



CATEGORY ARCHIVES: PARENT EDUCATION IN NEW YORK CITY: THE PARENTING A SECOND TIME AROUND (PASTA) PROJECT, PHASE TWO

Weeks Seven and Eight: Focus Groups Times Five

Posted on **August 6, 2015** by **Jessica Ellen Hajdukiewicz**

During these past two weeks five PASTA focus groups took place. It was a great experience getting to co-facilitate them and see all our preparations come to life! Plus it was also nice to get to put faces to names since I had spoken to so many people on the phone. By conducting five focus groups we had a chance to host one group with alumni three years out of the program, two groups with alumni two years out of the program, and two groups with alumni just one year out of the program. In total we were able to speak with 49 of the PASTA graduates to learn what information they still retained from the curriculum and how they use the information in their everyday lives as caregivers. Focus groups are beneficial because they provide, in this case at least, an opportunity to reconnect with alumni from the program. Now for any future reports we have a plethora of alumni data and conversations to add to the pre/post data already collected during the program year!

I definitely learned a lot through the preparations and execution of these focus groups including:

1. **It's beneficial to overestimate the amount of attendees.** Because we were providing \$20 and a roundtrip MetroCard to participants as an incentive for their participation we wouldn't want to get into a situation where we didn't have enough to hand out. Estimating the correct numbers can be difficult because people may show up who didn't RSVP or people may not feel like coming the day of. For the focus group with alumni three years out of the program 20 participants showed up- surprisingly exactly the number predicted from my previous blog post!
2. **Anything can happen during focus groups**– We even had a fire drill in the middle of one. So it's just important to be flexible.
3. **Sometimes participants are going to go off-topic and it's okay!** There are actually research articles that highlight the benefits of an "unfocused" focus group. Sometimes focus groups would go a bit off track particularly around the workshops dealing with navigating social services. Navigating these complex systems can be a source of exasperation; therefore, despite facilitation attempts, participants sometimes use these

focus group questions as an opportunity to voice their frustrations.

4. **Audio recorders are very sensitive-** For any future focus group I will make sure we host them in a setting where the acoustics of the room don't interfere. Perhaps host them in the winter so there are no [very necessary] fans.

5. **It was inspiring how connected the participants were-** During the focus groups the participants expressed how they felt like such a family and over the eighteen-week duration of the program shared a number of personal stories with each other. I wish I could have seen one of the PASTA classes in its execution but the bond was certainly palpable amongst attendees of the focus group.

I'll be sure to share more findings from the focus groups. For now I am just transcribing the audio recordings and beginning to analyze the findings in order to compile a focus group report.

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Week 6: Coordination

Posted on **July 21, 2015** by **Jessica Ellen Hajdukiewicz**

This past week involved a lot of coordination for the focus groups. We sent out all the flyers for the four focus groups we will be hosting and contacted all of the participants. While we speculated that we would get a positive response from participants who graduated a year ago, we were not sure what the response would be from participants who graduated three years ago. Fortunately as it turns out, they were some of the most excited for the focus groups! Many of participants expressed how excited they were for a reunion and told me a bit about the new challenges they are facing as caregivers as their children grow.

We tried to host the focus groups at the places where the original PASTA classes were held since the participants are familiar with the location and are probably more likely to make that specific trek again. However, one of the focus groups will actually be held at the Department for the Aging so it will be interesting to see how attendance rates differ, if at all, for hosting the focus group in a different location.

Additionally, last Friday, we had a meeting with the PASTA coordinators from the Department for the Aging since the PASTA program is a joint effort between Cornell Cooperative Extension-NYC and the Grandparent Resource Center at the Department for the Aging. During this meeting we made sure that we weren't unnecessarily duplicating our recruitment efforts and touched base in regards to expected attendance. As of now, we have one group where we are expecting almost 20 individuals- we will see how many do attend the day of. While having a

focus group of 20 people is probably a bit larger than ideal, it is definitely a good problem to have considering the disappointing attendance at the CAUSE focus groups last week. This coming week will be one of the first PASTA focus groups with participants who graduated one year ago so we will see how many actually attend compared to the number of those who made the verbal commitment!

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Week Five: IRB Approval and First Focus Group

Posted on **July 13, 2015** by **Jessica Ellen Hajdukiewicz**

IRB has now officially approved PASTA as part of our continuation request. Our old PASTA IRB approval had expired so earlier in the summer we gathered the forms to send over to Cornell's IRB. Now that they've gotten back to us we can officially recruit participants for the focus groups!

We have set four dates for the focus groups because we are conducting them with participants who are one year out of the program and alumni who are three years out. It will be interesting to see how different the conversations are, particularly in regards to the information participants retained from the classes and skills they still employ in their everyday lives. I'm excited to analyze the transcriptions and code for their differences!

