of these stressors (Patterson 2002).

Many studies have been conducted using family stress theory as the framework. Each has studied the family's response to a variety of normative and non-normative stressors including external stressors on families. In a recent study, White, Roosa, Weaver and Nair (2009) used a sample of 570 Mexican American two-parent homes to evaluate the effects of neighborhood, economic, and cultural stress factors on parenting. Mexican American families were assessed because they tend to hold more traditional views toward gender roles and two-parent families are the norm even among low-income families (White et al., 2009). Therefore, the researchers sought to understand how cultural, economic, and neighborhood stressors affected parenting through parental depression, warmth, and consistent discipline. Viewing this through Hill's original ABCX model, the cultural, economic, and neighborhood stressors (A) were hypothesized to interact with family structure and parenting behaviors (B). Perceived imbalances between these factors (C) could lead to family crisis (X), which may manifest in increased levels of parental depression and less consistent discipline and warmth (White et al., 2009). Results were consistent with the theory and showed that economic hardship and cultural stress were related to increases in depressive symptoms, which were also related to decreased warmth and consistent discipline (White et al., 2009). Mothers in this study showed to be less effected by economic and neighborhood stress, which the researchers hypothesized could be related to family structure (White et al., 2009). The results of this study support and provide further evidence of how stress affects parenting and families.

Other studies of family stress theory have also evaluated the impact of economic, cultural, and neighborhood stressors on families and parenting (Magnuson & Votruba-Drzal, 2009; McLoyd, 1990). These studies have assessed how stressors affect parenting through parental distress and negative parenting behaviors. All of these reviews and studies have shown the impact that stress has on parents and children, and many have considered how stress contributes to depression and less positive parenting. Magnuson and Votruba-Drzal (2009) report that higher levels of stress are linked to psychological distress. Psychological distress is linked to harsher, inconsistent, less nurturing parenting behaviors (Magnuson & Votruba-Drzal, 2009). McLoyd's (1990) review supports the same findings that economic hardship is linked to psychological distress, which in turn influences parenting behaviors. Parents facing distress due to hardship are more likely to be "depressed, irritable, and explosive" and have more difficulty coping with circumstances (p. 335). Research shows that factors such as social and financial support, can mediate psychological distress (McLoyd, 1990). Although research still focuses on the stressors facing families, there has been a shift to also consider the protective factors and characteristics that help families to overcome the negative effects of stress.

To evaluate the impact of protective factors on neighborhood stress, Kotchick and colleagues (2005) tested a buffered model of family stress. This longitudinal study of 123 African American single mothers focused on the stressors of psychological functioning and neighborhood stress on parenting (Kotchick et al., 2005). The researchers examined social support as a buffer against the negative effects of neighborhood and economic stress on psychological functioning and parenting. The

goal was to determine if parents who had higher levels of social support had lower levels of distress due to neighborhood and economic stress (Kotchik et al., 2005). Kotchick and colleagues (2005) also evaluated if there were correlations between parental distress, parenting behaviors, and social support, and found that there were significant correlations between the three factors being assessed. The results showed that parents with higher levels of social support had lower levels of distress due to neighborhood/environmental stress. They also practiced more positive parenting behaviors, such as more monitoring, consistency, and better parent-child relationships (Kotchick et al., 2005).

In another study, Bigbee (1992) proposed hardiness as a protective factor against the stressors of life events and the occurrence of illness. Hardiness refers to the characteristics and ability to survive and flourish through hardship (Bigbee, 1992). Results showed that there was a correlation between stress and illness occurrence, and that hardiness was a moderating factor between these (Bigbee, 1992). Significant correlations were found between hardiness and occurrence of illness, which shows hardiness may have a direct and/or buffering effect on the relationship between stress and illness (Bigbee, 1992). In a similar study, McCubbin (1988) evaluated the influence the protective factors family type, resources, and coping had on families with mild to severe chronically ill children. Although results varied slightly between groups, the families' ability to cope, the amount of resources available and the family's level of support all proved to be protective factors in families with chronically ill children (McCubbin, 1988).

In conclusion, family stress theory provides a lens through which the processes and interactions between risk and protective factors can be studied. Factors, such as social, family, or financial support have shown to buffer the effects of stress on parents and families (Kotchick et al., 2005; McCloyd, 1990; White et al., 2009). The inclusion of protective factors in the study of family stress has broadened the spectrum and understanding of how risk and protective factors influence the family. Although families continue to face stressors, understanding the protective factors that can help to protect against risk can be beneficial. A variety of protective factors have been identified in research, and due to the different aspects to consider there is not a consistent set of protective factors.

### **Protective Factors Literature Review**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2009), protective factors are those characteristics or factors that act as a buffer against a variety of risks. Risk factors, on the other hand, are individual, family, and community factors that put children in greater danger of being a victim of abuse or neglect (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009). Masten and Wright (1998) assert that in the presence of one or more risk factors a factor that ameliorates the effect of those risks is considered a protective factor.

Consistent with family stress theory, the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) developed a framework of five protective factors believed to prevent and reduce the stressors that may lead to child abuse and neglect (Horton, 2003). This framework was developed through discussions with a national advisory panel, researchers in child abuse and neglect, and family support fields (Horton, 2003). After establishing the Protective Factors framework, the CSSP conducted a two-year study on early care and

education programs and an extensive literature review on how these programs can work to promote protective factors (Horton, 2003). Research shows that protective factors can have a buffering effect against the negative effects of risk factors and stressors (Horton, 2003; Kotchick, et al., 2005; Muslow, Caldera, Pursley, Reifman, & Houston, 2002).

The CSSP Protective Factors framework has been used as the foundation of CSSP's Strengthening Families Initiative. The Strengthening Families Initiative focuses on building protective factors in families through early childcare centers, child welfare departments, and other programs working with families (CSSP, 2008). The goal is to increase protective factors that will promote strong, healthy families (Horton, 2003). The Protective Factors framework consists of five factors, four of which are directly related to parents and one of which is directly related to child development. The Strengthening Families approach seeks to increase the protective factors of parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, and the social and emotional competence of children (Table 2-1, p. 25; Horton, 2003).

The first of these five factors is parental resilience. Although family resilience is one of the overall goals of Strengthening Families, it begins with resilient parent(s). Resilience is often defined as the ability to successfully overcome adversity (McCubbin&McCubbin, 2005; Patterson, 2002). Specifically, parental resilience is defined as "the ability to manage both crisis and the everyday challenges of family life, and to address the physical, emotional and cognitive impacts of stress" (FRIENDS National Resource Center, 2007). Resilient parents are better able to adapt and

maintain positive attitudes in the face of hardship (CSSP, 2008). If parents successfully manage both chronic and acute stressors they are more apt to practice positive parenting behaviors in every day life (Patterson, 2002).

Table 2-1. CSSP protective factors and definitions

Protective Factor	Definition
Parental Resilience	The ability to bounce back and overcome adversity and the stresses of life.
Social connections	Family, friends, and neighbors that provide social, emotional, and concrete support to parents.
Knowledge of parenting and child development	Appropriate understanding of child development and expectations for behavior, and information on raising children.
Concrete support in times of need	Formal and informal supports (TANF and Medicaid) to increase financial security to cover daily and unexpected costs.
Social and emotional competence	Through nurturing and attachment parents promote positive development of children's social and emotional skills.

As defined by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (2008) and FRIENDS National Resource Center (2007)

There are many characteristics of parental resilience including, strength, flexibility, and the ability to cope with stress (Strengthening Families Illinois, 2007). Similarly, hardiness contributes to resilience in strengthening individuals abilities to overcome stress (Bigbee, 1992). Other personal characteristics, such as high self-esteem, have consistently shown to have a buffering effect on negative stressors as well (Thoits, 1995). Patterson (2002) also asserts that coping abilities and strategies can contribute to parental resilience. These characteristics of resilience can be influenced in several ways. Parents that learn how to manage, prevent, and cope with stress are more likely to be resilient when facing hardship (Child Welfare Information Gateway, Children's Bureau, & FRIENDS National Resource Center For Community-Based Child Abuse

Prevention, 2010). Parents that have higher levels of support have also been shown to be more resilient.

The second factor, social connections, can be defined as the social, emotional and concrete support gained from family, friends, neighbors, and others within the community (Armstrong, Birnie-Lefcovitch&Ungar, 2005; CSSP, 2008). Social support can be provided through emotional support, positive interactions, and affection (Armstrong et al., 2005). According to research, social support often has a mediating effect on parental stress (Armstrong et al., 2005; Kotchick et al., 2005; Mulsow et al., 2002; White et al., 2009). Results from two studies showed that social support had a buffering effect against cultural, neighborhood, and economic stress (Kotchik et al., 2005; White et al., 2009). These connections and relationships are essential to healthy well-being. Social connections and support provide an outlet through which parents can relieve stress. Research shows that isolation contributes to greater levels of stress, which leads to higher risk of child maltreatment (Horton, 2003). Therefore in order to combat isolation, social connections must be formed to increase social support.

There is a significant amount of empirical evidence supporting that social connections have protective effects against the risks of economic disadvantage. Results from a study by Hashima and Amato (1994), suggest that social support is especially important for parents living in poverty and can have a buffering effect on economic stresses. In a review of literature Barnett (2008) found that social support is often a "critical moderator" between economic disadvantage, parenting, and parenting distress (p. 147). Another longitudinal study looked at the protective effects of social support on parental stress among mothers within three years after having a child. Support groups

for parents with infants in similar developmental stages provided stress relief for mothers (Muslow et al., 2002). Social support has consistently shown to be a protective factor against various stressors and is essential to strengthening families.

Knowledge of parenting and child development is another key factor in strengthening families and preventing child abuse and neglect. According to the CSSP (2008), knowledge of parenting and child development consists of an appropriate understanding of child development, expected child behavior, and information on raising children. Due to lack of knowledge, parents may overreact or not understand why their children are behaving in a particular way. Research has found that parents may get angry or frustrated by their child's behavior because they do not understand that their child is actually behaving developmentally age appropriate (Horton, 2003). Knowledge of parenting and child development is important so parents understand why their child is behaving a certain way and/or how to handle a child at a certain age.

Parenting education and support programs have been used to emphasize different aspects of parenting and child development. One form of parenting education is to increase knowledge of child development (Horton, 2003). According to Horton (2003), support and education can be in the form of general education programs, support programs, home visitations, and combined therapy education programs. One parenting education and support method is called Triple-P- Positive Parenting Program (Joachim, Sanders & Turner, 2010). Joachim and colleagues (2010) evaluated the efficacy of a parent discussion group based on the Positive Parenting Program techniques. The group focused on hypothetical situations and discussed problem solving, implementation plans, and had peer support (Joachim et al., 2010). The results of this

study showed that as parents gained more parental knowledge they reported less disruptive behavior, fewer cases of ineffective disciplining, and higher levels of parental confidence (Joachim et al., 2010). Increasing knowledge of parenting and child development serves as a protective factor and increases a parent's understanding and self-efficacy.

The fourth factor focuses on the resources available to or held by the family. Lack of resources can create a great deal of stress in times of need. Providing concrete support to parents can help to alleviate some of the stress caused by environmental problems. Concrete support is the financial security a family has to meet daily and unexpected needs through formal and informal supports, such as TANF (Temporary Aid for Needy Families), Medicaid, and social connections (CSSP, 2008). Research shows that economic stress has a significant effect on parental distress, which negatively influences parenting (Kotchick et al., 2005; Magnuson & Votruba-Drzal, 2009; McLoyd, 1990; Parke et al., 2004; White et al., 2009). Low-income parents may struggle to provide for their children due to costs; therefore, providing concrete support in times of need can be protective against the effects of lack of resources (Horton, 2003). Resources are essential to strengthening families, whether they are material or relational. Helping families to meet critical needs and even obtain medical help is one way to strengthen and protect families (Horton, 2003).

The final protective factor in this framework differs from the previous four in that it more directly relates to children. Social and emotional competence is defined as the child's ability to interact and communicate in a positive manner (CSSP, 2008). The social and emotional competence of children is developed through positive nurturing

and attachment with parents. Children's social and emotional skills have shown to be a risk factor in some cases; therefore it is essential that parents nurture healthy development of these skills (Horton, 2003). Research affirms that social and emotional competence contributes to school readiness and more positive relationships (Denham & Weissberg, 2004). These skills include learning how to communicate, deal with problems, express themselves, and other necessary social skills (Horton, 2003). Research also shows that social and emotional competence is a vital aspect of child development, and it is imperative for parents and other caring adults to foster the development of these skills through positive nurturing and attachment. (Denham & Weissberg, 2004).

All five of the protective factors identified in the CSSP framework are positively correlated with each other and are used in the Strengthening Families approach to develop healthy families through community support (Horton, 2003). Stressors and risks will always be present to some degree, and it is crucial that protective factors be strengthened and developed within families. These protective factors help to ameliorate the risk and decrease vulnerability to the cumulative effects of risk of numerous stressors affecting families (Masten & Wright, 1998). Therefore, family stress can be reduced through the increase of protective factors present in families. The Strengthening Families protective factors can be promoted in families through early childcare centers, family support programs, schools, and any other programs working with families. Through community and program efforts, protective factors can be increased and families strengthened.

## Community Café Literature Review

"Something fundamental changes when people begin to ask questions together. The questions create more of a learning conversation than the normal stale debate about problems." Mike Szymanczyk, Chairman and CEO, The Altria Group

"When conversation is connected and alive, action will emerge naturally." Juanita Brown, 2001, p. 178).

Community Cafés provide a setting for parents to participate in guided conversations focused on the protective factors. During a café, parents rotate around tables, taking part in conversations about “questions that matter” in groups of four or five (Hurley & Brown, 2009, p. 2). Unlike a traditional parent support group, the goal of Cafés is to emphasize the protective factors in an effort to strengthen families and communities and create change. The Community Café is founded upon the belief that every family, parent, and child, has an "inalienable right to the five protective factors" (National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds, 2008, p. 57). Parent leaders are trained in Café techniques and lead the Cafés. Through this parent leadership is increased and more mentorship opportunities occur.

The Community Café approach is a combination of World Café principles and the Strengthening Families Protective Factors (National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds, 2008). A core belief of Community Cafés is that social change can take place "one conversation at a time" (National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds, 2008, p. 57). Conversations are at the heart of the Café model, and lead to collaborative learning. The World Café model is based on the belief that everyone has wisdom and creativity through which "networks of conversation and social learning enable us to create ‘living knowledge’" (Brown, 2001, p.iii). Café conversations

allow people to share their wisdom and gain a deeper understanding of what matters to the group (Brown et al., 2005). Meaningful conversations and dialogue bring about collective intelligence and shared meaning (Brown, 2001). Through conversations a group collaboration of thinking occurs, where knowledge is shared, understanding is developed, and communities are strengthened (Brown et al., 2005). Conversations are not unique to Cafés, but Cafés provide a safe outlet through which conversations are fostered and encouraged.

The foundation of Cafés is built upon dialogical theories and the work of theorists such as David Bohm and Paulo Freire (Brown, 2001). Bohm believed that a culture of dialogue is necessary for society to survive, and emphasized the importance of collective dialogue (as cited in Brown, 2001, p. 64). He also stressed the power of dialogue, and the deeper knowledge that could be gained through collective insight (Brown, 2001). Dialogue is a complex process through which sharing and listening combine to allow for a deeper level of meaning to be developed. Knowledge is shared, developed, and passed on through conversations creating collective insight and learning (Brown et al., 2005). This approach focuses on the generative order of conversation. Generative order, as Bohm and Peat (2000) identified it, refers to continuous development and contribution to the whole. Bohm and Peat (2000) describe this order in the creation of a painting, in which a painter begins with an idea and moves slowly through the process of developing the painting as a whole. In the process of conversation, generative order is the continuing growth of collective intelligence as conversations occur over time (Bohm & Peat, 2000; Brown, 2001). Collective intelligence is gained through dialogues in which shared meaning and discoveries are made

(Brown, 2001). Freire, too, considered dialogue as a critical thinking process, in which reflection and action contribute to collective knowledge (as cited in Brown, 2001, p. 85). Critical thinking is essential and allows for the transformation and reinvention of knowledge through conversations (Brown, 2001).

The World Café model was greatly influenced by the hypotheses and methodologies of dialogical theorists, viewing dialogue as social inquiry, transformative, and contributing to collective wisdom (Brown, 2001). The dialogical expressions of both Bohm and Freire emphasize the wisdom of ordinary people and the transformative nature of dialogue (Brown, 2001). In conjunction with dialogical theories, learning and knowledge are socially constructed through appreciative inquiry. Appreciative inquiry acknowledges that no one approach is right but rather there are "multiple ways of knowing" that can all contribute to the greater whole. The use of appreciative inquiry furthers the conversational processes that contribute to collective inquiry and insight.

Brown and colleagues (2005) describe how through these dialogical principles the World Café model was began in January of 1995. Founders Juanita Brown and David Isaacs were hosting a "strategic dialogue" meeting for the Intellectual Capital Pioneers – a group of executives, researchers, and consultants (Brown et al., 2005, p. 14). This meeting was part of a series of formal dialogues being held, but due to inclement weather the hosts were forced to improvise. Tables were set up and covered with easel paper, crayons set out, and flowers on the table. Members of the pioneer group arrived and settled in at tables enjoying conversations over breakfast. Rather than disrupt the conversations taking place, Brown and Isaacs decided to forego the formal dialogue circle originally planned. Almost an hour into the morning someone suggested switching

tables in order to gain from what others were discussing as well. One member from each table stayed at the current table, while others traveled around the room to other tables. People wrote on the easel paper tablecloths and shared from one conversation to the next, cross-pollinating and harvesting information gathered from each (Brown et al., 2005). The collective group intelligence grew as conversations were shared around the room. The group brought together their various tablecloths and identified the key themes and ideas discussed. The informal “café” style conversations brought about a unique form of collaborative thinking and knowledge that proved to be successful. Thus, the World Café model was born.

