ASSESSING COMMUNITY BUILDING IN COVER'S MODEL OF HOME-REPAIR EXCHANGE

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research Topic

We were tasked with designing a research proposal to analyze the relationship between COVER's reciprocal home-repair program and the sense of community among the organization's volunteers and homeowners it serves. COVER is located in White River Junction, Vermont and bridges the gap between under-resourced homeowners in need of urgent home repair and volunteers who offer their services to prevent relocation or homelessness.

COVER has repaired 1,647 homes since 1998; 358 volunteers served the organization in 2020-2021. The organization prides itself on the role it plays in community building, and is seeking a methodology to systematically analyze its impact in the Greater Upper Valley. Our aim is to propose a framework for an evidence-based measure of how well COVER is building community through its model of reciprocal home-repair exchange.

Defining Community & Community Building

For our study, we use Gardner's (1993) definition of community, which conceptualizes the term as a practice founded on mutual responsibility and ownership that involves developing connections among residents and promoting positive patterns of individual and group behavior. Key to this definition is the notion that a community must actively be constructed by individuals (Mulligan 2015). In the context of COVER, both the homeowner and volunteer must take part in establishing and cultivating a community. Further, the construction of community requires a structure of mutual dependence and responsibility, reinforced by trust and effective communication, prompting a greater sense of solidarity. Only when all members of a community feel a mutual dependence and responsibility to that community can social exchange occur (Molm, Collett, and Schaefer 2008).

Community Building Organizations (CBOs)

Establishing social exchange and promoting a greater sense of interconnectedness is particularly important for those living in disadvantaged communities. Neighborhood poverty can discourage individuals from participating in their communities and social lives (Swaroop and Morenoff 2006). Thus, these areas have a higher demand for local social organizations, like COVER, which can help foster community. Research has shown that higher levels of social cohesion and interaction are linked to a number of positive outcomes, including better physical and mental health among community members (Swaroop and Morenoff 2006). Through its model of mutual home repair exchange, COVER has the ability to not only provide critical home-repair assistance to the homeowners it serves, but also to cultivate a community of mutual responsibility and connectivity.

Community building organizations (CBOs) like COVER facilitate a growing sense of community through encouraging multiple forms of engagement among recipients such as participating in active conversation, contributing toward a shared goal, and working cohesively. We define engagement as requiring "behavioral engagement such as attending and responding to comments or contributing to the shared task… as well as high quality forms of social participation such as working cohesively, respectfully, and supporting other team members" (Linnenbrink-Garcia, Kempler Rogat, and Koskey 2011). Therefore, implementing established methods of communication can help in facilitating active participation among community

members and increase a community's social and cultural capital (Pinkett 2003). By providing a platform for recipients to interact with one another, CBOs help build connections within these communities and focus on resources already available in the community. In this way, CBOs empower communities to work toward a shared goal, such as that of addressing environmental issues as described by Stedman's (2009) study of a community watershed organization. Vanryn (2018) builds on this importance of establishing shared intention. She found that acts of community service effectively create a sense of mutual obligation across community members. In working toward a shared goal, individuals learn to work cohesively and establish positive relationships with each other, increasing the community's social capital.

Impact of CBOs' Forms of Engagement on Recipients' Sense of Community

The various forms of engagement community members participate in, facilitated by community building organizations, impact their sense of community. This engagement boosts their sense of trust and support, and encourages a culture of generalized exchange. A community's social capital is directly linked to its social connections (Lui and Besser 2003). This creates a stronger sense of community amongst recipients, as there are greater levels of active participation. This functions as a self-reinforcing feedback loop, in which those with a stronger sense of community will continue to participate in community-involvement activities (Lui and Besser 2003). Having this sense of connectedness can lead to a "perceived availability of future support" which further encourages recipients to continue participating in such activities and compounds their sense of community (Shen 2014). Engagement methods can help create feelings of self-determination and sense of control while also stimulating a sense of trust within recipients and CBOs. The relationship between CBOs and their recipients promotes a "generalized exchange," defined by Molm, Collett, and Schaefer (2008) as "both indirect reciprocity and unilateral flows of benefit," in this relationship between CBOs and their recipients. Generalized exchange indirectly expands the recipients' sense of community through development of trust and solidarity. When recipients engage in reciprocal and non-reciprocal forms of engagement, they are able to establish mutual connections and feelings of support that foster their sense of community.

