



Ladies of Distinction Participant Analysis

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Introduction

In the fall of 2005, the principal of Beck Academy saw a dire need for positive role models in the lives of young female students at his school. Upon expressing this desire to a Furman student, the Ladies of Distinction was initiated. The purpose of the program was 1) to develop a sisterhood through the act of mentoring and 2) show the girls who they are in addition to what they can become. This purpose was very important because Beck Academy was located in the inner city, and most of the girls were from low income neighborhoods and housing projects. In the fall of 2006, however, Beck Academy started a new year in a new location, in a much better neighborhood. The program lost many of the girls who were participants at the old school because of zoning. To get a better understanding of the participants for this year, I decided to do an analysis of the areas that the 2006 participants live in.

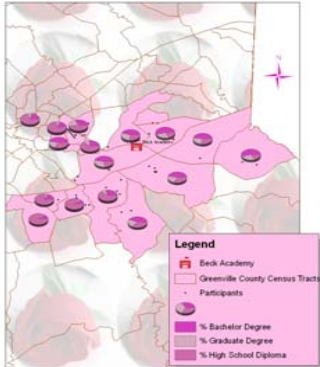


Intended use and users

The information obtained by this project can be very useful to the Ladies of Distinction program. It will help the mentors understand what issues in the girls' communities they are dealing with most often. It is also useful because it helps the volunteers to have an idea of what areas should be targeted for fundraising. By knowing which communities the girls live in, we can visit businesses in these communities to allow them the opportunity to contribute to the success of the girls. It can also be useful in helping the Ladies of Distinction and Beck Academy have a more diverse group of participants. The program is open to any girl regardless of financial status or background, so this information will give us a better understanding of if we have a fair distribution of girls from different economic statuses participating in the program.



Figure 1 shows the distribution of different levels of educational attainment in the girls' communities.



To find out the locations the girls lived in, I had to find out their addresses. A confidential and anonymous survey was conducted that asked each girl their address and the price they paid for lunch (full, reduced, or free). This would be a good indicator of the income of the girls of this year. After obtaining all their addresses, I compiled a database containing the addresses and its latitude and longitude. To get the longitude and latitude, I added the census tract information as a table with all of its attributes. I exported the data for only the census tracts the girls live in. I then composed a database containing the census tracts and the attributes related with each census tract. I imported the addresses in ArcMap as XY data. Each participant was plotted on the map according to its latitude and longitude. I added three more layers containing, the Greenville county boundary, the Census Tract Boundaries for the USA and the Block Groups for the USA. Out of the last three layers, I selected only those attributes that pertained to Greenville County and added them as new layers, and deleted the unnecessary data.

Methodology

Figure 2 shows the relationship between Beck with single parent households and areas with income below poverty.

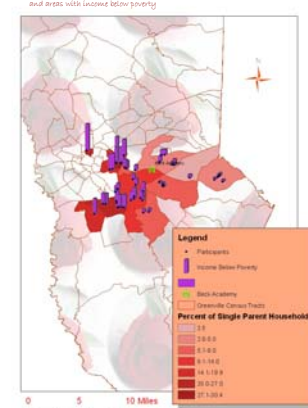
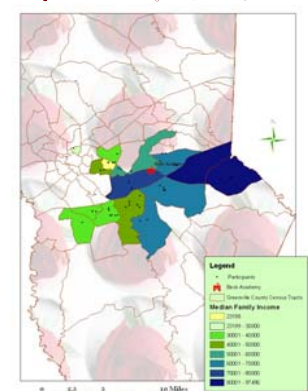


Figure 3 shows the Median Family Income of the areas the girls live in.



Methodology cont.

Since the latitude and longitude were established for one of the layers, when I added those with no projection specified, they assumed the projection of the layer with the addresses. This was Transverse Mercator. I then created graduated color maps and pie charts using the symbology fields in ArcMap.

To make the map easier to understand, I created my own breaks for the ranges instead of using the natural breaks provided by ArcMap.

Results cont.

The last map (Figure 3) is a map that shows the Median Family Income of the areas that the girls live in. As expected with the change of Beck Academy to a better neighborhood, a lot of girls were from areas with fairly high income. The areas of lower income were the areas to the west of Beck Academy. The areas with higher income also were the areas with high percentages of bachelor degrees and graduate degrees.

All the maps consistently show that the areas to the west of Beck Academy are areas with financial and household stability issues. This does not necessarily mean that the girls from these areas actually live in homes where this is an issue. However, chances are, if they don't live in a home with these issues, they have a friend who do. All this information is important because most problems that the young girls develop can be the result of having to deal with being from a single parent household or a household with low income.

These maps show that since the move of Beck to a new location, the number of girls who are dealing with these issues are declining.



DATE SOURCE:

- 1. U.S. Census Bureau
- 2. Beck Academy
- 3. Beck Academy

Results

The results of this study were very interesting. Figure 1 shows the highest level of education attained, consisting of a high school diploma, bachelor degree and a graduate degree. This was interesting because the percent of people with high school being their highest level attained was more prevalent to the west of Beck. Figure 2 shows a correlation between the areas with income below the poverty level single parent households. Those areas with a high percentage of income below poverty level were the same areas with a high percentage of single parent homes. This also shows that a lot of the girls are either from single parent homes or live in areas where this is prevalent. There seems to also be a relationship with the location of Beck and the girls communities. Those communities to the left of Beck are the lower income and less stable communities. Those to the right of Beck are the higher income communities. This is very useful information because if we wanted to make the program available to only those girls who were from the lower income communities we would know which communities needed to be targeted.

Additional Program Information and Accolades

* Ladies of Distinction is affiliated with Keller Service Corps, the volunteering/community service agency at Furman University.

* The program received an award from the Commission on Higher Education for the best service learning project in the state among private schools in South Carolina.

* Received the Boundary Breaker Program of the year by Furman University

* The volunteers raised over \$ 5000 through fundraising and very generous donations. This played a huge part of the success of the program's first year because the Ladies of Distinction program does not receive any additional funding. This money was used to provide the girls with formal dresses and accessories and a ceremony which debuted the young girls as Ladies of Distinction.



Special Thanks and Contact Info

* Special thanks to those volunteers who assisted in the collection of data and gave input. If you would like more information about this organization, you can contact

Sheronda Witter at sheronda.witter@furman.edu or Nancy Cooper at nancy.cooper@furman.edu.