Drawing on the World Café model, Community Cafés operate under the same dialogical principles (Table 2-2, p. 35). Community Cafés focus on dialogue as an essential process to learning and creating change. In conjunction with these dialogical principles, Community Cafés function from a knowledge base built upon three areas: protective factors are necessary for families and children to thrive, leadership begins within one's self and transforms communities, and parent partnerships impact policy, practice, and programs (National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds, 2008). Through the conduit of conversations each of these areas contributes to strengthening families. Community Cafés incorporate the CSSP Protective Factors through questions and conversations focused on the various factors protective factors, such as social support or parental resilience. Parents are encouraged to become leaders and take ownership within their community. Cafés also promote leadership through parent hosts leading Cafés and mentoring other parents (National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds, 2008). The parent leadership and partnerships

that are developed through conversations and Cafés contribute to impacting the community on various levels. As parents develop as leaders and the community is strengthened, parents join together to impact policy, practice, and programs. Conversations are instrumental in developing the protective factors, parent leaders, and impacting the community.

Café conversations are built around questions that matter. “Questions that matter” help to lead conversations and provide a context for social learning (Brown & Isaacs, 1996, p. 4). These questions focus on protective factors and help families to develop their strengths. The questions that are developed guide the conversations and future questions that may arise, therefore developing questions that matter is at the heart of the Café process.

Cafés value culture, courage, and conversation (National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds, 2008). Every conversation focuses on strengthening and developing protective factors within the participants. The dialogue is focused on parents’ experiences, emphasizing what they know, what they can share, and how they can grow. The goal of the Café is to, "Change the lives of children through conversations that matter" (National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds, 2008). Brown (2001) identifies Café conversations different from other conversational approaches in that it focuses on asking and discovering the "right" questions, exploring deeper, catalytic questions, and finding themes in the conversation based on the question(s) (p. 148). This dialogue leads to change as people discover, reflect, and harvest new ideas that lead to implementation and action (Brown et al., 2005).

Table 2-2. World Café and Community Café design principles

Design Principles	Description
Setting the context	The “frame of reference” and the boundaries in which the Café will take place, including the purpose, participants, and parameters
Create hospitable space	Establishing a physical, social environment that is conducive to conversation, collaboration, and creativity
Explore questions that matter	Developing and asking questions that promote constructive conversation and lead to innovation
Cross-pollinate and connect diverse perspectives	As conversations take place, different perspectives, collaboration, and insights contribute to new thinking
Listen together for patterns, insights, and deeper questions	Collaboratively listening, reflecting, and discovering different ideas, perspectives, connections, and questions
Harvest and share collective discoveries	Collecting the knowledge created and shared through the Café conversations, possibly in visual form

Brown et al., 2005

There are six guiding principles to the World and Community Café framework: (1) “clarify the context”, (2) “create hospitable space”, (3) “explore questions that matter”, (4) “cross pollinate and connect diverse perspectives”, (5) “listen together for patterns, insights, and deeper questions”, and (6) “harvest and share collective discoveries” (Hurley & Brown, 2009, p. 6). These principles form the foundation of this conversational, collaborative approach.

The first principle, clarify the context, is essential in fostering collaborative conversations. Setting the context prior to hosting the Café is essential to the process of promoting community and conversation (Brown et al., 2005). The three key elements of

the context are the purpose, participants, and parameters (Brown et al., 2005). It is important to clarify the context in order to determine the purpose and questions that matter (Hurley & Brown, 2009). The first step to setting the context is establishing the purpose. This begins with identifying the current situation and why the Café being held is important (Brown et al., 2005). Understanding the “what” and the “why” will help determine the participants to invite and the parameters to set. Typically Community Cafés are focused on parents, but it is beneficial to include social service providers and other leadership in order to incorporate other perspectives. The parameters for Cafés can be as creative or traditional as the host(s) desire, and should be established based on the purpose of the Café (Brown et al., 2005). The location, resources, and setup should all be established within the context parameters as well (Brown et al., 2005). These three elements of setting the context are the first steps to preparing and hosting a Café.

The second design principle is creating a hospitable space. In an example of a large group Café, Isaacs' recounts some of the steps taken to create a warm, inviting environment in which conversations can develop (as cited in Brown, 2001, p. 110). An informal setting was set up with small tables covered in paper that participants could write/draw on, along with the hosts interacting with participants and encouraging mutual hospitality (Brown, 2001). Cafés should be inviting and comfortable, a place where people feel free to dialogue and express their thoughts openly (Brown, 2001). They should also create a fun and creative atmosphere, which allows for collaborative conversations to take place (Brown, 2001). Creating a hospitable space and clarifying the context of Cafés are two essential pieces of Cafés.

Principle three, exploring questions that matter, is at the core of hosting Cafés. Dialogical theory provides the foundation for this principle. Based on this theory, it is essential that prior to the Café, clear and concise questions be developed. Catalytic and provocative questions set the stage and help to create meaningful, collaborative conversations that lead to future change (Brown, 2001). Brown and Isaacs (1996) express the importance of formulating penetrating questions that provoke a thoughtful array of responses and challenge underlying assumptions. The quality of questions asked influences collective knowledge and learning processes (Brown, 2001; Brown & Isaacs, 1996). Likewise, these questions help groups look to the future and to collaboratively explore ideas and perspectives (Hechenbleikner, Gilburg&Dunnell, 2009). Questions and conversations of Cafés have also helped to bring groups together and boost morale (Jongeneel& Randall, 2009). People are motivated by questions, and they help to reframe issues (Hurley & Brown, 2009). Based on dialogical theory, questions that matter help facilitate meaningful conversations that can lead to change. In a Café on questions, participants identified the value of framing and developing questions that lead to collective inquiry and don't stop with one answer (Brown, 2001). Participants stated that questions should be used to reframe thinking from problems and issues to possibilities (Brown, 2001). The following questions are examples of questions focused on the CSSP protective factors.

“Do you have someone in your family, neighborhood, and/or community that you can count on? Think of a time when you needed support, and how this person helped you through.”

“What in your family history or culture make sit difficult or easy to ask for help?”

“Think about a challenging time in your family. What made you feel proud of your family in that situation?” (National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds, 2008, p. 39)

Questions should evoke creativity and collective inquiry among the group (Brown, 2001). The questions should be relevant and genuine, and should evoke thought and further questions (Brown et al., 2005). Formulating questions that matter is essential to the Café framework.

Cafés are designed to facilitate and enhance the collaboration of knowledge and thinking between participants. By rotating around tables and taking part in conversations with various small groups the learning network expands beyond regular small group interactions. Cafés are designed to value and encourage the cross-pollination of ideas and connect diverse perspectives (Principle 4). The general nature of Cafés allows for creative flow in conversation in which participants do not get stuck but rather carry on their conversations to each group discussion (Brown, 2001). As participants move about the room to different conversations, they not only share their own ideas but the perspectives they have gained from others through conversations (Brown et al., 2005; Brown, 2001). This unique system, in which diverse perspectives are welcome, allows for cross-pollination through conversations to enhance collective intelligence (Brown et al., 2005). In this unique system, conversations are a means through which rich perspectives emerge and are integrated (Brown, 2001). As Brown and colleagues (1997) expressed, the dialogues that begin in Cafés never end, but instead continue on through each participant’s future conversations.

Conversations are not just a matter of speaking but of engaging in listening as well. Listening together to gain further insight contributes to the collective nature of Cafés (Principle 5). Collective listening leads to identifying patterns, insights, and deeper questions (Hurley & Brown, 2009). The goal of Café conversations is to not only listen personally but rather beyond the individual to deeper meaning (Brown, 2001). Participants are encouraged to listen together for deeper questions, patterns, and themes that emerge through the cross pollination of ideas through conversations (Brown, 2001). It is important that participants are provided time to reflect silently and as a whole on the conversations (Brown et al., 2005). Different from other instances of dialogue, participants become responsible for sharing and connecting ideas with the larger whole beyond their own personal thoughts and ideas (Brown, 2001; Brown et al., 2005). This collective listening contributes to coherence of ideas, community, and strengthening families. As the group, or system, identifies themes and patterns, unity and shared meaning emerges (Brown, 2001).

This system thinking and conversing as a whole contributes to greater knowledge and a "harvest of collective insight" (Principle 6) (Brown, 2001, p. 234). A key component of Café conversations is harvesting the ideas shared together and representing them in some way. For example, one group hired a muralist to draw a visual representation as the group shared thoughts and discoveries made, while others have had participants walk around and review the writing and drawings on the tablecloths (Brown, 2001). This collective insight can be represented in various ways and is a useful part of gaining collective insight. As Brown, Isaacs, and Margulies (1997) said, "None of us is smarter than all of us" (p. 7).

Community Cafés focus not only on these design principles but incorporate the aforementioned protective factors as well. The merging of these factors results in a powerful tool through which the lives of children and families can be changed (National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds, 2008). For each Community Café the context - purpose, participants, and parameter – are established based with the overarching goal of strengthening families and building community. Questions that matter and conversations are focused on developing and incorporating the five protective factors identified by the CSSP. After these steps are completed the host(s) set up a warm, hospital space for parents to join together for the Café. Any resources, such as food and childcare are also established. As the Café begins, the questions that matter are presented to initiate and focus conversation on identifying families’ strengths. The wisdom, knowledge and diverse experiences of the participants are shared and cross-pollinated through conversations around the room. The tablecloths and movement between conversations around the room allow for people to connect ideas, identify patterns, and develop collective insight. Community and collective intelligence are deepened through the Café process, and families are strengthened as they focus on protective factors.

In conjunction with the World Café model and protective factors, Community Cafés have several core principles that specify how to implement these approaches. The Core Principles of Cooperation and strategies presented in the Community Café Orientation Host Guide (2008) are indicators of the protective factors and Café design. There are eleven Core Principles of Cooperation specified in the Community Café Orientation Host Guide (2008). The core principles focus on different areas such as parent

leadership, and honor and respecting values. These include (1) “parents and communities create the partnerships needed for children to thrive”, (2) “Parent Leaders design, host, monitor and evaluate Cafés in partnership with community”, (3) “Honor and respect every contribution to the café”, (4) “Honor and respect every person’s leadership”, (5) “Act like everyone arrives with the best of intentions”, (6) “Honor and respect every person’s culture”, (7) “Build and share collective wisdom and consensus”, (8) “Work with equality, self determination and reciprocity”, (9) “We are the leaders that will create the positive change we need”, (10) “Maintain safety and kindness in our words and environment”, and (11) “Strive to make every decision and contribution with compassion” (National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds, 2008, p. 13).

The core strategies provide more detail on promoting leadership, partnership, and strengthening families. Strategies for networking participants in leadership include, mentorship, using wisdom of local parent leaders to design Cafés, reciprocity in relationships, expression, and listening. Networking partnership strategies include sharing collective wisdom, sharing culture, and value meaningful conversation. In terms of strengthening families, core strategies focus on strengths, co-learning, trusting the wisdom present, and visualize together. The purpose of these key strategies and core principles is to provide more specific approaches to implementing Cafés (National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds, 2008). These strategies are founded upon the design principles of World Cafés and the goal of promoting the CSSP protective factors. These strategies are used to maintain the integrity of the Café approach but still allow for it to be adapted based on the needs of a given community (National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds, 2008).

The theoretical foundation of the Café collaborative provides reason to believe that these guiding principles can lead to change not only within individual family systems but within communities as well. Dialogical theory and personal stories have served as support thus far in the Café collaborative. The emphasis on parent leadership engages parents as equal partners and gives them a stronger voice within the community (National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds, 2008). The Community Café approach respects parents' collective wisdom and seeks to develop parent leaders and strong families (National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds, 2008). Little research has been done on Community Cafés since their inception just a few years ago. As Community Cafés continue to spread across the country, it is essential that this approach be researched and evaluated.

### **Concept Mapping Literature Review**

Based on the stories of participants and hosts from around the country Community Cafés have been highly successful and have a significant impact on families and communities. A formal evaluation of Cafés will provide research-based evidence for what is taking place as a result of Cafés. Concept mapping provides analyses that can be utilized in strategic planning, program evaluation, measurements, and organization (Trochim, 1989b; Kane & Trochim, 2007). The collaborative process of concept mapping allows participants to contribute and organize ideas throughout the evaluation, which fits well with the collaborative Community Café approach (Kane & Trochim, 2007).

According to Kane and Trochim (2007), concept mapping brings stakeholders together to conceptualize a framework that can be used in both planning and evaluation. This visual framework is developed through several steps of data collection and analysis. The process of concept mapping begins with brainstorming, at which time

participants generate statements based on a focus statement developed by the facilitator(s) (Trochim, 1989b). A focus statement typically instructs participants to, “Generate statements/ideas about a specific topic...” and is followed by a prompt such as, “A specific idea about this is...” (Kane & Trochim, 2007). The statements brainstormed by the participants are compiled into a comprehensive list. This list is then revised and reduced by removing statements that are duplicates, complicated, or irrelevant. The final list consists of statements representing unique and independent concepts.

Next, the participants each complete a card sort with the brainstormed ideas, grouping them based on their perception of similarities (Trochim, 1989b). The rating is the third part of the structuring portion of concept mapping. Participants rate each statement based on a given rating scale. For example, the statements may be rated based on how important participants think each one is or how much of a priority they think each concept is (Trochim, 1989b).

Concept mapping has been used in many areas for both planning and evaluation purposes. This process can be used as the starting point for formative or a summative evaluation. For example, Galvin (1989) reported how concept mapping was used as the starting point for the evaluation of a new Big Brother/Big Sister program called One-to-One. In this case, the state officials decided that in order for the program to receive more funding it must be evaluated to determine its effectiveness. The process began with the staff brainstorming over one hundred items describing the One-to-One program (i.e. “feeling better about one’s self”) (Galvin, 1989, p. 54). Ninety-eight brainstormed items were used in the card sorts completed by each individual staff member. The

concept map that was constructed consisted of twenty-three groups of statements. the groups were organized on the map by individual and group activities, social and activity skills. Clusters were developed and included categories such as, “cope with family life”, “artistic activities”, and “take chances” (Galvin, 1989, p. 55).

In this example, the brainstorming and sorting first two parts of the concept mapping process were used to create a visual map and identify outcomes of the One-to-One program. The map provided an understanding of how the local program operated and also highlighted key concepts that could be used in further evaluation. A questionnaire was developed based on the identified outcomes, which helped to strengthen the validity of the results (Galvin, 1989). The concept mapping process provided a means of evaluation of the One-to-One program that was useful for further research.

In another study, concept mapping was used in a training evaluation in a large networking and engineering company in Canada (Michalski& Cousins, 2000). The evaluation took place using three stakeholder groups consisting of trainers, program sponsors, and trainees. Concept mapping was used to assess the importance of training results and training evaluation within each stakeholder group (Michalski& Cousins, 2000). The groups were instructed to brainstorm based on the focus statement, “Generate statements (short phrases or sentences) that describe specific training pro- gram results that would contribute to the success of [the organization] over the next 12 to 24 months” (Michalski& Cousins, 2000, p. 215). The statement “One specific training program result that would contribute to the success of [the organization] over the next 12 to 24 months is...” was used to keep the brainstorm focused

(Michalski& Cousins, 2000, p. 216). Two hundred nineteen statements were generated between the three groups, and the list was refined to one hundred statements for use in the sorting and rating (Michalski& Cousins, 2000). After sorting the statements, the participants rated each item twice based on the training result importance (TRI) and the training evaluation importance (TEI) (Michalski& Cousins, 2000).

The results of the concept mapping processes were then compared between and within groups using pattern mapping. The concepts were sorted into five groups including, customer value, benefits resulting from training, skills and knowledge, effective training program attributes, and employee satisfaction. Cluster rating maps and pattern matches visually showed the differences between how they viewed the importance of both training evaluation and training results (Michalski& Cousins, 2000). In terms of TRI benefits resulting from training was found to be most important with customer value second. The TEI results on the other hand showed the effective training program attributes and skills and knowledge clusters as the most important. The pattern matches provided a visual representation of the comparisons between groups. This allows all of the stakeholders to see how they viewed the importance differently. For example, the training providers had an inverse relationship between TRI and TEI rankings, while the program sponsors and the trainees rated the items much closer between the TRI and the TEI (Michalski& Cousins, 2000). This evaluation helped to determine stakeholder differences in training evaluation, including both results and evaluation criterion. (Michalski& Cousins, 2000).

Concept mapping has also been used for planning and curriculum development in schools (Sutherland &Katzb, 2005). In an evaluation study done through the Manitoba

School Improvement Program in Canada, concept mapping was used to support organizational learning (Sutherland & Katz, 2005). All of the stakeholders began by brainstorming based on the instructions, “Generate statements (short phrases or sentences) that relate to [teacher/student] perceptions of student engagement” (Sutherland & Katz, 2005, p. 260). The initial one hundred fifty-two statements were edited down to sixty for use in the sorting and rating steps (Sutherland & Katz, 2005). The results of the sorting and rating were used to compare teachers and students responses using a pattern match. The pattern match showed that the students and teachers rated the same three clusters as the highest, but in a slightly different order (Sutherland & Katz, 2005). Both groups ranked “diversity/belonging” as the highest, while “student–teacher interactions” and “engagement as a habit of mind” were the next two highest (inverse for teachers) (Sutherland & Katz, 2005, p. 266). According to Sutherland and Katz (2005), concept mapping was effective in conceptualizing the constructs of the different views and values held by the teachers and students. This participatory approach engaged all stakeholders in the evaluation process and allowed them to have ownership in the school improvement initiative (Sutherland & Katz, 2005).

