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I am writing this at 39,000 feet above the plains of central and western Nebraska, on my way home from the 2016 Engagement Scholarship Consortium (ESC) Annual Conference in Omaha. I found ESC to be such a successful, invigorating, and rewarding gathering of a most diverse group of engagement scholars and practitioners. *JCES* will be publishing a special edition in 2017 that will report on the highlights and share many of the stimulating and innovative papers that were presented there.

While at ESC I was privileged to represent *JCES* at the traditional editors’ forum along with my counterparts from four other engagement journals. While we all agreed on several important aspects of the engagement publishing world—basing manuscripts on rigorous scientific work, learning from “revise and resubmits” and rejections, and focusing on the key foci of each journal—we also differed in key ways. Those differences strengthen and widen the engagement publishing landscape by providing journals that target very different niches and thus ensuring that a wide diversity of your experiences and research needs can be met and shared with a large audience. *JCES* has been and will remain a “different kind of journal” that will strive to share the work of academics and researchers, practitioners, students, and community members in ways that appeal to all of us and increase the value of our work.

I was also thrilled to meet the *JCES* team face-to-face for the first time. Until now, we had all been faceless voices on conference calls. Not surprisingly, we all hit it off and I think we now have a new understanding of each other’s skills and passions and vision for *JCES*. New to the team is Krystal Dozier, assistant to the editor. Krystal is a graduate student at The University of Alabama, and brings energy and youth, and a sense of humor, to our shared goal of delivering and improving *JCES*.

Helping us publish a robust and provocative collection of articles each issue is a team of reviewers, many who also serve on our Editorial Board. Most reviewers, however, remain anonymous and driven by a selfless desire to promote engagement scholarship and do so for no public recognition and the occasional mumbled “thank you” from one of us. So, in gratitude for the invaluable service our reviewers play in keeping us from being just another publishing outlet, Thank You! Blind peer review is an enduring characteristic of quality scholarship, and you provide the expertise and direction that is essential to our mission. We are always looking for more reviewers; if you are interested in helping us, just drop us an email and we will put you to work. More reviewers will help us meet our biggest challenge brought on by our success over our first decade of existence, providing timely feedback to our authors.

Issue 9.2 of *JCES* continues to stretch the boundaries of engagement scholarship. For instance, Randy Stoecker and J. Ashleigh Ross introduce us to the emotional side of engagement—the personal needs and experiences of those traumatized by external forces. Subjects appreciated and responded to the emotional support that researchers and others provided, but in large they perceived...
researchers in general as insensitive to community needs. Closely related to this work is the work of Louanne Keenan, who describes an interdisciplinary study in Canada that documents the administrative and operational challenges that thwarted and invigorated work linking homelessness and incarceration to women's health.

Nicole Thompson and Nancy Franz elaborate on the decision choices that engagement practitioners face as university scholars. Their work will go a long way toward helping those inside and outside academia better understand why we do the things we do.

Sharon Casapulla and Michael Hess describe their model of engagement education in which “teaching and learning are place-focused, project-based, asset-driven and democratically oriented.”

Michelle Kaiser, Christy Rogers, Michelle Hand, Casey Hoy, and Nick Stanich introduce us to the creation of food-mapping teams—diverse interdisciplinary expertise and resources of university researchers and community partners whose work informs, and impacts community engagement.

I'll end by reemphasizing a point made by Fay Fletcher, Alicia Hibbert, Brent Hammer, and Susan Ladouceur, in their article on authentic relationships, that draws focus to the principle of “…working with, versus for, in or on community.” JCES is all about working with communities.

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The Emotional Context of Higher Education Community Engagement
J. Ashleigh Ross and Randy Stoecker

Abstract
Higher education community engagement has an emotional context, especially when it focuses on people who have been traumatized by oppression, exploitation, and exclusion. The emotional trauma may be multiplied many times when those people are also dealing with the unequally imposed consequences of disasters. This paper is based on interviews with residents of the Lower 9th Ward of New Orleans who experienced various forms of higher education community engagement in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. The results are surprising. First, residents most appreciated the sense of emotional support they received from service learners and volunteers, rather than the direct service those outsiders attempted to engage in. Second, residents did not distinguish between traditional researchers and community-based researchers, and perceived researchers in general as insensitive to community needs. The article explores the implications of these findings for preparing students and conducting research in any context involving emotional trauma.

The practices of higher education community engagement—service learning, community-based research, and similar practices going under different labels—have in common their focus on people who are suffering from exclusion, oppression, and exploitation in contemporary society. In essence, the targets of our service are people experiencing trauma of various kinds. It does not require a deficit approach (McKnight, 1996) to understand that people denied access to the quality of life enjoyed by those of us accorded dignified and fairly paid work, safe streets, and public voice will experience those conditions on an emotional level. In fact, the most important consideration for our engagement may be the emotional trauma of such circumstances.

How prepared are community-engaged scholars to understand and empathize with, rather than exacerbate, the emotional trauma of oppression, exclusion, and exploitation? And how important is it for us to do so? We focus on higher education community engagement in the Lower 9th Ward following Hurricane Katrina. There has been perhaps no group of people more subject to higher education community engagement than the people of New Orleans and especially of the Lower 9th Ward. Uncountable college students have spent spring breaks, summers, and sometimes semesters in New Orleans, gutting houses, running surveys, and doing all manner of other projects. It is important to understand, however, that the context in which these students were working was not simply that of a natural disaster.

The Case of the Lower 9th Ward
The Lower 9th Ward in New Orleans is east and down river of the central city and the French Quarter. Landowners originally built plantations in long strips extending from the river to the Bayou Bienvenue for river access, and located plantation houses on the highest elevations. After slavery ended, the higher area transitioned into a business district, and wealthy residents built on this natural levee, while freed black men and women settled the back areas of swamps and wilderness. Human activity led to large-scale deterioration of coastal wetlands and made low-lying areas of New Orleans more vulnerable to flooding (Day, Boesch, Clairain, & Kemp, 2007) where minority populations, due to discriminatory housing practices, were more likely to live (Colten, 2006). The construction of canals further decreased the storm protection qualities of the wetlands and cut the Lower 9th Ward's land connection to New Orleans proper (Germany, 2007; The Data Center, 2014) creating a community that has experienced isolation and neglect from the rest of the city (Germany, 2007). Residents of the area felt like the backwater of New Orleans (Langhorst & Cockerham, 2008).

The consequences of this history became clear in 1965 during Hurricane Betsy (Bullard, 2007, when the levee failed along the Industrial Canal, flooding 80 percent of the Lower 9th Ward, stranding people on their roofs and leading to 81 deaths (The Data Center, 2014). Many Lower 9th Ward residents did not view Hurricane Betsy merely as a natural disaster but suspected the government...
intentionally blew up the levee along the Industrial Canal to save other parts of the city (Bullard, 2007; Colten, 2007), which actually happened in 1927 (Barry, 2007).

Even though the area suffered from Hurricane Betsy and white flight, it also boasted one of the highest home ownership rates in the city. Corner stores, personal gardens, and local hunting and fishing opportunities supplied many residents’ needs. The Lower 9th Ward has never had a bank, but residents created a local subsistence-based economy (Ross & Zepeda, 2011) with a vibrant community of active social aid and pleasure clubs, including the local Mardi Gras Indians tribe—a central component of the African American Mardi Gras. Neighbors knew each other and extended family members often lived within blocks of each other (Jackson, 2006).

