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Engaged Scholarship and Level of Activity and Degree of Engagement
—Doberneck, Glass, and Schweitzer

Community Service Experience and Perceptions of Diversity
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Using Deliberative Polling to Measure the Economic Impact of Walmart
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A Checklist for Implementing Service-Learning in Higher Education
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Developing Internal and External Partnerships in the Health Professions
—Peery and Kolasa

Establishing a Community-Based Research Network in Rural Alabama
—Watters, Hanninen, and Hardin
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TRACK 3: Voice of the Community Partner

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For Higher Ed, the *Crucible Moment* Has Arrived

In addressing the social, civic, ethical, and moral challenges of society, higher education has a long history of fluctuation in the United States. Many North American research universities originated with a goal of preparing students to possess a sense of civic responsibility and contribute to democratic society in a positive way. Most of us who work in the engaged scholarship arena are familiar with Ernest Boyer (1991, 1996), who is often credited with refocusing attention on higher ed’s civic engagement mission. Since this refocusing, there have been varying degrees of exploration, attention, and resources allocated to community engagement by institutions of higher education, as well as a focus on how those who work within this context should be rewarded by their institutions.

Recently, *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy’s Future* was submitted to the U.S. Department of Education by the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement National Task Force Association of American Colleges and Universities (2012). This report has the potential to be another seminal piece in the engagement scholarship arena. Although a complete critique of the report is beyond the scope of this opinion piece, there are highlights worth sharing that might motivate readers who have not read the report to seek it out and engage in a critical and reflective analysis of it. The complete report may be accessed at http://www.aacu.org. Referred to as a 21st century call to action for higher education to provide leaders with the knowledge, skills, motivation, and values needed to be active participants in shaping the world through the democratic process, the report addresses many of the obstacles to making education, especially higher education, relevant to current challenges. More than just a specialized presentation of the need for such an approach to education, the report provides evidence of the “anemic state of U.S. civic health” (p. 6). Another strength of the report is its provision of components of civic learning and democratic engagement in the areas of knowledge, skills, values, and collective action.

Of course, as would be expected, there are criticisms of the report. A primary criticism questions the role of government in implementation of this action approach in the higher education system (Finn, 2012). My experience is that many in the field of engagement scholarship and civic education have not read the report or are not aware of it. I encourage you to examine this report and share it with others interested in community engagement and higher education.

The current issue of *JCES* includes manuscripts that speak to many of the ideas and points raised in *A Crucible Moment* through various approaches. In this issue you will find manuscripts that speak to how university resources and partnerships can be used to assist rural communities in meeting their needs by bringing interdisciplinary groups together and building on their strengths to overcome the many challenges faced by these communities. Other manuscripts address diversity within the context of service-learning and how the process of deliberative polling can influence both individual and group attitudes. Our commitment to bring attention to the role of engagement scholarship within the reward system at institutions of higher learning is reflected in a manuscript that examines how publicly engaged scholarship varies within disciplines by intensity of activity and degree of engagement along various dimensions. In addition, another manuscript provides a useful checklist for evaluating service-learning as an instructional strategy. There are more articles that we could mention, but we will trust you to seek them out. We are pleased to include in this issue a piece by two students who worked with local communities in response to the devastating tornadoes that affected many of us directly tied to *JCES* on April 27, 2011.

Finally, we are excited about hosting NOSC 2012, September 30–October 3, with the theme of *Partner. Inspire. Change.* We encourage you to submit your proposals (http://nosc2012.ua.edu/proposals.html), and look forward to providing you with a meaningful, enlightening, and educational conference experience. Texas Tech will host the conference in 2013 under the new conference name, Engagement Scholarship Consortium, (http://www.outreachscholarship.org/).

References


About the Editor

Cassandra E. Simon is an associate professor in the School of Social Work at The University of Alabama.
Abstract

Traditional towns in the Intermountain West, platted in the late 19th century as railroad shipping or resource extraction centers, are experiencing significant changes as they develop more diverse economies. Small towns often lack adequate resources to address comprehensive planning and design on their own. However, universities, through interdisciplinary outreach and engagement, utilizing service-learning, can offer design, planning, economic development, and other strategies, concepts, and policies to foster sustainable development. This paper addresses the challenges of 1) developing an interdisciplinary organizational structure, 2) establishing positive community-university relationships and, 3) matching academic outcomes to community needs as the institution shifts from faculty-initiated service-learning projects to an interdisciplinary partnership model for outreach and engagement. The theoretical and philosophical dimensions raised by the challenges are illustrated by three community-university partnership case studies in Intermountain West communities.

Introduction

According to geographer William Travis (2007), growth in the Intermountain West is “an amenity gold rush” (p. 22). Between 1990 and 2000, Nevada, Arizona, Utah, Colorado, and Idaho were the five fastest-growing states in the nation, a trend likely to continue. However, as communities transition from resource extraction economies of the old West to post-industrial economies of the new West, they are confronted with a new palette of environmental issues related to population growth and consumptive land use patterns (Apel & Glenn, 2009). Mining, timber, and agricultural communities in the emerging new West often suffer from loss of economic vitality, aging housing stock, brownfield sites, decaying infrastructure, and poor aesthetic character. Many communities, located at the interface between fragile ecosystems, growing populations, and shifting economic realities, often lack the resources to adequately deal with land use planning and design challenges.

Beginning with a review of community-university partnerships, this paper presents three case studies and the interdisciplinary partnership model for outreach and engagement at the University of Idaho (U of I). More detailed sections explore partnership relationships, academic and service outcomes, and the prospect of exporting the community-university model to other institutions. We make the argument for an interdisciplinary outreach and engagement model that focuses on multiple partnerships both within and outside the university to comprehensively address communities’ design and planning needs. Addressing different stages in the planning process, from visioning to policy development, requires matching appropriate skill sets of academic programs with the needs and abilities of community partners. During our 20-year history of working with transitioning communities, we have found that they face a host of economic, environmental, infrastructure, social, and governmental problems. A long-term strategy is generally needed to prioritize and schedule partnership projects (Reardon, 1999; Sorensen & Lawson, 2011). For example, out-of-compliance wastewater treatment systems must be updated before new housing or tourism efforts are initiated. Since the professional expertise to be contributed by the university partner differs according to the development sector, a sequence of courses and faculty from multiple disciplines is often necessary. In addition, the community often needs months to debate alternative planning proposals, acquire permits, or revise ordinances before successive projects can be undertaken. The next section provides a general overview of community-university partnerships.

Community-University Partnerships

Universities and communities have a long history of collaborative partnerships for economic, aesthetic, and infrastructure improvements (Barnes, Altimare, Farrell, Brown, Burnett III, Gamble, & Davis, 2009; Reardon, 1999; Sorensen & Lawson, 2011). These partnerships began a period of professional activism in planning and design disciplines during the 1960s in response to ill-conceived urban renewal and other significant infrastructure projects (e.g., interstate...
highways, flood protection). Milestone partnership projects include the University of Chicago’s Neighborhood Initiative (Wiewele & Lieber, 1998); the University of Maryland’s Urban Community Service Program (Baum, 2000); Howard University’s Community Association (Martin, Smith, & Philips, 2002); the University of Illinois’ comprehensive and long-term East St. Louis Action Research Project with residents of the city in 1987 (Reardon, 1999); and the rural, design-build program to assist impoverished communities throughout Alabama by the late Sam Mockbee of Auburn University (Oppenheimer Dean & Hursley, 2002).

American university presidents are embracing the idea that their universities “should be engaged in problem solving for the broader society and the state and local community” (Myers & Banerjee, 2005, p. 126), with an understanding that the partnership should be mutually beneficial (Baum, 2000). Outreach and engagement are integral to the mission of land-grant universities, which were created to “provide equal access to education and service to communities” (Kellogg Commission, 1999, p. 1). U of I’s mission explicitly states the institution’s role as “a land-grant institution committed to undergraduate and graduate-research education with Extension services responsive to Idaho and the region’s business and community needs” (University of Idaho, 2009).

However, the character of the community-university relationship in university mission statements is often vague. The dynamic between professional experts in universities and citizens in communities led to criticism that universities were too unaware, dated, and disorganized to address social problems in constructive ways (Kellogg Commission, 1999). For example, Bringle and Hatcher found that some university outreach programs treat “communities as pockets of needs, laboratories for experimentation, or passive recipients of expertise” (2002, pp. 503-504). This criticism is confirmed by surveys demonstrating that citizens have an increasing wariness of the motivations of professionals and their practices. Professions (e.g., law, engineering, architecture) have had a checkered history of public regard in the United States. Although professionals are licensed by the state or professional organizations to ensure that practitioners have achieved a level of technical competency and will offer their services for the betterment of society, research indicates that many citizens view the professions as self-serving monopolies of particular market sectors (Fischer, 2009). While university outreach activities are not profit motivated, citizens may be justifiably suspicious of career development, research, and service-learning initiatives by design, planning, engineering, and other professional degree programs.

Similarly, experts offering community services can be confused and frustrated when citizens question or reject their technical proposals. The expectation that expert knowledge confers some authority within the community decision-making process is a serious partnership shortcoming (Fischer, 2000). A balanced dialogue that places technological proposals within the context of ethics, economics, and political realities is a better model for community-university partnerships. The Danish consensus conference is one model where a layperson panel is presented with a technological proposal and recommends policies or actions to decision makers and other citizens (Grundahl, 1995; Danish Board of Technology, 2011).

The limited concept of the university as a technology transfer entity is far too narrow to satisfy the aspirations of community partners. Even the call for universities to embrace a two-way process of working in partnership with a focus on urban-oriented issues only addresses the shift from agriculturally dominated economies to diversified economies (Apel & Glenn, 2009; Overton & Brunkhardt, 1999), but not necessarily deliberative, democratic processes.

When university outreach capabilities match the needs expressed by community partners (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002), a balance between academic scholarship and the creation of planning and design products in communities is more easily met (Myers & Banerjee, 2005). The older partnership literature identifies successful partnerships as those built on overlapping goals and achievable outcomes that focus on improving community situations (Baum, 2000; Martin, Smith, & Philips, 2002), while newer paradigms include facilitation of community building and participatory democracy (Boyle & Silver, 2005; Fischer, 2009; Ostrander, 2004; Sorensen & Lawson, 2011).

The first step in encouraging a more democratic participatory process is expanding who participates. Second is interaction through a range of learning, communicating, and advocating opportunities. Third is meaningful impact through prioritization, criticism, advice, and evaluation (Fung, 2006; Barnes et al., 2009). Each of these aspects of deliberative democracy is discussed later in relation to the case studies.

Effective partnerships with small towns through university outreach and engagement programs face a number of challenges that are compounded by a range of service-learning goals. In this paper we address these challenges. The first is building an organizational structure and contributory expertise to respond to the diverse needs and capabilities of
small towns (Fischer, 2009). In particular, we describe the U of I’s interdisciplinary model for outreach and engagement, making the argument that this model is critical in order to address the diversity of community design and planning needs and to maintain long-term commitments, sustain relationships, add value through new projects, and secure grant funding. The second challenge is establishing positive partnerships between university administrators, faculty, and students and elected officials, interest groups, and citizens. The third challenge is matching the academic outcomes to the expectations of the communities. We discuss the management of this challenge through the interdisciplinary organizational model, partnership relations, and student service-learning experiences.

In order to ground the theoretical and philosophical dimensions raised in this paper, our discussion is supported with examples from community-university partnerships in three Intermountain West communities. The case study communities are briefly described in the following section.

**Case Study Communities**

Between 2002 and 2009, U of I faculty partnered with three communities in Idaho: Sandpoint (Bonner County), Plummer (Benewah County), and Cascade (Valley County). Each community has experienced significant economic shifts from natural resource to recreation and service-based economies. Partnering with the university helped both students and citizens identify historic preservation and infill strategies for revitalizing historic districts and maximizing the sustainable use of natural assets. Table 1 lists characteristics of each community.

### Sandpoint (Community-University Projects Fall 2002 and Fall 2006)

Sandpoint, touted by *Outside Magazine* (2004) as one of America’s top-10 small towns, is located on the shores of Lake Pend Oreille in Idaho’s Panhandle (Figure 1), at a nexus of a transcontinental railroad and popular recreational opportunities.
natural resources propelled development of timber, mill, and tourist industries.

As a booming recreational amenity town and transportation crossroad, Sandpoint faces population growth and transportation challenges. During the past 10 years the city annexed new subdivisions in Bonner County, quadrupling its land area since 1972. The North American Free Trade Agreement of 1994 has increased rail and truck traffic from Canada that passes directly through downtown Sandpoint, compromising community connectivity and local mobility. Traffic congestion threatens quality of life and undermines the ambience of First Avenue, the town’s historic main street. To help improve traffic flow, the Idaho Department of Transportation (IDOT) is constructing a bypass along the original Northern Pacific right-of-way. The bypass, under construction since 2002, creates a barrier between the town and the waterfront.

Plummer (Community-University Projects Fall 2007 to Spring 2008)

Plummer, located on the western edge of Benewah County in northern Idaho, is surrounded by rolling wheat fields and forested foothills.

Plummer’s one square mile town site, platted in 1909, was established at the junction of two railroads in the middle of the Coeur d’Alene Indian Reservation. The town was incorporated as the Village of Plummer in 1910. By 1912, 800 residents lived in the town. Plummer’s early economy was largely supported by timber harvesting and milling. After World War I, the town suffered from the economic downturn (Wetter, 1962). By the mid-1900s, the economy shifted toward agriculture, although the town still has a lumber mill. A fire in the early 1970s destroyed the majority of the buildings on its main street. Since the catastrophe, the town has struggled to define its central business district due in part to its main street being an east-running highway that is a primary transportation route for trucks bringing logs to the mill. The other possible main street is also a significant north-south highway. The town has had weak land use planning, adopting its first comprehensive plan and land use ordinances in 1995.

Cascade (Community-University Projects Fall 2008 to Summer 2009)

Cascade is located in central Idaho, 75 miles north of Boise. The town is nestled in the Long Valley between Cascade Lake reservoir and the north fork of the Payette River. Surrounding the broad, flat valley are steep, forested mountains.

The town of Cascade was originally a six-block plat created by W. Patterson in 1913 after the Oregon Short Line Railroad was constructed. Businesses and residents of nearby towns that were not served by the railroad moved to Cascade. Local businessmen raised funds and constructed a courthouse to secure the county seat for the town. The town’s first lumber mill was built in 1923 and the Bureau of Reclamation constructed the dam for Cascade Lake reservoir in 1946. During World War II, Cascade was a shipping hub for antimony and tungsten ore (City of Cascade, 2004).

The Long Valley once provided a wide range of agricultural products, largely supplanted today by seasonal cattle operations. However, the primary economic activity in the region was milling lumber. The Boise Cascade sawmill closed in May 2001, forcing the community to search for a new economic base. Federal and county government has always provided some financial and economic stability. Planning challenges in Cascade include a legally insufficient comprehensive plan, outdated zoning ordinances, new commercial development occurring outside of the core downtown district, and uncoordinated county planning.

The following section examines the U of I’s evolution from faculty-initiated service-learning projects to an interdisciplinary partnership model for outreach and engagement.

Faculty-Initiated Projects—An Expertise Mode

The U of I has a track record of community-university partnerships beginning in the late 1980s, particularly through its design programs. Projects that provided architecture and landscape architecture students with service-learning opportunities were conducted in dozens of Intermountain West communities. The partnership between the U of I and Sandpoint is an example of a faculty-initiated relationship. In 2002, Sandpoint’s city planner, who knew the architecture faculty personally, engaged students and faculty to develop concepts for mitigating the impact of the impending IDOT bypass and to take advantage of new opportunities afforded by its construction. Student teams helped the town envision a new visitor’s center at the intersection of downtown and the bypass off-ramp, a new pedestrian bridge connecting the visitor’s center to the city beach park, enhancement of a boardwalk along Sand Creek, an expanded civic center, and a new master plan for the marina.

Between 2002 and 2006, Sandpoint continued gaining national exposure as a mountain amenity town. Publicity translated into spiraling growth rates and rapid inflation of real estate prices, threatening
to displace long-time residents. In 2006, the city planning office and parks and recreation director invited an architecture professor to organize a second round of service-learning studio projects for architecture and landscape architecture students to support a comprehensive planning process. Planning and design concepts were developed in the following areas: parks and recreation, affordable housing, downtown revitalization, city beach and marina, city facilities and public space, and redevelopment of a former mill property.

Since 2006, several recommendations have been implemented and others are under way. While the Sandpoint example highlights the success of a faculty-initiated service-learning project, its impacts can be limited. It takes time to build relationships with community leaders and citizens, and once faculty and students move on to another community, new relationships must be built. Many faculty-initiated opportunities develop through individual faculty networking at regional conferences and professional associations. Without a structure to support them, faculty-initiated partnerships can atrophy since they are often dependent on the charisma, expertise, and networks of individual faculty. Furthermore, faculty-initiated projects have focused on design solutions, with limited ties to other programs or university Extension. To build on the design programs’ successful faculty-initiated projects, while addressing some of their limitations, the U of I made a strategic commitment to interdisciplinary outreach and engagement in the mid-2000s.

**Institution-Initiated Projects—An Interdisciplinary Model**

In 2007, the U of I reorganized and expanded its community outreach and engagement efforts by creating the Building Sustainable Communities Initiative (BSCI). The BSCI has three parts: an interdisciplinary master’s degree in planning and community design, a community engagement component, and a professional training program. Through the BSCI, an interdisciplinary partnership model was developed, which includes participation from eight colleges and U of I Extension (Figure 2). This university-wide platform added faculty expertise in planning, economic development, engineering, political science, health, hazards, and law to the traditional architecture, landscape architecture, and Extension outreach activities. Greater expertise expanded the number and types of communities that the university could partner with, but necessitated coordination at an institutional level. The interdisciplinary model builds on the faculty-initiated project model, while still providing room for those types of projects where applicable. Table 2 illustrates the wide-range of outreach capabilities available to communities through the interdisciplinary model due to the increase in contributory capacity. Key to the BSCI’s success is its direct link to U of I’s strategic plan.

**Interdisciplinary Model Initiation**

In 2006, the U of I adopted outreach and engagement as a goal in its 2005-2010 Strategic Plan. Shortly thereafter, the president formed a team to identify ways to meet the goals. The first BSCI director, a team co-chair, made the community engagement arm of the initiative a showcase for the university’s new commitment to community-university partnerships. A key aim of the initiative was to increase university engagement with communities through an interdisciplinary structure. Before the university sought out community partners and projects, it focused on strengthening links within the institution. This relationship building started with the BSCI proposal. The co-chairs of the proposal brought together faculty with contributory expertise from across campus. Eight colleges made faculty line commitments to the initiative, and a Landscape Architecture Department faculty member was given an Extension specialist appointment, which provides an important link between campus and off-campus faculty.

Extension strengthened its community development focus throughout its system. Extension Community Development specialists address community challenges ranging from rapid population growth to economic and social change. The expanded community development focus coincided with an Extension program called Horizons Community Leadership to Reduce Poverty, funded by the Northwest Area Foundation, aimed at reducing poverty and achieving sustainable prosperity in small towns and reservation communities.

![Figure 2. U of I’s Interdisciplinary Partnership Model for Outreach and Engagement](image-url)
**Interdisciplinary Model Structure**

The BSCI has a director, a program manager, and an administrative assistant, in addition to the Extension specialist (landscape architect), and an executive committee composed of faculty from participating colleges. By developing this structure, the BSCI made a strategic commitment to long-term partnerships with communities. This structure improves on efforts by individual faculty in developing relationships by 1) ensuring institutional commitments of time and resources, 2) coordinating efforts to build value through multiple projects, 3) sustaining relationships into the future, and 4) formalizing partnerships with memoranda of understanding (MOUs).

**Forming Community-University Partnerships**

Crafting community-university partnerships takes dedication by all the partners. This section emphasizes how projects are identified and partnerships are formed. It also addresses the roles and relationships between various partners including citizens, faculty, and students.

Community-university partnerships are initiated in different ways. Ideas may come through Extension faculty who bring community needs to the landscape architecture Extension specialist, who then relays them to the on-campus faculty through the BSCI’s executive committee. If community needs align with the initiative’s goals, faculty expertise, and academic objectives, staff from the university visit the community, meet with local leaders, and form a partnership based on a set of criteria tightly linked to the university’s strategic plan (Table 3). Alternatively, long-term partnerships may also grow out of short-term, faculty-initiated projects in which the community has other needs that may engage different academic departments.

Once the community and executive committee decide to form a partnership, the program manager prepares a contract outlining the proposed projects and commitments from university participants (faculty, staff, and students) and community participants, who could be the mayor, city or county commissioners, and community group leaders. This contract outlines key roles, responsibilities, and university and community financial contributions.

**Table 2. Outreach Capabilities of Selected Courses and Programs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programs &amp; Courses</th>
<th>Products</th>
<th>Extension/ Horizons</th>
<th>Landscape Architecture &amp; Arch Studies</th>
<th>Advanced Landscape Arch. Studies</th>
<th>Planning Introduction Course</th>
<th>Planning Studio</th>
<th>Internship</th>
<th>Contracted Studies*</th>
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*Contracted studies: A faculty/student team takes on a community project outside of class for a specified amount.
Community Engagement

In the model the university partner shares responsibility with community leaders and other stakeholders in recruiting partner participants (Fung, 2006). Participants are self-selected with encouragement from newspaper, radio, and poster announcements. However, we seek additional participation that may yield a better representation of the public through surveys. We also engage in targeted recruitment of participants to establish representation from a range of age, income, and ethnic groups.

Citizens and their elected officials are not only the recipients of technical services; they also provide critical local knowledge for students and faculty. This is perhaps the most poorly understood dynamic of the engaged university and its service-learning programs. In some instances, university faculty assume they know the solutions to particular problems and that community participants should defer to their technical judgment. However, it is becoming more accepted that technical and social spheres coproduce knowledge (Fischer, 2009). In the case study examples, community knowledge was solicited, especially in the visioning, programming, progress review, and evaluation stages of project development. In fact, the faculty fosters deliberative public discourse, which in some of the communities was rare due to dysfunctional political entities, economic stresses, and lack of meaningful participatory opportunities. Democratic participatory opportunities are intangible but important outcomes of community-university partnerships. Our experience is that Extension faculty are in a strategic position to mediate between university expertise and community values and goals in a participatory setting given their location in the partner community.

Discrepancies between academic and community outcomes can be minimized when partnerships are initiated with a true understanding of partner benefits. Extension faculty in Cascade and Plummer worked for 18 months with Horizons participants.

Table 3. Partnership Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Level</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Community Need</td>
<td>Community has identified a critical need that requires outside assistance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Assessment</td>
<td>Community Readiness</td>
<td>Participated in one of a number of state-wide processes (e.g., Horizons) and identified vision and goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Leadership</td>
<td>Community elected leaders support the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Partners</td>
<td>Key community contact is working with additional partners on the project Presence of an Extension faculty person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Potential to work across jurisdictional boundaries to demonstrate a regional approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Commitment*</td>
<td>Community can contribute resources to the project (e.g., paying expenses, providing in-kind contributions, staff/volunteer time).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Under-represented Populations*</td>
<td>Has the potential to involve under-represented residents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Fit with Program Learning</td>
<td>Community needs meet the learning outcomes set forth for the program, the class/studio, student projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Faculty can contribute expertise and insight into project and guide students in their work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach</td>
<td>Application*</td>
<td>Has scholarly and/or creative application—for the place, the state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee</td>
<td>Visibility/Significance*</td>
<td>Addresses critical need of regional/state-wide significance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Tied to University of Idaho Strategic Action Plan Goal Three: “Outreach and Engagement”
in study circles, leadership training, visioning, and action team formation. In both communities, the Extension faculty served as a facilitator and mediator. The result was citizen groups with considerable practice in public discourse and decision-making. Especially for communities beginning a planning or design effort, the extended visioning activities established an effective venue for other units of the university outreach organization to build upon. In both communities, students took ideas that came from the visioning processes and crafted them into real-world solutions.

The city of Plummer, in conjunction with the Horizons team, completed an updated comprehensive plan in summer 2007. Main goals were to guide growth toward existing development while maintaining the town’s rural character and to create a distinct and bustling downtown core (City of Plummer, 2007). With a new comprehensive plan, the city needed to update its 1995 land use ordinances. The Extension faculty in the area contacted the U of I planning program to assist the town in developing a land use ordinance that would implement the goals of their comprehensive plan.

Goals identified by the Horizons action teams for Cascade were to create a regional riverside park at the former mill site, improve the city park, and revitalize the downtown core. Citizens in Cascade, through Extension, requested the University’s assistance for the development of a broad range of planning and design concepts. The multi-year engagement with Cascade resulted in many products and service-learning opportunities for students (Table 4). In both communities, due to the Horizons program, citizens were capable of judging planning and design proposals for consistency with their values and priorities. The program effectively enhanced the community-university partnerships in Plummer and Cascade.

**Faculty Engagement**

Both on-campus and Extension faculty are critical to the success of community-university partnerships. Extension faculty live in the communities and interact with residents and elected officials on a daily basis. They have a keen sense of community power dynamics and social capital, assisting campus faculty with relationship building. Furthermore, they communicate and disseminate project progress through the press and other outlets.

Prior to bringing in students, campus faculty meet with community leaders to determine the scope and focus of class projects. This step helps to determine the type and amount of community support and university resources needed to complete projects. The semesters or years of university involvement are estimated and a project sequence is outlined. The costs associated with field trips as well as the printing and binding of final products is written into the MOU.

**Student Engagement**

Students play a major role in the community-university partnerships, ranging from their solicitation of residents’ ideas and goals to the production of design concepts and draft planning documents. Before setting foot in a community, students prepare for their service-learning experiences. Faculty, who have undergone service-learning training, bring in speakers and assign readings about the community, from current affairs to historic accounts. In the case of Plummer, students read histories of the Coeur d’Alene Tribe and heard presentations from Extension, Anthropology, and Education faculty who had worked with the tribe and town of Plummer.

Another method for orienting students is developing a regional atlas. The atlas is produced during the fall semester, prior to the intensive service-learning studio course in spring. The atlas project familiarizes students with the biophysical, cultural, historic, social, demographic, economic, and political aspects of the community/region. To produce the atlas, students conduct primary and secondary data collection, analysis, and synthesis. The primary data are collected during a field trip taken mid-semester, where students are paired with community members. In addition to writing their own sections, students share their work with the class and write a conclusion that outlines the major planning, design, and economic development challenges and opportunities facing the community/region. The atlas project provides students with a rich background prior to conducting design and planning projects in the community. In this way, students, when developing land use ordinances or master plans, are able to be socially, culturally, and environmentally sensitive to community and/or regional contexts.

To ensure that students conduct themselves in a professional manner, faculty review community engagement etiquette and professional associations’ codes of ethics and have students complete the National Institution of Health’s Protecting Human Research Participants certificate.

**Student/Community Interactions**

During the spring studio, students visit the community to gather citizen goals and criteria for projects, tour the community, and take photos. Based on the aspirations of the citizens, the students
develop work plans. Both community contacts and faculty approve work plans before students begin their projects. The second visit takes place at mid-semester, when students give public presentations of draft work for feedback from the community. They incorporate this input into their final drafts. At the end of the semester, students may return a last time to give final presentations and deliver their reports or design concepts.

Working with the Plummer city clerk and City Council on new land use codes, students divided into three teams to work on traditional land use categories (residential, commercial, and industrial); the central business district to develop a form-based code that aligned with the city’s traditional western town aesthetics; and a series of environmental overlays focused on protecting undeveloped lands, public infrastructure, and water resources.