Concept mapping is a versatile research tool that can be used in a wide range of fields for different purposes (Johnsen, Biegel & Shafron, 2000; Trochim, 1989a). This is a useful method through which complex concepts can be organized and interpreted (Johnsen et al., 2000; Trochim 1989a; Trochim, 1989b). According to Kane and Trochim (2007), concept mapping in planning and evaluation is only limited by “the need, creativity, and motivation of the participant group” (p. 135) and “the creativity of the evaluator and the constraints of the context” (p. 158).

This collaborative approach is an appropriate method of evaluation for Community Cafés and will allow participants to have an active voice throughout the process (Kane & Trochim, 2007). Cafés are a conversational approach to promoting protective factors and strengthening families, and concept mapping is a method of evaluation that will respect the nature of the Café process.

## CHAPTER 3 METHODS

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the beneficial outcomes of participating in Community Cafés. The goal is to gain a better understanding of the benefits Cafés provide to families as well as offer preliminary evidence for the success of Cafés as a new approach to strengthening families.

### **Design**

Community Cafés use a dialogical approach to gaining wisdom, building community, and strengthening families (National Alliance of Children's Trust & Prevention Fund, 2008). They create an environment that is conducive to open and honest communication between parents. Therefore, a method of evaluation that does not interfere with the conversational nature of Cafés is most appropriate. Concept mapping is an integrated approach used in planning and evaluation that allows participants to have a voice throughout the entire process of evaluation (Kane & Trochim, 2007). This mixed methods approach provides the opportunity for participants to share their thinking and is grounded in multivariate statistical techniques, including cluster analysis and multidimensional scaling (Trochim, 1989a). This method of evaluation is well suited to provide valuable information on Community Cafés.

In order to complete this evaluation of Community Cafés, a cross-sectional research design was used. Cross-sectional designs are used often to compare or determine the relationship between two or more cases with regard to different variables (Bryman, 2004; de Vaus, 2001). In this study, the design allowed me to determine the relationship between the concepts generated by participants. One of the essential goals

was to determine the relationship between the concepts and how they form into conceptual groups (or clusters). As Bryman (2004) emphasized, cross-sectional research designs are generally used to determine the correlations between variables. In this case correlations were analyzed between concepts and groups of concepts.

Along with the ability to conduct correlations and comparisons, standard cross-sectional designs do not contain a time element (Bryman, 2004; de Vaus, 2001). Data is generally collected at one point in time and is often quantifiable (Bryman, 2004). Although data collection through concept mapping occurs in three steps, the data analyzed from the last two steps is collected at a single point in time.

### **Sample**

United Way Worldwide introduced Strengthening Families to six pilot sites nationally. This project sought to embed the Protective Factors into the work of local United Ways. Community Cafés have been integrated along with Strengthening Families in four of the six pilot sites. The National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds has been instrumental in the expansion of Community Cafés nationally, and through the implementation of United Way Strengthening Families, United Way Worldwide has joined this initiative as well. The United Way Strengthening Families sites that participated in the evaluation of Community Cafés are the United Way of Greater High Point, United Way of Anchorage, and the United Ways of Washington state association. The Juneau Family Health and Birth Center (Juneau, AK) has also been hosting Cafés and participated in the evaluation.

The theoretical population of interest in this study is parents and those that work with parents in some capacity. The population for this study consists of Café hosts, parents, service providers, and leadership team members. Café hosts are parent

leaders that help organize and lead Community Cafés, whereas leadership teams typically consist of members from the Children’s Trust Fund, a United Way contact, a coordinating contact, and often a parent host.<sup>2</sup> The sample frame consists of all the units from which the sample may be selected (Bryman, 2004; Bernard, 2000). The sampling frame that was used to construct the sample for this study consists of all participants who have participated in or experienced Community Café(s) in some capacity at some point in time.

Based on formation gathered from each of the participating sites in this study, the majority of the sites have a predominantly female population, with the exception of the Father Café in Juneau, AK. Several of the sites also reported having a high Spanish-speaking population for which all of the materials were translated. The project leaders and Café hosts served as the liaisons in order to obtain an adequate sample and conduct this evaluation.

### **Demographics**

There were several complications that had to be dealt with throughout the data collection process. Due to the nature of this evaluation, the research team was unable to complete the process of collecting data on our own. Evaluators from the United Way Strengthening Families project were trained on how to complete the data collection steps. Overall, sixty-six people participated in the brainstorming, with thirty-seven completing sorts, fifty-five completing importance ratings, and forty-seven completing achievement ratings. As a result of complications with data collection, twenty-four ratings did not include attached demographic forms. There were also thirty-one ratings

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<sup>2</sup> (R. Higa, person communication, Dec. 18, 2009)

that could not be used due to incompleteness or lack of variability in responses (i.e. rated all statements as 5). Of those that were removed, there are eight importance ratings with demographics, four achievement ratings with demographics, and three of both ratings with demographics. There are also seven importance ratings without demographics and nine of both ratings without demographics.

The following demographic information was collected from the sixty-six participants who completed this evaluation.

Table 3-1. Demographic frequency table

Variable	Value	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	35	53.0
	Male	6	9.1
Race/Ethnicity	African American	4	6.1
	Asian	5	7.6
	Did Not Respond	1	1.5
	Hispanic or Latino	9	13.6
	Multi-racial	3	4.5
	Native American or Alaskan Native	1	1.5
	Other	1	1.5
	White (Non Hispanic/European American)	13	19.7
Education	4-year college degree (Bachelors)	11	16.7
	9th to 12th grade (no diploma)	4	6.1
	Elementary or junior high school	1	1.5
	High school diploma/GED	3	4.5
	Masters degree	6	9.1
	No formal education	1	1.5
	Some college (no degree)	2	3.0
	Technical or Associates degree	5	7.6
Role in Café	Community Café Host	10	15.2
	Parent/Individual	14	21.2
	Social Service Provider	2	3.0
	State-wide or national Community Café leadership team	10	15.2

Table 3-1. Continued

Variable	Value	Frequency	Percentage
Marital Status	Divorced	4	6.1
	Married	19	28.8
	Partnered	6	9.1
	Separated	2	3.0
	Single	5	7.6
Language	English	29	43.9
	Other	1	1.5
	Spanish	9	13.6
City	Anchorage	5	7.6
	High Point	6	9.1
	Juneau	5	7.6
	Olympia	9	13.6
	Rochester	4	6.1
	San Antonio	1	1.5
	San Diego	1	1.5
	Seattle	5	7.6
	White Center	1	1.5
State	Alaska	10	15.2
	California	1	1.5
	North Carolina	6	9.1
	Texas	1	1.5
	Washington	44	66.7

Table 3-2. Mean demographics

Variable	Valid Number	Number Missing	Mean	Standard Deviation
Age	36	30	40.44	11.828
Number of children	35	31	2.14	1.396
Number of Cafés attended	37	29	6.00	4.967
Overall perceived benefit of Cafés	37	29	4.68	.530

### Method

This cross-sectional design utilizes a mixed methods approach. Concept mapping allows for both qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis. Quantitative methods

produce measurable, quantifiable results through data analysis, whereas qualitative methods focus more on the words of the participants (Bryman, 2004). Concept mapping uses a combination of these methods to produce a visual representation of the participants' thoughts. The three steps of concept mapping allow the participants to share their point of view and guide the process of data collection. The qualitative process of brainstorming is the first step, at which time participants generate the concepts used throughout the rest of the process. The sorting and rating portions allow for quantitative analyses to be conducted. Although, the sorting provides quantitative data it holds a qualitative element in that participants sorted the concepts based on how they felt they should be grouped and then named each set of concepts. This allowed me to not only conduct analyses but also understand the participants' points of view. The use of mixed methods enhances this study and provides a good fit for the evaluation of Community Cafés.

### **Procedure**

Concept mapping is a well-established method of data collection that allows participants to have a significant say throughout the process (Galvin, 1989; Kane & Trochim, 2007; Michalski & Cousins, 2000). The three data collection steps of concept mapping – brainstorming, sorting, and rating – allow the participants to express themselves in the evaluation. Several steps were completed prior to data collection, including identifying the sample and preparing materials. The primary contacts and other on-site Café leadership served as the facilitators throughout the data collection process.

In order to identify the sample, leadership from various locations were contacted. There were five local United Ways and one United Way State Association participating

in the United Way Strengthening Families Pilot; four of these sites have been hosting Community Cafés over the last year or two. One other national location was contacted to determine their interest in participating in the evaluation. Evaluators at each of the four sites were contacted with information regarding concept mapping and the evaluation of Community Cafés. The initial contact was via email with a basic explanation of the proposed evaluation method, including attachments of concept mapping materials. After this initial communication, a conference call was set up with all of the evaluators and the research team. This conference call served to fully orient the sites to concept mapping and answer any questions they had about the process. A detailed explanation of the three concept mapping data collection steps was given, along with how this process fit well with Community Cafés. Following the explanation the research team answered any questions the evaluators had. After the completion of the brainstorming step, the site evaluators were trained and completed the sorting and ratings themselves at a United Way Strengthening Families meeting in Seattle, Washington. This provided them with an opportunity to experience the process and clarify any uncertainties.

Each of the evaluators worked with the local Café leadership in their area to determine how they would facilitate each of the three steps – brainstorming, sorting, and rating. The sites each reported how they planned on hosting each of the sessions necessary for the concept mapping process. Flyers were handed out to parents and posted in visible locations to invite people to come participate in this project. The evaluation was presented as an opportunity to provide feedback on what they have learned and what they think are the benefits of Cafés. The volunteers were

compensated with a small stipend for participating in the study and dedicating their time to helping the researchers.

## **Brainstorming**

The first step in collecting data was brainstorming, which generated the concepts used in the rest of the study. Each site hosted brainstorming sessions with the volunteer participants based on the given focus statement developed by the researchers.

Brainstorm sessions were conducted in both English and Spanish. The focus statement used in the brainstorming sessions was, “One specific benefit of Community Cafés is that it. . . .” The facilitators used this statement as the prompt about which the participants brainstormed statements and ideas. Brainstorming could be done individually or in a group. General brainstorming rules were followed throughout this process. Participants were instructed to “brainstorm as many statements as possible, there are no right or wrong answers, and respect others’ ideas.” They were told to openly suggest concepts that they believe are benefits. The goal of the brainstorm was to develop a broad list of the benefits of Cafés.

After each site completed their brainstorming session, they sent a copy of the generated list of concepts and the participants’ signed informed consent forms to the researchers via mail, fax, or email. The informed consent forms were filed in a locked file cabinet for the researchers’ records. The concepts from all of the brainstorming sessions were compiled into one comprehensive list. All Spanish brainstorms were translated to English. This list of over 600 statements was then organized and reduced to eighty-three statements in preparation for the sorting and rating steps (Appendix A). A multistep procedure was used to identify the core concepts. First, the concepts were organized and key words were identified (Kane & Trochim, 2007). Any duplicate

statements were removed, along with confusing statements, while double barreled and complex statements were separated into simpler statements. Statements that were not specific benefits of Cafés were also removed (i.e., statements about the set up of the room or the cost of Cafés). The list was further reduced by removing concepts that were very similar and refining statements so they could be more easily understood. The research team (e.g., myself and the principal investigators on the research project) completed this process of analyzing the list of concepts through individual and group review. This list was reduced to a list of eighty-three concepts to be used in the sorting and rating steps. Each statement was assigned a number and placed on a card. The statements were placed in the same number order on each of the rating questionnaires. The number corresponding to each statement was used to keep a record of the statements throughout the sorting, rating and data analysis.

### **Sorting**

In order to complete the second and third steps of concept mapping, the facilitator at each site planned another session for which parents, service providers, and parent hosts completed the card sorts and ratings. Facilitators contacted participants who completed the brainstorming to once again participate in the next step. Phone calls were the primary means through which participants were invited to participate again. The participants attended the sessions and completed the card sorts based on the guidelines presented by the facilitators. The participants were instructed to sort the cards by similarity as they saw fit. Participants were not to put all of the cards into one pile or each card into its own individual pile. Finally, it was recommended that the cards be sorted into at least five groups. Upon completing their sort, each participant recorded the results of their individual card sort. On a separate form, participants recorded the

number of each statement in each of the sorted groups. They completed this process for each pile of sorted concepts and then named each group with a word or phrase that they felt best described the statements in that pile. There was no right or wrong way to sort or identify a group of statements; this process was up to the discretion of the participant.

## **Rating**

The final step in the concept mapping data collection was the rating process. Facilitators asked participants who completed the brainstorming and sorting steps to also complete the rating step as well. To obtain additional ratings, facilitators contacted others involved in Community Cafés to see if they would participate in the rating process to increase numbers. Those who completed both the sorting and ratings did so at one session, whereas others, who completed only the ratings, did so in additional sessions. Participants were asked to complete two rating forms. Each form was created using the eighty-three statements from the brainstorming process. The first form addressed how important the participant thought each concept was compared to the rest. They rated how *important* it was that each statement occurred as a benefit of Community Cafés on a scale from one to five, one being unimportant and five being very important (Appendix A). The second rating form addressed how much each statement was *achieved* through Community Cafés (Appendix A). Participants once again rated the statements on a scale from one to five, one being not at all achieved to five very much achieved. Each participant was asked to complete both rating forms as the final step in the concept mapping data collection process.

## Data analysis

The Concept Mapping Software© was used to complete the data analysis process. The first step in analysis is the creation of a similarity matrix, which is constructed based on the results of the card sorts. According to Kane and Trochim (2007), the results of the sorts are used to create a similarity matrix that shows how often participants paired statements together. Individual sorting matrices are developed for each participant's sort and then the results are summed across all participants to create the complete similarity matrix (Kane & Trochim, 2007). This matrix shows the patterns and similarities in how participants sorted the statements. The similarity matrix is then be used to conduct the next analysis of multidimensional scaling. Multidimensional scaling uses the similarity matrix to plot points representing the statements on a map (Figure 4-1, p. 62) (Kane & Trochim, 2007). Multidimensional scaling is a validated statistical technique used to determine the similarity and relationship between points (Dumont, 1989). A two-dimensional scale is used for concept mapping and typically assigns each statement two points in order to create a "point map" (Kane & Trochim, 2007). According to Kane and Trochim (2007), multidimensional scaling uses the similarity matrix and, "...iteratively places points on a map so that the original table data are as fairly represented as possible" (p.94). The plotted "point map" consists of all the statements represented by points with the corresponding assigned number used for identification. The stress level is a standard diagnostic measure that is used as an indicator of whether or not the multidimensional scaling is a "good" statistical fit for the data. The stress level represents how well the map represents the input data (Kane & Trochim, 2007). Generally, the higher the stress level the greater "discrepancy" there is between the map and the input data (Kane & Trochim, 2007). Kane and Trochim (2007) report

that the average stress level for concept mapping is approximately “0.285” with a standard deviation of “0.04”, generally concept mapping stress levels range between “0.205 and 0.365” (p. 98). The higher the stress level the greater the inconsistency is in the transferring of the data from the multidimensional similarity matrix to a two-dimensional place on a map (Kane & Trochim, 2007). The stress level is used to determine if the map is a good fit for the data, in a sense this is a measure of reliability (Kane & Trochim, 2007).

The next step is hierarchical cluster analysis, which utilizes the point map from the multidimensional scaling to cluster the data. Hierarchical cluster analysis groups the concepts into clusters based on their location on the point map (Kane & Trochim, 2007). The hierarchical method begins with each concept in its own cluster and begins to group them based on the closeness of concepts on the map. In other words, concepts that are close to one another on the point map will be clustered together while points farther apart will not. (Kane & Trochim, 2007). As with other hierarchical clustering techniques, the number of clusters selected as the best fit for the data is determined based on the context and the judgment of the researchers analyzing the data (Kane & Trochim, 2007). According to Kane and Trochim (2007), clusters will vary based on statistical software and the judgment of the analysts. Therefore, it is important to recognize that the point map remains the same, and the clusters are just a means of interpretation of the analysis (Kane & Trochim, 2007). After determining and assigning the final number of clusters, each of the clusters is labeled based on the statements present in the group. The participants’ suggestions for themes on how they grouped their

statements may be useful in determining labels, but ultimately this is based on the researchers' understanding of the clusters (Kane & Trochim, 2007).

The software provides several visual representations of the data. Point rating maps plot the average rating from all participants for a given statement, while cluster rating maps (Figure 4-3, p. 67 and Figure 4-4, p. 71) represents "the average rating for all statements in each cluster" (Kane & Trochim, 2007, p. 106). Point rating maps and cluster rating maps are similar in what they portray on their respective maps. Another visual representation provided by the software is a pattern match (Figure 4-5, p. 75), which uses the data from multiple cluster rating maps in order to compare the differences between ratings or between various groups of participants (Kane & Trochim, 2007). Pattern matches are a good visual representation of the data that provide further information about the data collected. Another representation of the individual statements is a bivariate graph separated by quadrants; each statement is plotted on the graph based on the average rating of *importance* and *achievement* of statement (Figure 4-6, p. 76). The upper right quadrant represents the statements that are rated above average on both variables (Kane & Trochim, 2007).

Overall, the analysis of the concepts brainstormed, sorted, and rated provided a feasible evaluation of the benefits of Community Cafés. The analyses present both visual and statistical representations of the data, which are useful in interpretation. The concept mapping method of evaluation on a whole is a sound approach that will help to provide a better understanding of Community Cafés. Cafés have not been evaluated and this is a useful first step. Not only do these results provide insight into Cafés at present, but they can also be used to lead and guide evaluations in the future.

## CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

Data collection and analysis was guided by the five research questions. Each will be addressed in order as they reflect the sequential steps of the Concept Mapping process.

### **Research Question 1**

Research Question 1, “What are the perceived benefits of Community Cafés identified by participants?”, was addressed through the first Concept Mapping step: brainstorming. The sixty-six participants that completed the brainstorming identified over 600 benefits of Community Cafés. Examples of some of the concepts include: “Raises the value of parent voices and wisdom” (34), “Creates positive social networks for parents and caregivers” (10), and “Allows people to be listened to by others” (8). As noted previously, this list of statements was then whittled down to eighty-three statements (Appendix A).

### **Research Question 2**

Research Question 2, “How do participants structure these concepts in terms of similarity?”, was addressed through analysis of the sort data. Each participant sorted the final 83 concepts into groupings based on similarity. Once entered into the Concept Mapping Software, a similarity matrix is computed leading to a multidimensional scaling analysis. The sort data is used to create a group similarity matrix, which records how often each statement is sorted together. Multidimensional scaling then uses this similarity matrix to iteratively place the points on a map as accurately as possible, with each statement represented by its corresponding number (Kane & Trochim, 2007). Each additional iteration adjusts the points to minimize the stress and spatial differences in

the representation of the matrix (Shepard, 1979). The stress level represents the goodness of fit of the map, the lower the stress level the better the fit of the map. Through meta-analytic analyses Kane and Trochim (2007) report that most concept mapping stress levels fall “between 0.205 and 0.365” (p. 98). Therefore, the current stress level, after ten iterations of 0.3269 (Figure 4-1) is an appropriate fit for this model, given the variability of the sort data. Although the stress level is an acceptable fit, it is somewhat high.

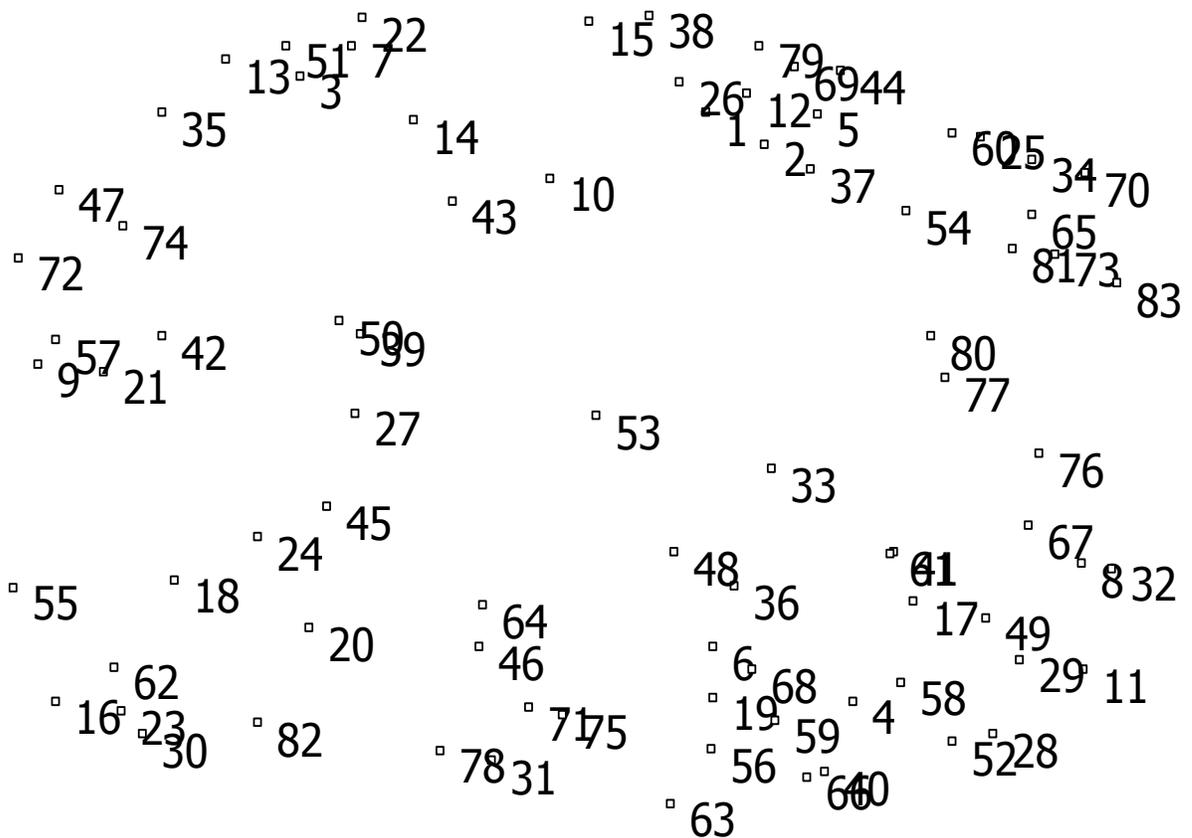


Figure 4-1. Point map

The Concept Systems Software then used the point map to conduct hierarchical cluster analysis to establish the number of clusters. Agglomerative hierarchical cluster analysis begins with each statement in its own cluster and merges clusters until all are in one cluster (Kane & Trochim, 2007). It was determined that a nine-cluster solution

was the best fit. The research team began by looking at a seven-cluster solution. This solution showed the statements in larger clusters with very broad themes throughout. We determined that seven clusters was too broad and examined an eight, nine, and ten cluster solution. The ten-cluster solution separated several statements from a larger group due to their distance from the others, but they were consistent with the theme of the larger cluster. After reviewing the various solutions, the nine-cluster solution seemed to be the most appropriate model. The eight-cluster solution combined an unfocused cluster with a more focused cluster. Based on this broadening of a well-defined cluster, it was determined that the nine-cluster solution was the most appropriate representation.

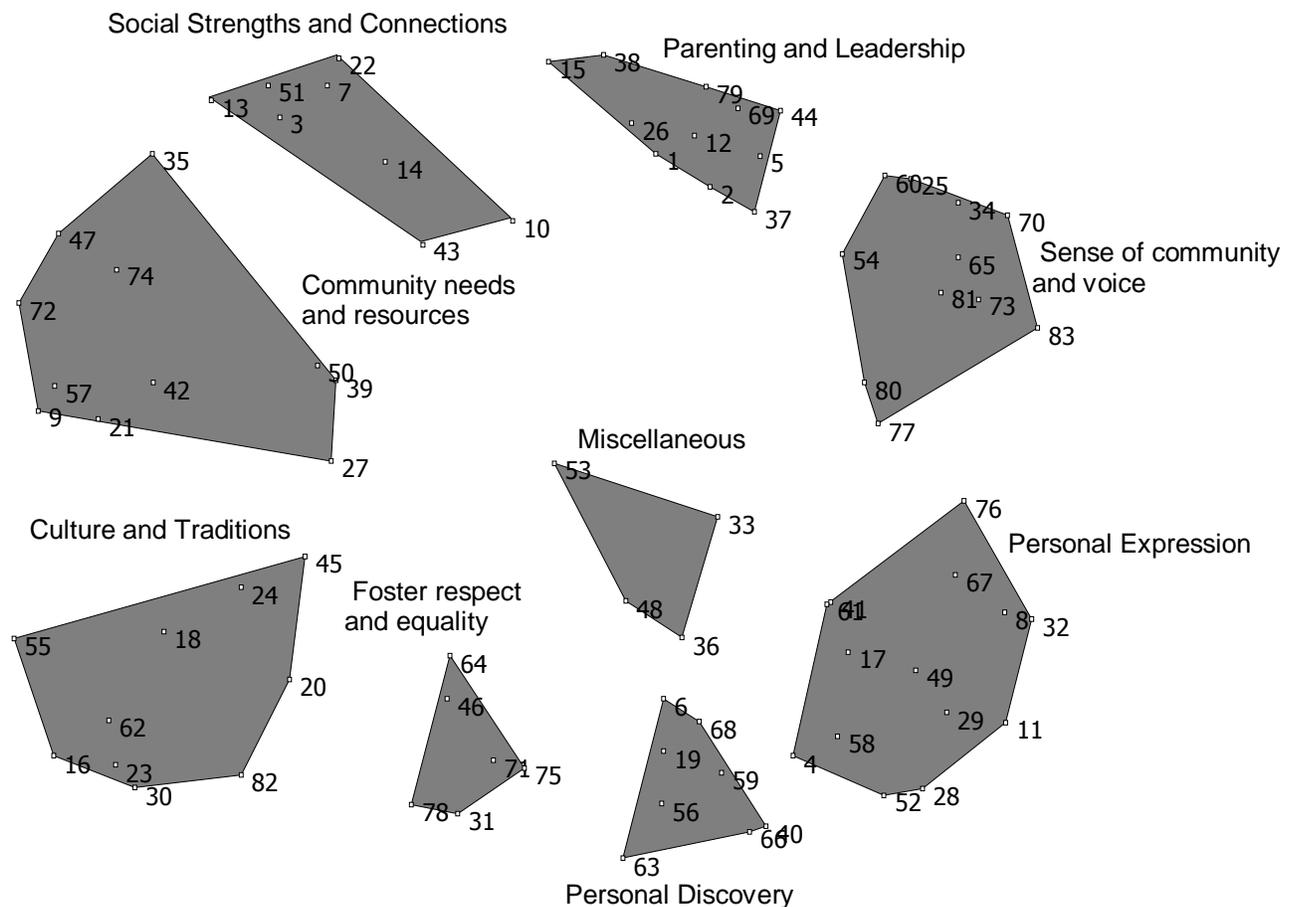


Figure 4-2. Cluster map with points

Table 4-1. Nine-cluster sort solution

Cluster Name	Statement Numbers	Description
Parenting and leadership	1, 2, 5, 12, 15, 26, 37,38, 44, 69, 79	Focuses on improving parenting and developing parents as leaders
Sense of community and voice	25, 34, 54, 60, 65, 70, 73, 77, 80, 81, 83	Centers around building community, partnerships, and valuing parents' voices
Social strengths and connections	3, 7, 10, 13, 14, 22, 43, 51	Focuses on how Cafés help create positive social connections
Community needs and resources	9, 21, 27, 35, 39, 42, 47, 50, 57, 72, 74,	Concentrates on raising awareness of community needs, resources, and strengths
Culture and traditions	16, 18, 20, 23, 24, 30, 45, 55, 62, 82	Centers on appreciating and connecting participants with different cultures and traditions
Personal expression	4, 8, 11, 17, 28, 29, 32, 41, 49, 52, 58, 61, 67, 76	Focuses on the environment Community Cafés create to foster personal expression, open communication, listening, and support
Personal discovery	6, 19, 40, 56, 59, 63, 66, 68	Centers around the personal and emotional benefits of Cafés that contribute to growth and healthy relationships
Foster respect and equality	31, 46, 64, 71, 75, 78	Speaks to the atmosphere of respect, equality, trust, and acceptance Cafés promote
Miscellaneous	33, 36, 48, 53	Contains statements on meaningful conversation and others on finding solutions for problems

The nine-cluster solution is presented in Figure 4-2. Each cluster was labeled based on the most common theme found among the given statements. Table 4-1

presents the cluster names, descriptions and statements found in that cluster. Due to the lack of focus in the “miscellaneous” cluster, it will not be reported in the analyses and discussion that follow.

### **Research Question 3**

Once the number of clusters is identified, the clusters can then be compared to one another based on an analysis of the ratings. Data from the ratings is used to address Research Questions 3, 4, and 5. For Research Question 3, “How important is it to participants that these perceived benefits occur through Community Cafés?”, the ratings of importance were analyzed in several different ways. Table 4-2 presents the descriptive analyses of the ratings of importance, including the mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum for each cluster. The clusters are ordered from highest to lowest mean score. In addition, Figure 4-3 provides a visual representation of the average ratings of importance. This presents the nine clusters in layered form based on the average level of ratings; the more layers shown the higher the average rating of importance, and vice versa.

Overall, the statements and clusters all had relatively high average ratings and were all regarded as important to some extent. Through the cluster rating map it can be seen that “community needs and resources” and “personal discovery” are the benefit clusters that contain the lowest importance averages with only a single layer. “Parenting and leadership”, “sense of community and voice”, and “foster respect and equality” are the benefit clusters with the highest averages, with five layers each. “Sense of community and voice” and “foster respect and equality” each had an average rating of importance of 4.22, while “community needs and resources” had an average rating of 3.98. “Foster respect and equality” had the lowest standard deviation of 0.06, with

statements ranging from 4.13 to 4.32. This shows the consistency of the ratings of the statements in this cluster.

Table 4-2. Cluster statistics for ratings of importance

Cluster Name	Number of Statements	Average Rating	Standard Deviation	Minimum Rating	Maximum Rating
Foster respect and equality	6	4.22	0.06	4.13	4.32
Sense of community and voice	11	4.22	0.28	3.47	4.53
Parenting and Leadership	11	4.18	0.19	3.85	4.51
Personal expression	14	4.14	0.23	3.65	4.49
Social Strengths and Connections	8	4.08	0.34	3.31	4.43
Culture and traditions	10	4.07	0.22	3.67	4.36
Personal discovery	8	4.00	0.20	3.78	4.33
Community needs and resources	11	3.98	0.23	3.74	4.45

Next, each cluster was evaluated based on average responses to each concept in the cluster. When examining each cluster by individual concepts, “sense of community and voice” had one of the statements with the lowest mean rating, “Gives parents a nice distraction outside of the house” (statement 60) and the highest rated statement, “Helps parents understand they are not alone” (statement 83), giving it the second highest standard deviation of 0.28. This higher standard deviation shows the variability of the

ratings of the statements in this cluster. “Social strengths and connections”, which was the median cluster, had the largest standard deviation at 0.34 and the statement with the lowest mean rating overall, “Connects parents to local government leaders” at 3.31 (statement 43). “Parenting and leadership”, was the third highest average rated cluster and contained the statement with the second highest mean rating overall at 4.51 (statement 5). Overall, statement 5 (4.51), “Promotes parent engagement and involvement”, and statement 83 (4.53), “Helps parents understand they are not alone”, had the two highest ratings of importance; although they are in different clusters, they are both specifically related to parent engagement.

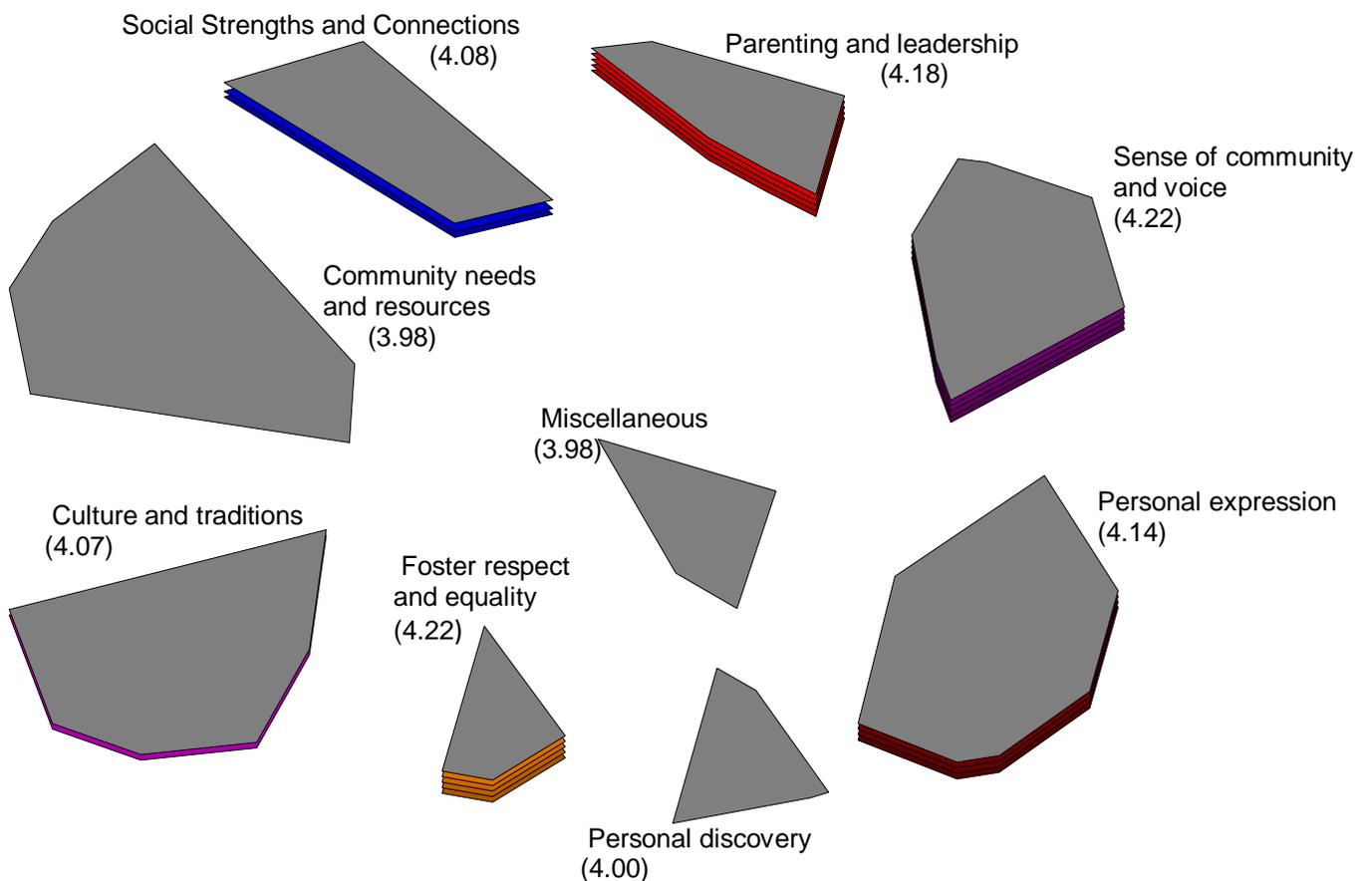


Figure 4-3. Cluster rating map of importance

Table 4-3. Statements with highest ratings of importance

Statement Number	Cluster	Rating	Statement
83	Sense of Community and Voice	4.53	Helps parents understand they are not alone
5	Parenting and Leadership	4.51	Promotes parent engagement and involvement
29	Personal Expression	4.49	Helps decrease isolation
77	Sense of Community and Voice	4.45	Builds a sense of community
35	Community Needs and Resources	4.45	Focuses on families' strengths, not their deficits
69	Parenting and Leadership	4.44	Builds confidence and hope that parents are capable of making it better for their children
10	Social Strengths and Connections	4.43	Creates positive social networks for parents and caregivers

The cluster “Community needs and resources” had the lowest average rating, yet it includes two very highly rated statements, “Focuses on families’ strengths, not their deficits” (statement 35) at 4.45 and “Creates networks and collaboration within the community” (statement 50) at 4.38. This cluster had only 4 of 11 statements with ratings over 4.00, two of which were 4.05 and 4.00. The more highly rated clusters had similar themes whereas the lower rated clusters did not. The highest ratings focused around sense of community, parent involvement, and respect and equality, which more directly benefit parents. Whereas, the lower rated clusters included broader concepts around community needs and resources, solving problems, and conversation. Participants rated the statements based on what they felt was most important, which can benefit Café leaders in the future.