Gap In The Literature

Prior research on CBOs tends to provide a generalized perspective of both community building and engagement. This existing literature focuses on one stakeholder group involved in the generalized exchange between CBOs and their recipients. Existing studies generally examine the recipients who are immediate beneficiaries of the services provided within the generalized exchange. Our research proposes taking a multidimensional approach for measuring sense of community with a focus on reciprocal exchange between multiple stakeholder groups. Specifically we intend to study the two groups involved in COVER's reciprocal home-repair exchange: homeowners and volunteers.

Proposed Research

COVER's 70+ annual home repair projects play a vital role in preserving homes in a region where there has long been a severe shortage of affordable housing. Of the homeowners that COVER works with, 85 percent fall below the federal poverty line. Typical projects that the organization works on include roof repair and construction, accessibility remodeling, energy efficiency measures, and floor repair. Our research question asks how well COVER is building community through its model of reciprocal home-repair exchange. Our independent variable is

COVER's reciprocal home repair exchange and our dependent variable is sense of community. The mediating variable is engagement during the project.

METHODS

Research Methods

To best answer our research question, we propose a cross-sectional, mixed-modes survey sent to COVER volunteers via either web or mail and homeowners following their COVER workday. The survey (see Appendix A) would take around ten minutes to complete and would include mostly *YES/NO/OTHER* or "*Rate on a scale of 1-10...*" questions, with a few short-answer questions. A survey, unlike other research methods, will allow for a viable self-report of attitudes, beliefs, and values to best assess the subjective experience of building and feeling "community." Survey methods are efficient and cost effective, as they require little time, resources, and labor for distribution and analysis. Survey methods can also be easily adapted to various modes, allowing respondents to take the survey in a format that best suits their needs. To accommodate COVER homeowners who might not have access to a reliable Wi-Fi connection or suitable technology, we would utilize the mixed-modes approach where COVER volunteers take the survey online and homeowners receive the survey via traditional mail.

However, the survey format does have some limitations we had to take into consideration. First, the survey method might show weak causal evidence about the relationship between our independent and dependent variables. There may be additional confounding or mediating variables impacting respondents' sense of community that our survey does not measure and cannot control for in the same way that a randomized controlled trial would be able to. Additionally, surveys measure what people say, not what they do. While our proposed design attempts to minimize this effect by protecting the respondents' privacy, respondents might still experience social desirability bias and mis-report their actions, beliefs, or feelings.

Proposed Measures

Our survey would have two primary measures: engagement and community. Our "engagement" indicators are based on our working definition of engagement adapted from Linnenbrink-Garcia, Kempler Rogat, and Koskey (2011): "Effective engagement in groups requires… behavioral engagement such as attending and responding to comments or contributing to the shared task… as well as high quality forms of social participation such as working cohesively, respectfully, and supporting other team members." Survey questions would assess "attending and responding to comments," "contributing to shared tasks," and "working cohesively" with questions about homeowner/volunteer communication, and conversation, connection over meals, and small group work. This measure is objective, and seeks to examine the actions and behaviors of both volunteers and homeowners during the workday.

Our "community" measure uses indicators drawn from our working definition of community. We use Gardner (1993)'s definition, which sees community as "The practice of building connections among residents, and establishing positive patterns of individual and community behavior based on mutual responsibility and ownership." Our survey will measure community indicators like "connections" "positive patterns of…community behavior," and "mutual responsibility and ownership" through questions about how welcome the volunteer felt in the homeowner's house/space; the likelihood of either homeowner or volunteer engaging in spontaneous conversation in a different context; and the respondents' sense that both homeowner

and volunteer benefitted from the project. These questions aim to examine respondents' more subjective "sense" of community and they focus more on feelings and hypothetical scenarios.

Sampling and Recruitment

COVER should employ a stratified sampling technique, randomly selecting an equal number of participants from the two strata of homeowners and volunteers. The sampling frame will consist of a list of contact information for all COVER volunteers and homeowners. From this frame, the sample will be drawn, ensuring that both strata are proportionally represented. This technique will ensure that results accurately reflect the opinions and experiences of both groups, allowing for valid analysis of the larger population of COVER volunteers and homeowners.