Hurricane Katrina exposed the effects of poverty, class, political decision-making, community structure, and discriminatory land use practices (Pastor, Bullard, Boyce, Fothergill, Morello-Frosch, & Wright, 2006; Yodmani, 2001; Cannon, 1994) in creating unequal vulnerability to disaster (Kellman, 2011). When New Orleans mayor Ray Nagin ordered mandatory evacuation for the entire population, the main evacuation method of personal cars was not available to many in the Lower 9th Ward, where, in 2000, 32.4 percent of residents did not have a vehicle (The Data Center, 2014). Thus, many of the residents attempted to ride out the storm. When multiple levees failed, the most powerful and deepest water was in the Lower 9th Ward. The residents could not occupy their homes for six months (Colten, 2007), and could only visit in daytime. Many were relocated far away. The Lower 9th Ward was the only community forcibly prevented from resettling, even though other areas of the city sustained similar flooding damage (Langhorst & Cockerham, 2008).

Residents felt forgotten and neglected by their own country, and the labeling of them as “refugees” reinforced this notion. They had to make a strong and immediate case to rebuild if they were ever to occupy their homes again. One of the first and most significant sources of help for the residents came from individuals and organized volunteers, including academic groups that came down to do research and planning exercises. The very first house occupied after Katrina was the headquarters of Common Ground, a volunteer-based grassroots organization that provided rebuilding and legal assistance to residents. No data are available on the numbers of volunteers in the Lower 9th Ward but many organizations and academic institutions partnered with the community. By 2012 at least 15 organizations had formed to coordinate volunteers working within the Lower 9th Ward community. When asked how many volunteers their Lower 9th Ward organizations facilitated, community leaders responded with a range of numbers from 3,000 to 50,000. Volunteers participated in gutting homes, mowing lawns, and numerous other tasks for individual homeowners and community spaces. These efforts lent credibility to the Lower 9th Ward’s rebuilding efforts and put attention on the plight of the residents trying to rebuild.

Not all of the attention was altruistic. “Voluntouring” became a popular description for people going to New Orleans through an alternative break or church program to do a service project and have fun in the city. Large organizations and research groups came in but provided limited assistance to community residents (Pyles, 2009). It was the place to be for movies, documentaries, public art projects, books, and studies. Tour buses continually drove through with people snapping pictures while residents went about the task of rebuilding. These least altruistic visitors are clearly insensitive to the emotional trauma experienced by the residents. But how did those acting from more altruistic motives influence the trauma felt by residents? This question requires learning more about the emotional trauma created by the intersection of oppression and disaster.

The Emotional Trauma of Disaster and Discrimination

It may go without mention that natural disasters are emotionally traumatic events, but it is useful to establish how they are traumatic. For the emotional impacts may vary in ways that are relevant for this analysis. A review of studies on emotional trauma and disaster contexts from 1981 to 2001 found that youth seemed to suffer most. But among adults, women, ethnic minorities, people of middle age, those experiencing more severe disasters, those already having secondary stressors, and those with weak or declining psychosocial resources were likely to feel more traumatized (Norris, Friedman, Watson, Byrne, Diaz, & Kaniasty, 2002). In a companion article, the research emphasized the importance of early intervention for people in disaster contexts (Norris, Friedman, & Watson, 2002). In this research, the
authors included mass violence in their definition of disaster. Neighborhoods in Chicago that suffer dozens of shootings in a weekend would qualify, under this definition, as disaster contexts.

A strangely prescient study collected stress data from local college students 14 days before the Loma Prieta earthquake, and then was able to collect comparison measures after it. The study found, among other things, that students who experienced greater stress symptoms before the earthquake had even greater stress following it (Nolen-Hoeksema & Morrow, 1991). One can imagine people suffering the daily injustices of racial and economic exclusion having higher stress levels that would be further elevated by a disaster.

One of the potentially defining characteristics of people experiencing disaster situations is a traumatic sense of loss and loneliness. Walsh (2007) explored some of these feelings among disaster survivors, including from Hurricane Katrina. She proposed that, rather than providing individual treatment for people suffering traumatic loss in disaster contexts, rebuilding social networks is more important. Such an intervention, we will see, is particularly important in our case.

The Question of Community Impact of Higher Education Community Engagement

Concerns are growing about the value of higher education community engagement. While superficial surveys suggest that community agency staff are generally satisfied with service learning (Vernon & Ward, 1999; Ferrari & Worrall, 2000; Birdsall, 2005; Bailis & Ganger, 2006), more in-depth research shows that they also have low expectations and see themselves as providing as much to the service learner as they get back in service (Bell & Carlson, 2009). Beyond these studies of agency staff, however, there is almost no research looking at actual community outcomes of service learning, or asking the constituency members served by organizations and service learners how they perceive service learning (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009; Stoecker, Beckman, & Min, 2010). Further, while community-based research is touted as a “higher form of service learning” (Strand, Marullo, Cutfforth, Stoecker, & Donohue, 2003) there is no research assessing its actual value to communities.

Why the dearth of research on community outcomes? Mostly, service learning has been designed for educating students, and the research has followed that objective, with myriad studies discussing the effects of service learning on students (Warren, 2012). The lack of focus on community outcomes also appears in our definitions. Academics distinguish between various forms of community engagement, and especially between supposedly curricular-based service learning (sometimes called academic service learning) and student volunteerism or extra-curricular community service (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). But such distinctions are irrelevant to community people, who often only see students volunteering in their communities and neither know nor care whether they are receiving course credit (Garcia, Nehrling, Martin, & SeBlonka, 2009).

Most importantly, when professors and their students attempt to work with people in crisis, whether people are experiencing those crises as disconnected individual trauma or as a collective disaster, it is difficult to figure out how to have the greatest impact. Whether we wander into the Lower 9th Ward of New Orleans or multiple neighborhoods in Detroit or other communities, there is almost nothing to guide us. How should we work with individuals experiencing the traumas created by oppression, exploitation, and exclusion? How do we avoid prolonging or deepening the trauma? And can our community engagement help people manage the experience of trauma?

Research Methods

This research focuses on Lower 9th Ward residents’ perceptions of higher education community engagement in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. As such, it is an “extreme case” in Yin’s (2013) terms. Extreme cases allow us to see processes operating more vividly, while the findings may still be relevant to less extreme cases. Indeed, the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina in the Lower 9th Ward may only be different from that experienced by communities in U.S. cities such as Newark, Detroit, Chicago, and others in its suddenness. It is entirely possible that the focus of service learning on people suffering from deep-rooted oppression, exploitation, and exclusion may mean that the practice is dealing with people experiencing disaster circumstances even when they are not interpreted that way.

This research was designed in collaboration with the first author’s networks of Lower 9th Ward organizations and residents, with whom she had been working for a number of years using a community-based process. During the research planning and interviewing stages, she organized a
research planning team of 10 individuals, including residents and representatives from multiple organizations who had worked with academic partners. This team helped to identify key questions to ask, and key people to interview.

This article is part of a broader study of community, academic, and outside stakeholder perceptions of higher education engagement in the Lower 9th Ward. For this article, the data includes semi-structured in-depth interviews with formal and informal community leaders collected in January, March, June, and November of 2013. The first author interviewed a total of 22 community leaders—14 residents and eight community organization leaders. She interviewed five residents twice to gain a deeper understanding of themes that were emerging from the interviews. These five residents had a broader understanding of issues and could discuss and interpret the themes and place them into the larger context of rebuilding. These residents had also made themselves available to the researcher and were invested in the research while other residents preferred to play a less active role. The interviews typically lasted 30 to 60 minutes, and focused on involvement with and perceptions of campus-community partnerships and were approved by the University of Wisconsin-Madison Institutional Review Board.

It is important to note that, while this research attempted to determine residents’ perceptions of service learning and community-based research specifically, it is unable to do so. Residents did not distinguish between service learners and volunteers, mostly neither knowing nor caring whether a young person was getting course credit for volunteering. Likewise, they did not distinguish basic research from community-based research or journalism, even when pressed. Residents tended to refer to all labor-focused student assistance as “volunteers” and all students and faculty doing research or planning exercises as “researchers.” It should give us pause that all our efforts to make service learning and community-based research differentiated practices has been to no avail in this setting. In this research, then, we will use the residents’ terms of “volunteers” and “researchers.”