Table 4-4. Statements with lowest ratings of importance

Statement Number	Cluster	Rating	Statement
43	Social Strengths and Connections	3.31	Connects parents to local government leaders
60	Sense of Community and Voice	3.47	Gives parents a nice distraction outside of the house
48	Miscellaneous	3.48	Teaches people to replace bad habits with good ones
52	Personal Expression	3.65	Helps people develop and discover inner self
18	Culture and Traditions	3.67	Gives hope to our future generations
82	Culture and Traditions	3.69	Creates new traditions
57	Community Needs and Resources	3.74	Encourages more organizations to adopt the protective factor framework

#### Research Question 4

The ratings of achievement answer Research Question 4, “How much are these perceived benefits achieved through Community Cafés?”. Although the average ratings of achievement were slightly lower than importance, most showed they are still being achieved. The analyses of the achievement rating data for the nine clusters are reported in same manner as the importance ratings. The average rating of all the statements in each cluster, the standard deviation of the ratings, the minimum and maximum rating of statements in the cluster, and the number of statements in each cluster for both the importance ratings and the achievement ratings are reported in Table 4-5.

Based on the average rating of the clusters the cluster rating map portrays each cluster in a number of layers, with fewer layers representing a lower average rating. The

cluster rating map of achievement ratings is presented in Figure 4-4. In looking at the cluster rating map, “foster respect and equality”, “sense of community and voice”, and “personal expression” each have five layers, while “social strengths and connections” and “community needs and resources” each have one layer. “Foster respect and equality” was once again the highest rated cluster with an average of 4.17 and has the lowest standard deviation of 0.20, which shows that the statements in this cluster were consistently rated highly. “Personal expression” and “sense of community and voice” were the next two highest rated clusters with mean cluster ratings of 4.13 and 4.12. The lowest ratings were “social strengths and connections” and “community needs and resources” with mean cluster ratings of 3.83 and 3.84.

Table 4-5. Cluster statistics for ratings of achievement

Cluster Number	Number of Statements	Average Rating	Standard Deviation	Minimum Rating	Maximum Rating
Foster respect and equality	6	4.17	0.20	3.87	4.49
Personal expression	14	4.13	0.34	3.51	4.55
Sense of community and voice	11	4.12	0.28	3.52	4.47
Parenting and leadership	11	4.01	0.20	3.75	4.36
Personal discovery	8	3.98	0.31	3.47	4.57
Culture and traditions	10	3.95	0.37	3.38	4.61
Community needs and resources	11	3.84	0.26	3.39	4.34
Social strengths and connections	8	3.83	0.44	2.81	4.38

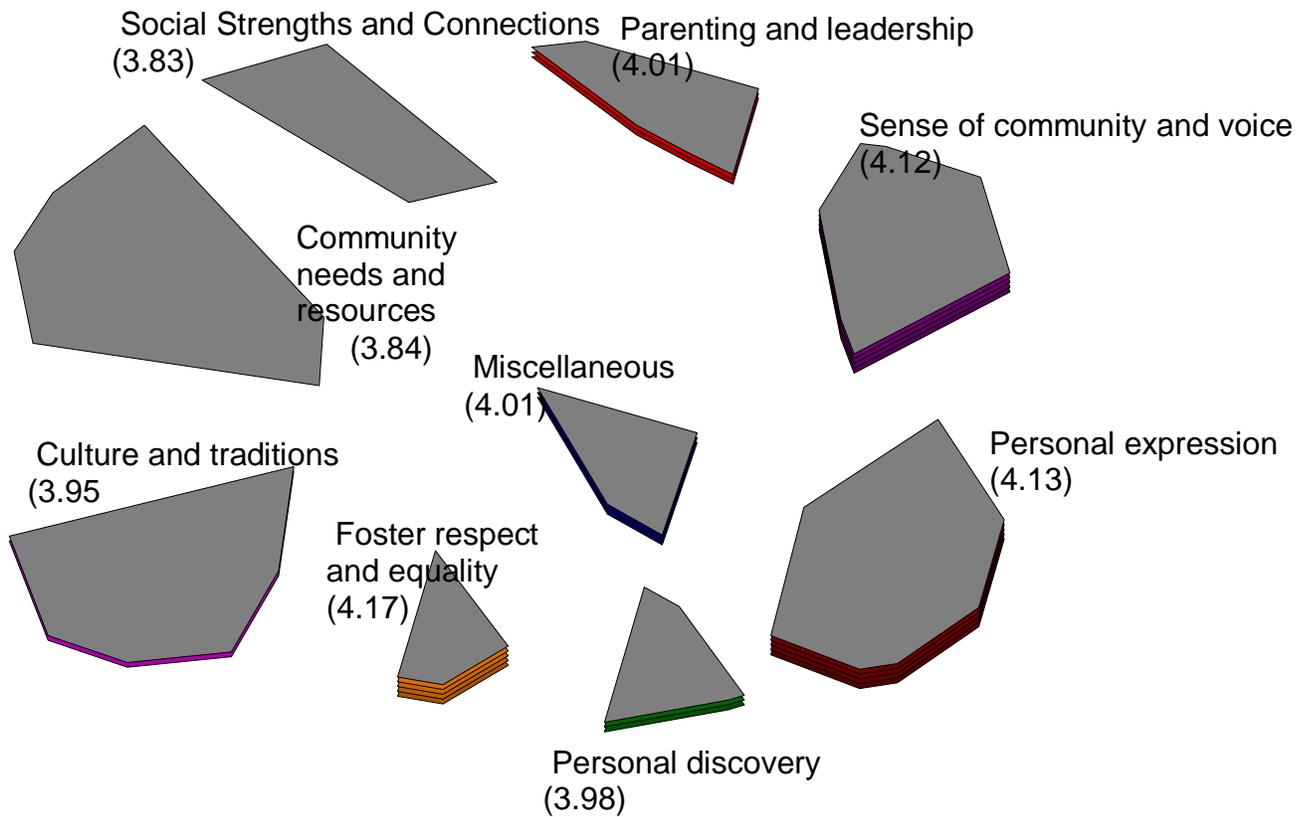


Figure 4-4. Cluster rating map of achievement

The statements in each cluster vary in rating. “Social strengths and connections” includes the statement with the lowest mean rating overall, “Connects parents to local government leaders” (statement 43) with a 2.81 average and has the second highest standard deviation 0.44. There is a broad range of mean ratings for the statements in the cluster “Social strengths and connections”, with some very highly rated and others very low, as is the case with statement 43 “Connects parents to local government leaders”. Similar to the ratings of importance, “Community needs and resources” only has three statements with over a 4.00 rating. “Culture and traditions” is the third lowest rated cluster with a 3.95 average, yet it contains the statement with the highest rating of

4.61, “Allows people to share their personal experiences, history, and culture” (statement 62).

Table 4-6. Statements with highest ratings of achievement

Statement Number	Cluster	Rating	Statement
62	Culture and Traditions	4.61	Allows people to share their personal experiences, history, and culture
56	Personal Discovery	4.57	Gives people the opportunity to express themselves
61	Personal Expression	4.55	Encourages people to exchange ideas with people they wouldn't normally interact with
36	Miscellaneous	4.55	Encourages different points of view in conversation
67	Personal Expression	4.53	Provides a supportive and a safe environment for conversation
8	Personal Expression	4.51	Allows people to be listened to by others
75	Foster Respect and Equality	4.49	Honors and respects everyone's input equally

There is more variability in the ratings of achievement with five of the nine clusters containing ranges over 1.00, two with 0.95, and the lowest two with 0.62. Some of the highest rated statements located in various clusters all share a similar theme of allowing people to express themselves and sharing different points of view: “Allows people to share their personal experiences, history, and culture”(62), “Gives people the opportunity to express themselves” (56), “Encourages people to exchange ideas with people they wouldn't normally interact with” (61), and “Encourages different points of view in conversation” (36). The results show that the same clusters of benefits that were most important to the participants were also the most highly achieved. These ratings

show what the participants felt was most achieved through their experience in Cafés, which can guide leaders in planning for the future.

Table 4-7. Statements with lowest ratings of achievement

Statement Number	Cluster	Rating	Statement
43	Social Strengths and Connections	2.81	Connects parents to local government leaders
48	Miscellaneous	3.24	Teaches people to replace bad habits with good ones
82	Culture and Traditions	3.38	Creates new traditions
57	Community Needs and Resources	3.39	Encourages more organizations to adopt the protective factor framework
59	Personal Discovery	3.47	Provides hope to the hopeless
18	Culture and Traditions	3.58	Gives hope to our future generations
52	Personal Expression	3.51	Helps people develop and discover inner self

### Research Question 5

Other visual representations of the ratings of importance and achievement are presented through the pattern match (clusters) and bivariate graph (statements), which address, “How do the concepts relate to each other in terms of importance and achievement?” the fifth Research Question. The pattern match shows the correlation between the importance ratings and the achievement ratings (Figure 4-5). It is a simple visual that helps display the comparison between the cluster ratings of importance and achievement. The data presented in the pattern match shows the clusters of benefits participants felt were most important in relation to which clusters of benefits they felt they experienced most through Cafés.

Overall, the average ratings of achievement were lower than the ratings of importance. Despite the difference in mean ratings, the comparison between importance and achievement has a correlation coefficient of 0.69, which is relatively high. They also held a broader range with statement ratings ranging from 4.61, “Allows people to share their personal experiences, history, and culture” (statement 62), to 2.81, “Connects parents to local government leaders” (statement 43). The importance ratings ranged from 4.53, “Helps parents understand they are not alone”, (statement 83) to 3.31, “Connects parents to local government leaders” (statement 43). Statement 43 was the lowest rated statement in both importance and achievement, while the highest rated statements were similar in allowing parents to share and connect with others. In looking at the comparisons through the pattern match, it is clear the top four clusters of both achievement and importance are the same. The cluster “foster respect and equality”, is the highest rated cluster in both importance (4.22) and achievement (4.17). The other three varied slightly in order between the importance and achievement ratings. “Sense of community and voice” matched “foster respect and equality” as highest in importance (4.22) and is third in achievement (4.12), while “parenting and leadership” is third in importance (4.18) and fourth in achievement (4.01), and “personal expression” is fourth in importance (4.14) and second in achievement (4.13). These top clusters all focus on how Cafés contribute to parenting, social connections, and personal expression.

The other four clusters have interesting relationships. “Social strengths and connections” is the fifth highest importance (4.08) and the lowest achieved (3.83), while “Culture and traditions” is sixth in importance (4.07) and sixth in achievement (3.95), whereas “personal discovery” is seventh in importance (4.00) and fifth in achievement

(3.98). “Community needs and resources” also has the lowest rating of importance (3.98) and the second lowest achievement rating (3.84). The pattern match displays the comparison of the mean importance and achievement cluster ratings.

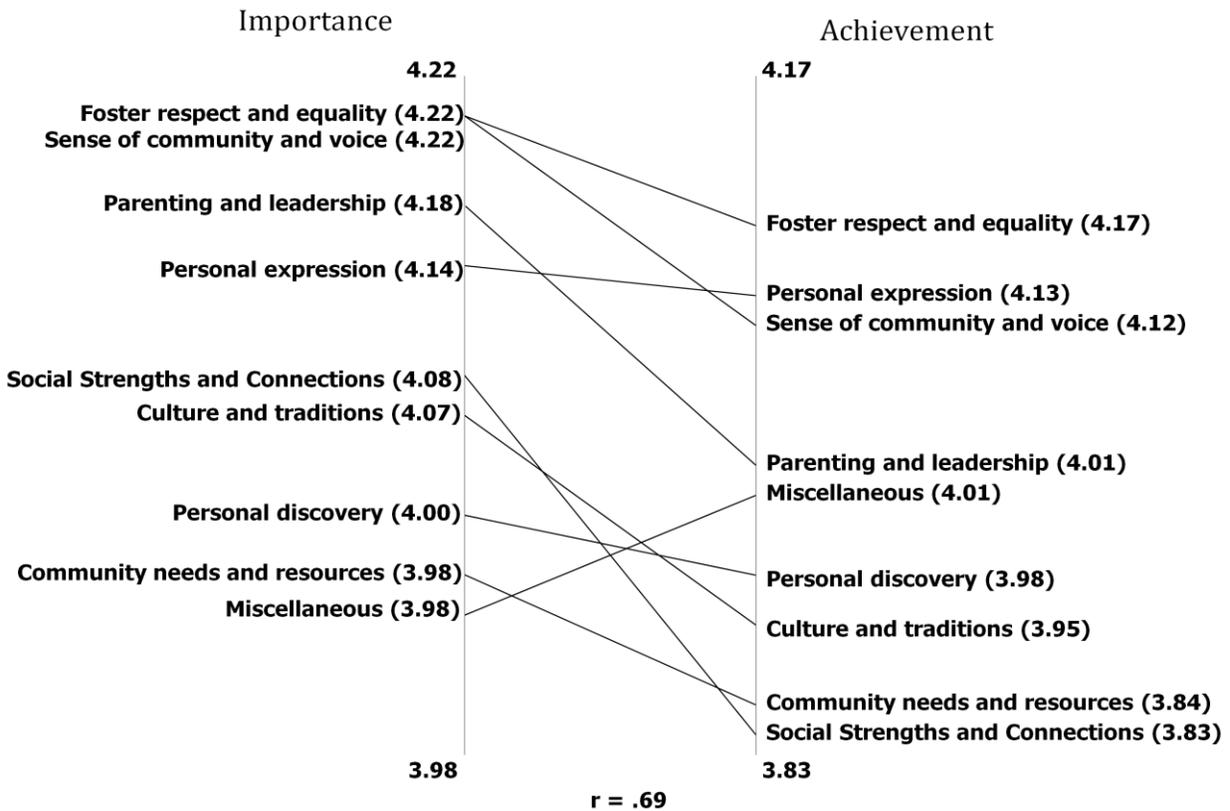


Figure 4-5. Pattern match comparison of importance and achievement ratings

The bivariate graph shows the average rating of each individual statement on a four-quadrant graph. The points are plotted using the average importance rating (x-axis) and the average achievement rating (y-axis). Statements found in the lower left quadrant rate below the average level of importance and achievement, while statements in the upper right rate above average on both importance and achievement. The upper left holds statements above average in achievement but below average in importance, and the lower right shows statements below average in achievement and above average in importance (Figure 4-6). The mean achievement rating is 4.01 and the mean

importance rating is 4.10, and these are used to define the quadrants. The bivariate graph shows the general positive, linear slope of the average ratings of the statements, and has an  $r$  correlation coefficient of 0.78. This shows that there is a high correlation between the ratings of the statements.