Data Interpretation

Data interpretation will be conducted using composite measures of the two variables. For the engagement measure, all but two survey questions are based on *YES/NO/OTHER* responses. For *YES/NO/OTHER* questions, the composite measure will be based on a count of *YES* responses. The questions have been designed such that *YES* responses indicate a positive response to engagement. The question about the lunch, snacks, and drinks would add one point to the composite measure for each option selected. A higher composite score indicates more engagement. The short-answer question will be analyzed separately from the composite measure for specific codes of "attending and responding or comments," "contributing to the shared task," working cohesively, respectfully, and supporting other team members." If more of these codes are detected in the response, this indicates more engagement. There will be a composite engagement measure for volunteers and a composite community measure for homeowners.

The composite measure for community will be based on the five survey questions that ask for responses on a scale from 1-10, with higher scores indicating a greater sense of community. The responses to the five questions will be averaged to get the composite community measure. A higher composite score indicates a greater sense of community. The short-answer question will be analyzed separately from the composite measure for specific codes of "building connections," "positive patterns of behavior," and "mutual responsibility and ownership." If more of these codes are detected in the response, this indicates a greater sense of community. There will be a composite community measure for volunteers and a composite community measure for homeowners.

Once the composite measures for engagement and community are calculated, the variables can be compared with engagement on the x-axis and community on the y-axis. One comparison will be made for the composite community homeowner score vs composite engagement homeowner score. Another comparison will be made for the composite community volunteer score vs. composite engagement volunteer score. To affirm COVER's goal, we would hope to see a positive association between the respective composite engagement scores and the respective composite community scores. This applies to the short-response questions as well. If responses are coded and detect the specific identified codes, this would indicate more engagement and a greater sense of community. This method of analysis will allow COVER to observe the overall relationship between the two measures, as well as identify specific patterns with consistent high or low scores for either measure. COVER will also be able to analyze any potential differences across homeowners and volunteers. This would allow COVER to pinpoint specific areas to focus on in improving their program.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Respect for Persons

Our research proposal is informed by the three basic principles included in the Belmont report, namely, respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. The first, respect for persons, means that our research must treat participants as autonomous agents who can fully decide what happens to them, and we must protect those with diminished autonomy. We would have respondents sign informed consent forms and ensure that participation in the study is not mandatory and will not compromise an individual's relationship with COVER or their access to COVER services. We also know that high school students regularly volunteer with COVER through a school program. We need to ensure that students' participation in our research is completely voluntary and is not a required element of any class or program.

Beneficence

The second principle, beneficence, means that we should maximize benefits and evaluate and minimize any potential risk from participating in our research. Our proposed research method includes no major or unnecessary risks; as a survey, it is not invasive or probing, it is quick, accessible, and should not provoke trauma or feelings of discomfort. Our research also provides respondents with potential long-term benefits from improving COVER's reciprocal home-repair exchange model and better creating community between its stakeholders.

Justice

The third principle, justice, means that the benefits and burdens from our research should be fairly distributed so that the group selected for research may benefit from its application. Not just one select group should be selected for our study. Since this research aims to measure "community building" we must seek input from *every* group included in the "community." We will proportionately and randomly sample both homeowners and volunteers to not skew our results to favor one party. Both homeowners and volunteers can benefit from their participation in this research, as it will ideally improve their experience as a part of the COVER community.

Privacy

In addition to the three Belmont principles, privacy was an important consideration. We will not ask for identifiable information for the research, and all information we collect would be kept secure and confidential, as outlined in the consent forms (See Appendix B).

FEASIBILITY AND SIGNIFICANCE

Significance

This research design is of both academic and practical significance as it contributes to filling a literature gap regarding the impact of local home-repair programs on community building, with a focus on multiple stakeholder groups. Additionally, it adds to existing research on community building in volunteer organizations and the relationship between volunteers and the communities they support. This research has practical advantages as well. It will allow the COVER team to evaluate the effectiveness of their program in the local area by gathering feedback directly from COVER volunteers and homeowners. Results from the study will help inform the organization as they think about areas of focus for improvement. Furthermore, our research can help the COVER team apply for grant proposals by providing concrete analysis for the community building aspect of their mission.

Feasibility

This research proposal is highly feasible. The COVER team already has access to contact information for all potential survey respondents due to the organization's application process for homeowners and volunteers to register with COVER. The survey itself is short and easy to complete, consisting mostly of *YES/NO/OTHER* and rating questions. Additionally, the COVER team can distribute the survey to respondents easily, with the volunteer survey being emailed and the homeowner survey being mailed. Finally, data analysis is relatively straightforward, as our questions are designed such that certain responses indicate higher levels of engagement and community, enabling the COVER team to form composite scores.