We also want to note that the research did not set out to study the emotional consequences of higher education community engagement in disaster contexts. There were no specific questions attempting to assess psychological health or post-traumatic stress symptoms. Rather, this theme of the emotional impact of higher education community engagement began to emerge out of the interviews unexpectedly, and is presented here as an initial exploration into what we believe is a new crucial area of research and practice for the field.

Findings

Widespread trauma provided the backdrop for academic involvement in the Lower 9th Ward where residents had collectively and individually suffered a catastrophic event. They felt broken and forgotten by the government. Their homes were destroyed and they had lost personal possessions from photographs to favorite clothes, all of which held memories from their pre-Katrina lives. Many family members who had lived within blocks of each other were now scattered across the country, some were still missing, and others were deceased. Residents didn’t know if they would be able to rebuild their houses or if they would get their old jobs back. Every single aspect of their lives was upended.

Residents were in a fundamentally different mental space than their out-of-state academic partners in dealing with these intensely emotional issues of personal loss coupled with feelings of vulnerability to both government decisions and natural elements. Any in-depth conversation with a resident usually included discussions of loss and lasting trauma, which provided a constant reminder about the immensity of suffering that many residents were experiencing. When the first author, during an earlier community survey, walked up to talk to one man who was sitting on a chair outside of his house she enthusiastically introduced herself and asked if he wanted to participate in the survey. “I just lost my wife and my son,” he said. “I’m sorry, I can’t right now.” Another survey respondent became physically and mentally stressed when the conversation turned to water, requiring a change of subject.

University and college faculty and students, even if they came with mental health training, were rarely equipped to handle the level of trauma that the residents suffered. Many of the faculty and students came to address an issue such as labor needs, planning and design, environmental restoration, and historic preservation. They did not anticipate dealing with residents’ mental and emotional support needs. There was a gap between what residents needed and what academic groups expected to provide in terms of a holistic approach to the disaster.
Even though most academic partners were not fully aware of and did not understand the complexity of the residents’ experiences, the most surprising finding of this research is that residents report experiencing some select psychological emotional benefits as a result of the compassionate academic presence. The presence of academics, especially student volunteers, demonstrated to residents that they had not been forgotten and their lives were valued. Residents reported getting an emotional boost from the company of students that helped make them more determined to rebuild. This is an important, if unplanned outcome from academic efforts since the students’ stated goal was to make tangible changes to the physical surroundings and not explicitly address the emotional needs of residents. We do not know about the extent to which students thought about their impact on the emotional well-being of residents, but doing so was not part of their planned actions.

Also surprising is the finding that residents did not experience this same sense of emotional support from researchers, even though many of the researchers surveyed for the broader study suggested that they also became involved in the rebuilding. Instead, as we will see, residents perceived researchers as being less caring and providing fewer immediate benefits. Thus, although the overall influx of academic assistance was physical proof that the area was not fighting the rebuilding battle alone, Lower 9th Ward residents and organization leaders perceived different motivations of researchers and student volunteers.

**Resident Perceptions of Student Volunteers**

The residents expressed gratitude for the volunteers because they demonstrated that someone cared enough about their lives to come down and personally help out. As one resident said, “There is not a person in the Lower 9th Ward whose life was not touched by a volunteer.” The volunteers helped carry the emotional load by listening to residents, which provided a cathartic release for some of them, and by working side-by-side with residents to rebuild their homes and their lives. Eight interview participants discussed how volunteers brought hope and inspiration, and provided motivation and support for the residents in the rebuilding process. People referred to the ways that volunteers freely gave their time and offered their compassion, mentioning how students directly impacted the recovery, or noted the mental benefits they felt from student involvement. One resident illuminated this perception, saying “You get to see these young people and it restored your faith in humanity.”

One resident said the effect of the volunteers grew because there were so many volunteers contributing. He spoke to how this would make the community better than it had been:

All the students who come here come here unasked. They come here willing to do whatever they can. They may not be able to do more than just tear down a wall of sheetrock but that is something special...those students that actually make up this world. So it is going to be a great place, greater than people actually know because [we] see so many students...the bucket is getting filled one drop at a time.... What I was trying to say to them is it's like a drop in the bucket and those buckets are getting full. So now instead of having one bucket we have thousands of buckets.

Another resident shared the story of her first experience with volunteers and how volunteers provided emotional support at a crucial time in her rebuilding story:

I am forever grateful to the volunteers. The first people that helped me in my house, and I still had floodwaters in the pots, and it was students that said in January ’06, “Let me help you.” So knowing that firsthand, I’m grateful at the most vulnerable time, not knowing where money was going to come from, not knowing if we were going to come back and rebuild. There was no trailers. It was dead silence. I’m confused. I’m somewhere else, you know, where I don’t want to be. And here’s these young people saying, “Look, let me help you.” Don’t know me. Would never see me again, but “Let me help you.”

Four residents shared personal stories of working with volunteers and the mental and emotional strength it provided. Residents spoke to how volunteers provided hope that helped them to keep going and rebuild. One organization leader said that much of the feedback he got from residents was about the emotional support they received from working with volunteers:
Yes. I can definitely say, because this was communicated to us. A lot of times residents felt that having the students working with them side by side, it was motivation, you know…. It made them feel like there are still some humans out there who care.... ‘Cause that bit of help, it builds up hope and it builds up dreams in a person and that carries people.

Other residents shared this feeling about the emotional benefits of volunteers:

I think there were a lot of barriers the residents had in trying to rebuild both their lives and the community back. To some degree, I think the students coming in kind of gave an encouragement of hope, that there’s still an interest. And that drives, I think, our community’s saying though it has been a while there’s still opportunities out there. There’s still those that are interested in trying to help make a difference.

Young people come here that have no vested interest here, who are here maybe because of a professor, you get extra credit. But once they got here, it’s like, a labor of love for them. Now you have residents working side-by-side with volunteers and volunteers full of so much energy. It energizes you to the point that you are like “hey, failure is not an option.”

When asked what would have happened had volunteers not come down, one resident and organization leader said:

Oh, we’d be stuck like chuck. I’m telling you. Because what the volunteers did was not only hands-on labor but it was actually like with my mother—she liked the mothering, the fixing the lemonade and the lunch and making sure everyone is doing fine…and kind of like for a lot of people it rejuvenated them and just talking. And seeing young kids out there giving a hand and stuff; it was really nice.

Overall, volunteers provided the intangible benefit of support, compassion, and hope. And residents returned the caring in a much more personal and relational form of reciprocity than the typical “credit for service” exchange reciprocity in most service learning (Stoecker, 2016). The knowledge that people cared enough to come down and physically support the recovery provided immense psychological benefits for the residents. Although the volunteers were coming down with the explicit purpose of providing labor, another value that they provided was a compassionate and caring presence. This was certainly an unintended consequence of the volunteer participation, but it demonstrates how important it can be to show basic care and consideration and how much that is appreciated in times of need. As one resident and organization leader said, “I want to say that students changed my life. I didn’t know people cared, and I found out they care a lot but just don’t know what to do.”

It is important to understand that the benefit residents felt from having the students was not just because they had someone to talk to. In fact, simply having someone to talk to about trauma may not be helpful (Nolen-Hoeksema & Morrow, 1991). It is about seeing hope and energy and care from the outside world that had previously only offered exclusion.

The above resident’s statement about volunteers not knowing what to do shows that volunteers provided emotional benefits to residents even if the volunteers’ efforts were not always directed on immediate priorities or effective in achieving resident goals. One organization leader, whose organization works with home demolition and rebuilding, said “We do require that they have training and that they tell us they have the skill set, and they come down here and they don’t, and it kind of screws up everything we do.” In too many cases during the early stages of rebuilding, volunteers were armed with crowbars and given basic instructions to tear out drywall and move everything in the house to the curb. Overzealous amateur demolitionists did some damage to structures and threw away things of value without realizing their worth:

There was a big problem that happened with all these volunteers and they came to this neighborhood, the Holy Cross neighborhood, at one point and tore out structures that could never be replaced…. It was that zeal of volunteerism versus the reality of what people know in the neighborhood.
The important point here is that the actual official service done by volunteers, including student service learners, could be less useful and less valuable than the unintended sense of emotional support that residents felt from even these unhelpful attempts at helping.

