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From history to science to art to manufacturing to sports, Alabama has it all. Come join more than 600 engaged scholars expected to attend the 13th annual National Outreach Scholarship Conference in Tuscaloosa, September 30–October 3. Register at www.nosc2012.ua.edu.

Noted Alabamians: From top, l-r, bluesman Willie King, writer Harper Lee, coach Paul "Bear" Bryant, scientist E.O. Wilson, Olympic champion Jesse Owens

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CORRECTION: In JCES Vol. 4 No. 2, we printed an incorrect table on page 7. Here is the correct table. We regret the error.
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**JCES Keeps its Commitment to Accessibility, in hard copy and now online**

As *JCES* begins its fifth year of publication, it seems appropriate to be somewhat reflective. We are steadily moving forward in having *JCES* meet our goal of being a premiere engagement scholarship journal, guided by our own brand of “authentic community engagement.” By this, we mean a journal that recognizes the centrality and importance of all persons involved in finding solutions to the problems addressed by engagement scholarship work. Beginning with the first issue, we committed to creating a “new kind of journal” – one responsive to the needs of communities and community partners and university constituent groups (i.e., faculty, staff, and students). *JCES* not only provides a venue for a variety of scholarly works from diverse perspectives, but is also structured around a work ethic directed toward diligently making sure the journal is accessible to all. This idea of accessibility has resulted in *JCES* being made available electronically. To access the electronic version of the journal, including all back issues, please go to www.jces.ua.edu. Despite the financial costs and the numerous online journals that have come about in recent years, there is still something to be said for the value of hard copy journals. This recognition, along with your ongoing support of *JCES*, has resulted in University of Alabama administrators, especially Vice President for Community Affairs, Samory Pruitt, making possible our ability to continue to make *JCES* available in hard copy. In addition to accessibility in the literal sense, *JCES* also gives a great deal of attention to literacy accessibility, ensuring that a wide range of individuals can read and most importantly, understand what is written. Before the release of its inaugural issue, this focus on literacy balance and the efforts made to embrace “authentic community engagement” led to some initial criticisms and concerns regarding the scholarly value of *JCES*. After all, how could a top peer reviewed research journal be written to and for the academic and other university personnel, community, and students, while maintaining rigor and quality? Understanding that we are all students, educators, researchers, and community in the varied contexts of our lives made that part easy for us.

It has taken a great deal of work from a dedicated group of individuals, but the feedback from those of you in the community engagement and scholarship field indicate that we have been successful in having *JCES* be a new and different kind of research journal, while maintaining scholarly rigor. We appreciate your support and are committed to retaining the high standards you have come to expect from *JCES*. As we work to strengthen community partner and student participation in the journal, we look to you all to encourage your community partners and students to submit a piece for review and possible publication in an upcoming issue of *JCES*. We make every effort to include a least one community partner and one student piece in each issue. These manuscripts need to be reflective essays or critiques on some aspect of community engagement and scholarship or their experiences with community engagement work. These pieces are 500–1000 word essays provided to give voice to these populations who are still too often spoken for as if they had no voice of their own, even in the engagement scholarship field, where they are typically given more voice than in traditional research. We know that you are as anxious as are we to hear more from our students and community partners and we look forward to hearing from many of them with whom you work.

As with each issue of *JCES*, we hope you find the included manuscripts informative, engaging, and relevant to your work in engagement scholarship. The articles in this volume are as varied as are the disciplines to which engagement scholarship applies. From addressing how to best improve health outcomes for the Latino population in a rural Southeastern community to understanding the application of critical race feminism as a framework for engagement scholarship, this issue provides stimulating and pointed suggestions for improving the communities in which we live. *JCES* continues to identify ways in which to highlight the role of engagement scholarship in the academic environment as seen with one manuscript that addresses how to develop more effective and sustainable relationships between communities and universities. Other manuscripts address topics that include ways to improve the society in which we live, whether through college instruction of a policy course or revitalization of a community post-disaster. As we prepare the next edition of *JCES*, which will be published shortly prior to our hosting of the National Outreach and Scholarship Conference, September 30–October 3, 2012, we are excited about the opportunity to showcase *JCES* and all else The University of Alabama has to offer. We invite you to attend the conference and learn even more about how to integrate the conference theme—Partner. Inspire. Change.—into your engagement scholarship work.
Abstract
Preparing students to be passionate about and engage in policy work can be a challenge for social work educators. Previous research supports that service-learning can increase positive attitudes and participation in macro practice. This manuscript presents a policy course that was taught using service-learning projects. Feedback from students was collected during the course and 15 months after its conclusion. Feedback from students suggested that students increased their confidence and competencies as policy practitioners and that the service-learning projects were influential in that change. After the course, students were engaging in policy activities such as calling, emailing, or writing an elected official, working on a specific policy change effort, participating as a member of a coalition working on a political issue of change, and voting. Lessons learned from this service-learning project are applicable to allied disciplines; implications for wider curriculum adoption and future research are discussed.

Introduction
It can be challenging for social work educators to communicate the importance of social welfare policy course objectives and themes to students. The usefulness of a macro skill set may not be appreciated by many undergraduate students until beginning a professional social work career. Dooley, Sellers, and Gordon-Hempe (2009) postulated that this attitude may stem from “a lack of knowledge regarding what macro practice involves and how it is implemented, rather than from a dislike of this area of practice” (p. 435). However, previous research supports that service-learning can increase positive attitudes and participation in policy practice (Anderson, 2006; Anderson & Harris, 2005; Droppa, 2007; Rocha, 2000). This manuscript explores a policy course that utilized a service-learning project. Fifteen months following the course, the attitudes and behaviors about policy practice were explored.

Literature Review
Jane Addams and Ellen Starr understood that a presence within the community would lead to a change in social welfare issues and create a commitment to community outreach (Kenny & Gallagher, 2002). The early values and philosophies of the Hull House are present in the practice today. Norris and Schwartz (2009) explain that the blending of “experiential learning, civic responsibility, and evidenced-based practice is the very foundation of social work practice and education” (p. 376). Given the mission of social work to participate in societal change, social work educators should be concerned about preparing future practitioners to be civically engaged members of the profession and society.

King (2003) reviewed social work’s history with service-learning and the positive benefits it offers to students, educators, and the communities served. He reported that the majority of literature in social work about the technique has focused on micro courses and skills. Social work students possess more negative attitudes toward macro courses than toward micro topics (Dooley, Sellers, & Gordon-Hempe, 2009; Hymans, 2000), and alumni report being insufficiently prepared for policy practice (Anderson & Harris, 2005). Researchers found that using service-learning in policy courses created valuable learning experiences and more positive attitudes toward policy (Anderson, 2006; Anderson & Harris, 2005; Droppa, 2007; Rocha, 2000).

Service-learning can benefit the education of students in several ways. Values such as diversity, self-determination, accountability, and collaboration can be taught using service-learning methods, which further students’ learning and social work knowledge (King, 2003; Williams & Reeves, 2004). Service-learning also promotes professional development. For example, Williams, King, and Kobb (2002) established that participation in the practice increased students’ ratings of their professional self-efficacy. Kropf and Tracey (2002) found that service-learning provided both pre-field preparation for MSW students and allowed social work educators an additional way to monitor professional readiness.

Anderson (2006) used a community-based research project in her policy course to increase interest in macro practice. Students worked with a health clinic that served undocumented Latinas who experienced domestic violence. Using the
Violence Against Women Act, students conducted research and made policy and procedure recommendations to the agency. Anderson argued that traditional macro courses taught policy from the positivist paradigm, thus distancing students from the social welfare policies studied. Using service-learning allowed her to teach from a postmodern perspective. Students "mucked through the swamp" by working with a local agency to assess how legislation impacted clientele. Anderson found this approach to analyzing policy decreased students' anxieties and increased their enthusiasm for policy work.

Droppa (2007) used a service-learning project in his policy courses for BSW students. Students reported that being involved in the community helped them understand the policy issues discussed in class. He found that BSW students who participated in the service-learning projects reported a desire to be involved in policy practice and felt the projects better prepared them for graduate school or employment.

Finally, Rocha (2000) conducted a study with MSW students who had taken a policy course as part of their graduate program. Half of the participants took a policy course that had a service-learning component, while the other half of the participants were taught using traditional methods. Rocha found that participants who had the service-learning component rated their competency as policy practitioners higher than those who did not have the experiential component. Also, the students who had taken the service-learning course reported engaging in more policy activities (e.g., communicating with elected officials, participating in community meetings on public policy issues, voting, or joining a citizen action group) following graduation.

Engagement in the community, including political work and advocacy, is not unique to social work, but is situated in the larger civic engagement literature. Boyte (2004) in his book Everyday Politics: Reconnecting Citizens and Public Life called for institutions of higher education to help students move from the micro work of solving individual problems to the mezzo and macro level change. In addition to learning the academic content, it was hoped that students would change their attitudes and behaviors about macro practice. Journal responses at the end of the course focus group, and a follow-up interview with students 15 months after the course concluded, helped to answer the following questions: After completing the service-learning policy course, do the students report more positive regard for their roles as macro practitioners? Do they engage in policy behaviors such as communicating with elected officials, participating in community meetings on public policy issues, voting, or joining a citizen action group?

Characteristics of the Course

Description of the Course

The course was a senior level policy course required for graduation at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio. The course was designed to meet the Council on Social Work Education’s (CSWE) curriculum related to social welfare policy and services. The course took place in a five-week summer quarter. Sixteen students enrolled in the course. Class was scheduled for two 210-minute sessions per week. Content was presented to students in a traditional academic manner (e.g., lecture, discussion, in class activities) during one class session per week. For the second day of class each week, students were required to spend a minimum of 210 minutes engaged in service-learning work related to a policy project designed by the instructor and the community partner to reinforce the concepts of the course.

Course Projects and Assignments

In order to apply the concepts from the course, students selected from one of four service-learning projects. The projects were prearranged by the instructor and coordinated through the University’s Office of Service Learning. Attention was given to selecting projects that aligned with social work values and dealt with issues that impacted different populations. On the first day of the course, students had an opportunity to select the project for which they wished to work. Students...
negotiated with each other and with the instructor to reach consensus about group assignments. This allowed students to select a project in which they were interested, aligned with their personal and professional values, and fit their schedules. A minimum of three students were needed for each project and no more than five students could work on a project. Additionally, final projects or deliverables were negotiated between the instructor and the community partner. Because this course took place in a five-week summer term, there was less opportunity for students to be involved in the preplanning of the projects. Students did negotiate some content of the final project with the partner and instructor. In a traditional academic term, students could be given more responsibility of identifying partners and projects.

The first group worked with a state representative and his staff on a bill regarding prisoner re-entry programs. The representative wanted the students involved to interview social workers who were employed in the field of criminal justice about their attitudes toward the bill and prepare an executive summary. This group took the project a step further by sending a letter in support of the bill to the office of the state National Association of Social Workers in Raleigh, N.C. The group negotiated with the instructor that this additional task be part of their final project. The second project involved working with a state senator on a bill proposing a cap on textbook prices. Students were asked to interview key informants, specifically faculty members who had written a textbook, librarians, and bookstores, about their attitudes regarding the bill. The senator needed an executive summary of the findings and this was the final project for the group.

The third project was helping a national advocacy organization contact community members about the 2007 farm bill, specifically issues related to food stamps. The organization wanted students to contact member groups to discuss the merits of the bill and to encourage them to become politically active. Unlike the other projects in which the community partner requested a final report from the students, this organization did not need a report. As a result, students spent all of their service-learning hours advocating for the passage of the farm bill with the agency’s constituents.

The fourth project involved working with a local agency who served senior adults. The agency wanted to promote a bill that would streamline service for seniors. The final project for the group was creating a letter of support from the agency to all members of the state House and Senate requesting support of the bill. As the project progressed, the students identified that advocacy materials that could be used with clients were needed. The students worked with the community partner to design advocacy materials for the agency to use with clients and their families. They negotiated the addition of this task as part of their final project and grade.

In order to help students reflect on their experiences, the students were required to complete log assignments. Students completed three logs over the course of the term that integrated their work with the community partner and the course content. The log assignment required students to respond to three or four questions about their policy knowledge. Details about the log questions are presented in the methods section under student reflections.

In the final week, students completed a final project, and turned in a paper detailing their reflection of the experiences. Finally, all four groups participated in a reception and presented their findings to the class and the community partners.

Methodology

Data Collection

This study employed a mixed method design. Data from two time periods were collected and analyzed. At the end of the term (time period one), data were collected from students using the following methods: reflection journals that were part of the course assignments and an end of the course focus group. In order to protect participants, the protocol of the study was approved by the authors’ university IRB. Sixteen students participated in the research; a full description of the participant demographics can be found in the results section.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data were collected from multiple sources (interviews, student reflection logs, and focus group notes) in time period one and two. In order to best understand the qualitative data, the first author transcribed her notes from the interviews. The second author transcribed notes from the focus group. The student reflection logs were already typed; the second author compiled responses to the questions. All qualitative data were reviewed and independently open coded.
by both authors (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The purpose of the open coding was to discover how the students described their experiences and to look for meaning in the data. In the first round of analysis, photocopies of the transcripts were cut into relevant strips of data and sorted into constructs. Next, similar constructs were grouped and labeled as concepts. Data and key student quotes were placed on notecards and then sorted to identify developing similarities. From this process, themes emerged. Following the independent open coding, the authors compared their findings and worked to agree on the qualitative themes. The authors typically agreed on the sorting of key data and quotes into categories; however, much of the discussion was centered on titling the themes. This process provided interrater reliability of concepts and themes.

**Time Period One**

*Students’ Reflections.*

Included as part of their weekly logs, students recorded their reactions to their experiences. The reflection questions were assigned by the instructor for the purpose of assessing the students’ learning and to promote the critical assessment of their professional development. The questions required students to draw from their readings, the NASW Code of Ethics, lecture, and lessons learned from the projects. In addition to material focused on the academic content of the course, over the course of the term students responded to reflection prompts such as “Describe your past political engagement. What excites you and scares you about the service-learning project?” and “Select one topic discussed in class/presented in the reading. Summarize your understanding of the topic. How does the concept apply to your work on the service-learning project?” The written responses were collected and coded by themes.

*Focus Group.*

On the last day of class, students were asked by the instructor to respond in writing to open-ended questions and to discuss their responses with the class. This was not graded and students were told the purpose was to reflect on learning and for the instructor to improve the course for future students. The written responses were collected and coded by themes.

**Time Period Two**

Fifteen months following the completion of the course, qualitative and quantitative data were collected from the student participants. The students were contacted via email to request their voluntary participation in the follow-up project. Nine students replied to this request. Students participated in a 45-minute qualitative interview with the first author who was not involved with the course, but was completing data collection for her MSW thesis. Students were compensated with $15 for their time and travel expenses. The interview consisted of 14 open-ended questions related to the students’ experiences in the policy course. The questions were designed to assess the students’ experiences in the course and how the learning may (or may not have) been influenced by the service-learning. Examples of questions were, "Did the service-learning experience help you develop as a micro (also mezzo and macro) level social worker? If so, how and did the service-learning experience change your attitude about policy? If so, how/why?"

In addition, based on the work of Rocha (2000), participants were given a list of policy activities (e.g., communicating with elected officials, participating in community meetings on public policy issues, voting, or joining a citizen action group) and asked to indicate which, if any, behaviors they had engaged in since the course ended. Given the small sample size, the responses were tabulated for each question and reported; only the mean, standard deviation, and range was reported for overall participation in policy activities.

**Results**

*Description of Students*

Sixteen students were enrolled in the course. Of the 16, 14 were Caucasian women; one was an African American woman; and one was an African-American male. The median age was 31.60 (range 20–58, SD = 12.92). All of the students started their senior practicum within two quarters of completing the policy course.

Nine students who participated in the policy course volunteered to participate in the follow-up interviews 15 months after the course ended. Of the nine students, seven were Caucasian females, one was an African-American male, and one student was an African-American female. The median age of the participants was 36 (range 22–59, SD = 14.7).
Time Period One

Student Reflection Logs

Included as part of their weekly logs, students recorded their reactions to their experiences. Reflection questions were assigned by the instructor for the purpose of assessing the students’ learning and to promote the critical assessment of their professional development. The most common theme related to students’ successfully using a skill. Examples of skills identified were talking to people in power about an issue (most common), report writing, and improving needs assessment. Examples of quotes that illustrate success in using a skill follow:

Before this project, I would hold back some questions I may want to ask. But now I have learned to ask things like "Can I have a copy of your budget?" or "Why are your prices so high?" (skill identified: talking to people in power)

I have found a new ability to call up complete strangers and speak with them about a political policy. I have found myself becoming more comfortable in talking with people about their opinions regarding this bill and setting up interviews. I have not always had confidence in myself and this project has been pushing me outside of my comfort zone. (skill identified: talking to people in power)

I worried about our group’s writing. … I thought, “Oh my god, we were giving the report to [an elected official]” and I wanted it to be good. We edited a lot. It wasn’t like a regular paper that we were turning in [to the professor]. (skill identified: writing skills)

The limitations that students recognized were more difficult to classify. The limitations were more closely tied with the nature and tasks associated with the project rather than based on a social work skill. Limitations included not having enough time to work on the project, key informants refusing to return phone calls, lack of local interest in the bill, and frustration with group members. These challenges may have interfered with their skill development.

Focus Group Responses

In written format and through a class discussion, students were asked to respond to four questions posed during the last class. The first question was, “Before this course, what were your attitudes about being involved in the political process?” Nine responses were classified as "related to fear." Examples of the fear students expressed are exemplified by the following quotations:

I wanted nothing to do with politics. I thought I wouldn’t understand politics and I felt disconnected from my legislators.

I was scared. I never have been involved with politics and I was intimidated and did not think I would do well.

Similarly, three students admitted that they were uninterested in being involved with politics or macro practice. Comments went beyond fear and included statements like "I hate the thought of policy" and “My opinion does not matter so why bother.” In contrast, three students expressed positive regard about the opportunity to engage in policy work.

The second question was, "What is your attitude about being involved in the political process today?" The participants’ responses were classified into two themes: Confidence expressed because new skills and knowledge were acquired and desire to be involved in future advocacy and policy work. Twelve responses were classified as new skills and knowledge. Student sentiment was expressed in the following quotations:

I am very excited to say I have been a part of a bill. Helping it move forward has made me extremely proud. Advocating by doing something is what I have learned.

I have a voice and I know how to use it to better our society and for my future clients.

Three students expressed that their experiences lead them to embrace their own advocacy responsibilities. One student wrote: “My attitude has changed. I plan to become more involved in the political process. At one time in my life, politics meant only civil rights. Now politics includes social justice for everyone.”

The final question was, “Is there anything
related to social work that you are more likely to do today than you were before the course started?” Eleven student responses were categorized as being more involved in policy work. Of those 11, 4 had specific plans of action, while 6 were less specific about how to be involved. Student responses included:

I will write to my representative because I truly know it is my social work duty.

Become politically active and speak up! Even if I don’t get my representative to do what I want, I still have the POWER and the RIGHT and the DUTY to do something about policies that hurt others.

Three students talked about being more aware of policies. One student wrote “I feel like I pay more attention to the news so that I have an understanding of what is happening in the world.” One student’s behaviors were not going to be changed following the course. She stated: “Although I learned a lot about policy, I still don’t want to have anything to do with it.”

**Fifteen Month Follow-up**

A concern of the instructor of the course was that students were excited about policy and macro work because of their intense emersion in the topic and that the excitement and application of policy skills would not persist over time. Fifteen months following the completion of the course, qualitative and quantitative data were collected from nine students.

Three major themes emerged during the participants’ interviews and demonstrated the connectedness between the students’ experience with policy and the project. The themes were "engaging in the service-learning experience helped students learn about policy"; "engaging in the service-learning experience gave students confidence about policy skills"; and "engaging in the service-learning experience influenced policy behaviors."

**Theme 1—Engaging in the Service-Learning Experience Helped Students Learn about Policy.**

Students discussed how their learning experiences were enhanced by the project because it allowed for hands-on learning. The students reported how the projects provided a platform to apply what they had talked about in class or read to a real-world problem. Examples of statements that illustrated students’ positive regard for the service-learning project follow:

I think I would have been bored out of my mind [in a traditional course], because policy—I mean honestly I dreaded it—because it’s policy and it’s scary. With service-learning I got so comfortable with policy. I understood the material taught in class because I could apply it to what I was doing right then.”

It would have been hard for me to learn and stay focused [in a traditional course] because I find sometimes policy…it’s easier to see it than to just read about it. You know I can memorize what it takes to become a bill but to actually get out there and experience what it takes to get a motion moved, to see what public officials do...you actually get hands-on with it and it is so much better to learn by seeing it, experiencing it...hearing the words out of the senators’ mouths was much more powerful than reading it from a textbook or writing a paper about it.

Service-learning made me more excited about policy. You know, “I can help change this.”

**Theme 2—Engaging in the Service-Learning Experience Gave Students Confidence about Policy Skills.**

During the qualitative interviews, students were asked to talk about their experiences with policy. Participants discussed how the service-learning projects increased their personal and professional confidence. Students felt as though the projects inspired them to know that their voices were being heard. Examples:

Confidence was one of the things that I think that I took the most away from it [the course]. It was feeling that as a social work student, you have much more say about things than what you ever would have thought. I definitely did not know we have as much power or as much of a voice as we do.
I love service-learning… it gives people the confidence. It gives students the confidence because we got to read about it and then I got to see it. Without the service-learning project, there would have been no way that I would have been able to testify in front of the Senate. I wouldn’t have had half of the educational experiences I’ve had over the past year without that class.

Theme 3—Engaging in the Service-Learning Influenced Policy Behaviors.

A third theme that emerged was the concept of the service-learning projects creating lasting behavioral changes for students. Following the course, the students were able to participate in a variety of experiences including testifying before the State Senate, presenting their policy project at a professional conference, interviewing senators, and talking with social work professionals and citizens in the community about their thoughts regarding policy issues. Through these activities, students were able to participate in the political process and begin to develop a macro skill set. One student discussed her views on political behaviors. She explained:

They [elected officials] don’t know anything that is going on if the public doesn’t write letters or let them know what is going on. I’m a big advocate now for writing letters to my representative. That is what has changed after the class, because now I realize the importance of it. I thought they probably get thousands of letters, but they really don’t. It is a big thing in order to produce change in laws for our clients.

Based on the political engagement of the students and their positive regard toward policy, it is important to recognize the level of commitment demonstrated by the students after the conclusion of the course. Students may have engaged in political behaviors because of the awareness and civic duty instilled in them during the service-learning project. Students’ comments about their involvement in political activities are expressed in the following statements:

I sent a letter and I gave out envelopes to others. I do a 12-step program and I do a support group and 13 of the participants sent letters about this bill. Some of them also made phone calls. I would never have done that before this class.

The four of us that were working on the bill wondered what was happening with the bill so we called up to Senator X’s office just to see. He keeps telling us that we are his contacts when he reinvents the bill. He is going reintroduce it and change it a little bit based on what we learned and what we educated him about the bill. He has taken the changes to heart what we found. We are still keeping in contact.

Participation in Policy Behaviors

Based on the policy skills outlined by Rocha (2000), students were asked about their engagement with policy actions following the policy course. During the interviews, students were asked about their involvement in nine political activities since the conclusion of the policy course.

On average, students had participated in four policy tasks (x = 4.4, standard deviation = 2.4, range = 2–8) since the course ended. Policy behaviors included using the internet to find information about controversial issues related to social welfare policy (n = 8); voting (n = 7); calling, emailing, or writing an elected official (n = 7); working on a specific policy change effort (n = 6); meeting with a public official (n = 4); participating as a member of a coalition or a committee working on a political issue of change (n = 3); being active in a political coalition (n = 2); being instrumental in organizing a political activity (n = 2); and sending a letter to the editor or having written an opinion/editorial piece (n = 1).

Discussion

Based on information collected from students in this course, the service-learning project helped the students develop policy skills (e.g., talking to people in power about an issue, report writing, assessing needs) and professional confidence. Three themes were determined to have impact on the students’ experiences. The themes were: 1) The experience helped students learn about policy; 2) it gave students confidence about policy skills; and 3) it influenced policy behaviors.

The majority of the students reported that through hands-on learning and reality-based experiences, they were empowered to participate
in the macro process. These students also asserted that the project enabled them to gain a better understanding of policy. Eight of the nine students who participated in the 15-month follow-up interviews reported that the project changed their attitude about social welfare policy and enhanced their overall learning experience.

The finding of increased competency was also important, as students may be more likely to participate in macro practice as direct service providers because they feel they have the skills necessary to engage in a task. Students reported increased engagement in policy activities following the conclusion of the policy course. With new confidence and new macro skills developed, students were able to continue their involvement with their own projects and participate in new macro opportunities. Because of the participants’ feelings of positive regard for the service-learning projects and the course, the students may be more likely to participate in political activities as they advance in their careers.

**Limitations of the Study**

There were several limitations to this study. One limitation was the small sample size. Sixteen students participated in the first data collection, while nine students participated in the follow-up. Also, data were not collected from the students prior to the start of the policy class that may have influenced the findings. However, the qualitative data indicated that students retrospectively reflected that they were fearful and reported disliking policy prior to the class.

Additionally, there were multiple factors, both personal and related to the class structure, which may have attributed to the students’ evaluations of the service-learning experiences and their experiences with social work policy. For example, some students were able to work on their first choice project, while others were not. The personalities and characteristics of the instructor and the community partners may have influenced students’ enthusiasm toward policy practice and the assessment of their skills.

Issues related to maturation may have also impacted the participants’ behaviors or attitudes at the 15-month follow-up. Participants had participated in a 425-hour senior practicum experience and may have taken their first professional job by the time the follow-up interview occurred. It is impossible to determine if the service-learning experience was fully responsible for the participants’ positive regard toward policy or behavioral changes as there was no comparison group. However, the work by Rocha (2000), which had a comparison group that did not participate in a service-learning component, suggests that service-learning experiences can account for some increase in policy behaviors.

**Implications for Social Work Education, Practice, and Research**

This service-learning experience supports previous research which indicates the effectiveness of using service-learning in a policy course. Droppa (2007) and Rocha (2000) found that students had increased competency and engagement in policy practice following service-learning projects. Rocha (2000) also described that students believed policy activities were important to social work practice. Students reported that this was influenced by the service-learning component of the course.

The major implication for social work practice is that service-learning is an approach that has the potential to generate student interest in macro practice. This pedagogy may advance social work values such as social justice, service, and obligations of practitioners to be macro change agents, values which have shown to be less understood by BSW students (Majewski, 2007). Service-learning allows students to become actively involved in the real world application of values and become proponents of social change. The feedback from students involved with this project suggests that service-learning helps social work students renegotiate their personal and professional identities to include being a macro practitioner. Further, it suggests that this confidence may propel students to engage in policy behaviors.