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APPENDIX A: SURVEY A.1: FOR THE VOLUNTEER

Introductory/Background Questions
1. What is your gender identity?
    ○ Male
    ○ Female
    ○ Nonbinary
    ○ Other:
2. What is your racial identity (select all that apply)?
    ○ White/Caucasian
    ○ Black/African
    ○ Hispanic/Latino
    ○ Asian
    ○ Native/Indigenous American
    ○ Pacific Islander
    ○ Other:
3. How did you hear about COVER?
    ○ Email
    ○ Website
    ○ Word of mouth
    ○ Social Media
    ○ Other:
4. What COVER building project did you work on?
    ○ Roof repair
    ○ Accessibility ramp installation
    ○ Widening doorways
    ○ Installing new stairs
    ○ Installing new railings
    ○ Other:
5. What is your annual household income?
    ○ Less than $25,000
    ○ $25,00-$49,999
    ○ $50,000-$74,999
    ○ $75,000-$99,999
    ○ $100,000-$149,999
    ○ $150,000 or more

Engagement Questions
1. Did the homeowner join you and the other volunteers for the safety talk check-in when you arrived on site?
    ○ Yes

  - ○ No
  - ○ Other:
2. Did the homeowner communicate their goals for the project to you during the workday?
   - ○ Yes
   - ○ No
   - ○ Other:
3. Did the homeowner offer you food or drink during your workday (select all that apply)?
   - ○ Lunch
   - ○ Snacks
   - ○ Drinks
   - ○ Other:
4. Did you eat a meal with the homeowner during the workday?
   - ○ Yes
   - ○ No
   - ○ Other:
5. Did you attempt to start a conversation with the homeowner?
   - ○ Yes
   - ○ No
   - ○ Other:
6. Did you and the homeowner engage in a conversation during the workday?
   - ○ Yes
   - ○ No
   - ○ Other:
7. What was the homeowner's role in the project? What tasks did they take part in? (short-answer question)
8. Did you and the homeowner exchange contact information?
   - ○ Yes
   - ○ No
   - ○ Other:

Sense of Community Questions
1. On a scale of 1-10 (with 0 being not at all likely and 10 being very likely), how welcome did you feel in their house/space?
2. On a scale of 1-10 (with 0 being not at all likely and 10 being very likely), how comfortable did you feel starting a conversation with the homeowner?
3. On a scale of 1-10 (with 0 being not at all likely and 10 being very likely), if you saw the homeowner in a public place, how likely would you be to strike up a conversation?
4. On a scale of 1-10 (with 0 being not at all interested and 10 being very interested), how much interest do you have in staying in touch with the homeowner?

5. On a scale of 1-10, how much do you agree with the following statement (with 0 being completely disagree and 10 being completely agree): the homeowner and I both benefited from this project?
6. In as much detail as you see fit, describe your relationship with the homeowner. (short-answer)

HOMEOWNER
APPENDIX A: SURVEY B.1: FOR THE ~~VOLUNTEER~~

Introductory/Background Questions
1. What is your gender identity?
    ○ Male
    ○ Female
    ○ Nonbinary
    ○ Other:
2. What is your racial identity (select all that apply)?
    ○ White/Caucasian
    ○ Black/African
    ○ Hispanic/Latino
    ○ Asian
    ○ Native/Indigenous American
    ○ Pacific Islander
    ○ Other:
3. How did you hear about COVER?
    ○ Email
    ○ Website
    ○ Word of mouth
    ○ Social Media
    ○ Other:
4. What services is COVER providing you with?
    ○ Roof repair
    ○ Accessibility ramp installation
    ○ Widening doorways
    ○ Installing new stairs
    ○ Installing new railings
    ○ Other:
5. What is your annual household income?
    ○ Less than $25,000
    ○ $25,00-$49,999
    ○ $50,000-$74,999
    ○ $75,000-$99,999
    ○ $100,000-$149,999
    ○ $150,000 or more

Engagement Questions
1. Did you join the volunteer group for the safety talk check-in when they arrived on site?
    ○ Yes
    ○ No

