

# THEory into ACTion

## **A Bulletin of New Developments in Community Psychology Practice**

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### The Scout reframed: *Mouvement Partage* at Sacré-Cœur School in Egypt

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These past months, I was introduced to *Mouvement Partage*, which translates to “shared movement” in French. *Mouvement Partage* is composed of an independent group of women operating in the all girls’ French school, Sacré-Cœur in Cairo; and started around 40 years ago. What struck me the most is how the development of the activities and programs fit well with the teachings and practices of community psychology. The idea first was to create something similar to the Girl Scouts, yet it has developed to include several components to develop the participants further. The program is run by around 60 guides, and includes 400 students, ages 9-16, mainly from both Sacré-Cœur school branches in Cairo, and a small number of students come from other French schools in Egypt.

“Our main role is to deliver principles and values to the students through games and scout activities” explained one of the guides. Like the Girl Scout, *Mouvement Partage* has the same components of structure, guides and uniforms. Students have to respect order and discipline, and come in their school uniform wearing their *Mouvement Partage*’s scarf. The Girl Scouts is more focused on the scouting skills, like tying knots, setting up a fire and living in the wilderness. *Movement Partage*, however, puts the interpersonal skills and creativity before these scouting skills. For example, the camps are not as harsh as the scouts; they do not let the students sleep in the wilderness or the desert. Also, for example this year, the theme of the camp for the younger students is Disney Princesses; each group will have a Disney princess as a representation on their board of achievement for the duration. At the end of the camp the winning group would win a treasure. “For the older ones the theme could be Olympics or Oscars, which is a fun idea to help the guides deliver their educational messages in a creative and engaging way” added a guide.

The originality of the *Mouvement Partage* is that it is the only program in Egypt that targets students starting nine years of age from both religions in Egypt, to reiterate the notion of tolerance. Also, this program adapts the concepts of the scouts to the culture and community. The main concepts that *Mouvement Partage* works on are personal growth and development, creativity, sustainability and citizenship. Furthermore, they incorporate a process of needs assessment in all activities that they plan and implement.

### **Program Development Based on Needs Assessment**

At the beginning of the year, *Mouvement Partage* conducts two types of needs assessments. The first type is concerned with the needs of the participants. There are three categories of participants: students, sub guides- students in grade 10, and guides- starting grade 11. The guides’ plan the year for the students based on what they view as the main needs and also inquire about the needs from the parents of different students. Based on these needs, they

compose one-year long program with a new theme every year, to cater to the students. Also, the guides divide the teams, making sure that each guide can handle the group for which she is responsible and is in touch with its specific needs and areas of development.

The second needs assessment is conducted with community partners and non-governmental organization. The guides collect varying needs that inform the adaptation of different projects and activities that the participants can engage in. These projects vary from collecting money to fulfilling logistical needs to conducting activities with the various partners.

### **Personal Growth and Development**

Every week, students meet after school on Saturday for two hours. The students, led by about two guides, engage in different weekly activities. These activities could be collective, meaning all the different groups from the different grades engage in the same activity, or can be done within each grade. The activities are designed to develop the various attitudes, skills, and knowledge that help the participants develop their personalities and also gain some practical scout skills. Also, the activities introduce the participants to new concepts, ideas, or even hobbies. The activities are planned to cater to the needs set out at the beginning of the year. In addition to the weekly meetings, an annual camp and an annual larger event, called *Festival du Mouvement*, take place every year. The Festival, planned by guides and student is usually held around Christmas. The event is a fundraiser to teach the students and their friends that they can enjoy their time and participate in different activities while supporting a charitable cause. Last year for example, they helped raise funds to buy orphans tickets to an amusement park.

All activities have to be related to the theme. This year's theme is "Marche en Avant"; which means march forward. Accordingly, the participants work to develop and take a step forward in their lives, communities, etc. Furthermore, every grade has its own principle that they focus on for the year. These principles include creativity and respect. Every group creates a flag with the principle and comes up with a mantra for what it means. The flag and the mantra are shared with the rest of the group during the reunion every Saturday to start off the activities and embed the values by which they aim to live. Also, every week during the reunion, students from the different grades are honored with a badge for being a role model in discipline, respect, and good behavior. This motivational act makes the students want to actively contribute, and develops a sense of pride in the students. Also, the guides serve as role models while keeping very close relations with each student.

Furthermore, the guides plan activities for the students in the community. The aim of these activities is to monitor and develop the way the students deal and behave with people from different social classes, how they ask for services and favors, and how they deal with strangers in general. "Respect does not have to do with wealth, it is a general fundamental principle, please and thank you are magic words" reiterated a *Mouvement Partage* guide.

### **Sense of Community and Citizenship**

Most importantly, *Mouvement Partage* works on the sense of community of within participants in the movement then focus on the sense of community within their societies and the community at large. Weekly activities focus on the different principles and values in the context of the group as one community. For example, they engage the students in small competitions where the whole group has to cooperate. One week they had to come up with a creative way to dress up their guide from recycled materials. The exercise both gets them to cooperate and come up with something creative and teaches them about reusing materials and being sustainable.

As for building the sense of community within the larger society, the highlight of every year for the students is the engagement in projects that help them foster good citizenship. Based on the needs assessment of the community and partners, participants participate in different projects. This year, they have a competition between the different grades to fundraise for wishes of orphans in a partner organization. They went to the orphanages and asked the orphans for their wishes and needs. For the rest of the year, participants creatively come up with activities to fundraise and provide the orphans with their needs. This program is more geared towards charity, yet they also engage in other projects to learn about sustainable development. The concept of citizenship is brought to the students in such a way to help them learn how to engage in activities that can also benefit others, and in the larger sense benefit the whole community.

### **Sustainability**

One of the guides told me “A guide remains a guide forever.” Students can enroll in the movement starting in grade four. When they reach grade nine, they may apply to become guides by serving as sub guides for one year. During this year, sub guides are provided with informal training on skills and knowledge then get tested throughout the year. After passing this year, students become guides and will pair up with a more experienced guide to lead a younger group. The guides continue participating in the activities as long as they want. Many of the guides who currently run the movement have graduated from the school, some from university, and some even have their own children in the program. The built sense of community and belonging gifts this organization its sustainability. When the guides leave school, they do not leave *Mouvement Partage*.

*Mouvement Partage* has added to the lives of many students at the school, evidenced by the fact that all of its leaders are alumni of the program. They still dedicate their time and effort to reciprocate the teachings and principles of the movement. Such a program is very beneficial to the students, especially in how it tackles the different aspects of personal growth in addition to enriching the sense of giving back to the community and becoming a good citizen. Above all, the dynamic nature of the movement, which differentiates it from the girl scouts, help such program to better cater for the needs of the participants and the society; closely related to the community psychology principles of engaging the community in creating the programming and continually developing it. Most importantly, *Mouvement Partage* targets a group of privileged young girls; which may not be categorized as a critical or endangered group. Yet, the aim is to build these girls to become positive contributing members to the society, through the heightened sense of community and sense of responsibility to the larger community that is embedded in them. This model can easily be replicated in different schools, to provide participants with extra curricular activities and experiential learning, to enable students in different schools to become active contributing citizens of a society with high integrity and values. Accordingly, the benefit would spread to other communities.

*This is one of a series of bulletins highlighting the use of community psychology in practice. Comments, suggestions, and questions are welcome. Please direct them to Tabitha Underwood at [underwoodtabitha@gmail.com](mailto:underwoodtabitha@gmail.com).*