Midway through their work, student teams presented draft recommendations for the land use ordinances at a Plummer City Council meeting, where elected officials and the general public provided written and oral input on the draft ordinances. Students incorporated community comments into their final reports. The city clerk utilized much of the students’ work to develop a draft land use ordinance that was vetted through a public process. The city adopted the code in August 2009.

The Cascade case study is an example of an extensive community-university partnership, where the university made a multi-semester commitment to address a number of design and planning projects. In fall 2008, planning students developed an atlas, while architecture and landscape architecture students prepared master plans and design prototypes for buildings and landscapes within Cascade’s city limits.

Concepts from the fall courses provided citizens with images of how their town could be improved (Figure 3, for example). The atlas and design prototypes formed the basis for spring 2009 landscape architecture and planning studios, which focused on refining design concepts for a riverside park and updating the city’s comprehensive plan. For a full accounting of partnership projects in Cascade, see Table 4.

**Student Reflection Opportunities**

An integral component of service-learning is ensuring students the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and project outcomes. This reflection can take various forms, such as written reflections, journal entries, or group discussions. The process of reflection allows students to connect their learning to broader social, environmental, and cultural contexts, enhancing their understanding and appreciation of the impact of their work. It also helps them develop critical thinking skills and the ability to analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of their contributions to community projects.

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**Table 4. Outreach Activities in Cascade, Idaho, 2007–2009**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Course/Program</th>
<th>Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007–2008</td>
<td>U of I Extension</td>
<td>Visioning, training facilitators, leaders, poverty reduction goals, strategies and actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2008</td>
<td>Landscape Architecture Studio</td>
<td>Brownfield redevelopment of the former mill site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2008</td>
<td>College of Art and Architecture internship</td>
<td>Extension projects in Cascade and data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2008</td>
<td>Introductory Planning Course and Extension</td>
<td>Atlas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Landscape Architecture Studios and Extension</td>
<td>Master planning and design prototypes for buildings and landscapes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Landscape Architecture Studio</td>
<td>Riverside Regional Park master plan alternatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2009</td>
<td>Landscape Architecture Studio</td>
<td>Refinement of Riverside Park Master Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Studio and Extension</td>
<td>Regional Amenity Plan and Cascade Comprehensive Plan Update</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2009</td>
<td>Landscape Architecture Internship</td>
<td>Graphic production of Riverside Park Master Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Internship</td>
<td>Community Garden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape Architecture Studio</td>
<td>Living Machine® Landscape and Technical Drawings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
their experiences. It is important for students to understand that not only are they engaging in professional practice and providing a service to a community; they are also increasing their critical problem-solving skills, abilities to adapt to changing situations, and learning to communicate with people of different backgrounds and experiences (Sletto, 2010). Through structured reflection, students are able to learn by thinking about what they are doing (Bonar, Buchanan, Fisher, & Wechsler, 1996).

After each field trip, students and faculty debriefed, discussing topics ranging from specific planning and design needs to small town politics. Students kept journals during the semester, chronicling their experiences. Reflecting on the Plummer project, one student said students appreciated the “challenging projects and the opportunity to apply methods and knowledge gained” from the Plummer studio and others classes. Another explained that students appreciated faculty allowing “students of various disciplines to solve ‘real-world’ problems.” Students appreciated the “organic nature of teamwork” and enjoyed working in communities where they were exposed to a “wide-variety of different people and perspectives” and where they got the opportunity to apply “architecture, landscape architecture, and planning disciplines to community projects.”

Service-learning, particularly for applied disciplines like planning and architecture, is important because professional practice “involves more than a conceptual understanding of the knowledge and skills; it also requires an operational understanding” (Roakes & Norris-Tirrell, 2000, p. 100). Through service-learning projects, students receive occupational competence that complements their conceptual knowledge and skills (Roakes & Norris-Tirrell, 2000). Group and individual reflection opportunities give students the ability to identify and examine the linkages between knowledge and application.

Exporting the U of I Model

For those interested in the U of I’s interdisciplinary partnership model for outreach and engagement, the following lessons learned may be of help.

Contributory Expertise

Perhaps the easiest task, and one of the most important, is to invite faculty with a range of expertise to adopt the concept and methods of engaged service-learning. Adjusting position descriptions, making joint appointments to encourage interdisciplinary collaboration, and rewarding faculty for outreach efforts on par with more traditional research productivity is likely more difficult and time consuming. For Extension faculty, it is important that their job descriptions include community development responsibilities to encourage partnership building. Effective partnerships require faculty to embrace participatory, democratic decision-making and understand that interdisciplinary work and its products will be subjected to the logic of public discourse and viewed through the lens of social and cultural knowledge.

Model Organization

A passionate faculty member can create and deliver useful products to the community and create transformative learning opportunities for students, but long-term and interdisciplinary programs need institutional support and funding (Barnes et al, 2009; Sorensen & Lawson, 2011). Outreach, service, and knowledge transfer are embedded in the mission of land-grant colleges, but other institutions of higher education may need to incorporate these values into the academic culture in order to foster the support and participation of the administrative and academic units. Managing partnerships in many communities simultaneously requires dedicated administrative and staff positions, although faculty should be directly involved in establishing partnerships and in curriculum development.

A robust outreach and engagement program based on a diverse set of contributing experts and their students also requires an organization that includes, among others, faculty, administrators, grant writers, and public relations staff. Our model emerged from two desires: to develop more effective ways to improve the quality of life in Idaho communities, and to provide students and faculty with transformative interdisciplinary engaged learning opportunities. University, college, department, and faculty structures emerged from these goals.

Effective Partnerships

Projects of the greatest value to the community and the students involve broad citizen participation and
meaningful opportunities to communicate, interact, and contribute to decisions about the goals, criteria, and technology employed in addressing community planning and design needs. In our experience, the BSCI director and the Extension specialist have the most experience communicating the outreach and engagement values of the university and soliciting the initial goals and scope of community needs. Clarity of community aspirations and university objectives eliminates misunderstandings that are the source of citizen and student disappointments. The aspirations and objectives must be revisited often in long-term partnerships and communicated to each new faculty member, student team, and community group that joins the project.

As we discussed previously, there are multiple pathways for identification of potential partners and projects. Faculty-initiated projects arising from conference presentations, service organizations, and professional networks are a rich source. Local liaisons, such as Extension faculty and municipal or county economic development officers in remote communities, are another. In addition to being adept at matching community needs with service-learning projects, Extension faculty and economic development officers are important promoters and facilitators of positive community-university relationships.

**Academic and Service-Learning Outcomes**

For students and faculty, participating effectively in an interdisciplinary community-university partnership effort is as important as developing and applying discipline-specific skills. Therefore, assisting students in resolving unexamined values associated with expert contributions, and the social and cultural systems in which they are embedded, is an important educational goal (Sletto, 2010). Furthermore, participatory and democratic public deliberation should be part of the service-learning experience (Sorensen & Lawson, 2011). Preparation for the experience and reflection on the meaning and value of engaged learning enriches student experiences (Bonar et al., 1996; Roakes & Norris-Tirrell, 2000). Acquisition of professional knowledge founded in history and theory is the counterpoint to service-learning. Faculty impart this information to students to ensure a well-rounded education as well as to maintain accreditation. These academic requirements must be explained to partners so that they understand the balance faculty must find between service projects and academic objectives.

**Final Reflections**

In contrast to faculty-initiated partnerships such as Sandpoint, the Plummer and Cascade case studies illustrate that the capacity to partner with communities at various planning stages is dependent on a robust and flexible interdisciplinary model of outreach and engagement coordinated at the university level, where a long-term commitment by the community and university is made. This is not to imply that the U of I’s interdisciplinary model of outreach and engagement has been perfectly implemented. For example, communication sometimes breaks down and a mismatch between the academic outcomes and community needs and readiness occurs. In a recent assessment of the State University of New York’s partnerships with local communities, Doble and King (2011) highlight the pitfalls of complex partnerships including coordination and communication challenges and mission discrepancies. Additional difficulties and disappointments are described below.

First, a layer of bureaucracy may be established between faculty and community partners compromising capacity for direct communication in initial project development. The responsibilities of identifying communities, securing funding, and project definition that was once solely held by individual faculty is now managed by the director and executive committee in partnership arrangements. This reduces the capacity for satisfying personal engagement between faculty, citizens, and their leaders. However, this deficiency is largely offset through inclusive partnership building processes that engage all participants in shaping common project goals.

Second, it can be difficult for individual faculty to be aware of all the activities being undertaken by university units as well as all of the personnel and courses involved. In April 2011, the university created the Office of Outreach and Engagement. The office is developing a tool for tracking university and courses involved. In April 2011, the university created the Office of Outreach and Engagement. The office is developing a tool for tracking university projects and partnerships throughout the state. Coordination by this unit will increase everyone’s awareness and highlight the work the university is doing statewide.

Third, university and community schedules do not always correspond. For example, in Sandpoint public presentations in 2006 were not well attended due to conflicting university and community calendars. As a remedy, students gave the city planner digital presentations and a project book that allowed dissemination of ideas to citizens.

A final challenge is that the expanded outreach effort garners significant visibility in the communities, with university colleagues, and with state legislators. Therefore, the quality of the outreach products from service-learning courses
must be fully professional. This adds daunting new responsibilities for the participating faculty since the final project, which contains much student work, must be fully professional. Increasing standards and student requirements only partially resolves the gap. Faculty time to revise, present, and publish student-produced outreach products is unsupported. Program administrators have recognized this shortfall and are now securing funding for post project production.

Our experience in working with communities in economic transition leaves us with the following conclusions: (1) The commitment by the participating higher education unit must be serious because the needs are so diverse; (2) the contributory expertise and organizational structure must be comprehensive and efficient; (3) the partnership must be long-term; and (4) the participatory, democratic process must be honored by all participants.

Our interdisciplinary outreach and engagement model benefits all participants. Students receive transformative service-learning experiences through the application of discipline-specific skills and interdisciplinary collaboration. Faculty gain through enriched teaching and scholarship opportunities. And local communities gain through participatory processes resulting in design and planning concepts that support sustainable development.

References


Sletto, B. (2010). Educating reflective


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**About the Authors**

Tamara Laninga is an assistant professor in the Bioregional Planning and Community Design Program; Gary Austin is an associate professor in Landscape Architecture; and Wendy McClure is a professor of Architecture—all at the University of Idaho.
Abstract
Publicly engaged scholarship is often described by activity (e.g., service-learning; community-based, participatory research; public humanities), by place (e.g., rural communities, urban neighborhood), or by partner (e.g., non-governmental organization, school). These common descriptors—based on what faculty do, where they do it, and with whom they partner—fail to characterize how faculty members collaborate with community partners in engaged research, engaged teaching, and engaged service. This study explored whether two process-oriented constructs—level of activity and degree of engagement—were useful descriptors of how faculty members go about their scholarly collaborations with the public. Interpretive content analysis of 173 promotion and tenure forms revealed significant differences in intensity of activity and degree of engagement by gender, race, age, teaching assignment, joint departmental appointment, appointment length, Extension appointment, and discipline. These variations suggested new directions in professional development for community engagement and appointments/assignments supportive of faculty involvement in publicly engaged scholarship.

Introduction
In response to public criticism concerning their contributions to the greater good of society, some institutional leaders and faculty at American research universities have led organizational change initiatives to make publicly engaged scholarship a central tenet of their institutional missions (Boyte, 2005; Kezar, Chambers, & Burkhardt, 2005; Matthews, 2006). Many leaders recognized the need for systemic change to sustain engaged scholarship on their campuses and have advocated for various reforms in institutional policy and practice (e.g., revised strategic plans, vision and mission statements, revised promotion and tenure policies, and new incentive and rewards programs) to integrate engagement on their campus (Checkoway, 2001; Ehrlich, 2000).

Consequently, publicly engaged scholarship has moved from the margins to the mainstream at many higher education institutions, with 115 campuses designated with the Carnegie Community Engagement Elective Classification in 2010 (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2010; Driscoll & Sandmann, 2001). Some leaders in the engagement movement, however, are concerned that many of these institutional change efforts represent shifts in rhetoric only and not in the ways in which faculty collaborate with community members, diluting the ideal of reciprocal, mutually beneficial partnerships with communities. Specifically, they charge that lack of focus on the process dimensions of engagement may “leave some campuses and their leaders with the impression that they are ‘doing engagement,’ when in fact they are not” (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2002, p. 8).

While early institutional change efforts focused on organizational structures, policies, and practices, more contemporary ones emphasize the significantly different types of relationships faculty have with their community partners and advocate for crisper distinctions between types of faculty-community relationships (Saltmarsh, Hartley, & Clayton, 2009). However, beyond calls for a greater focus on understanding the process dimensions of community engagement, very little research has been conducted to differentiate ways in which faculty collaborate with their community partners empirically.

Research Purpose and Questions
The goal of this research was to contribute to the limited but growing research about publicly engaged scholarship, which includes research about levels (Colbeck & Wharton-Michael, 2006), integration (Bloomgarden & O’Meara, 2007; Colbeck & Weaver, 2008), pervasiveness (Colbeck & Weaver, 2008), and types (Doberneck, Glass, & Schweitzer, 2010; Glass, Doberneck, & Schweitzer, 2011). Specifically, this study was designed to explore whether two process-oriented constructs—intensity of activity and degree of engagement—were useful for characterizing differences in how faculty members collaborate with community partners in engaged research, engaged teaching, and engaged service (Glass & Fitzgerald, 2010). A second research
goal was to determine whether analysis using these two process-oriented constructs would reveal significant demographic (gender, race, age, number of years at institution), appointment (assignments, joint college, joint departmental, Extension), or disciplinary differences in how faculty members approach their publicly engaged scholarship. The following research questions framed this study:

1. Are faculty demographic characteristics related to intensity of activity and degree of engagement in publicly engaged scholarship?
2. Are faculty appointment variables related to intensity of activity and degree of engagement in publicly engaged scholarship?
3. Is the faculty member’s area of study related to intensity of activity and degree of engagement in publicly engaged scholarship?

To be clear, we are not advocating that higher levels of intensity of activity or degrees of engagement are “better” than lower levels; our goal, instead, is to reveal the range of ways faculty members collaborate with the public, based on empirical evidence, and to examine whether there are demographic, appointment, or disciplinary patterns related to how faculty approach their scholarly collaborations with the public.

### Conceptual Framework and Definitions

For this study, we modified Colbeck & Wharton-Michael’s (2006) framework, “Individual and Organizational Influences on Faculty Member’s Motivation and Engagement in Public Scholarship,” and linked individual characteristics, academic characteristics, and areas of scholarship to intensity of activity and degree of engagement (see Figure 1).

We used Michigan State University’s definition of publicly engaged scholarship, which states that engagement “is a scholarly endeavor that cross-cuts instruction, research and creative activities, and service; fulfills unit and university missions; and is focused on collaboration with and benefits to communities external to the university” (Provost’s Committee on University Outreach, 1993). Because we wanted to move beyond descriptions of activity, place, and partner, we developed two process-oriented constructs to characterize the differences in how faculty members approached their scholarly collaborations with the public.

Intensity of activity was comprised of the frequency, duration, and complexity of faculty members’ interactions with community partners and was influenced by Enos & Morton’s (2003) framework for development of campus-community partnerships. Intensity of activity included types of engagement activities, number of different types of engagement activities, frequency and duration of the engagement activities, scholarly output related to the activities, and awards/recognitions received for publicly engaged scholarship.

Degree of engagement characterized the extent to which faculty members collaborated with their community partners in reciprocal, mutually beneficial ways, and was influenced by The Research University Civic Engagement Network’s degree of

**Figure 1.** Individual factors related to intensity and degree of publicly engaged scholarship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Characteristics</th>
<th>Demographic Variables</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Race/ethnicity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Age</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Number of years at institution</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Characteristics</th>
<th>Appointment Variables</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assignment in teaching, research, service</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extension appointment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Joint appointments</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rank</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Scholarship</th>
<th>Field of Study Variables</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>College grouping</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intensity of activity and degree of engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
collaborative processes in engaged research (Stanton, 2008), Imagining America’s continuum of scholarship (Ellison & Eatman, 2008), and distinctions between transactional and transformational partnerships (Saltmarsh, Hartley, & Clayton, 2009). Degree of engagement focused on depth of collaboration and included the direction or flow of information or knowledge; locus of control in decision making; extent of collaboration at different stages of the engagement process; and recognized sources of new knowledge or understanding associated with publicly engaged scholarship.

External audiences (often called the community or the public) were broadly defined in this study to include more than geographically bound communities (e.g., neighborhoods, cities, or regions defined by physical place). We also included communities of identity, affiliation or interest, circumstance, faith, kin, and profession or practice (Fraser, 2005; Ife, 2002; Marsh, 1999; Mattessich, Monsey, & Roy, 1999). Private consulting and individual volunteerism were excluded from the study because they fulfill individual goals, not unit or university missions. Faculty contributions to university, college, or departmental committees and to scholarly and professional associations were also excluded because those activities do not contribute directly to the public, but instead address campus or disciplinary needs or goals.

Research Design and Methods

For this exploratory study, we conducted an interpretive content analysis of the faculty members’ portions of promotion and tenure forms, rich descriptions of faculty members’ scholarly activities in instruction, research and creative activities, and service. Interpretive content analysis was selected because it is particularly well-suited for determining the presence of identified concepts in large amounts of unstructured text and because it is a context-sensitive analytic technique, responsive enough to differentiate between nuanced meanings inherent in faculty descriptions of their scholarly activities (Krippendorff, 2004). For example, using interpretive content analysis, we were able to differentiate between how plant biologists and urban planners use the word “community” in descriptions of their scholarship.

Research Site and Participants

Because this was an exploratory study, we purposefully limited data collection to one site (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2001). Michigan State University was selected because it is a research-intensive, land-grant, Carnegie-engaged institution, where faculty members are expected to achieve scholarly excellence across all three traditional academic missions—research and creative activities, teaching, and service—and to pursue these activities in service to the public good. Michigan State University also revised its promotion and tenure forms in 2001 to encourage faculty members to report their publicly engaged scholarship. As such, institutional data about faculty members’ scholarly activities were reasonably expected to provide the rich, detailed examples required to determine whether the two process-oriented constructs—intensity of activity and degree of engagement—would reveal differences in how faculty members approach their scholarly collaborations with the public.

Researchers accessed promotion and tenure documents written by tenure line faculty who underwent tenure and promotion reviews between 2002 and 2006. Due to the unavailability of institutional data, the study did not include tenure line faculty who were unsuccessful in promotion and tenure review; were no longer employed at the university; and/or no longer held tenure track appointments at the university. During the study period, 374 tenure-line faculty members met our eligibility criteria and were contacted by mail for their informed consent. Of the eligible faculty members, 46% (n=173) consented to have their promotion and tenure documents included in this institutional review board approved study.

The 173 participants included 69% male, 31% female, 80% White, 5% Black, 10% Asian/Pacific Islander, 2% Hispanic, and 3% American Indian/Alaska Native. Participant ranks included 54% assistant professor and 37% associate professor. Participants held primary appointments in the following colleges: 27% agriculture and natural resources; 19% natural science; 14% social science; 12% arts and letters, including music; 6% education; 4% business; 4% engineering; 4% human medicine; 4% osteopathic medicine; 4% veterinary medicine; 2% communication arts and sciences; 2% nursing; and 1% other primary tenure home.

Using chi-square analysis, researchers determined that faculty members included in this study were not significantly different (by gender, ethnicity, primary college, and rank) from the full-time, tenure line faculty at Michigan State University during the 2002–2006 study period.

Sources of Data

Researchers accessed the study data from two sources centrally collected and organized by the institution’s Office of Academic Human Resources: a university administrators’ database and promotion and tenure forms completed by faculty members. Data
Data Coding and Analysis

Researchers assigned two different holistic scores—one for intensity of activity and one for degree of engagement—to characterize faculty members’ publicly engaged scholarship. Because this was an exploratory study, holistic scoring was used to describe each faculty member’s engaged scholarship in its entirety (instead of scoring specific instances of publicly engaged scholarship and aggregating the scores into an overall score). Researchers used the four-point coding scheme (none, low, medium, and high) developed by Colbeck and Wharton-Michael (2006) to characterize levels of faculty engagement. For intensity of activity, researchers coded a 0 for absolutely no publicly engaged scholarship reported by faculty; 1 for faculty whose publicly engaged scholarship could be characterized by mostly ad-hoc, short-term activities with no scholarly publications or awards associated with it; 2 for faculty whose work was characterized by a mixture of shorter and deeper intensity publicly engaged scholarship; and 3 for faculty whose work was characterized by multiple types; ongoing, regular relationships; or partnerships with community members which resulted in generation of scholarly publications and/or awards and recognitions.

For degree of engagement, researchers coded a 0 for absolutely no publicly engaged scholarship reported by faculty; 1 for faculty whose work was characterized as mostly unidirectional transfers of expert knowledge from university to community recipients; 2 for faculty whose work was characterized as a mixture of unidirectional and collaboratively co-created activities; and 3 for faculty whose work was characterized as predominantly reciprocal, mutually determined flows of knowledge and resulting co-generated scholarship.

We coded the data by hand to ensure faculty members’ descriptions of their engaged scholarship were considered in their fullest context. We followed standard procedures for team-based coding, including frequent meetings to ensure coding consistency across team members, to discuss and resolve ambiguous cases, and to update coding rules and the codebook as needed (Mayring, 2000; MacQueen, McEllen, Kay, & Milstein, 1998).

Once the data were coded, we entered them into Statistical Package for Social Sciences 17.0. As is common practice in exploratory research and interpretive content analysis, we analyzed the key constructs using various statistical procedures to search for significant patterns in the data. We calculated means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, and conducted t-tests, one-way analyses of variance, and chi-square statistics to examine differences within groups and between groups of faculty. Two-way analyses of variance were also used, when appropriate, to identify potential interactions between demographic variables. For this study, p < .05 level was considered to be the level of statistical significance; however, because this was an exploratory study, we occasionally noted patterns in the data that were interesting even if they failed to meet the threshold of statistical significance.

Results

Q1: Are faculty demographic characteristics related to intensity of activity and degree of engagement in publicly engaged scholarship?

The demographic characteristics considered in this study included gender, race, age at time of review, and number of years at the institution at time of promotion/tenure review. Because the numbers of minority faculty members were small, we grouped them into a single category—non-White faculty—for the purposes of analysis. Mean levels of intensity and degree of engagement were compared using t-tests and one-way analyses of variance. Results and levels of statistical significance are presented in Table 1.

For intensity of activity, there were no statistically significant differences in publicly engaged scholarship by gender, race, and age, though intensity did vary by number of years at the university. Greater levels of intensity were found for faculty who had been at the institution for 11 to 15 years. For degree of engagement, there were no statistically significant differences by race and by number of years at the institution. Women reported statistically significant higher degrees of engagement than their male colleagues, and faculty members in their 50s reported higher degrees of engagement than their younger colleagues.

After testing for main effects, two-way analyses of variance were conducted to look for possible
interaction effects between the demographic variables. For intensity of activity, there were no statistically significant findings. For degree of engagement, the interaction between gender and race was statistically significant. Mean levels by gender and race for degree of engagement are depicted in Figure 2.

The data in Figure 2 indicate that there is very little difference in the degree of engagement between White males (mean = 1.28), non-White males (mean = 1.30), and White females (mean = 1.40). Non-White females (mean = 2.18) reported a statistically significant higher degree of engagement than the other groups.

Q2: Are faculty appointment variables related to intensity of activity and degree of engagement in publicly engaged scholarship?

Faculty appointment variables in this study included rank and assignment (percentage of appointment in instruction, research and creative activities, and service; Extension appointment; patient care appointment; joint appointment; and length of appointment [academic 9 month or academic 12 month]).

**Assignment**

At Michigan State, faculty members’ assignments typically consist of an assigned percentage of time in instruction, research and creative activities, service, and other categories, including Extension, international, urban affairs, and patient care. The instructional assignment is further divided into the following sub-categories: undergraduate teaching, graduate teaching, non-credit instruction, and academic advising. The service assignment is divided into three subcategories: academic (within scholarly and professional organizations); academic (within the broader university); and within the broader community.

Pearson’s correlations were conducted to determine whether assignments were related to intensity of activity and degree of engagement. Results are reported in Table 2, with a single asterisk indicating significance at p < .05 and a double asterisk indicating significance at p < .01.

The data in Table 2 revealed several statistically significant patterns related to assignment. First, there is an inverse relationship between assignment in instruction and degree of engagement. Faculty with higher percentage appointments in graduate instruction described higher degrees of engagement in their scholarship, while faculty with higher percentage appointments in undergraduate instruction described lower degrees of engagement in their scholarship. Second, faculty members’ percentage assigned to service to the university showed a negative relationship with intensity

Table 1. Mean Levels of Activity and Degree of Engagement by Gender, Race, Age, and Years at Institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Level of Activity</th>
<th>Degree of Engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (n=54)</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male (n=117)</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (n=137)</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-white (n=34)</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30s (n=44)</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40s (n=100)</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50s (n=28)</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years at Institution</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0–5 years (n=42)</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6–10 years (n=79)</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11–15 years (n=33)</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 or more years (n=17)</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

0 = none reported; 1 = low; 2 = medium; and 3 = high *p ≤ .05
of activity. That is, faculty with higher assigned percentages to service to the university reported lower intensity of activity. As their assigned percentages of service to the university decreased, they reported higher levels of activity in publicly engaged scholarship. Faculty members’ assigned percentages to service to the profession did not vary greatly (between 4% and 6%) and were not related to faculty members’ reported intensity of activity. Finally, faculty members’ assigned percentages to service to the community showed a positive relationship with reported intensity of activity. As assigned percentage of service to community increased so did reported intensity of activity.

**Joint Appointments**

In this study, the majority of faculty members (83%) held appointments in one department, with 15% appointed in two departments and 2% appointed in three departments. For the purposes of analysis, we compared faculty with a single department appointment to faculty with joint appointments. A t-test was conducted to determine whether an appointment in more than one department was related to the reported intensity of activity and degree of engagement. Faculty with joint appointments (mean = 2.39) were more likely than their colleagues with single appointments (mean = 1.94, p = 0.027) to report high intensity of activities. For degree of engagement, the analysis showed no statistically significant differences between faculty with single and joint appointments.

**Length of Appointment**

Michigan State faculty hold either 9-month or 12-month appointments. T-tests were used to compare the different appointments and to determine whether length of appointment was related to intensity of activity and degree of engagement. For intensity of activity, no statistically significant differences were found. For degree of engagement, faculty members with 12-month appointments had statistically significant higher degrees of engagement than their colleagues with 9-month appointments.

This study included faculty members of two ranks—individuals going up for promotion/tenure to the associate professor level and those going up for promotion/tenure to the full professor level. T-tests were conducted to determine whether rank was related to reported intensity of activity and degree of engagement. We found that there were no statistically significant findings for intensity of activity or degree of engagement related to rank.

**Q3.** Is the faculty member’s area of scholarship or discipline related to intensity of activity and degree of engagement in publicly engaged scholarship?

For the primary college appointments, we recoded Michigan State’s 15 colleges into 8 more
commonly used college groupings for the purpose of analysis. Means and standard deviations for intensity of activity and degree of engagement by primary college appointments are reported in Table 3.