- Other:
2. Did you offer food and drink during the workday (select all that apply)?
    - Lunch
    - Snacks
    - Drinks
    - Other:
3. Did you eat lunch with the volunteers?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Other:
4. Did you attempt to start a conversation with the volunteers?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Other:
5. Did you engage in a conversation with the volunteers?
    - Yes
        - Conditional question: If 'Yes,' how many volunteers did you have a conversation with?
            - 0
            - 1
            - 2
            - 3+
    - No
    - Other:
6. Did you communicate your goals for the project to the volunteers during the workday (separately from when you applied to COVER)?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Other:
7. Did the volunteers actively communicate with you in regard to project updates?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Other:
8. What was your role in the project? What tasks/small projects did you participate in? (short-answer question)
9. Did you exchange contact information with any of the volunteers?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Other:

Sense of Community Questions
1. On a scale of 1-10 (with 0 being not at all likely and 10 being very likely) how comfortable did you feel starting a conversation with the volunteers?
2. On a scale of 1-10 (with 0 being not at all likely and 10 being very likely), if you saw the volunteer in a public place, how likely would you be to strike up a conversation?
3. On a scale of 1-10 (with 0 being not at all interested and 10 being very interested), how much interest do you have in staying in touch with the volunteer(s)?
4. On a scale of 1-10, how much do you agree with the following statement (with 0 being completely disagree and 10 being completely agree): the volunteer(s) and I both benefited from this project?
5. In as much detail as you see fit, describe your relationship with the volunteers (short-answer)
6. On a scale of 1-10 (with 0 being not at all likely and 10 being very likely), how likely would you be to reach out to the COVER volunteers for support beyond their home repair services?

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORMS

<u>Form C.1: CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN RESEARCH — HOMEOWNER</u>
COVER Home Repair

How well is COVER building community through its model of reciprocal home-repair exchange?
Helen Hong, Executive Director, and Dr. Tom Cormen, COVER Board member

You are being asked to take part in a <u>research study</u>. Taking part in research is <u>voluntary.</u>

<u>Study Summary:</u> The purpose of this study is to gather information about the role that COVER plays in building community through its model of reciprocal home repair. There are no known risks to participating in this study. Your participation in this study will help inform COVER in their program design.

Your decision whether to take part will have no effect on your eligibility to receive COVER's services, nor will it impact your ability to volunteer with the organization. Your participation in this study will not impact the quality of services you receive. Please ask questions if there is anything about this study that you do not understand.

<u>What is the purpose of this study?</u>
The purpose of the study is to better understand the role that COVER's reciprocal home-repair program has on the sense of community in the Greater Upper Valley.

<u>Will you benefit from taking part in this study?</u>
You will not personally benefit from being in this research study. We hope to gather information that may help people in the future, as these findings may inform and advise COVER in their program design.

<u>What does this study involve?</u>
Your participation in this study will last for about 10 minutes at some point following your participation in a COVER home repair project. Your participation in this study will involve the completion and return of a paper survey that will be mailed to your address.

<u>What are the options if you do not want to take part in this study?</u>
The alternative is to not take part in this study. Not participating will not impact your future eligibility to engage with COVER's services.

<u>If you take part in this study, what activities will be done only for research purposes?</u>
If you take part in this study, the following activities will be done only for research purposes:
- You will complete a survey after you engage with a home-repair project

<u>What are the risks involved with being enrolled in this study?</u>
There are no known risks involved with being enrolled in this study.

Will my data be deidentified and used in the future for other purposes?
We will not collect identifying information. At this point in time, there are no future plans for the use of this data.

Other important items you should know:
• **Leaving the study:** You may choose to stop taking part in this study at any time. If you decide to stop taking part, it will have no effect on your engagement with COVER's home repair projects.
• **Number of people in this study:** We expect tens of people to enroll in this study.
• **Funding:** There is no outside funding for this research project.

How will your privacy be protected?
The information collected as data for this study includes:
- Your experience throughout parts of the workday
- Your assessments of the sense of community you feel after having engaged with a COVER project

Data collected for this study will be maintained indefinitely.

Identifying information will not be collected as a part of this study, so your name will not be associated with your responses. We also keep the information collected for this study secure and confidential.

A technical safeguard that will be used to protect the data will be keeping survey responses in a locked cabinet.

No publication or public presentation about the research described above will reveal your identity.

It is possible for a court or government official to order the release of study data.

What about the costs of this study?
There are no costs associated with your participation in this study.

Will you be paid to take part in this study?
You will not be paid to take part in this study.