Social work educators and researchers should continue to evaluate if service-learning increases students’ learning and promotes professionalism in the field. Future researchers should consider employing a comparison group and a larger sample to determine if service-learning is responsible for behavioral and attitudinal changes about policy practice.

While this project focused on social work curriculum and students, the lessons learned about engagement are applicable to related majors such as sociology, criminal justice, teacher education, nursing, and other disciplines which have a policy course in the curriculum. If students feel disenfranchised from the political process or do not make the link between their direct practice as police officers, teacher, or nurses, they may be less inclined to use their professional knowledge.
to shape public policy in their fields. As such, preparing students to participate in the current political climate should be of concern to all disciplines.

Conclusion

Social work students enter a complex and changing practice arena. Students need to have critical thinking, practice skills, and theoretical understanding to participate in solving social problems. Service-learning pedagogy may be a vehicle in which to expose students to society’s needs and potential solutions. In 1994, Courtney and Specht described how social workers had become “unfaithful angels” to the profession’s mission of social change. If BSW students increase their political skill competencies and feel empowered to make macro level changes through service-learning experiences, they may help reshape the future of the profession and return us to a time when community organizing, activism, and social justice were the hallmark of the profession. Service-learning, specifically in the macro and policy classes, may help create a new generation of social work practitioners who have a career centered on social change. Ultimately, this changes the lives of clients through the creation of more socially just policies that promote a better, more equitable society.

References


About the Authors

Tarin Mink is a mental health therapist at Samaritan Behavioral Health, Inc., in Dayton, Ohio. Sarah Twill is an associate professor of social work at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio.
Abstract

In North Carolina, health disparities for the emergent Latino population are well documented. Between 2005 and 2009, a community-university engagement model with Latino leaders and university faculty and students in rural eastern North Carolina worked to address solutions to health disparities among Latinos. Based on principles of community-based participatory research, this model focused on partnership formation and capacity building. Community partners acquired leadership and research skills. University partners gained a local understanding of Latino health through collaborative community and systems-level initiatives. Mutual benefits were achieved in partnerships established, resources leveraged, and community members reached. These strategies can be replicated in other communities that have an immigrant Latino population, community-oriented, bilingual health professionals, and a university committed to engagement.

Background

Counties in eastern North Carolina can be characterized by their rural nature, agricultural economy and emerging Latino population. Wayne County, where this project was conducted, has a per capita income of $31,000; nearly 14% of the population lives in poverty, compared to statewide figures of $35,000 and 12.3%. (North Carolina State Center for Health Statistics 2010). The southern part of Wayne County is noted for its sandy soils, good for growing cucumbers, cantaloupe, watermelon, and other truck crops. Annual migration into this region by Latino farm workers is estimated at more than 10,000. In addition to farm work, Latino workers are employed at numerous poultry and pickle processing factories in the area. Trailer parks, placed strategically for these workers, dot the landscape. The county sewage treatment facility and county landfill are both situated in this part of the county. The local health department and department of social services are 20 miles away in the county seat. There has never been regular public transportation to and from the southern part of the county, making access to these services difficult. The school-age population is 50% Latino in the public school district serving this area (A. Pridgen, personal communication, April 18, 2011).

Latino immigrants not only live in this disadvantaged environment, but low public sentiment of Latinos has also resulted in their discrimination by and alienation from mainstream society. Community-university engagement is one approach to working with communities that face social, structural, and environmental inequities (Wallerstein & Minkler, 2008). This approach can also address ethical and social justice issues particularly salient to the conditions facing Latino immigrants (Baumann, Domenech Rodriguez, & Parra-Cardona, 2011).

Community Partner

As a result of growth of the Latino population in Wayne County, Willie Cartagena, a resident, founded the Hispanic Community Development Center [the Center] in 2002 to provide advocacy in the form of translation/interpretation services and employment assistance to the emerging Latino community. He renovated a former gas station in the southern part of the county with funds from local industries that employ Latinos. In 2005, he became the executive director and established the Center as a non-profit organization with a board of directors and bylaws. The mission of the Center expanded to include community development and resource acquisition, in addition to advocacy.

University Partner

At this same time, I (Kim Larson) was also a resident of Wayne County teaching at East Carolina University (ECU). For over 30 years, I had worked with Latino families, first in Honduras, as a Peace Corps nurse, and later in eastern North Carolina in a rural migrant health clinic. I had just completed my dissertation on sexual risk behaviors among Latino adolescents, which used ethnographic methods of participant-observation, in-depth interviews, and relevant documents to generate data. I read the local newspaper, The News-Argus, everyday for community events involving the Latino population and kept field notes of
the events I attended. On February 28, 2005, the News-Arg reported on the formation of the Wayne County Coalition on Latino Child Health through a Community Access to Child Health grant funded by the American Academy of Pediatrics. The announcement invited community members interested in being a part of the coalition to “step forward and agree to participate…” (Moore, 2005, p. 7A).

Natural Partnership

Mr. Cartagena and I were among 30 stakeholders who attended the initial coalition meeting. The coalition met monthly for one year and identified three priority health disparities among Latino children and adolescents: poor oral health, excessive accidents and injuries, and adverse sexual health outcomes. As a result of the joint work on the coalition and a mutual interest in improving the health of the Latino community, Mr. Cartagena and I formed a natural partnership that was enhanced by my fluency in Spanish, familiarity with the Latino culture, and health-related experience. The purpose of this paper is to describe partnership formation and capacity building in a community-university engagement model with Latino leaders and university faculty and students in Wayne County, North Carolina.

Partnership Formation (2005-2006)

At the invitation of Mr. Cartagena, I began attending the monthly Saturday morning board meetings of the Center beginning in 2005. At the time, there were 10 board members, men and women from Cuba, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Puerto Rico, and the United States. Since some board members preferred to use English and others preferred Spanish, all board meetings were conducted in both languages. Mr. Cartagena explained my role as a member of the ECU nursing faculty and community member interested in the health of the Latino community. Some board members preferred to use English and others preferred Spanish, all board meetings were conducted in both languages. Mr. Cartagena explained my role as a member of the ECU nursing faculty and community member interested in the health of the Latino community. Some board members appreciated my participation and others were skeptical, admitting a belief that the university has been indifferent to the needs of rural communities. ECU’s mission statement contains a pledge to “serve as a national model for public service and regional transformation” (East Carolina University, 2009), but some residents question that pledge. Shelton (2008) describes how establishing trust sets the foundation for a successful partnership. I knew that building trust was of paramount importance, and so I kept my promises, participated extensively, and practiced openness with board members.

Drawing from principles of community-based participatory research (CBPR), I approached our work using a collaborative, equitable process where all partners identified mutual benefits (Israel, Schulz, Parker, Becker, Allen, & Guzman, 2003). Board members had recently collected community needs assessment data and requested assistance with the analysis, interpretation, and dissemination of the data. As nursing faculty, I was able to match nursing students in a service learning course with Center board members on projects such as the community needs assessment. Simultaneously, nursing students who had completed a study abroad program in Guatemala and had acquired Spanish language skills collaborated with board members to conduct a health fair. I also facilitated the project of a graduate student in the Nursing Leadership concentration who worked for one year with the board members on creating a bilingual community resource directory. Board members translated and edited the directory while the graduate student compiled the information and called each agency for a description of services and contact information. These projects would not have been accomplished without this community-university partnership in place.

The early stage of partnership formation allowed community-university partners to discuss issues of importance to the community. Discussion centered around proposed interventions and grant-funding that might address health concerns in the Latino community. In 2005, the Center had an annual budget that was less than $10,000 and operated solely on donations from local industries and occasional fund-raising projects. There were no paid staff and volunteer board members were only available in the evening and weekends. Community
members requesting translator/interpreter services or job assistance contacted members by telephone. As a result, board members knew they were not responsive to many of the community needs and had a long-term goal of a paid staff member at the Center five days a week.

**State of Latino Health**

During partnership formation I was asked to take an advisory role to share with board members the current health research on Latino populations and to assist with grant-writing. Using North Carolina State Center for Health Statistics data (2006; 2010), we began discussions about the health disparities within the Hispanic/Latino population. Considering the priority health needs identified by the County Coalition for Latino Child Health, board members were concerned about adverse sexual health outcomes. Data gathering and interpretation was an ongoing activity that occurred throughout this partnership as new information became available. The following data served as the foundation for the grant proposals developed by this partnership.

North Carolina has the third highest birth rate for Latinas ages 15-19 in the nation (Kost, Henshaw, & Carlin, 2010). According to the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (2010), the 2004–2008 pregnancy rate for NC Latinas ages 15-19 was 173.2/1000, nearly three times higher than the overall teen pregnancy rate of 64.5/1000; for the past 14 years, the teen pregnancy rates in Wayne County have been higher than the state rate; and the 2004–2008 HIV case rate for NC Latinos was 33.6/100,000, higher than the overall population case rate of 24.3/100,000.

Eastern North Carolina has some of the highest HIV infection rates in the nation (McCoy, 2009). Moreover, Wayne County had a syphilis rate four times the state average (North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, 2008). Finally, a larger percent of NC Latinos than whites and African Americans were uninsured, could not see a physician due to cost, and had no personal physician (North Carolina State Center for Health Statistics, 2010).

Cultural attitudes and beliefs toward sexual health, lack of bilingual health care personnel, traditional health practices, and lack of access to health care resources may hinder usual public health prevention approaches for reducing the risk of sexually transmitted infections among the Latino population. In two local studies, issues surrounding migration were pertinent to addressing sexual risk behaviors (Larson, 2009; Larson & McQuiston, 2008). Further, the school environment offered numerous opportunities for facilitating sexual risk behaviors among Latino youth (Larson, Sandelowski, & McQuiston, 2011). Traditional public health research strategies, such as health education campaigns, are often poorly suited to address the complexities of health and social problems of Latino families (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008).

Although partnerships between Latino communities and universities have been successful in HIV prevention in some parts of the country (Baldwin, Johnson, & Benally, 2009; Kim, Flakerud, Koniak-Griffin, & Dixon, 2005; Rhodes et al., 2006), no studies could be found that addressed sexually transmitted disease prevention using a community-university engagement model with Latino leaders in rural eastern North Carolina. As a result, board members and I decided to focus the community-university engagement model on prevention of these infections in the Latino population.

**Capacity Building (2007-2009)**

Using another CBPR principle, capacity building, the aim was to ensure the reciprocal transfer of knowledge, skills, and capacity among all partners (Israel et al., 2003). Toward the end of 2006, Mr. Cartagena received a request for a proposal from Hispanics in Philanthropy, Inc. (HIP) an international collaborative that provides planning and implementation grants to Latino-led non-profit organizations. Board members and I decided to submit a proposal that would target leadership development. At the same time, the local health department offered a grant opportunity to non-profit organizations to reduce adverse sexual health outcomes among minority populations. I met with a small group of Center board members (4 of the 10) weekly to draft grant proposals for both initiatives. The draft proposals were approved by the entire board at a regular board meeting. A budget for the HIV/AIDS prevention grant of $2,200 went entirely to the Center for operating expenses such as rent, telephone, utilities, and training supplies for one year. A budget for the HIP leadership grant was proposed and responsibilities designated allocating half of the $20,600 grant to the Center and half to the university. The Center received operating expenses and the university received expenses to purchase training materials and supplies. Still, it is important to note that during the partnership formation stage there was
no funding for any activities. This is a key CBPR principle, where partnership commitment must continue even if funding is not yet available (Israel et al., 2003).

**HIV/AIDS Prevention Grant**

In 2007, a five-week HIV/AIDS prevention training program was implemented with board members using an HIV/AIDS training manual designed for Latino immigrants in North Carolina (McQuiston, Parrado, Martinez, & Uribe, 2005). I facilitated a series of five interactive workshops with board members to provide the skills to become HIV/AIDS community trainers and to share prevention strategies with individuals and groups in homes, churches, and workplaces. Six board members completed the five-week (10 hours) training program. Both the female and male board members convened groups of community members informally in a variety of locations to share HIV/AIDS prevention information over the course of a year.

**Hispanics in Philanthropy (HIP), Inc. Grant**

The decision to target leadership development came because of limited Latino representation on official county boards or civic organizations. Board members believed that the Center could benefit from this type of training. The HIP grant had three aims: to build an active and responsive board of directors; establish an on-site computer resource center; and strengthen partnerships between the Center and mainstream community organizations. A series of leadership development workshops were designed during joint meetings between board members and nursing faculty at the East Carolina Center for Nursing Leadership (ECCNL). Training sessions followed the regular monthly board meetings at the Center and took place between October 2007 and June 2008. The leadership training was designed to help board members develop and apply leadership skills. Nine nursing faculty and graduate students from the ECCNL facilitated the 11-session training program. Faculty and student time involved in the leadership training was provided in-kind, reinforcing the university’s commitment to community engagement. Key concepts of applied research were included in the leadership training sessions, such as human participant protection education and data collection strategies. Leadership topics and skills applied are described in Table 1.

When the Center received a donation of 12 refurbished computers from the local Air Force base, a computer resource center was established. The HIP grant allowed the Center to be equipped with Internet and DSL access. This enabled the Center to offer adult English as a Second Language classes through the local community college and provide basic computer literacy training for community members. This was facilitated by a board member with a degree in computer information technology. Community members used the Internet for searches on health and employment, to complete homework assignments, and to obtain international news. Internet access expanded board members’ ability to communicate with the broader community through the development of a website (www.hcdci.org) and a quarterly electronic newsletter. At this time, a primary industry donor provided for a full-time staff member to keep the Center open five days a week.

The HIP grant also provided support to strengthen relationships between the Center and mainstream organizations. Joint projects between the local health department and the Center included the Get Real, Get Tested (Hazte la Prueba) campaign (a door-to-door initiative in high-risk neighborhoods that offered free HIV and syphilis testing), influenza vaccine clinics, and a dental screening and referral clinic. The clinics were held at the Center and board members and university partners worked cooperatively to market and carry out these community outreach initiatives.

**HIV Non-traditional Test Sites**

In 2009, the state Department of Health and Human Services encouraged community-based non-profit organizations to establish non-traditional test sites to address the growing HIV/AIDS epidemic among minority populations. Bowles et al. (2008) found that rapid HIV testing in outreach and community settings was an effective approach for reaching members of minority groups and people at high risk for HIV infection. Board members and nursing faculty developed a non-traditional test site application that highlighted board member capacity building in the areas of HIV/AIDS prevention training and leadership development. This capacity building work positioned the Center to become the first Latino-led HIV site for the OraQuick ADVANCE® Rapid HIV-1/2 antibody test (OraSure Technologies, Bethlehem, PA) in the state. The establishment of the site is a unique initiative between the state Department of Health and Human Services the local health department, the ECU College of Nursing, and the Center. It
was the only Latino-led HIV-nontraditional test site at the time in the state with board members involved in writing the utilization and quality assurance plan and completing applications for certified HIV testing and Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments waiver. Two board members and I attended an 8-hour training in the OraQuick screening procedure and completed a two-day state-certified course in HIV testing, counseling, and referral. Following state guidelines, board members and I conducted monthly outreach screening clinics at the local community soup kitchen and a popular Latino market.

Findings

Throughout every stage of this community-university engagement model, Center board members and university nursing faculty collaborated on need identification, program design, and implementation of grant initiatives. Enhanced community capacity has been demonstrated through increased leadership and collaboration on long-range health initiatives and through the institutionalization of a community-based HIV prevention program. During its first year, 2009-2010, the HIV-NTS outreach initiative provided HIV/AIDS education to more than 500 community members and tested 113 men and women at various community locations (see Table 2.). In addition, board members were instrumental in placing free condom dispensers at the Center and at a night club serving a large Latino population.

Perhaps one of the greatest achievements was that through the use of CBPR principles of collaboration and equity, an authentic partnership was established between Latino leaders and university faculty. Through leadership training, Center board members increased their competence with research skills in data collection and human participant protection education, and community development skills in grant-writing and program planning. University faculty strengthened the mission of the university through community engagement with a community partner. Nursing faculty acquired knowledge about the financial struggles of a small community-based non-profit organization advocating for the Latino community and the dynamic nature of board membership. Although the health of the Latino population was important to board members, holding cultural events symbolizing a proud Latino heritage to the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Applied Skills</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creating an Effective Board</td>
<td>• Developed organizational vision and mission statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs Assessment</td>
<td>• Reviewed relevant health status data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Completed Human Participant Protections Education for Research Teams Certification Course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Implemented Community Health Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength, Weakness, Opportunity,</td>
<td>• Completed SWOT analysis for HCDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Threat (SWOT) Analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority Setting</td>
<td>• Established health priorities for Hispanic/Latino community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making and Problem</td>
<td>• Practiced skills in group process and communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Planning</td>
<td>• Completed strategic plan (See Figure 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change and Conflict Management</td>
<td>• Revised organizational bylaws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Management</td>
<td>• Developed budget, reporting and audit mechanisms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Empowerment</td>
<td>• Utilized case studies to address power and control issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant writing and Community</td>
<td>• Identified grant opportunities: local, regional, and national</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation: Process/Outcome</td>
<td>• Developed evaluational matrix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Created strategies for information dissemination</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
mainstream community was equally important. The Center’s viability was strengthened by securing funding for operating expenses and by developing a community-based intervention (i.e. HIV-nontraditional test site outreach) to address health disparities in the Latino community. Capacity building further provided skills in opening dialogue between Latino men and women on taboo topics of sexual risk behaviors and HIV/AIDS. Board members benefited from establishing linkages with university-related resources, the ECCNL, and the local Area Health Education Center. Two board members completed a certification course through the Health Education Center in medical Spanish interpreter training. Using decision-making and priority-setting skills, the Center board members developed the first strategic plan (see Figure 1.). With Internet access, the Center expanded communication to the larger community through an electronic newsletter and a website with links to community-designed information.

Latino representation on official boards and civic groups has grown dramatically. Decisions made using the strategic plan were a regular part of each board meeting. For example, in 2009, the decision to join the local Chamber of Commerce came about after board members discussed the benefits of becoming equal players with other mainstream organizations. With a very small budget, the membership fee for the Chamber of Commerce was a concern. Board members and university partners contributed $10-$20 each to pay the $200 membership fee. A ribbon-cutting ceremony followed, which was attended by the mayor, county commissioners, The News-Argus, and dozens of residents. Many of these community members were unaware of the Center before this event. This led board members to work with the Downtown Development Corporation on a new multicultural venue “VIVA Goldsboro!” Center board members applied for and received a grant award from the Wayne County Arts Council for this event. One board member returned to school for a nursing degree. She conveyed how the partnership influenced her decision in this remark, “It was the HIV training that motivated me to go to nursing school.” At a regional health conference, this board member gave her first formal presentation on her perspective of the community-university partnership (Larson & De La Torre Fletcher, 2009).

The most recent leadership opportunity came when the at-large position on the Wayne County Board of Health became available. I encouraged

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity/Race</th>
<th>(n = 113)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black/African-American</td>
<td>(72)</td>
<td>63.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>(25)</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>(16)</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>(n = 113)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>(79)</td>
<td>69.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>(34)</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Multiple Choices)</th>
<th>(n = 113)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex without a condom</td>
<td>(84)</td>
<td>74.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex with a cocaine user</td>
<td>(56)</td>
<td>49.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple sex partners</td>
<td>(42)</td>
<td>37.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex with a prostitute</td>
<td>(29)</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location of screening</th>
<th>(n = 113)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community soup kitchen</td>
<td>(75)</td>
<td>66.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino market</td>
<td>(17)</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public housing units</td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCDC/Health Fair/Church</td>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
a Latina woman active in the Latino community to apply for the position. In February 2010, she became the first Latina member appointed to this board.

Outcomes such as these strengthen a marginalized immigrant community and transform it into part of the larger community. Capacity building shifted the power differential for these Latino leaders, giving them an equal voice and recognizing their contribution to community health.

**Challenges**

Internal and external challenges were encountered in partnership formation and capacity building. Internal challenges were related to fluctuation in board membership. Some new board members were learning about the organization at the same time they were learning leadership skills. In addition, one board member was philosophically opposed to receiving grant monies because of the belief that funding agencies were demanding and authoritative. The board members in support of grant-funding to expand programs and services could not convince this member of the benefits and this member chose to leave the organization. According to Mr. Cartagena, board member attrition was quite high due to relocation of work, international travel, childcare and other household responsibilities, especially for the women on the board.

This was the first time board members had been responsible for financial management and accountability to funding agencies. This responsibility required a considerable amount of work for volunteer board members, most of whom had full-time employment. To alleviate some of this burden, I wrote the monthly updates and progress reports to these agencies and received approval from board members. I was also asked by board members to keep industry donors apprised of the Center’s accomplishments. These progress letters to industry donors provided evidence of the benefit of a full-time staff person at the Center.

External challenges were related to a lack of awareness of Center programs and activities by both the broader Latino community and the mainstream community. Although Spanish/English posters and brochures were placed in strategic locations, low literacy in the adult immigrant Latino population limited awareness and thus participation. The Hispanic Community

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**Figure 1. Strategic Plan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assuring Sustainability</th>
<th>Evolution of the Center</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Restrictive bylaws</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increase board member participation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Explore the use of volunteers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Explore additional funding venues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Acquire new facility</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<th>Expanding Service Programs</th>
<th>Initiating Children/Youth Programs</th>
<th>Service to Hispanic/Latino Community</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Formalize food bank</td>
<td>• Acquire child care facility</td>
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<td>• Reach broader community in need with Targeted Service Projects</td>
<td>• Sponsor Youth group</td>
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<td>• Sponsor women’s group</td>
<td>• Implement children’s programs; nutrition, tutoring, after-school programs.</td>
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<td>• More fully develop health promotion programs; health fairs, health charlas (chats)</td>
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<td>• Initiate outreach health clinics</td>
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<td>• Establish computer training</td>
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<td>• Establish DMV training</td>
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<td>• Establish employment referral program</td>
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<th>Building Community Relations</th>
<th>Integrating with the larger community</th>
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<td>• Host cultural events in the community</td>
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<td>• Partner with community agencies</td>
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<td>• Develop webpage and social marketing to target population</td>
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<td>• Attend community affairs</td>
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<td>• Sponsor community sports events</td>
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<td>• Develop Bilingual Resource Directory</td>
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Development Center-university partnership has begun designing social marketing strategies, such as photovoice and sociodramas (Conner et al., 2005; Olshesky, Zive, Scolari, & Zuniga, 2007; Rhodes & Hergenrather, 2007) to reach Latinos with low health literacy. These strategies are critical for reaching Latinos that are cautious about seeking assistance even from Latino advocacy groups (Ovaska, 2008; Rhodes et al., 2006).

Recognizing these challenges and believing in the adage that there is “strength in numbers,” ECU established the Nuevo South Action Research Collaborative involving university researchers from anthropology, health education, nursing, and social work to continue CBPR efforts with multiple Latino-led advocacy groups, including the Center. (Contreras, 2010).

**Conclusion**

Health inequities plague our most vulnerable populations, particularly those with language differences, limited access to care, and low health literacy. North Carolina has one of the fastest growing Latino populations in the nation (Kochar, Suro, & Tafoya, 2005), and public health professionals are acutely aware of the disproportionate incidence and prevalence of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease in this population. Between 2005 and 2009 this community-university engagement model built mutual trust and shared expertise with the aim of reducing the incidence of sexually transmitted infections in the Latino population. Using CBPR principles, the Center-university partnership expanded capacity to address the needs of the broader Latino community through the development and establishment of community partnerships. Leadership opportunities have allowed greater visibility of the contributions to the community by the Latino leaders. The local perspective is essential to CBPR efforts and at this juncture board members have increased capacity in the research process (Cochran et al., 2008; May et al., 2003). Board members now believe in their role to curb the rise of HIV in the immigrant Latino community, and take pride in establishing the first Latino-led HIV-nontraditional test site in the state. Providing HIV information and services in places like the Latino market and community soup kitchen reached women and men who would otherwise not have sought services. Moreover, when services are delivered by bilingual, compassionate, well-trained community members working in concert with public health providers, fear is lessened and access to care is opened for the most vulnerable.

This case study featured a community-university engagement model that demonstrated mutual benefits through partnership formation and capacity building. The health and social needs of the immigrant Latino community are now more apparent to mainstream community leaders in a position to mobilize greater resources to address the marginalization, poverty, stigma, and suffering experienced in rural eastern North Carolina. Like other researchers (Kim et al., 2005; McQuiston et al., 2005; Rhodes et al., 2006), we recommend widespread application of CBPR principles when working with newly arrived immigrants with assets that are often unrecognized and where organizational power could easily dominate the immigrants without understanding their culture, needs, or the stressful migration and settling in process. The CBPR principle that should receive more emphasis is the idea of building on the strengths, resources, and relationships that exist within communities of identity (Israel et al., 2003). Churches might be allies in eliminating health disparities, yet board members thought church leaders were reluctant to participate in collective engagement activities. Still, many CBPR principles were employed in this project, such as community-university co-learning, partnership development and maintenance, and a long-term commitment.

We believe these strategies could be replicated in other communities that have a growing immigrant Latino population, community-oriented, bilingual health professionals, and a university committed to community engagement.

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**Acknowledgements**

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appreciate the commitment of the community and academic partners who participated in this project.

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Goldsboro News-Argus, p. 7A.


Abstract

Back-to-back hurricanes prompted the creation of a partnership between Western Carolina University and an affected community in western North Carolina. The partnership was designed to promote the economic, social, and cultural revitalization of the community while creating opportunities for civic engagement and enriched student learning. The principal stakeholders in the partnership were the university and the municipal government, representing the community at large. The partners undertook several projects over a three-year period as part of a comprehensive, multifaceted initiative. In this article, the authors discuss the benefits and impact of the projects on participants and the community. They also share the insights gained and lessons learned from the initiative and comment briefly on factors inherent in effective university-community partnerships.

Natural disasters provide a special opportunity for university students to assist affected communities. Moreover, when such disasters occur, university faculty and community partners are often expected to generate knowledge from these occurrences through research (Richardson, Plummer, Barthelemy, & Cain, 2009). For the “engaged campus” (or “engaged institution”), responsiveness to the attendant needs and concerns comes naturally, reflecting a commitment to sharing institutional resources and expertise with the greater community (Edgerton, 1994; Kellogg Commission on the Future of the State and Land-Grant Universities, 1999).

In many cases, civic engagement projects are developed by individual faculty members and negotiated directly with particular community agencies. This decentralized approach is very flexible and matches the distributed decision-making rights maintained in higher education. However, because it tends to be ad hoc, such an approach often leaves gaps in the service and capacity-building support that higher education institutions could provide to their surrounding communities. The emphasis on institution-wide engagement efforts addresses that shortcoming. Furthermore, current engagement efforts demonstrate a renewed commitment to the civic responsibilities of higher education (Sandmann, Jaeger, & Thornton, 2009; Schneider, 2000).