The data in Table 3 indicate, for both intensity of activity and degree of engagement, that faculty members with primary appointments in education, health and medical professions, and agriculture and natural resources reported higher levels, while faculty members with primary appointments in business, arts and humanities, and physical and biological sciences reported lower levels. Faculty members with appointments in engineering and social and behavioral sciences fell somewhere in the middle. These findings are consistent with other studies that examined how area of study relates to faculty participation in publicly engaged scholarship. For example, researchers examining commitment to community service found “the weakest supporters of community service [were]…faculty trained in the physical sciences, anthropology, and English” (Antonio, Astin, & Cress, 2000, p. 384). Similarly, faculty members in physical and biological sciences, the arts and mathematics, engineering, and computer sciences reported that service-learning (one type of publicly engaged scholarship) is “not relevant to their disciplines” (Abes, Jackson, & Jones, 2002, p. 12).

In Figure 3 it is clear that the college grouping shows a positive relationship between intensity of activity and degree of engagement, with faculty in some colleges reporting both low intensities of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Intensity of Activity</th>
<th>Degree of Engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructional appointment overall</td>
<td>-.200*</td>
<td>-.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate instruction</td>
<td>-.208*</td>
<td>-.238*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate instruction</td>
<td>-.019</td>
<td>.209*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research appointment overall</td>
<td>-.161*</td>
<td>-.081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research and creative activities</td>
<td>-.157*</td>
<td>-.080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service appointment overall</td>
<td>.289**</td>
<td>.110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic service</td>
<td>-.243*</td>
<td>-.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University service</td>
<td>-.251**</td>
<td>-.112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community service</td>
<td>.373**</td>
<td>.127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension appointment</td>
<td>.334**</td>
<td>.085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient care</td>
<td>.083</td>
<td>.207*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p ≤ .05 level of significance; **p ≤ .01 level of significance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College Grouping</th>
<th>Intensity of Activity</th>
<th>Degree of Engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture and Natural Resources (n=44)</td>
<td>2.57 0.76</td>
<td>1.52 0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Humanities (n=24)</td>
<td>1.38 1.06</td>
<td>1.04 0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business (n=6)</td>
<td>1.17 0.41</td>
<td>0.83 0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (n=9)</td>
<td>2.56 0.73</td>
<td>2.11 0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering (n=6)</td>
<td>1.50 0.84</td>
<td>1.17 0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Medical Professions (n=21)</td>
<td>2.33 0.80</td>
<td>1.81 0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical and Biological Sciences (n=30)</td>
<td>1.53 0.85</td>
<td>0.97 0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and Behavioral Sciences (n=26)</td>
<td>2.00 1.02</td>
<td>1.38 0.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
activity and low degrees of engagement while others reported both high intensities of activity and high levels of engagement.

**Delimitations and Limitations**

Because this study was exploratory, data were collected from one research site. The results are not expected to be broadly generalizable, but instead should be considered as a starting point for additional research conducted at other institutions of higher education where faculty members conduct publicly engaged scholarship.

Promotion and tenure forms as a source of data have some limitations. Faculty descriptions of their own scholarship, especially for promotion and tenure, are complex expressions, negotiated between the (sometimes competing) epistemological, institutional, and disciplinary influences and faculty members’ perspective on both the value of their own work and the perception of “what counts” at their institution at the time of review (O’Meara, 2002). Faculty members may have selectively included information on their forms, emphasizing specific aspects of their scholarship while minimizing others in order to make the strongest case going forward for review. Junior or mid-career faculty, for example, may have chosen to underreport their publicly engaged scholarship (Ellison & Eatman, 2008). As a result, data from promotion and tenure forms may differ from faculty members’ more authentic, less strategically crafted descriptions of their publicly engaged scholarship. While the “unreactive” nature of documents gives them their stability as a data source, it also limits researchers to analysis of text without further explanation from faculty members (Whitt, 2001). In other words, the written documents may tell only part of the story. Despite these limitations, promotion and tenure documents are the institutional record of faculty scholarship and served as an accessible, stable, and rich source of data for this study.

**Discussion and Future Directions For Research and Practice**

At Michigan State University, faculty members from a broad range of backgrounds, appointments, and disciplines described publicly engaged scholarship in their promotion and tenure materials, thereby providing researchers with a rich source of data about how faculty members collaborate with the public in engaged research, engaged teaching, and engaged service. Using interpretive content analysis, we were able to characterize faculty members’ engaged scholarship by intensity of activity and degree
of engagement—two process-oriented constructs different from the usual activity, place, and partner descriptions of engagement. Analyses also revealed patterns—related to demographics, appointment, and discipline—in how faculty members describe their engaged research, engaged teaching, and engaged service. This study’s findings suggest several future direction for research and practice.

First, while previous research has shown female faculty and faculty of color are more likely then their male and majority colleagues to be committed to and motivated by community-based teaching and research (Antonio, 2002; Antonio, Astin, & Cress, 2000), this study revealed that their engaged scholarship is also more likely to be characterized by higher levels of intensity of activity and degree of engagement. This finding is consistent with other research that confirms higher levels of publicly engaged scholarship by female faculty of color in what Turner describes as the “manifestation of interlocking race and gender” (Antonio, Astin, & Cress, 2000; Turner, 2002, p. 79). Future researchers may wish to study the interaction effects of race and gender related to publicly engaged scholarship—specifically, looking for differences across racial/ethnic groups (e.g., disaggregating ‘faculty of color’). Institutional leaders in higher education would do well to recognize this trend and ensure that institutional supports for engaged research, engaged teaching, and engaged service are especially supportive of women faculty of color who are more likely to be committed to the most intensive forms of publicly engaged scholarship.

Second, this study showed that faculty members’ assignments (e.g., percentages assigned to instruction, research and creative activities, and service) are related to levels of intensity of activity and degree of engagement in publicly engaged scholarship. Faculty members with graduate teaching assignments described higher degrees of engagement than their colleagues with undergraduate teaching assignments. Faculty members with appointments in “service to the broader community,” even minimal percentages, described higher levels of activity than their colleagues with “service to the university” appointments. Faculty members with Extension appointments, appointments in more than one department, and 12-month appointments (versus 9-month) were also more likely to demonstrate higher levels of activity or degrees of engagement. Because very little previous research has examined assignment and its relationship to publicly engaged scholarship, we would suggest that future researchers build upon this exploratory study to examine whether trends at Michigan State are consistent across American colleges and universities. Institutional leaders responsible for leading organizational change efforts for community engagement would do well to consider how faculty assignments are made on their respective campuses and to make adjustments in faculty appointments to support their engaged faculty.

Third, this study provided additional evidence that the disciplines in which faculty are initially socialized and practice their scholarship influence how they approach their collaborative scholarship with the public. Disciplinary differences revealed by this study confirmed what other researchers have discovered; that is, faculty members in agriculture, education, and health sciences are more likely to be engaged with communities, while their colleagues in the physical sciences and arts and humanities are less likely to conduct their instruction, research and creative activities, and service in conjunction with community partners (Abes, Jackson, & Jones, 2002; Antonio, Astin, & Cress, 2000). Future research is needed to understand these disciplinary differences, to identify how the disciplines create the barriers or facilitators for faculty involvement in publicly engaged scholarship, and ultimately to understand what publicly engaged scholarship looks like across the spectrum of faculty disciplines. More thorough understandings of these differences will allow institutional leaders to support faculty success and to communicate faculty relevance to society at large. Institutional leaders charged with professional development for community engagement should consider these findings as they craft faculty development programs that provide more than a “one size fits all” approach. For example, faculty members in disciplines with lower levels of activity or degrees of engagement (e.g., business, arts and humanities, physical and biological sciences) likely need different types of incentives, connections, and support to establish more robust community collaborations than their colleagues in disciplines with higher levels of activity and degrees of engagement (e.g., education, agriculture, and health and medical professions). In addition, this study’s findings suggest that faculty members’ age and years at the institutional may also influence their levels of activity and degrees of engagement. Those charged with professional development for community engagement may also want to consider a lifespan approach to supporting engaged faculty (Ellison & Eatman, 2008).

Conclusions

This study demonstrated that two process-oriented constructs—intensity of activity and degree
of engagement—provide a way of describing publicly engaged scholarship that goes beyond activity, place, or partner descriptions. These two constructs allow faculty, researchers, and institutional leaders to make distinctions between the many ways faculty members collaborate with the public in engaged research, engaged teaching, and engaged service. They allow differences in type of activity, number of types of activities, frequency and duration, scholarly outputs, flow of information and knowledge, locus of control of decision-making, extent of collaboration, and sources of new knowledge and understanding to come into relief or focus in ways that descriptions based on activity, place, or partner do not allow. We hope that the two constructs, along with other process-oriented constructs yet to be developed, will strengthen our understanding of variations in faculty members’ approaches to collaborative scholarship with the public. By making distinctions about the process dimensions of publicly engaged scholarship, we may respond to criticisms about changes in “rhetoric” with sound evidence about reciprocal, mutually beneficial, scholarly collaborations with the public.

References


About the Authors
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Abstract

Previous research has documented many positive effects of community service on student learning. Although a few studies have discovered that community service increases student’s cultural awareness, little research has addressed concrete changes in students’ conceptualization of diversity. The current study investigates how community service participation changes the complexity of students’ attitudes toward and perceptions of diversity. One hundred and six students participated in community service as a requirement for classes in Small Group Communication. Both quantitative and qualitative analysis of pre and post-community service surveys revealed that (1) community service significantly increased students’ level of comfort in interacting with populations different from their own, and (2) community service facilitated a shift of students’ conceptualization of diversity from simple categorical divisions to both similarity and difference as dynamic principles of identity.

As the relevance of multiculturalism became increasingly critical at the university level, faculty began incorporating unique learning opportunities into their courses that allowed students to explore and reflect upon multicultural issues across multiple contexts (O’Brien, 1993). In recent years, community service-based pedagogy has gained much attention as one of those opportunities that could potentially bring positive impact on students’ learning about diversity.

Existing scholarship highlights the impact of community service on a variety of aspects of students’ learning, including their sense of social responsibility and personal efficacy, the development of important life skills, and an enhanced sense of political, social, and cultural awareness. While previous research findings provide strong evidence supporting the significance of community service-based learning, few studies have focused specifically on learning associated with diversity.

Several studies have shown that community service helped students raise cultural awareness (Jahoda, 1992; Jones & Hill, 2001; Osborne, Hammerich, & Hensley, 2006; Primavera, 1999; Simons & Cleary, 2006). However, their findings are still challenged in terms of their substantive integration and methodological rigor. Specifically, while the improvement of cultural awareness has been well documented, the content of “awareness” and how students’ conceptualizations of diversity develop over time as a function of community service experience are unknown. Methodologically, many studies have used either longitudinal observations pre- and post-community service activities (Giles & Eyler, 1994; Simons & Cleary, 2006), control groups (Eyler, Giles, & Braxton, 1997) and quantitative (Eyler, Giles, & Braxton, 1997; Osborne, Hammerich, & Hensley, 1998) or qualitative analyses (Jones & Hill, 2001). However, few studies integrated multiple methodologies to address the impact of community service on diversity in a more comprehensive manner.

This study investigates changes in the complexity of students’ conceptualizations of diversity in small group communication courses. We begin with a discussion of the historical and contemporary “crisis of community” that provides a context for current models for diversity, difference, and service-learning. Next, we discuss the impact of community service-learning models in higher education for increasing cultural awareness, social responsibility, and life skills. We also discuss the relevance for increasing these areas for the learning outcomes in small group communication courses. Next, we adopt integrative methodologies, using a quantitative methodology, to explore how short-term community service participation plays a role in changing student attitudes toward diversity, and a qualitative approach to examine how such change manifests itself in resultant conceptualizations of diversity. We end with a discussion of our findings that demonstrate a link between students experiencing a service-learning component in their small group communication courses and developing an increased sense of cultural awareness and social responsibility as evidenced through their evolved understanding of diversity.

A Crisis of Community: Diversity, Difference, and Service-Learning

Community service is an integral part of American life. According to Morton and Saltmarsh (1997) the emergence of contemporary models of community service and service-learning is the
result of cultural responses to “individual and social dilemmas that emerged from the crisis of community at the turn of the last century” (p. 137). This early crisis of community is described as a fragmentation of a unified American culture by the combined forces of industrialization, urbanization, and immigration, and by the increasing centralization of political and economic power in the hands of private, industrial elite. U.S. American culture has focused relentlessly on the idea that individuals are self-interest maximizers and that private accumulation and private pleasures are the only measurable public goods. Capitalism requires us to be consumers rather than citizens.

Putnam (2000) describes a more contemporary version of the crisis of community. While the earlier one was a result of urbanization and the industrial revolution, Putnam looks at the increased individualization and separation as a result of suburbanization caused by middle-class urban flight and facilitated by the mobility of the automobile and reinforced by increased usage of technology such as the internet. Given these cultural changes, he argues that models of civic engagement and social connectedness have substantially declined. Those groups that he claims have grown in membership, such as Sierra Club and NOW, are primarily tertiary associations, meaning that the members do not actually gather in groups and build any relationships among themselves. For Putnam, the current crisis of community reflects a loss in “social capital” or the “features of a social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (p. 2).

So, while community groups are increasingly more homogeneous and tertiary, we know from a number of different projections, our community and institutional associations are increasingly becoming more diverse. One study estimates that by the year 2030, Asians, blacks, Hispanics, and other minorities will account for one-third of the U.S. population (Allen, 2004). Also, there are increasing demands by social identity groups for equal rights and recognition. Therefore, issues of social justice involving race, class, language, socioeconomic status, cultural sensitivity, and privilege pervade most activities we associate with community service.

The historical and contemporary crises of community demonstrate the need to consider definitions and experiences of diversity and difference. As we know from theories of social construction and social identity, the individual self is forged through our interactions with others (Allen, 2004; Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Therefore, engaging in service to communities raises complex issues that go beyond the acts of teaching a child to read, feeding the homeless, or tutoring English to a newly arrived immigrant—it exposes students to experiences of difference. Allen (2004) describes the important distinction between diversity and difference. Diversity is the word most frequently used to describe set categories of race, class, socioeconomic status, gender, sexuality, etc. Difference, on the other hand, “signifies how we tend to view identity (ours and others)” (Allen, p. 4). While diversity tends to almost exclusively focus on the categorical divisions of others, difference focuses on both similarity and difference as dynamic principles of identity. Allen continues, “This perspective allows us to recognize that no two persons are either totally different or totally similar” (p. 4).

One clear way that students can experience difference is through service to others. In fact, Morton and Saltmarsh (1997) describe the shift in models from charity to service that form the basis of most service-learning models of engagement. This is more than a simple name change. Charity fundamentally requires an unequal social system; there must, by definition, exist a giver and a receiver; the donor and the needy.

A service model, on the other hand, is not about giving money or resources that might maintain a diversity gap; students learn about the similarities and the differences among themselves and others. In the next section, we turn to previous research that adopted this service model and review how service-learning methods influence students’ social responsibility, life skills, and cultural awareness.

Impact of Community Service Learning

Stafford, Boyd and Lindner (2003) describe service learning as a method through which students learn by participating in meaningful, organized community activities.

Rooted in the educational pragmatism of John Dewey (1938), the structured community service experiences of undergraduate students that are often required and parallel classroom instruction, have been the focus of considerable scholarly attention. Much of the research indicates that service-learning contributes to increased awareness and understanding of the values, knowledge, skills, efficacy, and commitment that underlie effective citizenship (Bringle & Steinberg, 2010; Einfeld & Collins, 2008; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Mobley, 2007).

Students develop a heightened sense of social responsibility through their community service contributions. Giles and Eyler (1994) demonstrated that community service contributes to feelings of
civic involvement, a sense of social obligation and a belief that service facilitates sustainable outcomes in community life—by sharing resources with other members in the society. Similarly, Scales and Blythe (1997) argue that student service contributions often stimulate a sense of citizenship on the part of student participants. Moely et al. (2002) and Wilson et al. (2008) found that service-learning correlates with increased plans for civic action and future community involvement.

In addition to social responsibility, scholars have substantiated the sense of efficacy students experience as a result of their community service. According to Pleasants, Stepans, and Selph (2004), community service not only stimulates interest in community involvement, but also provides students with opportunities to discover how they can make a difference in the community and subsequently leaves them believing that they can be that difference. Youniss and Yates (1997) provide an apt description of this quality, arguing that students do not become paralyzed by the challenges they encounter, but rather often experience a sense of agency and a feeling of responsibility to the forces for social change.

Scholars have also carefully documented a cross section of “life skills” students acquire via participation in community service activities. Primavera (1999) discovered that 65% of the students surveyed experienced feelings of increased competence, heightened self-esteem and personal growth. Similarly, Scales and Blythe (1997) reported that students experienced intellectual growth and heightened feelings of autonomy. Astin and Sax (1998) discovered increases in self-confidence and a greater willingness to assume leadership roles. And in complementary research, Pleasants et al. (2004) argued that community service not only provides students with challenging opportunities to lead, but to do so while simultaneously building their self-confidence and ability to work outside of their comfort zones.

Community service participation can also impact students’ political, social, and cultural awareness. Politically, community service can provide students with an opportunity to discover the relationship between civic responsibility, participation in the community, and the attainment of meaningful outcomes for multiple communities involved (Astin & Sax, 1998; Mobley, 2007; Moely et al., 2002). Community service participation provides often opportunities for students to observe first hand unequal opportunities, as well as inequitable distributions of resources between social groups – inequities that provide a rationale for both political action and civic involvement (Primavera, 1999).

Socially, students can gain insight into issues affecting the lives of other social groups in the society (Pleasants et al, 2004). Students become aware of both the extent and depth of social problems including poverty, discrimination and violence (Youniss & Yates, 1997). But perhaps most importantly, Giles and Eyler (1994) found that after participating in community service activities, students became more likely to make situational attributions than personal attributions when it comes to socioeconomic and political disparities across social classes. In other words, community involvement helped students identify the lack of equal opportunities to all groups and its impact on the disparity between groups.

Participation in community service also impacts upon the student’s cultural awareness. Research suggests that student attitudes toward diversity shift as a result of their participation. Jahoda (1992) as cited in Youniss and Yates (1997) argues that community service brings students into contact with people who are different and who the students might not have previously known about. Jahoda (1992) argues that such exposure contributes to a “discovery of the other” (p. 87), and a process whereby those previously known through stereotypes, become real to the student volunteers. Giles, Eyler, and Braxton (1997) argue that such exposure contributes to not only a reduction of stereotyping, but furthermore greater empathy toward others. Some students even acknowledge the inaccuracy and unfairness of stereotyping. This is consistent with Osborne, Hammerich and Hensley’s (1998) findings about positive changes of cognitive complexity. Cognitive complexity refers to “the degree to which a person feels or she seeks out multiple explanations for the behavior of others” (p. 7). In their study, service learning participants showed significantly higher ratings on the cognitive complexity assessment than non-service learning participants. Primavera (1999) discovered that students displayed a greater appreciation for diversity and multiculturalism following their community service participation, and perhaps most interestingly a heightened awareness of similarities among people of different cultural backgrounds—a result also supported by the research of Simons and Cleary (2006).

Finally, service-learning influences the degree to which students learn about and experience cultures they assume to be unlike their own. In a qualitative investigation, Jones and Hill (2004) discovered that community service contributes to cultural learning, the negotiation of individuality and the crossing of boundaries between cultures. Through
cultural learning students become familiar with the
day to day lives of AIDS patients for example,
and acquire a broader understanding of the disease.
Through the negotiation of individuality, students
discovered that those of different races, social
classes, sexual orientation or even HIV status face
and deal with some of the same day to day issues
as the students themselves and their own family
members. Additionally, by crossing boundaries,
Jones and Hill (2004) argue that students actively
work to circumvent the barriers that are imposed by
community service itself and subsequently discover
what life is like “on the other side (p. 210).”
Eyler and Giles (1999) reported a similar finding
in saying that “students’ report that their service-
learning contributes to a sense that the people they
work with are ‘like me’ and demonstrate their growing
appreciation for other cultures” (p. 54). Moely et al.
(2002) and Hunt (2007) also found that students
with more community service-learning experience
demonstrated reduced stereotyping and a greater
understanding of other cultures. Dunlap (1998)
examined the reflection journals of undergraduate
students involved in multicultural service sites. She
used the students’ own voices to demonstrate the
ways service-learning works to influence how students
express, experience, and negotiate multicultural
or race-related incidents. Other work has offered
recommendations for how to teach and talk about
issues of diversity and difference in a service-learning
classroom. Green (2001), for example, writes about
the critical importance of discussing race when
engaging in service-learning. Dunlap, Scoggin, Green,
and Davi (2007) provide a useful theoretical model
for framing the ways white students experience issues
of privilege and socioeconomic disparities through
their service-learning courses.
As the literature suggests, researchers have
discovered a positive relationship between
community service and cultural awareness.
Community service participation allowed a
heightened sense of others, greater appreciation and
awareness of diversity, and increased knowledge of
multi-cultural groups that strengthen cross-cultural
relationships with those they serve. What remains
unclear is how, within the context of the increased
awareness that other scholars have demonstrated,
student sensitivity to diversity actually changes
through community service participation and
how such change manifests itself in subsequent
conceptualizations of diversity. In attempting
to explicate how student sensitivity to diversity
actually changes, we anticipate that after completing
a community based service learning experience
students will first, have a better understanding of
diversity, second, feel more comfortable interacting
with people who are different from themselves, and
third, feel more comfortable working with those
representing different cultures. These potential
changes will first be explored quantitatively and
then qualitatively.

The Small Group Communication Course
Communication is an excellent discipline in
which to explore the relationship between service-
learning and cultural and social diversity. While
interdisciplinary in nature, much of communication
studies focuses on the area of “praxis,” or the
interrelationship between theory and practical
experience. Applegate and Morreale (1999) claim,
“There is a special relationship between the study of
communication as the means for constructing social
reality and service-learning as a pedagogy designed to
enhance social life and communities” (p. xii).

More specifically, the learning goals associated
with many small group communication courses are
further enhanced with service-learning pedagogies.
Most small group communication courses include
a core curriculum, including the study of group
dynamics such as teamwork, collaboration, conflict,
and diversity, as well as group processes, such as
decision making and problem solving. Most small
group communication scholars agree that more can be
learned by studying “real” groups in “real” situations
(Putnam & Stohl, 1994). Similarly, students can learn
more about small group dynamics and processes
by experiencing “real” lived group experiences. In
a study of service learning in a small group class,
Foreman (1996) noted: “It is difficult for a student
to understand small group communication and the
role communication plays in making the experience
a positive or negative one until he or she is actually
involved in a small group experience” (p. 1).

Yelsma (1999) agrees that service-learning
is a critical component to furthering the goals of
small group communication courses. He states that
small group classes typically have two fundamental
goals: 1) to encourage students to learn about more
effective ways of interacting with others in group
settings, and 2) to reflect on their own values and
attitudes when interacting with others (often those
similar to themselves). Service-learning, however,
allows an opportunity for students to “learn more
about attitudes and values of people different from
themselves” (Yelsma, p. 88; Hammond, 1994).
Yet, support for these claims is scant, as the
majority of research on small group communication
and service-learning has focused on the process
of group problem solving, not understandings of cultural awareness and diversity.

Method Overview

This study was conducted at DePaul University, chosen for the study for several important characteristics relating to service-learning and diversity. For six straight years, 2002–2008, U.S. News and World Report (DePaul University Newsroom, 2010) has recognized DePaul for its top-25 service-learning program, and the Princeton Review has recognized DePaul for its top-10 diverse student population (DePaul University Newsroom, 2010). For our investigation, we conducted surveys with students who were participating in a community-based service project as part of the requirements for the Small Group Communication class. We conducted surveys with them at two different points in time: one before they started the community service for the class and the other after the service. The surveys asked the participants to report their perceptions, attitudes, and knowledge about diversity and to define what constitutes diversity. These pre- and post-service reports in both Likert scale and open-ended formats allowed us to measure the impact of community service on student sensitivity to diversity.

Participants

Eighty-one undergraduate students enrolled in small group communication classes participated in the study. Although 81 participants participated, only 57 completed both surveys; hence the quantitative analysis is based on the responses of those 57 only.

Procedures and Context

Students enrolled in three small group communication classes during the fall 2006, winter 2007, and spring 2007 terms were invited to participate in the study. The participation was voluntary, and no reward was offered. Each survey took approximately 15 minutes. These classes required community service in their course work. To fulfill their requirement, all students chose a specific service location and worked in the location as a group of 5-6 members for 5 weeks. Individually each worked a minimum of 15 hours. See Table 1 for a description of community service sites and student service responsibilities. Each site closely mirrored the diversity of its surrounding neighborhood in demographic composition—providing students with opportunities to work with adolescents, teenagers, and adults (including senior citizens), representing primarily African American, Hispanic, and Asian populations.

Upon completion of their community service, the students produced a group paper and presentation. The assignment required that students assess both the positive and negative consequences of community-service learning from the perspective of their field experiences and to draw upon course content in offering an assessment of the relative effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the communication processes operative at each site.

The first survey was conducted two weeks after the students were first divided into groups and before they started their community service. The second survey was conducted one week after they finished the community service. The participants indicated in the survey the extent of their agreement (1-5, 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree) with the following statements: (1) I can make difference in the community, (2) I have interacted with populations different from me extensively, (3) I feel comfortable interacting with populations different from my own, and (4) I’m very knowledgeable about diversity. The participants were also asked to define diversity in an open-ended format. The same set of questions was asked in the second survey.

Data Analysis

Our data analysis involved both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative method tested the statistical significance of the difference between pre- and post-test ratings related to participant perceptions and attitudes toward diversity. The qualitative analysis examined similarities and differences in terms of the participants’ conceptions of diversity over time by looking at how they defined diversity in narratives before and after they engaged in community service activities. Established qualitative procedures were used in analyzing student narrative responses (Berg, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The second author first conducted a line-by-line analysis of both pre- and post-test narratives. This analysis allowed the conceptual labeling of thematic contents that emerged from the data. Then, the second author grouped the responses in thematically discreet clusters that were identified from the line-by-line analysis. The third author then reviewed the clusters in order to ensure discreetness of content (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Results: Quantitative Difference between Pre and Post Community Service

The repeated measure of ANOVA was conducted with pre- and post-community service ratings as between-subject factors and various outcome measures as within-subject factors. The
mean ratings of pre- and post-community service surveys are reported in Table 2.

As shown in the table, participants showed significant improvements over time in terms of their perceptions of their ability to make a difference in the community. The improvement in terms of the extent of interacting with different populations was not statistically significant, but was in the expected direction. These results indicate that students gained confidence in their ability to improve their communities, added to their knowledge about diversity, and felt more comfortable working with culturally diverse populations because of their community service.

### Qualitative Differences Between Before and After Community Service

When comparisons were made between pre- and post-test narrative responses, interesting thematic distinctions emerged. The distinctions may be grouped into three categories: (1) responses suggesting the positive acceptance of diversity; (2) responses suggesting the importance of interaction and convergence; and (3) responses suggesting the presence of similarity between the students themselves and the diverse populations with whom they interacted. In the pre-test responses 80% of the students consistently offered straightforward demographic reflections on what constitutes diversity. Consider an example; one student defined diversity in the following manner: “The differences people may have between them. These differences could include race, age, culture, religious views, etc.” Demographic descriptions of this sort were typical of most pre-test narrative responses. In the post-test responses, 30% of those surveyed provided
the same demographic descriptions, but these denotative observations were followed by one of the three connotative descriptors referenced above—acceptance, interaction or similarity. Consider each thematic distinction and examples in Table 3.