Whom should you call with questions about this study?
If you have questions about this study or concerns about a research related problem or injury, you can contact the research director for this study: Helen Hong at director@coverhomerepair.org.

CONSENT

I have read the above information about "How well is COVER is building community through its model of reciprocal home-repair exchange?" and have been given time to ask questions. I agree to take part in this study, and I will be given a copy of this signed consent form.

_____

Participant's Signature and Date   PRINTED NAME

_____

Researcher or Designee Signature and Date   PRINTED NAME

Form C2: CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN RESEARCH — VOLUNTEER
COVER Home Repair

How well is COVER building community through its model of reciprocal home-repair exchange?
Helen Hong, Executive Director, and Dr. Tom Cormen, COVER Board member

You are being asked to take part in a <u>research study</u>. Taking part in research is <u>voluntary.</u>

<u>Study Summary:</u> The purpose of this study is to gather information about the role that COVER plays in building community through its model of reciprocal home repair. There are no known risks to participating in this study. Your participation in this study will help inform COVER in their program design.

Your decision whether to take part will have no effect on your eligibility to receive COVER's services, nor will it impact your ability to volunteer with the organization. Your participation in this study will not impact the quality of services you receive. Please ask questions if there is anything about this study that you do not understand.

What is the purpose of this study?
The purpose of the study is to better understand the role that COVER's reciprocal home-repair program has on the sense of community in the Greater Upper Valley.

Will you benefit from taking part in this study?
You will not personally benefit from being in this research study. We hope to gather information that may help people in the future, as these findings may inform and advise COVER in their program design.

What does this study involve?
Your participation in this study will last for about 10 minutes at some point following your participation in a COVER home repair project. Your participation in this study will involve completion and the return of an online survey completed electronically.

What are the options if you do not want to take part in this study?
The alternative is to not take part in this study. Not participating will not impact your future eligibility to engage with COVER's services.

If you take part in this study, what activities will be done only for research purposes?
If you take part in this study, the following activities will be done only for research purposes:
- You will complete a survey after you engage with a home-repair project

What are the risks involved with being enrolled in this study?
There are no known risks involved with being enrolled in this study.

Will my data be deidentified and used in the future for other purposes?

We will not collect identifying information. At this point in time, there are no future plans for the use of this data.

Other important items you should know:
• **Leaving the study:** You may choose to stop taking part in this study at any time. If you decide to stop taking part, it will have no effect on your engagement with COVER's services.
• **Number of people in this study:** We expect tens of people to enroll in this study.
• **Funding:** There is no outside funding for this research project.

How will your privacy be protected?
The information collected as data for this study includes:
- Your experience throughout parts of the workday
- Your assessments of the sense of community you feel after having engaged with a COVER project

Data collected for this study will be maintained indefinitely.

Identifying information will not be collected as a part of this study, so your name will not be associated with your responses. We also keep the information collected for this study secure and confidential.

A technical safeguard that will be used to protect the data will be password protection of computers and electronic files.

No publication or public presentation about the research described above will reveal your identity.

It is possible for a court or government official to order the release of study data.

What about the costs of this study?
There are no costs associated with your participation in this study.

Will you be paid to take part in this study?
You will not be paid to take part in this study.

Whom should you call with questions about this study?
If you have questions about this study or concerns about a research related problem or injury, you can contact the research director for this study: Helen Hong at director@coverhomerepair.org.

CONSENT

I have read the above information about "How well is COVER is building community through its model of reciprocal home-repair exchange?" and have been given time to ask questions. I agree to take part in this study, and I will be given a copy of this signed consent form.

_____

Participant's Signature and Date   PRINTED NAME

_____

Researcher or Designee Signature and Date   PRINTED NAME

Form C3: ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH — MINOR VOLUNTEER
COVER Home Repair

Study title: How well is COVER building community through its model of reciprocal home-repair exchange?

Person leading this study: Helen Hong, Executive Director, and Dr. Tom Cormen, COVER Board member

If you want to, you can be a part of this research study. People do research to try to find answers to questions.

Why are we doing this research study?
The reason we are doing this research is to better understand the role that COVER's reciprocal home-repair program has on the sense of community in the Greater Upper Valley.

Why are you being asked to be in this research study?
As a volunteer for COVER, we want your perspective on how your experience with the organization has influenced your sense of community.

What will happen during this study?
You will be asked to complete an online survey which will take about 10 minutes.

What are the good things that might happen in this study?
There are no benefits to you from being in this research study.