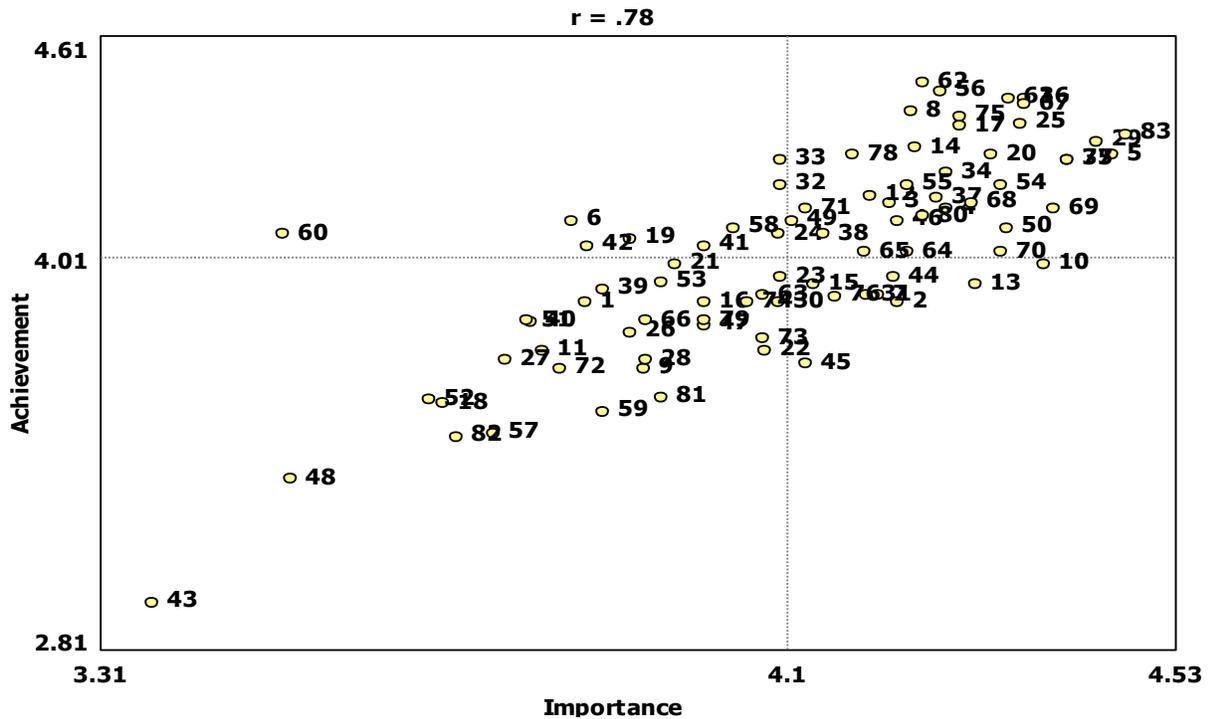


Figure 4-6. Bivariate graph of average importance and achievement ratings of each statement

The largest portion of the statements are located in the upper right quadrant, meaning they are above the average in both achievement and importance. Benefits such as, “Helps parents understand they are not alone” (83), “Provides a supportive and safe environment for conversation” (67), “Honors and respects everyone’s input equally” (75), and “Gives people the opportunity to express themselves” (56) are located in the upper part of the upper right quadrant, which shows that these are the most highly important and achieved statements. These benefits all relate to personal expression and support, two areas that were found to be very important and achieved throughout

the results. The highest rated statements were consistent with the highest rated clusters, including “foster respect and equality”, “parenting and leadership”, and “social strengths and connections”. There are several statements just below the average on one variable or the other. For example, “Creates positive social networks for parents and caregivers” (10), “Allows parents in challenging situations to collaborate with parents who have thrived in similar situations” (44), and “Builds protective factors for families” (13) are all above average in importance but slightly below on achievement. On the other hand, “Helps people develop discover inner self” (52), “Provides the time for deep conversations” (32), and “Increases appreciation for meaningful community conversation” (33) are all above average on achievement but borderline on importance. There is a significant number of statements that are below average on both measures, although many are very close to the average on both. Several statements such as, “Connects parents to local government leaders” (43) and “Teaches people to replace bad habits with good ones” (48) were extremely low on both ratings. “Helps people develop discover inner self” (52), “Gives hope to our future generations” (18), “Creates new traditions” (82), and “Encourages more organizations to adopt the protective factor framework” (57) are all relatively low on both ratings as well. “Gives parents a nice distraction outside the house” (60), on the other hand, is very low on importance but is above average in achievement. The above average importance statements are all relatively close to the average achievement, whereas there is more distance between the above average achievement and below average importance statements. Although there are several statements low on both measures, the majority of statements were moderately important and achieved. The statements in the upper right quadrant are the

most highly achieved and most important benefits as identified by the participants.

Based on the mean ratings of individual and clusters of statements, participants identified the social community, personal expression, and supportive environment to be very important and highly achieved benefits through their experiences in Community Cafés.

## CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to evaluate Community Cafés and identify what participants believe are benefits of Cafés. This evaluation was conducted through the lens of family stress theory and the CSSP Strengthening Families Protective Factor framework. The method of Concept Mapping provided a feasible approach to evaluation that meshed well with the conversational nature of Community Cafés. Through the steps of Concept Mapping, participants identified benefits of Cafés, organized them in groups, and rated them based on importance and achievement.

The process of Concept Mapping addressed the five research questions presented in this study. Question 1, “What are the perceived benefits of Community Cafés identified by participants?” was answered through the step of brainstorming; participants identified as many benefits of Cafés as possible in brainstorming sessions. Over 600 benefits were generated in the brainstorming process. These ranged from the practicality of Cafés to how they bring people together and build community. This list was then refined and reduced to 83 statements to be used in the sorting and rating steps.

The second question, “How do participants structure these concepts in terms of similarity?” was addressed through the sorting process. The participants completed the card sorts by sorting the concepts into groups based on similarity (Table 4-1, p. 64 and Figure 4-2, p. 63). The data from the sorts was analyzed through the use of multidimensional scaling and hierarchical cluster analysis. A similarity matrix was created from the sort data and each point was plotted on a map through multidimensional scaling. Nine clusters of statements were identified. The statements in

each cluster generally center around a given theme, consistent with the protective factors and Café principles. Several of the clusters related to the protective factors focused on parenting and leadership, social connections, building community, and identifying community needs and resources. The cluster themes related to the Café environment focused on personal expression, culture and traditions, fostering respect and equality, and personal growth.

Questions 3, 4, and 5 were addressed through the completion of the ratings of importance and ratings of achievement. The data showed that the highest ratings had consistent themes and therefore are the primary focus in the discussion. Through the ratings of importance Question 3, “How important is it to participants that these benefits occur through Community Cafés?”, was addressed (Table 4-2, p. 66 and Figure 4-3, p. 67). The clusters with the highest mean ratings of importance were “foster respect and equality”, “sense of community and voice”, “parenting and leadership”, and “personal expression”. Apart from the “parenting and leadership” cluster, these top clusters were similar in that the themes centered on how the Café environment allows for community, conversation, expression, and openness. Community Cafés are founded upon dialogical principles and using conversation to bring about change; participants identified statements and clusters related to these principles as the most important.

Question 4, “How much are these benefits achieved through Community Cafés?”, was answered through the ratings of achievement participants completed (Table 4-5, p. 70 and Figure 4-4, p. 71). Similar to the ratings of importance, “foster respect and equality”, “personal expression”, “sense of community and voice”, and “parenting and leadership” had the highest mean ratings of achievement. Cafés focus on fostering

conversation among participants to develop protective factors, parenting skills, and leadership. The achievement ratings show that participants felt that Cafés promote expression, parenting, community, and leadership as they are designed to do.

The participants' ratings of the statements were also used to answer Question 5, "How do the concepts relate to each other in terms of importance and achievement?". Visual results to this question can be seen in Figures 4-5 (p. 75) and 4-6 (p. 76). The pattern match shows the comparison of the cluster ratings of importance and achievement. This comparison had a high correlation of .69. The top four clusters were the same in both achievement and importance: "foster respect and equality", "personal expression", "sense of community and voice", and "parenting and leadership". The bivariate graph plots the individual statements on a four-quadrant graph based on the ratings of importance and ratings of achievement. The correlation for the comparison of individual statement ratings of importance and achievement was .78, which is high. The consistency and high correlation between the importance and achievement ratings of both the clusters and statements demonstrates how Café participants are experiencing what is important to them. The themes are also consistent with the Café guiding principles and protective factors.

Cafés are designed to create a hospitable environment that appreciates conversation and encourages the development of collective wisdom (National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Fund, 2008). This dialogical process is conducive to building community, expression, and the protective factors. Although the benefits found in this study are related to Café principles and protective factors, the statements were

identified solely by the participants. These benefits are not based on theory, but rather on the perceptions and experiences of those participating in Community Cafés.

### **Association with Protective Factors**

Upon further examination, many of the clusters that emerged from the analysis can be linked to the five CSSP Protective Factors: social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, social and emotional competence of children, and parental resilience (Table 2-1, p. 25). Based on the statements within a given cluster, themes were identified. The language of the statements and themes of the clusters were in many cases similar to the protective factors. Through evaluative judgment it was determined that several of the clusters focused on areas that related to strengthening families and increasing protective factors. In fact, several of these themes were consistent with specific CSSP protective factors, demonstrating the effectiveness of the Community Café approach in addressing these factors (Table 5-1). All cluster and statements means reported in the tables are mean ratings of achievement.

Table 5-1. Clusters associated with protective factors

Clusters by Rating of Achievement	Associated Protective Factor	Statement Examples
Foster respect and equality (4.17)		
Personal Expression (4.13)	Parental Resilience	“Builds and improves self-esteem”
Sense of Community and Voice (4.12)	Social Connections	“Helps parents understand they are not alone” “Gives voice to parents and others concerned with the well-being of children”

Table 5-1. Continued

Clusters by Rating of Achievement	Associated Protective Factor	Statement Examples
Parenting and Leadership (4.01)	Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development	“Increases knowledge of parenting” “Encourages parents to better understand child development”
	Social and Emotional Competence of Children	“Allows parents in challenging situations to collaborate with parents who have thrived in similar situations” “Builds confidence and hope that parent are capable of making it better for their children”
Personal Discovery (3.98)	Parental Resilience	“Helps people discover their own skills and abilities” “Provides time to rest, laugh, and reflect”
Culture and Traditions (3.95)		
Community Needs and Resources (3.84)	Concrete Support in Times of Need	“Teaches people how to find and use resources when needing to deal with a situation or need” “Creates a higher sense of accountability for providing what children and families need” “Promotes awareness of community resources”
Social strengths and connections (3.83)	Social Connections	“Creates positive social networks for parents and caregivers” “Helps decrease isolation”

The results showed that one of the most common themes found among the clusters is social connections and community. The clusters, “Sense of community and voice” and “Social strengths and connections”, both focused primarily on the benefits of building community and strengthening social connections. Research shows that social connections are very important for parents and caregivers (Horton, 2003). Social connections can help moderate the negative effects of economic, neighborhood, and

parenting stress (Barnett, 2008; Kotchik et al., 2005; White et al., 2009). Participants, in this study, identified specific statements such as, “Creates positive social networks for parents and caregivers” (statement 10) and “Helps parents understand they are not alone” (statement 83) as benefits of Cafés; these concepts were both rated as highly important and highly achieved. Social support can come from family, friends, or neighbors. According to the participants, Community Cafés help connect participants to build these relationships within their community. Interestingly, “social strengths and connections” was the lowest mean rated cluster in achievement with an average of 3.83. This may be due to the fact that statements within this cluster that focus on areas other than just social connections were rated lower. For example, “Teaches new ways to cope when raising families” has a 3.68 mean rating of achievement and “Increases knowledge of strengths and weaknesses of families” has a mean rating of 3.79. On a whole though, the benefits that specifically related to social connections, such as “Allows a chance to talk to others about the challenges and joys of raising a family” (4.38), are rated highly in achievement and importance suggesting that Cafés emphasize and promote the protective factor of social connections.

Another cluster associated with the protective factor of knowledge of parenting and child development is “parenting and leadership”. Understanding child development and parenting can be a great benefit for parents. Parents may not always understand why their child is behaving a certain way and can become frustrated, when the child is actually behaving in an age appropriate way (Horton, 2003). Participants found that the benefits associated with Parenting and Leadership are highly important (average 4.18) and achieved (average 4.01). Some statements specifically relate to the protective

factor with phrases such as “Increases knowledge of parenting” and “Encourages parents to better understand child development”. While other statements indirectly related to how parents could improve their parenting through collaborating with others such as, “Allows parents in challenging situations to collaborate with parents who have thrived in similar situations”. Parents can gain wisdom and insight from other parents who have experienced similar situations. Cafés allow parents to connect with other parents and learn from one another. Through the benefits associated with the “parenting and leadership” cluster it can be seen that knowledge of parenting and child development is important to participants, as well as highly achieved.

The third protective factor of concrete support in times of need can also help buffer the effects of stress. Research shows that economic stress and lack of resources can be a source of negative stress on families (McLoyd, 1990; White et al., 2009). Concrete support can help families meet critical needs (Horton, 2003). In this study, one cluster more specifically related to concrete support in times of need: “Community needs and resources”. Participants rated statements concentrated on meeting people’s needs as important and achieved, but not as highly as the statements about the previous protective factors. For example, “Teaches participants how to find and use resources when needing to deal with a situation or need” (statement 9), “Creates a higher sense of accountability for providing what children and families need” (statement 47), and “Promotes awareness of community resources” (statement 39) were all found to be benefits of Cafés. Interestingly, this cluster was rated as one of the lowest in importance and achievement. This low mean rating may be due to a lack of discussion in the Café about how to connect with specific community resources, rather than a failure to discuss

community resources in general. Despite this, participants still found these concepts to be moderately important (average 3.98) and achieved (average 3.84).

The fourth protective factor in the CSSP framework focuses on parents fostering the social and emotional competence of children. Statements focus on helping parents provide better situations for their children, which can in turn promote healthy social and emotional competence. Parents and caregivers play a pivotal part in nurturing the development of these competencies in children (Denham & Weissberg, 2004; Horton, 2003). Many of the statements were related to parenting, and positive parenting behaviors help to foster social and emotional competence (Brooks, 2008). Social and emotional competence is developed through the modeling and guidance of parents and caregivers (Horton, 2003). The cluster “parenting and leadership”, was the group of benefits most closely related to the social and emotional competence of children. This cluster focused on improving parenting and leadership for the benefit of the children. Some examples of such statements are, “Builds confidence and hope that parents are capable of making it better for their children” (statement 69) and “Gives voice to parents and others concerned with the well-being of children” (statement 54). Although participants did not specifically identify this as a benefit, the statements related to this protective factor were highly rated and can contribute to healthy child development.

The final protective factor in the CSSP Protective Factor framework is parental resilience. Many of the benefits of Cafés contribute to this in some way. Parental resilience is the ability to overcome adversity (McCubbin & McCubbin, 2005). Positive well-being, strength, flexibility, and the ability to manage crises are all characteristics of resilience (Strengthening Families Illinois, 2007). Two clusters center around parental

resilience through the themes of “personal expression” and “personal discovery”. The statements found in both of these clusters relate to many of the personal benefits participants experience through Cafés. These clusters consist of statements such as “Builds and improves self-esteem” (statement 28), “Helps decrease isolation” (statement 29), “Helps people discover their own skills and abilities” (statement 63) and “Provides time to rest, laugh, and reflect” (statement 6). Other statements identified by participants include “Focuses on families’ strengths, not their deficits” (statement 35) and “Increases understanding about protective factors” (statement 27). The benefits and clusters signifying personal well-being, expression, and growth in many ways all contribute to parental resilience and positive well-being. The community, support, and encouragement promoted through Community Cafés all can help parents to manage stress, overcome adversity, and become resilient. According to Patterson (2002), if parents can positively manage stressors they are more likely to practice healthy parenting behaviors. Although resilience is not specifically identified, the statements and clusters that promote resilience are highly rated. Therefore, parental resilience is an essential protective factor promoted through Cafés.

### **Association with Community Café Core Principles**

The benefits found in this evaluation not only relate to the protective factors but also to the World Café Design Principles and Core Principles of Cooperation as described in the Community Café Orientation Host Guide (National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Fund, 2008). Through analysis and interpretation of the statements and clusters, similarities with the Café principles can be seen. It was determined through consideration of individual statements and cluster themes that the results were consistent with the principles in many ways. The language of the specific

statements and cluster themes is, in many ways, aligned with the Café principles. Based on these similarities it was determined that the clusters and statements are associated with the principles of Cafés. The design principles establish the overall method of Community Cafés, while the core principles and strategies seek to strengthen families, build partnerships, and promote parent leadership in more specific approaches that can be adapted to establish meaningful Cafés within local communities (National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Fund, 2008). The Core Principles focus on concepts such as equality in conversation, parent leadership, listening together, and cultivating collective wisdom. Many of these strategies and principles are reflected in the benefits identified by participants.

Community Cafés were founded upon the six guiding principles of the World Café model along with the CSSP Protective Factors. These six principles –“clarify the context”, “create hospitable space”, “explore questions that matter”, “cross pollinate and connect diverse perspectives”, “listen together for patterns, insights, and deeper questions”, and “harvest and share collective discoveries” – all contribute to the implementation of the core principles of Cafés and the development of protective factors (Hurley & Brown, 2009, p. 6). Several of the benefit clusters identified relate to these design principles, including the clusters of “personal expression”, “foster respect and equality”, “personal discovery”. The “personal expression” cluster touches on areas such as listening to others, exchanging ideas, and the safe environment provided by Cafés. This relates to the design principles of creating a “hospitable space”, “cross-pollinating and connecting diverse perspectives” and “listening together for patterns, insights, and deeper questions”. “Foster respect and equality” and “Personal discovery”

also both consist of statements focused on appreciating different perspectives and expression.

Table 5-2. Cluster associations with core principles of Community Cafés

Clusters by Rating of Achievement	Associated Core Principles
Foster respect and equality (4.17)	Honor and respect every person’s leadership Honor and respect every contribution to the café Work with equality, self determination and reciprocity Act like everyone arrives with the best of intentions Strive to make every decision and contribution with compassion
Personal Expression (4.13)	Maintain safety and kindness in our words and environment
Sense of Community and Voice (4.12)	Build and share collective wisdom and consensus Parents and communities create the partnerships needed for children to thrive
Parenting and Leadership (4.01)	Parent Leaders design, host, monitor and evaluate Cafés in partnership with community We are the leaders that will create the positive change we need
Personal Discovery (3.98)	
Culture and Traditions (3.95)	
Community Needs and Resources (3.84)	
Social strengths and connections (3.83)	

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Core Principles of Cooperation as cited in the Community Café Orientation Host Guide (National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds, 2008, p. 13)

These guiding design principles contribute to the implementation of the Core Principles and strategies in Community Cafés. The core principles are promoted through the core strategies of networking leadership, networking partnerships, and strengthening families (National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds,

2008). The Core Principles focus a great deal on respect, equality, and appreciating others. They also promote parent leadership and collective community wisdom. These principles guide individual Cafés based on community needs and issues. Several of the clusters identified in this evaluation are similar to and can be related to the Core Principles of Cafés.