Volunteer Service Versus Research

Residents did not feel the same sense of emotional support from researchers, leading to another way of talking about the emotional impacts of higher education community involvement. As we mentioned, residents do not distinguish between research that attempted to follow participatory principles and traditional research controlled by academics and designed to answer academics’ questions that is increasingly seen as colonizing (Smith, 1999). Though our broader research project found that many academics in New Orleans believed they were using the best practices of community-based research described by Strand and others (2003), for reasons that are unknown and are deeply concerning, even the best practices of community-based research were unable to differentiate themselves from traditional academic research in residents’ eyes.

The emotional benefits of direct service volunteers contrasts sharply with the perceived meddlesome nature of research efforts, which took time and energy away from direct rebuilding efforts and instead focused on indirect and theoretical benefits. One of the most important principles in any type of higher education community engagement is to not harm the community or its residents. But six interviewees thought that academic research partnerships harmed and exploited the community, from treating people as passive research subjects to focusing resources and energy on projects that were not important to the community or even what residents and local organization leaders wanted.

Residents and organization representatives differed somewhat in their views about the relative benefits of researchers compared to volunteers. Residents were more forgiving of outsider academics, perhaps because of the direct benefit they received for rebuilding their own homes and the emotional support they received in their time of need. Organization representatives, on the other hand, generally agreed that the emotional support provided by volunteers was important, but they had less patience with the lack of tangible benefits from research. One possible explanation for this is that the organizations, even when run by individual residents, focused on the larger community-wide issues, and the lack of useful academic products meant that community-wide issues did not advance as they had hoped. When asked whether they would welcome academics back if there was another Katrina, a few organization representatives said that they would be reluctant to do so, and six of them recommended that communities in similar situations take time up-front to meet with the academic partners and develop a system for weeding out unhelpful partnerships so they can focus on those most likely to benefit the community.

During discussions about the research-based efforts, residents and organizations frequently mentioned feeling used by academics in research-based projects. Many Lower 9th Ward interviewees reported negative feelings about researchers, even when they said that they had no complaints about academic involvement in general. Ten interviewees reported feeling used by academic groups. One resident said that the community had been “misused and abused” by researchers. Another community resident said, “I think they came in here to experiment. Yeah, most of academics, to me, came in to experiment.” Residents generally expressed feelings of research fatigue. Many interview responses illustrated that people had been over-researched and that the residents were left with empty promises and nothing to show for their efforts. One organization leader discussed how this affected the residents:

Particularly for researchers who have promised to send you a copy of this, and they haven’t, that is irritating a number of residents and to some degree whether or not they are interested in talking to academicians and students again because they feel that they are just being used for whatever purposes, and they [the academics] are not living up to their end of the bargain.

The research fatigue impacted this study because people were hesitant to be interviewed for this research. The first author became increasingly hesitant to ask residents for interviews as she learned that many of them had received little in return for their efforts with research, and she did not want to contribute to further research fatigue. During the community leader interviews she had
an increasingly harder time getting people to talk with her. Some interviewees were visibly agitated during interviews and repeatedly expressed their frustration that the research-based efforts would not directly benefit them or the community. Residents that she had not worked with before expressed this feeling more readily than those with whom she had built a relationship. Some articulated that they would have responded differently or not responded at all if they were not familiar with her through past experience working with the Lower 9th Ward. In essence, many were saying that they were already done cooperating with researchers.

It is important to remember that most academic-designed research efforts such as surveys, interviews, and questionnaires take time before they can produce anything usable. Residents expressed frustration with these research efforts and ultimately found many of them to be a waste of time. If residents do not feel like research is useful, it may impact the type of information they provide. A few residents and representatives mentioned that residents became resentful that they had academic groups coming to their doors and asking questions and that the researchers never reached out to share what they were doing with organizations or residents:

The researchers didn't have to explain themselves to the community. They should have and they should need to. They have not done that.

It would have been a different type of impact into the community if we had a conversation of what is really needed in the community, because you got to remember, I go back to the same thing, that you have to realize when I came home my focus was rebuilding my house. You understand. I lost everything we had.

One resident pointed out that, in a time of need, researchers didn't come to help out; they only came to assess:

The academic groups came in as a study to see “okay they had limited resources, limited funds.” They wasn't coming in to improve per se the community, they came in to study the community after a tragic event, which is a big difference, if you understand what I am saying. So they didn't; their agenda was completely different from the volunteers.

There were also issues of academics wanting to document the community rebuilding process, and that got in the way of the community actually being able to handle their business. A community leader shared how the documentation influenced community meetings:

People wanted to come and videotape us. Now there were a couple of instances we allowed it. But we went beforehand and asked, “Do you have a problem if cameras are on us tonight?”… Because you had some folks that would just show up and ask, “Oh, I want to film you.” Slow your roll, bro. This is not a movie. Okay. Yeah. It was a bit too much sometimes.

Ultimately, researchers may have had a negative emotional effect on residents because of the intrusive nature of the data gathering and the lack of tangible return it provided for residents. This is a negative outcome of academic involvement that may have real repercussions for how the community chooses to partner or cooperate with researchers in the future.

Implications and Recommendations

The unexpected results of this study have deep implications for service learning and community-based research. They point to the need for careful reflection on our practices and consideration that we may at times be doing more harm than good. This research also suggests ways to rethink higher education community engagement to do less harm and potentially more good in communities in general and especially where significant emotional trauma is present.

The Invisibility of Community-Based Research

This research questions the assertion by Strand et al. (2003) that community-based research (CBR) is a more effective way to involve students in assisting communities than direct service programs. Even though some researchers operating in the Lower 9th Ward were using CBR methods, residents did not view these researchers as distinguishable from traditional research. The first author attempted to tease out the differences in these two types of research by asking pointed questions.
about CBR but residents did not indicate that they perceived a difference in CBR compared to traditional research methodology. The only difference any resident mentioned that pertained to CBR was based on the length and strength of personal relationships. But overall the residents viewed the actual research efforts as more invasive than helpful and did not link participating in research to positive emotional well-being. Research efforts either provided no benefit, or even caused harm through the emotional frustration they created or the cynicism they fostered. Arguing that our findings collapse traditional and CBR is no defense, since residents could not differentiate between the two types of research on the ground in their community. The decision by some community members to not participate in further research efforts should alarm researchers regardless of whether or not they follow the tenets of CBR. We need to be aware that community residents and organizations are actively deciding that it is not worth their time to participate in research. We community-based researchers need to do some deep reflection on why we can't make distinctive a practice that we insist is so much more respectful and useful to communities.

It is possible that many community-based researchers had met, and were partnering, with a community organization. But many organizations also do not communicate regularly or effectively with their constituencies. In such cases, CBR becomes a partnership of a researcher and an organization director and this condition points to the importance of integrating CBR with community organizing so that constituency members remain informed, build power, and use the research to develop their communities (Stoecker, 2016). The problem may be rooted in academics’ tendency to treat research as research, rather than as integrated with action. What if researchers had done research with residents while also helping to gut a house or dump flood waters out of pots and pans? What if they had gone door to door with organization leaders, or even with a newsletter from the organization to enhance community communication along with doing research? What if they had organized community events with food at the front end of the research, and along the way and when the research phase was switching into an action phase? And, of course, that is often the problem, as even most community-based research never shifts into an action phase (Stoecker, 2009).

Building the capacity of community organizations to work with and guide researchers may also help. Six organization leaders noted that they need to be more directive with research efforts, and be less willing to indulge in individual academic projects. A couple of Lower 9th Ward leaders said that their organizations were setting up systems so that researchers are more accountable and the organizations have more control over the research.