What are the problems that might happen in this study?
Sometimes people have problems in research studies that make them feel bad. There are no known risks related to being in this study. Some problems might happen that the researchers don't know about. It is important to let the researchers and your parents know if there is anything that you don't like about the research study right away. Sometimes things that bother one person don't bother another person at all, so you need to let us know when something is bothering you.

Who will be told the things we learn about you in this study?
Neither your name nor any other identifiable information will be collected as a part of the study, so your name will not be associated with your responses.

Will you get any money or gifts for being in this research study?
You will not receive any money or gifts for being in this research study.

Who should you ask if you have any questions?
If you have questions you should ask us. If you or your parents have other questions, worries, or complaints you should contact Helen Hong at director@coverhomerepair.org.

What if you change your mind?

You may stop being in the study at any time. If you want to stop, just tell us so and we will stop right away. If you decide to stop, no one will be angry or upset with you. You can ask questions at any time. You will still be able to work with COVER in the future even if you choose to stop this study.

Title of Study: How well is COVER building community through its model of reciprocal home-repair exchange?

Principal Investigator: Helen Hong, Executive Director, and Dr. Tom Cormen, COVER Board member

If you sign your name on this page, it means that you agree to take part in this research study. You may change your mind any time for any reason.

_____   _____
Sign your name here if you want to be in the study   Date

_____
Print your name here if you want to be in the study

I have explained this study to and answered questions of the child whose name is at the top of this form. I informed the child that he or she could stop being in the study and can ask questions at any time. From my observations, the child seemed to agree to take part in the study.

_____   _____
Signature of Research Team Member Obtaining Assent   Date

_____
Printed Name of Research Team Member Obtaining Assent

APPENDIX D: SENSE OF COMMUNITY INDEX (SCI)

The Sense of Community Index (SCI) is based on the work of McMillan and Chavis (1986) that identified four elements of community: membership, influence, meeting needs, and a shared emotional connection. The SCI is a survey-based measure that we took into account when developing our own survey questions. The SCI - 1 is shown below:

Sense of Community Index

SENSE OF COMMUNITY INDEX II

The following questions about community refer to: [insert community name].

How important is it to you to feel a sense of community with other community members?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Prefer Not to be Part of This Community	Not Important at All	Not Very Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important

How well do each of the following statements represent how you *feel* about this community?

		Not at All	Somewhat	Mostly	Completely
1.	I get important needs of mine met because I am part of this community.	O	O	O	O
2.	Community members and I value the same things.	O	O	O	O
3.	This community has been successful in getting the needs of its members met.	O	O	O	O
4.	Being a member of this community makes me feel good.	O	O	O	O
5.	When I have a problem, I can talk about it with members of this community.	O	O	O	O
6.	People in this community have similar needs, priorities, and goals.	O	O	O	O
7.	I can trust people in this community.	O	O	O	O

Sense of Community Index

		Not at All	Somewhat	Mostly	Completely
8.	I can recognize most of the members of this community.	○	○	○	○
9.	Most community members know me.	○	○	○	○
10.	This community has symbols and expressions of membership such as clothes, signs, art, architecture, logos, landmarks, and flags that people can recognize.	○	○	○	○
11.	I put a lot of time and effort into being part of this community.	○	○	○	○
12.	Being a member of this community is a part of my identity.	○	○	○	○
13.	Fitting into this community is important to me.	○	○	○	○
14.	This community can influence other communities.	○	○	○	○
15.	I care about what other community members think of me.	○	○	○	○
16.	I have influence over what this community is like.	○	○	○	○
17.	If there is a problem in this community, members can get it solved.	○	○	○	○
18.	This community has good leaders.	○	○	○	○
19.	It is very important to me to be a part of this community.	○	○	○	○
20.	I am with other community members a lot and enjoy being with them.	○	○	○	○
21.	I expect to be a part of this community for a long time.	○	○	○	○
22.	Members of this community have shared important events together, such as holidays, celebrations, or disasters.	○	○	○	○
23.	I feel hopeful about the future of this community.	○	○	○	○
24.	Members of this community care about each other.	○	○	○	○

More information about the SCI can be found here:

Chavis, David M., K.S. Lee, & J.D. Acosta. 2008. "The Sense of Community (SCI) Revised: The Reliability and Validity of the SCI-2." Paper presented at the 2nd International Community Psychology Conference, Lisboa, Portugal.