

Session: Improving Equity through Political Strategy and Effective Implementation

Chair/Discussant: Michael Shires, Pepperdine University

Session Summary: Kim Arnold, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

The overarching theme of this session was that policies and programs often have flawed designs that could translate to improper implementation and unintended consequences. It is important for programs and policies to be designed with participation from the people that they are intended to serve, and to be written in a way that will facilitate proper implementation.

Papers:

1. Ingredients for Success: Implementing Community Advisory Councils in Detroit, **Kyu-Nahm Jun**, Wayne State University and **Juliet Musso**, University of Southern California

When Detroit was going through financial problems, democratically elected officials were stripped of their power and the state appointed an emergency (financial) manager. In attempts to provide citizens with a formal vehicle to voice their concerns, the emergency manager attempted to form Community Advisory Councils (CACs). Due to various factors, including problems setting up the CACs, no funding, and lack of residents interested in setting up the CACs, the program failed. Key policy implications from this study include the following:

- Stakeholder collaboration is key to designing and implementing policies and programs.
- Both top-down (e.g. government) and bottom-up (e.g. grassroots) support is key.
- Goals for implementation should be realistic and achievable.

2. Implementation Theories and Interventions: Improving Civil Rights Compliance in Three States, **Douglas Hess**, Grinnell College

Three states (NM, CO, and NC) that experienced compliance problems with the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) were described. Common NVRA implementation problems include a decentralized system of elections, state election officials with no control over voter registration agencies, lack of communication with state election officials and voter registration agencies, paperwork burdens, and weak enforcement. Implementation theories have posited that ambiguity and conflict yield poor implementation—NVRA has both characteristics. Presence of ambiguity and problems with control over implementation units within the three states was a major problem that led to poor implementation outcomes. The key policy implication of this study is that policies should include prescriptions for implementation and enforcement. Policies should be transparent, and have support from policymakers and constituents to reduce conflict.