**Attending to Emotion in Higher Education Community Engagement**

Perhaps more than anything else we must attend to the reality of emotion and trauma in the communities with whom we attempt to engage. One potential harm mentioned during the community interviews was the problem of academics not recognizing the healing process that the community needed to go through so it would be healthy again. When academics stepped in, they neglected to comprehend the psychological wounds from the trauma of Katrina and the social structural context that produced its unequal impacts.

One community organization representative with academic ties, who has since moved to the Lower 9th Ward, spoke about the discrepancy between the amount of need versus what academics could provide. He mentioned that the emotional complexity of individuals gets lost in the background, and that impedes residents’ ability to take control of the academic partnerships:

> We never made people whole and in fact they died behind that and are still dying behind never making them whole. The Lower 9th Ward—they became pawns in a game as opposed to the central part.... So these universities with this abstraction in their mind have wanted to implant the advancements... And that is where you start to hear that pushback and that anti-university, anti-intellectualism in some cases. Because in fact it is really not anti-intellectualism as much as anti-invasion of these advances without making the neighborhood whole.

Another resident spoke of how the lack of “wholeness” impacted the partnerships:

> The community must adopt a position of “we want to make this community whole ourselves and we are going to do...
But rarely do academic groups think about making a community “whole.” They come to address a specific issue or carry out a specific program. The issue of “making the community whole” speaks to the need for academic partners to really understand the depth of the experiences that the Lower 9th Ward has undergone. Residents perceived volunteer programs that provided direct service as more beneficial because the process felt more personal and the outcomes were more direct. That is, it seemed more whole. The act of volunteers physically going to the community and helping individual residents left a lasting positive impression, and it provided encouragement and hope in the residents to keep moving forward. Volunteers also left behind tangible evidence of their participation, even when it was imperfect, which visually demonstrated their work and also contributed to a sense of normalcy in the Lower 9th Ward.

The most important impact, in many ways, was the emotional support that volunteers provided to residents. But since the purpose of emotional support was not articulated and integrated into academics’ efforts, the benefit was also likely a hit or miss proposition. The best practices in higher education community engagement primarily emphasize building a relationship with “a community partner”—an organization or even an individual in an organization—not with the individual community members. It’s hard enough for untrained academics to handle the emotions involved in a relationship with a single organization director under normal circumstances. We are particularly ill-equipped to handle the emotional trauma that was all too present following Katrina. Students are even less likely to be trained in dealing with poverty and mental health in community-campus partnerships. The Lower 9th Ward provided an extreme case, and even some students experienced psychological trauma as a result of their volunteering (Heldman & Israel-Trummel, 2012). The lack of mental health training and support left both sides of the partnerships with unmet mental health needs.

We can start addressing this issue by making visible the importance of emotional trauma so that faculty and students can be less discipline-driven and more focused on the personal and emotional aspects of both their organization partners and their community or constituency members to ensure that the personal needs of individuals do not get lost. Mental health support is not usually discussed when preparing students and faculty to work with communities, but it should be. Since academic partners can also emerge from community-based experiences with trauma based on what they experienced (Heldman & Israel-Trummel, 2012), mental health training can help them deal with the issues that the communities face as well as protect themselves and their students. Academic partners can also spend more time discussing the complexity of loss with students so they are aware of the emotional issues that residents face.

In the Lower 9th Ward many students and professors engaged with community residents through formal and informal discussions where trauma was part of the conversation. Some classes held orientations that included discussions with homeowners, and many residents talked of the emotional hardships associated with the disaster and the recovery process. Students were often overwhelmed by these discussions, and some consequently suffered from emotional stress themselves. Clearly, universities and colleges should have organized preparatory sessions to help students learn about how to deal with these emotions and follow-up sessions to help students process them once they returned.

It is also possible to imagine an even more intense preparation of students and faculty involving counseling training and other specialized skills to help students and faculty learn emotional helping skills. However, the positive emotional impacts that residents expressed from their relationships with untrained students should give us pause. We should perhaps not try to prepare students to be professional counselors or therapists. Our best efforts may be directed toward helping students become aware of emotional trauma, and find ways to simply allow their compassion to come through. Attempting to professionalize emotional helping may ruin it.

Attending to the emotional trauma of disaster contexts requires some important work. We need to provide faculty and students alike with educa-
tion and training about trauma. It would behoove service learning administrators to sit down with their in-house counseling staff, or the faculty of their counseling, psychology, social work, and other relevant programs, to design training to help faculty and students recognize and tend to both their own emotions and those of others. Then there needs to be official space provided for their emotional self-reflection, with the support of trained counselors, during the civic engagement experience. This seems especially applicable for those who plan to do civic engagement that involves research, where the contact with residents may be only fleeting but may add to the trauma. Institutional review boards may impose requirements for trained personnel to deal with trauma in such contexts, but we can go beyond such a requirement for one-off crisis intervention to rethink the CBR process so that it reconnects residents to each other and reconfigures the research to express caring rather than simply extracts data. For example, researchers can help organize community meals that are also research planning events or even data collection events, getting to know residents even a little bit by organizing the meals with them, and then eating together with them. In other words, we need to think about CBR as a community organizing process, not a research process. Table 1 lists some recommendations.

In doing this, it is important we remember that such emotional trauma is not necessarily unique to obvious disaster contexts (Norris, Friedman, Watson, Byrne, Diaz, & Kaniasty, 2002). Over the July 4th weekend in 2014, 82 people were shot, 14 fatally, in Chicago, with the vast majority in four south side neighborhoods (Nickeas, 2014). Chicago area higher education institutions have been sending their students into those neighborhoods. We have already seen that those disaster contexts may be as defined by trauma as a hurricane. And they are just as deserving of justice.

References

Table 1. Recommendations for Higher Education Civic Engagement in Disaster Contexts

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<thead>
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<th>CBR:</th>
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<td>1.</td>
<td>Make sure residents, not just organization, feel control over CBR.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Integrate CBR planning and data collection with direct ongoing emotional support of residents.</td>
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<th>CBR and Service Learning:</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Prepare students and faculty to recognize and understand trauma.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Connect residents to adequate and ongoing trauma services and resources.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Prepare students and faculty to provide informal and non-expert emotional support.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Provide for emotional support of students and faculty themselves.</td>
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Finding Our Direction: The Process of Building A Community-University Food Mapping Team

Michelle L. Kaiser, Christy Rogers, Michelle D. Hand, Casey Hoy, and Nick Stanich

Abstract

Multifaceted causes and consequences of food insecurity require collaborative work across multiple academic disciplines and with various community partners in order to build sustainable solutions. Interdisciplinary teams require thoughtful considerations of time devoted to team-building exercises, paying particular attention to understanding members’ values. Teams must find points of convergence, develop mutually agreed upon common language, and openly discuss needs and expectations. This paper describes the process of building a community-university Food Mapping Team to address food security. The FMT initiative allows for a well-coordinated exploration of data collection methods that capitalize on the diverse interdisciplinary expertise and resources of university researchers and extensive knowledge of community partners, whose work can inform, and be impacted by, these efforts. We provide a set of processes used to form our partnership and describe our decision-making process in the development of a community food security research project. We also include a self-assessment of the research planning and implementation process that our team used and describe areas of improvement for other community-university groups to consider.

To build sustainable solutions, multifaceted causes and consequences of food insecurity require collaboration among multiple academic disciplines and a variety of community partners. The Food Mapping Team (FMT) was established to explore ways that interdisciplinary, engaged community research, including geo-coded surveys, data analysis, and mapping, can be used to 1) provide a greater understanding of multi-dimensional food systems at local, state, and regional levels; 2) display geographic disparities associated with poverty, race, food insecurity, and health; 3) layer data sets related to food access, availability, distribution, and production; and 4) explore community-led interventions to address food insecurity and inequity.