University-community partnerships are usually based on “transactional” or “transformational” relationships (Clayton, Bringle, Senor, Huq, & Morrison, 2010, p. 6; Enos & Morton, 2003, p. 24). A transactional relationship operates within existing structures, where entities collaborate because each has something that the other perceives as useful. It is a short-term, project-based relationship with limited commitments. In contrast, a transformational relationship involves long-term, sustainable commitments that set the stage for growth and change among the parties concerned. As Clayton and her colleagues note, a university-community relationship could also be “exploitative” (i.e., so unilateral that, intentionally or unintentionally, it takes advantage of, or even harms, the parties involved).

Transactional and transformational partnerships provide a fulcrum for civic engagement projects that can be mutually beneficial. Civic engagement projects can enrich the curriculum; create new, potentially fruitful interdisciplinary linkages; and energize faculty work by raising new questions and topics for teaching and research while enhancing community capacity to address issues and solve problems that arise (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2002). Civic engagement gives substance to the rhetoric of partnership and positions the institution as a contributing member of the community. Further, civic engagement supports the development of “community capacity,” defined as the combined influence of a community’s commitment, resources, and skills that can be deployed to build on community strengths and address community problems (Mayer, 1995).

Building community capacity is rife with challenges. For example, cultural differences in the way a higher education institution and a community agency generate knowledge and solve problems constitute a significant challenge for effective communication and coordinated action with regard to mutual goals and shared vision (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). Academicians view knowledge
as residing in specialized experts, many of whom are geographically dispersed; community residents view knowledge as pluralistic and well distributed among their neighbors. Faculty are stereotyped as being isolated, contemplative, theoretical, and overly cautious; community leaders are action-oriented, focused on results, expansive in looking for local resources, and responsible for making day-to-day decisions about their communities (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002).

In this article, we present a case study describing a partnership between one institution and one community in the aftermath of a natural disaster. We outline the context for the initiative and the conceptual framework for our study; discuss the approaches to establishing the partnership, along with pertinent issues; and highlight several projects that were implemented. Finally, we share insights gained and lessons learned about effective university-community partnerships.

**Background and Context**

In the fall of 2004, the western mountains of North Carolina bore the brunt of the remnants of two hurricanes—Frances and Ivan. Canton, the second largest town in Haywood County, was especially hard hit as the paths of the hurricanes marked an “X” over the town center. Frances and Ivan visited the area only 10 days apart, prompting the authorities to declare two states of emergency. Twenty-eight inches of rain fell into the county’s watersheds. Stream gauges placed in the Pigeon River, used to measure the great floods of 1916 and 1940, indicated record-high water levels after Frances let loose her wrath across the county, only to reveal even higher levels caused by Ivan. The “500-Year Storm” left downtown Canton under as much as 12 feet of water, destroying many businesses and closing the paper mill, thus dealing the community a stunning economic blow.

The paper mill laid off most of its 1,500 employees for more than six months. The loss of the plant’s payroll adversely affected many businesses that depended on it as their source of revenue. The mill underwent a $330 million restoration and upgrade, and after two years was back in operation. In the meantime, the General Assembly of North Carolina established the Hurricane Recovery Act of 2005. Under this legislation, the state funded a business recovery assistance program and offered low-cost loans to businesses affected by the hurricanes. The University of North Carolina’s Small Business and Technology Development Center (SBTDC) at Western Carolina University (WCU) would function as a regional business recovery assistance center. (WCU is a constituent institution of the University of North Carolina.) The SBTDC would conduct interviews with more than 60 businesses and monitor those subsequently receiving loans, mainly to replace fixtures and inventory.

By that time, although the water had receded from Canton’s physical infrastructure, it had not fully subsided from the community’s psyche. Indeed, the floods continued to have a profound impact on the economic, social, and cultural systems of the community and on the personal lives of its citizens. After nearly two years, a substantial part of the downtown area had not rebounded. Many stores remained closed and boarded up; unemployment increased and property values decreased; and the out-migration of teachers, entrepreneurs, and citizens, which started in the immediate aftermath of the hurricanes, continued at an alarming rate. By 2008, Canton’s population, which previously stood at nearly 10,000, declined to 3,900.

A WCU entrepreneurship professor (the third author) researching the impact of the hurricanes became aware of the devastation experienced in Canton and saw an opportunity for his students to enrich their education through engagement in the community’s recovery efforts. At the same time, the Community-Based Learning Initiative (CBLI) at Princeton University announced the availability of funds from a grant awarded by the Learn and Serve America program of the Corporation for National and Community Service. Community-based learning aims to enrich coursework by encouraging students to apply the knowledge and analytical skills gained in the classroom to the pressing issues faced by local communities. In response to the CBLI announcement, three members of the university’s College of Business faculty (including the second and third authors) devised a plan to develop a partnership with the Canton community, located about 35 miles from the campus. The Princeton-based program provided a small sub-grant to support the three-year (2007–2009) initiative that would eventually be called Canton Connections.

**Research Method and Framework**

In our research, we used the case study method. A case study is an empirical investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, following systematic procedures and drawing on multiple sources of evidence (Stake,
Data sources for this study were students’ reflection papers and journals, informal interviews with community members, faculty feedback, and our field notes.

A sensemaking perspective (Weick, 1995) combined with the concept of situated learning (Anderson, Reder, & Simon, 1996) provided the theoretical underpinning for our study. A sensemaking perspective focuses on how people construct meaning; it also illustrates how theories contribute to understanding community as an arena shaped by human interaction (Domahidy, 2003; Weick, 1995). Further, as Domahidy explains, sensemaking is social (engaging multiple actors in sharing their understanding of what takes place) and retrospective; and it focuses on extracted cues (i.e., elements most salient to the actors). In situated learning, learning results from a social process intricately tied to the interactions of social actors, settings, events, and processes (Anderson, Reder, & Simon, 1996). According to Domahidy, sensemaking and situated learning raise questions about forms of association and patterns of social interaction, which may be considered within a rich context of university-community partnership.

**Initial Approach to the Partnership**

The Learn and Serve sub-grant proposal included an outline of a preliminary revitalization plan for the Canton community and a list of prospective collaborators. The WCU professors had selected the Canton town government as their primary external partner. Together they identified other entities to be brought into the partnership. At an early partnership meeting in the municipal government’s boardroom, the mayor presented a list of 10 action items that the town council considered important. The restoration of business operations was high on the list. During a series of follow-up meetings, the collaborators formulated their Initial Plan. At that time, the principal players in the partnership were municipal leaders (i.e., mayor, aldermen, and town manager); SBTDC; Haywood Community College; Haywood County Economic Development Center; Blue Ridge Paper; and WCU.

A number of proposed projects with a corresponding timeline were included in the plan. One of the larger projects was a museum dedicated to the paper industry, which would be a tourist attraction for the community. A vacant building that needed rehabilitation was available for this purpose. Apart from featuring a history of the paper industry, the Museum of the Art and Science of Papermaking would also house the community college’s papermaking program and provide a creative outlet for hobbyists. University and community college faculty members saw disciplinary overlaps, leveraging their students’ knowledge and skills in public history, construction management, interior design, and marketing for the benefit of the community. Another large project proposed for Canton involved helping small businesses develop recovery plans. Teams of university students taking an entrepreneurship consulting course were to assist 12 SBTDC clients who had received loans under the Hurricane Recovery Act of 2005 by developing plans that would market each business and bring back its customers.

**Initial Results**

A WCU student team gathered information from towns that had experienced similar disasters and had implemented recovery plans. One such town was Franklin, Virginia, which experienced severe flooding from Hurricane Floyd in 1999. The WCU-Canton partners used information and best practices from Franklin and other towns to create a revitalization plan. In the meantime, another WCU student team worked with Haywood Community College students and faculty to develop preliminary plans for the museum. At the same time, a WCU faculty member made arrangements with the SBTDC for students to assist the unit’s clients. The students would serve as consultants, assisting business owners with identifying new target markets and preparing an advertising strategy.

An informal assessment of the initiative, conducted at the end of the first semester (spring 2007), revealed mixed results. The research done by university students yielded valuable information that could be used for planning a countywide post-disaster revitalization program. In addition, two university faculty members administering the Learn and Serve sub-grant made strong connections with the municipal administration, and the SBTDC was poised to assist with the recovery of small businesses. However, plans to establish the museum were hampered by the unsuitability of the available building and issues related to the building permit. Meanwhile, elected officials (aldermen) who had been deeply involved in the partnership failed in their reelection bid. Consequently, various community partners disagreed about how to move the project forward. Also, while the SBTDC developed productive projects with its
clients, most of the clients immersed themselves in working to rescue their own businesses without the assistance of student groups. To make matters worse, Blue Ridge Paper, a major partner in the revitalization endeavor, was sold to a New Zealand company with no ties to western North Carolina. Whereas the former management of the paper mill had been cordial and supportive, the new managers were unresponsive to requests for meetings and discussions.

The assessment identified the lack of measures of success as a major shortcoming of the initial approach to the partnership. The assessment also revealed that communication between the Canton-based stakeholders and the university partners was hampered by conflicting schedules. Additionally, competing priorities had diverted the attention of some faculty members from the initiative to which they had made a commitment. To make matters worse, project organizers encountered resistance from some students, who were unenthusiastic about driving to Canton when there were opportunities for service-learning projects much closer to the campus.

Revised Approach

Although the project organizers did not clearly define what success would look like, it was clear that the initial approach did not achieve the desired results. Therefore, they decided to restructure the partnership with new players from both the community and the university. The partnership would include not only elected or appointed officials but also leaders of community-based organizations as well as ordinary citizens of the community. The university representatives would include not only College of Business faculty but also faculty from other academic programs as well as the university’s service-learning administrator.

What follows is a description of the main elements of the partnership. We go on to summarize significant projects and outcomes and then to share lessons learned from the partnership experience.

Elements of the Partnership

The revised approach to the partnership included seven elements: (1) New and renewed connections; (2) specific stakeholder roles; (3) campus-wide coordination; (4) manageable projects; (5) community-engaged pedagogy; (6) explicit learning outcomes; and (7) a capacity-building focus. We describe these elements below.

New and Renewed Connections. The faculty leaders, with support from the Canton town manager and the service-learning administrator, organized the Canton Connections Faire in fall 2007 to bring together interested campus and community members. By then, there was renewed faculty interest in the initiative. The event fostered community involvement in the development of the partnership agenda based on a shared vision of what could be achieved. University and community participants made new connections and renewed old ones.

Held in Canton’s historic Colonial Theatre, the fair featured a showcase of university programs and resources. Twenty-five members of the Canton community attended, as did a 15-member group of faculty, administrators, and students from the university. It was a veritable marketplace of ideas (Menard, 2010), as business owners, mill workers, municipal employees, elected leaders, and ordinary citizens discussed project possibilities with university representatives. Together, they identified more than 40 potential projects. The event got a good press, and the prospects were exciting. Canton representatives remarked that the university was “truly a partner” with the community, rather than the perceived ivory tower. The university sponsored a follow-up fair at the same venue near the end of the academic year (in April 2008). Project leaders highlighted the collaborative efforts and tangible results of the partnership. The event served to build understanding and a positive relationship between the university and the community.

Specific Stakeholder Roles. The principal stakeholders in the partnership were the university and the municipal government. Other stakeholders were identified and roles were specified. Municipal leaders would provide information on local economic and social issues or needs; SBTDC, supported by the Haywood County Economic Development Center, would counsel small businesses and coordinate business development projects in partnership with the U.S. Small Business Administration and the state university system; and WCU would coordinate the partnership and engage students, supported by faculty, in community-based projects. The university also would take the lead in ensuring regular communication among the collaborators.

Campus-wide Coordination. After the faculty leaders from the College of Business assessed early results of the initiative, they decided to transfer administration of the Learn and Serve sub-grant and coordination of the fledgling partnership to
the Center for Service Learning. An academic support unit, the center promotes course-based community service and functions as the campus clearinghouse for engagement opportunities in the wider community. The center was better suited to building the necessary relationships across campus and with the Canton community to advance the revitalization plan. Moreover, the center would be able to monitor ongoing projects, track the outcomes of the grant-funded work, and submit regular reports to the funding agency.

Manageable Projects. The collaborators agreed to maintain Canton Connections as a comprehensive, multifaceted initiative that would support post-disaster revitalization of the community. Shortly after the first Canton Connections Faire (in spring 2008), the collaborators started eight projects. Four were dropped mainly because the project scope was too large to fit the semester’s schedule. In addition, the 45-minute drive between the university campus and the mill town proved problematic in relation to the class schedule. The university and community collaborators decided to concentrate on short-term, manageable projects with an eye to long-term projects as circumstances changed.

Community-Engaged Pedagogy. Faculty and students teaching a variety of courses were offered opportunities to employ community-engaged pedagogical strategies focused on collaboration with Canton. Community-based learning could take the form of service-learning, undergraduate/community-based research, practicum, or senior capstone.

The strategy most widely embraced was service learning, which connects community and curriculum by integrating relevant service into courses of study (Bowen, 2008; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). With its experiential and reflection components, service learning facilitates opportunities for applied learning beyond what is possible in traditional college classes. University students and faculty have been known for their service-learning projects in post-hurricane situations (Richardson et al., 2009; Steiner & Sands, 2000). For example, after Hurricane Floyd caused devastating losses in eastern North Carolina (in fall 1999), a medical school modified its curriculum to allow students to aid flood-affected communities while fulfilling learning objectives (Steiner & Sands, 2000).

Explicit Learning Outcomes. In the curriculum framework for the partnership initiative, the participating course instructors specified learning outcomes that reflected both disciplinary and liberal-learning perspectives. Liberal-learning outcomes include intellectual and practical skills (e.g., inquiry and analysis, critical and creative thinking, effective written and oral communication, teamwork, and problem solving); personal and social responsibility (including civic knowledge and engagement); and integrative learning (demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems). The Association of American Colleges and Universities (2007) lists these outcomes as essential for university students. Theatre students, for example, would hone their performance techniques while developing critical-and creative-thinking skills.

Capacity-Building Support. Capacity building brings social actors together to identify and address complex community issues. It involves developing, utilizing, and retaining knowledge, skills, and abilities; setting goals and planning strategies; and identifying constraints. The WCU-Canton initiative supported efforts to build community capacity for social, cultural, and economic revitalization. In support of civic engagement goals, the partnership organizers emphasized the need to enhance community capacity to address issues and solve problems that would inevitably arise (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2002), beyond the life of the existing partnership.

Significant Projects and Outcomes

Several significant projects were implemented as part of the revitalization efforts in Canton. Faculty and students from the College of Fine and Performing Arts and the Kimmel School of Construction Management and Technology joined College of Business students as participants in service-learning projects in the hurricane-affected community. One notable project brought life back to the town’s theatre; another addressed a need identified by the local credit union; and a third supported the improvement of the local government’s building permit process. Three small businesses benefited from engineering and technology projects.

Participating students were required to summarize, analyze, and synthesize their experiences vis-à-vis learning objectives. Some students used wiki technology to create interlinked web pages that allowed them to reflect on the lessons learned from their community-based projects. Others documented their experiences and responses in journals or reflection papers.
**Theatre Productions.** Canton officials and WCU representatives discussed the need to bring patrons back to the Colonial Theatre, which was a vital part of the community’s cultural life. The municipality acquired the 347-seat facility in 1998. The theatre first opened in 1932 and was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2000. Before the floods, the municipality spent $1.2 million to renovate the building and its fixtures. After the floods, it spent an additional $2 million to restore the facility.

The university’s Theatre in Education (TIE) program came into the picture. At WCU, TIE was a liberal studies course designed with a sharp focus on service and engaged learning. The TIE company consisted of students from theatre, art, music, and education, who took responsibility for all aspects of a production. TIE faculty served as mentors, encouraging the students to make all creative decisions and to reflect critically on their decisions.

The TIE company collaborated directly with partners in Canton to resolve a number of technical issues as they promoted and prepared for the first of two productions. Before too long, it became clear that cultivating the partnership was a worthy priority for the TIE company as it would contribute considerably to the participants’ theatre production know-how. The company staged “Dogwood’s Search” (in summer 2008) and “Tales of Trickery” (in spring 2009) in the Colonial Theatre. Nine students contributed approximately 90 hours of their time to the first production; 20 students (mainly upper-level performance majors) were involved in the second, logging nearly 200 hours. For “Tales of Trickery,” the students were enrolled in a three-hour course (taught in the fall) followed by a two-hour practicum (in the spring), highlighted by the “tour” in the Canton community. They staged the latter production with support from the university’s Gamelan Orchestra and attracted dozens of area middle-school students. The TIE company played to full houses and provided curricular support material to teachers in attendance.

In their reflection papers, participating students reported that they gained significant appreciation for the Canton community, its citizens, and its revitalization goals. Follow-up discussions showed that the students “get it,” according to one of their professors. Evaluators observed that the first production, in particular, empowered students’ sense of advocacy as emerging artists and educators and prepared them for post-performance discussions at a conference of the American Alliance for Theatre and Education in ways superior to class discussions. The students developed critical-thinking skills and creative abilities while honing their production and performance techniques.

**Credit Union Project.** The local credit union wanted to introduce a new financial product to benefit community youth. A professor of finance restructured his course to incorporate the proposed project because he thought it would help his students develop appropriate skills for working with a client and understanding a community’s financial needs.

Sixteen students took on the challenge of researching, analyzing, and defining an appropriate product for the credit union. After completing about 60 hours of work, they presented a report in which they recommended a special credit card offering for young people. The credit union accepted and implemented the recommendation as part of its operating strategy. As a result, membership in the credit union increased. The students gained real-world experience on a project typically handled by experienced consultants. As reported by their course instructor, “the students projected [a sense of] empowerment, and all were successful in the spring job market.”

**Building Permits.** Canton’s chief building inspector requested that an information system be developed to enable his office to manage the building permit process more efficiently. The manual process being used was time-consuming; assembling the reports required by the county was onerous. Computer information systems (CIS) faculty embraced the opportunity to incorporate a relevant project in three classes over two semesters. In the first semester, a team of students taking both a systems analysis and design course and a database management course analyzed the business processes and defined the system requirements. They also designed the system and database for the building inspector’s office. In the following semester, as part of a CIS capstone, the same student team developed the system that they had designed with faculty supervision.

The students made presentations to the staff in the building inspector’s office. After a few changes were made to what they proposed, the new system was pressed into service. The students had spent about 340 hours on this relatively large project, which provided them with experience in the full software development lifecycle. They had learned to work as a team on a real project for a real client.
and to be responsive to the client’s requirements. Moreover, as the project assessment revealed, the students developed project management skills. In the end, they also better understood the role of information systems in delivering governmental services efficiently and effectively. The course instructors concluded that multi-semester, multi-course projects were feasible, offering advantages in terms of a systematic process of project identification, development, and completion.

**Engineering and Technology Projects.**

As a complement to their regular coursework, engineering and technology students, based in the Kimmel School, completed three projects to support businesses in the community. Learning outcomes from these projects included the ability to analyze and summarize research findings and make effective presentations. One group of students assisted the Canton facility of a company that manufactures lightweight aluminum components for the heavy-duty transportation industry. That group conducted a study of a component inventory and organization for warehousing and manufacturing, and made applicable recommendations. Another group of students completed a warehouse overstock analysis for the local operations of a fiber-based packaging solutions company. The students submitted reports that included a cost analysis and suggestions for handling warehouse overstock. The third project entailed a space utilization study to determine the feasibility for expansion of a small machining company.

In their reflections, students noted that they “made connections between learning, experiences, and skills” and “learned to transform knowledge into actions to benefit the greater community.” The “opportunity to engage in collaboration and problem solving” was also meaningful to students.

**Other Projects.**

Students as well as faculty were involved in the implementation of other projects. A small student team volunteered to help in creating a hiking trail for the Canton community. Reflecting on that project, one student said she “felt it was [her] civic duty” to lend a helping hand while another mentioned his “small contribution to help improve [residents’] health and well-being.” Art students visited the community and proposed the creation of murals, which they would design as part of a service-learning project. At the same time, faculty offered their expertise as consultants to community-based organizations, and small-business program administrators assisted merchants in developing business recovery plans.

As the initiative drew to a close, community members expressed appreciation for the support received at a time when they needed it most, and municipal leaders regarded the partnership as “fruitful.” According to the town manager, Canton benefited from “public exposure” and received a “feather in our cap.” The community had gained access to the knowledge and resources of the university through collaboration with faculty, administrators, and students.

**Insights Gained and Lessons Learned**

We evaluated the overall partnership experience by means of informal interviews, observations, and a review of relevant documents, such as students’ reflection papers and journals. Guided by our experience as practitioners and scholars, we constructed meaning from the qualitative data analyzed and then elicited feedback from partnership collaborators.

From a sensemaking perspective (Weick, 1995), we have come to understand and appreciate that process should sometimes be valued as much as, if not more than, outcomes. In retrospect, while many of the original goals of the Canton initiative were not accomplished, engaging meaningfully in the social process of collaboration was itself an accomplishment. Collaboration was based on a common agenda, purposeful activities, regular communication, an incremental approach, and collective responsibility.

Project-related activities encouraged increased interaction among community members, facilitated student rapport with faculty, and fostered reciprocal relationships between the community and the university as a whole. The community-based projects “took us out of our comfort zone” and “made learning come alive” (students); “enhanced the learning experience” (faculty member); “connected the community with the university” (municipal leader); and “created a good picture of an engaged institution” (administrator). As researchers, we gained valuable insights into the pitfalls and promises of a university-community partnership.

The partnership that developed between WCU and Canton was based on a transactional relationship, designed to be instrumental in the completion of specific projects (Clayton, et al., 2010; Enos & Morton, 2003). This was more appropriate than the long-term, transformational relationship sometimes advocated by proponents of campus-community partnerships. Transformational relationships are clearly appropriate and de-
sirable when all partners are seeking change and growth. In this case, the partnership was focused on the revival of the community. Consistent with previous research (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002), we found that cultural differences in the way a university and a community entity produce knowledge and solve problems posed a challenge for coordinated action toward mutual ends. In this regard, our faculty colleagues were sometimes slow to respond to requests, and some indicated that their departments did not seem to value interdisciplinary work.

In a situated learning context (Anderson, Reder, & Simon, 1996), the partnership experience generated several insights and lessons:

• Establishing and maintaining a university-community partnership is a demanding enterprise. It requires coordination by professional staff, who can serve as liaisons among various constituencies, including students, faculty, administrators, and community partners.

• Creating a social marketplace of ideas (Menard, 2010) to gather information and share ideas on proposed projects is an effective approach to university-community collaboration.

• Project planners need to be mindful of the possibility of faculty or student resistance because of time and travel constraints. It is important also to recognize the unpredictable nature of community-based work and the need to provide flexible scheduling options for faculty and students.

• Community issues often call for collaborative problem solving, drawing on the knowledge, perspectives, and skills of diverse disciplines and programs. In our view, a major community-support initiative, coordinated across disciplines and departments, has a better chance of success than projects by academics acting independently. Institutions that value engagement with their surrounding communities should recognize and reward faculty for pursuing interdisciplinary work.

• Assigning clear roles and responsibilities to stakeholders is a fundamental element of a successful partnership.

• Regular, frequent communication between university and community partners is essential to the success of a partnership.

• Community-based (civic engagement) projects allow students to apply knowledge and skills gained in the classroom to real-world issues. Projects can help to build higher-order skills such as critical thinking, analysis, and problem solving.

Conclusion

Canton Connections represents one university’s attempt to foster collaboration aimed at revitalizing a community affected by a natural disaster. The intention behind the partnership was to facilitate the implementation of a variety of projects that would help to breathe new life into the community while simultaneously enhancing student learning. The WCU-Canton partnership achieved some measure of success, as evidenced by the projects completed and the learning outcomes realized. Through practical approaches and instrumental action, students addressed issues that benefited the community in small, immediate ways. The extent to which the partnership was instrumental in sustaining social and economic renewal through community capacity building is yet to be determined.

For future initiatives of this kind, we recommend that measures of success be defined clearly and expectations discussed thoroughly by all concerned. It is important, from the outset, that stakeholder roles and responsibilities be clarified, community-wide support be mobilized, and participants communicate regularly with one another. It is important, too, that projects be given visibility and the accomplishments of the partnership be reported frequently on the campus and in the community. All of these factors contribute to the effectiveness of a partnership.

In the final analysis, an effective partnership is fundamentally one that is greater than the sum of its parts. It is characterized by synergy among stakeholders, who work collectively to achieve objectives to which they are all committed. In post-disaster situations, higher education institutions can make knowledge socially responsive and
demonstrate good institutional citizenship by initiating partnerships that ultimately help to build community capacity and capabilities.

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References


Abstract

The profiles of American communities are among the most dynamic in recent history. This qualitative study examines collaboration between an urban community and The University of Utah. The Communities Together Advocacy Project illustrates parents’ perspectives on the effectiveness of an advocacy training program and their subsequent leadership roles within a community. Findings speak to parent advocates as critical stakeholders in community-university partnerships.

Theoretical Framework

Comprehensive community-based family support programs in both rural and urban areas support healthy family functioning and allow for greater family participation in larger educational systems (Bellah, Madson, Sullivan, Swindler, & Tipton, 1985). Examples of family support programs are found in social, school-based, religious, and community-based programs (Bellah, et al., 1985; Dryfoos, 2002, 2003; Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002; Friedman, 2007; Kagan & Weissbourd, 1994; Kronick, 2005). Many school districts keep school buildings open for extended hours and have co-located and integrated education, health, job-training, and recreation services to recreate school settings as community centers. These opportunities expand our definitions of education and broaden opportunities for dialogue across multiple stakeholders (Ames & Farrell, 2005; Maurrassee, 2001; Schor & Gorksi, 1995).
The traditional characteristics of CBR include somewhat nontraditional researchers and participants in their examinations of communities (Israel, Krieger, Vlahov, Ciske, Foley, Fortin, Guzman, Lichtenstein, McGranaghan, Palermo, & Tang, 2006). That is, CBR community stakeholders work jointly with traditional researchers to identify common issues worthy of investigation, with the goal of reaching greater social justice and institutional reform.

Our study embraces the tenets of building reciprocal relationships between researchers and community members and is focused on multiple perspectives that reflect the historical and cultural experiences of families and the “funds of knowledge” within communities (Mitchell & Bryan 2007; Rishel, 2008; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). The experiences and skills that families bring to communities are validated by formalizing the knowledge-sharing role of residents in their neighborhoods and schools. The community-based support of CTAP provided avenues for families to engage in ongoing resident participation, relationship building, and community-driven action.