Many of the benefits reported by participants correspond with these core strategies. Strategies of Community Cafés focus on areas of leadership, partnership and strengthening families. The strategies seek to honor and respect input, equality, develop collective wisdom, focus on strengths, and allow for meaningful conversations. Many of the clusters are associated with these strategies (see Table 5-3). For example, the cluster “culture and traditions” corresponds with strategies to strengthen families such as, “give voice to cultural traditions” and “build common language and co-create new culture” (National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Fund, 2008, p. 13-14). Individual benefits, such as “Offers an opportunity for parents to become leaders” (statement 2), relate to strategies promoting leadership and mentorship through Cafés. All of the clusters, and more specifically many of the statements, convey the core principles and strategies used in the Community Café approach.

Finally, strategies of Community Cafés focus on areas such as honoring and respecting input, equality, developing collective wisdom, focus on strengths, and allow for meaningful conversations. Many of the benefits reported by participants correspond with these principles. For example, one cluster focused specifically on “Culture and traditions”, which corresponds with the strategies “co-learn rather than train or teach and co-create group culture”, “give voice and stage to cultural and family traditions”,

“share stories to grow collective wisdom”, “share each other’s language”, “build common language and co-create new culture”, and “grow family culture to live the change we are seeking” (National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Fund, 2008, p. 13-14).

There are three clusters - “personal discovery”, “personal expression”, and “foster respect and equality” - that all correspond with many of the strategies focused on respecting and honoring everyone’s input, valuing conversation, listening to one another, and sharing in conversation. The other clusters relate to strategies such as connecting participants to community resources (“community needs and resources”), building community and social capital (“sense of community and voice” and “social connections and strengths”), and mentorship and honoring leadership (“parenting and leadership”). All of the clusters, and more specifically many of the statements, convey the core principles and strategies used in the Community Café approach.

Table 5-3. Clusters associated with Community Café core strategies

Cluster	Leadership	Partnership	Strengthening Families
Foster respect and equality (4.17)	Allow for a variety of ways to express voice and thinking	Invite verses persuade Arrive curious, suspend judgment	Come with a curious and beginners mind for every café activity  Trust the wisdom in the room
Personal expression (4.13)	Listen, use “I statements,” rather than offer solutions	Build and share collective wisdom  Treat meaningful conversation as a human need	
Sense of community and voice (4.12)		Develop compassionate working relationships	

Table 5-3. Continued

Cluster	Leadership	Partnership	Strengthening Families
		Create a continuum of advocacy opportunities	
		Build and share collective wisdom	
Parenting and leadership (4.01)	Design mentorship in café activities  Use local wisdom of parent leaders and neighborhood assets to design the Cafés, the invitation and to implement		
Personal discovery (3.98)	Highlight individual strengths		
Culture and traditions (3.95)		Share each other's language, build common language and co-create new culture	Co-learn rather than train or teach  Give voice to cultural traditions
Community needs and resources (3.84)			
Social strengths and connections (3.83)	Create relational value through reciprocity – value social capital	Every strength and talent can be used to strengthen families  See ourselves as part of the system we are trying to change	

Core Strategies as cited in the Community Café Orientation Host Guide (National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds, 2008, p. 14)

The similarities between these principles and the identified clusters show that Cafés are accomplishing many of the goals set forth. Although the benefits identified by

participants are closely related to the principles of Cafés and protective factors, they are not all specifically addressed in this evaluation. There is not strong evidence for the protective factor of social and emotional competence of children being developed through Cafés. The benefits more often were related to improving parenting, which relates to the protective factor of knowledge of parenting and child development. Although participants did not specify every principle and protective factor directly, this evaluation still provides evidence for the productivity and benefits being achieved through Community Cafés. (National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Fund, 2008).

### **Limitations**

There are several limitations that suggest caution in interpreting the results. Due to the locations of the sites participating, the evaluation team was unable to facilitate the data collection process. Contacts at each site were trained in how to facilitate and collect the data. Many of the site contacts were concerned with the amount of work being asked of the parents. Therefore, it is unclear how all the processes were framed and explained to the parents and participants completing the study. Another limitation was fatigue in completing the rating questionnaires, which was due to the length. There were 27 importance ratings and 16 achievement ratings that had to be discarded because there was no variation in their responses. For example, on the importance ratings someone marked 5s (very important) for every statement. Others began filling out the questionnaire and then switched their responses to all of one number (e.g. all 4s or 5s). These questionnaires were removed as to not skew the data.

The third limitation that was faced was the issue of incomplete or separated data. The rating packets sent to each site included – a cover letter, demographic form, rating

of importance, and rating of achievement. Some sites returned just importance ratings, just achievement ratings, or unattached demographic forms. Overall, there were 55 importance ratings completed and 47 achievement ratings completed; this does not include the 27 importance and 16 achievement ratings that were removed. Of the valid rating surveys used in analyses, 24 did not have demographic sheets attached. This limited our ability to complete comparison analyses between groups, such as parents, hosts, service providers, and leadership.

A fourth limitation of this study is the overall sample size. In general, the number of participants that completed the ratings was relatively low. As previously mentioned, there were 55 importance and 47 achievement ratings completed and used for data analysis. Although for most studies using these methods of data analysis this is a small sample, in terms of concept mapping this sample size is appropriate. For example, in Galvin's (1989) evaluation of a Big Brother/Big Sister program consisted of nine staff members. According to Trochim (1993), the recommended sample size for concept mapping evaluations is approximately fifteen participants. Therefore, the 37 sorts, 55 importance ratings, and 47 achievement ratings completed are a relatively large sample size for this method of evaluation.

A fifth limitation related to the sites is that we were unable to control for regional differences, gender, and other demographic variables. These comparisons would have provided further information on how the results varied by region, gender, race/ethnicity, participant's role in the Café and other demographic variables. Due to the demographic forms being unattached to the ratings, these comparisons and variables could not be

accounted for. This inability to control for variables and conduct comparisons contributes to the overall lack of generalizability of this evaluation.

Despite these limitations, this evaluation is a good first step in formal study of Community Cafés. The benefits were identified by participants of Cafés, and were all rated positively in both importance and achievement. The results suggest that despite the ability to evaluate the results by region, there is consistency in the way the participants identified, sorted, and rates the benefits of Cafés. Likewise, the benefits identified were linking to the protective factors and the core principles of Cafés.

### **Implications**

This evaluation study has several implications for the future. This is the first formal evaluation of Community Cafés to be completed. Cafés have recently expanded across the country, and a formal evaluation was necessary to provide evidence as to whether or not Cafés are an effective means to strengthening families.

Since Cafés have grown and expanded across the country so quickly in recent years, there has been little done to develop a means to evaluate them. This study can contribute to evaluation in the future in several ways. First, the benefits, clusters, and ratings can be used to create another standard form of a measure to evaluate Cafés. For example, a questionnaire could be developed based on the benefits and the clusters identified by participants. The ratings and sorts could also be used to develop interview or focus group questions.

Although the regional differences are a limitation of this study, it is also a positive implication for future studies. Researchers should look to consider more participants from various sites in evaluation. One of the main purposes of Cafés is to meet the needs of those participating. Therefore, regional and even site differences should be

expected to some extent, although all still have the same overarching goal of strengthening families.

This evaluation also provides evidence for those in leadership in Community Cafés. The participants identified all of the benefits and had a voice throughout this evaluation. Participants and hosts can work together to determine what benefits or outcomes are important to their unique Cafés and work together to achieve their outcomes. Café leadership can also use this information to understand which benefits participants think are important and which they are actually experiencing. This information can help leaders to guide the focus of Cafés and possibly strengthen areas that are very important but not as highly achieved.

Since the results were clearly related to the protective factors and the core principles, there is some evidence for the fidelity of the Café approach being implemented around the country. This is a positive implication for those in leadership to know that Cafés are generally promoting the same principles, each in their own unique way. The benefit clusters related closest to parental resilience consistently had the highest mean ratings, while the cluster similar to concrete support in times of need typically had the lowest mean rating. The benefits focused more on personal well-being or direct influence to the participants in general had the highest mean ratings, whereas the broader or community level benefits often had lower mean ratings. Café leadership can use this information to focus on areas of weakness, such as community level benefits. This evaluation can help leadership, hosts, and participants better understand what is happening as a result Cafés and discover what is important to the participants.

Overall, this evaluation is a step forward in providing evidence for the benefits participants acknowledge as a result of Community Cafés. This study draws attention to what those participating in Cafés find important and what they are actually experiencing. The method of Concept Mapping provided a foundation upon which valid and reliable measures can be developed to conduct further evaluation and gain a greater understanding of Community Cafés.



All of the following statements were generated as possible benefits of the Community Café process. In a brainstorming session, people completed the following statement, "One specific benefit of Community Cafés is that it..."

Please circle a number between 1 and 5 for each statement in terms of how important you think it is that this is a benefit of Community Cafés. Keep in mind, you may feel that all of these statements are important. We are asking you to rate each statement based on the level of importance when compared to one another. Use **all** the values in the rating scale (from 1 to 5) to make distinctions.

<b>How important do you think it is that this is a benefit of Community Café?</b>  <b>That it:</b>	<b>Not as important</b>					<b>Very Important</b>
	1	2	3	4	5	
1. Teaches parents to step out of their comfort zone	1	2	3	4	5	
2. Offers an opportunity for parents to become leaders	1	2	3	4	5	
3. Encourages families to share their thoughts and ideas about parenting techniques that worked	1	2	3	4	5	
4. Builds trust	1	2	3	4	5	
5. Promotes parent engagement and involvement	1	2	3	4	5	
6. Provides time to rest, laugh, and reflect	1	2	3	4	5	
7. Teaches people how to make their families stronger	1	2	3	4	5	
8. Allows people to be listened to by others	1	2	3	4	5	
9. Teaches participants how to find and use resources when needing to deal with a situation or need	1	2	3	4	5	
10. Creates positive social networks for parents and caregivers	1	2	3	4	5	
11. Leaves people with a better sense of their unique strength	1	2	3	4	5	
12. Allows parents to get to know each other and develop friendships	1	2	3	4	5	
13. Builds protective factors for families	1	2	3	4	5	
14. Allows a chance to talk to others about the challenges and joys of raising a family	1	2	3	4	5	
15. Enhances parenting skills and abilities	1	2	3	4	5	
16. Preserves culture and traditions	1	2	3	4	5	
17. Provides the opportunity to be heard and validated without being judged	1	2	3	4	5	
18. Gives hope to our future generations	1	2	3	4	5	

<b>How important do you think it is that this is a benefit of Community Café?</b>  <b>That it:</b>	<b>Not as important</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Very Important</b></span>				
19. Lets people share their hopes, dreams, and goals	1	2	3	4	5
20. Generates collective wisdom	1	2	3	4	5
21. Provides information on how we can better serve communities as leaders	1	2	3	4	5
22. Teaches new ways to cope when raising families	1	2	3	4	5
23. Increases acceptance of cultural differences	1	2	3	4	5
24. Encourages people to feel more relaxed and open with neighbors	1	2	3	4	5
25. Creates the opportunity for parents to have positive conversations	1	2	3	4	5
26. Creates opportunities for parents to access resources and services	1	2	3	4	5
27. Increases understanding about protective factors	1	2	3	4	5
28. Builds and improves self-esteem	1	2	3	4	5
29. Helps decrease isolation	1	2	3	4	5
30. Teaches people about cultural understanding and respect	1	2	3	4	5
31. Encourages people to look at the world differently	1	2	3	4	5
32. Provides the time for deep conversations	1	2	3	4	5
33. Increases appreciation for meaningful community conversation	1	2	3	4	5
34. Raises the value of parent voices and wisdom	1	2	3	4	5
35. Focuses on families' strengths, not their deficits	1	2	3	4	5
36. Encourages different points of view in conversation	1	2	3	4	5
37. Inspires parents to be better parents and community members	1	2	3	4	5
38. Increases knowledge of parenting	1	2	3	4	5
39. Promotes awareness of community resources	1	2	3	4	5

<b>How important do you think it is that this is a benefit of Community Café?</b>	<b>Not as important</b>					<b>Very Important</b>
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	
<b>That it:</b>						
40. Takes away stress	1	2	3	4	5	
41. Teaches people to listen to others	1	2	3	4	5	
42. Helps to raise awareness and discussion about the community needs and issues	1	2	3	4	5	
43. Connects parents to local government leaders	1	2	3	4	5	
44. Allows parents in challenging situations to collaborate with parents who have thrived in similar situations	1	2	3	4	5	
45. Builds leadership that carries into new environments	1	2	3	4	5	
46. Removes barriers that generally keep people from participating	1	2	3	4	5	
47. Creates a higher sense of accountability for providing what children and families need	1	2	3	4	5	
48. Teaches people to replace bad habits with good ones	1	2	3	4	5	
49. Motivates participants	1	2	3	4	5	
50. Creates networks and collaboration within the community	1	2	3	4	5	
51. Increases knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of families	1	2	3	4	5	
52. Helps people develop discover inner self	1	2	3	4	5	
53. Promotes ownership of local problems and solutions	1	2	3	4	5	
54. Gives voice to parents and others concerned with the well-being of children	1	2	3	4	5	
55. Brings together a variety of cultures that may not have connected otherwise	1	2	3	4	5	
56. Gives people the opportunity to express themselves	1	2	3	4	5	
57. Encourages more organizations to adopt the protective factor framework	1	2	3	4	5	
58. Encourages creativity, curiosity, and new ideas	1	2	3	4	5	
59. Provides hope to the hopeless	1	2	3	4	5	
60. Gives parents a nice distraction outside of the house	1	2	3	4	5	

<b>How important do you think it is that this is a benefit of Community Café?</b>  <b>That it:</b>	<b>Not as important</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Very Important</b></span>				
61. Encourages people to exchange ideas with people they wouldn't normally interact with	1	2	3	4	5
62. Allows people to share their personal experiences, history, and culture	1	2	3	4	5
63. Helps people discover their own skills and abilities	1	2	3	4	5
64. Breaks down barriers that separate us	1	2	3	4	5
65. Allows parents to have a voice in conversations about programs and organizations	1	2	3	4	5
66. Allows for personal growth and change	1	2	3	4	5
67. Provides a supportive and safe environment for conversation	1	2	3	4	5
68. Promotes healthier relationships	1	2	3	4	5
69. Builds confidence and hope that parents are capable of making it better for their children	1	2	3	4	5
70. Allows parents to discover their potential and their wisdom	1	2	3	4	5
71. Develops a sense of belonging and acceptance	1	2	3	4	5
72. Builds an army of trainers and speakers on strengthening families through protective factors	1	2	3	4	5
73. Connects parents to schools and teachers	1	2	3	4	5
74. Encourages individual responsibility of personal and family development	1	2	3	4	5
75. Honors and respects everyone's input equally	1	2	3	4	5
76. Allows a group of people to brainstorm solutions to problems and advocate for change	1	2	3	4	5
77. Builds a sense of community	1	2	3	4	5
78. Encourages everyone to trust the wisdom in the room	1	2	3	4	5
79. Encourages parents to better understand child development	1	2	3	4	5
80. Brings the community together to focus on common goals to help families and the community	1	2	3	4	5
81. Builds partnerships between parents, businesses and organizations in the community	1	2	3	4	5

<b>How important do you think it is that this is a benefit of Community Café?</b> <b>That it:</b>	<b>Not as important</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Very Important</b></span>				
82. Creates new traditions	1	2	3	4	5
83. Helps parents understand they are not alone	1	2	3	4	5

### Clasificación de Logros (Rating of Achievement Spanish Version)

Los siguientes enunciados fueron desarrollados como beneficios posibles del proceso del Community Café. En una sesión de lluvia de ideas los participantes completaron la siguiente frase: "un beneficio particular de los Community Cafés es que..."

Para cada frase, por favor, marque con un círculo el número de 1 a 5 que mejor corresponda a cuánto se logró ese beneficio para usted por haber participado en el Community Café. Utilice todos los valores de la escala de clasificación (de 1 a 5) para distinguir el nivel del logro.