This paper describes the process of building a community-university partnership to address food security. We discuss the background, rationale, and institutional support associated with the development of a food mapping team, the ways in which members were recruited and have (or have not) been retained, the impacts and benefits for community and university partners, the methods used to engage members in the work, and the ways in which FMT members were involved in the development and implementation of a specific community research project. We also include a self-assessment of the two-year research planning and implementation processes that our team used and describe areas of improvement for other community-university groups to consider.

Background and Rationale for Addressing Community Food Security

Our FMT was built, in part, upon relationships established through an existing and evolving collaborative partnership aimed at addressing food insecurity and healthcare access called the Hunger.FOOD.Health Initiative. This section provides a background of the issues that were being discussed in the community and the university at the time the research team was formed.

Food security is “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy lifestyle,” measured annually though a validated survey (United States Department of Agriculture [USDA], 2013). Food insecure households report reduced diet quality, variety, intake, or desirability (USDA, 2013). Health consequences of food insecurity include reduced consumption of fresh produce and higher rates of chronic health problems (Adams, Grummer-Strawn, & Chavez, 2003; Rose, 1999), which can lead to limited mobility and work impairment (Hamelin, Habicht, & Beaudry, 1999); depression, anxiety, social isolation (Casey, Goolsby, Berkowitz, Frank, Cook, Cutts, Black, Zaldívar, Levenson, Heeren, & Myers., 2004); and
impacts on child development (Alaimo, Olson, & Frongillo, 2001; Cook, Frank, Berkowitz, Black, Casey, Cutts, Meyers, Zaldívar, Skalicky, Levenson, Heeren, & Nord, 2004). Health outcomes resulting in low economic productivity and decreased social participation can negatively impact economically disadvantaged places (Hamelin, Habicht, & Beaudry, 1999).

The community food security [CFS] framework has been used by academics and community practitioners to reduce obesity and food insecurity by encouraging collaboration across different sectors to: 1) invest in food production, 2) retain localized food knowledge, 3) increase capacity for food-related economic opportunities, and 4) address nutritional quality in communities (American Dietetic Association, 2010; Hamm & Bellows, 2003; Story, Hamm, & Wallinga, 2009; Wallinga, 2009).

To understand how issues like consumer perceptions of safety and physical limitations interact with the food environment to determine how food and health outcomes could be improved through structural and behavioral interventions using the CFS framework, initial assessment of the community’s food environment is necessary. The food environment has been operationalized in the following ways: affordability, in terms of price variations among food sources and between processed food and fresh produce (Chung & Myers, 1999; Drewnowski & Specter, 2004; Kozikowski & Williamson, 2009); accessibility in terms of transportation and distance to stores (Apparacio, Cloutier, & Shearmur, 2007; Short, Guthman, & Raskin, 2007; VerPloeg, Breneman, Farrigan, Hamrick, Hopkins, Kaufman, Biing-Hwan, Nord, Smith, Williams, Kinnison, Olander, Singh, A., & Tuckerman, 2009); and availability of food sources and food varieties (Cohen, Andrews, & Kantor, 2002).

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) is one method that has been used to show spatial differences of food access, availability, and health outcomes that may differ in terms of income, race, population density, transportation, types of stores, and availability of alternative food markets (Apparacio, Cloutier, & Shearmur, 2007; Paez, Gertes, Farber, Morency, & Roorda, 2010; Sharky & Horel, 2008; Short, Guthman, & Raskin, 2007). GIS allows multiple datasets to be updated efficiently and analyzed to compute distance and buffers. Mapping can help determine community assets and liabilities (Cohen, et al., 2002). Mapping is useful in terms of 1) communicating large amounts of technical information in a compact, visual way for different audiences, 2) identifying targeted intervention areas, and 3) communicating universal problems (Kirwan Institute, 2009).

History of Food Mapping Team Development

In 2008, The Ohio State University, where FMT members work, embarked on a strategic planning process that resulted in significant investment and support for initiatives that sought to address challenging global issues. Three focus areas emerged: Food Production and Security, Health and Wellness, and Energy and the Environment (The Ohio State University, n.d.a.). Shortly thereafter, an investment of $3.75 million by the university supported the development and maintenance of the Food Innovation Center (FIC) for a five-year period (The Ohio State University FIC, n.d.b.). The purpose of this center was to encourage collaborative interdisciplinary teams interested in co-creating knowledge and solving global issues like obesity and food insecurity. The FIC supported the development of collaborative research teams with $2,500 Team Award grants and larger project-specific one-year innovation initiative grants ($50,000). The FMT began in November 2012 with a Team Award after interest for such work grew out of the FIC-funded Hunger.FOOD.Health Initiative’s strategic think tank event in July 2012 that involved over 60 community and university stakeholders. The Team Award enabled community partners and faculty interested in exploring food mapping to come together each month from January 2013–May 2013, resulting in successfully obtaining an Innovation Initiative grant in the summer of 2013. The primary investigator (PI) and first author, who is a university faculty member, was awarded the funds and managed them; no funds paid for faculty research time for any team members. Details of the work that took place over this time period are included in subsequent sections to provide a set of processes that we used and the purpose of each of those processes.

Significance of the FMT Research

The institutional support for, and the community investment in, addressing the causes and consequences of food insecurity cannot be understated. The FMT organically developed from conversations with community agency leaders, food industry professionals, and university faculty and students in response to the need to address local food insecurity. This organic evolution paralleled
the development of the university’s focus areas. The
university and community support for the work of
the FMT has created the infrastructure necessary to
better understand and improve food security at the
household, community, and regional levels.

While national data sets and maps provide a
solid starting point for communities to understand
food environment disparities, their shortcomings
have led several nationally recognized food
security leaders to recommend improved methods
to integrate localized primary data collection. The
layering of data at several scales can lead to a better
understanding of food access in terms of its spatial,
temporal, cultural, economic, personal, social, and
service delivery domains (Freedman, Blake, &
Liese, 2013). The FMT initiative allows for a well-
coordinated exploration of data collection methods
that capitalize on the diverse interdisciplinary
expertise and resources of university researchers,
along with the knowledge of community partners,
whose work can inform, and be impacted by,
these efforts. Ultimately, we seek to select and test
sustainable interventions to improve food security
and community health in different localities.

Team Members

We developed an initial list of potential Food
Mapping Team members through newly formed
and existing relationships among faculty and
community agencies, participants of the Hunger.
FOOD.Health Initiative, and Food Innovation
Center members. Then, we used a snowball strategy,
aiming to keep the group open and diverse. During
this initial phase, we focused on exploring common
interests and collaborative relationships. Though
some of the initial community and the university
members have decided to no longer participate
(e.g., due to job changes, different research
interests, competing work responsibilities), other
group members have been added, and the group
is always open to new members. Our core team
consists of 12 faculty across five colleges (Arts &
Sciences, Social Work, Medicine, Health Sciences
and Dietetics, and Engineering), two schools
(Public Affairs and Architecture), five departments
(Geography, Family Medicine, Medical Dietetics,
City and Regional Planning, Horticulture and
Crop Science), three institutes or programs
(Agroecosystems Management Program, Center
for Urban and Regional Analysis, and the Kirwan
Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity), a
non-profit urban farm, a non-profit local food
advocacy organization, a large regional foodbank,
the city health department, representatives from
the local food policy council, a healthy corner store
program, and graduate students from a wide range
of disciplines. Most participation has been unpaid
and voluntary, with the exception of campus parking
passes and light snacks and meals during meetings.
The second grant ($50,000) supported a part-time
project coordinator, two community-based research
assistants, and two student assistants. Departments
where faculty and staff reside also occasionally
provided funding for graduate students working
on the project.