CTAP

In 2001, CTAP emerged when the University rallied its faculty to work in partnership with local schools, community agencies, and area residents to identify and illuminate pathways to higher education for traditionally underrepresented students. CTAP reflects three consecutive years of implementation where each year represents a phase in the evolution of reciprocity between a community and an institution of higher education. In its early years, CTAP brought together university faculty, representatives from community organizations, and parents through a series of workshops. These information exchanges provided platforms designed to empower parents concerning their students’ education and schooling experiences. The goal of the workshop series was one dimension of a larger CTAP specifically designed to open dialogue between families and the community. CTAP workshops provided opportunities for family stakeholders to examine the tools necessary for navigating public education, with the ultimate goal of sharing perspectives with members of their respective communities (i.e., families, local, university).

During the first year, 2005–2006, two workshop series provided 32 community members with education-related topics for parents and families delivered first in Spanish for 14 participants with a second session in English for 18. The underlying principles of CTAP during the first year was to identify structural mechanisms, including information on job opportunities, platforms for discussions, and venues for community support. These information co-ops allowed mutually beneficial information exchanges that have been maintained over time between the University and the community. That is, in addition to information shared with families on the mechanics of accessing higher education, families’ insights broadened project facilitators’ understandings of families and the knowledge they bring to education-related discussion. Family participants made known their insights, assets, and roles when navigating educational systems and accessing pathways to higher education.

During the second year, 2006–2007, workshop graduates worked within their home communities, where they shared and gathered information from their constituents through family forums. The workshops and subsequent family forum of CTAP bridged structured workshop formats to a grassroots focus on family knowledge and goal setting. For example, events included school tours where parents shared their knowledge of the school experience for their children with others. These insights were particularly useful for immigrant families who had many questions regarding the safety of U.S. schools. The formalized formats of these workshops provided opportunities for CTAP participants to be involved in what Schor and Gorski (1995) describe as shared education services and cultural experiences where community members served as ambassadors and experts within their communities.

During year 2, CTAP formalized access points to higher education in ways that extended the more typical dissemination of information on bureaucratic paper work and the necessary technicalities for completing applications and related forms. While the technical/procedural dimensions of access to higher education are critical, CTAP workshops also identified structures and institutional mechanisms that are self-sustaining. Specific outcomes included providing family partners with long-term, viable roles within school communities as advocates, liaisons, and educators.

During the third year, parents shared their insights about public education across multiple venues (e.g., community events and in their roles as school-based liaisons to other parents). They voiced their concerns about school-related issues...
and learned avenues for problem solving and information sharing as advocates within their family and neighborhood communities. CTAP formalized systematic linkages between higher education and public schools in addition to identifying and sharing general information on pathways to higher education for traditionally underrepresented groups. Our third year discussion provided in-depth details on the evolution from information sharing to information creation. That is, as parents became more involved as participants, they adopted roles where their insights and knowledge from years 1 and 2 influenced their views of themselves as participants in schools and education-related experiences. A discussion of focal participants and their experiences later in this paper illustrates the perspectives and roles of parent participants over time.

Year 3 reflected the process of what Brown (2007) described as a commitment to communication and respect where multiple iterations of program development and implementation are informed by the knowledge and expertise of the local setting. In keeping with the mutually reciprocal goals of CBR, CTAP progressed beyond the technical elements of project implementation (e.g., where to meet, how much food to order) to collaboration where stakeholders became active participants in project development, (e.g., meeting with other members of the community, long-term goal setting, and community guided participation). Year 3 also included information sharing platforms from which parent advocates contributed their knowledge and expertise within the wider educational community. Changes from year 3 to the present illustrates developments in the degree to which community members are owners in the process of goal setting, project execution, and project evaluation as part of the planning for next steps.

Methods and Data Analysis

During CTAP’s first two years, data were collected from parents and workshop facilitators through surveys, meeting narratives, interviews, and a focus group. The first data set included surveys where 13 parents evaluated the quality of the workshops, provided suggestions for future sessions, and identified plans for incorporating workshop information into participants’ daily lives and communities. Additional data were gathered during year 2 through three parent interviews and a focus group with workshop facilitators.

To analyze the qualitative data, the research team examined focus group transcripts, meeting transcripts, and interviews. Independently, team members read interview transcripts, survey data, and a focus group summary. Through a process of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), a matrix was constructed to facilitate data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Initial categories for coding identified dominant themes using a form of triangulation (Denzin, 1989).

The stories of three parent advocates (pseudonyms) appear as short case studies (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1994) and showcase their perceptions of CTAP. Bonita, a Mexican immigrant and mother of four, runs an in-home day care. Gloria, a Caucasian mother of four, attends an applied technology program, and Rosa, a mother of four is a Mexican immigrant without a college education but wants her children to go to college. Case study participants were selected due to their willingness to: 1) participate in CTAP workshops; 2) complete interviews; and 3) serve as family forum advocates during monthly 2006–2007 meetings where they shared their expertise with others.

Findings

Workshop formats and recruiting

In year 1, the CTAP workshop series was designed to build community dialogue about education access where all members’ knowledge and contributions were valued. Workshops covered such topics as community schools, advocacy for children, building relationships between families and schools, accessing school services, healthy habits, and information on resources for children receiving special education services. Additional sessions were geared toward the developmental needs of children from birth through adulthood and general information on higher education. These information sharing sessions provided members of the community with workshops that highlighted parental rights within school communities and offered information to share with others—indicating a larger ripple effect.

The first workshop format included a two-day training session for Spanish speakers delivered by members of the Salt Lake City School District, the Salt Lake community, and The University of Utah. Funds through a HUD grant and a 21st Century Learning Grant provided participants with transportation to the two fall sessions, child care, meals, and stipends for participation. The spring training was specifically geared toward English speakers and included the same services.

Under the guidance of a community advocate
working collaboratively with the program director, participants from the community were recruited as members of an informal extant group who met regularly to discuss issues related to education and services for families and communities. The fall 2005 training, delivered in Spanish, served 14 participants with the spring session serving 18 community members.

**Participant Feedback**

During the spring 2006 workshops, 18 participants took part in two half-day workshops delivered in English. The spring workshop content mirrored the fall presentation. Participants shared extremely positive feedback including their reactions to sessions that focused on how to interact with their children, suggestions for effectively communicating with their children, and ideas on how to engage in activities other than watching television. Participants commented positively on the workshop presentations on strategies for communication with teachers and ideas on how to become more involved in their children’s schools.

Workshop presentations on strategies for self-care and self-improvement practices within their own education or career goals were also highlighted positively. Participants also cited their newfound knowledge regarding their rights as parents in U.S. schools as particularly useful. Parents cited the benefits of learning ways to communicate with their children about school, strategies for academic success, tools for communication with teachers, suggestions for greater involvement in schools, and plans for meeting long-term career goals.

**Facilitators’ Perspectives**

Focus group facilitators cited the value of providing families with opportunities to share their knowledge on how to promote their children’s school success. Echoing a parent’s feedback on navigating educational systems (including college) a facilitator reported:

> If families don’t know anyone who has ever been to college, then the families may need connections with those individuals who have the ability to make additional contacts. These workshops provide these levels of direct instruction and information sharing.

Facilitators suggested future workshop topics on the social, behavioral, and developmental needs of adolescents, and educational pathways within American schools.

During year 2, efforts were taken to examine the perspectives of parents who had taken part in the orientation workshops. In-depth interviews were conducted with three workshop participants by a project evaluator. Translations were provided by a CTAP project director for Spanish speaking participants. The participants were contacted initially by project director Wanda Alison, who arranged for home visits. Project evaluator Becky Barlow and community liaison Paula Walker completed home visits with Bonita, Gloria, and Rosa.

**Focal Parents**

Bonita, Rosa, and Gloria were three parents who participated in the CTAP workshop series. Their stories are shared as focal participants because they help illuminate the meaning of our findings.

**Bonita**

Bonita is in her mid-30s and is married with four children. Bonita and her family are immigrants from Mexico, and reported limitations in her English skills. Bonita runs a day-care from her home that she and her husband own. Her two oldest daughters are students at a curriculum and assessment lab in the Salt Lake City School District. Her younger daughter has been diagnosed with learning disabilities and the family sought the help of CTAP to identify the educational services necessary for her daughter. Bonita does not have a college education.

Alison and Barlow conducted the initial interview. Alison had a long-standing relationship with Bonita through related community work and brokered the interview as a conduit for Barlow and Bonita.

Bonita took a break from her in-home childcare to talk with Alison and Barlow. Barlow described Bonita’s home as a large, nicely furnished home on the west side of Salt Lake City. The visit took place in Bonita’s living room, while the kids watched television in the family room. Bonita was glad to see Alison and spoke with her at length in Spanish with questions and concerns regarding the needs of her younger daughter, who was recently diagnosed with learning disabilities. Barlow reported, “It was obvious that Bonita trusted Alison and sought her help as an advocate for her.”

The interview was conducted in Spanish. Alison translated the interview questions into Spanish, and listened to Bonita answer in Spanish. Alison then translated Bonita’s answers to Barlow,
who took notes and recorded the interview.

Gloria Jones

Gloria is a Caucasian woman in her mid-30s. She is married and has four children. She does not have a college education, but has begun attending an applied technology institute in her community as a result of information gained through CTAP workshops. Upon their arrival for the interview, Gloria and her young son greeted Barlow and Walker for the interview. Gloria’s home, described by Barlow as a small but comfortable home, was the location for the interview. Throughout the conversation Gloria was friendly and confident. Gloria’s familiarity with Walker and CTAP was obvious as the two exchanged general updates on family and community topics. The interview began quickly and Gloria provided answers that were short and concise.

Gloria expressed concerns about some issues at her children’s neighborhood elementary school and later transferred them to a charter school in a district 20 miles north of Salt Lake City. Gloria worked closely with staff to learn more about her rights as a parent and attended additional CTAP meetings to gain as much information as possible about educational options for her children. Since her first year in CTAP Gloria has secured a job in the Salt Lake School District.

Rosa Morales

Rosa is in her mid-30s and is relatively fluent in her conversational English. She is married and has four children, ages four through seventeen. She and her family are immigrants from Mexico. Rosa is a stay-at-home mom and she and her husband own their home. Rosa does not have a college education, but spoke highly of the value of education and reported that it is very important for her children to go to college.

Upon their arrival, Rosa welcomed Walker and Barlow to her large home, complete with a trampoline in the front yard. Rosa knew Walker well and was comfortable with her presence and questions. Rosa’s 3-year-old daughter stayed close to her mom, with her older children in other parts of the house during the interview. The interview took place in the family living room, with a big-screen TV on a Spanish language station. As Barlow described the purpose of the visit and presented the consent forms and description of our project, Rosa became nervous and was hesitant about doing the interview. Barlow showed Rosa the interview questions. Rosa called her oldest son, who was 17, to translate for her. She decided she felt confident in doing the interview, which began somewhat slowly. As she began talking, Rosa became more comfortable, and talkative. The interview lasted approximately 25 minutes.

Parents’ Perspectives

Interview data from workshop participants reflect powerfully the impact of their experiences. Bonita commented:

Before I participated in the project I dropped off the girls at the curb in the car. Now I walk the girls into the school, pick up each of them in their class, and say “Hi” to their teachers. Before, I was afraid to talk to teachers. Now I ask the teacher for a book so we can go home and read it together.

Bonita noted that during past summers she would take her girls home to visit family. She told her husband that now she wants to remain home [Salt Lake] for part of the summer to enroll the girls in activities and classes. She noted, “Now that I’m aware of this information and the opportunity, I feel compelled to do it [summer school activities] even more.”

When asked if participation in the workshop series helped parents become more involved in their child’s school as advocates, Gloria commented:

Oh, definitely; it empowered me to know that if I was not happy with something going on, there were options that I had and could make changes. I took my children out of school and put them at a different school because I knew it was something that I could do…. It opened my eyes to what was actually going on in the school, the things that I had felt were going on were not OK and that I was not crazy—that you know, this is not right but because nothing’s being done in the school—that doesn’t mean they were right.

Gloria’s comments reflect a level of validation in her knowledge about what needs to be in place for her children’s education and her role in providing those insights.

For Rosa, participation in the workshop series provided a specific, detailed focus for discussions with her son on information about attending higher education. Rosa commented when asked about whether and how the workshops impacted
involvement in her children’s education:

Yeah, a lot. More communication with my kids. And they like it, and I like it. I have four children—the program teaches me more and helps me a lot. And now when they complain about school, I relate. Before they didn’t tell me stuff, now more and more I talk to them about everything, about everything. I can be open like that with my son and I like it a lot. The university program helped a lot, like I can do it too, my son, like you. It’s not that we didn’t cover things before, but now he can come and talk to me about something too. I like that better… Before I was scared talking about school and the way my son would do it or say it, and now I’m not scared about anything. I like that better. It’s great.

While Bonita reported that the workshop series did not have a direct benefit for her, the impact on her family was significant. She reported that attendance at the workshop opened her eyes to what’s around her as a parent and her contributions to the educational process for her children. She said that she wants more information; she wants to look into information that will help her children.

As a result of her CTAP experiences she is more attentive to her children’s education now. And as a parent, she needs to educate herself and knows the power of her role in impacting her children’s education through her communication with the school. Bonita reported that her training needs to be ongoing and she is looking for more education for herself.

For Rosa, the workshops provided a vehicle for discussion about her son’s future. She noted:

I’ve always asked my kids what are they going to be doing later; they’re going to be living and working at what, working at McDonald’s? “If you want to do something good,” I said [to my son], “you better go back to school and do something that will help you, so you need to be doing something to help with your work.” And he said OK. From now on, I’m going to be talking about that a lot. I talk to him about what he needs to be thinking about…what he does and what he wants to do. I have said to him, “You need to know what you want because that is good for you.”

When asked if there were specific topics that would be helpful for families, Rosa commented:

I want my kids to go to college if they can…more [information] about how to get through high school and get into college. …A lot of Mexican families don’t know how to get that information. A lot of boys are already working…so I think it’s good to have someone from the university or something to talk about going to college—something for you, something of value, something for people to be more intelligent about school. Now I see more Mexicans…coming here and lots with teenagers. They move here because it’s [supposed] to be better, but sometimes it’s the same. … I understand a lot of people going through school and they need to see that I can do it and my family will get me the money … see people talking about going to school. Like you go to high school and you see kids talking about going to college and my family has no money, but I do it. And kids can go home and tell their families so their families know about that.

For the focal participants in this study, CTAP provided the technical pathways for experiences that opened doors to discussions in education that they had not formally considered in the past. It’s important to note the word “formal.” These parents have always valued education. They’ve always considered the importance of education and employment options for their children. The workshop and continued dialogue about education-related issues provided the how-to platforms for families and opened their eyes to issues related to American public schools in the Salt Lake City School District. The forum of the workshop legitimized the goals of parents for their children and gave a level of specificity that allowed for continued discussion with their children, other parents, and school personnel (e.g., teachers and administrators). The technical information shared in the workshops provided a springboard for more in-depth discussions on education-related issues.

Bonita noted that her experiences were validated by “opening my eyes to what’s around as a parent.” She said that she wants more information. She wants to look into information that will help her
children. She is more attentive to her children’s education and knows she must also “educate myself.”

In the two years following her initial work with CTAP, Bonita has been employed by The University of Utah as a CTAP parent-partnership liaison, where she spends part of her time at target schools linking parents to university-school information programs focused on navigating school systems and initial access to higher education. Recently, she played an instrumental role in connecting parents from two local high schools and a junior high, including information events held at the University where Bonita served as a family liaison connecting Spanish speaking parents as event participants.

Rosa no longer serves a role in CTAP; however, she volunteers in one of her children’s classrooms as a teacher’s aide. Her school is recognized as a CTAP site with 12 other actively engaged parents. In her role, Rosa facilitated a parent group and now leads Spanish speaking parents who connect with the wider family community through several school-based events. These parents attended university information events on access to higher education and lead the process for applying for college and financial aid within the community.

Lessons Learned

Workshop Formats

While data from our pilot group are promising and speak to the evolving status of collaborative efforts, initial findings are not without limitations. Parents suggested a friendlier workshop format including taking away physical barriers, such as tables, to encourage a format where participants talk about issues and needs. Parents were open and willing to learn; however, they reported facilitators need to be aware of individual differences between families based on issues such as immigration and documentation status. For the undocumented parents, discussions often related to their own status, in addition to their children’s needs. Facilitators suggested counselors or advisors who could provide more explicit information with time to discuss issues regarding the work and education needs of many immigrant families.

When asked to evaluate the utility of various workshops, a facilitator reported, “Parents loved the meeting at our middle school… . They were in awe.” Prior to the school visit, parents were intimidated by the building and were pleased to learn that the glass in the building was shatter proof. Parents of elementary students reported that the middle school tour defined next steps for their children. A discussion on the school’s middle school teaming approach gave parents a feeling of support and helped them understand campus resources and safety. A workshop facilitator referenced the significance of formalized opportunities for parents to share knowledge on educational issues as active participants from across communities.

Workshop Impact

The impact of CTAP is critical for the larger university-community project facilitators. When Gloria was asked if her experiences would have any impact beyond her participation in the workshops, because she now works in the Salt Lake School District, she said:

I tell everybody about it… . I think it’s really good. The more people that take it [the workshop], the better our schools will be. It’s not a cultural thing, it’s not a lazy thing, it’s just a parent things. Where sometimes in the schools you’ve got to do what you can do—there’s not much more you can do beyond that. Even though you work during the day, you work during the night, there are still things you can do. Let the parents not feel guilty about being the supermom that’s in the class. I think it’s great—I think everybody should take it.

For Gloria, CTAP participation provided both information on education-related issues and served as a mechanism for communication within her community where her contributions were valued.

Next Steps

A feature of truly collaborative efforts that link universities and communities is through partnerships that recognize the role of multiple stakeholders. CBR, through CTAP, is designed to provide mutual benefits to stakeholders, flexible collaboration, and communication that is responsive to communities (Brown, 2007). Definitions of mutual benefit may vary and are clearly open to interpretation. It is hoped that exposure to information is adequate in providing substantive opportunities for participants in various projects. While ideally useful, exposure to information on its own may not prove significant if the information and opportunities shared do not result in sustainable and institutionalized outcomes for participants. The outcomes of the CTAP training for Bonita, Gloria, and Rosa moved
beyond the valuable, though sometimes limited, exposure to information sharing. Clearly there are merits to "learning the ropes" of any organization; schools and educational institutions are no different. However, beyond sometimes narrow emphases on the how-tos of educational systems, learning about schools must also capitalize on how those systems provide, inform, and educate.

Work completed during years 1 and 2 established the groundwork for reciprocal collaboration. Specifically, as a result of the reciprocal partnership between The University of Utah and the Salt Lake School District and the community-based workshops, Gloria and Rosa are currently employed as family advocates within an elementary and middle school. In their positions, both women provide other parents with specific information about the school site and are instrumental in their efforts to link school, home, and community. In Rosa’s position with the Salt Lake School District, she conducts much of her school-family liaison work from her home, calling other parents to let them know about school community council meetings, parent-teacher conferences, and other school functions. As a result of the training, Rosa fields specific questions from community members about the purpose of school-related topics such as meetings, district policies, and procedures, defining who should attend various meetings, and identifying why it is important to be an active participant in their children’s education. Gloria’s position has similar job dimensions but she is active on-site and at a local community center, where many families participate in pre-school and after-school activities. Gloria’s employed position gives her the ability to introduce parents to a host of community resources and supports.

Clearly, the newfound roles of our focal participants reflect their varied and developing influence within their communities. Since its inception, CTAP has more closely aligned with CBR to reflect community driven action where reciprocal learning and teaching take place by and for community members.

**Year 3**

Early parent involvement in the development of the CTAP workshops opened dialogue between families and the school community. Years 1 and 2 workshops provided opportunities for stakeholders to examine the tools necessary for navigating public education. Year 3, and the beginning of year 4, more closely reflect the tenets of CBR where community ownership and project direction are in place through site-based models, where stakeholders inform the direction of projects as members. CTAP’s site-based model is currently active at six schools: two elementary, two middle, and two high school locations. While each partnership site reflects the unique strengths and needs of that community, CTAP is consistently utilized as a mechanism for parent voices where their experiences influence education positively.

CTAP’s site-based models facilitate venues that bring together parents and families to engage in issues that affect youth, while simultaneously promoting a more equitable and reciprocal exchange of knowledge and information. For example, a dual immersion language project at Alan Elementary School had a long-standing history of divisions between the Latina/o and Caucasian parent communities. Since a CTAP presence was established, a new dialogue among parents emerged for all parents, with a conscious recognition of ethnicity and race. Through the CTAP forum, common goal-setting for educational access and success developed. The conversations between parents and university partners provided opportunities to discuss the process for creating a college-bound culture for children beginning in kindergarten. The parent community identified shared values and used formalized dialogues to reach across their historical divisions. Initial CTAP contacts at Alan were bridged by Rosa Morales. Currently, an additional 12 parents are involved in formal roles at the school site and through CTAP.

**The Role of University Research**

The move to site-based CTAP partnerships has enriched community-generated research opportunities for University of Utah faculty. These CBR partnerships support not only parents but youth, particularly at the high school level. Specifically, expanded community involvement in CTAP was most evident at CTAP high school sites that included both youth and adults. In coordination with parents and University faculty, a youth core conducted interviews and focus groups to identify issues deemed important to young people within the school context. Project data themes reflected discrimination faced by youth at their school sites and were showcased in youth generated videos shared with CTAP stakeholders including parents, teachers, school administrators, and university partners. A formal showcase of the youth-initiated investigations allowed youth and parents to share discussions on how to address
issues in their community.

A significant outcome of the family community linkages is the Partners in the Park Partnership (PIP). The PIP program began in 2003 as an opportunity to create spaces for families to gain a greater awareness and related pursuits in accessing higher education. PIP provided unique spaces where families, youth, and partners, are exposed to higher education as a viable option for the future. Funds from a community partner provided 10 CTAP parents with paid support to act as family-community liaisons at PIP events. They shared their insights on the concept of collaborative partnerships as mechanisms for making higher education a reality.

CTAP's Future

Each year the CTAP community grows, benefiting from the synergy of additional partners and program graduates. Four CTAP graduates are positioned in formal school-community advocate roles within the Salt Lake School District and act as community-based parent liaisons, responsible for maintaining communication networks with parents in their neighborhoods. By attending school meetings, notifying families of school events, and encouraging other parents to become involved in school activities, advocates integrated broader parent participation and diverse perspectives into the school environment.

As CTAP has grown and produced positive results as indicated through data gathered from participants and project facilitators, CTAP-affiliated activities have gained considerable interest from the local school district. That is, area principals and teachers are requesting more specialized workshops targeted to the needs of each school level and community. Similarly, parents of middle school students are requesting more specific information on issues related to adolescent development and youth culture.

The development of programs that expand into the community allow a greater number of stakeholders to come together to exchange knowledge, creating a broader scope of understanding for all partners. The expansion of CTAP also facilitates a greater number of faculty members from the University of Utah who bring research into practice in ways that assist schools and families and inform their work on community/university partnerships.

As site-based CTAP partnerships emerge, partners reflect the specific issues and strengths of each school community and the neighborhoods where they reside. According to the January 2008 issue of the CTAP Newsletter, recent site-based models hope to bring together all stakeholders in ways that will engage the specific issues affecting their home communities.

Significance

Increasingly diverse communities that reach across traditional boundaries are on the rise in major urban communities in the United States (Kane & Orsini, 2005; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). In response, Pre-K-16 stakeholders must forge partnerships and develop programs that value and reflect these changes.

After four consecutive years of collaboration by a university, a school district, and community, CTAP has become a campus-community partnership that connects families, schools, and resources to validate family support of children’s educational success. A core group of CTAP parent advocates have accepted leadership roles where they continue to connect the needs of families in their neighborhoods to the wider educational community.

Overall, parent participants positively evaluated methods that build communication between children and teachers and strategies for self-care and parental rights. Early data indicate the ripple effect of information sharing between parents who teach workshop content with others (e.g., parents, neighbors, and family members).

CTAP was initially designed as a mechanism for sharing information on education-related issues including suggestions for navigating Pre-K-12 settings and accessing higher education. The workshop series also prepared parents to be conduits on education-related issues within their communities. In addition to general information sharing, all stakeholders learned of families' needs with specific emphases on immigration, documentation, and venues for greater voice and community empowerment.

CTAP presents a unique opportunity for establishing reciprocal relationships between parents and others committed to equitable Pre-K-16 education. Our study identified a framework for sharing experiences across stakeholders with a critical community-driven focus for continued dialogue. In year 2 our project extended collaborative opportunities to include monthly family forums delivered by CTAP participants and a bilingual workshop series. Efforts during year 3 and the beginning of year 4 included paid opportunities for CTAP parents to share their knowledge with members of the wider
educational community. Further analysis will examine the effects of these project components.

Opportunities that unite stakeholders have the potential to serve as catalysts for family-community connectedness, where the well-being of all members is enhanced (Kemmis, 1995). Projects such as CTAP expand our definitions of teachers, redefine the lines of expertise, and build educational pathways in new ways.

About the Authors

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Meaningful Relationships: Cruxes of University-Community Partnerships for Sustainable and Happy Engagement

Trae Stewart and Megan Alrutz

Abstract

The authors draw on organizational theory’s use of the metaphor as a way of understanding and explaining sustainable university/community-engaged partnerships. Working from the premise that transformative and reciprocal relationships prove essential to pedagogies of engagement, specifically service-learning, this essay argues that pursuing and maintaining meaningful partnerships between universities and communities or organizations in many ways parallels our efforts to sustain healthy romantic relationships. Through a description and analysis of 10 cruxes for sustaining long-term, healthy relationships, the authors offer a model for achieving intentional, ongoing, and systemic campus-community partnerships.

Metaphor as Investigatory Medium

The use of metaphor has a rich history in organizational theory; comparing organizations to machines, organisms, the human body, a jungle, and architecture, among other things, proves commonplace (Cornelissen et al., 2005). In fact, Morgan (2006) argues, “Metaphor is central to the way we read, understand, and shape organizational life” (p. 65). Building on this assertion, it comes as no surprise that “most modern organization theorists have looked to nature to understand organizations and organizational life” (Morgan, 2006, p. 65). Organizations are complex systems, and metaphors allow us to explore organizations in creative ways (Oswick et al., 2002). Each metaphor itself is unique and reflects different worldviews of an organization. They provide insight into the epistemological and ontological foundations from which the creator is approaching the issues (Amernic et al., 2007; Oberlechner & Mayer-Schoenberger, 2002). A metaphor that is commonplace can often be easily identified with, and thus put into practice, by the members of the organization.