Parenting A Second Time Around (PASTA)

The New York City Department for the Aging's Grandparent Resource Center in collaboration with NYC-Cornell University Cooperative Extension invite you to participate in a...
PASTA Focus Group!!!

Focus Group Hosted by: Hudson Guild
119 9th Avenue, New York, NY 10011

A sixty minute confidential discussion with other PASTA participants to discuss your experience with the program.

For: The Parenting A Second Time Around participants to respond to questions including:

- What were the highlights about the program?
- What did you find most challenging?
- What advice would you give to others going through this program?

Your input is important to us to help plan future programs!

Participants Receive:

- ✓ Metrocard (if public transportation is required)
- ✓ \$20 Stipend Upon Completion of the Focus Group
- ✓ The opportunity to influence future projects

WHEN: Friday July 31st from 10:00am-11:15am
Registration at 10am & Discussion begins promptly at 10:15am

To RSVP: Please contact Helen Flowers at
HFlowers@aging.nyc.gov or
212-652-4297

Directions: Take the A.C.E. train to 14th Street and walk one block west to Ninth Ave. Walk about three blocks north and Hudson Guild is on the West Side of 9th Ave between W 17th Street and W 18th Street.

We want to ensure that we have a good participation rate so we are reaching out to them in multiple ways: by telephone, e-mail, and mail. Hopefully between the three methods we can gather a good number of people to attend! It's been awhile since I've sent something in the mail- below is a picture of the invitations we mailed!



This week I also got to attend my first focus group through the CAUSE program. Recruitment was a bit difficult for that because the group was already small to begin with. Out of nine students, four attended the focus group. While we would have ideally had more, it was a rich discussion and most of the students were very eager to share what they learned. I got to work closely with an independent researcher Cornell hired to work on the project who was very impressively meticulous. She was a great person to shadow and I was mesmerized by how well she retained what each individual said.

She showed me how to take notes on a valence spectrum- indicating the positive and negatives people discussed, an important part of program evaluation. By doing so, the conversation flowed and seemed more natural, because she could refer back to the responses from the prior 45 minutes, rather than solely read off a list of questions we wanted to cover. I was responsible for taking notes and filling in questions where I thought key information was missing. It was nice getting to see the big picture and focus on individuals' responses since she also showed me how to "code on the spot". It was a great technique that expedites the report writing process. However, this requires two people: a facilitator and coder during the focus group.

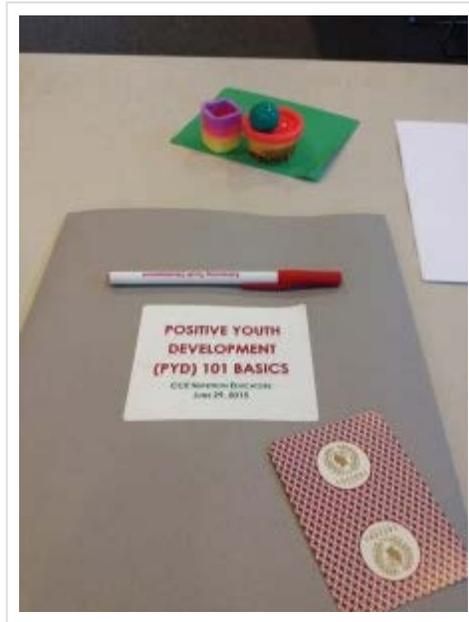
It was a great experience getting to see her facilitate the focus group so I am looking forward to doing more focus groups with the PASTA participants!

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Week Four: Positive Youth Development Training

Posted on **July 6, 2015** by **Jessica Ellen Hajdukiewicz**

This past week I had to opportunity to travel to Nassau County in Long Island to attend a Positive Youth Development training session. This training was targeting nutrition educators in Nassau and Suffolk County. After speaking with these educators, they told me that they worked with all demographics but many of them were beginning projects, this summer, working with children- hence the training session!



The training session covered a lot of topics including: what is positive youth development, adolescent development, positive youth outcomes, youth programming, and ageism. Many of the topics overlapped with a lot that has been taught in my human development courses! It was very interesting to see how these topics are taught to people who aren't familiar with the technical language. It definitely encouraged me to step back to focus on the bigger picture before delving into theorists and their respective theories.

Facets of youth development that I've consistently learned about in my courses are the positive youth outcomes known as the 6 Cs. The 6 Cs include competence, confidence, character, caring, connection, and contribution. It was interesting to delve into how program educators frame their work within the 6 Cs. We got to discuss specific activities and the facilitator encouraged structuring lessons according to the goal outcomes. For example, rather than solely lecturing, educators may want to take a minute and select a classroom leader so he or she can gain confidence and be a very active participant. There are a lot of subtle ways educators can go about achieving these goals but training sessions like these makes the issues more salient so educators can plan their lessons accordingly!