Acceptance. In the first category, post-test definitions of diversity include not only a reflection on what constitutes diversity, but the suggestion that diversity creates a positive dynamic within a group context. In the sample responses, notice in particular the phrases “positive combination,” “positive atmosphere,” and “success as a whole.” Between the pre- and post-tests one can discern a shift from a definitional effort alone to making positive attribution within the context of each student’s perception of diversity.

Interaction. The second category of narrative responses allows us further insight into the development of student perceptions of diversity. Here the post-test responses, once again, went beyond the initial pre-test effort to define diversity, suggesting that the concept of diversity includes members of diverse groups interacting with one another. Notice in particular the phrases, “interacting with one another,” “interacting in one environment,” and “including and engaging.” Again, the denotative suggestion that diversity includes the behavioral dimension of interaction within the context of difference is meaningful.

Similarities. Finally, recall the arguments of Primavera (1999) and Simons and Cleary (2006) that community service facilitates perceived similarities between student volunteers and diverse community members. In our third category, student narrative responses clearly support earlier research efforts. Post-test definitions of diversity reference the presence of “similarity” in the midst of difference. Consider the phrases “having common similarity,” as well as “similarities and differences” present in student narrative responses. Narrative responses thus suggest a perceptual shift from definitions that stop at descriptions of difference alone, to definitions including the more proactive denotative themes of positive acceptance of, interaction among, and similarity or affiliation with members of diverse groups.

These themes reflect an important movement on the part of student definitions and understanding of diversity to difference. As noted earlier, while diversity tends to focus almost exclusively on the categorical divisions of others, difference focuses on both similarity and difference as dynamic principles of identity. The shift from conceptualizations of diversity to difference is an important one as students begin to recognize that no two persons are entirely different or entirely similar (Allen, 2004). These themes did not emerge in the narrative responses offered in the pre-test definitions.

Discussion

Scholars have clearly demonstrated the relationship between community service participation and the increased cultural awareness that occurs among student participants in community service education. This investigation unpacks the notion of increased cultural awareness and allows further understanding pertaining to what increased sensitivity to diversity means from the point of view of a student volunteer.

One of the contributions of our study is a broader application of the concept of diversity to the literature of community-service learning. Previous research on diversity and community service-learning considered diversity primarily in terms of distinctions in racial, ethnic or socio-economic backgrounds (e.g., Jones & Hill, 2001). However, this investigation attempted to adopt a more comprehensive approach by conceptualizing diversity more broadly as “difference” (Allen, 2004). Our student participants were exposed to not only diverse ethnic groups in their service activities, but also different age groups (e.g., adolescents and seniors), physically challenged

Table 2. Mean Ratings on Perceptions, Attitudes, and Knowledge about Diversity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-Community Service Mean &amp; Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Post-Community Service Mean &amp; Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) I can make a difference in the community.</td>
<td>4.00 (.82)</td>
<td>4.21 (.74)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) I have interacted with populations different from me extensively.</td>
<td>3.75 (.85)</td>
<td>3.91 (.85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) I have extensive knowledge about diversity.</td>
<td>3.75 (.93)</td>
<td>4.08 (.78)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) I feel comfortable interacting with different populations from me.</td>
<td>3.98 (.79)</td>
<td>4.19 (.74)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) F (1, 56) = 4.49, p < .05, η² = .07  3) F (1, 56) = 7.28, p < .01, η² = .12  4) F (1, 56) = 3.98, p < .05, η² = .06

*Indicates difference between the two means in the same row significant at the .05 level. **Indicates difference between the two means in the same row significant at the .01 level. N=57
Given that our participants reported significant
cchange in their attitude toward populations different
from their own and more complex conceptualizations
of diversity, the application of our results may be
extended beyond racial or ethnic diversity.

Pre- and post-test survey responses suggested
that participants experienced significant changes
over time. Significant improvements occurred
with regard to the volunteers’ perceived knowledge
about diversity, their perceived capacity to make a
difference in the community, and their increased
level of comfort interacting with diverse populations.

While previous research demonstrates increased
knowledge of diversity, and perceived similarities
with diverse groups, the narrative responses in this
investigation provide a heuristic complement to
those conclusions—providing even further insight
into what actually constitutes a change in terms
of cultural sensitivity. The heightened knowledge

| **Table 3. Pre- and Post-test Narrative Responses: Definitions of Diversity** |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| **PRE-TEST** | **POST-TEST** |
| **Positive Acceptance** | “Differences and likenesses coming together to form a whole.” |
| | “A positive combination of different individuals with different backgrounds and traits that come together effectively.” |
| | “Mixture of people from different ethnicities and cultures.” |
| | “Diversity is the mix of races, classes, and people to create a positive atmosphere in the society.” |
| | “A wide range of people from different backgrounds.” |
| | “Diversity is a broad selection of the population within a group. The group is different in race, sex, age, opinion, and religious views, but still works to succeed as a whole.” |
| **Interaction** | “The communication of varying groups of people coming from different social/economic backgrounds.” |
| | “People of different backgrounds interacting with one another.” |
| | “Main component: race, ethnicity, nationality; leads often to different economic status.” |
| | “Different background, race, ethnicity, interacting in one environment.” |
| | “A mixture of values, beliefs, traditions, cultures, religions, educational backgrounds, and social/political/economic status.” |
| | “Diversity is the concept of including and engaging with a range of ethnic, social, economic, cultural, and political backgrounds.” |
| **Similarity** | “The idea of different people with different backgrounds living/being in one community.” |
| | “Diversity is the difference between the many people born into a world. Diversity is having common similarity...” |
| | “Differences between people, whether it be sex, race/ethnicity, social class, age.” |
| | “Diversity is the many types of ethnicities/races there are. It is also the differences and similarities between age groups, socio/economic groups, race, religion, etc.” |
| | “Differences among people—anything from race to religion to hair color.” |
| | “Differences and similarities between people, whether race, nationality, religion, sex, etc.” |
of diversity reported by student volunteers could arguably influence the perceptions of similarity and positive acceptance of diversity reported in the narrative responses. But perhaps most importantly, by acknowledging that diversity includes the dynamic dimension of interaction and engagement within the context of their definitions, the narrative responses are also suggesting an interesting relationship between an attitudinal shift toward diversity and the potential for a behavioral shift as well.

Our study has a few limitations that need to be considered for generalizations of the results. First, student participants’ reports on their community service experiences were based on only 15 hours of their participation in one designated community service site. Although the logistical constraints are inevitable when the service-learning components are folded into course requirements, the short-term involvement in one specific service site certainly presents limitations in generalizing our findings to longer-term and more diverse service experiences. We speculate that a longer period of exposure to multiple communities may magnify the findings of the current study and may also reveal more nuanced or different types of conceptual changes about diversity besides “acceptance,” “interactions,” and “similarities” that we identified in this study.

Second, our study addressed only conceptual changes about diversity influenced by community involvement as part of a course requirement. Therefore, extending these findings to behavioral changes outside the classroom would be problematic. Conceptual changes about diversity would be more meaningful when they are directly linked to behavioral shifts in the future interactions with diverse populations. Future research needs to assess the impact of the conceptual shift on student willingness to participate in community service activities following required involvements in the classroom. Such research would provide not only further insights into what constitutes cultural sensitivity but also evidence to suggest the actual ways in which conceptual changes in cultural sensitivity are demonstrated by participants’ behavior in community service activities.

We are living in a contemporary “crisis of community” (Allen, 2004; Morton & Saltmarsh, 1997; Putnam, 2000). Service-learning affords the opportunity for experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together. More specifically, service-learning in contexts such as these small group communication courses can provide a context for students to shift their thinking about diversity and difference and to set the stage for building a stronger democracy through acceptance, interaction, and a focus on similarities beyond the classroom.

Service-learning and teaching are not the only academic functions that can benefit from civic engagement (Barker, 2004). There has been increased interdisciplinary attention paid, both in theory and practice, to the role of civic engagement as scholarship (Boyer, 1996; Barker, 2004; Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006). Engaged scholarship is often defined as a collaborative form of inquiry in which academics and community practitioners are said to “coproduce knowledge” to solve complex and compelling civic and community problems (Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006, p. 803). In doing so, engaged scholarship does not follow a standard, social scientific model for academic knowledge; it invites (and ultimately requires) a reciprocal relationship between civic practices and the production of knowledge. As Barker (2004) puts it, “the scholarship of engagement suggests a set of practices that cuts across all aspects of the traditional functions of higher education” (p. 126). Therefore, as engaged scholarship with a focus on service-learning and diversity, this work provides an important intersection among the often disparate academic areas of teaching and research with the practical and complex components of participating in a civic society.

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Wilson, A.E., Allen, J.W., Strahan, E.J., & Etheir,


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Abstract

This article presents the results of a deliberative poll in which members from the local community and college students from SUNY Cortland discussed the economic impact of Walmart on a small town. We review the literature concerning deliberative polling and describe the process of the deliberative polling event. Our examination of the data focuses on net changes in the participants’ opinions and gross changes in the participants’ opinions. We discuss the trends and implications of the opinion shifts and outline future research. The results illustrate that the process of deliberation affects changes in attitude items at both the individual and group level.

Social and political apathy affects both students and the broader society. Putnam (1993) contends that this phenomenon is connected to a decline in social capital, which he defines as “the features of social organization such as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (p. 36). Putnam thinks that citizenship is affected by social capital. Moreover, involvement in civic life has been connected to lower absenteeism and reduced apathy. Social capital theory assumes that engagement on any level will enhance social trust and efficacy in citizenship, thereby strengthening democracy.

Since the 1980s, a number of methods for involving citizens and making their voices heard have been advanced. These include focus groups (Kreuger & Casey, 2000; Morris, 1999; Morrison, 2003); citizen juries (Coote & Lenhaglan, 1997; Smith & Wales, 2000; Niemeyer & Blamey, 2003); planning cells (Renn et al., 1984, 1993); citizen panels (Kathlene & Martin, 1991; Bowie et al., 1995), and consensus conferences (Einsiedel, 2002; Andersen & Jaeger, 1999).

Another approach used for involving citizens by providing them a public forum for discussion is the deliberative poll. The deliberative poll is different from other methods because it allows for estimating informed opinion while retaining the possibility of generalization to the overall population through random sampling (Fishkin, 1991, 1995, 1997; Ackerman & Fishkin, 2002; Hough & Park, 2002; Hansen & Anderson, 2004; Luskin, Fishkin, & Jowell, 2002). This article presents the findings from a deliberative polling event at SUNY Cortland.

The deliberative polling method attempts to combine the depth of a qualitative analysis with the generalizability of a representative poll. Where decisions are being made without proper information, we might reasonably expect that these decisions may not entirely reflect an individual’s “true” interests. Some argue that the problem of an uninformed public and disengagement could be remedied through deliberation. As James Fishkin et al. (2000) contend:

While there is disagreement about how much lack of information and interest affects people’s views [and engagement], it is possible that preferences would be noticeably different if everyone was more knowledgeable about, attentive to, and reflexive about the issues involved. In deliberating, it is hoped that citizens will develop informed, or more reflective, preferences than would otherwise be the case (p. 657).

Those participating in a deliberative poll may shift from a position of ignorance and/or disengagement to a position of measured opinion and/or civic engagement. Fishkin argues that contemporary democracies fail to provide ordinary citizens with a means to have their voices heard. As a result, individuals believe that being informed and engaged have no utility for them. This is known as rational ignorance (Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960). Participation in a deliberative poll may reduce the impact of an individual’s rational ignorance by providing them with the incentive and opportunity to think about important policy issues and engage in a process that values their opinions.

The basic design of a deliberative poll includes contacting, inviting, and polling a representative sample to attend a one- or two-day deliberative polling event at a common location. Participants are then provided with carefully balanced briefing materials laying out the major arguments for and
against a given set of policy proposals, policy related issues, or electoral alternatives. The participants engage in dialogue with experts and decision makers based on questions they develop in small groups with trained unbiased moderators. After the deliberations, the sample is once more provided the original questions. The consequential changes in opinion signify the conclusions the general public would reach if they had an opportunity to discuss an issue, engage with alternative points of view, and become more informed.

The goal of this project was to determine if deliberation would have any impact on participants’ opinions, regardless of whether they started from a positive or negative view of the selected issue. Increased deliberation affords a unique insight into what might be a better understanding of what people are actually thinking and feeling. The investigation of the polling event in Cortland, New York, reveals that the process of deliberation affects changes in knowledge and attitude items at both the individual and aggregate levels. This analysis includes a review of the deliberative polling literature, an explanation of our hypotheses and methodology, an examination of the data, including net changes in the participants’ opinions and gross changes in the participants’ opinions, and finally a discussion of the implications for engagement.

Literature Review

There is a considerable body of research that attempts to assess the extent to which an individual’s opinion would differ if that person were given time to inquire about the subject matter and given information about the topic.

Deliberative Polls

Through a number of deliberative polling events, Fishkin et al. (2000) have found that, following participation in such exercises, people are stimulated to learn more about politics and that opinion shifting is common. Luskin, Fishkin, and Jowell (2002) compiled a national probability sample of 301 British subjects who met for the world’s first deliberative poll. The deliberation focused on the root causes of crime, policing, punishment, and procedural rights, covering matters such as the rights of the accused, those of victims and the citizenry in general, as well as juvenile matters. By the conclusion of the event, participants increased their support for sending fewer criminals to prison, relaxing sentences for juvenile offenders, and alternative sentencing models for those deemed a lesser risk to society. The premise upon which such events are organized is that the resulting deliberated opinions will be more considered as a consequence of increased interest in the issues, increases in knowledge, the exposure to multiple arguments and points of view, and more careful reflection.

Hough and Park (2002) found that information and dialogue could generate important shifts in attitudes about the best ways of controlling crime. The changes they discovered were all in the identical direction, relating to a decrease in support for stronger measures such as imprisonment as a response to crime and greater support for rehabilitation. It is not unexpected that there was a quantifiable change in attitudes directly after the weekend seminar. For example, 35 percent of participants initially thought that “sending more offenders to prison” would be a very efficient way of lowering the crime rate. After the weekend, only 20 percent took this view. What is surprising is that opinion change seems to be long lasting. While 50 percent initially thought that “stiffer sentences generally” would be a very effective way of reducing crime, when followed up 10 months later only 36 percent thought the same. Support for community penalties was originally quite high and remained largely unchanged. Not all people adopted more liberal views after the event; some adopted tougher views. In general, people adopted less extreme views after the event, with a net shift in a liberal direction.

Hansen and Anderson (2004) studied the results from the Danish National deliberative poll on the single currency with a representative group of 364 Danish citizens. Between 7 and 28 percent of the participants changed their viewpoint on a number of issues related to the single currency. Before participating in the deliberative poll, 45 percent of the participants indicated that they would vote yes, 37 percent no, and 18 percent did not take a stand. At the conclusion of the poll, 51 percent revealed they would vote yes, 40 percent no, and just 9 percent had not made up their minds. The participants’ answers reveal a deliberative procedure dominated by considerable changes in opinion, an increase in knowledge, and an improved ability to form a reasoned opinion.

Hypothesis

This analysis adds to the research concerning deliberative democracy and opinion formation. It is important to emphasize that only attitude change of some kind is predicted, rather than change in any specific direction. The theory is that the involvement of such an event will move participants from a position of ignorance and disengagement to a
position of considered opinion and engagement.

H1: Participant opinions concerning the economic implications of Walmart on a small town will have a net change after deliberation on the issues.

H2: Participant opinions concerning the economic implications of Walmart on a small town will have a gross change after deliberation on the issues.

Methodology

This study presents evidence from a deliberative polling event that took place at SUNY Cortland. The all-day event started at 8 a.m. and concluded at 4 p.m. Our limited budget prevented us from hosting the event for two days. The issue selected was the economic impact of a Walmart on a small town. This is particularly relevant for Cortland County as it is an economically depressed area.

Of the 76 student and community participants who attended the event, 44.7 percent were men and 55.3 percent were women; 36.8 percent were 25 years old or younger, 13.2 percent were between the ages of 26 and 40, 23.7 percent were between the ages of 41 and 55, and 26.3 percent were 56 or older. The racial makeup of participants was 96.1 percent Caucasian, 2.6 percent African-American, and 1.3 percent Native American. The income distribution for 76 participants revealed that 25 percent of participants make less than $10,000 per year, 18.4 percent make between $10,001 and $19,999, 23.6 percent make between $20,000 and $34,999, 17.1 percent make between $35,000 and $49,999, 11.8 percent make between $50,000 and $64,999, and 2.6 percent make more than $65,000 a year. The sample of participants closely reflects the demographic characteristics of Cortland.

Participants and Design

The sampling process followed a two-stage probability design consisting of all individuals within Cortland County and all members of the SUNY Cortland student body. Volunteer students reading from a prepared script used a residential phone book covering Cortland County and called every eighth name listed. A separate college list including students covering Cortland County and all members of the SUNY Cortland student body was used with the understanding that this method would provide a stronger incentive for participants to complete the survey. A total of 76 participants completed both the pre- and post-surveys for a response rate of approximately 36.7 percent (based on the number who had originally committed to attend). The lower than anticipated turnout was due, in part, to the weather. The day we held our deliberative polling event was an unusually warm and sunny early spring day in Central New York, an area noted for its long, cold, snowy winters.

We followed up the phone call with an additional letter and/or email reminding them of the date and time of the event. The morning of the event, the organizers received 22 phone calls from individuals informing them of their inability to attend. A total of 76 participants completed both the pre- and post-surveys for a response rate of approximately 36.7 percent (based on the number who had originally committed to attend). The lower than anticipated turnout was due, in part, to the weather. The day we held our deliberative polling event was an unusually warm and sunny early spring day in Central New York, an area noted for its long, cold, snowy winters.

Materials and Procedure

The briefing materials provided to participants were drafted and reviewed by a panel of four faculty members from the university. The focus of the materials was information about the possible economic impacts of a Walmart store on a local economy as well as the public policies associated with this topic. The small group moderators were trained a week before the event and included faculty, staff, and members of the community. There was a six-member panel of experts, including three members of the faculty, town council members, local business people, and the mayor of Cortland.

On the day of the event, participants registered, signed the informed consent document, and then were randomly assigned to a small-group. Nine small groups contained 8-10 participants plus the moderator. The deliberations included a 60-minute small group session, a preliminary 30-minute opening session with welcome remarks by the President of the University and instructions for the day, and a 60-minute plenary session with the expert panels fielding questions, followed by a 60-minute lunch break, and another 60-minute plenary session with experts answering the remaining questions from the small groups. At the conclusion of the second plenary, the participants filled out the post survey.

The Data

The survey instrument included 38 economic-based questions concerning Walmart. The breakdown of the questions was as follows: 11 questions concerning workers; 9 questions concerning prices; 10 questions concerning Walmart’s impact on other businesses and taxes; and 8 questions concerning economically related public policy questions and issues related to big box stores. We hoped that the number of total questions would provide a stronger incentive for participants to complete the survey. An incentives drawing was included as part of the event to increase participation.
Table 1. Changes in Attitudes Toward Walmart After Deliberative Polling Event

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean P1</th>
<th>Mean P2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impact on Workers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pays workers fairly</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pays workers living wage</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>2.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treats workers fairly</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>3.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offers workers affordable healthcare</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>3.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides an increase in jobs</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>3.14**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides workers full-time jobs</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supports unions</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>4.36**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treats workers similar to other big box stores</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>2.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributes to the export of jobs</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>2.28**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides jobs with career tracks</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides jobs for people with disabilities</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>3.24*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impact on Prices and Consumers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides products at a lower price</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impacts competitors’ prices</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>1.39*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prices are fair</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pricing leads to less competition</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I shop at Walmart because of the prices</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>2.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prices allow me to buy products I usually can’t afford</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.04*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumers benefit from Walmart’s retailing system</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>2.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brings international goods to consumers</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>2.22**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raises the cost of living for consumers</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>3.03**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impact on Business</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attracts new business to the area</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generates a larger customer base for business</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.03**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes growth in non-growth communities</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>2.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draws people to community</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>2.59*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money saved by customers spent elsewhere in the community</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>2.45*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negatively impacts small business</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulk purchase items undermine local business</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>1.78**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impact on Taxes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increases tax base of town</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>2.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits taxpayers</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimulates economy of town</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department stores should be regulated</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>2.58**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of department stores should be limited</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>2.78**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government should increase the minimum wage</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government should pass universal healthcare coverage</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>1.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government should protect the American workers</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government should require department stores to offer affordable healthcare</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>2.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government should establish store design guidelines</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>2.47**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities should be able to vote on whether Walmart should be allowed</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>1.55**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at the 0.05-level (two-tailed) **Significant at the 0.01-level (two-tailed)
We had a number of items such as electronic equipment and items donated from the college store that were given away at the end of the event. The incentives giveaway did not begin until the moderators collected all of the surveys from each group.

A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure participants’ opinions. Likert scale items are most often used to investigate how respondents rate a series of statements by having them circle or otherwise mark numbered categories. Our scale was as follows: 1 (strongly agree), 2 (agree somewhat), 3 (don’t know), 4 (disagree somewhat), and 5 (strongly disagree). The inclusion of “don’t know” within a basic Likert scale makes an implicit acknowledgment that not all respondents will have a position or the knowledge to respond appropriately. It seemed appropriate to use don’t know for this project as we knew that not all of the participants would have formed opinions on some of the questions included in our survey.

We first analyzed our data to examine net changes in pre-survey and post-survey responses using a paired samples t-test to examine differences in mean scores. Our results are discussed below in the next section. In order to more finely differentiate types of change, we coded each pair of responses (pre-test and post-test) for each participant on each variable according to whether or not their responses indicated no change in position, a change in at least one level or degree, a change into or out of neutral (the “don’t know” category), or a change of side. For each recomputed variable, we ran a frequency distribution to analyze the percentage of respondents who exhibited no change, a change in at least one level, a change into or out of neutral, or a change in side. As a test of statistical significance, we used the chi-square test for frequency distributions.

Results: Net Change

Following the analysis of Luskin et al. (2002), we evaluated change on two broad dimensions: net change and gross change. Net change is simply the difference between pre and post deliberation means, aggregated across individuals. These changes may be positive or negative; we were interested in magnitude of the absolute net change. By these criteria, the Walmart deliberative polling project seemed effective. The opportunity for discussion, reflection, and additional information had an impact on participants’ opinions. On nearly half of the survey items, opinions underwent statistically significant change. Table 1 presents the means, before and after participation, of the participants’ positions on every survey item, including the p-value from a paired comparison test of the significance of the differences in means. Of the 38 items, 16, or 42.1 percent, showed statistically significant change at the 0.05 level or above.

Results: Gross Change

To get a more accurate picture of opinion change, we calculated the gross opinion change of the participants. Gross opinion change is computed in several ways. One measure of gross changes examines the percentage of the participants who changed position on the five-point scales. This measure includes any individual who moves either way on the 5-point Likert scale for a particular item to any degree at all (including moving even one position from strongly agree to agree, for example). The second measure of gross change examines the percentage of participants who change sides or who move from “neutral” to any level of agreement or disagreement with a particular item. The third measure of gross change is the percentage of participants who changed sides completely, and it does not include those who moved from neutral. Percentages of those who exhibit change on the first dimension of gross change will be higher than that of those who exhibit change on the second or third dimensions of gross change (Luskin et al, 2002). In other words, the measure of the third dimension for gross change—change in position, disregarding movement from neutral—is the most conservative measure. The measure of the first dimension, any change at all, is the most liberal. Table 2 presents several measures of gross change.

Discussion

We hypothesized that participation in a deliberative polling event would be associated with a shift in attitudes and an increase in general knowledge about the subject. The observation of the net and gross attitude change of participants’ opinions would seem to support the theory of deliberative polling concerning the effect of more informed opinions. Our event was smaller than the national events that have taken place over the past twenty years. Yet, this more local focus allowed us to reduce our operational and economic costs, thereby, increasing the likelihood of a successful deliberative polling event.

The data illustrates significant opinion change by participants. In terms of net change, sixteen out of thirty-eight questions or 42.1 percent demonstrated statistically significant change at the 0.05 level or above. And while many of the changes in opinion may have cancelled each other out, we determined that overall 72.6 percent of the respondents changed position on at least one variable, that at least 63% of the respondents percent changed sides on at least
Table 2. Gross Change in Attitudes Toward Walmart Before and After Deliberative Polling Event

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Percentage Changing Position</th>
<th>Percentage Changing Side</th>
<th>Percentage Changing Side Completely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impact on Workers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pays workers fairly</td>
<td>61.3**</td>
<td>45.3**</td>
<td>13.3**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pays workers living wage</td>
<td>63.5**</td>
<td>47.3**</td>
<td>06.8*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treats workers fairly</td>
<td>59.5**</td>
<td>50.0**</td>
<td>13.5**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offers workers affordable healthcare</td>
<td>72.6**</td>
<td>63.0**</td>
<td>12.3**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides an increase in jobs</td>
<td>71.2</td>
<td>60.2</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides workers full-time jobs</td>
<td>58.1**</td>
<td>39.2**</td>
<td>17.6**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supports unions</td>
<td>61.6**</td>
<td>52.1**</td>
<td>11.0**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treats workers similar to other box stores</td>
<td>59.5**</td>
<td>48.6**</td>
<td>13.5**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributes to the export of jobs</td>
<td>55.4**</td>
<td>46.0**</td>
<td>12.2**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides jobs with career tracks</td>
<td>62.2*</td>
<td>46.0*</td>
<td>20.3*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides jobs for people with disabilities</td>
<td>64.9**</td>
<td>48.7**</td>
<td>12.2**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impact on Prices and Consumers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides products at a lower price</td>
<td>35.1**</td>
<td>17.6**</td>
<td>16.2**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impacts competitors’ prices</td>
<td>54.1**</td>
<td>23.0**</td>
<td>09.5*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prices are fair</td>
<td>52.1**</td>
<td>24.7**</td>
<td>09.6**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pricing leads to less competition</td>
<td>49.3**</td>
<td>21.1**</td>
<td>07.0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I shop at Walmart because of the prices</td>
<td>43.7**</td>
<td>25.3**</td>
<td>22.5**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prices allow me to buy products I usually can’t afford</td>
<td>43.8**</td>
<td>23.2**</td>
<td>16.4**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumers benefit from Walmart’s retailing system</td>
<td>55.4**</td>
<td>29.7**</td>
<td>13.5**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brings international goods to consumers</td>
<td>63.5*</td>
<td>44.7*</td>
<td>13.6*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raises the cost of living for consumers</td>
<td>58.6*</td>
<td>37.2*</td>
<td>18.6*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impact on Business</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attracts new business to the area</td>
<td>61.6</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generates a larger customer base for business</td>
<td>56.2**</td>
<td>41.0**</td>
<td>20.5**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes growth in non-growth communities</td>
<td>56.2**</td>
<td>45.2**</td>
<td>19.2**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draws people to community</td>
<td>54.1**</td>
<td>35.2**</td>
<td>20.3**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money saved by customers is spent elsewhere</td>
<td>50.0**</td>
<td>41.9**</td>
<td>13.5**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negatively impacts small business</td>
<td>51.4**</td>
<td>36.5**</td>
<td>24.3**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulk purchase items undermine local businesses</td>
<td>54.1**</td>
<td>29.8**</td>
<td>14.9**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impact on Taxes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increases tax base of town</td>
<td>63.0**</td>
<td>52.0**</td>
<td>17.8**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits taxpayers</td>
<td>52.7**</td>
<td>43.3**</td>
<td>12.2**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimulates economy of a town</td>
<td>47.2**</td>
<td>36.1**</td>
<td>12.5**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department stores should be regulated</td>
<td>59.7*</td>
<td>43.1*</td>
<td>26.4*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of department stores should be limited</td>
<td>52.1**</td>
<td>31.5**</td>
<td>12.3**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government should increase the minimum wage</td>
<td>37.0**</td>
<td>10.9**</td>
<td>2.7**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government should pass universal healthcare coverage</td>
<td>36.1**</td>
<td>11.1**</td>
<td>4.2**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government should protect the American worker</td>
<td>37.5**</td>
<td>13.9**</td>
<td>5.6**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government should pass legislation to require department stores to offer affordable healthcare</td>
<td>39.7**</td>
<td>17.3**</td>
<td>8.2**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government should establish store design guidelines</td>
<td>49.3**</td>
<td>34.2**</td>
<td>13.7**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities should be able to vote on whether Walmart should be allowed</td>
<td>41.1**</td>
<td>12.3**</td>
<td>4.1***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at the 0.05-level **Significant at the 0.01-level (Although asterisks are applied to each of the percentages in the table, the significance level was established for the differences among the three categories, and not for each percentage separately.)
one variable (including movement to and from the neutral category), and that 30.1% percent changed sides completely (excluding movement to and from the neutral category) on at least one variable.