¿Cuánto cree que cada beneficio se logró con su participación en el Community Café?  El Café:	No se logró en absoluto					Se logró totalmente				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
1. Desafió a los padres a aventurarse fuera de lo que están acostumbrados	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
2. Ofreció a los padres una oportunidad de volverse líderes	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
3. Animó a las familias a que compartieran sus ideas y reflexiones acerca de estrategias que hayan funcionado en la crianza de los hijos	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
4. Generó confianza	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
5. Promovió la participación y compromiso de los padres	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
6. Proporcionó tiempo para descansar, reírse y reflexionar	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
7. Enseñó a la gente cómo fortalecer a sus familias	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
8. Les permitió a las personas la oportunidad de ser escuchadas por los demás	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
9. Enseñó a los participantes cómo encontrar y utilizar recursos cuando se encuentren en una situación de necesidad	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
10. Creó redes sociales positivas para padres y cuidadores	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
11. Volvió a los participantes más conscientes de sus propias fortalezas	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
12. Dejó a los padres conocer y desarrollar amistades	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
13. Desarrolló factores de protección para las familias	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
14. Dió la oportunidad de hablar con otros acerca de los retos y alegrías de criar una familia	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
15. Aumentó las destrezas y habilidades de criar a sus hijos	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
16. Mantuvo la cultura y tradiciones	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
17. Proporcionó a cada uno la oportunidad de ser escuchado y sentirse validado sin ser juzgado	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

¿Cuánto cree que cada beneficio se logró con su participación en el Community Café?	No se logró en absoluto					Se logró totalmente					
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
<b>El Café:</b>											
18. Dió esperanza a nuestras futuras generaciones	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
19. Dejó que la gente compartiera sus sueños, esperanzas y metas	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
20. Generó sabiduría colectiva	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
21. Proporcionó información acerca de cómo podemos mejorarnos como líderes para servir a nuestra comunidad	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
22. Enseñó nuevas formas de llevar la crianza de la familia	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
23. Aumentó la aceptación de diferencias culturales	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
24. Alentó a los participantes a sentirse más relajados y abiertos con sus vecinos	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
25. Creó la oportunidad para que los padres tuvieran conversaciones positivas	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
26. Creó oportunidades para que los padres pudieran tener acceso a recursos y servicios	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
27. Aumentó la comprensión acerca de los factores de protección	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
28. Aumentó y mejoró la auto-estima	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
29. Ayudó a disminuir el aislamiento	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
30. Enseñó a la gente acerca de la comprensión cultural y el respeto	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
31. Animó a la gente a ver el mundo de una forma distinta	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
32. Proporcionó a la gente el tiempo para conversaciones profundas	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
33. Aumentó el aprecio por conversaciones significativas dentro de la comunidad	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
34. Aumentó el valor de las voces y sabiduría de los padres	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
35. Se enfocó en los puntos fuertes de las familias y no en sus debilidades	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
36. Fomentó distintos puntos de vista en las conversaciones	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
37. Inspiró a los padres a que sean mejores papás y miembros de la comunidad	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
38. Aumentó el conocimiento acerca de ser padre	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	

¿Cuánto cree que cada beneficio se logró con su participación en el Community Café?	No se logró en absoluto					Se logró totalmente					
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
<b>El Café:</b>											
39. Promovió el conocimiento sobre los recursos comunitarios	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
40. Disminuyó el estrés	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
41. Enseñó a la gente a poner atención a los demás	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
42. Ayudó a la concientización y el debate acerca de las necesidades y asuntos de la comunidad	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
43. Conectó a los papás con los líderes gubernamentales de su zona	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
44. Permitió que padres en situaciones difíciles colaboraran con padres que hayan superado retos parecidos	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
45. Fomentó la capacidad de liderazgo que se aplique en nuevas situaciones	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
46. Eliminó las barreras que normalmente impiden que la gente participe	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
47. Creó mayor sentido de responsabilidad por llenar las necesidades de los niños y las familias	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
48. Enseñó a la gente a reemplazar los malos hábitos con los buenos hábitos	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
49. Motivó a los participantes	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
50. Creó redes de contacto y colaboraciones dentro de la misma comunidad	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
51. Aumentó el conocimiento acerca de los puntos fuertes y débiles de las familias	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
52. Ayudó a cada quien a conocerse a si mismo	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
53. Fomentó un sentido de responsabilidad hacia los problemas y soluciones locales	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
54. Dio una voz a los padres y a otros preocupados con el bienestar de los niños	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
55. Reunió varias culturas que quizás no se hubieran conectado bajo otras condiciones	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
56. Dio a la gente una oportunidad para expresarse	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
57. Alentó a más organizaciones a que adopten el marco de los factores de protección	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
58. Fomentó la creatividad, la curiosidad y las nuevas ideas	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
59. Les dio esperanza a los desesperados	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	



¿Cuánto cree que cada beneficio se logró con su participación en el Community Café?	No se logró en absoluto					Se logró totalmente				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
<b>El Café:</b>										
80. Reunió a la comunidad con el propósito de enfocarse en las metas compartidas de ayudar a las familias y la comunidad	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
81. Construyó alianzas entre padres, empresas y organizaciones de la comunidad	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
82. Creó nuevas tradiciones	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
83. Ayudó a que los padres comprendan que no están solos	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX B  
AVERAGE STATEMENT RATINGS OF IMPORTANCE

**Parenting and leadership**

5 Promotes parent engagement and involvement	4.5
69 Builds confidence and hope that parents are capable of making it better for their children	4.4
37 Inspires parents to be better parents and community members	4.2
2 Offers an opportunity for parents to become leaders	4.2
44 Allows parents in challenging situations to collaborate with parents who have thrived in similar situations	4.2
12 Allows parents to get to know each other and develop friendships	4.2
38 Increases knowledge of parenting	4.1
15 Enhances parenting skills and abilities	4.1
79 Encourages parents to better understand child development	4.0
26 Creates opportunities for parents to access resources and services	3.9
1 Teaches parents to step out of their comfort zone	3.8
<b>Average</b>	<b>4.1</b>

**Sense of community and voice**

83 Helps parents understand they are not alone	4.5
77 Builds a sense of community	4.4
25 Creates the opportunity for parents to have positive conversations	4.4
70 Allows parents to discover their potential and their wisdom	4.3
54 Gives voice to parents and others concerned with the well-being of	4.3
34 Raises the value of parent voices and wisdom	4.3
80 Brings the community together to focus on common goals to help families and the community	4.2
65 Allows parents to have a voice in conversations about programs and organizations	4.2
73 Connects parents to schools and teachers	4.0
81 Builds partnerships between parents, businesses and organizations in the community	3.9
60 Gives parents a nice distraction outside of the house	3.4
<b>Average</b>	<b>4.2</b>

**Social Strengths and Connections**

10 Creates positive social networks for parents and caregivers	4.4
13 Builds protective factors for families	4.3
14 Allows a chance to talk to others about the challenges and joys of	4.2
3 Encourages families to share their thoughts and ideas about parenting techniques that worked	4.2
7 Teaches people how to make their families stronger	4.2
22 Teaches new ways to cope when raising families	4.0
51 Increases knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of families	3.7
43 Connects parents to local government leaders	3.3
<b>Average</b>	<b>4.0</b>

**Community needs and resources**

35 Focuses on families' strengths, not their deficits	4.4
50 Creates networks and collaboration within the community	4.3
74 Encourages individual responsibility of personal and family	4.0

47	Creates a higher sense of accountability for providing what children and families need	4.0
21	Provides information on how we can better serve communities as	3.9
9	Teaches participants how to find and use resources when needing to deal with a situation or need	3.9
39	Promotes awareness of community resources	3.8
42	Helps to raise awareness and discussion about the community	3.8
72	Builds an army of trainers and speakers on strengthening families through protective factors	3.8
27	Increases understanding about protective factors	3.7
57	Encourages more organizations to adopt the protective factor	3.7
	<b>Average</b>	<b>3.9</b>

### **Culture and traditions**

20	Generates collective wisdom	4.3
62	Allows people to share their personal experiences, history, and	4.2
55	Brings together a variety of cultures that may not have connected	4.2
45	Builds leadership that carries into new environments	4.1
23	Increases acceptance of cultural differences	4.0
30	Teaches people about cultural understanding and respect	4.0
24	Encourages people to feel more relaxed and open with neighbors	4.0
16	Preserves culture and traditions	4.0
82	Creates new traditions	3.6
18	Gives hope to our future generations	3.6
	<b>Average</b>	<b>4.0</b>

### **Personal expression**

29	Helps decrease isolation	4.4
67	Provides a supportive and safe environment for conversation	4.4
61	Encourages people to exchange ideas with people they wouldn't normally interact with	4.3
17	Provides the opportunity to be heard and validated without being	4.3
4	Builds trust	4.3
8	Allows people to be listened to by others	4.2
76	Allows a group of people to brainstorm solutions to problems and advocate for change	4.1
49	Motivates participants	4.1
32	Provides the time for deep conversations	4.0
58	Encourages creativity, curiosity, and new ideas	4.0
41	Teaches people to listen to others	4.0
28	Builds and improves self-esteem	3.9
11	Leaves people with a better sense of their unique strength	3.8
52	Helps people develop discover inner self	3.6
	<b>Average</b>	<b>4.1</b>

### **Personal discovery**

68	Promotes healthier relationships	4.3
56	Gives people the opportunity to express themselves	4.3
63	Helps people discover their own skills and abilities	4.0
66	Allows for personal growth and change	3.9

19 Lets people share their hopes, dreams, and goals	3.9
59 Provides hope to the hopeless	3.8
6 Provides time to rest, laugh, and reflect	3.8
40 Takes away stress	3.7
	<b>Average 4.0</b>

**Miscellaneous**

36 Encourages different points of view in conversation	4.4
33 Increases appreciation for meaningful community conversation	4.0
53 Promotes ownership of local problems and solutions	3.9
48 Teaches people to replace bad habits with good ones	3.4
	<b>Average 3.9</b>

**Foster respect and equality**

75 Honors and respects everyone's input equally	4.3
64 Breaks down barriers that separate us	4.2
46 Removes barriers that generally keep people from participating	4.2
31 Encourages people to look at the world differently	4.2
78 Encourages everyone to trust the wisdom in the room	4.1
71 Develops a sense of belonging and acceptance	4.1
	<b>Average 4.22</b>

## APPENDIX C AVERAGE STATEMENT RATINGS OF ACHIEVEMENT

### Parenting and leadership

5 Promotes parent engagement and involvement	4.36
12 Allows parents to get to know each other and develop friendships	4.22
37 Inspires parents to be better parents and community members	4.21
69 Builds confidence and hope that parents are capable of making it better for their children	4.17
38 Increases knowledge of parenting	4.09
44 Allows parents in challenging situations to collaborate with parents who have thrived in similar situations	3.94
15 Enhances parenting skills and abilities	3.91
1 Teaches parents to step out of their comfort zone	3.85
2 Offers an opportunity for parents to become leaders	3.85
79 Encourages parents to better understand child development	3.79
26 Creates opportunities for parents to access resources and services	3.74

**Average: 4.01**

### Sense of community and voice

25 Creates the opportunity for parents to have positive conversations	4.47
83 Helps parents understand they are not alone	4.43
77 Builds a sense of community	4.34
34 Raises the value of parent voices and wisdom	4.30
54 Gives voice to parents and others concerned with the well-being of children	4.26
80 Brings the community together to focus on common goals to help families and the community	4.15
60 Gives parents a nice distraction outside of the house	4.09
70 Allows parents to discover their potential and their wisdom	4.02
65 Allows parents to have a voice in conversations about programs and organizations	4.02
73 Connects parents to schools and teachers	3.72
81 Builds partnerships between parents, businesses and organizations in the community	3.52

**Average: 4.12**

### Social Strengths and Connections

14 Allows a chance to talk to others about the challenges and joys of raising a family	4.38
3 Encourages families to share their thoughts and ideas about parenting techniques that worked	4.19
10 Creates positive social networks for parents and caregivers	3.98
13 Builds protective factors for families	3.91
7 Teaches people how to make their families stronger	3.87
51 Increases knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of families	3.79
22 Teaches new ways to cope when raising families	3.68
43 Connects parents to local government leaders	2.81

**Average: 3.83**

### Community needs and resources

35 Focuses on families' strengths, not their deficits	4.34
50 Creates networks and collaboration within the community	4.11
42 Helps to raise awareness and discussion about the community needs and issues	4.04
21 Provides information on how we can better serve communities as leaders	3.98

39	Promotes awareness of community resources	3.89
74	Encourages individual responsibility of personal and family development	3.85
47	Creates a higher sense of accountability for providing what children and families need	3.77
27	Increases understanding about protective factors	3.65
72	Builds an army of trainers and speakers on strengthening families through protective factors	3.62
9	Teaches participants how to find and use resources when needing to deal with a situation or need	3.62
57	Encourages more organizations to adopt the protective factor framework	3.39
		<b>Average: 3.84</b>

### **Culture and traditions**

62	Allows people to share their personal experiences, history, and culture	4.61
20	Generates collective wisdom	4.36
55	Brings together a variety of cultures that may not have connected otherwise	4.26
24	Encourages people to feel more relaxed and open with neighbors	4.09
23	Increases acceptance of cultural differences	3.93
30	Teaches people about cultural understanding and respect	3.85
16	Preserves culture and traditions	3.85
45	Builds leadership that carries into new environments	3.64
18	Gives hope to our future generations	3.50
82	Creates new traditions	3.38
		<b>Average: 3.95</b>

### **Personal expression**

61	Encourages people to exchange ideas with people they wouldn't normally interact with	4.55
67	Provides a supportive and safe environment for conversation	4.53
8	Allows people to be listened to by others	4.51
17	Provides the opportunity to be heard and validated without being judged	4.46
29	Helps decrease isolation	4.40
32	Provides the time for deep conversations	4.26
4	Builds trust	4.17
49	Motivates participants	4.13
58	Encourages creativity, curiosity, and new ideas	4.11
41	Teaches people to listen to others	4.04
76	Allows a group of people to brainstorm solutions to problems and advocate for change	3.87
11	Leaves people with a better sense of their unique strength	3.68
28	Builds and improves self-esteem	3.65
52	Helps people develop discover inner self	3.51
		<b>Average: 4.13</b>

### **Personal discovery**

56	Gives people the opportunity to express themselves	4.57
68	Promotes healthier relationships	4.19
6	Provides time to rest, laugh, and reflect	4.13
19	Lets people share their hopes, dreams, and goals	4.06
63	Helps people discover their own skills and abilities	3.87

66	Allows for personal growth and change	3.79
40	Takes away stress	3.78
59	Provides hope to the hopeless	3.47

**Average: 3.98**

**Miscellaneous**

36	Encourages different points of view in conversation	4.55
33	Increases appreciation for meaningful community conversation	4.34
53	Promotes ownership of local problems and solutions	3.91
48	Teaches people to replace bad habits with good ones	3.24

**Average: 4.01**

**Foster respect and equality**

75	Honors and respects everyone's input equally	4.49
78	Encourages everyone to trust the wisdom in the room	4.36
71	Develops a sense of belonging and acceptance	4.17
46	Removes barriers that generally keep people from participating	4.13
64	Breaks down barriers that separate us	4.02
31	Encourages people to look at the world differently	3.87

**Average: 4.17**

APPENDIX D  
IRB APPROVAL



PO Box 112250  
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352-392-0433 (Phone)  
352-392-9234 (Fax)  
irb2@ufl.edu

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DATE: May 25, 2010

TO: David Diehl, PhD; Larry Forthun, PhD  
PO Box 110310  
Campus

FROM: Ira S. Fischler, PhD; Chair *ISF*  
University of Florida  
Institutional Review Board 02

SUBJECT: **Renewal of Protocol #2008-U-0631**

TITLE: Evaluation of United Way of America Strengthening Families

SPONSOR: United Way of America

Your request to continue your research protocol involving human participants has been approved. Participants are not placed at more than minimal risk by the research. You are reminded that any changes, including the need to increase the number of participants authorized, must be approved by resubmission of the protocol to the Board.

Re-approval of this protocol extends for one year from the date of the review, the maximum duration permitted by the Office for Human Research Protection. This approval is valid through June 19, 2011. If this project will not be completed by this date, please telephone our office (392-0433) at least six weeks in advance so we can advise you how to reapply.

It is important that you keep your Department Chair informed about the status of this research project. In addition, if your project is funded, you should send a request to extend your grant along with a copy of this project renewal notification to DSR, Awards Administration, P.O. Box 115500.

ISF:dl

APPENDIX D  
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

## United Way Strengthening Families

### Informed Consent

University of Florida

Protocol Title: Evaluation of United Way of America Strengthening Families

**Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in the study.**

- 1. Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this study is to evaluate the Community Café initiative in your community.
- 2. What will you be asked to do in the study:** You may be asked to participate in one or more of the steps in this evaluation process. The steps include: a) brainstorming of ideas about the benefits of Community Café, b) sorting ideas into meaningful groups, and c) rating the ideas on a questionnaire. You may be asked to participate in any or all of these steps in the evaluation process.
- 3. Time Required:** Each step in the evaluation will be completed at different times. The time period for collecting data will be approximately 1 year; however, your participation will be limited to brainstorming (about 15-30 minutes), sorting (about 30 minutes), and/or rating (about 30 minutes).
- 4. Risks:** There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.
- 5. Benefits:** Your participation in the study may not only increase your understanding of Community Cafés, but it may also promote positive parenting and healthy child development. Likewise, your feedback will be used to evaluate and improve the implementation of Community Cafés.
- 6. Confidentiality:** Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. You will be assigned an ID number that will only be used to: (a) track whether you have/haven't completed research requirements, and (b) keep track of your responses over time. The list connecting your name to your email address will be kept in a locked file cabinet. When the study is completed and the data has been analyzed, the list will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any report.
- 7. Voluntary Participation:** You do not have to participate in this research. You can end your participation at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.
- 8. Compensation:** You will not be compensated for your participation in the study.
- 9. Right to Withdraw from the Study:** You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.
- 10. Contact Information:**

National Evaluators: David Diehl, Ph.D., or Larry Forthun, Ph.D., University of Florida, Family, Youth, and Community Sciences, phone: (352) 392-1778, dcdiehl@ufl.edu or lforthun@ufl.edu

**11. Whom to contact about your rights as a research participant:**

IRB02 Office, Box 112250, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250, phone: (352) 392-0433

Approved by  
University of Florida  
Institutional Review Board 02  
Protocol # 2008-U-0631  
For Use Through: 06-19-2010

**You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this research study.** If you give your consent to participate in this study, please sign below as indicated.

Please keep a copy of this informed consent for your records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Samantha Carannante graduated from Oral Roberts University in 2009 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education with a concentration in Teaching English as a Second Language. In the spring of 2011, she received her Master of Science from the University of Florida in Family, Youth, and Community Sciences with a concentration in Family and Youth Development. Samantha plans to pursue a career in teaching elementary education and family service fields.