In this essay, we engage a primary metaphor to generate accessible and thought-provoking ways of looking at university-community partnerships. In an effort to frame the complexity and chaos that often characterizes university-community partnerships in a novel and user-friendly fashion, we offer the metaphor of personal relationships. This metaphor parallels institutions, namely colleges and universities, and organizations and communities such as schools, neighborhood non-profit centers, and businesses, to individuals seeking to build, or working to maintain, a romantic partnership. We argue that organizations and democratic communities, although composed of various individuals with diverse cultures and ideologies, are often collectively represented by a “voice of one”—one mission, one philosophy, one leader. Even as we offer this metaphor, we do not assume that deviations from this “one” do not exist. Grahn (2008) suggests that no single metaphor can capture an entity’s complete nature/essence: “Different metaphors provide different insights in the target domain, and can constitute and capture the nature of organizational life in different ways, each generating powerful, distinctive but essentially partial kinds of insight” (p. 2-3). And, although we offer the relationship metaphor as widely applicable in its manifestation, culture and experience dictate how each of us sees and approaches relationships, and thus ultimately makes meaning from them and/or the metaphor we present. Bringle and Hatcher (2002) suggest, “there is merit in applying the analogy because […] awareness of nuances can be made more salient, and recommendations for improved campus-community partnership can be offered” (p. 504). Moreover, Bringle and Hatcher (2002) draw on Torres (2000) and Arriago (2001) to suggest that campus-community partnerships operate as a web of interpersonal relationships that offer “a framework for understanding the give and take, the ups and downs, the fits and starts in a service-learning partnership that are aspects of the growth of any relationship” (p. 513).

As Grisham (2006) maintains that organizational metaphors are culturally bound, we recognize that the following framework may not prove relevant in every context. Nevertheless, we offer our thoughts and experiences in order to catalyze a conversation around building and sustaining university-community partnerships specific to pedagogies of engagement, or models...
of teaching and learning that invite students to develop meaningful relationships with their community. To do so, we present a brief review of research on partnerships in community engagement, including best practices and several frameworks for community-engaged partnerships. We transition from these frameworks to propose a new, simpler framework built on the metaphor of dating and personal relationships. Through the lens of 10 cruxes, we demonstrate, metaphorically, how universities and community organizations, because their partnership is mediated through people, can be conceptualized as two individuals working to build and sustain a meaningful relationship.

**Partnerships in Service-Learning and Community Engagement**

It seems reasonable that if universities want their graduates to acquire ideals and ethics associated with healthy democracies (e.g., honesty, tolerance, generosity, teamwork, consensus, social responsibility), then they must provide students with opportunities to practice and ultimately acquire those dispositions and skills. Pedagogically, this requires instructors to adjust their own professional conduct and transform curricula accordingly (Astin, 1999).

Collaboration, both within and outside of university campus boundaries, is not always common practice, however. Academics often cocoon themselves within their disciplinary texts, jargon, and methods. Historically, the ghettoization of disciplines coincided with a larger separation of the university from the communities in which they are located. Universities frequently frame their outreach into the community as providing a service or charity to those less fortunate, a sort of gift (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; London, 2000). Similarly, community members often see their local university as distinct from the rest of the community (Jacoby, 2003). Ramaley (2000a) explains, “[O]ften partnerships are fragmented by competing interests within the community or on campus or both” (p. 3).

A common result from this mindset is that universities and communities approach their relationships with one another simply as transactions, or a series of one-way transfers of goods. Transactions, by nature, are temporary, instrumental tasks. Transactional relationships (Enos & Morton, 2003) (see Table 1) originate from an understanding that each partner has something that the other needs, and therefore each party collaborates with the other to exchange these resources within existing structures, work, and personnel. Although devoid of commitment, a successful transactional relationship will satisfy some of the needs of all parties. Within a university-community partnership, this often means that each party simply uses the other to meet an immediate need, and then breaks off the relationship when their needs are exhausted. Although short-term partnerships can address acute needs (Bringle & Hatcher 2002, p. 511), from the community’s perspective, their needs often remain.

In contrast, engaged institutions partner with communities in order to collectively meet both parties’ needs, hopes, and desires. Engaged universities embrace communities as equal partners who work with, not for, universities in a mutual exchange to discover new knowledge and promote and apply learning (Karasik, 1993). This collaborative paradigm redefines universities from curators of knowledge to dialectic partners who must reconsider how they operationalize teaching for the benefit of all (Torres, 2000)—“a successful collaborative process [that] enables a group of people and organizations to combine the complementary knowledge, skills and resources so they can accomplish more together than they can on their own” (Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies and Health, 2002, p. 2).

One pedagogy of engagement that has received increased attention over the past decade is service-learning. Service-learning asks students to address a genuine community need through volunteer service that is connected explicitly to the academic curriculum of their academic course through ongoing, structured reflections designed for maximizing a deep understanding of course content, addressing genuine community needs with impact, and developing learners’ sense of civic responsibility.

To illustrate, we consider the disaster from Hurricane Katrina to the Gulf Coast of the United States in 2005. During the coinciding academic semester, a professor is teaching an environmental public policy course. She sees an opportunity for her students to provide assistance to hurricane victims while being able to contextualize how policy and decisions that they are learning about in class affect citizens directly. The class travels to New Orleans. Looking toward rebuilding and recognizing the need for community voices in decision-making, the students conduct a needs analysis by interviewing residents and elected officials of the hurricane-ravaged city about the

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most pressing needs after the hurricane. Based on these discussions, they identify that the debris and unsafe structures should be cleared to lessen the possibility for accidents/injuries, stop the growth of mold, and allow for rebuilding more quickly. They identify the areas most in need and hold a community meeting to explain what they intend to do and how they would like to work with residents as partners. Several dozen residents agree to work with the service-learners.

While the university students serve, they learn the human side of environmental policy, something not readily taught through course readings alone. They hear stories of how the debris they are clearing used to reside in living rooms and children’s bedrooms. They hear residents’ frustrations around the lack of protection from such devastation and the lack of government response. Through individual and group reflection activities, assignments, and course lectures/readings, the students analyze why the hurricane caused such devastation, learn about disaster preparedness, and why the potential for devastation and the response to the problem by the government were not adequately addressed. They are challenged to reflect on their activities in terms of personal development, content learning, and their sense of civic responsibility, specifically in line with how they can help address community needs through service. In seeking to address potential controllable issues that added to the devastation, the students move beyond a temporary, transactional approach to addressing the problem.

As a culminating project, students prepare a written report and presentation and share the results and suggestions with the residents and elected officials in the form of policy memos. These memos include strengthening levees, better hurricane preparedness education in schools, and better plans to react to a natural disaster, including temporary housing structures and food provisions. Student service-learners are invited to testify before the Louisiana State Legislature about their findings and recommendations, and do so alongside the community residents and partners.

As illustrated in the above example, service-learning cannot solely manifest within the restricted space of a university classroom. Moreover, this pedagogy of engagement relies explicitly on partnerships, and a series of relationships, between

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Transactional</th>
<th>Transformative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basis of relationship</td>
<td>Exchange-based and utilitarian</td>
<td>Focus on ends beyond utilitarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End goal</td>
<td>Satisfaction with exchange</td>
<td>Mutual increase in aspirations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Satisfaction of immediate needs</td>
<td>Arouses needs to create larger meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles played by partners</td>
<td>Managers</td>
<td>Leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundaries</td>
<td>Accepts institutional goals</td>
<td>Examines institutional goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support of existing institutional goals</td>
<td>Works within systems to satisfy interests and partners</td>
<td>Transcends self-interests to create larger meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner identity</td>
<td>Maintains institutional identity</td>
<td>Changes group identity and larger definition of community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope of commitment</td>
<td>Limited time, resources, and personnel to specific exchanges</td>
<td>Engages whole institutions and potentially unlimited exchanges</td>
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</table>
universities and the communities or organizations affected by, and working to address, a particular problem or issue. In service-learning, the notion of a community or an organization is understood broadly. It can refer to micro-communities present on the university campus itself, such as a student organization or club, to local neighborhoods or schools surrounding the institution, to more encompassing conceptualizations on the national or global scale, such as the Red Cross. Typically, universities locate themselves as the hub of their partnerships with community groups (Benson, Harkavy, et al., 2000; Harkavy & Romer, 1999; Pickeral, 2003). Some, however, locate K-12 schools or other community groups in the center (Abt Associates & Brandeis University, 2003; Piñeros-Shields & Bailis. 2006). The fewest number seek an egalitarian partnership structure, so that no individual organization within the partnership is marginalized or given more power. Each of these models points to a need for understanding the dynamics and function of relationships within university campus-community partnerships.

No matter which kind of community or organization participates in a service-learning model with a university, healthy relationships are built on and maintained by shared understanding and reciprocity. This implies that the university decides with, rather than dictates to, its community partners what the learning outcomes should be, what service activities would best achieve those goals, and how to address the needs of the community partner simultaneously. Mattessich and Monsey (1992) further explain the process as requiring “a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship that includes a commitment to: a definition of mutual goals; a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; mutual authority and accountability for success; and sharing not only responsibilities but also of the rewards” (p. 7). In other words, the paradigm of universities as saviors of resource-, competence-, and knowledge-deficient communities noticeably shifts when a commitment to reciprocity underpins the partnership.

When truly executed, reciprocal partnerships can benefit all parties. Service-learning research has found that strong university-community partnerships can 1) strengthen social capital, 2) provide a means to accomplish a task that is difficult to address alone, 3) ensure service recipients’ voice, 4) enable sharing of resources, skills, funding, and knowledge, and 5) ground higher education institutions in community realities and interests (Roehlkepartain & Bailis, 2007).

A complementary approach to the egalitarian perspective of reciprocity is one founded on social justice and the disruption of traditional power structures. Under this conceptualization, service-learning and other pedagogies of engagement redefine experiential activities in the community, moving away from notions of charity (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). Service, after all, implies the provider has some type of power of which the recipient is deficient. In contrast to this exploitative lens, justice-based approaches to partnerships, however, envision reciprocity as “an expression of values, service to others, community development and empowerment, which determines the purpose, nature, and process of social educational exchange between learners students and the people they serve” (Stanton, 1990, p. 67).

Moving away from a foundation in transactions, partners in transformative relationships expect some kind of sustained commitment and change. One’s involvement in these relationships is predicated on a willingness to reflect on one’s own practices and approaches to issues. As the name implies, change is central to transformative relationships. However, there is no set timeline to achieve expected changes. The organic nature of transformative relationships often allows for unexpected insight, creativity, excitement, and/or transformation for all involved. Transformative partnerships ultimately have greater impacts because partners are able to combine their resources to address mutually defined problems in more dynamic and comprehensive ways. “When a collaborative process achieves a high level of synergy the partnership is able to think in new and better ways about how it can achieve its goals; carry out more comprehensive integrated intervention; and strengthen its relationship with the broader community,” according to the Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies and Health (2002, p. 2).

Approximating a Model

While the mission and/or goals of most universities include working with the local community, identifying a single model for successful and sustainable university-community partnerships is impossible. After all, every university, community, and organization is unique. Issues involving people, social policies, entrenched histories of inequalities, and funding constraints are complex and multilayered. Research suggests that there is no one-size-fits-all...
model (Piñeros-Shields & Bailis, 2007). Settling on a single, normative approach to creating and sustaining successful partnerships is bound to exclude some legitimate element(s). This, in turn, adds to, instead of solving, the problem.

Regardless, and specific to service-learning and other experiential education approaches, several sets of benchmarks and lessons addressing partnerships have been offered. Three of the most often cited examples are outlined in Table 2. While both unique and comparable pieces exist across these examples, each approach considers community-campus partnerships from a similar perspective—large multidimensional institutions, organizations, and communities, layered by bureaucracy and micro-cultures trying to work together. Although in reality this might be true, this perspective tends to overwhelm partnerships before the work has even begun. Concerns over probabilities, rather than an excitement over possibilities, can confound new connections.

As a result, our purpose is to provide an accessible schema on which readers and practitioners can prepare for entering partnerships. The following cruxes aim to encourage increased pre-flection and intentionality around healthy and sustainable campus-community partnerships in service-learning. In our conceptualization, the onus for building transformational partnerships between campuses and communities falls on individuals who represent larger institutions. Bringle and Hatcher (2002) remind us that self-awareness, communication, and self-disclosure become paramount for individuals when initiating and developing partnerships: “Evaluating and communicating information about the potential rewards and costs” (p. 507) before initiating the campus-community relationship supports the development of ultimately transformational partnerships and associated outcomes.

**University-Community Partnerships: 10 Cruxes for Sustainable (and Happy) Engagement**

The term crux has several definitions, many of which tap into the complexity of university-community partnerships and relationships at large. Understood as both a “foundation for belief” and a “perplexing difficulty,” cruxes remind us that there are key points in any relationship/partnership where we make choices about how we will participate and if/how we will move forward. This section outlines 10 cruxes, or pivotal points, in a relationship that ultimately present ideas, tensions, and questions worth considering in university-community partnerships, specifically within service-learning models.

**Crux #1: Putting Yourself on the Market**

*Personal Relationships.* We all have experiences that shape how and why we move through the world and interact with others. Experience tells us that being in a “good place” as a single or unattached person, usually makes it easier to enter into a healthy relationship. Clearly understanding who we are and what we want and need before venturing into a relationship can help us avoid drama and complications down the road. Preparations may include readying ourselves emotionally, physically, financially, and spiritually for what it means to share parts of our lives with someone else. This step may include opening ourselves up to potential opportunities and challenges that scare us and/or highlight our vulnerabilities.

**Implications for University-Community Partnerships.** A university that finds it difficult to identify and work on its internal challenges will struggle to be a good campus partner. Similarly, a community or organization, regardless of its work, will struggle if its motives and goals for seeking a partnership remain undetermined, constantly in flux, or self-serving. To overcome these barriers, organizations, like individuals, must identify and name the support mechanisms at their disposal. Pulling from Walshok (1999), Bringle & Hatcher (2002) suggest that “campuses, as well as community agencies, must develop infrastructure (e.g., centralized office, policies, procedures, staff) with the capacity to evaluate and respond to unanticipated opportunities for forming partnerships with differing levels of formality, varying projected time frames, and multiple purposes” (p. 506). This step should simultaneously include recognizing those internal and external obstacles that may present themselves when seeking, forming, or attempting to maintain a partnership. What is scary about this new partnership? What does the organization have at stake? What does the university stand to gain? How will pursuing a partnership fit within the mission of the university and the community partner? And, for individual faculty and scholars, how will this partnership support your research and teaching agenda while simultaneously addressing a genuine need in the community?

**Crux #2: Building on Existing Relationships**

*Personal Relationships.* Most relationships develop out of existing friendships and from personal connections. People we already know can
help to broaden our social arena, introduce us to someone who shares common interests, or present opportunities to take a relationship to the next level. Certainly, shifting the nature of an existing relationship can get complicated as expectations and commitments change. A strong foundation of open communication and honesty can help manage some of the difficulties inherent in changing relationship dynamics from friendships or casual dating to something with more long-term goals and implications.

**Implications for University-Community Partnerships.** Building on current relationships with community organizations can provide exciting opportunities for development and sustained effectiveness. In fact, research in service-learning notes that university-community partnerships that consistently report effective outcomes grew out of existing relationships and developed into work beyond individual projects (Abt Associates &

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage I: Designing the Partnership</th>
<th>Community-Campus Partnerships for Health (2001)</th>
<th>Ramaley’s (2000b) Lessons Learned from Existing Partnerships (p. 242)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>founded on a shared vision and clearly articulated values</td>
<td>• Partners have agreed upon mission, goals, and measurable outcomes for the partnership.</td>
<td>• Each partner has unique elements shaped by the history, capacity, cultures, missions, expectations, and challenges faced by each participating group or organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beneficial to partnering institutions</td>
<td>• The relationship between partners is characterized by mutual trust and respect, genuineness, and commitment.</td>
<td>• An ideal partnership matters to the academic strength and goals of the university and to the assets and interests of the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage II: Building Collaborative Relationships</td>
<td>• The partnership builds upon identified strengths and assets but also addresses areas that need improvement.</td>
<td>• There is no such thing as a universal community. It takes time to understand what elements make up a particular community and how people experience membership and community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>composed of interpersonal relationships based on trust and mutual respect</td>
<td>• The partnership balance of power among partners enables resources among partners to be shared.</td>
<td>• Unless the institution as a whole embraces the value and validity of engagement as legitimate scholarly work and provides both moral support and concrete resources to sustain it, engagement will remain individually defined and sporadic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>multidimensional: they involve the participation of multiple sectors that act in service of a complex problem</td>
<td>• There is clear, open, and accessible communication between partners, making it an ongoing priority to listen to each need, to develop a common language, and to validate or clarify terms.</td>
<td>• Important to take time to think about what the University can bring to the partnership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clearly organized and led with dynamism</td>
<td>• Roles, norms, and processes for the partnership, with input and agreement of all partners.</td>
<td>• The good collaboration will continue to evolve as a result of mutual learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage III: Sustaining Partnerships Over Time</td>
<td>• There is feedback to, among, and from all stakeholders in the partnership with the goal of continuously improving the partnership and outcomes.</td>
<td>• Some communities are being partnered to the point of exhaustion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>integrated into the mission and support systems of the partnering institutions</td>
<td>• Partners share the credit for the partnership’s accomplishments.</td>
<td>• The early rush of enthusiasm can be replaced by fatigue and burnout unless the collaboration begins early on to identify and recruit additional talent to the project for the collaboration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sustained by a partnering process for communication decision-making and the initiation of change</td>
<td>• Partnerships take time to develop and evolve over time.</td>
<td>• Like any other important effort, community partnerships must be accompanied by strong commitment to a “culture of evidence.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evaluated regularly with a focus on both methods and outcomes</td>
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**Table 2. Commonly Cited Campus-Community Benchmarks**

[Vol. 5, No. 1—JOURNAL OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SCHOLARSHIP—Page 49]
Brandeis University, 2003; Bailis, 2000; Piñeros-Shields & Bailis, 2007). Further, as an increasing number of tasks are spread across a diminishing number of colleagues, using the web of personal relationships that are available via our own or colleagues’ connections can enable opportunities for both efficiency and effectiveness. Like personal relationships, however, all parties will need to adjust if the nature of the relationship changes. Moreover, if and when a partnership develops from a colleague’s introduction, added pressures exist to make the partnership work, and the possibility for tension rises if the partnership ends. Clayton et al. (2010) confirm that service-learning and civic engagement relationships can progress or regress in quality throughout the life of a partnership.

**Crux #3: Making Quality Face Time**

*Personal Relationships.* Mixed opinions exist on the viability of long-distance and technologically supported relationships. What is usually shared by both sides of the debate is that ongoing, quality face time is necessary to maintain interest and emotional engagement in a relationship. Although texting, email, and talking on the phone serve as acceptable and often low-commitment communication efforts, relationships usually progress and deepen when live, human connections are available. Personal interactions not only allow for more intimate moments, but also for each partner to see how the other lives, and opportunities for how s/he might fit within that structure. Moreover, a willingness to be present within someone’s space/place shows that we are interested in who they are and what they care about.

**Implications for University-Community Partnerships.** Bringle and Hatcher (2002) offer three significant components for building meaningful relationships within campus-community partnerships: frequency of interaction, diversity of interaction, and strength of influence on the other party’s behavior, decisions, plans, and goals (p. 509). In addition, the importance of remaining present, both physically and emotionally, can contribute to developing closeness. Electronic communications can provide an expedient way to share information and set up meetings for partnering organizations and their staff. However, these methods of communication can never fully substitute for in-person interactions. Building partnerships requires that people spend time getting to know one another and each other’s organization; this kind of dialogue often happens impromptu, in between agenda items and more formally facilitated conversations. As in the professional world, there are times when academics and their community partners must make time for each other. Meeting prospective community partners on their own turf also can make for a more comfortable, open, and less formal first interaction, and allows the campus partner to gather important information about the context in which future work might take place. In addition to where one meets, it is important to also consider how often the meetings take place and the kinds of interactions you foster; quality does not trump quantity and vice versa.

**Crux #4: Naming What You Need and Want**

*Personal Relationships.* To date, no one can read minds. And while guessing games are entertaining at carnivals, individuals connected emotionally to a significant other are less entertained when such tasks present themselves in the relationship. Prioritizing time to “talk” can be difficult and anxiety-provoking in any relationship, but verbalizing what we need and naming what is at stake for us can help both partners get what they want and meet the needs of their partner at the same time. Without this vulnerability, and ability to articulate what you need to feel satisfied, connected, and/or appreciated, relationships remain on a surface level.

**Implications for University-Community Partnerships.** Universities, or those who represent them, have to be honest about where they are coming from, what they need, and what they can offer: “Hidden agendas and needs can sabotage progress” (Roehlkepartain & Bailis, 2007). In addition to discussing logistics and time lines, both parties need to name their bottom lines, even when it feels risky. Walshok (1999) suggests that these discussions address identity, purpose, procedures, and resources of each party. On which issues are each willing to compromise? What is non-negotiable, and what does each need help with? Take the guessing out of partnerships by making time to build trust and openly work through misunderstandings: “It is important to engage in active efforts for each partner to understand the needs, strengths, goals, limitations, expertise, and self-interests of the other partners, and then design efforts to reflect those things, including clear expectations” (Roehlkepartain & Bailis, 2007).

**Crux #5: Actions Speak Louder than Words**

*Personal Relationships.* Taking the time to build trust and talk openly is an important foundation
for any relationship. However, talk only goes so far if it is not backed up by concrete actions and recognizable gestures of love, appreciation, and support. Our actions within a relationship speak volumes about our values and, more specifically, our commitment to our partners. Giving hugs, organizing the kids’ schedules, making dinner, and putting the dirty plates in the dishwasher when it is usually the other partner’s task says more about commitment to a partnership than words alone can communicate.

**Implications for University-Community Partnerships.** Community partnerships require an appropriate balance between building trust and taking action: “[I]t is vital to move beyond thinking and planning in order to begin taking concrete actions that demonstrate the benefits of partnership” (Bailis, 2000 as cited in Roehlkepartain & Bailis, 2007). This dance is something that partners negotiate at every stage of a project—coming to the table prepared, but also demonstrating openness to shifting a course of action and adjusting the ways that we actively participate in any given partnership. These gestures of action may be as simple as weekly phone calls, keeping an internally circulated blog specific to the partnership, asking the community partners to co-teach or be a guest speaker at the university, or introducing the possibility for partnering again the following academic term. Exchange theory reveals that maintaining relationship satisfaction is directly tied to outcomes (i.e., rewards minus cost) that exceed partners’ minimal expectations (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Emerson, 1976). Seeing the results of a university-community partnership, even if the evidence remains formative, contributes to the trust and deepening of the relationship for both parties.

**Crux #6: Opposites Attract**

**Personal Relationships.** We seek partners and friends to complement us, not to mirror us. Differences offer exciting places to imagine ourselves anew; they can challenge our sense of identity, and grow our vision and potential. Even as differences in opinion and perspective become difficult or perplexing, consider how contrasting personalities and ideas can energize a relationship and contribute to exciting changes to how we see ourselves and how we engage in the world.

**Implications for University-Community Partnerships.** Just because the mission, activities, or values of a community partner do not fit precisely within the language of the university, or your own organization, does not mean that they won’t be an exciting partner. Rather, the partnership can focus on new goals that the parties create together and, more specifically, how each party may bring unique qualities that help achieve those goals through collaboration, cooperation, and a pooling of resources. Tavalin (2004) writes,

> It’s okay that not everyone is aboard with the same dream. … It helps to be headed in the same direction, though, with overlapping and intersecting goals. Finding those meeting points is what makes for successful collaborations (p. 21).

New ideas and vectors of activity keep our jobs interesting. And, investing in an adventure with a complementary partner may open new ways of looking at old issues, which may ultimately help to solve the issue that brought you together in the first place. As Ebata (1996) noted, universities and communities each have a lot to offer one another.

**Crux #7: Managing Baggage**

**Personal Relationships.** If you’re an adult, you have baggage. It is precisely these pieces of our life experiences that tend to color how we operate in the future. These might include a crazy family, bad credit, former partners that won’t disappear, and so on. Some of us have small, manageable pieces, while others, and with no fault ascribed, possess numerous, overflowing, and unmanageable bags. In a long-term relationship, though, our bags often become open and accessible to a large degree. Pieces tend to spill out when we least expect it and can often startle our significant other if s/he is not prepared. What is important to remember, however, is that everyone carries baggage into the relationship, including ourselves. Knowing how to recognize and negotiate realistic expectations in our own lives and with others is an essential skill to managing baggage.

**Implications for University-Community Partnerships.** Like people, community organizations come to a partnership with overt and hidden baggage. The organizations with which we partner often struggle with low budgets; the staff wears multiple hats; and daily operations are bound by challenging organizational policies and/or bosses. Compassion, flexibility, and patience become paramount in making these partnerships work amidst everyday challenges. Communicating across these issues as we work to meet each other’s needs proves an important tool for faculty and students to practice and learn. Most importantly,
partners in the university-community relationship must remember that perfection does not exist. And trying to hide or diminish our issues will not serve the relationship constructively in the long run. Instead, we should approach issues as they arise with maturity and honesty so that the bumps can be traversed together and with minimal damage.

**Crux #8: Addressing Conflict**

*Personal Relationships.* Conflict of varying degrees arises in even the healthiest of relationships. Avoiding conflict only causes more problems over the long term, making it important to develop strategies to keep communication clear, open, and kind—even when things get messy. Addressing problems early on in a direct manner can help two people move through conflict in a way that deepens, rather than damages, the relationship. Constructive discussions of difference can also help avoid “kitchen sinking,” where old conflicts and wounds are transferred to current issues. This power play can erase trust and shift away from a model of reciprocity and equity. Acknowledging and owning what “pushes your buttons” ahead of time is a proactive step toward conflict management.

**Implications for University-Community Partnerships.** Organizations might consider talking to their university or community partners about how they want to address challenges that arise as a partnership develops. Naming worries and fears about specific conflicts (e.g., decision-making, project timelines, expectations) early in a partnership may help us to be more intentional about how we address conflicts of interest or other potential challenges:

Acknowledging that any particular campus-community partnership may have differences in relative dependency and power is important to managing and nurturing the development of healthy campus-community partnerships (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002, p. 510).

Therefore, we should engage in difficult conversations around ownership, expectations, and responsibilities before we begin a partnership and try to let our partner know it/when conflicts start to arise. Open and understanding communication can help remind partners that we are looking out not just for ourselves, but also for the good of the partnership.