**Net Change**

The trends concerning the magnitude of net change in opinions about Walmart reflect a mixed bag with a slight majority of questions moving in a positive direction in support of Walmart. Of the 16 questions that demonstrated a statistically significant change, 10 were more negative toward Walmart and six were more positive. The questions dealing with impact on business and prices reflected a positive trend about Walmart, while the responses to the impact on workers and policy questions tended to be more negative. Why these particular changes in opinion? We can offer a few impressions, based on firsthand observations of the event.

Concerning the impact on businesses, three of the seven questions demonstrated statistically significant net change with two of the three questions shifting in favor of Walmart. With respect to whether Walmart “attracts new business to the area,” one of our experts, the Mayor of Cortland, discussed in great detail that Panera Bread, Bed, Bath and Beyond, and Lowe’s had agreed to establish themselves in Cortland if the Walmart project was approved. The Mayor also mentioned a study that the town commissioned which supported the claim that Walmart would diminish the capacity of local businesses to employ workers leading to a net decrease in jobs. The result of the conversation was that overall job creation would not offset job loss, explaining that Walmart would diminish the capacity of local businesses to employ workers leading to a net decrease in jobs. The result of the conversation was that overall job creation would not offset job loss, leaving a typical town with a net loss of jobs.

The impact on workers section demonstrated a negative shift of opinions including “provides an increase in jobs,” “supports unions,” and “contributes to the export of jobs.” Only two of the five statistically significant questions reflected a positive trend with “treats workers fairly” and “provides more jobs for people with disabilities.” Two of the experts addressed Walmart’s exclusion of unions in group discussions as well as the expert responses played some part in the overall shift of opinions.

The most significant positive shift in opinions related to prices. There was a shift for participants toward Walmart having a positive impact on competitors’ pricing, which is related to the ability of individuals to afford products that they may not usually be able to afford. The ability to afford products that would usually be considered out of range may have also influenced the question concerning cost of living. On the other hand, we noted a shift in position on “Walmart raises the cost of living for consumers” toward neutral, consistent with the shift toward agree on “Pricing leads to less competition.” Perhaps respondents recognize an immediate effect of lower prices, but a longer-term effect of higher ones if competition is diminished.

The starting positive position concerning prices may be due in part to Walmart’s marketing campaign. The “Always Low Prices” slogan was used by Walmart for 19 years and their estimated marketing budget is approximately $570 million dollars a year (Helm, 2006). Walmart has a very powerful marketing campaign that seems to have influenced the participants to some extent. Certainly the small-group discussions as well as the expert responses played some part in the overall shift of opinions.

Of the four statistically significant questions concerning prices, three moved in a positive direction in support of Walmart. They included “impacts competitor’s prices,” “prices allow me to buy products I usually can’t afford,” and “brings international goods to customers.” Responses to one question moved in a negative direction, “raises the cost of living for consumers.” Of the three statistically significant questions concerning impact on business, two tended toward the positive, “attracts new business to the area” and “generates a larger customer base for business.” It appears from the data that participants’ positive opinions concerning Walmart and prices were strengthened as a result of the event and they were not as concerned about businesses that were already in Cortland.

A specific question developed by one of the small-groups dealt with unions. The experts responded that Walmart does not have a union but allows workers to buy into the company with shares of stock. One statistical hint of the impact of this discussion may be seen in Table 1 in the increased negativity of participants believing that jobs were more likely to be exported overseas again leading to an overall net loss
for a town. This result was not surprising given the questions asked during the plenary session focused on job creation and whether Walmart salaries were comparable to other box stores in the area. The economic downturn and loss of jobs locally may also have impacted participants’ opinions concerning middle-class workers in general. Although they do not seem to believe that Walmart creates jobs overall, neither do they seem to believe that Walmart causes net economic harm for a particular community. This may be due to the belief that the impact of Walmart on the economy of their community as a whole is positive by bringing in new business and offering lower prices.

It is important that deliberative polling also impact participants’ policy preferences. This should be the result of most deliberative polling events or these results would be revealing no more than what ordinary polling provides. The four policy questions that demonstrated a statistically significant negative response toward Walmart included “department stores should be regulated,” “the number of department stores should be limited,” “the government should establish store design guidelines,” and “communities should be able to vote on whether Walmart should be allowed.” Even though there were more positive statistically significant changes overall, all four statistically significant policy questions were negative. We were surprised by this result and are not completely convinced that this is due to the plenary session discussion.

At the same time, the deliberative experience had very little impact on participants’ policy preferences concerning the minimum wage and providing health care. As there was little to no discussion of these questions, it would make sense that opinions did not shift on these issues. The lack of change on these questions, coupled with the statistically significant changes on questions related to Walmart is consistent with our hypothesis that deliberative polling accounts for shifts in opinion. And on the items directly related to workers, there was limited opinion change concerning the treatment of workers in relation to other box stores, providing jobs with career tracks, and paying workers a living wage. On the questions concerning prices, there was also not much movement about prices at Walmart being generally fair, participants shopping at Walmart due to their prices, and consumers benefiting from the stores’ retailing system. In terms of impact of a Walmart on taxes, there was limited change in response to the questions regarding increases in the tax base of a town and benefits to individual taxpayers. All things considered, however, the overall net changes were still relatively significant.

### Gross Change

As with net change, gross change included some noticeable variations. Proposals dealing with wages and health care see relatively little gross change. This result might be expected of issues that were not addressed by the deliberative polling discussion. Another question with a lower percentage of participants changing position was Walmart “provides products at a lower price.” This is not unexpected as there might be a psychological reason for the response to this question. Once a shopper enters Walmart and notices those lower price point items, they might form the opinion that everything in the store is the lowest price in the area. This perception is reinforced with a media campaign blitz that reemphasizes this point to the consumer. Taken together, it is not surprising that participants believe that Walmart provides consumers with products at a lower price. In contrast, questions relating to the impact on workers and impact on businesses show particularly widespread gross change. Perhaps these are two areas where pre-deliberation attitudes were not as solidified and participants’ attitudes were more subject to change.

The number of participants who changed their position is between 35 and 73 percent. The percentage changing sides runs in the 11-60 percent range. The percentage of those participants changing side completely was between 3 and 30 percent. As with net change, there are some noticeable variations across policy topics. Concerning those participants who changed side completely, five out of the ten lowest percentages were found in the public policy section. On the question asking whether the “government should increase the minimum wage,” only 2.7 percent changed their position completely. Regarding the question as to communities being able to vote on whether Walmart should be allowed, 4.1 percent changed sides completely on the scale provided. And concerning the question whether the “government should pass legislation for universal health care coverage,” 4.2 percent changed sides completely.

As Luskin et al. (2002) point out, when examining gross changes, particularly those involving changing sides completely, percentages that are in the “mid-to-high single digits are impressive … and those in the twenties are astonishing” (p. 472). Those questions on which more than 20 percent of the participants changed sides (whether from the agree to the disagree range or vice versa) included, “provides an increase in jobs,” “provides jobs with career tracks,” “I shop at Walmart because of the prices,” “generates a larger customer base for business,” “draws people to the
community,” “negatively impacts small business,” and “department stores should be regulated.” Of those questions, respondents tended to move from the disagree to the agree range on the variables, “I shop at Walmart because of the prices,” “generates a larger customer base for business,” “draws people to the community,” “negatively impacts small business,” and “department stores should be regulated.” Respondents tended to move from agree to disagree on the variables, “provides an increase in jobs” and “provides jobs with career tracks.” Table 2 summarizes statistically significant net changes.

There were also a number of issues where the percentage of participants who changed sides completely was statistically significant. On an issue related to workers, “provides an increase in jobs,” 30.1 percent of participants changed sides completely. The opinion shift was moving in a negative direction on this issue, weakening support for Walmart. Slightly more than 24% of participants changed sides completely about whether Walmart negatively impacts small businesses. Overall, the participants were moving in a more positive direction in response to this issue, although the mean responses mask changes in sides that could have canceled each other out. And 26.4 percent of participants changed sides completely on whether department stores should be regulated. The shift in opinion for this issue was stronger in terms of allowing the government to regulate these types of box stores. Each of these issues represents a significant shift of opinions.

Limitations

There is disagreement about the efficacy of the deliberative poll as a proper research tool. It is important to note that scholars question the ability of a deliberative poll to stimulate true deliberative dialogue (Hart & Jarvis, 1999; Tringali, 1996), while others in the field have questioned the basic premise that deliberation provides the optimal format to study social outcomes (Mendelberg, 2002; Sanders, 1997).

Denver et al. (1995) in their study of one type of deliberative opinion poll found no evidence that deliberation significantly affected the quality and nature of participants’ beliefs and understanding about the issues discussed. This limitation as applied to this study is addressed in more detail under future research. They also found that participants’ knowledge of certain political “facts” had actually decreased. While the knowledge effects of deliberation are an important aspect of the arguments offered for deliberative democracy, the evidence of knowledge gains is not yet conclusive and should continue to be analyzed.

There were a number of potential limitations with our study. First, one of the common criticisms of deliberative polling is the amount of time and money necessary to successfully organize such an event. Even though we were able to save money by using local resources for the event, cost was still an issue. For example, we had to rely on volunteers to make up the expert panels. Because this issue has been debated locally, we were able to utilize local faculty members and elected officials as experts and moderators. We did, however, have a cancellation without much notice and were scrambling to find a replacement to make sure both positions were represented.

Another possible limitation concerns the reliance on the use of experts to provide information for the deliberative dialogue for the participants. In our case, we used local experts—members of the faculty at SUNY Cortland, area business people, and local politicians knowledgeable about the issue. The philosophy of the deliberative polling process is that “experts” are defined in as neutral a way as possible and the information they deliver should be factually based to aid in rational decision-making. Yet, there are clearly problems with this process. First of all, the mere fact of labeling someone an “expert” (and someone else as “not expert”) shapes how that individual’s information is received by an audience. Calling someone an expert may turn them into someone perceived to be an expert, regardless of the quality of the information that they may be presenting. Second, the personalities of the experts had a tremendous range. We had several academics who were much more reserved than other presenters, and we had several politicians who were very outgoing. Even with a moderator and a platform that included an equal amount of time to respond, it is possible that the more extroverted experts could have a slightly greater impact due to their presentation style. In addition, those speaking favorably about Walmart were fairly well known public figures in the community. Those speaking on the other side of the issue were not as well known. It is difficult, if not impossible, to perfectly balance a panel in terms of knowledge of an issue and skill at presenting one’s arguments. At the same time, labeling someone as an expert gives weight to their testimony that may not be deserved. The audience is still left to sort out which “facts” they will believe and which ones they will ignore.

Finally, the format of the deliberative polling event has been characterized as a “quasi-experiment” because it lacks the full investigational control characteristic of a laboratory experiment and
because it lacks a true randomly assigned control group. The first limitation is inevitable given the setting and time treatment period. The inability to exclude extraneous influences is largely shared by all field experiments, but the deliberative polling process includes a number of elements such as the unbiased moderator and balanced briefing materials which hopefully minimize this potential problem. As for the second limitation, our deliberative polling event had a small attrition rate from those individuals who agreed to participate during the initial interview to those individuals who decided to participate. This may be explained by the smaller scope of our event. The limitations of a deliberative poll should continue to be evaluated in light of the purpose of each project and weighed against the strengths and weaknesses and costs of the available research options for the purpose at hand.

Future Research

There are a number of questions that this project does not address that should be examined for future research. One theoretical question concerns how much of the event’s impact stems from gains in information versus increased contemplation. The questions we have to ask ourselves: are new or changed viewpoints accounted for by simply providing greater attention to the particular policy or issue presented? Do opinions shift by the mere fact of offering time for individuals to think about them? Even without acquiring more information about the economic impacts of Walmart, some participants may view the alternatives through different eyes due to different standards or to think harder about them and thus to see more clearly through the same eyes.

Another question would be to determine whether changes in opinion were derived from the briefing materials, the discussion in their small groups, and/or the plenary session in which questions were answered by the experts. It would also be interesting to determine whether changes in opinion were based on participant’s demographic characteristics such as their political affiliation or gender. Future deliberative polling events might collect data which attempt to isolate those impacts from others. This might help us to better understand these possible influences (and further analysis of our own data might shed light on these questions as well).

One final area for further research might concern the longevity of these changing opinions or whether participants revert back because of the re-introduction of friends and family. A deliberative polling event in the future might re-poll the participants six months to a year after the initial event to determine whether or not their opinions remained the same or reverted back to their initial positions. This could help us to better understand the participants who were more or less susceptible to change during the event.

Conclusion

The general insight provided by this project is that deliberative polling can be a successful device for increasing the awareness and understanding of the economic impacts of Walmart amid a somewhat diverse number of participants. Our experience has shown that universities are valuable forums for these types of events, as resources can be assembled cheaply and quickly with experts and moderators such as professors, local politicians and administrators. The process of deliberation allows participants to become more informed, to realize its aptitude to solve public problems, to become engaged, to make a decision based on the virtues of an issue rather than on media sound bytes.

This deliberative polling event demonstrated that exposure to information and allowing for open discussion concerning an issue led to opinion change. Citizens who were directly involved with the deliberation were stimulated by the both the small-group and plenary session discussions. Many expressed the fact that they operated under misconceptions about Walmart, and felt that they learned a lot. At the end of the last plenary session, there was an apparent connection made between the participants. They felt comfortable in their new role as citizens deliberating on a given topic, asking key questions, and formulating new opinions.

References


Helm, B. (October 9, 2006). Wal-Mart, please don’t leave me. *Business Week*, p. 84.


**About the Authors**

Christopher Latimer is an associate professor in the Department of Political Science and associate director of the Institute of Civic Engagement; Karen Hempson is Lecturer II in the Childhood Education Department; and Richard Kendrick is a professor in the Sociology/Anthropology Department and founding director of the Institute for Civic Engagement—all at the State University of New York at Cortland.
Instructors in teacher education courses use an array of instructional strategies to facilitate preservice teachers’ acquisition of the theoretical knowledge of teaching and the application of the process of teaching children and young adults. Instructional strategies are implemented in the college or university classroom, online, or in school classrooms. Diverse instructional strategies to actively engage the university students in their own learning include role-playing activities, cooperative group projects, and service-learning (Sileo, Prater, Luckner, Rhine, & Rude, 1998). This article provides teacher educators with a foundation for using service-learning in their courses and a structure to guide and evaluate service-learning as an instructional strategy.

Service-learning has been implemented successfully as an instructional method in elementary and secondary schools, as well as community colleges and universities (Griffith, 2005; Yoder, Retish, & Wade, 1996). Service-learning allows students the opportunity to practice critical thinking skills and apply learning in real-world settings, while meeting authentic needs in communities. Service-learning presents students with real-world problems to confront, alternatives to consider, and solutions to find. Service-learning challenges students to work collegially, communicate successfully, and acquire and exercise new skills. Research indicates that service-learning, when well designed and managed, can contribute to student learning and growth (Astin & Sax, 1998; Billig et al., 2005; Chang, 2002; Hamm & Houck, 1998). Grounded in John Dewey’s theory of learning through experience, service-learning increases self-esteem, knowledge and skills acquisition, personal and interpersonal skills development, and a sense of accomplishment (Chen, 2004; Conrad & Hedin, 1991; Duddarar & Tover, 2003; Ehrlich, 1996).

Service-Learning in Higher Education

Research has indicated that service-learning is effective pedagogy on college and university campuses. Research has further indicated that service-learning has had a positive impact on academic, social, and cultural variables (Butin, 2006). It increases understanding and depth of course content, promotes knowledge and understanding of civic and social issues, and increases awareness and acceptance of diversity (Astin & Sax, 1998; Billig et al., 2005; Chang, 2002; Cress, Collier, Reiteneauer, & Associates, 2005; Hamm & Houck, 1998). Service-learning may be included in college and university courses as a separate course with a focus on service-learning (Anderson, Swick, & Yff, 2001) or as strategy for teaching academic concepts in disciplines such as engineering (George & Shams, 2007; Mehta & Sukumaran, 2007; Zhang, Gartner, Gunes, & Ting, 2007), education (Chen, 2004; Swick & Rowls, 2000), and nursing (Romack, 2004).

Faculty resources and research on service-learning present a four-stage schema for service-learning planning (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). The stages are (1) preparation, (2) implementation, (3) assessment/reflection, and (4) demonstration/celebration (Fertman, 1994; Kaye, 2004).

Preparation

Preparation involves a variety of activities, including identifying a community need, establishing a goal/objective for the service-learning project, establishing the knowledge and/or skills necessary for the project, and determining resources and activities necessary for the project (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Kaye, 2004). Course objectives should include and connect academic and civic/social learning (Berle, 2006; Zlotkowski, 1995). Service-learning should be carefully and thoroughly planned (Berle, 2006).
Planning includes developing connections with community resources for the project (Kaye, 2004), determining the number of participants, establishing the type of project and whether students will have a choice in their type of project, the number of hours required for the project, and the expected outcomes or forms of assessment for evaluating project outcomes and student learning (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). Werner and McVaugh (2000) recommended several strategies for increasing the quality and interest of service-learning, including giving students a choice and control of their project. Choices and control over project assignment and project activities have resulted in a goodness-of-fit between tasks and students’ interests resulting in an increase in learning and competence and may result in the internalization of the value of service. Mabry (1998) found that service-learning seems to be more effective when students provide at least 15 to 20 hours of service per semester and are in frequent contact with the beneficiaries of their service project. Assessment for evaluating academic learning and the outcomes of service-learning include formative and summative reflections (George & Shams, 2007; Mabry, 1998); focus groups (Cooks & Scharrer, 2006); group discussions (George & Shams, 2007); journal writing (Cooks & Scharrer, 2006; George & Shams, 2007); observations including videotapes (Cooks & Scharrer, 2006); narrative assessments in the form of a midterm and take-home final (Strage, 2000) or essays (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996); and presentations (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996).

Implementation

Implementation of service-learning should include frequent connections of the project to academic content (Cress et al., 2005). Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, and Yee (2000) found that instructors who frequently connected the service-learning project to academic learning facilitated a learning relationship whereby the service experience enhanced academic understanding that in turn enhanced the service experience. Throughout the implementation of the service project, students should reflect on the project and academic learning to assess their learning. This ensures that participation in the service-learning project is impacting academic learning and enhancing social learning (Astin et al.) or understanding of diversity (Rhoads, 1997).

Assessment/Reflection

Much has been written regarding the assessment of service-learning and service-learning outcomes. Assessments often focus on evaluating the course and/or evaluating student academic and social or civic learning. Cooks and Scharrer (2006) presented several methods for assessing students’ social learning that included interviews, focus groups, journal assignment analysis, and analysis of videotaped interactions. Bringle and Hatcher (1996) suggested using purposeful reflections linked to course objectives that are analyzed using a rubric or a separate activity such as a poster presentation or essays. Student reflections as a data source seem to be the most frequently used form of assessment. Bringle and Hatcher suggested the use of purposeful reflection activities, analyzed using a rubric to rate learning, or a separate activity such as a poster presentation or essay. Ash, Clayton, and Atkinson (2005) used rubrics to evaluate students’ thinking as demonstrated in their written reflection. Strage (2000) used an analysis of students’ journals to determine that students had reflected thoughtfully on the connections between lecture information, readings, and hands-on experiences. Questionnaire surveys and Likert scales have been developed and used to evaluate course objectives and program outcomes that included service-learning projects (George & Shams, 2007; Zhang et al., 2007). However, George and Shams (2007) issued a caution regarding the use of Likert scales and surveys because assessment of learning based on self-report may be biased due to students providing desirable responses. Student surveys and semi-structured discussions at the end of the semester can also provide information regarding suggestions for program improvements (George & Shams, 2007). In addition to assessing the impact of the service-learning project on student learning, George and Shams contended that it is equally important to determine the success of the project from the perspective of the community partner. Although traditionally outside the realm of learning in higher education, obtaining community members’ perspective provides a more holistic assessment (George & Shams, 2007), which promotes service-learning as a mutual activity in which both parties benefit (Rhoads, 1997).

Demonstration/Celebration

Kaye (2004) defines the final stage of demonstration as allowing students the opportunity to discuss and openly exhibit their work through different formats such as displays, performances, and presentations. Demonstration provides students an opportunity to validate what they have learned and how they learned it, as well as to share that learning with others. While celebration is sometimes included as the final stage of service-
learning projects (Fertman, 1994), Kaye suggests that celebration be included in the demonstration stage, such as planning a festive occasion paired with the student demonstrations. Students, too, have reported the importance of being given the opportunity to share the results of their service-learning projects with others (Swick & Rowls, 2000).

Existing literature on service-learning provides a wealth of information for developing and implementing service-learning projects in higher education. The literature provides descriptions of instructors’ experiences in implementing service-learning, including details such as methods used and evaluation procedures (Allison, 2008; Curtis & Mahon, 2010; Larios-Sanz, Simmons, Bagnall, & Rosell, 2011; Ming, Lee, & Ka, 2009). Many colleges and universities have developed faculty resources including pamphlets, brochures, and practical guides to support faculty in developing a service-learning course or project (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Gilchrist, Mundy, Felton, & Shields, 2003). There is information on worksheets for planning, suggestions on how to assess, types of reflection activities/questions, pre and post assessments for students, and numerous checklists. However, for an instructor inexperienced in service-learning and undertaking the development of a service-learning project in a course for the first time, accessing the depth and breadth of the literature could be overwhelming.

We attempted to streamline the existing literature into a manageable checklist to provide a simple method of planning and assessing an instructor’s experience with service-learning. The simple checklist provides a framework that reflects our experiences and the service-learning literature. Further, the checklist breaks down the four stages of service-learning into components somewhat finer than that which the literature recommends.

This article provides a description of our service-learning experiences and the resulting checklist we developed. The purpose of the checklist is to assist an instructor—in particular those new to service-learning—in developing, implementing, and evaluating the results of a service-learning project. This checklist provides instructors the opportunity to fine-tune their experience and continue to grow in their use of service-learning.

**Service-Learning Project Description**

Our experiences in service-learning include planning, implementing, and assessing service-learning projects as required assignments in two graduate courses and one undergraduate course over an eight-year span. During that time we assessed and reflected on the assigned projects, making revisions to provide more detail in the planning, providing more feedback and linkages to academic and social learning, and refining the evaluation of student learning. We reviewed (a) the course syllabi; (b) the service-learning projects completed by students; (c) student course evaluation ratings and comments; (d) instructor notes; and (e) evaluation instruments completed by the instructors to revise and improve our service-learning projects.

In an attempt to design a workable schema to assess service-learning experiences, we developed a guide for instructors to complete in reviewing the service-learning experiences. After the initial guide was developed, the instructors met and reviewed data collected from the courses. Discussion ensued on how to respond to each item on the guide, and revisions were made to provide greater clarity. Each instructor then individually completed the guide for an additional course each taught, and comparisons were made. Differences in perspectives were discussed until complete agreement was reached on elements to include on the guide. A study of our service-learning experiences was then completed (Jenkins & Sheehey, 2009).

**The Checklist**

Our experience in developing a guide for evaluating service-learning in higher education courses, and a review of the literature on service-learning, led to our development of a simple checklist for planning, implementing, and evaluating service-learning. Elements on the checklist were grouped into the four stages widely accepted in the service-learning literature (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Fertman, 1994; Kaye, 2004), resulting in a 10-item checklist.

The checklist is presented with brief descriptions of suggestions for instructors to consider; individual items should be weighed for appropriateness against instructor’s prior knowledge and background, and the course into which a service-learning project (SLP) assignment is to be integrated. We included the data collection source, criteria utilized, and a brief discussion on each of the elements. The checklist can be found in Table 1.

**Stage 1: Preparation**

1. Course description. Data Collection Source: Course syllabus. Criteria: Consider whether the goals and objectives of the course are aligned with the goals and objectives of service-learning. The course syllabus should include the course goals and objectives specific to service-learning and the nature or benefits of service-learning as related to
the course content (Berle, 2006; Zlotkowski, 1995).

2. Integration of SLP into course content. Data collection source: Course syllabus, course agenda, individual class agendas, and supporting materials. Criteria: Prepare the course session agendas to integrate the SLP into the course. Schedule class sessions to devote to the teaching of service-learning, the monitoring of project implementation, and final presentations of projects (Kaye, 2004).

3. SLP description and requirements. Data Collection Source: Course syllabus and/or supporting course materials (e.g., service-learning guide, separate handouts with project description and directions). Criteria: The SLP assignment should be described in detail. Include a description of the components of the project and detailed written directions for submitting. Specify if the students are to submit a final written report of the SLP, the elements to include in the paper, and how it will be scored. Consider breaking the project assignment into parts to be submitted to the instructor on specific dates. The instructor can then provide written and/or verbal feedback to individual students to direct their completion of the SLP. The SLP directions should include specific details for the evaluation/reflection section (George & Shams, 2007; Mabry, 1998). Consider including specific questions to guide the students’ reflection regarding what they learned from the project and the impact of the project (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). The evaluation component should require students to reflect upon the learning in three aspects: (a) learning of course content, (b) their thoughts and feelings about the service-learning experience, and (c) the impact of and feedback from the community partner who participated in the service-learning project. Consider using a pre- and post-test method (questionnaire or survey) for evaluating the results of the SLP impact on students and community partners (Borges & Hartung, 2007; George & Shams, 2007).

3a. Time requirement. Data Collection Source: Course syllabus and/or supporting materials. Criteria: Details of time students should devote to the service-learning project should be specific enough to provide students the necessary guidance (Berle, 2006). Specify if the SLP should be a semester-long project, and specify the minimum (and maximum) number of hours students are required to devote to the project (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). Consider requiring students to submit a timeline or time log with an estimate of the time devoted to planning, implementing, evaluating, and writing the project final report.

3b. Grade value. Data Collection Source: Course syllabus and/or supporting materials. Criteria: The SLP should be given a point value and assigned a percentage of the course grade appropriate for the project assignment. In our experiences, the SLP accounted for 30% to 40% of the course grade. Individual project reports were evaluated on a 100 point scale, and included the presentation of the project to the whole class.

