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## Mark Aber


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My current research interests focus in three areas: (1) collaborative community-based interventions designed to build community organization and promote community development, (2) contextual influences on individuals' understanding of race - particularly in public school settings; and (3) neighborhood influences on the development of family and adolescent well being.

Generally, I use participatory action research methods which aim to include members of a target community, population or group in the identification of problems, collection of data, and analysis of their own situation in order to improve it. This approach aims to contribute to basic knowledge about community dynamics while generating data and engaging in a research process that contributes to solving practical problems in the lives and communities of the target group. The method necessitates that the research enterprise grow out of and be part of community action. It also requires that the action-research agenda build on a foundation of genuine, trusted and sustainable relationships between the university researcher and the community collaborators. My work employs multiple methods (i.e., quantitative and qualitative; survey, interview, ethnographic observation).

A current project examining collaborative community-based intervention focuses on efforts to promote educational equity in public schooling. The Champaign School Climate Study grew out of a community complaint to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights (OCR), alleging racial inequities in various aspects of education in Champaign schools. Over the past several years, I have worked with various community stakeholders and the administration in the Champaign Schools to conduct participatory research aimed to evaluate and improve the school district's racial climate. Together we have developed the only significant measure of school racial climate that currently exists for use among secondary school students and staff. A multi-racial grassroots organization of parents, educators, community members and groups - the Coalition for Racial Equity and Excellence in Education (CARE-3) - coalesced around the climate survey results following their release to the schools and community. CARE-3 has emerged as a primary representative of the plaintiff class in the federal legal case that has grown from this process. Our most recent work aims to document and advance the work of CARE-3. It aims to unpack how and why community members are involved with local equity issues, how decision making works regarding equity issues, the role of community input and involvement in shaping decisions regarding equity, and how race is used in the discourse and/or decision making process surrounding issues of equity.

**Representative Publications:**

- Mattison, E., & Aber, M. S. (2007). Closing the achievement gap: The association of racial climate with achievement and behavioral outcomes. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 40*(1-2), 1-12.
- Rasmussen, A., Aber, M. S., & Bhana, A. (2004). Adolescent coping and neighborhood violence: Perceptions, exposure, and youths\* efforts to deal with danger. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 33*(1-2), 61-75.
- Hellenga, K., Aber, M. S., & Rhodes, J. E. (2002). African-American adolescent mothers\* vocational aspiration-expectation gap: Individual, social and environmental influences. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 26*(3), 200-212.
- Aber, M. S., & Nieto, M. (2000). Suggestions for the investigation of psychological wellness in the neighborhood context: Toward a Pluralistic Neighborhood Theory. In Cicchetti, D., Rappaport, J. Sandler, I. & Weissberg, R. (Eds.), *The promotion of wellness in children and adolescents*. Washington, D.C.: Child Welfare League of America.
- Aber, M. S., & McArdle, J. J. (1991). Latent growth curve approaches to modeling the development of competence. In M. Chandler & M. Chapman (Eds.), *Criteria for competence*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 231-258.

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