

Belonging to Something Greater Than Self: Flint Women Giving Back to the Community

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What Is the Purpose of This Study?

- Having meaning in life promotes happiness and wellbeing across the lifespan.
- A large ($n = 100$) community-based participatory qualitative study was conducted to identify the needs, hopes, dreams and strengths of Flint area women, as well as their suggestions for improving well-being for women in Flint.
- This article presents results related to a sense of belonging to something greater than themselves. This includes having meaning in life, having a voice, and a description of ways respondents serve others in their community.

What Is the Problem?

- Little is known about the strengths, needs, assets and suggestions for improving the well-being of women in Flint and areas such as Flint from their own perspectives.
- Flint, Michigan, is a small city experiencing social, economic, and health challenges. However, the city also has vibrant groups of residents who are taking active part in creating a better future for themselves and their community. This study presents findings from a highly community-engaged qualitative work where the community members were a part of the entire research process, including co-authorship.

What Are the Findings?

- Participants defined meaning in life as having a sense of significance, a deep connection to their community, and a sense of acknowledgement for their overall contributions.
- Women emphasized the importance of opportunities for women to contribute to something larger than themselves.
- Participants suggested systems would be more responsive to the needs of women when women have a stronger voice.
- Women served their community in many roles. However, despite some societal progress, respondents indicated that women continue to be underpaid and their contributions undervalued. Respondents also suggested that rectifying these inequities might contribute to better addressing the needs of women.

Who Should Care Most?

- Public health partners working with communities.
- Researchers doing community-engaged work with underserved populations.
- Community members from low-income communities experiencing social, health, and economic challenges.

Recommendations for Action

- Creating opportunities for women to contribute to their community is important.
- Partnerships should empower communities.
- Having women's voices represented at all spaces is important.
- Addressing inequalities experienced by women, valuing women's contributions and equitable compensation for women's work is crucial.