3c. Type of project. Data Collection Source: Course syllabus and/or supporting materials. Criteria: Specify the type of project required. Types of SLPs include direct, indirect, and advocacy or civic action. Fertman (1994) defined the three types as follows: Direct service is personal contact with those to whom the service is provided, such as cooking and serving food to the homeless; indirect service “involves channeling resources to solve a problem,” (p. 13) such as fundraising for the homeless; civic action involves “active participation in democratic citizenship” (p. 14), such as petitioning the local government to address housing needs of the homeless. Students should be informed if they are to choose their own project (limited choice), choose from a menu (limited choice), or be assigned a predetermined project. Werner & McVaugh (2000) found that providing a choice increased the quality and interest of the project and resulted in an increase in learning and internalization of the value of service. A study by Mayhew (2000) suggested that students learn whether given limited or unlimited choice. In our experiences, we allowed students to choose their type of project, according to specific criteria provided. Students predominantly chose direct service and implemented worthwhile projects that provided a needed service to others, within the guidelines of the project description and appropriate to the course. Instructors may want to complete a chart that summarizes the types of projects students implemented.

3d. Location. Data Collection Source: Course syllabus and/or supporting materials. Criteria: If the SLP is to be implemented in a specific location or with identified community partners, the instructor should develop community connections regarding the SLP location (Kaye, 2004). For example if a SLP is assigned in a reading methods course, the instructor should have made a connection with the administrator and teachers in a school to facilitate implementation of the SLP. The
Table 1. Checklist for Planning Implementing and Evaluating Service-Learning Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage One: Preparation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Course Description. Prepare your course syllabus with clear alignment of course and service-learning project (SLP) goals and objectives; specify course objectives tied to the service-learning project.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Integration of SLP into Course Content. Purposefully plan the course syllabus with integration of the SLP into the course content and class sessions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. SLP Description and Requirements. Specify the SLP requirements, directions, and methods for evaluating the project. Include elements of the SLP, such as the use of ongoing reflective journal writing; timeline and time logs; formative and summative evaluation procedures; SLP presentation; questions upon which students should reflect on the value of service-learning in areas such as personal development, affective development, and civic responsibility; and on course content; final paper/report; and supporting materials. Provide a clear and detailed description of the SLP that specifies:</td>
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<td>a. time requirement—amount of time required to devote to project</td>
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<td>b. grading criteria for the project, and value toward the total course grade</td>
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<td>c. types of projects—direct, indirect, or advocacy</td>
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<td>d. location of SLP—where service is to be provided and with whom</td>
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<td>e. evaluation—how project will be evaluated. Prepare a scoring guide or rubric that is aligned with and in the same format as the SLP components. Include point or percentage value to components. Provide the scoring guide or rubric to the students in advance, and encourage their use of the instrument in preparing their final project report.</td>
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<th>Stage Two: Implementation—Performing the Service</th>
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<td>4. Foundation for service-learning. Prior to allowing students to begin a project, provide a foundation for service-learning as a philosophy and as pedagogy. Introduce service-learning as a valuable instructional technique; provide the rationale and theoretical research base. Assign readings or have students locate articles or stories of teachers who have implemented service-learning projects (Chen, 2004; Dudderar &amp; Tover, 2003). Provide examples of completed projects as models for students to review.</td>
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<td>5. Student support and feedback. Consider requiring the students to submit the SLP in parts; give regular feedback to students, especially during the planning and early implementation stage (Swick &amp; Rowls, 2000). Allow students to share ongoing progress and dialogue with others in class (Mayhew, 2000). Encourage students to reflect on the experience as it progresses and at the end, such as through reflective journals (Dudderar &amp; Tover, 2003). Answer questions and assist students in problem solving as issues arise.</td>
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<th>Stage Three: Reflection</th>
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<td>6. Student learning and performance on SLP. Reflect on the pre and post surveys, student project reflections, completed project, and course grades. Devote time to review data on student learning and performance. Reflect on the course evaluations and ratings/comments specific to the SLP.</td>
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<td>7. Student satisfaction. Reflect on the comments in the students’ reflections and on course evaluations, and on instructor observations. Plan in advance to gather sufficient data to provide for a review of student satisfaction.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Instructor satisfaction. Reflect on instructor observation and instructor notes, completed projects, and course evaluations. This is a subjective evaluation to be determined by the instructor after completing the experience. Utilize a format for evaluating the results of the SLP assignment and implementation. Discuss SLP results with colleagues and students. Determine strengths and areas in need of improvement; continue to refine.</td>
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<th>Stage Four: Demonstration/Celebration</th>
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<td>9. Student celebration. Allow students to present their projects (Swick &amp; Rowls, 2000); determine whether the presentation of the project is a part of the SLP grade.</td>
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<td>10. Instructor Celebration. Present the results of your experience to other faculty in your university, college, or department. Provide support to colleagues and act as a resource. Share your experience with graduate students and encourage their research with service-learning. Present at national conferences. Publish your results.</td>
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volunteer criteria/requirements of the school would then need to be identified and clearly articulated to the candidates. If the SLP is assigned in a course on working with families, the specific location may not be specified as long as the project participants include families. However, the instructor should have connections with family resource centers and include volunteer criteria for those centers, as applicable. We required students to submit to the instructor a proposal indicating the type of project and location—including documentation that they meet volunteer criteria for that organization or agency—and receive approval prior to implementing. Given sufficient location choices, meeting volunteer criteria should not be a hindrance.

3e. SLP Evaluation. Data collection source: Course syllabus and/or supporting materials. Criteria: Clearly specify how the project will be evaluated (Cooks & Scharrer, 2006; George & Shams, 2007). Align the method of evaluating the project with the project description. A rubric, for example, should be comprised of the identical components included on the written directions for the SLP, with criteria for levels of performance. Students should be provided the written evaluation document/rubric, including specific information for all components to be submitted to the instructor. Consider including details for evaluating (a) the content of the project final paper, (b) the quality of the written product, (c) the quality of the presentation, and (d) the appropriateness of the project to service-learning and to the course.

Stage Two: Implementation—Performing the Service

4. Foundation for service-learning. Data collection source: Class agenda, instructional materials, instructor’s notes. Criteria: Provide sufficient information and instruction on service-learning. Prior to allowing students to begin the projects, provide a foundation for service-learning as a philosophy and as pedagogy. Introduce service-learning as a valuable instructional technique; provide the rationale and theoretical research base, the principles and practices of service-learning, and the benefits to teaching and learning. Assign readings or have students locate articles or stories of teachers who have implemented service-learning projects (Chen, 2004; Dudderar & Tover, 2003). Provide examples of completed projects as models for students to review.

5. Student support and feedback. Data Collection Source: class agenda, instructor notes. Criteria: Schedule class sessions to review specific requirements for the projects; include class time to answer questions regarding the assignments, and review students’ drafts of projects prior to completion. Periodically, instructors may hold individual and whole class sessions with students to clarify project requirements and give feedback. Class sessions also may include coverage of topics related to specific skills needed to complete the project. Include frequent connections of the project to academic content (Astin et al., 2000). Allow students to share ongoing progress and dialogue with others in class (Mayhew, 2000). Encourage students to reflect on the experience as it progresses and at the end, such as through reflective journals (Dudderar & Tover, 2003; George & Shams, 2007; Mabry, 1998). Answer questions and assist students in problem-solving as issues arise.

Stage Three: Assessment/Reflection

6. Student learning and performance on SLP. Data Collection Source: Before and after surveys, student project reflections, community partner feedback, completed project and course grades. Criteria: Instructors should devote time to review data on student learning and performance. Instructors should utilize multiple measures in evaluating student performance on the SLP, including course grades, individual project grades, and other measures including community partner feedback. If a before and after survey or questionnaire was implemented, evaluate the data for indications of student learning (George & Sham, 2007; Zhang et al., 2007). Similarly, evaluate the questions to which students responded in the project reflection section (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). Items that address acquisition of course content and impact of service-learning project on the community partner should be analyzed.

7. Student satisfaction. Data collection source: Reflection section of SLP, student course evaluations. Criteria: Instructors should have gathered sufficient data to provide for a review of student satisfaction. Student satisfaction of the SLP can be determined from comments on the reflection section of the SLP and in the course evaluations completed by students at the end of the course. On the course evaluations, items pertaining to “course assignments,” “course projects,” and/or “overall course” should be analyzed. Mean responses to those items as well as student comments should be considered. Student satisfaction may indicate the degree of learning about the academic field and the impact of the project on the community partner. Research indicates that students report
greater satisfaction in courses implementing service-learning (Moely et al., 2002).

8. Instructor satisfaction. Data Collection Source: Observation/instructor notes, review of completed projects, course evaluations. Criteria: This is a subjective evaluation to be determined by the instructors after reflecting upon the experience. Challenges that higher education faculty face in implementing service-learning, such as an already over-crowded curriculum, lack of time to plan, and the mission and goals of the program or course not aligned with service-learning (Anderson et al., 2001) are important issues to weigh against the benefits of service-learning. Instructors should consider keeping notes during implementation and to reflect upon them following the experience. Instructors should summarize “what I learned as an instructor,” noting what worked, what didn’t, and what next. Further, note any changes made to the project from a prior experience, if appropriate, and the result.

Overall, both instructors were pleased with the results of the SLP assignments and students’ performances. We integrated the SLPs into the course as required assignments, in courses that typically required semester long projects; therefore there was no issue of an “already over-crowded curriculum.” We devoted more time in planning the projects in the first experiences, but time lessened with experience. The conceptual framework of our college, “preparing educators for a just and democratic society,” is closely aligned with the outcomes of service-learning, and therefore supports its use. Both instructors felt we learned much from the experience, but both still consider we have room to grow. Instructor satisfaction was highest in the final experiences.

Stage Four: Demonstration & Celebration

9. Student and partner celebration. Data Collection Source: Student and partner presentations. Criteria: Instructors should provide opportunities for students and community partners, if possible, to present their final project results to others (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Swick & Rowls, 2000). Class time can be devoted to allow students and partners to present individually or in a poster session format. An alternative is to schedule a Mini Conference during which students and partners will present their project results. Encourage students and partners to submit proposals to local, state, or national conferences to present their results. In our experience, students enjoyed the opportunity to present their findings to the class; some community partners participated in the presentations or were invited guests at the celebration. Presentations included poster sessions and individual power point presentations. We found the presentations well prepared and engaging overall.

10. Instructor celebration. Data source: Instructor presentations. Criteria: Instructors should share their experience with colleagues through informal or formal opportunities. At the local level, instructors can share their results with colleagues at department and/or college wide meetings or forums. Share your experience with graduate students and encourage their research with service-learning. Instructors may prepare a manuscript for publication to share the results of the experience. Finally, instructors may consider submitting a proposal to local, state, or national conferences to present their results. Community partners might also be invited to co-present their perspectives on the projects.

Discussion

Although the literature provides descriptive guidance for planning, implementing, and evaluating service-learning in higher education courses, we developed a checklist for planning and assessing service-learning projects in our courses. We included information from the literature as well as our own experiences in developing our schema. We divided our checklist into the four stages of preparation, implementation, assessment/reflection, and demonstration/celebration as presented in the literature, broken into smaller components. We found that it is essential that all aspects of the service-learning project be thoroughly planned and linked to course academic learning and social learning goals and objectives. As recommended by Werner & McVaugh (2000), we determined that offering selective choices regarding projects should be included in service-learning assignments. As Mabry (1998) suggested, we determined a specific number of hours during the semester for the project implementation and developed connections with the community regarding possible projects. We included feedback and review of course academic concepts to enhance learning and support of the project throughout implementation as suggested by Astin et al. (2000). We also recommended that requirements for the project be reviewed throughout the semester to provide support and clarification. We suggested evaluations be conducted prior to the project, throughout implementation of the project, and after the project. The use of formative and summative evaluations provides the instructor with feedback regarding student learning through the duration of the project (George & Shams, 2007; Mabry,
As Bringle and Hatcher (1996) suggested, we recommend the use of reflections, surveys using a Likert scale (George & Sham, 2007; Zhang et al., 2007), presentations (Bringle & Hatcher, etc.) as instruments for evaluating student-learning. We also included specific questions on course evaluations and project grades to determine student and community partner satisfaction and student learning outcomes. Similar to the celebration as the last component of a service-learning project, we suggest instructors of courses in higher education who have included a service-learning activity in their course celebrate by sharing their results with colleagues in their departments, colleges, and universities through formal or informal meetings or forums. In addition, celebration might include publishing research on service-learning outcomes for specific disciplines and presenting findings at local and national conferences.

Summary

From our review of the service-learning literature and our experiences, we gleaned the critical elements to consider in planning, implementing, and evaluating service-learning in higher education. We then condensed that information into a usable checklist. With the use of the checklist, we analyzed specific components of our service-learning experiences. We determined that the checklist provided a valuable structure to assist us in identifying our strengths and weaknesses, and in determining areas needing improvement. We offer this instrument as a means of providing suggestions to those interested in implementing service-learning. We suggest that others use the checklist to assist in determining the specific elements that worked and what is in need of further improvement.

References


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Amelia Jenkins is a full professor, and Patricia Sheehey an associate professor in the Department of Special Education at the University of Hawaii Manoa.
Mini-Med School: Developing Partnerships with the Community and Between Health Professions and Students
Annette I. Peery and Kathryn M. Kolasa

Abstract
Often in the high-tech, fast paced arena of health professions education, community engagement may be ignored. One rural, Southern university with a large health sciences division did not allow this to occur and has provided an opportunity for engagement and scholarship through a Mini-Med School. This multi-session education experience introduces members of the general public to academic and professional experiences of a medical education, and includes an interactive health fair session. The health fair session relies on the collaboration of multiple health professions – medicine, nursing and dietetics, thus promoting faculty and students from these health professions to engage in dialogue, training and interaction with each other and the community participants. This activity has been deemed extremely successful in promoting engagement of individuals and groups on multiple levels and thus provides an exemplar for others to follow.

Introduction and Background
Since the early 1990’s, scientists and interested lay people have met in the Mini-Med Schools experiences throughout the U.S. Mini-Med school, in some locations, is an open lecture series. In others, like the one offered at the [University] from 1998-2002 and again in 2007, is a multi-session education experience exposing members of the general public to the academic and professional experiences of a medical education. The Mini-Med school is designed to foster a better understanding of the role medical school and related programs such as Nursing and Allied Health, plays in its community. There have been few papers describing this program, although the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Science Education published a planning guide (2006). This paper, then, is meant to describe how one southeastern university medical school conducted a Mini-Med school, the partnerships developed between the school and the community as well as between health professionals and students engaged in this effort. We also report on the results of the “Doctoring Experience”, one of the experiential learning activities for participating community members.

Mini-Med School
The concept was brought to the School of Medicine by a representative from the [company] that provided a small unrestricted grant for the first three years and the program was offered subsequently for five consecutive years. It was offered with internal funding for an additional two years. The program included a variety of presentations offered over a 6 week period. These dealt with cutting edge developments in medicine and provided hands on learning with new technology as well as question-and-answer sessions among faculty and participants. The sessions, attended by more than 500 individuals were taught by physicians and researchers in their fields who were chosen for their ability to make the technical language of medicine understandable to the non-medical public and who volunteered their time.

The objectives of the program were to assist participants to develop understanding of the following: 1) The primary care mission of the University; 2) the disease and health conditions especially prevalent in the region; 3) the growing emphasis in medicine on health improvement and disease prevention; and, 4) the importance of research in improving health care.

Methodology
The program highlighted health concerns of the region and included heart disease and stroke, cancer, diabetes and obesity. Special areas of training received by some health professional disciplines were included, such as biomedical research, medical humanities and ethics, medical communication and patient education, and the use of evidence based medicine. The program also demonstrated some of its treatments and telemedicine, along with lower technology training of students using standardized patients.

Integral to the programming was an interactive activity during each session. The goal was for each participant to leave the session with a new skill from calculating their own Body Mass Index and assessing the heart healthfulness of their personal diet to identifying quality web sites to using the tools of Evidence Based Medicine to answer their personal clinical questions. Mini-Med school was a
popular program based on its high attendance rates, waiting lists for the next offerings and comments made on evaluations completed after each session rating the quality of the presentations and interactive activities. We wanted, however, to have a more objective measure of the impact of Mini-Med School and chose to evaluate the impact of the “Doctoring” experience which gave participants information about their own health status.

In 2003, The Institute of Medicine called for educating all health professionals to deliver collaborative patient-centered care via interprofessional practice (Greiner & Knebel, 2003). Our 2007 Mini-Med school provided student volunteers an excellent opportunity to experience interprofessional practice. Thirty-six students from dietetics, nursing, and medicine along with primary care resident physicians, interacted with each other and Mini-Med school participants in a “Doctoring” experience. All students, within their own professional school, completed the University and School of Medicine confidentiality module. The students of the various disciplines were trained together, by health professions faculty, to manage stations where each participant had their diet analyzed, body composition measured, lifestyle screened for diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular disease. Most of the students had no direct experience or training with these measurements. An Interprofessional Training Session was held the week prior to the “Doctoring” experience which included a review of confidentiality concepts and practicing the measurements on themselves and each other. In the earlier Mini-Med schools faculty managed these stations but only provided oversight during the 2007 event.

The students experienced “Doctoring” from a patient’s viewpoint, increasing their sensitivity to patient concerns. They had the opportunity to informally interact with the general public about their desires to serve their community in a health profession. Students learned psychomotor skills such as finger stick blood sugars, insulin injections, taking a blood pressure, and measuring ankle-brachial index and learned the value of screenings to educate and empower healthcare consumers to promote change in health behaviors. Students also had the opportunity during the “Doctoring” experience to improve their communication skills with consumers.

Community Participants (Sample)

Participants to the Mini Med School were recruited through a mailing to community leaders as well as paid newspaper advertisements. The promotional literature promised the participants that the program would enlighten, entertain, and familiarize participants with medical terminology and to provide insight into biomedical research and patient care.

Adult men and women from a wide variety of occupations, and who had a strong desire to learn more about medicine and medical education and were willing to commit 18 hours over a period of six weeks to fulfill this wish enrolled in the sessions. The class size was typically limited to 90 people on a first-come-first-serve basis.

Prior to the 2007 Mini-Med School, IRB approval was obtained from the University and Medical Center Institutional Review Board of [University] to collect survey data concerning the participants. Additionally, participants signed a consent form on the first night of the Mini-Med School after attending a presentation on the process of Human Subject Research Review. Participants were able to refuse to participate in any component of the program and their consent to participate in the results reported in this paper was based upon them voluntarily turning in a copy of the form at the end of the session.

Data Collection

During the “Doctoring Experience,” participants were divided into small groups and had the opportunity to rotate through eleven interactive stations where they learned to use the same screening tools medical students employ to help adult and pediatric patients understand how their lifestyle contributes to obesity and chronic disease (previously discussed). Each participant received a “Doctoring Experience Report Card” on which the results of their screenings, as well as their answers to some health history questions, could be recorded. The participants retained a copy and a copy was turned in for a door prize drawing, if the participant desired to do so. All participation was completely voluntary and participants completed only the questions and activities they desired.

Instruments

Participants had the opportunity to complete a variety of screening and assessment instruments at the various stations during the “Doctoring Experience,” and were able to record their results on the “Doctoring Experience Report Card.” The “Doctoring Experience Report Card” allowed participants to enter results of the previous instruments, results of blood pressure and blood glucose readings, and to answer questions regarding their health and health-related behaviors. Other
instruments included a Calcium IQ Quiz, Rate Your Plate (non-DASH version) dietary assessment, and Diabetes Risk Test. “Rate Your Plate” and the “Calcium IQ Quiz” provide quick assessments and have been developed or revised and evaluated by dietitians in the [University] Department of Family Medicine.

The “Calcium IQ Quiz” has participants answer calcium intake related questions based on their previous day’s dietary intake. Based upon that intake, 1 to 3 points are given for various calcium containing foods/beverages and the total points then multiplied by 100 resulting in the approximate milligrams (mg) of calcium consumed in the previous day. Participants can then compare this amount to the recommended daily allowance for their age and gender. (ECU Family Practice Center, 1999)

The “Rate Your Plate” instrument assesses how individuals are doing in making healthy choices related to their eating patterns based upon their typical, or usual, intake of various foods. The “Rate Your Plate” scores are interpreted as follows: 18 to 28 points = there are MANY ways to make your eating patterns healthier; 28 to 41 points = there are SOME ways to make your eating patterns healthier; and, 42 to 54 points = you are making MANY healthy choices. (ECU Family Practice Center, 1998).

The “Diabetes Risk Test” (National Diabetes Education Program, 2011) helps determine one’s risk of developing pre-diabetes or type 2 diabetes. The guides one through a brief series of “yes/no” questions with points assigned to each. A score of 10 or greater represents that an individual has an increased risk of developing pre-diabetes or type 2 diabetes if they continue with their current lifestyle.

Results

Sixty-four (91%) of the 70 participants completed the evaluation. Of these 70% reported that they participated in most of the interactive stations.

Participants were asked whether they found the interaction with the students to be a positive experience and all responded that their interactions were very positive. Following is a summary from the 2007 Mini-Med School of the demographics of the participants as well as an overview of their “Doctoring Experience” results indicating their own health status.

Demographics

Data were collected from 64 participants, representing 91% of the entire group. The mean age of the sixty-four respondents was 47 years, with an age range of 19 to 86 years. The majority were female (63%) and Caucasian (83%). Forty-seven percent held a graduate degree while only 4% held a high school diploma as their highest degree earned. In terms of internet use, 12% reported that the never or infrequently used the internet and 47% reported using the internet often. Additionally, 71% of respondents reported that they had taken information they found on the web with them to discuss with their physician, indicating that consumers do seek health information on their own.

Weight and Body Composition

Participants had the opportunity to determine their height, weight, waist to hip ratio, body mass index (BMI) and answer questions related to their weight as a child as well as the weight of their own children. In this sample, 18 (28%) had a BMI of between 25 and 30 kg/m2 while another 18 (28%) had a BMI greater than 30. Of those with a BMI equal to or greater than 30, only 8 (13%) reported being overweight as a child and most reported (10, or 56%) becoming overweight after the age of 20. Of those with a BMI > 25, only 15 (23%) reported that a physician broached the subject of weight with them, and 19 (83%) of those reported that they had attempted at some point to lose weight after their physician mentioned it.

Healthy Eating and Physical Activity

Forty-seven participants reported their score on the “Rate Your Plate” instrument, which assesses whether or to what extent individuals are making healthy choices related to their eating patterns based upon their typical intake of various foods. Of these participants, 36 (76.6%) had a score of 42 or higher, indicating that the majority of the respondents were already making healthy choices in regards to their eating patterns.

Forty-nine participants reported their score on the “Calcium IQ Quiz.” It is recommended that individuals age 19 to 50 years have a daily calcium intake of 1,000 mg and those over 50 years 1,200 mg (NIH, 2011). Of the respondents, only 13 (26.4%) reported a calcium intake of 1,000 mg or more over the past 24 hours.

Participants were also asked if their physician had ever encouraged them to walk, be active for at least 30 minutes a day on most days of the week and/or do strength training at least two days a week. Although 20 (62.5%) or the 64 participants reported that they followed their physician’s recommendations for physical activity most of the time, only 8 (11.4%) respondents reported that their physician had encouraged them to walk, 11 (15.7%) were told by...
their physician to be active for at least 30 minutes a day on most days of the week, and only 7 (10%) were encouraged to engage in strength training at least two times per week.

Diabetes

In this sample (N=64), 7.8% reported having been diagnosed with diabetes and all were taking either oral medication and/or insulin. While only 5 (7.8%) reported a diagnosis of diabetes, only 6 (9.4%) had been told by their physician at some time that their blood glucose level was high.

Participants had the opportunity to have their blood glucose levels checked via a finger stick. These were considered random blood glucose readings as they were taken without regard to when the individual last ate food. A blood glucose reading is one of the assessments used to assist in diagnosing diabetes. The American Diabetes Association 2008 Clinical Practice Guidelines state that a random blood glucose level of 140 to 199 mg/dL may be diagnostic of pre-diabetes, while a random level of 200 mg/dL or higher may be diagnostic of diabetes (American Diabetes Association, 2008). Of the participants who completed this screening (N=60), fifty-four (90%) had a random blood glucose level between 71 and 129 mg/dL, 4 (6.7%) between 142 and 160 mg/dL (pre-diabetes range), and 2 (3.3%) of 200 mg/dL or greater (diabetes range). Participants also had the opportunity to complete the American Diabetes Association Diabetes Risk Test. A score of 10 or greater represents that an individual has an increased risk of developing diabetes if they continue with their current lifestyle. Of the 36 participants who reported their score on this risk test, 11 (30.6%) reported a score of 10 or greater, indicating an increased risk of developing pre-diabetes or type 2 diabetes.

Cardiovascular Disease

In this sample, 6 (9.4%) of respondents reported they had been diagnosed with hypertension (systolic BP > 140 or diastolic > 90, for those without diabetes (NIH NHLBI, 2008). Medications for hypertension were used by 5 (7.8%) and 6 (9.4%) had been encouraged to eat less salt to assist in managing their hypertension. Thirty-one of the participants had their blood pressure taken and recorded. The actual blood pressure results of participants that were normal or hypertensive were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pressure Type</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normal systolic</td>
<td>13 (41.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal diastolic</td>
<td>20 (74.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypertensive systolic</td>
<td>2 (6.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypertensive diastolic</td>
<td>1 (3.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information related to cholesterol, LDL, HDL and triglyceride levels was self-reported. In this sample, 14 (87.5%) reported having their cholesterol tested within the past two years and only 5 (7%) of participants reported the values for their LDL, HDL and triglyceride levels (the majority of which were within the desirable range). Of the respondents, 16 (38%) reported that they had been told that their cholesterol was too high and 12 (30.8%) had been encouraged to change their diet due to this, but only 7 (10%) reported actually making dietary changes and 8 (18.6%) stated they take medication for their high cholesterol levels.

Motivation to Change

Participants in “The Doctoring Experience” were asked, “Based on what I learned today, I am motivated to change personal behavior.” Of the respondents, 56 (86.2%) replied “yes”.

Satisfaction of the Interdisciplinary Teams

Students participating in the interdisciplinary teams responded to an open-ended survey concerning the experiences. The student volunteers from all disciplines were extremely positive as they reflected on the experience, with 100% reported satisfaction with the experience.

They were asked “in what capacity did you interact with students from disciplines other than your own?” One student responded: “The training session was very informative and taught me skills I would not have learned if I chose not to participate. . . . I liked the interaction of the program with (other) students . . . The idea of the entire program combining the disciplines and working together was great! We should be working together, our studies overlap and join in so many ways!”

When asked “what was the most beneficial aspect of this experience for you?” the responses included:

- “I had the incredible opportunity to learn new skills that I would have probably never had the chance to learn. . . . they really help to put things in (perspective) for me from the eyes of a patient.”
- “Interacting with the community.”
- “The most beneficial aspect of this program was definitely the training session. I also enjoyed the one-on-one time with the individuals coming through. The random questions some individuals came up with were fascinating, and it was also interesting how much information they expected me to know.”
Discussion

For these respondents, the rates of overweight and obesity were slightly lower than the national average. In the United States, about two-thirds (66%) of adults age 20 and older are overweight or obese as indicated by a BMI of > 25. Of these nearly one-third (31.4%) are considered obese, with a BMI > 30 (NIH NIDDK, 2007). In this group the comparable percentage was 56%. It may be that this group was more highly educated and therefore more aware of the importance of maintaining a healthy weight. It is also interesting to note that this group scored highly on the “rate your plate” exercise indicating that as a whole they are making healthy food choices. Yet the majority are still in the overweight or obese category.

The majority of respondents, 62.5%, reported that they followed their physician’s recommendations for physical activity most of the time. This number seems quite impressive as only 26% of adults in the U.S. engage in vigorous leisure-time physical activity three or more times per week and 59% do no vigorous physical activity at all in their leisure time (NIH NIDDK, 2007). We note, however, that less than 25% reported that their physicians discussed their weight or exercise regimen with them. This is consistent with other reports in the literature reporting that physicians and nurse practitioners do not readily discuss weight control issues (Pollack et al, 2010).