**Crux #9: Routine Maintenance**

*Personal Relationships.* Worthwhile relationships require constant care, attention, and maintenance. Prioritizing communication, time to connect (about things beyond work and household responsibilities), and special efforts to strengthen a relationship can make the difference between short and long term, as well as fulfilling and unfulfilling, relationships. Don’t wait for a holiday (or a fight!) to send flowers or make intentional efforts to reconnect with your partner. Reminding your significant other that they are special, reassessing their needs and wants, and demonstrating your appreciation, care, and commitment contributes to trust and can sustain you through challenging times.

**Implications for University-Community Partnerships.** We should make it a priority to connect with our community partners in ways that prove meaningful to them. Take the time to assess their needs and challenges; send notes and offer other gestures of recognition, thanks, and appreciation. This kind of attention and care to all aspects (personal and professional) of a university-community partnership proves essential to deepening engagement and growing sustainability. Partnerships require hard work, but the payoffs are substantial. Public recognition and celebration of the benefits and outcomes of the partnerships (e.g., through a press release, website feature, award, or community event) reaffirms a commitment to partners and to the value of the shared work (Keener, 1999).

**Crux #10: It’s not you; it’s me.**

*Personal Relationships.* Unhealthy, dysfunctional relationships can also prove sustainable. However, not all relationships should transition into long-term commitments. In certain situations, goodbyes can be healthy. So know when to end it. Regardless of whether a romantic relationship ends under the best of circumstances, ramifications and challenges always exist around how to move through, and forward from, the end of the relationship. Friends and families often become intertwined. Property and pets are shared. And custody of children and other legal matters may need to be addressed. Moreover, most of us struggle with concerns over our reputation as a partner and our chances of partnering again in the future. No one wants to be seen as a heartbreaker, player, or user. Being kind, generous, and forthcoming through relationship transitions can help to protect you from gossip and bad will, and can support the various entwined parties that may have a vested...
Reflecting on the above cruxes, themes emerge on the mechanics of interpersonal relationships. Contexts often differ, each set requires that we draw experiences into our professional spaces. While the knowledge and understanding from our personal analogy provides a framework for transferring on the applicability of a particular issue. This cruxes, is but one way of looking at and reflecting romantic relationship, illustrated through these and manage" (p. 5). The metaphor of a personal, shaping the situations that we want to organize to find fresh ways of seeing, understanding, and is to become skilled in the art of using metaphor: Ongoing, and Systemic Partnerships Preparing for the Long Haul: Intentional, Ongoing, and Systemic Partnerships Morgan (2006) reminds us that the “challenge is to become skilled in the art of using metaphor: to find fresh ways of seeing, understanding, and shaping the situations that we want to organize and manage” (p. 5). The metaphor of a personal, romantic relationship, illustrated through these cruxes, is but one way of looking at and reflecting on the applicability of a particular issue. This analogy provides a framework for transferring knowledge and understanding from our personal experiences into our professional spaces. While the contexts often differ, each set requires that we draw on the mechanics of interpersonal relationships. Reflecting on the above cruxes, themes emerge around the importance of clear, consistent communication; an ability and willingness to reflect on self, others, and community; an ethic of care; a multilayered perspective; and, an interest in the greater good.

As we work to pursue and maintain university-community partnerships, interpersonal relationships prove essential to community engagement efforts (Brindle & Hatcher, 2002). Paying attention to our own tendencies and inclinations within personal relationships can offer insight into our role in university-community partnerships. Considering the metaphor of a romantic partnership offers us an opportunity to reflect on the kinds of partnerships we are interested in and willing to work toward, and just how we will participate within them. These metaphorical cruxes offer personally relevant ways to consider moving away from transactional relationships and toward more transformative partnerships within university-community partnerships. After all, sustained partnerships can provide beneficial experiences for students, improved community outcomes, and rich learning opportunities (Bailis, 2000).

Thomas Guskey, a scholar in professional development and evaluation in education, suggests that effective work with partners may require a shift in educational structures and culture. He encourages movement away from traditional deficit-based models in which universities attempt to fix problems through one-off projects and activities (Guskey, 2000). Working from an assets-based model, Guskey demonstrates the benefits of programs and partnerships that are “intentional, ongoing, and systemic” (p. 16). Guskey’s framework for professional development offers a useful paradigm for achieving transformative relationships in service-learning and other university-community partnership models. Designing intentional goals and outcomes, developing ongoing activities and collaboration, and establishing systemic buy-in requires a willingness of both parties to reflect on their own relationship practices and to imagine new ways of approaching one’s work.

Within this framework, Stoecker and Tryon (2009) challenge scholars to think about whose voice gets included in, and how community members are affected by, service-learning engagement. By exploring these issues, they encourage those in higher education who facilitate community engagement projects and partnerships to think about their roles as university faculty, educators, and keepers/producers of knowledge. Although some of the suggestions and questions
embedded in the relationship metaphors above may seem obvious, it is not uncommon to fall into challenging behaviors and patterns within personal, professional, and academic relationships. University-community partnerships are constantly in flux as partners work to negotiate and accommodate a host of contexts and human-factors that are often out of their control. For this reason, transformative partners must remain open to unanticipated developments, disruptions in the status quo, and emergence of new values and expectations at every stage of their partnership (Enos & Morton, 2003). Self-awareness and flexibility around our own behaviors within relationships, such as communication patterns. The ways we express our needs, desires, and appreciation, and how we respond to stress and political pressure, can go a long way in pursuing and maintaining transformative partnerships.

In his model of scholarship—discovery, integration, teaching, and application—Ernest Boyer (1990) presented a unified structure that deepens how scholars accomplish work that meets the real needs of communities. The scholarship of discovery and application do not happen independently of one another. Rather, they grow out of praxis, or the reciprocal and cyclical relationship between theory and practice. University-community partnerships offer rich ground for supporting students in an engaged praxis—in this case, the mining, building, and reflecting on places and spaces of rich possibility in their education and in their lives. In almost every aspect of our lives, we participate in relationship-building, making personal relationships an accessible and potentially illuminating metaphor for thinking about how we prepare for campus-community partnerships. These deceivingly simple cruxes may offer a platform for operationalizing a transformative partnership. As we stated at the beginning of this article, every relationship is unique and cannot be reduced to a single framework. Readers, therefore, are encouraged to draw on additional metaphors to both name and illustrate the complexities inherent in partnerships and transformative relationships specific to service-learning.

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References


The purpose of this research was to explore the experiences of women of colour at The University of British Columbia (UBC), Vancouver, Canada, in a service-learning context from a critical race feminist perspective (Verjee, 2010). The author was interested in exploring the development of service-learning from this perspective based on the proposition that educational institutions, particularly higher education, remain a site of systemic injustices (Henry & Tator, 2010; James, 2010).

Bannerji (2000), hooks (2003), and Razack (1998) maintain that universities are premised on an ideology of whiteness, patriarchy, and classism as the dominant culture, which functions to colonize, marginalize, and silence racialized students, non-academic staff, and faculty. The intention behind the research was to explore the experiences of women of colour at and with UBC and, based on their experiences, to create a vision for service-learning engagement that would foster respectful and mutually beneficial partnerships with individuals and communities of colour. For the purpose of this paper, universities, the academy, and educational institutions all refer to higher education.

**Service-Learning Engagement**

Most of the literature on service-learning emphasizes the importance of developing collaborative partnerships with communities that create a common vision for addressing community concerns in addition to improving student learning and civic engagement (Bringle, Clayton, & Price, 2009; Holland, 2001; Marullo & Edwards, 2000). However, little attention has been paid to the role that communities play in enacting the goals of service-learning programs. In addition, only a small amount of research has explored the impact of service-learning programs on communities, and there has been a growing dissatisfaction inside and outside the service-learning movement regarding whether communities are truly being served (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009).

O’Grady (2000) and Stoecker and Tryon (2009) suggest that the key to service-learning engagement is to maintain the focus on collaboration with communities for the purposes of community development and social problem-solving through the identification of community issues, along with components such as reflective activities for students and the integration of service with curriculum. The challenge remains as how to do this when education, as a reflection of Canadian society, continues to remain a site of social inequities (Bannerji, 2000; Dei, Karumanchery, & Karumanchery-Luik, 2004; James, 2010; Monture-Angus, 2001; Razack, 1998).

There is a deep divide, a mistrust between educational institutions and locally based communities, that stems from a history of exploitation (Campus Compact, 2000). Educational institutions are also a site of struggle between dominant knowledges (e.g., the mainstream knowledge of professional scholars) and the wisdoms of “othered” world views (e.g., the lived knowledge within communities. Enos and Morton (2003) suggest that institutional partnerships with communities are also based on views that perceive communi-
ties as the domain of problems and institutions as the domain of solutions. All of these conditions exacerbate mistrust and power differentials between communities and educational institutions. In addition, the elitist, conflict-driven, and competitive cultures at colleges and universities, versus the more collaborative and less-hierarchical nature of communities, deepens the conflict even further (Jacoby, 2003; Lin, Schmidt, Tryon, & Stoecker, 2009). If service-learning is to truly involve higher education in real-world problem-solving, then communities must be a central and active partner in leading these efforts.

Langseth (2000) suggests that when educational institutions embark on service-learning engagement, their lack of attention to power differentials and to institutionalized Eurocentric values often causes harm. Jones (2003) adds that if such power relationships are not acknowledged and remedied, service-learning partnerships will likely create even more social inequities. Critical race theory offers a useful lens in understanding how social oppression operates; yet this form of inquiry remains on the margins of the community engagement literature. For example, few studies explore critical race theory in health that examine the need for transforming social institutions because of the social, political, and economic struggles faced by people of colour, or the mental health issues resulting from racial stratification (Brown, 2003; Graham, Brown-Jeffy, Aronson, & Stephens, 2011). Surprisingly, there is limited application of critical race theory in education and what it offers to an understanding of race and racism, or, more importantly, in an understanding of the arrangement of power relationships in service-learning engagement.

For these reasons, critical race feminist theory was utilized as epistemology and methodology in exploring the development of service-learning at UBC.

Research Methodology

Narratives by dominant groups, such as white, male, and the elite are generally legitimized in the academy and society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). Such narratives provide these individuals with a shared sense of identity within society and its institutions. These identities and life experiences are also reflected by dominant discourses and practices, and are viewed as mainstream, natural, and widely accepted as the “truth.” Such reflections of “truth” can determine and limit who gets to speak, heard, and valued (Henry & Tator, 2010; James, 2010). Counter-stories are, therefore, narratives of marginalized persons who speak of social injustice. Such stories are often not legitimized in society and speak against accepted truth. Critical race theory is such a methodology, and utilizes counter-storytelling, which looks at transforming the relationship between race, racism, and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000).

Critical race feminist theory, as a category of critical race theory, puts power relations at the centre of the discourse on gender, race, class, and all forms of social oppression. Anti-essentialist in nature, it involves the examination of the intersections of social oppression and how their combinations play out in various settings (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). Utilizing critical race feminist theory, we interviewed 14 women (students, non-academic staff, faculty, and non-university community members) for part of this research study. Representative of a diverse range of educational faculties and university departments at UBC, they also included women in non-university community settings who had been involved with UBC in some partnership capacity.

The participants were recruited from posters, electronic postings, and by snow-ball sampling [also known as word-of-mouth or “chain referral” sampling] and ranged in age from 25 to 59. They identified as women of colour and spoke of their identities as being fluid and multiple, Canadian, non-white, non-Aboriginal, immigrant settlers on First Nations land, straight, queer, and lesbian. They described their cultural backgrounds as Chinese, Philippine, Korean, Caribbean, Haitian, Jamaican, Jamaican-Costa Rican, Black, African, Kenyan, South Asian, Indo-Canadian, Indo-Ugandan-Canadian, East-Indian, and mixed race (part European ancestry).

Of the 14 women interviewed, six were UBC students; four were undergraduate students and two graduate. Three of the women interviewed were non-academic staff and two were part-time faculty members. Two of the 14 were non-university community members. One was a part-time faculty member at another institution of higher education in Vancouver who had been a graduate student at UBC.

Two hour-and-a-half, face-to-face individual interviews were conducted with each woman at a time and confidential location convenient to them. Each interview was transcribed and a second interview set-up to review themes and transcripts from the first interview. A semi-structured interview technique was utilized with standard questions and the use of an interview protocol around
their UBC perceptions and experiences and their visions of service-learning engagement that would enhance partnerships between individuals and communities of colour.

Experiences of Women of Colour at and with UBC

James (2010) states that the impact of racism, and the values, attitudes, and ideas they express, is not merely a product of encounters with other individuals, but are structured by the ideologies, ethics, and practices of institutions and society. These very real instances of discrimination are experienced as trauma on one’s physical and mental health. Delgado (2000) suggests that race-based stigmatization is “one of the more fruitful causes of human misery” (p. 131).

Racialized students, non-academic staff, and faculty have acknowledged that institutions of higher education are toxic and hostile (Henry & Tator, 2010). The day-to-day reality for women of colour in the academy involves overcoming hurdles, constantly having to negotiate the institutional landscape, mediating confrontations, and fighting to survive a relentless onslaught of racialized micro-aggressions (Bannerji, 2000; hooks, 2003; Razack, 1998). The women in this study spoke of daily micro-aggressions and trauma of being unseen, unheard, devalued, silenced, de-legitimized, disempowered, scrutinized, disciplined, and perceived as inferior. Following are some of the themes that emerged from their interviews:

• Racialization as “other”
• Lack of commitment to curriculum and pedagogical transformation
• Low representation of racialized faculty
• Low representation of racialized non-academic staff in management and senior management
• Lack of commitment to institutionalizing diversity in the academy

Racialization as “Other”

According to James (2010), colonialism operates in society today as part of an ideology of social differentiation sustained by political, economic, and social domination of one racial group by another. From this point of view, education is seen as a political and educational site where power relations and social inequality are reproduced (Wagner, 2008). Such sites operate in ways that usually negate the experiences of racialized peoples, and in doing so reinscribe them as “outsiders,” thereby making it difficult to establish themselves as legitimate, equal, and contributing participants within these institutions (James, 2010; Razack, 1998). Racialization is part of this process of domination and subordination through the categorization of physical appearance, in particular skin colour, whereby the racialized are constructed as “other.” Stamped with a badge of inferiority, the racialized are denied opportunities and equal treatment and excluded from participation in any meaningful way (Delgado, 2000; Henry & Tator, 2010). A graduate student shared her experience of racialization, of feeling invisible and insignificant. She explained that she often experienced lack of voice at the institution because of her skin colour:

> Being a woman of colour is certainly evident. It’s not like I can pretend I’m not. I’ve said before, it’s not like that I can come home or go out and take off my skin and blend in…. I definitely feel that I’m marginalized. I feel that I’m not present, [that] what I have to say is not valid… .

A non-university community member shared her experience of racialization, of being present but invisible in white dominated spaces in both educational institutions and community organizations. She spoke of how insignificant she felt in not being seen or acknowledged:

> When I’ve worked within institutions or organizations which have been predominantly white, I’ve encountered situations where I haven’t been acknowledged… i.e. no eye contact, no greeting. At these times I’ve felt excluded and invisible.

Such experiences of a “chilly” climate is common on university campuses where women of colour experience invisibility and lack of voice as they encounter sexism, racism, and classism (Ma-yuzumi & Shahjahan, 2008).

Lack of Commitment to Curriculum and Pedagogical Transformation

Dei, Karumanchery, and Karumanchery-Luik (2004) and Calliste (2000) conclude that universities, being state sanctioned and funded, support and reproduce inequities. The ideology of the white settler nation-state is reflected and supported by the academy, where classrooms and interactions
mirror the everyday world (Bannerji, 2000; Razack 1998). Many instructors of colour teaching in the academy have argued that neither their presence nor their histories are recognized in the academy (Henry & Tator, 2010).

In this research, UBC was viewed as an institution that supports nation-building though emphasis on Eurocentric and male-dominated knowledges. Though the women interviewed agreed that there are programs and courses that provide alternate spaces and critical studies, in general education was seen as reinforcing the status quo. A faculty member had this to say:

I don’t think our education, as it stands, really does very good justice to non-white groups in this university. I think we really get a very Europeanized history of the world…. That’s not to say we don’t have courses or programs that relate to other cultures and histories, but in terms of what we really celebrate and what is really promoted, I think it is European.

Campbell (2003) suggests that most institutions of higher education in Canada lack a concrete commitment to diversity and inclusion. Diversity is usually responded to by teaching a bit of this and a bit of that as add-on approaches, but there is little rigorous reorganization of the curriculum. Most of the curriculum is still grounded within a dominant framework that disappears or erases “othered” world-views. For many racialized students, universities continue to be a place of disconnection (hooks, 2003), a sense that something is missing and being reminded that they are “outsiders.” An undergraduate student spoke of the disconnect she experienced between what was being taught at the academy and her lived experience:

In fact, I was noticing that I was doing poorly as I started to realize that it [education] wasn’t working…there was a disconnect between who I am and what [UBC] was teaching.

Mirza (2006) suggests that racialized students are more likely to leave their university before completing their programs because of unmet expectations about higher education. There was a sense from the students interviewed that there were higher attrition rates for students of colour than their white counterparts.

Low Representation of Racialized Faculty

Dei et. al (2004) state that instructors in post-secondary institutions remain primarily white, and that racialized faculty sometimes makes up less than 5% of educators. On the other hand, racialized students often comprise 50% or more of the student population in many post-secondary institutions, and there is generally a lack of commitment to hiring faculty of colour at these institutions (Campbell, 2003). In addition, women make up almost 60% of undergraduate students, 45% as PhD students, but only 18.8% as full professors (Ollivier, Robbins, Beauregard, Brayton, & Sauve, 2006). However, women of colour represent only 3.4% of full-time and 10.3% of all faculty positions in Canadian universities (Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, 2006). Their numbers are significantly lower than their male counterparts (Henry & Tator, 2010).

Students interviewed expressed a desire for an increase in racialized faculty representation for mentoring, support and guidance. Luther, Whitmore, and Moreau (2001) state that racialized students are drawn to similar faculty members as role models, as experts in mutual areas of interest, as personal advisors, and research supervisors. Students desire to be understood without the need to explain what they are experiencing in the academy. They want to feel comfortable in exploring critical questions in a supportive environment that does not threaten them but stimulates them intellectually and affirms who they were.

Increasing the numbers of racialized faculty would, in fact, advance the standards of education by providing richer and broader learning experiences for all students. Excellence in teaching is not only about competence; it is also about representation (Henry & Tator, 2010). According to Luther, Whitmore, and Moreau (2001), having a critical mass of racialized faculty is a means to equity. An undergraduate student remembered the first time she met a racialized faculty member, and what a surprise this was to her, but also how inspiring this was. She found herself engaged for the first time in her academic program:

And you know, I was stunned. And I double-checked that she has a “doctor” beside her name… . [During the course] I found myself asking questions. I found myself engaged, and I found myself really interested…. I would never do that before. You know, no way!
However, demands by colleagues, through requests to be guest speakers to different classes, usually on topics of race, ethnicity, or cultural issues, further exacerbate an already heavy workload for racialized faculty. This additional work leaves little time for activities supporting tenure and promotion, and further marginalizes them. In addition, Kerl and Moore (2001) state that there are huge costs associated with marginalization for faculty of colour, costs that range from having one’s research and teaching located on the margins, to being punished for speaking out about inequities. The faculty interviewed suggested that heavy workloads, research on the margins, and demands from students put them at a higher risk of burnout than their white counterparts.

Low Representation of Racialized Non-Academic Staff in Management and Senior Management

It is well documented that the majority of non-academic support staff and service workers in the academy are non-white (hooks, 2003). Many universities have conducted employee workforce audits, and these indicate a significant level of under-representation of women of colour in management and senior-level non-academic administrative positions (Henry & Tator, 2010). A graduate student spoke of her perceptions:

I think the institution needs to have much more representation of people of colour in positions of power because we certainly have lots of people of colour in the institution, but they’re not in positions where they’re influencing students. They’re actually men and women who are bowing down to students, who are picking up students’ garbage.

The women of colour in non-academic administrative positions suggested that there are some very real discriminatory practices in place that prevent people of colour from being hired and promoted into leadership positions, and that employment equity policies have mainly benefited white women. They spoke of UBC’s lack of commitment to hiring, retaining, and promoting non-academic staff of colour into management and senior levels of management within the academy.

Many of the women spoke of “gatekeeping” practices within UBC that prevent racialized non-academic staff from being promoted. When job vacancies come up, departments are known to hire personnel that they know, people who are viewed as a “fit.” Calliste (2000) states that gaining employment and promotion through the ranks to non-academic positions is often not based on merit. She suggests that one must be a member of a privileged group, to be suitable and supportive of the status quo. In addition, hiring or interviewing committees are also often homogeneous and white in make-up. White people are therefore more likely to be hired and promoted into leadership positions. A non-academic staff member gave an example of this:

…management hire people that they know versus posting positions for short-term positions, one year maternity leaves, etc., with the rationale that it’s easier than posting a position, [i.e.] advertising to the broader community for appropriate candidates. The result is that those individuals who are already known get more opportunities than the unknown. White candidates get hired for short contracts, gain valuable on-site job experience and “fit,” and then get hired when the permanent positions come up. This is a typical UBC hiring practice and is discriminatory.

As Razack (2002) reminds us the more prestigious and higher paying jobs in post-secondary institutions remain white, whereas the lower levels remain racialized. Economic discrimination occurs through discriminatory practices that limit access and employment of racialized people into desirable positions, including positions of leadership. Because of these discriminatory practices, racialized candidates who are eminently qualified lose employment opportunities and advances in employment (hooks, 2003). Such people, even with educational qualifications who should be positioned within the “meritocratic” circuit and gain returns from their education, experience disadvantages and discrimination. Another non-academic staff member, even though very well qualified, experienced barriers to being placed in a leadership position because her white colleagues claimed that she made them feel uncomfortable:

In the workplace, I’m not seen to “fit in.” My presence seems to cause discomfort and mistrust. People have said, “She makes me feel uncomfortable.” I’m not perceived to be suitable for leadership positions where I would be giving orders,
or [where] I would have authority over a white person. This is all part of the underground discourse, which translates itself into actuality. You get mysteriously passed over for leadership positions in favour of a white person who is less qualified and less competent. The galling thing is that you are expected to train and prop that person up.

**Lack of Commitment to Institutionalizing Diversity**

Many of the faculty and non-academic staff interviewed in this study facilitate diversity and social justice training across the campus, including activities that involve internationalizing the campus. They stated that there is much resistance to social justice training and education by senior management at UBC. A non-academic staff member shared an experience regarding a conversation she had with her director in the development of a diversity workshop for students. Her director wanted to focus the content of the workshop on understanding cultural differences and celebrating diversity, and not on social justice. She relayed:

> I was told that this approach [social justice] was a dangerous approach, and that I better be careful, that it was “immoral.” Which horrified me! I was shocked.

Such attitudes from people with power, in shaming marginalized individuals, contribute to continued experiences of oppression. Shaming perpetuates dominant values and morals in the workplace and sends messages of how work should be carried out. hooks (2003) states that systematic shaming colonizes the mind and the imaginations of racialized peoples. Those who shame crush the spirit of people who strive for social change; they practice a form of emotional violence. Such management practices are hurtful, devaluing, and degrading and maintain the subordination of “others.”

Often programs and events that are life-sustaining to marginalized people, such as Black History month, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Women’s History month, Pride Week, etc., are tokenized as one-off [one-time] events, and therefore not institutionalized. These “othered” histories and knowledges are not integrated into the everyday teaching and learning environment. Yet, these very spaces were viewed as life-affirming to students, non-academic administrative staff, and faculty at UBC, many of whom help coordinate these events on a voluntary basis.

Unfortunately, many of these events take on a multicultural or celebratory approach to promoting diversity. These short, intermittent events are seen as stop-gap measures in education, and such programs do little to challenge systemic inequities. An undergraduate student talked of how degrading and disrespectful “diversity as celebration” was to her:

> Let’s enjoy each other’s food, and lets go to the Chinese New Year Festival and then to the Caribbean Festival in July and then go to the Powell Street Festival for Japanese culture and things like that where it’s surface, very tokenizing and quite frankly, belittling. I’m more than that. I’m more than my food and great costumes and dances.

Ahmed and Swan (2006) suggest that in show-casing diversity and holding celebratory events accompanied by happy colourful faces, systemic inequities faced by people of colour remain hidden. In addition, by being the caretakers of diversity, people of colour are repositioned as “outsiders within” as institutions are discharged from doing this work. James (2010) suggests that diversity represents nothing more than a public relations enterprise that yields support and financial benefits for publicly funded institutions to justify their continued claim to government funding and in raising tuition fees, particularly for international students. Mirza (2006) adds that an “inclusion” framework is also a desirable feature in higher education as “good for business.” She argues that diversity statements act as a mechanism for reproducing institutional hegemony and operate in ways that keep the project of diversity stuck and unfinished, as if “saying is doing,” (p. 104). Diversity and social justice mission statements and policies in higher education have little to do with transforming the academy and have fundamentally failed to change the culture of whiteness within academia (Henry & Tator, 2010).

The counter-stories that the women shared regarding their UBC experiences painted a picture of a political, economic, cultural, and educational context which operated in ways that usually negated, minimized, or denied their daily experiences. Such experiences made it difficult for them to establish themselves as legitimate, visible, equal,
valued, and contributing participants of the institution. The women interviewed worried about the development of university-community partnerships for service-learning engagement with all marginalized communities, but in particular with communities of colour. They suggested that such partnerships must be developed from a community development approach, where those most impacted by marginalization and oppression are centrally involved in partnership development. In addition, they suggested that the academy engage in a re-visioning process requiring the transformation of hegemonic structures and practices. Otherwise, they stated, service-learning engagement would likely perpetuate social inequities and injustices.

Institutional Transformation

From a critical race feminist perspective, the following key elements for institutional transformation were recommended for UBC from the women interviewed for this study. Such transformation would support and enhance service-learning engagement with communities of colour. These key elements included leadership in establishing the vision and mission; ensuring faculty representation and employment equity for non-academic staff; curriculum and pedagogical transformation; access and equity for racialized students; anti-oppression education and training; and aligning systems and practices for authentic inclusion.

Leadership

Leadership was viewed as essential in establishing the vision, direction, and goals for institutional transformation to address and remedy systemic inequities. The women interviewed suggested that even though commitment from the top was necessary, it was not the only condition for institutional change. Change, they felt, required the participation of many leaders throughout the institution who “walk the talk,” and who understood that such transformation required long-term commitment. In addition, the women suggested that an advisory committee be established at the presidential level to help guide the project for transformation. They suggested that this advisory committee be representative of the communities the institution partners with. This would then serve to guide service-learning engagement that advances community development goals.