Building Our Team

The FMT spent the first four months
participating in a wide range of facilitated
discussions aimed at helping build team rapport.
Much literature exists on the challenging aspects
of creating successful community-university
partnerships because of the extensive work
needed to quell conflict, adapt to different
personalities, and manage power and control
(Cottrell, Lord, Martin, & Prentice, 1996; Nelson,
Prilleltensky, & MacGillivary, 2001; Strand, Marullo,
Cutforth, Stoecker, & Donahue, 2003). Other hurdles
include navigating differences in ways research is
conducted (Cottrell, et al., 1996; Williams, Labonte,
Randall, & Muhajarine, 2005) and faculty concerns
about whether community-university research
is rigorous enough or will be accepted widely in
scholarly journals (Galinsky, Turnbull, Meglin,
& Wilner, 1993; Lundy, Rippey-Massat, Smith, &
Bhasin, 1996). Time commitment is also important
to all involved (Bevilacqua, Morris, & Pumarięga, 1996;
Lundy, et al., 1996; McWilliam, Desai, & Greig, 1997).

The PI is trained in social work, a professional
discipline rooted in values of social justice, service,
and the value of every individual and human
relationship (National Association of Social
Workers, 2008). The PI’s background and training, in
addition to experience facilitating service learning,
set the stage for the deliberate process of utilizing
asset-based community engagement methods
(Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993) and researching the
creation of successful, collaborative interdisciplinary
teams in which each person felt their ideas and
expertise were valued (see Ditkoff, Allen, Moore,
& Pollard, 2005; Helm, Holt, Conklin, Parisseau,
& Pearson, 2010; Suarez-Balcazar, Harper, & Lewis,
2005). The PI received funding to attend an Art of
Hosting leadership training to learn methodologies
and practices for hosting meaningful dialogue
among diverse groups (see Art of Hosting, n.d.).
Meeting One: January 2013

The first meeting brought with it much energy and uncertainty, as potential interested members interacted with old friends, colleagues, and people they had never met. The objectives of the first meeting were to have potential members recognize the diversity of thought and valued resources among their peers, revisit the initial purpose and intent of the group, discuss what food mapping meant to different participants, and develop objectives for moving forward as an emerging team. First, small break-out discussions were used. Groups were asked to discuss how they felt team meeting time should be used and how the team should work together to move forward. Each group brainstormed project ideas, wrote them on large sheets of paper, and shared them.

Once each small group shared their work, the large group discussed the wealth of ideas. The PI helped the participants theme the ideas into three core areas. The first related to values. In the first meeting, a certain level of uncertainty about purpose and time commitment existed. Four ideas emerged related to values. First, the group wanted to ensure that mapping tools and outputs were easy to access, simple enough for non-experts, and useful for a range of consumers. Second, building trusting and meaningful relationships was deemed critical. Third, the team determined that transparency was needed to gain public trust. Fourth, the team decided that the work be undertaken not only for academic research but also to provide information necessary to shape policy initiatives and behavioral change. Key themes of trust, respect, communication, results-oriented collaborative work, and mutually beneficial relationships are common in the community-university literature (Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 2001; Strier, 2011; Thompson, Story, & Butler, 2003).

The second core focus related to the community. The team determined that it was important to have an impact on the local level, and to support and inform the work of community agencies. The team identified the need to intentionally create partnerships that would have the greatest impact in an efficient way. Lastly, members determined the need to ensure that the community’s voice was at the table and to be mindful of other initiatives perceived to slight or ignore the localized needs of residents. These considerations parallel other findings that show communication, community decision-making, making information broadly available, and disseminating results to the public are important to community-based participatory research (Pivik & Goelman, 2011).

The third core focus area related to needs of university participants with an emphasis on working synergistically and developing interdisciplinary relationships. It was important for members to acknowledge the responsibilities of the academic community to publish. This served, in part, to inform others who were unfamiliar with requirements of faculty at a research-based institution. Members also reiterated that the purpose of the FMT was to solve identified complex problems and ask questions, lending itself to the assurance of quality translational research. These issues have appeared in other work, such as Cortes’s (1998) study that revealed that incentive systems within higher education (such as valuing publication over service) are structurally misaligned with collaborative community-university work, while McWilliam, et al. (1997) note that the time commitment needed can leave faculty feeling disappointed that results do not come faster.

Team members were also asked to reflect on a series of questions disseminated via email, compiled, shared, and discussed. Questions included: 1) What does “food mapping” mean to you? 2) What brought you to the FMT table? 3) What about the FMT excites you? 4) What do you expect the FMT to accomplish over the next four months? This document was uploaded to a shared drive for easy accessibility and has been periodically revisited. By having transparency during our entire process, we have a mechanism for accountability for all group participants; anyone can review where we started and whether needs are being met or have shifted. It also serves as a starting point for new members interested in learning about other FMT members.

Meeting Two: February 2013

The FMT hosted a social event in which we could continue to get to know one another over a meal, and to learn from each other through team member-initiated presentations. The event was held at the foodbank facility of one of our community partners. Five faculty members presented on various topics, including: integrating health and geographic data into functional models of risk identification, understanding how psychological
distortions of physical maps may be used for food access measures, basic spatial analysis techniques, research on mapping the cost of a balanced diet, and research related to a national food systems project. Five community partners presented on various projects: a public health department mapping tool, the use of mapping to identify potential food production sites for urban agriculture, the use of data and mapping at a foodbank and food pantry affiliates, and reports on programs related to childhood obesity. Three university partners affiliated with Extension and on-campus institutes or centers also presented on various mapping projects, capacity, skills, and resources available to the FMT.

The low-stress, communal event garnered excitement, and served the purpose of recognizing the extensive expertise within the group. Cherry and Shefner (2004) note that one of the common pitfalls of community-based research is the idea that university knowledge supersedes community knowledge and the expertise of research faculty, in particular, can serve to create a power dynamic in which university experts dominate decisions. By inviting all members to present at this forum, we sought a way to recognize the wide range of experiences and expertise that members were bringing to the FMT.

This gathering also generated an initial cognitive map, which is a recognized method of illustrating complex aspects of qualitative systems, according to Lee and Kwon (2014), who also found that cognitive maps are valid and useful within several disciplines, making this method an ideal approach to explore key procedures, variables, areas of focus, policies and outcomes discussed among core members of our community-university team. In addition to effectively capturing several perspectives within large diverse groups to foster greater communication among stakeholders pertaining to system requirements, cognitive maps have been used to explore the strength of a concept’s impact on overall system objectives (Hanafizadaeh & Aliehyaei, 2011). Thus such representations can shed light on the relevant content and context that are needed to develop effective interventions (Shewchuk, Franklin, Harrington, Davies, & Windle, 2004). The initial cognitive map shows methodologies along the top, variables and topics of interest, and the linkages with outcomes and policy. Then the names of partners with specific expertise, represented by circles, were overlaid with this initial figure (see Figure 1).

Meeting 3: March 2013

During the third meeting, we employed “Open Space Technology” (Owen, 2008), one of the methods taught in the Art of Hosting (n.d.) training. The goal of this method was to maximize the participants’ time by creating a way for people to engage around issues of most importance to them. Once the participants had shared expectations in the January meeting and participated in the learning event in February, it was appropriate to delve into deeper conversations about topics that the group could consider focusing on for an initial community-university research project together. One of the benefits of using the Open Space method is its alignment with FMT values: participants value their time, they need to have intention behind their work, and they desire to have an equitable distribution of power. The basic premise is that the group is setting their own agenda for the meeting (Owen, 2008). For our group, we had two 30-minute rounds of

![Figure 1. Cognitive Mapping of Event: People-Access-Modeling](image-url)
four conversations each. In Open Space, anyone can pose a question to the group and invite a conversation. The person writes the question or topic on a large sticky note that gets placed in view of the group with the person’s name at the bottom. People are welcome to pose questions until all slots are filled, with room to adapt to whatever the group’s needs are for the day (i.e., less or more conversations). This is another way in which we addressed the need to have all voices heard, with no particular voice more important or dominant than another. Participants can remain with one group during the entire session or go between groups as they please, contributing in whatever way they see fit. Table 1 shows the Open Space board of questions that were posed by group members (unedited).