In the United States, as the prevalence of obesity has increased, so has the prevalence of diabetes, particularly type 2 diabetes. In 2007, the prevalence of diagnosed and undiagnosed diabetes in the U.S. for all ages was estimated to be 7.8% of the population. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008). In this group 8.1% reported having been diagnosed with diabetes, thus they were comparable in this aspect to national norms.

Changing one’s lifestyle and health behaviors may be met with multiple starts, relapses, re-evaluations and restarts. Prochaska and DiClemente describe this cycle in their change theory, which includes six stages:

1) Pre-contemplation (resisting change)
2) Contemplation (thinking about change, but not considering it within the next month)
3) Preparation (getting ready to change; plan to act within one month)
4) Action (practicing new behavior; 3 to 6 months)
5) Maintenance (continued commitment to sustain new behavior)
6) Termination (if no relapse, new behavior is habit) OR Relapse (resume old behaviors) (Kritsonis, 2004; Littell & Girvin, 2002)

The participants in this program would most likely be in the second or third stage of change. One might assume that some resistance has been overcome through the program participation. The positive response to the item asking about plans to change would suggest that change is under consideration or that the individual might be actively planning how to bring about the change.

Engagement on Multiple Levels

Mini-Med School in this University has united the University and Health Sciences Division and the community at-large and has been successful at integrating teaching, research, service and community engagement. Community members engaged in this experience were able to see and experience first-hand what the major University in their area has to offer the region in terms of health care and in education of health professionals to serve this region. They had opportunities to learn about current, cutting-edge topics and research in healthcare and how it might relate to them. Additionally, they had the opportunity to learn more about their own health, through the “Doctoring Experience”, and how to promote a healthier lifestyle for themselves and their families.

In conclusion, interprofessional work with multiple disciplines can lead to extremely successful interactions, events and engagement. The Mini-Med School program was an example of such a successful interaction. All groups involved in this project interacted with one other and found that a positive activity. Future evaluation should focus on determining the degree of impact the program has had in bringing about healthier behaviors in the participants and also the effect of interprofessional education activities on each professional group.

References


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Abstract
The Alabama Entrepreneurial Research Network (AERN) is a program originated to encourage entrepreneurship in rural areas of economic distress. In addition to promoting prosperity in low-income areas, the program now also serves as an opportunistic research network for interdisciplinary science investigations. Through AERN, potential and existing entrepreneurs in rural areas of Alabama have access to extensive university resources and personnel to advance their ideas for improving their local economies. The network provides materials, training, counseling, and business research services. AERN now includes 15 partners located over a large geographic area. This network has been sustained for over 10 years at a non-land grant state university. This paper describes the AERN program and suggests that an extensive university bureaucracy devoted to community relationships (such as the very successful and admirable Extension System) is not always necessary for long-lasting, effective engaged scholarship. The University of Alabama (UA) team has benefited as surely as the rural partners and local entrepreneurs. We have gained skill in community-based engagement scholarship and research; journal articles have been written; cross-university collaborations have been forged; students have been involved in real-life problem solving. We see this endeavor as a positive example of how to form a sustainable university-community relationship.

Introduction
Entrepreneurs worldwide find it harder to access capital and technology in rural areas. Even with a good idea and a strong will, potential rural entrepreneurs often lack the technical or managerial know-how necessary to create successful businesses. Rural areas are also often areas of economic distress. (Snyder et al., 2011.) Our aim has been to establish a robust community-partners network within the business community in rural, low income areas. The network serves as a vehicle to increase prosperity, but it is also a resource for community-based research for interdisciplinary science. Business and economic research might come first to mind, but we have discovered with experience that a community-partners network of entrepreneurs is also an important resource for research in other academic fields.

An original aim of the community-partners network was to make resources from The University of Alabama available to local communities in creating jobs and for increasing locally available goods and services. From that original aim, a network with more sophisticated goals has evolved. The original goal of interaction with rural communities has never changed, but along the way we have developed interdisciplinary coalitions and research opportunities. This paper chronicles that process and encourages others to be open to this kind of academic endeavor.

Our rural partners perceive a positive relationship between physical, environmental, and cultural amenities and economic growth; nevertheless, they know that they are not freestanding economies. Their economic well-being depends on other, surrounding rural counties and on nearby metropolitan areas. Having a formal, long lasting link to business research with a major university has given each partner the chance to develop its own unique strategy for using the university-community resources to improve its local economy.

Despite rural socioeconomic difficulties, our study region has a rich cultural history, and its citizens are optimistic about the future. The area has produced artists, musicians, writers, civil rights activists, and national political figures. In celebration of these assets, different organizations within the various counties organize annual festivals devoted to culture, crafts, cuisine, local flora, music, and in one case, to that great economic powerhouse of earlier times, the mule. (Mule Day is held every June in Gordo, in Pickens County.) Our community partners are constantly pursuing new ways to improve the economic and social conditions in this most impoverished part of Alabama.

By putting resources directly into the hands of people who need them, AERN, the university-community network we have established, enables the targeted communities to build local economic successes and simultaneously contribute to original research. Building a sustainable, cohesive, committed network of community partners and university
researchers is hard, but doable. The process we describe here is proving valuable for the advancement of research and for the economic benefit of the partner communities.

Literature Review

Community-university collaborations are not new (Austin, 2004). Many units and disciplines across academia have engaged in a wide range of community-based relationships for generations. Because community problems offer opportunities for all three legs of the university’s mission—research, teaching, and service—the experiential learning for students, fresh data sources for faculty, and publicly recognized service outreach, make the community-based research model attractive (Brooks & Schramm, 2007).

The literature regarding community-based research collaborations points to the value of trust and mutual understanding among all partners to a project. At the earliest possible point in the research process, the community partners should be involved and all participants should be mutually defining the goals and objectives of the project. The community partners should have legitimate input regarding the direction of the project, the gathering of the research data, and the analysis of the project results. It is through this level of shared processes that another key element of true community collaboration can be attained: research that has a real and impactful result in the partner communities. A goal of any community-based collaboration should be for the partnership to survive beyond the life of the project currently being undertaken (University of Washington, School of Public Health, 2010).

The ongoing challenge to effect change in rural, low income communities often is that community engagement varies across different socioeconomic groups. For example, less affluent groups participate at a lower rate in community activities than other individuals (Williams, 2004). In any effort to overcome long-standing socioeconomic and cultural hurdles and to ensure broad participation in network activities, communication among local government workers, local politicians, and entrepreneurs is important. While entrepreneurs can tap informally into social capital networks—i.e. personal contacts with important players in the community—the structural dimensions of social capital can also provide a framework regarding the three ingredients important to the individual entrepreneur: access (to scarce resources), timing, and referral (Berggren, 2009).

Community-based development and research continue to gain momentum, particularly in health-related disciplines. There is an ongoing hope that local citizens will take ownership and responsibility and undertake action to achieve sustainability within their own communities for medical translational research efforts (Prinsloo, 2008). “Translational” research moves an idea from theory into practice, and experience shows that sustained university-community research networks like AERN are an excellent vehicle for this to happen.

Building capacity and sustainable economic development activity in “marginalized” communities (Austin, 2004) is the foundation upon which our model rests. Millio (1995) has noted that institutions such as those acting in partnership often serve as important intermediaries between individuals within low performing, rural communities and larger structural partners outside the community. As suggested by the literature, nurturing the community-based groups, and creating and sustaining bridges between individuals and the institutions that support them, are nearly synonymous with rebuilding community capacity (Anheier & Salamon, 2001; Dekker & Van Den Broek, 1998; Merrett, 2001; Perotin, 2001; Salamon, 2001; Stoll, 2001; Williams, 2004).

The bridging of individuals and institutions and larger outside structures takes place through a series of progressive stages that, over time, will increase the likelihood that collaborative, mutual democratic interactions occur that enhance the long-term success of the partnership and the specific project. The shared growth and building of the collaboration, with the preferred goal of full participation by the community partners, also allows for the development of local, engaged democratic interactions that will lead to behavioral changes and local advocacy for future and ongoing collaborative actions among all parties (Terlecki, Dunbar, et al., 2010).

Any approach to sustained community and entrepreneurial capacity building should begin with a common understanding of the individuals and communities involved. First, at its most basic level, “...the ideas for a new venture seem very much rooted in single entrepreneurs.” These entrepreneurs have knowledge and experience harvested over their lifetimes and are searching for “relevant resources to exploit the idea.” (Borch, Forde, Ronning, Vestrum, & Alsos, 2008). Second, at the community level, the local players are looking for tangible action and results, rather than further analysis of the underlying structural social, economic, cultural, or demographic factors that undergird the community or targeted project population. In other words, community partners expect the research and collaboration to directly benefit
the community, enhance community assets, and provide some understanding of the community’s place in relationship to the larger structures beyond the local environment. In practical terms, regular meetings, specific actions, focused attention on new members to the collaboration or partnership, and other tangible work products all contribute to creating sustainability and build a common sense of purpose that can ultimately lead to true social change and increased local capacity (Austin, 2004).

The fundamental challenge facing community-based development and collaborative research efforts remains “…to adapt and develop support tools that work well in the specific local context.” Any community-based network must manifest flexibility in the deployment and adaptation of the support tools used in its collaborative efforts—particularly in rural communities (Borch et al., 2008). Over time, the partnership model has the opportunity to transcend traditional project-based collaborations due to its ability to deal with both high levels of complexity and a lack of capacity by any one organization. Long-term efforts to build trust among partners should be predicated on shared decision making, flexibility, mutual implementation of the project, and transparent conversations among all partners. By focusing on the partnership, the likelihood for greater long-term impact and sustainability for both the partners and the partnership will be enhanced (Terlecki, Dunbar, et al., 2010; Austin, 2004).

The AERN Model

This paper describes a community-based model (Figure 1) that meets the community expectations outlined above by Austin and the research expectations outlined by Terlecki and Dunbar. The community-based research model described in this paper has a 10-year history with a strong base of service and a more recent history with successful academic research endeavors.

Our network is deliberately only in rural areas. The commonalities of history and culture that our rural counties share contribute to our successful AERN community partnerships today. Nevertheless, university researchers who might begin work in a rural area in which they did not grow up should not assume that all nearby rural counties with similar statistical profiles are all basically alike. Advice from this project is that university researchers must be carefully attuned to local sensibilities, expectations, and leadership. “They all look alike to me” is never a good way to begin any research endeavor—ever. Even though AERN counties are some of the poorest counties in Alabama with poorly developed physical and social infrastructure and minimal resources, they have leaders who want to see improvement and progress.

Our area’s common history includes chronic poverty and lack of access to high quality public education, factors that introduce impediments to increasing rural prosperity in the area. Chronic poverty restricts access to capital for business
startups. Local public schools don’t always offer a solid early childhood or elementary education; nor do the public secondary schools always ensure that students have strong basic skills to support further, postsecondary education. Business owners sometimes wish for a better collaboration between educators and employers to ensure that curricula are aligned with workforce needs.

Seven of the 17 counties in our network had a majority African-American population (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2010); every county had double-digit unemployment rates (Alabama Department of Industrial Relations, 2010); poverty rates ranged from 18 to 35 percent of the total population in the 2005–2009 time period (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates Program, 2009); up to 30 percent of the adults in these counties have not completed high school and the median family income in several counties is approximately half the national average, while none of the counties has a 2010 median family income as high as the Alabama state average, which is only 85 percent of the national average (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2005-2009). Our AERN counties generally lack a strong tradition of entrepreneurship among the African-American population.

The socioeconomic situation described above for our research area seems dire, but local response to the AERN initiative has been good and the program has met with success. Local business leaders in all AERN counties, regardless of location, have shown interest and enthusiasm for participation in AERN activities and for participation in community-partnership research activities.

Origins

The University of Alabama launched AERN to enhance rural entrepreneurship with the long-term objective of reducing some of the economic distress in these communities. Plant closings and layoffs have resulted in extensive lost jobs in the AERN service area. Textile/apparel, lumber, food, and paper are industries in the AERN area that have shed a considerable number of jobs in the recent past. This industrial downsizing has, of course, resulted in other layoffs from locally owned businesses forced to downsize after the local economy began to shrink. The original program 10 years ago had no academic research objective. The purpose then was to get business research tools into the grasp of rural entrepreneurs, train them in effectively using the research materials, and stay in touch. It was a good idea; it worked; its success has given us opportunities beyond the original intent. Our advice to others is that evolving goals and objectives are not bad. Stay true to your cause, but certainly add different ingredients from time to time to make the recipe tastier. This idea is expanded later in the paper.

Equipment and Materials

From the beginning (Figure 2), AERN has been a program with three components. One is to make available computers and peripheral equipment, business software, reference books, and other business research resources to chambers of commerce, industrial development agencies, or other nonprofit organizations whose mission includes business development in very rural, low income areas of Alabama. These organizations put the AERN resources in a secure location accessible to the public. The computers and other research materials are used to encourage potential entrepreneurs to start or expand a local business, or for other economic development work in the target area. The second component is a strong training emphasis. The staffs of the partner agencies receive training in how to use the materials and the public is offered seminars and workshops. The third component is AERN’s website. Many online resources are accessible there and the site is designed for ease of use by the lay public.

The program that was piloted in several West Alabama counties has subsequently been expanded fourfold. The small towns in our rural service area do not have a budget to purchase the business research tools provided through AERN; nor have they had the experience and expertise to use business software and printed business reference books effectively. Yet experience shows that when these tools are available, potential entrepreneurs are willing and able to access them for many uses.

The system works because it is a community-university partnership. The University of Alabama provides the service delivery components of the program. The UA-selected business reference materials (printed materials and software) are housed in the offices of partner agencies, but remain on the UA inventory. UA technical staff set up computers, peripheral hardware, and basic software in the offices of the partner agencies. The local partner agencies provide consumable materials (printer cartridges, paper, etc.), office furniture, physical access to the materials, and staff to help people use them.

AERN centers are located within agencies whose mission is economic advancement—chambers of commerce, industrial development authorities, community development agencies, and the like.
AERN provides a flexible toolkit for locals who want to bring businesses and opportunities to their areas. AERN creates a decentralized network to bring cutting edge entrepreneurial computing tools and training directly to underserved, rural communities in Alabama affected by economic conditions of downturn and long-term decline. The system has proved remarkably replicable. The project began as part of a strategy to bring prosperity to rural, economically distressed areas and is beginning to produce solid community results. Following are two examples.

Traveling Workshops, Train-the-Trainer Programs.

Training local entrepreneurs to use computers and software for the purposes of adding new jobs and income to the area is done primarily by on-site seminars and workshops, but also through the AERN website. Training topics include researching markets, accessing expert advice, writing business plans, communicating with the public and current and prospective clients, and using technology in business applications.

The staff of the partnering agencies receive training so they can be local resources when UA personnel are not available on-site. Agency staffers learn to use the business software and electronic media. As funds permit, UA upgrades and enhances the resources available to its partners. Our partners have proven to be very entrepreneurial in their own right. They have used the AERN resources not only for helping individual entrepreneurs, but also for industrial recruitment, as a catalyst/leverage for grant proposals, and as a resource for other business development.

Recovering from economic downturn has several possible paths.

In one county, a man whose job had been eliminated at his long-time employer decided he wanted to open a restaurant on the downtown square. His father was willing to give him financial backing. He and his father came to the local chamber of commerce multiple times over the course of several weeks as they worked on a rigorous business plan. Starting a restaurant is risky. In fact, this entrepreneur was moving into a location where a previous restaurant had failed. A year later, he has met all his sales targets and is now open for lunch in addition to his original evening hours. He and his father give much of the credit to the AERN resources for the informed decisions they made, and they are grateful to our AERN partner for helping them through the process.

This story can be repeated again and again in different counties, for a consumer electronics store, an office supply store, an industrial paint contractor and others.

Several of our partner agencies use the AERN resources for local industrial recruitment. This is a use of the system that we never envisioned at the beginning. One county has been able to attract a pipeline company; another has used the socioeconomic statistics available through AERN to document need and write a successful grant for an airport upgrade. Others have used AERN to research an industry group (poultry processing, pulp and
paper) before making an industrial recruitment effort.

Web-Based Client Delivery Services.
AERN has a website housed at the University. This website has current program information and news, connects the AERN partners to a variety of UA resources they would otherwise not have, and provides a central point of contact for persons outside AERN to access the program. We post a regular short newsfeed with tips about information resources for entrepreneurs (e.g., highlighting a special feature of one of the AERN reference works or a particularly helpful free website). We deliver this information via RSS or an email list on a monthly basis. We archive the feed on the AERN website. We created Flash (audio/animation) demos showing how to use the various resources located at the centers. (See http://aern.cba.ua.edu; especially note the “Ask a Business Librarian,” which gives website users the professional services of University faculty librarians to help research a business problem.

In 2009, we created a DVD that contains the digital tools listed above. The DVD was designed to deliver the tools to the user’s computer desktop without need for Internet access. Copies of the DVD were made available for distribution from the AERN partner centers because, when the AERN began, access to the Internet was problematic for some of our target audience. To our delight, the DVDs have not been popular. The digital divide is closing. Our rural clients generally have regular, reliable access to the Internet and are getting more and more comfortable about using it.

AERN investments are a catalyst for our partners to build further capabilities. AERN is a “tool kit” for do-it-yourself business building. UA faculty, staff, and researchers will not do any of the “hammering and sawing” for a person who wants to create his or her own business. Instead, the UA team will guide and direct that person in the use of business research tools so that he or she can make good business decisions. The project leaders of AERN are committed to providing ongoing training and upgrading the technology in the local sites, as resources allow. The local partner agencies are the key to the success of the program. Where an agency has recognized the potential of AERN’s resources and made proactive use of them, there has been notable success.

Factors Necessary for Success
Local Partners. In counties where a local partner has not been interested or creative, the program has languished. Where an agency has recognized the potential of AERN’s resources and made proactive use of them, there has been success. Our experience confirms what other engaged community scholars have noted—for a partnership to be successful, it must have buy-in from both the agency’s administrative level and the contact person with whom we work every day. In one county, our contact person was a charming, cheerful woman with an accounting background. She organized AERN workshops; she worked one-on-one with a local black-owned business that expanded to a second location; and she seemed to enjoy this aspect of her job. She and her board didn’t agree and they asked her to discontinue spending time on AERN activities. When we went back to that county to retrieve the resources, everyone in the room was sad. On a different occasion we had a contact person who was also charming, eloquent, and friendly, but not at all interested in AERN. We met with her board members to clarify why the program wasn’t working well. When they discovered the problem, they solved it by reallocating some of the AERN responsibilities to another person who was delighted to have this project to work with. Our original contact person is still a team member, and we appreciate the board’s creative solution.

Money and Staffing. AERN began, as an idea only, in the fall of 2000 with a grant from the state legislature. It became operational in the spring and summer of 2001. So, we have about 10 years of experience. AERN began with no permanent staff, no identifiable home base, and no budget guaranteed beyond the end of the initial fiscal year. The co-directors had other, full-time jobs within the University. Nevertheless, AERN has grown geographically because it was a good idea that was developed in partnership with community-based leaders, and it has grown academically because it is nourished by a research-minded administration.

For the first several years, AERN’s funding base came from a grant that the state legislature gave to The University for the purpose of economic development. The University’s administration was not required to allocate those funds to AERN, and certainly there were competing projects by others within the university. The administration continued to allocate these earmarked dollars to AERN because it was a program with a successful track record and a vocal set of community partners. In the past decade’s lean years of funding for higher education, the University’s administration has continued to support the program because it has become interdisciplinary and research-oriented, as well as being popular with rural constituents.

In the mid-2000s we won a competitive award for economic development activities from a federal agency. We have applied for, and won, several others since then, from a variety of federal departments and
agencies. Additionally, the university's administration has continued to show monetary support, even when the earmarked funds from the state legislature were no longer available. A state consortium devoted to economic development has twice given a grant to AERN. We continue to seek funding from the public and private sectors. There is no line-item funding for this program in anybody's budget—federal, state, local, public, or private. We have been proactive in asking, and over about 10 years we have been allocated, from one source or another, about $1,045,000.

**Documenting the Process.** The co-directors try to substantiate the economic differences AERN has had in its counties, not an easy task. Entrepreneurs sometimes let an idea "percolate" for quite a while before acting on it. When they do make a business decision, there's no legal or even ethical requirement for them to report the results to us. Although attributing a dollar value to AERN's efforts in rural Alabama is difficult, evaluation has been a strong component of the AERN from the beginning. Partners give regular feedback in the form of formal, quarterly conversations with one of AERN's co-directors. Additionally, partners fill out an annual report form that asks for numerical information regarding usage of the materials and the results of that usage. We specifically ask our partners to monitor to their best ability the jobs created and jobs saved that can be attributable to the use of AERN resources. We have a continuing sense of the business opportunities that have been made possible by this program and we can describe particular examples.

**Lessons Learned**

Some initial technology choices for program partners were not popular, specifically training videos, reference books on DVD instead of paper, and scanners for the computers. We bought small televisions and VCR tapes for the very earliest partner agencies. The VCR tapes were commercially produced tapes about small business topics such as financing, management, and the importance of good accounting. We envisioned our partners hosting small groups to watch the videos and discuss them afterward. Or perhaps individuals who came into the centers would want to watch the videos privately. That never happened, anywhere. People were interested in researching their particular small business needs; they were not interested in spending time on general-interest small business topics.

When we began the program we bought one very expensive reference book on DVD instead of in paper. Only one partner agency ever used the DVD. Many lost that expensive disk. Initially, our rural areas had strong preferences for doing business research with books. We have seen a dramatic difference in the decade we have been operating the program. While DVDs are still not popular, finding information on the Internet is. In a very short time, middle-aged residents of rural Alabama have become remarkably more adept at using the Internet. When we began this project, Internet service was not available in all of Alabama's rural areas. "Last mile" digital divide issues were an early problem that has gotten better as the 21st century progresses.

Even with better Internet access and less Internet anxiety, the basic reference collection of books continues to be important. Reading and taking notes from a book is preferable many times to reading on a screen about a subject. Yet, the information in books ages as time passes. People are tempted to take a book home, and some don't return it. The AERN reference books are not intended to circulate, but keeping the collection complete and up-to-date is challenging.

**Factors Contributing to Successful University-Community Partnerships.**

As mentioned earlier, one of the most important lessons we have learned is that buy-in from the local agency is crucial. Our partners must spend time and energy on the ground promoting the program and training its users. Not all partners are equally good at this or willing to spend time on it. Many of our partner agencies have part-time staffs and staffers in all agencies have other pressing job assignments. AERN is most effective in counties where AERN's goals and the staff person's job responsibilities are very congruent.

Another lesson not to be overlooked is that a successful program requires time and attention from the administering university. Neglected partners will become disinterested and nonfunctional. It is the job of the administering partner to find ways that the program can be beneficial in both directions; finding those ways is not the job of the community partner. Motivating the community partners is another important function of a successful administrative style. It would be easy for the partners to be passive recipients of university teaching and expertise. Experience has taught them that this is the model most universities prefer. This program aims for a partnership that runs in both directions—both from the university and back to the university (Figure 3).

**Successful Engaged Scholarship Benefits the Partnering University**

The benefits to a university that seeks to build a long-term community relationship accrue in several...
areas—political, public relations, student recruitment, academic research, and interdepartmental cooperation are easy, obvious examples. Other university-related benefits are more subtle. The University of Alabama is not a rural institution and has always had strong attachments to the urban parts of the state. An enhanced UA presence in rural Alabama educates both the UA team members and the rural partners. Sophisticated, well-educated, highly paid, urban academics can be mightily out of touch with rural realities. (One eye-opener is learning about sophisticated, well-educated, highly paid, rural dwellers—whose point of view about nearly everything can be different from the urban scholar’s.)

Developing a successful, sustainable community outreach network in rural areas based on economic development has positive public relations and political benefits to the local partners as well. Local governmental leaders are intensely interested in the health of their local economies and are generally interested in and appreciative of partnerships that foster that growth. Local leaders are also quick to notice a relationship that is not a partnership. A community outreach effort marked by university employees’ insincerity, inconsistency, and short-term commitment is not good for the initiating university’s reputation, the cooperating community, or the careers of anyone on either side.

Building a network that can be used for research and engagement scholarship, as well as for entrepreneurship training, has created intracampus connections and cooperations that are leading to other, more, and different ways to strengthen translational scholarship. In the case of AERN,
this program at various times has been engaged with the UA Libraries, the School of Medicine, the College of Human Environmental Sciences, and faculty within AERN’s own home, the College of Commerce and Business Administration, as well as from several other disciplines. Undergraduate and graduate students from many disciplines have worked with our rural partners. Students and community members have like one another and value what each brings to the process.

Successes—and Some Failures

There are several ways to measure success for an entrepreneurial research network. One is a positive impact on the local economy. The formation of new small businesses contributes to the well-being of their local communities, and the ability to attract a new, outside industry provides jobs and additional income. AERN has had a number of those successes and we highlight them in our program’s quarterly newsletter, on our website, and in our annual report.

Another way to measure our success is that the program has continued for a decade and is thriving. University administrators have supported it; so have funding agencies. With no permanent, line-item source of funding and no full-time staff until a few months ago, the program has grown in number of partner counties, expanded in scope, and achieved some degree of recognition.

The ability to bring people together to work toward a common goal is another measure of success. AERN has several examples of this. The partners in our network have frequently met together to discuss, or to engage in, regional cooperation for economic growth. In the past, none of these agencies would have been in touch with each other or would have the possibility of cooperating for the common good. Another well-known benefit of engaged scholarship is moving academic experiences and expertise to the real workplace, and conversely moving everyday realities of community life back to university researchers’ work. AERN continues to bring rural partners together with urban scholars.

Another success AERN has achieved is in building a network of partners in rural counties who are interested in and willing to participate in university academic research studies. What is the attitude of rural residents about the relationship between the business enterprises in a local economy and the local availability of health care? What do new small business owners in Alabama have in common with new small business owners in a different country? What role does the existing business community have in expanding health care options in a rural area? Is there money to be made in that effort, while at the same time improving the general level of health to the community? These are academic research questions that AERN has already been working on in Alabama, in partnership with faculty members from various disciplines within the university. The network of partners AERN has established has begun to make a difference in engagement scholarship and translational science in Alabama.

There have been failures over the years. Our partnerships in two counties have formally dissolved. The organizational infrastructure in those counties was too fragile to sustain the partnership. The agencies in those counties could not continue to provide a place to keep the AERN materials, a contact person, and the support of the governing board. Some of the small businesses that have started have failed. Despite the background research and consultation that preceded the business start-up, some entrepreneurs found the rigors of small business ownership were too difficult and closed voluntarily. Others found they could not sustain their businesses during the economic downturn. No venture is one hundred percent successful. We regret the businesses and relationships that were not long-lasting, but we are able to document a long-term, overall positive effect in rural Alabama because of the program.

We believe this is a portable, easily replicable business development model for other counties within Alabama and certainly in other states or countries with low income, rural, isolated communities affected by economic downturn. Easily demonstrable benefits accrue to local communities, the university at large, and the academic community. Benefits to local entrepreneurs include researching markets; accessing expert advice; writing business plans; and networking with other rural areas in Alabama. Our community partners have training sessions on the UA campus; small group workshops for potential entrepreneurs led by business librarians and small business experts; one-on-one training for staff personnel of partner agencies; and “Ask a Librarian” and other targeted information on the AERN website. Our partners have equally been proactive in the program by hosting, and frequently leading, local seminars using AERN materials.