Some of the literature suggests that university-community partnerships should establish advisory boards for service-learning programming. These advisory groups should be comprised of students, non-academic staff, faculty and non-university community members for the purpose of monitoring partnerships and guarding against inappropriate dependency, power differences in decision-making, and exploitation (Bringle et. al., 2009; Marullo & Edwards, 2000). In addition, Lin et al. (2009) suggest that leadership must ensure that their infrastructure meets the needs of all students, non-academic staff and faculty in devoting resources to addressing issues of diversity, ensuring that the necessary resources are made available for systemic change. A non-academic staff member suggested that direction from leadership would pave the way forward at UBC. She stated:

…that message should come from the top down. The president of our institution should say that it’s [institutional transformation] important, and that it’s mandatory, and that it’s to be done, because it’s only when the message comes [from] top-down that it gets heard and respected, and everybody comes on board.

Ensuring Faculty Representation and Employment Equity for Non-Academic Staff

All the women interviewed spoke about the few numbers of racialized faculty employed at UBC and the poor retention and lack of promotion of racialized non-academic staff into management and senior management positions. According to James (2010), the homogeneity of faculty members, and the lack of rights and entitlement to equitable treatment and equality of opportunities for racialized non-academic staff are of great concern in many institutions of higher education in Canada. The denial of access to privileges and opportunities otherwise available to white people is characteristic of racial discrimination. Some of the women reiterated that there was no method at UBC for tracking the hiring and retention of racialized non-academic staff. The lack of records on where racialized people are employed within the institution conceals their economic marginalization and supports the denial of economic injustices. The women interviewed stated that such findings must be reported annually and an action plan implemented to remedy this.

Ensuring faculty representation and employment equity for racialized non-academic staff was seen as a means to equity, and a much needed measure for creating credible partnerships with marginalized communities. In addition, having such
representation as part of service-learning engagement and programming might provide valuable learning “insider” perspectives on the histories and lived experiences of these communities (Sleeter, 2000). It is suggested that these perspectives assist in developing capacity for engaging in meaningful collaborations with communities (Ogden, 2001). A non-university community member spoke about the importance of community representation on the ranks of faculty and management at UBC. She said:

I think if you want to operate in a manner that is going to engage the community at some level, you need to be reflecting the community within the structure and community at the university.

The women interviewed noted that faculty and non-academic staff involved in service-learning development at UBC were primarily white. They spoke of the importance of diverse representation, students, non-academic staff and faculty in developing service-learning partnerships with marginalized communities. More importantly, they suggested that people involved with the development of service-learning have a critical understanding of the histories of social oppression, and how these inform the reality of unequal social relations. This would only take place once the institution committed to a vision for transformation; otherwise service-learning partnerships would likely replicate social inequities.

Curriculum and Pedagogical Transformation

All the women interviewed stated that curriculum across the academy required de-colonization, by which they meant integrating alternate and ‘othered’ perspectives into the curricula. Not engaging in curriculum transformation, and maintaining Eurocentric worldviews, amounts to intellectual racism (Bannerji, 2000).

The students also spoke of the need for instructor training on dealing with conflicting worldviews in the classroom, yet such training at universities is not mandatory, and faculty who desire such training do so for their own professional development. They suggested that faculty teaching service-learning courses should be required to take some form of anti-oppression training to provide them with the skills to develop inclusive classroom strategies utilizing different sites of knowledge that draw all students, including students of colour, into conversations. Some service-learning literature does speak to the need for curriculum to be structured around critiquing the structures of oppression and engaging in educational strategies for social transformation (O’Grady, 2000), but little is said about faculty education and training.

A faculty member spoke to these issues:

I’m afraid that even after thirty years of discussions on multiculturalism, we still find many courses where the syllabus is as if these discussions had never really taken place. Where there are no inter-textual conversations or whatever, so that we still read the one Euro-text. In my way of thinking at this point, we should be reading many texts simultaneously so that we get a healthy talk and response, or writing and response….

A non-university community member stated that she often encountered UBC students with little or no understanding of the history of colonialism or social oppression in Canadian society. For example, some students she encountered had never heard of the residential school system, others wondered whether sexism or racism still existed, and some did not know what heterosexism meant. She spoke of the enormous responsibility placed on the shoulders of non-university community members to decolonize the minds of students sent to them through university-community placements. Another non-university community member spoke of a need to broaden the curriculum by integrating alternate worldviews that speak back and challenge dominant ideologies of Eurocentrism. She suggested that in preparing for service-learning engagement, curriculum must address political, economic and social injustices:

In preparation to partner with communities of colour, the academic environment should provide a forum that would enable faculty and students to examine, analyze, and address their own issues around oppression. The curriculum content would be diverse enough to include non-Eurocentric, feminist, and anti-oppression pedagogy and analyses.

Access and Equity for Racialized Students

All the women felt that the university had a role in promoting access and equity for all students desiring a higher education. They were concerned, however, about escalating tuition costs and the
high level of student indebtedness. Many of the women interviewed felt that these posed a huge deterrent for many students, mostly for those from poor socio-economic backgrounds, primarily gendered and racialized.

The women worried about which students would be afforded an education and which would be left out. They pointed out that, once in the system, racialized students also tended to have more difficulty than white students in securing scholarships, and even graduate assistantships. They felt that lack of institutional support in terms of the provision and allocation of specific scholarships and graduate assistantships put students of colour at a further disadvantage.

According to the students, racialized students often find themselves working at multiple jobs, usually in low paying positions, in order to financially support their education and every-day living. These multiple jobs are necessitated because of economic inequities, which, in turn, negatively impact their academic performance. The students interviewed stated that many instructors are inflexible with assignment extensions related to economic difficulties, thereby forcing them to withdraw from courses and putting their academic programs in jeopardy. An undergraduate student shared just this experience:

[Professors] not understanding that as a woman of colour, there are pressures that I have. Like whether that’s economic – women of colour aren’t always in the best economic positions. So for me that meant that I was on student loans, that I had to work 30 hours a week [during] my first 2 years at UBC, while being a full time student....

Having to work multiple jobs, racialized students are sometimes unable to take advantage of career development opportunities, such as presenting at conferences or attending career fairs. It has been well documented that without institutional support, students of colour face a constant struggle for survival (Thomas-Long, 2003). Lin et al. (2009) and Stoecker and Tryon (2009) also point out that in Canada it is primarily white students who are involved in service-learning placements. Could it be that students of colour are otherwise preoccupied with everyday social, political, and economic realities that leave them little or no opportunity to get involved?

Again, women interviewed for this study raised questions and concerns around the lack of demographic information about the student population at UBC, particularly the racial demographics of students. These key questions were posed: Who are the students at UBC? What are their needs with regards to education and services? Why are so few students of colour involved in service-learning programming? Participants also noted that there was no data regarding the retention or attrition of students. There was, simultaneously, a high level of suspicion that the acquisition of these demographics would reveal higher rates of attrition for racialized students. The need for this demographic information was seen as important in determining where the institution might be failing these students. As a non-academic staff member suggested:

First, the institution would have to know who their students are. Exactly what their needs are, where they’re coming from, and I don’t think we’re there yet. My understanding is the university doesn’t even track equity groups, the visible minority groups.

**Anti-Oppression Education and Training**

The language of diversity is prominent in universities like UBC, both in administrative and pedagogical spheres (Henry & Tator, 2010). This discourse on diversity claims neutrality and a level playing field. Bannerji (2000) suggests that diversity sensitization or training has displaced equity-related programs that specifically address sexist, classist, and racist social power relations. The women interviewed expressed concern about the status quo, and suggested that education and training needed to be founded on anti-oppression principles in addressing the social organization of unequal power relations. Cultural diversity training does occur, but takes the “cultural differences” approach, where difference is thought to reside in the individual rather than the system. This does little in promoting systemic change as it does not examine how the treatment of subordinate group members are socially organized to sustain existing power relations (Razack, 1998), suggesting that racism and oppression are a result of attitude, behaviour and individual ignorance.

The women stated that there was no question that changes in employment composition were important steps to institutional transformation. However, hiring individuals from marginalized groups, they felt, could not occur in a vacuum. They suggested that hiring, retention, and promo-
tion of people of colour in the academy had to be supported by anti-oppression education in order to foster inclusive working, living, and learning environments.

In addition, the women also suggested that UBC must become knowledgeable about the communities it wished to partner with, particularly the histories of those communities. Maurrasse (2001) suggests that students, non-academic staff, and faculty are not automatically knowledgeable or skilled in the dynamics of community engagement. Education and training are also necessary for university members to become familiar with their community partners and ethical practices around community development. Without these knowledges, the institution would be unlikely to develop meaningful relationships. A community-member shared her view:

I think the institution would need, whether they were students or they were the instructors themselves or administrators, they would need a lot of learning. There’s a lot of stuff that they don’t know about communities, communities in general and then about particular communities, communities of colour.

Aligning Systems and Practices for Authentic Inclusion

In order for UBC to create a welcoming and inclusive working, living, and learning environment, the women in this study suggested that the institution needed to ensure inclusion in all its diversity efforts. They argued that this would involve the alignment of all institutional systems, and ongoing assessment and evaluation of these systems, to create authentic inclusion.

It was repeatedly noted in the stories that were told by the women interviewed that systemic discrimination, in particular racism, is often viewed as the exception and not the rule at UBC. Razack (2002) states that viewing racism as the exception is a rejection and denial of these everyday encounters and practices. Under these conditions, power and unequal relationships continue to be perpetuated, particularly in spaces created to promote diversity and “inclusion” where people of colour are invited to participate, but tokenized in not being heard, valued, or respected. Authentic inclusion values “othered” voices and engages their perspectives into decision making.

According to the women interviewed, aligning systems and practices for authentic inclusion would require an integrated systems approach, along with an ongoing process for assessment and evaluation: How well are we doing? What needs to change in order to improve? How do we continue evolving? Assessment and evaluation would require the experiences of those marginalized to inform the evolving transformative process. From this, dominant ideologies, ethics, and practices would start to shift. Such a transformative endeavour requires organizations to become learning organizations which constantly evaluates and adjusts operations in line with goals and changing contexts. Institutional transformation, as systems shift, must occur all the way to the core of institutional culture (Kofman & Senge, 1995). Again, the women interviewed spoke about the necessity of having leadership establish policy and practices regarding institutional transformation for inclusion and educational transformation.

A Critical Race Feminist Vision for Service-Learning Engagement

From a critical race feminist perspective, the project of service-learning engagement must be led by communities affected by systemic marginalization in their desire for societal transformation. It is imperative, therefore, that educational institutions recognize the ideologies and practices of domination that structure how we relate to one another daily in maintaining subordination of others, and commit to institutional transformation. Institutions, therefore, need to invest in understanding the histories, social relations, and conditions that structure groups unequally, as much of the work that underpins service-learning engagement involves remedying and alleviating multiple sites of oppression.

A non-academic staff member suggested that service-learning engagement with communities of colour would likely be unsuccessful if the institution neglects to recognize and remedy the many forms of social injustices embedded within its structures. She commented:

Looking at oneself and seeing marginalization within academia, right? I mean, how can it understand outside, when you know, there’s no movement at all for racialized people within academia.

A non-university community member added to this in suggesting that successful collaborations with any marginalized community must involve institutional accountability through transforma-
tion from within:

An institutional environment that would make education accessible to all, including marginalized groups; model and promote race, class, and gender equity; encourage and sustain diversity; create and sustain political, social, and cultural awareness and sensitivity; maintain the right of freedom of association, speech, and expression; and provide a safe, comfortable, and respectful learning space.

Razack (1998) suggests that in order for any sort of trust to be established between educational institutions and marginalized communities, institutions would be required to be accountable, “a process that begins with recognition that we are each implicated in systems of oppression that profoundly structure our understanding of one another. That is, we come to know and perform ourselves in ways that reproduce social hierarchies” (p. 10). Once we are able to recognize this, we can become accountable to communities we desire engagement with. Maurrasses (2001) adds, if social responsibility to communities is not seen as essential, communities will remain marginalized and will likely not embrace such engagement.

Mohanty (1997) suggests, therefore, that any collaboration across social hierarchies must involve a critique of hegemony. The long-term preparedness of higher education to develop lasting service-learning partnerships with marginalized communities is dependent upon its ability to change internally (Maurrasses, 2001). Monture-Angus (2001) and Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010) suggest that structural and systemic change is the only way in which meaningful and substantive long-term change can be secured in any type of community development engagement. Critical race theory offers an emancipatory pedagogy in understanding the lived experiences of people of colour with oppression and systemic exclusion. With such an understanding begins the work of reorganizing institutions for service-learning engagement that would enable colleges and universities to create outstanding partnerships to address and solve local, national, and global injustices.

Practices and policies of oppression, discrimination, and disregard continue to plague institutions of higher education in Canada (James, 2010; Henry & Tator, 2010). This research utilizing critical race feminism was an attempt to address systemic inequities experienced by women of colour in and with the academy, and in doing so adds to the gap in the discourse on university-community partnerships for service-learning engagement. Educational institutions must recognize the reality of systemic injustices and oppression in society, and within education itself. Doing so would necessitate transformative systems change in order to support service-learning engagement in redressing societal injustices.

A critical race theory approach studies the voices and experiences of people of colour in understanding how structures, laws, policies, and practices discriminate and are set up to exclude. This study utilizing critical race feminism interviewed 14 women of colour and their counter-stories explored their experiences with regard to multiples forms of social oppression at and with UBC. Given the limited sample size, this study was exploratory in nature; however, the counter-stories of the women of colour interviewed relay a political, social, and economic affiliation with the stories of racialized students, non-academic staff, and faculty in the academy as outlined in the supporting literature. There is limited application of critical race theory and what it may offer in understanding race, racism, and the arrangement of power relationships in education and service-learning engagement. Other studies utilizing this approach may add further depth and breadth to this body of knowledge.

Summary

This article has illuminated the ways in which the political, social, and economic contexts of The University of British Columbia operates in ways that usually result in negative experiences for women of colour. Through a critical race feminist methodology and analysis, this study has put forward transformative solutions to racial, sexual, and class subordination, which, if left unaddressed, could result in the development of harmful service-learning partnerships and engagement with communities of colour. A transformative vision for service-learning engagement from a critical race feminist perspective was developed from this research, calling for institutional accountability and transformation of hegemonic structures and practices from within before any genuine, respectful, and authentic relationships with communities of colour can be developed. Such endeavours would only serve to support and grow service-learning engagement in redressing systemic injustices that plague our communities and nation.
About the Author

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Civic Engagement and People with Disabilities: The Role of Advocacy and Technology

Sarah Parker Harris, Randall Owen, and Cindy De Ruiter

Abstract
Disability legislation acknowledges the right of people with disabilities to participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others, but there continue to be significant barriers in accessing all aspects of the policymaking process. Advocacy and technology are two core strategies used by the disability community to advance the rights of people with disabilities. Further understanding of how these strategies and tools empower people with disabilities to connect with government is needed. This research seeks to develop and enhance civic knowledge and practices of people with disabilities by conducting civic engagement training and evaluation and examining the role of four disability advocacy organizations. Using qualitative and quantitative data, the research explores the inclusion and participation of people with disabilities in civic society, with a focus on advocacy and technology.

Introduction
In the United States in the 1970s the civil rights model began to influence disability policy discourse and practices, which shifted from a charity approach to one that embodies human rights, self-determination, and empowerment. During this time there was a great deal of support for ending discrimination against people with disabilities (Scotch, 2001). However, unlike other civil rights movements, the disability rights movement was relatively invisible, which meant that political, social, and legal structures created to advance rights either were not applied or were applied with less rigor in the case of people with disabilities (Mezey, 2005; Stavis, 2005; Switzer, 2003). Despite strong disability legislation intended to increase the social and political participation of people with disabilities, there continues to be significant barriers in accessing all aspects of the policymaking process. The Americans with Disabilities Act and other legislation has not solved these problems for many of the 50 million people with disabilities in the United States (Blanck et al., 2004). Using empirical qualitative and quantitative data obtained through training, evaluation, and focus groups with people with disabilities and interviews with disability advocacy staff, the research examines how advocacy and technology can facilitate empowerment of people with disabilities to express and communicate their views and needs regarding disability policy.

People with Disabilities in Civic Society
Historically, people with disabilities have been isolated both from general society and from each other, which has restricted opportunities to participate in public domains or to politically organize (Donoghue, 2003). Disability policies have typically been developed for people with disabilities, rather than with their direct participation (Braddock & Parish, 2001; Garcia-Iriarte et al., 2008). Furthermore, people with disabilities continue to be marginalized in all aspects of the policymaking process, including lobbying efforts, voting, and serving as elected representatives (Barnartt et al., 2001). Inequalities still exist in basic areas such as public accessibility and transportation, which prevents people with disabilities from full civic and social participation. Moreover, people with disabilities may have lower self-efficacy than others, and even when accounting for differences in employment and education, people with disabilities do not believe that they can impact the political system (Schur, Shields, & Schriner, 2003). Elected officials rarely solicit the input of people with disabilities, so it is important that people with disabilities are able to engage in public policy debate (Silverstein, 2010).

Research acknowledges the importance of direct involvement of people with disabilities in all aspects of policy debates, and civic engagement is one means in which to create or influence change. For people with disabilities, civic engagement can help to create self-efficacy, promote social integration, and develop personal interests (Barnartt et al., 2001; Hahn, 1985; Zola, 2005). Like other citizens, people with disabilities want an equal voice in democratic debates and the opportunity to advocate for change (Barnartt et al., 2001). Such participation and involvement in public
Disability Advocacy

The use of advocacy by people with disabilities has been successful in changing policies and programs, most of which are associated with protests organized by the disability rights movement. A historical analysis of the number of protests by disability organizations between 1972 and 1999 shows growth in political activism over the years (Barnartt & Scotch, 2001). For instance, the group Disabled in Action developed strategies to block traffic to secure accessible public transportation in New York in 1977. That same year several groups of people with disabilities led sit-ins in 10 federal government offices until the government issued regulations for Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and in 1988 deaf students at Gallaudet University protested until a deaf president was hired to lead them (Barnatt et al., 2001; Fleischer & Zames, 2001; Shapiro, 1994). In 2003 representatives from a group known as Mad Pride in California received national attention for a hunger strike organized to bring attention to the rights of people with mental health issues (Lewis, 2010). In Chicago, there is a strong history of grassroots disability advocacy being used to elicit change and connect citizens with government. Disability organizations, including Access Living and the Progress Center for Independent Living, have played a significant role in disability policy debates across Illinois. This included efforts toward deinstitutionalization, transportation accessibility, and securing access to sign language interpreters. In addition, the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities in Chicago has been active in ensuring access around public sidewalks, voting, and schools.

Non-profit organizations face legal restrictions on the amount of lobbying they can engage in, but they still manage to make a significant impact in policymaking ( Vaughan & Arseanault, 2008). In order to create widespread change, forming relationships between people with disabilities and state representatives is critical because it helps citizens gain power in the policy arena. However, people with disabilities face various barriers to full involvement. Most barriers fall into one of three categories: intrapersonal (skills and competence); interpersonal (team dynamics); or organizational (resources, decision-making processes) (Foster-Fishman, Jimenez, Valenti, & Kelly, 2007). One of the most common barriers is a lack of resources or funds to either purchase assistive devices or make trips to visit official, so having a voice in policy decisions can be challenging. Other barriers that hinder the development of advocacy skills in individuals with disabilities include inaccessible buildings, a lack of training experiences, negative attitudes, and few opportunities to practice learned skills. Increasing safe environments, supporting advocacy trainings, and forming mentor relationships can help facilitate the development of self-advocacy skills for people with disabilities.

Technology for People with Disabilities

While advocacy has been an essential strategy for promoting the rights and participation of people with disabilities, further efforts are needed to encourage and facilitate people with disabilities in public policy domains. The use of adaptive technology is another vital strategy that empowers people with disabilities to connect with government, as it facilitates communication and allows for full expression in policy debates; and are, at times, the only means by which they can access public debate. Furthermore, people with disabilities often use technology to relate to the real world. This is especially true for people who use augmentative and alternative communication devices as people with severe communication impairments face significant additional barriers in participation, attaining self-determination, and realizing a high quality of life (Light et al., 2007). Research has demonstrated that such technology, when people are appropriately trained to use it, can help people with disabilities overcome barriers to full and equal participation, and develop socio-relational and problem-solving skills (Light et al., 2007; McCarthy et al., 2007). It is imperative that people with disabilities have opportunities for continued training and support in using technology, because
increased participation implies a greater range of communication environments (McNaughton & Bryen, 2007).

Adaptive technology is vital in allowing people with disabilities full participation in policy debates and the ability to become involved in the decision-making processes about policies that affect how they live in society. Aside from facilitating communication, technology can also be used as an organizational tool, it can help spark discussions about policy, and it can permit people with disabilities to find up-to-date information on government regulations and laws. Though seemingly all positive, some aspects of new technologies create additional barriers for people with disabilities who want to fully engage in civic society. There is a digital divide in society due to the fact that some individuals have access to internet and advanced technology and some do not (Rubaii-Barrett & Wise, 2008). Cost, availability, accessibility features, and lack of knowledge in effective usage are all barriers to people with disabilities taking full advantage of different forms of technology. There are regulations in place that address the issue of inaccessible technology, but states are either unable or unwilling to carry out federal mandates. Instead of focusing on increased spending, lobbying for greater enforcement of existing state and federal policies can be effective in bringing about positive changes in technology for those with disabilities (Rubaii-Barrett & Wise, 2008). Creating equal access to advanced technology for all people will help weaken the digital divide and increase opportunities for individuals with disabilities to become involved in policymaking processes.

Disability Rights

It is important to include people with disabilities in the decision-making process, particularly when those decisions affect them, so that people with disabilities are subjects of the political process rather than objects of policy decisions (Quinn and Degener, 2002). People with disabilities currently do not have an equal voice in the political process. For instance, voter turnout for the 2008 elections shows a gap of 7% between people with and without disabilities (57.3% and 64.5%) (American Association of People with Disabilities, 2010). Although this represents substantial improvement from 2000 and 1998 (gaps of 20 and 12 percentage points, respectively) (Schur, Kruse, Sbriner, & Shields, 2000), additional strategies are needed to increase participation of the disability community in the democratic process.

The need to increase political engagement of people with disabilities is reflected internationally in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). People with disabilities played an active role in the development of the CRPD, which was unusual for a United Nations convention, which are typically negotiated solely by representatives from member states (Lang, 2009). The convention ensures that people with disabilities and disability organizations have a permanent voice pertaining to the convention to provide specialized expertise on disability issues and contribute to meaningful solutions (Melish & Perlin, 2007). The convention promotes the social model of disability and aims to remove barriers to the participation of people with disabilities and promote their inclusion in society.

Specifically related to civic engagement, Article 29 of the convention, “Participation in Political and Public Life,” acknowledges the right of people with disabilities to participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others. This involves ensuring that voting procedures, facilities and materials are appropriate, accessible, and easy to understand; protecting the right to perform all public functions at all levels of government, including facilitating the use of assistive and new technologies where appropriate; and promoting an environment in which people with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in the conduct of public affairs (United Nations, 2006). The research draws on Article 29 to further understanding of the facilitators and barriers to civic engagement of people with disabilities and disabilities stakeholders. Advancing understanding of effective tools and strategies to increase involvement of people with disabilities in public life is necessary to ensure the rights of all citizens.

Methodology

Our aim is to examine how advocacy and technology can facilitate empowerment of people with disabilities to express and communicate their views and needs regarding disability policy and to do this in ways that influence the responsiveness of government. The research explores the following specific research questions:

1. How do people with disabilities engage with government, and what are the roles of policy knowledge, technology, and advocacy strategies in this engagement process?
2. What are the motivations of people with disabilities to engage in policy debate, and what are the perceived barriers and facilitators to increasing civic participation?

3. What is the role of technology in enabling and increasing access to government for people with disabilities?

4. How do disability organizations build advocacy knowledge, enhance civic awareness and responsibility, and increase development of technology skills to enable people with disabilities to participate in policy debates?

Research Design

This pilot study was conducted in Chicago from January to June 2011. The researchers worked in conjunction with the Assistive Technology Unit (ATU) and the Great Lakes Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Center—two disability organizations at the University of Illinois at Chicago that focus on engagement with and providing services to the community, as well as two disability community organizations, the Progress Center for Independent Living (PCIL) and Access Living (AL). In order to address the research questions, the project engaged with people with disabilities and these organizations in a participatory process to collect empirical data through community resource assessments, training sessions and evaluations, and focus groups/interviews with people with disabilities and/or disability stakeholders, as outlined below.

Community Resource Assessment

A community resource assessment was performed for each of the research project partners (ATU, ADA, PCIL, AL). This was a comprehensive appraisal and analysis of the advocacy and technology strategies that these organizations engaged in, which entailed a systematic critical review of secondary data, supplemented with interviews with key staff from each organization. Data for this part of the research included organizational material focused on public meetings and advisory boards; training and education programs; textual and promotional materials; teleconferences, webinars, and websites; and social networking and listservs. In addition informal interviews were conducted with a key staff member from each of the organizations to supplement the written materials. The goal of this stage of the research was to gain a better understanding of the organization and how they facilitate inclusion of people with disabilities, especially related to the fourth research question: How do disability organizations build advocacy knowledge, enhance civic awareness and responsibility, and increase development of technology skills to enable people with disabilities to participate in policy debates?

Training and Evaluation

Three civic engagement trainings were conducted for groups of people with disabilities associated with the partner organizations. Each session was for people with disabilities of working age (18–64) who live in the Chicago area and are interested in becoming more involved in civic engagement activities. Each training session was unique, based on the organization it was conducted with, although each contained elements of five broad themes: general civic engagement, building policy knowledge, using advocacy, using technology, and becoming more involved with government. The five themes were used to structure each of the trainings similarly so that they are comparable on a broad level. Table 1 outlines each training session format.

Each participant was asked to complete an evaluation form prior to and 6–8 weeks after each training. Depending on availability and accessibility requirements, participants completed the evaluations in person, by email, or phone. The evaluations consisted of approximately 10 close-ended questions designed to measure policy knowledge and levels of engagement, and six open-ended questions designed to better understand the civic engagement of each individual. The qualitative data obtained from these questions are used alongside the data obtained from focus groups and interviews. The other results of these evaluations are used as a pre- and post-test analysis. [Note: because of time constraints and the poor completion rate of the pre-evaluation for the participants using alternative communication devices, people in the PCIL/ATU training were not asked to complete a post-evaluation]. The result of the training and evaluations provide insight into the following research questions: How do people with disabilities engage with government and what are the roles of policy knowledge, technology, and advocacy strategies in this engagement process? What is the role of technology in enabling and increasing access to government for people with disabilities?
Focus Groups and Interviews

Six weeks following the trainings, follow-up focus groups and individual interviews were conducted with the training participants. Focus groups allow for a deep, rich understanding of how advocacy and technology can facilitate empowerment of people with disabilities in civic engagement. It provided a forum for hearing directly from people with disabilities on their perceptions and experiences in accessing government; increasing civic awareness and responsibility; the role of advocacy, the use of technology, and alternative communication devices in civic participation; strategies to increase responsiveness of government; and other general issues related to participation in policy debate. Participants in the AL training completed a focus group in person. The ADA training participants completed the focus group questions individually by participating in a short telephone interview because of difficulty completing the focus group remotely. Participants in the PCIL/ATU training also completed the focus group directly with one of the researchers on an individual basis.