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Week Three: The CAUSE Project

Posted on **June 26, 2015** by **Jessica Ellen Hajdukiewicz**

This week I got to switch gears for a little bit because I worked more on the CAUSE project- College Achievement through Urban Science Exploration (I attended the program's graduation earlier this summer). I analyzed the pre-tests which asked questions about environmental behaviors, feelings towards the environment, and opinions on doing research and pursuing a science-related career. The same survey is administered at the end of the program

so it will be interesting to later explore how the responses change, if at all, after having participated in the program. The scope of the survey was impressive and it gave me a good foundation of how social scientists phrase questions targeted at teenagers.

We also did some administrative work in regards to organizing focus groups for the CAUSE participants. There will be two focus groups- one for current participants and another for alumni of the program who are either entering their freshman year of college or are already in college. We worked to compile the necessary documentation for IRB and are now eagerly awaiting their response!

Furthermore, I had a chance to attend a coalition meeting with the Partnership for a Healthier Brooklyn which consists of members from different community based organization all across New York City. It was very exciting to learn about the current public health initiatives in the community. We then had the opportunity to provide feedback on posters they developed as part of a farmers' market campaign. It also gave me the chance to talk with people from agencies who were interested in the PASTA program so hopefully we'll be able to partner up and they can serve as a site for the workshops.

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Week 2: Lots of Recruitment!

Posted on **June 20, 2015** by **Jessica Ellen Hajdukiewicz**

This week involved multiple levels of recruitment including: recruiting sites to host the workshops, people to participate in the workshops, and people who participated in previous years to come back and do focus groups.

In order to recruit participants for focus groups I went through old binders of data collection to compile the names of participants as well as their addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses if they provided one. This process taught me how important it is to organize your data well! Luckily the researchers here in New York City kept organized binders so finding this information to compile was quite simple. I'll have to start reaching out to these participants soon so hopefully this contact information is all still valid- one of the struggles associated with longitudinal research projects, I suppose!

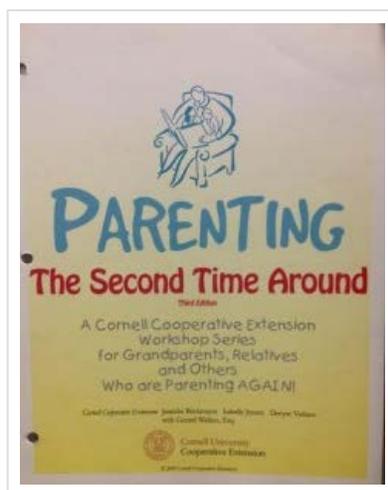
Another difficulty associated with long-term research projects is the consideration of participants' time. For example, the PASTA program typically lasts for 18 weeks and that length of time could be intimidating for people and agencies to commit to. So we're now experimenting with changing the program's duration by doubling up some weeks, meaning we offer two workshops some weeks rather than just one a week. We have devised some alternatives so the program can be offered for either a total of twelve or fourteen weeks. These alternatives may encourage some agencies to host the program and enable more participants to commit. We are hoping to offer this alternative specifically for Fall 2015 and we can then later analyze how these changes impact participation rates.

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Week One: Focus Groups and Coding!

Posted on **June 12, 2015** by **Jessica Ellen Hajdukiewicz**

This was the first week of my internship and I got to delve right into it! I am interning with a program called Parenting the Second Time Around (PASTA) in New York City which provides parenting and caretaking education classes for grandparents and other relatives who are parenting their younger relatives. On my first day I was provided the PASTA curriculum which consists of eight two-hour classes covering topics such as rebuilding a family, child and adolescent development, legal advocacy, and discipline. The parenting classes are embedded in a randomized controlled trial (RCT) where nutrition classes, also eight two-hour sessions, serve as a control group. This will be the fourth year of the program.



My main roles for the summer will be to help identify future sites where these classes will take place, recruit participants, and conduct focus groups to see how participants from previous years are still applying the knowledge they gained from these classes. Focus groups are important because they address the longitudinal aspect of the research project. This week I reviewed transcripts from the focus groups with participants from the first two years of the program and I will conduct focus groups with the participants from year three. Analyzing previous transcripts has been beneficial because it gives us a foundation to modify discussion questions for the upcoming focus groups so we can ensure we will have rich data to work with. I had a chance to talk with someone from the Bronfenbrenner Center for Translational Research about how to code qualitative research and use a coding software which was extremely helpful!

Additionally, Thursday evening I was able to attend the graduation and poster presentation of another Cornell Cooperative Extension project in NYC called College Achievement through Urban Science Exploration (CAUSE). CAUSE, in collaboration with Henry Street Settlement (HSS), aims to increase high-school students' interest and

skills in science with a community-based and environmental approach. The class culminated in a research project so at the graduation the students presented their projects and defended their poster during the poster session. The research the students conducted was all very impressive and their passion was palpable! I'm looking forward to working with PASTA more and learning about other projects CCE-NYC engages with!

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