The University of Alabama has just as surely benefited from its community-based engagement with AERN partners. Students have had experiences they would never otherwise have had; faculty have interacted with community leaders and entrepreneurs they never would have otherwise known; and researchers have learned things they would not have discovered without the AERN network.
The “soft” benefits of AERN are not to be taken lightly—increased visibility; enhanced ability to provide service; encouragement of regionalism; collaborative, community-based academic research. But the “hard” benefits also speak loudly in a low-income, low population density region. Despite some failures, there is solid evidence that AERN has helped create or save jobs in rural Alabama (Table 1).

What’s Next?

At this writing, AERN’s future looks promising. There is both university institutional support and community support and interest. What began as a good idea for providing services, with the potential for increasing prosperity in rural Alabama, is now poised as a model for university/community research. The model is so strong that it could be implemented in all counties, not only rural counties. Funding for that is not in place, but if the money were available, the mechanism would work.

The program partnerships that have been forged lend themselves to cooperative community-based research in areas other than small business formation and traditional economic development. We have made beginnings in these directions. In 2008 and 2009 AERN network partners and university researchers cooperated in a survey research project that looked at the relationship between health care in our AERN communities and economic development. Without question, health care has improved over time in Alabama, but not equally in all areas. The Black Belt has been an area that has attracted the attention of medical researchers because of its incidences of certain diseases, cancer and diabetes for example, and for health care disparity in the region. The economic and health care service problems of the AERN service area are well known. What is not so well known is the dynamics of the two together. This initial small study gave some insights, but further study is needed, for example to assess the immediate and long-term impact on a community of the opening of a new doctor’s office, hospital, or multi-employee business or industry.

AERN is partnering with the university’s College of Community Health Sciences (CCHS) to seek grant and research opportunities to introduce the latest health innovations into these rural areas. By combining health and business opportunities, AERN and CCHS expect to both enhance the health of the communities and chart the economic benefits of healthcare activities. This intracampus coordination benefits both the university and the AERN partner communities. The cohesive network of AERN partners benefits university researchers who seek to work in the Alabama Black Belt and the Black Belt citizens benefit from the university’s long-term, collaborative relationship with them.

An unexpected benefit has accrued to the University’s Business Library faculty, who report real enjoyment from working with actual entrepreneurs. Ordinarily, their time is spent helping students with their assignments or faculty with their academic needs. Working with business people located in a rural setting has been completely different and very satisfying for the librarians, and now they have taken their work to the next important sustainability level: They published the results of their experience in a refereed library journal (Pike, Chapman, Brothers, & Hines, 2010).

What was initially conceived as a service project is easily moving into the realm of solid community-based academic research, producing publishable results. The service component of AERN has not lessened and will never be replaced by academia’s research and publishing requirements. Continuing our community-based network of local business communities partnered with the university is our main goal. At the same time, that network is potentially interesting to health researchers, social work researchers, undergraduate student service-learning projects, and the academic arts community, as we have seen thus far. Other research opportunities no doubt will reveal themselves.

Table 1. Jobs Created or Saved by Entities Using AERN Resources*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Jobs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>226</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>182</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>182</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>79</td>
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*Data provided by county partners

Conclusion

AERN is a 10-year-old program originally designed to encourage entrepreneurship and build local capacity in rural areas of economic distress. The network now includes 15 partners spread over a large geographic area of the state and provides training, counseling, and business research services through its local community partners. The local partners

1 Scholars include 12–23 counties in Alabama’s Black Belt, named for its dark, rich soils in the central part of the state. The area roughly tracks the state’s former plantation region. Counties that make up the region tend to be predominantly African-American.
consist of local economic development agencies, chambers of commerce, and other stable nonprofit entities in the local infrastructure. In addition to promoting prosperity in low-income areas, the program now serves as an opportunistic research network for social science investigations.

Why does The University of Alabama participate in this activity? Building mutually committed community relationships advances the teaching, research, and service missions of the university. Sustaining these kinds of partnerships for the long term has historically been a challenge within many research settings. The partners and the researchers must both perceive inter-related needs that are worthy of time spent working together. The concept of engagement scholarship, as codified by the National Association of State University and Land-Grant Colleges (2004), implies reciprocity, whereby both the institution and partners in the community benefit and contribute.

Engagement blends scientific knowledge from the university with real-world knowledge within the community to establish an environment of co-learning. Engagement involves shared decision making. Successful community-based research involves a series of steps that are intended to lead to cohesion among all participants while also sustaining the network. Ideally, the lessons learned from the process will be written up, submitted, reviewed, and published in a journal article, thereby elucidating the successes and failures of a given project upon which future scholarship may be built.

The best community-based research requires that the professional researchers adopt an attitude of humility when entering the community. If researchers seek information from community partners, they need to be honest with the community about their intentions and motives. They must be willing to accept moments of disagreements and resistance. Likewise, the community participants must be willing to be honest and to follow through on activities for which they have agreed to participate. Relationships between communities and the academy should be measured by impact and outcomes on the communities and individuals served, not only by the academic outcomes achieved.

Finding that balance is difficult. The model we suggest here is that a service-based community network with leadership committed to its future is the kind of engagement that enables faculty to be better scholars and provides positive outcomes that are appreciated within the community. Additionally, a long-term, sustainable community network for research projects enhances the learning experience for students and multiplies the institution’s impact on external constituencies. The scholarship of engagement is tied to public accountability. In coming decades all universities will face a redefinition of how they conduct teaching, research, and service in community relationships. As Dr. Heather Pleasants at The University of Alabama put it: “We have arrived at a moment in time when colleges and universities are increasingly engaging in research with communities, rather than research on communities” (Hollander, 2010).

The Alabama Entrepreneurial Research Network is an example of how to form a community relationship that works on several levels. It enables participating community members to seek new paths to prosperity, while allowing university researchers to seek new paths for translational research—research that translates ideas from the ivory tower to the market square, and also in the other direction. Community members are willing to give time and effort to the network because they see ongoing, positive benefits to themselves and their communities. Scholars in many forms of action/engagement research in several disciplines see professional benefits to their fields and their careers. Students have gotten “real world” experience along with academic credit for their projects and service in rural Alabama. People at each of these entry points into the network have learned to appreciate the point of view of the others.

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**About the Authors**

Annette Jones Watters is the associate director for the Alabama Entrepreneurship Institute; Paavo Hanninen is the program coordinator of the Alabama Entrepreneurial Research Network; and Mike Hardin is the Dean—all in the Culverhouse College of Commerce and Business Administration at The University of Alabama.
Like many of our neighbors, on April 27th of 2011 we sat in our living room watching on live television as menacing tornados destroyed several communities across Alabama. On that April night, the city of Gadsden appeared to have made it through the storm with minimal damage. Therefore, we spent the majority of our evening contacting our peers and colleagues who might have been initially impacted by the Tuscaloosa tornadoes.

We spent the morning after the tornadoes discussing several approaches to usefully assist our community in assessing the relief needs in Tuscaloosa. After consultation with friends and colleagues in Tuscaloosa, we determined that the best option was to address relief needs from our location in Gadsden, a town in northeast Alabama. The Director of The University of Alabama’s Gadsden Center granted permission to use the Center as our relief drive distribution hub. Our goal was to establish a site for Gadsden community members to donate relief goods and items for persons in Tuscaloosa. The relief drive was scheduled for the first two business days following the tornadoes, in order to allow adequate opportunity to advertise the drive and communicate with our Tuscaloosa friends and colleagues about high priority current needs.

Many of our fellow students and colleagues who resided in Tuscaloosa were without power during those first few days after the tornado. However, cell phones enabled some limited access to social media applications such as Facebook. Through such real time reports, we were able to get a better idea of what was taking place on the ground in the Tuscaloosa area. Communication with Tuscaloosa residents was an important aspect of the relief effort. From Friday the 29th to Monday the 1st, the list of needed items changed to include more first aid supplies and toiletries, as opposed to bottled water and non-perishable foods.

The next few days were devoted to contacting local organizations to advertise the tornado relief effort. We called and emailed local Gadsden community centers, including the YMCA, libraries, two local community colleges, the Masonic Lodge, and over 20 nearby churches. The purpose of these phone calls was to notify the organizations about the relief drive, leave our contact information with an organization representative, and have the organizations assist us with advertising the event. The Gadsden Times included two articles about the relief drive, and we also completed an interview with a local radio station.

Interestingly, several community churches were relieved to hear about the relief efforts. We were told by many community organizations that they had already been contacted by people seeking assistance or seeking the opportunity to provide assistance. Our relief drive was a welcome focus for the community organizations that had yet to organize specific efforts.

Volunteerism in a Disaster: A Real-Life Engagement Learning Experience

James Taylor and Jessica Averitt Taylor
By the end of the day on Tuesday, hundreds of donations had been made by the members of the community. We delivered much of the donations to Tuscaloosa, but soon learned that an initial outpouring of generosity had left many relief agencies in Tuscaloosa overwhelmed by donations. Because of this, we also delivered donations to previously overlooked communities in northeast Alabama that had also been affected by the tornadoes.

When it was over, the tornado outbreak was responsible for over 243 deaths within our state. The disaster relief efforts following the April 2011 tornadoes crossed socioeconomic, gender, ethnic, and geographical boundaries. For example, in the small community of Monrovia, Alabama, over 2,000 volunteers were documented in a single day, and many were actually turned away (McCarter, 2011). More than 3,000 volunteers came to the small community of Harvest, Alabama during the first week following the tornado (Bonvillion, 2011). There was tremendous diversity in the individuals who came to assist in the relief drive. Many of these individuals indicated to us that although they were impoverished, they wanted to give what little they had for the benefit of their fellow community members.

Through this relief drive, we were able to empower a northeast Alabama community to assist neighbors in Tuscaloosa, and in the process to draw several key lessons from our experience:

• Social media and communication skills were essential to the success of the relief drive, as detailed in the community engagement literature (Johnson, 2010; Shah, Schmierbach, Hawkins, Espino, & Donovan, 2002).

• Coordination provided the essential links between people, places, and resources, each of which was required in all three phases of the operation. In particular, we relied extensively upon our friends and colleagues in Tuscaloosa and the Gadsden Center staff members. The importance of coordination is in keeping with previous findings regarding disaster relief (Zakour, 1996).

• As participants in relief efforts, we were able to initially cope with our shock and feelings of loss. The relief drive enabled our own spiritual and emotional growth (Steffen & Fothergill, 2009).

The events of April 27th were certainly tragic and horrific. However, this real-life experience drove home to us the importance of conceptualizing community engagement as not being a one-sided affair, as we realized how much we became dependent on the knowledge, resources, and support of our community members.

We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to Dr. Beverly Dyer, Tena King, Mary Maddox, Donna Pickard, Roger Woodward, David Cochran, Mr. Jerry, Ms. Thompson, and the community members of Etowah and Calhoun Counties who assisted us with the relief drive.

References


About the Authors

James Taylor and Jessica Averitt Taylor are both doctoral students in the School of Social Work at The University of Alabama.
JCES invites the submission of book reviews that speak to a wide range of issues relevant to the scholarship of engagement. Reviews of books within the social sciences, the natural sciences and math, physical sciences, social sciences, medicine and health, the environment, law, business, and the humanities are encouraged.

Although reviews of individual books are the most common, JCES also invites submission of several reviews that speak to a particular topic area, to be published as a group. All book reviews submitted to JCES should provide readers with a broad overview of the book, but should go beyond this description to discuss central issues raised, strengths and limitations of the text, and current issues of theory and practice raised by the book that are germane to the subject matter and engaged scholarship.
In 2002 Oakland neighborhoods were making headlines, but not for reasons residents would want to brag about. The city’s homicide rates were on the rise. Local news outlets had “daily body counts running like sports scores across newspaper pages” (Soep & Chávez, 2010, p. 30). Reporters from the Oakland-based Youth Radio were in search of a counternarrative, one that would privilege not the death toll but the lived experiences of young people who had grown up in the neighborhoods under media siege. What emerged was “Oakland Scenes,” a multigenre radio story mixing spoken-word poetry with interviews of Oakland residents, many of whom were also Youth Radio participants.

“I’m here today to tell a story,” 19-year-old poet Ise Lyfe announces in Oakland Scenes’ opening track:

A twisted story of ghetto glory. Now, I know you heard of Romeo and Juliet, but I bet you ain’t heard of Rome and Net Net. See, their story’s a bit different. A bit more explicit. So sad, almost all bad. They’re young, beautiful and don’t even know. Society told him to be a thug, told her to be a ‘ho. They victims of a system placed on us years ago (p. 34).

The poem’s opening lines are followed by Youth Radio graduate and mentor, Gerald Ward II, interviewing his student Bianca as they drive down Oakland’s 78th Avenue:

Gerald: What do you see?
Bianca: Liquor stores, nail shops, there’s a whole bunch of people.
Gerald: This your neighborhood?
Bianca: Yeah. I try not to go outside at night. Because you never know [when] you might get killed.

“Oakland Scenes” says there is more than one way of telling a single story. It comments on the cycle and repercussions of poverty in certain neighborhoods as experienced by those who live there. Appearing in Elisabeth Soep and Vivian Chávez’s Drop that Knowledge: Youth Radio Stories, it is emblematic of the kind of work the book aims to describe and theorize. As Oakland Scenes refuses the master narrative about violence, so do Soep and Chávez refuse romanticized notions of projects that ‘give voice’ to young people. Instead, they draw from critical pedagogy and theories of media literacy to both advocate and complicate working with youth. The first task of a youth radio reporter is “finding and framing the story” (p. 50). The story told here is that of Youth Radio, an award-winning organization that produces youth-created stories for National Public Radio (NPR) and online venues. It represents a convergence of perspectives, including those of Soep, the program’s research director and senior producer, of Chávez, a professor at San Francisco State University, and of many of the Youth Radio students. It is also metadiscursive (e.g., “metaphorically speaking”) (Jung, 2005). It challenges its own assumptions. The authors are aware of their subject positions as producer, researcher, storyteller, and comment on the role this plays and ought to play in the building of narrative. They ask both how do we encourage young people to tell good stories and how do we talk critically about the stories they tell? What we find here is a book about process, both the students’ and the authors’, that achieves
that rare balance between theory and praxis, all the while giving students space on the page to tell their own stories. The text is accessible. Like Youth Radio, it prioritizes clarity and a good story, but never at the expense of critical engagement with the subject matter. Soep and Chávez draw from Henry Jenkins’s (2006) conceptions of convergence, or the content that arises “through a range of technologies all housed in one place” (p. 21) and theories of media literacy (Kress, 2003; Ong, 1999) to describe the kind of learning they advocate at Youth Radio. “Convergence literacy,” as they have coined it, brings together the ability to “make and understand boundary-crossing and convention-breaking texts … draw and leverage public interest, and … claim and exercise the right to use media to promote justice” (p. 16). Students face intersections, daily, between their own “intimate” experiences and “public” controversies (p. 27). Through radio stories written in hybrid forms, they probe these intersections in an attempt to represent themselves as political agents and reconcile conflicting notions of place, society, and self. This is in step with composition theorists and feminist scholars who insist on the value of theorizing the personal (Hooks, 1994; Hindman, 2004; Miller, 1996). Encouraging content that is complex and boundary-breaking requires challenging the very boundary that defines many learning spaces: that between teachers and students. To draw from Freire’s (1999) emphasis on prepositions, adults participating in Youth Radio work with students, teaching them to “compose compelling stories” and “critique mainstream media products” (p.53) while listening to their takes on contemporary issues. To this end, the authors advocate “collegial pedagogy,” defined as “two or more people jointly engage[d] in a significant task for a shared purpose” (p. 53).

The students in this text are three-dimensional. They have names and faces (pictured throughout the book). They are granted authorship, with an entire chapter dedicated to personal essays they have written about their experiences with Youth Radio and transcripts of the stories they have created. “Why should their names be replaced with pseudonyms, as is often the convention,” Soep and Chávez ask, “when we are writing about the creative contributions to a field in which they already have to fight for recognition?” (p.8). These students also have critical and emotional responses to a process they take seriously. One student, 17-year-old poet Rafael Santiago Casal, wrote a poem for Youth Radio criticizing America’s obsession with style and mass consumption. The poem included sexual references and explicit language. When told he would have to edit the poem for a radio audience, he opted out of the project, suggesting “perhaps [Youth Radio] had missed the message of the poem … which was about media manipulation of a personal truth” (p. 77). Another student, Rachel, in response to a suggestion from Soep that her story on standardized testing ought to include her own perspective as a student test-taker, responded, “It’s a little condescending to ask me to make it a personal story, as if I don’t have a political perspective that’s not necessarily based in personal experience” (p. 75).

In other instances, Youth Radio mentors guide students through the process of revision, of finding or unburying a story’s “lede.” This is an active task that sometimes requires refuting a student’s initial instincts. One cannot assume, the authors point out, students will produce meaningful, critical work just by expressing themselves and their opinions. They don’t automatically produce counternarratives. It is a mentor’s job to teach students to read a text and to build one. Intersections, between the personal and the political, between teacher and student, mentor and mentee, can also be defined as points of tension. Soep and Chávez push students to create work that is engaging and audience specific, to demonstrate “humility” alongside their “right to speak” (p. 20). And sometimes the students push back. That the authors are willing to share these points of tension is testimony to their belief in collegial pedagogy and converged literacy. The text refuses the idealized progress narrative (Carrick, Himley, & Jacobi, 2010) for a more nuanced story in which people and places are represented in all their complexity.

A question necessarily arises about the book’s relevancy. In an age in which most students download and even create digital content themselves, what is the role of Youth Radio? The authors argue that in addition to the skills they provide students, such programs also provide “a platform for collective activity,” “opportunities for local organizing” and a chance to “build leadership and advanced skills” (p. 15). Further, “they engage young people who are otherwise marginalized from digital privilege” (p. 15). The latter seems of particular importance as the gap continues to widen between those with technology access and those without. Whether or not radio is losing relevancy, the critical conversation Soep and Chávez introduce could potentially be applied to projects incorporating diverse media and technologies. Their insights are applicable to a wide range of educational settings, largely because they are based in both theory and the very real interactions, and tensions, between people with varying values. Another question is whether or not NPR, one of the central outlets for Youth Radio, provides an ideal audience for young people. Are the sacrifices
they occasionally must make to content and style ultimately worthwhile? Interestingly, this is something of which the students seem aware and even use to their benefit as a means of thinking about audience. Student Orlando Campbell writes of Youth Radio, in his reflective essay, “It was basically taking issues that might come up in my raps and delivering them in a way that a middle-class white public broadcasting audience could understand” (p. 166). Whereas it is common to hear adults speaking about how to reach a youth audience, Campbell in a sense turns the tables, identifying the challenges a young person faces in reaching a demographic different from his own. Youth Radio’s King Anyi Howell takes a different approach to the issue, insisting, after a version of his story is censored by NPR, that “multiple platforms means never having to compromise” (p. 97). In other words, what he can’t share with a national audience he can via iTunes, social media networks, and other online venues. Soep and Chávez remind us, however, that there is a difference between “actual and hypothetical audiences” (p. 98). They push back. In this intersection of voices—Orlando’s, Anyi’s, the author’s—readers are asked to recognize the complexity of adults representing students and students representing themselves. Ultimately what is important is students who come to Youth Radio with something to say have the chance to be heard. Sometimes this means changing the message to meet the requirements of a broader audience. The book’s appendix, a collection of resources for educators from the “Teach Youth Radio” online curriculum, draws creative exercises from successful youth radio stories. It includes writing prompts like this one, created after a piece by Youth Radio’s Evelyn Martinez conflating her mother’s memories of guerillas in El Salvador and her own experience of violence in East L.A.: Evelyn’s story starts with a striking visual image:

“My mom says she hated the night sky growing up. It was a place of danger.” Have students brainstorm images, and write them up on the board. Then hold a five-minute free-write that starts with this sentence: “I always hated (nighttime image—fill in the blank). It was a place of danger”… (182).

As an educator who works with youth on creative media projects, I found myself taking notes and marking pages to return to as I use Soep’s and Chávez’s concepts to think through my own pedagogies. The practical suggestions for the classroom are as useful as the theory that backs them up. The authors’ willingness to be critical of their own work and refuse easy answers earns my trust as an educator who knows teaching is, at best, complicated. Our lives, students’ lives, are multidimensional. We require counternarratives to represent them. Soep and Chávez, and the students of Youth Radio, give us these narratives.

References


About the Reviewer

Sara Cooper is a doctoral candidate in Rhetoric and Composition at the University of Houston Alta Vista.
Soo Hong is passionate about schools, education, and that critical union between schools and the communities in which they operate. In *A Cord of Three Strands: A New Approach to Parent Engagement in Schools*, her passion for, and knowledge of this union come to life as she deftly articulates what might rightly be described as a new paradigm in parent-school relationships. Through a detailed qualitative case study, Hong focuses on the experiences of one Chicago community as its residents and school personnel struggled to improve the quality of education for students. The process that emerged led to the creation of a strong, active system in which parents and schools come together in a mutually supportive system that brings out the best in their children. Out of the experiences of this community, Hong extracts the three strands (induction, integration, and investment) that she believes are necessary to replicate this parent involvement model in other communities. In the book, Hong articulates how one neighborhood developed these three strands in a joint effort to improve its schools.

The community that serves as the basis for this study is the Logan Square section of Chicago. As in many other communities, parents of school-aged children in the Logan Square community felt disconnected from their schools. Other than cursory knowledge of the names of their children’s teachers, parents had very little information about the school and its inner workings. This dynamic is not unique; unfortunately, this is the norm in many communities across the nation. In *A Cord of Three Strands*, Hong dissects the education process and points to critical junctions at which parents and schools can or should be able to work together in a symbiotic relationship. Hong sees the underlying theory as an ecological one. “With an ecological perspective on parent engagement, schools design processes for parent participation that actively center around parents rather than limiting them to roles in the periphery” (p. 26). This attitude is the crux of the entire model Hong puts forth.

The model is not a simple one, however. The bar set by the residents of Logan Square is a high one, yet it is not unattainable. For this community, the change took place over the course of approximately 40 years, although the foray into educational reform is a relatively recent one. Their particular paradigm shift began with the efforts of the Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA). This community organization was established in the early 1960s and has served the members of the community well by ensuring that city leaders consider the needs and desires of the community members, by bringing disparate community groups together, and by developing the sense of mutual support that makes communities strong. These activities are similar to those of many other community organizations across the country. It was the change of focus onto the educational system, however, that began to differentiate the LSNA from many other community organizations.

Early school-based activities for the LSNA consisted primarily of local school councils that provided representation for families in the educational hierarchy; however, members of the LSNA began to see the need for something more than mere representation in order to create meaningful, systemic changes in the schools infrastructure. In the mid-1990s, the LSNA began to shift its school-based activities from a representative capacity to a more engaged, hands-on function. At the heart of this effort was the LSNA Parent Mentor program. This was a collaborative effort in which parents were actively involved in the educational process. Parents worked right alongside teachers in classrooms. Members of the LSNA sought ways to become actively involved in the innermost operations of the community schools. Key to the success of their endeavors was the attitude of mutual respect and support that was assumed by people on all sides of the issue at hand. LSNA members made no attempts to usurp the roles of the school personnel; rather, their
function was to step in to assist with tasks that schools had not been able to complete successfully.

As might be expected, the process of changing roles from that of a parent of a child in school to that of a Parent Mentor who is intimately involved in the educational process is not an easy one. Hong follows the experiences of one cohort of Parent Mentors at one school and chronicles their successes and struggles as they learn to navigate school policies and familial responsibilities. Some parents find the role of Parent Mentor to be a very difficult one, while others take on the responsibility quite naturally. Through a detailed description of the different processes of parents, Hong illustrates how parents bring their unique backgrounds and interests to the learning environment their unique backgrounds and interests to the learning environment, which serves to add to the overall breadth of experiences for the students. Hong reports the comments of one Parent Mentor about another:

She is like the mother hen. What she does is she holds us all together; she makes me feel that we are capable and can make a difference here. I see her as a leader in this school. And by being with her and getting to know her, it definitely encourages me to think about what I might be able to do, you know, what kind of leader I could become (p. 77).

Hong draws from the examples provided by the Logan Square community to cut to the underlying principles that made this model work. Parents who serve as Parent Mentors are not relegated to the back corners of classrooms to alphabetize the crayons; instead, they are given responsibilities that make them fully invested partners in the educational processes. In this capacity, parents become well acquainted with their children’s teachers and classmates. This interconnectedness extends back into the community and helps to bind residents together outside of the school environment. Additionally, teachers report that the presence of parents in the classrooms helps to motivate and inspire children to perform better. As parents become more involved in the classroom, teachers also begin to experience changes in their attitudes. Instead of seeing parental involvement as a burden, teachers truly think of their Parent Mentors as assets, additional tools to help provide students with positive outcomes. The struggles many teachers face today, including the perfect storm of increasing class sizes and decreasing discretionary funding, reveals how the presence of invested parents an indispensable part of the teachers’ toolkit in the Logan Square community.

Hong’s work is a testament to the Logan Square Neighborhood Association and to the schools and students of the Logan Square community. As a study in community activism and parent involvement, it is difficult to imagine a stronger example than the transformation that this community has experienced. Hong’s writing is compelling and clear, even when she elucidates complex theoretical constructs. By organizing the book as a progression through the historical context of the LSNA, the organization’s development of the Parent Mentor model, and individual stories that reveal much of the details of why this program works, Hong provides the reader with the necessary contextual framework to describe the development of the program and still offer the intimate day-to-day details of its successful operation.

As an appendix, she includes a detailed, readable, description of the theoretical underpinnings of her work, in which the work of qualitative researchers Joseph Maxwell and William H. Schubert figure prominently, as well as the particular research methodologies she employed in the writing process, providing a useful component for readers interested in exploring similar approaches in parent involvement and community engagement research. Hong also describes her own particular ethnographic approach, something she calls layered ethnography, in which she employs many of the elements of portraiture concurrently with her basic ethnographic research. This methodological approach allows Hong to describe the broad systems at play (ethnography) and to illustrate how those systems impact particular students at particular locations (portraiture). The combination of these two methodological approaches enables Hong to provide deep, rich understanding of the systems at play.

At the heart of A Cord of Three Strands is Hong’s understanding of the context of the community and the individual experiences of the residents of Logan Square. The depth of her knowledge, gained through meticulous analysis of interviews and field notes collected during her research, comes through as she describes parents’ everyday triumphs and tragedies. The examples she provides help the reader feel the urgency and importance that the parents and teachers experienced as these community schools experienced positive change over time. This work makes a valuable contribution to our current research literature, and is well suited for people who are interested in community development, educational policy, education reform, or community activism.

About the Reviewer

Robert McKinney, Jr., LCSW, ACSW, is a doctoral student in The University of Alabama School of Social Work.
Instructions to Authors

The Editorial Board of the Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship (JCES) invites the submission of manuscripts that relate to its mission: to provide a mechanism through which faculty, staff, and students of academic institutions and their community partners may disseminate scholarly works from all academic disciplines, with the goal of integrating teaching, research, and community engagement.

All forms of writing and analysis will be acceptable for the journal with consideration being given to research and creative approaches that apply a variety of methodologies. Manuscripts that demonstrate central involvement of students and community partners and advance community engagement scholarship will be given favorable consideration. Manuscripts should be free of racial, religious, gender, ethnic, or any other identifiable forms of bias.

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Cassandra E. Simon
Associate Professor, School of Social Work
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• recommend revisions; resubmit
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