Qualitative data was also obtained from key stakeholders in each disability organization (N = 8). These open-ended in-depth interviews allowed stakeholders to add to existing secondary materials (i.e. the Community Resource Assessment); share perceptions and experiences of strategies used to increase participation of people with disabilities in policy debates; and provide important insight into key structural and process barriers and facilitators to promoting civic engagement. Thus, these interviews triangulate data on the civic engagement of people with disabilities. The qualitative data in this part of the research are useful for addressing all of the research questions, but they especially relate to the following research questions: Why do people with disabilities engage in policy debate, and what are the perceived barriers and facilitators to increasing civic participation? How do disability organizations build advocacy knowledge, enhance civic awareness and responsibility, and increase development of technology skills to enable people with disabilities to participate in policy debates?

Table 2 summarizes the number of participants in the various parts of this project.

Research Limitations

This project had three limitations: participant recruitment, technical difficulties, and participant response/dropout. Each of these are discussed below.

The majority of the participants in this research were identified by staff at the partner organizations. Although the project was advertised on listservs and distributed to people with disabilities, there was a very limited response. All of the participants were known to, or worked for, one of the partner organizations, suggesting they were already engaged with the disability community and actively seeking additional knowledge. Furthermore, one of the survey questions asked whether someone had voted in the last election, and 16/20 (80%) reported that they had. As reported earlier, only 57.3 per cent of people with disabilities voted in the 2008 elections (American Association of People with Disabilities,

Table 1: Training Sessions Format

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Emphasis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access Living (AL)</td>
<td>Series of two face-to-face trainings, one general and one focused on the experiences of a state lobbyist</td>
<td>10 in the first session and 11 in the second; all with disabilities who were staff or volunteers of AL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americans with Disabilities Act Center</td>
<td>One general webinar/ teleconference</td>
<td>Five people with disabilities who responded to a message posted to the Center’s listserv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress Center for Independent Living/ Assistive Technology Unit (PCIL/ATU)</td>
<td>Series of two face-to-face trainings, both general to account for the extra time needed for augmentative and alternative communication (AAC)</td>
<td>Six people who used AAC, recruited by PCIL or ATU staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These results suggest that the participants are not representative of people with disabilities as a whole, because they are already highly engaged. Therefore, it is unclear the extent to which the participants are representative of people with disabilities in general.

Technical difficulties limited many aspects of data collection and attendance at the trainings. This was especially an issue for the ADA webinar. On the morning of the training, only one participant was able to log into both the webinar and audio, despite detailed instructions provided by email and phone. The training session was rescheduled and the researchers worked one-on-one with each participant to ensure that they knew how to view the webinar on the rescheduled date. While each participant was able to access the training on the second day, it is ironic that individual training on using technology was necessary for a civic engagement training that emphasized how technology can facilitate inclusion of people with disabilities in policymaking. Technical difficulty was also an issue for the PCIL/ATU training participants. All of these individuals used alternative communication devices, and it was cumbersome and tiring (e.g. one of them uses a foot pedal to compose communication) for them to communicate and participate in the training. Communication difficulties are evident in the limited responses people in this training session gave to the pre-evaluation questions. In order to accommodate the extra time needed for response, the researchers organized an email listserv as a method to conduct the follow-up focus group so responses did not have to be immediate. However, this approach did not get any responses from the participants, due to restricted access to a computer and internet with accessible software. This limitation is a key finding because it highlights the difficulty that people who use alternative communication devices have communicating, which is likely to be exacerbated because policymakers rarely have much time to spend with a given individual or group.

Although there were only three dropouts from the trainings through the focus groups (one for the ADA Center and two for AL), missing out on their perspectives and not having a reason for their dropout raises questions. A better understanding of why they dropped out would contribute a lot of valuable information to the research. Prior to the training two additional people with disabilities indicated that they wanted to participate, but stopped responding to the researchers. They did consent to the research, meaning that there were 24 total original participants, and only 19 (79.2%) completed the research. For a short-term pilot study, the number of dropouts warrants additional consideration. For the people with disabilities that did not drop out, the researchers had to maintain constant contact and frequent reminders, in order to secure their participation. A number of participants indicated that email was their preferred method of communication, but they seldom checked or responded to it. If not for the vigilance and flexibility of the research team, that dropout rate would have been much higher.

Results

Stage 1: Community Resource Assessment

This section contains brief organizational descriptions and summaries of how each community disability organization engage in advocacy and technology.

Great Lakes ADA Center

The Great Lakes American with Disabilities Act (ADA) Center is a program of the Department of Disability and Human Development at the University of Illinois at Chicago. The center prides itself on providing information, materials, technological assistance, and training on the ADA to Region 5, which covers Illinois, Indiana,
Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. It offers a variety of training services in the form of audio conferences, online courses, podcasts, and webinars designed to build and enhance knowledge and facilitate discussion on the ADA. Through the Great Lakes Accessible Information Technology Initiative, the center is able to provide individuals and organizations with resources on information technology and its usage. They offer technical assistance, education, training, referrals, and materials via phone or online to those seeking information on technology accessibility. The Great Lakes ADA Center uses a range of media to share information, including through The Great Lakes Chronicle, employment legal briefs, the ADA document portal, an architectural compilation series, social networking sites, and smart phone applications.

**Access Living**

Access Living is a Center for Independent Living governed and staffed primarily by people with disabilities. It offers peer-oriented services, public education, awareness and development, teaching of advocacy skills, and the enforcement of civil rights on behalf of people with disabilities. Their mission is to “empower people with disabilities so they can lead dignified, independent lives and to foster an inclusive society for all people, with and without disabilities.” Advocacy is a major area for Access Living and they specialize in community development and organization, policy analysis, and civil rights. Access Living supports six grassroots groups that fight for social change in a specific area of interest. Through the Arts and Culture Project, AL helps to raise awareness and visibility of disability culture. As part of their policy work, Access Living staff network and build relationships with legislators to rally for policy change and creation. Access Living employs attorneys to provide legal counseling on civil rights issues such as education, housing, and discrimination concerns and to help educate consumers on their rights and how the legal system operates. Throughout its work, Access Living uses a peer-based philosophy to empower people with disabilities.

**Progress Center for Independent Living Summary**

The Progress Center for Independent Living (PCIL) is another community-based, non-profit Center for Independent Living focused on disability advocacy and is run by and for people with disabilities. The Progress Center believes that “independence is the ability to control one’s own life by making responsible choices from acceptable options.” PCIL provides four core services: information and referral on disability related topics; advocacy and direct support for disability rights; independent living skills training including budgeting, travel, personal assistant management, and job seeking to help people successfully live on their own in the community; and peer counseling and problem solving for people with disabilities. PCIL also holds training sessions for people with disabilities and conducts community education presentations on disability issues and policy. Through social media, e-mail, pamphlets, and a weekly radio show, PCIL is able to reach a wide range of consumers to educate individuals about independent living.

**Assistive Technology Unit**

The Assistive Technology Unit (ATU) is an interdisciplinary clinic of the Department of Disability and Human Development at the University of Illinois of Chicago. As a community-based service delivery program, it serves more than 90 per cent of its clients in their own home, school, work, or recreational environment. ATU staffs occupational therapists, physical therapists, rehabilitation engineers, and speech-language pathologists who specialize in assistive technology. The ATU defines assistive technology as “the use of commercially available, modified, and custom devices used by individuals with disabilities to maximize independence” and it offers this service in eight areas: adaptive equipment (custom-designed), augmentative communication, computer access, environmental control, home modification, mobility, seating, and worksite modification. The ATU offers educational workshops and graduate-level courses and a certificate program for professionals to enhance their knowledge of assistive technology. The ATU spreads information about their services through word of mouth, newsletters, digital pamphlets, academic publications, and conferences.

Each of these organizations build advocacy knowledge, enhance civic awareness and responsibility, and increase development of technology skills to increase participation of people with disabilities in policy debates. Furthermore, the organizations meet the goals of Article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Table 3 summarizes the community resource assessment in relation to the goals of this research.
Stage 2: Training Evaluations

A major component of this pilot project was to conduct civic engagement trainings in partnership with the disability organizations described above. In order to assess the impact of the trainings, each participant was asked to complete an evaluation before and six to eight weeks after the training. Each evaluation was unique to the organization that conducted the training, although six questions were consistent across the groups. Table 4 contains the responses to each of these questions (as noted before, the PCIL/ATU group did not complete a post-evaluation).

Although the participants may have been more engaged than people with disabilities in general, the training still showed an impact. Agreement with each of the questions indicates greater levels of civic engagement or understanding of the policy process. The cumulative responses (referred to the shaded cells in Table 4) indicate that the trainings were positive and achieved their goals. A chi-square test of significance ($\chi^2=9.4$, df=4, p-value=0.0517) shows that the results for each evaluation are independent of the other. These results are statistically significant at the 90 per cent confidence level, and very close to significant at the 95 per cent (which would be significant with a higher count). We can be confident that there is a different distribution of answers in the pre-and post-evaluations. More specifically, in the post-evaluation, participants were more likely to agree or agree more strongly.

The evaluations followed the same trend when broken down into individual training sessions. However, given the small number of participants per training, statistics have less significance. Results from each question for each group show that participants were more likely to agree or agree more strongly with the various questions relating to their civic engagement and policy knowledge following the trainings.

Although this trend was consistent, questions about the validity of the responses are interesting. The results suggest the possibility of acquiescence, which refers to the tendency of survey and questionnaire respondents to answer “yes” or agree.
with items on a survey instrument during research (Finlay & Lyons, 2002). On the pre-evaluation, 79.8 percent of their responses were either agree or strongly agree, and that number was 94.2 percent on the post-evaluation. This research does not have a way to wholly validate those responses and determine whether or not people with disabilities can back up what they said. However, one of the questions does offer some insight. People with disabilities were asked if they understood what civic engagement is, and in the pre-evaluations 16 out of 20 (80%) agreed or strongly disagreed. In the post-evaluation, 14 of 15 (93.3%) answered this way. One of the short answer questions asked people to define civic engagement. The responses for this question, especially during the pre-evaluation do not show much clarity on understanding civic engagement. The group from PCIL illustrates this point. Although three people either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, during the qualitative portion three people acknowledged that they did not know, and the only one that provided a substantial answer talked only about voting. This does not mean that every participant was confused, or acquiesced to the question as it was asked, but future research needs to follow-up this pilot study with more robust ways of measuring the knowledge that people obtained from these trainings, and how they put it into practice.

**Stage 3: Focus Groups and Interviews**

The qualitative data help to triangulate the survey responses. The answers to the open-ended questions are more interesting and provide valuable depth and insight into the impact of civic engagement trainings and local disability organizations. This section presents results from the focus groups with people with disabilities and interviews with disability stakeholders in the four organizations (see Appendix A for more detailed context of the participants such as pseudonyms, organization, and role). Two main themes emerged from the qualitative data: advocacy and action, and technology and these are discussed below.
Advocacy and Action

Advocacy takes many forms in the disability community, ranging from awareness raising and education to direct action. Participants described advocacy in terms of “knowing your rights and how to fight for them” (Kristen), and “having a voice” (Christina) and “do[ing] something for themselves” (Trevor). One staff member described advocacy as seeking to understand and alter both the root of oppression and its effects on the disability community (Allen). Because advocacy can take different forms depending on both the advocates and the audience, staff make it a priority to test and develop effective strategies for change. One staff member explained that his organization trains on a variety of strategies but “[w]hat doesn’t change is how advocates are going to organize and educate the consumers to take charge of their own lives (Brendan).

Advocacy via education was perhaps the most mentioned tool for empowering people with disabilities to participate in civic society. Advocacy staff believed that information translation was a key strategy for helping consumers understand advocacy strategies, as well as their rights and responsibilities. One participant described the importance of “educating [consumers] about an issue and letting them decide for themselves what stand they want to take, and pointing them in the direction to allow them to advocate for what they believe in” (Catie). Other staff members stressed the importance of enabling consumers to explore their own interests and values. Participants shared the effects of the awareness raising activities conducted though this project, saying “Now when I hear the news and hear them talk about budget cuts, my radar goes up when before I didn’t really care or know how it would affect me” (Christina). Another spoke of how the trainings prompted him to take direct action: “As a direct result of the training...I made a phone call to a politician. I called the governor’s office and said no budget cuts...I’m 51 and it was the first time in my life” (Evan).

Consumer education through advocacy training enables people with disabilities to have a stronger presence and a louder voice when interacting with the government. Staff described how the “contact of people in government with the people the programs are actually supposed to serve is a powerful thing” (Tim). Both advocacy staff and participants gave specific advice on the strategies they have found to be most useful and effective. Staff and participants generally prefer to advocate face to face with legislators and policymakers, coupled with awareness-raising activities such as street action (e.g. protests). Other effective strategies, especially when transportation is a barrier to physical access, include aggressive letter-writing or emailing campaigns, and phone calls. Education efforts spread beyond the disability community, however. An Access Living staff member said that a key factor in the larger disability advocacy effort is “educating the public to convey the message that disability issues are social issues” (Evan). Disability organizations are striving to educate their communities, disabled and non-disabled, about the issues they face. Peer support is seen as a key facilitator to successful advocacy action, and advocates take action to educate potential allies. Participants and staff serve on advisory boards and committees to partner with the larger community in creating an accessible environment. In addition, staff saw disability organizations as having a major role in making their community more visible, placing people with disabilities “into the public eye and into the minds of decision-makers” (Allen). Advocates also pursued “getting local media involved on covering issues” so that their views are included in coverage (Jeremiah).

As with any grassroots effort, there is “power in numbers” (Lenny). Participants strongly urged one another to be bold self advocates. During a focus group, one participant encouraged the others, “you have to show your face. We are disabled and proud and here to stay. To maintain power, we need to exercise the power that we have” (Elizabeth). Another person, when discussing developing effective strategies, advised the group to practice, try different advocacy methods, and work with others in the disability community (Catie). However, even the most powerful voice is rendered null if policymakers are not willing to hear it. Participants and staff shared that the greatest barrier faced by advocates is a lack of understanding or a willingness to understand disability issues. In general, staff and participants viewed the government as largely unreceptive to their message, echoing one another in saying that the government makes virtually no effort to reach out to people with disabilities. They suggested that the government needs to take action not only to meet the requirements of disability laws, but also to match the spirit of these laws and let the disability community know they are being considered.

Government bodies need to provide not only physical, but also programmatic access to
people with disabilities to enable all to participate. This was largely seen as lacking, however. One participant shared that “it’s an issue of even if they are willing to listen to us...do they have other priorities?” (Dana). Often, disability community members felt powerless in government situations. Participants and staff felt disempowered because they felt the government only wants you to vote and are generally not receptive to receiving input on issues. Brendan shared:

Government and politicians don’t see our community as a threat. They don’t see us as a threat or an economic resource to help them. So we continue being left behind, unfortunately. We are breaking barriers though. It’s going to take a while before government puts us on their agenda. It takes great effort to be at the table, and not on the menu.

**Technology and Civic Engagement**

Although technology cannot put the concerns of people with disabilities on the political agenda, it is an integral factor for engaging with civic society. Many people with disabilities are largely unable to afford the technologies necessary for participation. Third party payers will typically fund basic communication devices and software, but participants stated that this was rarely adequate to meet their communication needs. Additionally, third party payers will not allow for these devices to be used as a computer with internet capabilities, so any potential for long-distance communication is eliminated. In the cases that people with disabilities are able to afford their own computers, they may not have regular access to the internet. According to a staff member: “The fact that so few of our consumers have regular access to the internet is a problem and we still rely so much on U.S. mail and on phone calls to reach a lot of our consumers. The technologies are not always readily available” (Tim).

People with disabilities also expressed their frustrations related to constantly changing technologies. One person complained that as technology advances, “older versions don’t work anymore and it becomes difficult or impossible to access [technology]. Staying up to date is expensive and a lot of people with disabilities are unemployed” (Paul). While some people saw constantly changing technology as a barrier, others viewed it as a future opportunity. Cassandra, of the Great Lakes ADA Center, noted that “we’ll be looking at more mobile technology...We’re stuck right now because it’s a time of change, but our options are multiplying” (Cassandra).

While technology was often seen as a facilitator for engagement, many people with disabilities do not possess the necessary skills to effectively use it. People with disabilities expressed that more funding is needed for “speech-related services of course to help with communication and environmental controls” (Lenny). A major technological barrier to civic engagement was learning how to use the computer; staff remarked that getting everyone trained to be at the same skill level is a challenge. Staff saw their organizations as having a major role in helping people learn how to use technology and making people aware of the options available to them. Practical knowledge about technology can also be a gateway to a sense of belonging in the community. Learning about technology “helps people get in touch with interests they forgot they had, or discover new things out there that they didn’t know about. It makes a huge difference in a person’s perception of where they fit in the world” (Jeremiah).

Technology was found to play a gateway role in allowing people with disabilities to interact with the government and advocate for change. Though some argued that “nothing takes the place of old fashioned, one-on-one organizing” (Brendan), others strongly preferred online-only advocacy. The Internet enables a person to connect directly with legislators without having to face obstacles such as transportation and communication difficulties. Some participants commented that they prefer online interaction because “with a computer nobody knows [you have a disability] because you can type it, they can read it, and that barrier actually goes away” (Catie). Participants stressed that, ideally, an e-mail or phone call should receive the same attention as a face-to-face interaction. Technology facilitates independence and gives people a voice. It allows advocates to reach more people in less time and provide them with more information over time. Participants and staff agreed that technology is essential to allowing people with disabilities and policymakers to have a conversation on efforts for social change.

Having access to the Internet and other technology is of little use if the information available online is inaccessible. Staff remarked that “the amount of information accessible on the internet has exploded but when it’s not accessible, it doesn’t help. Ensuring that websites are designed and created accessibly and new technologies being
accessible is key” (Paul). They urged that accessibility needs to be at the forefront of design, rather than being an afterthought. According to participants, the government should have a responsibility to lead the way in accessible online information. One participant provided a suggestion to help create a more accessible online environment: “They [the government] could call and see how we use our computers, then we might give them some ideas about how they could make computers for people with disabilities, make telephones for disabled people” (Trevor). Participants and staff generally felt that the government’s technology is outdated and that they need to take steps to gain awareness of new technologies.

Conclusion

The research provides important policy, advocacy and technology insights into the civic engagement experiences of people with disabilities and disability advocacy organizations. The research draws on Article 29 of the CRPD to further our understanding of the effective tools and strategies so that people with disabilities can increase their involvement in public life.

People with disabilities require a range of informal and formal supports to engage in civic society, including: peer mentoring with experienced disability advocates (i.e. to address feelings of powerlessness, isolation, learn strategies); increasing opportunities for knowledge building through training/education (i.e. to help understand policy processes, how to engage with politicians); and better access to practical information (i.e. to learn about voting rights, how to register to vote) and accessible technology (i.e. to assist with communication, group empowerment). Increasing the political engagement of people with disabilities will ensure that new policies do not continue the cycles of oppression and marginalization historically experienced by this population.

Immediate solutions could involve developing ongoing training programs in conjunction with disability advocacy organizations, as well as setting up peer mentoring groups so that experienced disability advocates can share their strategies with other people with disabilities. Such programs can be modeled on the small scale trainings discussed in this research. A longer term challenge is addressing broader structural barriers facing people with disabilities, such as environmental barriers (i.e. inaccessible buildings, transportation and technologies), and attitudinal barriers (i.e., perceptions that people with disabilities are not valuable constituency groups). Training and peer-mentoring would also be a first step in addressing these more complex barriers. Additional strategies could involve increasing the visibility of people with disabilities on advisory boards and in other public positions, and awareness raising through email/letter writing campaigns, face-to-face meetings, and phone calls with legislators.

Parity of participation in civic engagement enables marginalized groups to be agents of social change. Through a community resource assessment, civic engagement trainings and empirical data gathered through pre-post evaluations, interviews and focus groups, this project identified key facilitators and barriers to developing and enhancing civic knowledge and practices of people with disabilities. However, further research efforts on a larger scale are still needed. The collaboration between individuals, disability advocates, researchers, scholars and service providers both with and without disabilities enabled an important participatory approach to research; thereby offering a unique and diverse perspective on an important public policy issue. Involving a range of stakeholders is an essential component of any future efforts to better support civic participation. It is through advancing our understanding of the effective tools and strategies to increase involvement of people with disabilities, including adults who use augmentative and alternative communication devices, that we can ensure the rights of all citizens.

About the Authors

All three authors are with the University of Illinois at Chicago. Sarah Parker Harris is an assistant professor and Randall Owen is a postdoctoral research associate, both in the department of disability and human development. Cindy De Ruiter is a doctoral candidate in the department of occupational therapy.

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Blanck, P., Hill, E., Siegal, C. & Waterstone,


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.
Making the Past Come Alive: Public Archaeology at Fort St. Joseph

Reviewed by Dean L. Anderson

Steve Kettner, DVD producer, lead videographer and editor, Media Production IT, Western Michigan University

People are fascinated with archaeology. But for many, reading about it or looking at exhibits in museums is as close as they can get to it. Some people even express the opinion that archaeologists are not very forthcoming about their work, and they only share their discoveries in stuffy journal articles read by other archaeologists.

Fortunately, this situation is changing. There is a growing effort in the field to bring archaeology to the public. The Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project at Western Michigan University is a striking example of this trend, and the DVD entitled Making the Past Come Alive shows us why.

Along with archaeological investigation and research, the goals of the Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project since its inception more than 10 years ago have included public outreach and education. This DVD illustrates the various venues through which the project brings archaeology and history to the public. Importantly, this story is told by students, teachers, dignitaries, re-enactors, and members of the visiting public as they each speak about their own experience with the project, having had the opportunity to engage in archaeology firsthand. This is a definite strength of the DVD. The viewer is treated to a university administrator extolling the accomplishments of the project, a teacher explaining how archaeology can be used to teach geometry, and a very poised middle school student commenting on the excitement of archaeological discovery.

The Fort St. Joseph project’s dedication to outreach is conspicuous in its effort to create opportunities for different constituencies to participate in archaeology. One of the core functions of the project is to offer a class in archaeological field methods taught through Western Michigan University. But what sets the project apart is the variety of camps offered that provide access to archaeology for the interested public beyond the traditional university student clientele. There is a week-long program for teachers through which they can earn graduate credits or continuing education units toward re-certification of their teaching licenses. The program for teachers helps bring archaeology into classrooms, and generates innovative ideas for using archaeology to teach subjects like math, history, science, and language. In addition, the project offers a camp for high school students and adults, and another separate camp for middle school students.

Each year, the project holds a weekend open house and welcomes the public to the site. Visitors get to see excavation in progress and talk to students and professors about what they are finding and how it contributes to our understanding of life on the Michigan frontier in the eighteenth century. Temporary outdoor exhibits are set up with information panels about the fort site and displays of artifacts recovered. In a grassy field adjacent to the site, a host of re-enactors add a touch of living history to the event, demonstrating period clothing, implements, weapons, and food. Attendance at the annual open house is testimony to public interest in archaeology: the number of visitors often exceeds 1,500 people and includes travelers from out-of-state.

The DVD runs 25 minutes in length, which makes it amenable for use in a classroom setting. It would be a useful tool to illustrate outreach and education in a college-level public archaeology class. At the same time, the video would have been strengthened by a brief discussion of the history of Fort St. Joseph. As the DVD begins, the narrator states that “Hidden beneath layers of soil and tree roots for more than two centuries lay the remains of an important 18th century mission, garrison, and trading post—Fort St. Joseph.” Unfortunately, that sentence is the only information provided to the viewer about the history of the site. A brief historical overview of the site, and a map depicting its location, would have given viewers more context and put them on firmer footing for understanding the ensuing discussion of the project.

The commitment the Fort St. Joseph project has made to public participation and public education is impressive, and sets a high standard worthy of attention in the field of archaeology. Through the obvious enthusiasm and investment conveyed by those who have had a part in the Fort St. Joseph project, Making the Past Come Alive does a commendable job of showing how such a project entices, educates, and excites the public.

About the Reviewer

Dean L. Anderson is the state archaeologist, Michigan State Historic Preservation Office, Lansing, Michigan.
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A separate cover sheet with the name(s), affiliation(s), and other identifying information and contact information (address, phone numbers, fax numbers, and email addresses) for each contributing author should be supplied. Additionally, authors should include four to six keywords at the bottom of the cover sheet.

All identifying information or references to the author(s) must be removed from the manuscript. Manuscripts that include identifying information will not be reviewed prior to correction. Each manuscript must also include an abstract of 150 words or less that summarizes the major themes of the manuscript. Manuscripts not meeting these criteria will be returned to the author before being sent out for review.

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Authors will be notified of a decision in a timely manner consistent with thorough scholarly review.
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• scan for style standards; request revisions if necessary
• assign manuscript number
• send acknowledgement email to primary author
• select appropriate reviewers

First Review
• send to reviewers: review request, masked manuscript, review form
• reassign manuscript if reviewers are unable to complete review
• send to reviewers: reminder email one week after requested due date if reviews not yet returned
• send to editor: combined reviewer comments/rating form

Editor Decision
• accept (if accepted, proceed to Step 8)
• recommend revisions; resubmit
• reject (end of process)

Revise and Resubmit Request
• notify primary author of decision
• send to author: letter from editor, document with reviewer comments, manuscript edits and tracked changes
• request resubmission within four weeks

Resubmission and Second Review
• scan for standards (esp. masked copy); if necessary, send author a request for revision
• reassign manuscript to original reviewers
• send to reviewers: masked manuscript, copy of masked letter from editor to primary author, masked document with original reviewer comments, review form, and masked manuscript with track changes/comments from editor
• request return of re-review within two weeks
• send to reviewers: reminder email one week after requested due date if reviews not yet returned
• send to editor: combined reviewer comments/rating form

Editor Decision
• accept (if accepted, proceed to Step 8)
• accept with minor revision

Accept with Minor Revision
• send to primary author: notification of decision, requested revisions to be returned within two weeks
• once revisions received, read thoroughly to ensure completion of all requests
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Noted Alabamians: From top, l-r, bluesman Willie King, writer Harper Lee, coach Paul “Bear” Bryant, scientist E.O. Wilson, Olympic champion Jesse Owens

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