At the end of each Open Space conversation, participants shared three points of convergence. For example, the group discussing what they wanted to learn about low income families (Conversation 1-2) listed the following: 1) How do we give voice to the voiceless and make the invisible visible? 2) Need to understand that hunger is a subset of poverty. 3) Do families understand the health issues with hunger? The group discussing food desert metrics (Conversation 2-2) went beyond discussing different variables and methods used to classify food deserts. Their group also described the politics of funding that was perceived to be driving the classification and methods widely used, as well as the question of “how consumers are understanding and experiencing food issues.”

Interestingly, members of the aforementioned groups had strong quantitative data analysis and methodological skills, but their ultimate focus acknowledged the desire to engage people experiencing food insecurity in order to ensure that the work completed by the FMT was responding to community-identified needs. Additionally, they were interested in incorporating the underlying social and political contexts of geographic spaces and challenging assumptions about people experiencing poverty. Seedat and Suffla (2012) describe how research generally excludes “community voices” (p. 483), which is representative of power dynamics in the traditional “research-researched dyad” (p. 484). The group’s conversation is reflective of these critiques, including the importance of understanding contextual elements where research is occurring and relational dynamics (Israel, Eng, Schulz, & Parker, 2005; Seedat & Suffla, 2012).

**Meeting 4: April 2013**

The purpose of the fourth meeting was to identify the FMT’s first specific research project. Members were ready to apply for a $50,000 grant to support a research project. Meeting attendees revisited areas of interest and discussed options for a one-year project. Throughout the discussion, participants continually identified the overall group’s purpose as related to research, outreach, and education that reflected the university members’ responsibilities to carry out the mission of land grant institutions (Jongbloed, Enders, & Salerno, 2008) and the community members’ professional roles and organizational missions to engage in community organizing, advocacy, and direct service with residents.

### Table 1. Open Space Technology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conversation 1</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Predictors → food access → health outcomes</td>
<td>What do we want to learn about low income families?</td>
<td>Can we map the level of community support for possible changes in the food environment for obesity prevention?</td>
<td>How do we translate knowledge into action?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conversation 2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can we map non-physical health determinants, skills, motivations, &amp; community leaders related to physical activity and nutrition?</td>
<td>Metrics – is the food desert still a useful construct? If not, how can we improve policy to get change? How do we define?</td>
<td>What resources need to accompany the food mapping to make it a practically useful resource for advocates?</td>
<td>What is preventing urban farming from becoming a funded priority in regard to the city’s urban planning framework?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The meeting results can be divided into three categories. First, the group discussed methodological approaches to understanding the food environment. This resulted in redefining food security in terms of food access (i.e., food affordability, food availability, transportation, and perceptions). The discussion also reiterated the need to move beyond a large number of existing public data sets to include community voices through primary data collection. Additional conversations about the geographical focus reflected the need to consider research feasibility. The second category can be described in terms of assets and opportunities, which included a discussion of the importance of mapping assets (e.g., healthcare utilisations, social service programs) and potential areas where community food security intervention strategies related to food production and distribution opportunities could take place. Topics included the impact of urban farms on health outcomes and food security and the potential for determining how various food markets might provide economic and social opportunities in the community. The third category reflects an expansion of intentions, outcomes, and impacts that participants stated in their expectations during the first meeting. Participants reiterated the importance of focused work that could improve health disparities and inform policy options. They also discussed underlying economic conditions and opportunities for research that could address sociopolitical contexts of food insecurity.

**Finding Our Direction: The Development of Our First Project**

While the availability of funding was the driver of the fourth meeting, the FMT began to collectively agree on their purpose around that time. Barker (2004) identified five practices of community-university partnerships. The FMT’s approach falls within four of those areas, which includes: the importance of including community members’ voices in the process of co-creating knowledge (participatory research), highlighting community assets and opportunities (public information networks), and providing reliable information to the public that can inform policy (civic skills/literacy) (Barker, 2004). The FMT also decided that they needed to recognize power dynamics, sociopolitical climates, and work with community partners to determine how this work could begin to dismantle oppressive conditions (community partnership) (Barker, 2004).

During the course of the team-building process, group membership continuously shifted as the FMT began to determine their course of action and purpose. Some of the university participants were unable to contribute time due to time constraints mostly related to funded work on other research projects. Community participants reflected similar sentiments, stating that the focus was not in line enough with the mission of their organization (e.g., we were focusing more on food access instead of childhood obesity) or that they were balancing too many projects. Most people communicated the desire to continue to receive updates and have access to the shared file folders, stating they would re-engage if it fit in with their schedules and interests. A core community-university team had emerged.

The next challenge for the FMT was writing a collaborative grant that was feasible and incorporated the emergent values and expectations of community and university participants. The grant’s purpose statement and objectives are indicative of the conversations that occurred during the four months of team building. For example, our purpose statement includes key indicators of food access that were outlined in the fourth meeting and discussed in several of the Open Space conversations. Additionally, the ultimate purpose of the project focuses on selecting sustainable interventions that may be tested to improve food security and community health. This idea is a direct reflection of continued statements by team members about considerations of how this research can be used by community groups to improve the community’s health in areas of greatest need.

The FMT’s direction pointed to research that was mutually beneficial for community and university members. Community-university partnerships have the potential to produce relevant, meaningful results that have real world implications (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Strier, 2011). Months of team building had helped the group solidify a common purpose and desire for research to be relevant to academics, policymakers, and community agencies, as well as impactful, transparent, and methodologically rigorous.

The process of writing a grant proposal and research protocol with the aforementioned intentions was a challenging endeavor. This was a phase in which the PI enlisted ideas and editing from others based on group decisions made about the research project the group wished to pursue.
Many decisions had to be made, including where the study would take place, what methodologies would be used, and how this one-year project would fit into the broader mission of the FMT. Ultimately, The FMT’s objectives specified the development of a comprehensive, user-friendly food access data hub to maximize community benefit, the integration of primary and secondary data sets for use in translational outcomes-based research, and the integration and enhancement of existing mapping and modeling methodologies to test and improve food environment indicators for use in evaluating policy interventions.

**Determining the Study Area**

Community and university members identified a study area that was determined by many factors, including feasibility of conducting surveys with limited time and funding, and the recognition that some neighborhoods in the large metropolitan community have been unintentionally overburdened with research, in large part, due to their proximity to the university and the high prevalence of social and health issues. The groups determined that the study needed to take place along a north-south corridor that included neighborhoods that were diverse in terms of socioeconomic status, race and ethnicity, and levels of investment by the city and university. One of the community partners who operates an urban farming non-profit relied on insights gleaned from a class he taught as a graduate student in which students were required to write about areas of the community in great detail. These insights were paired with community members’ priority areas for their own work and potential geographic areas for intervention to finalize the study area.

**Developing the Survey**

Several months were spent developing a comprehensive survey that would be administered online and in-person at sites throughout the neighborhoods of the study area. During this time, the FMT reviewed a range of smaller, community-based surveys and large national surveys. This iterative process brought forth the collective expertise of all involved. Though using a survey was one major aspect of the methodology, the importance of developing and conducting a survey that would engage community members in a meaningful way was still important. This part of the process took over four months and included compromises by all involved.

Much of the methodological discussions point to differences in epistemology and ontology, which, along with values are important when determining how research will be conducted (Creswell, 2005). Reviewing the themes of the team-building exercises points to a large number of participants who would lean toward interpretivism because of their interest in learning more about how people are experiencing their food environment and why those food environments in different geographic communities are not equitable. This interest in community members’ experiences lends itself to particular approaches to inquiry (e.g., open-ended survey questions) (Creswell, Hanson, Plano Clark, & Morales, 2007; Morse & Field, 1995). On the other hand, FMT members discussed the need to obtain basic baseline objective descriptive data to begin their work together. This largely positivist view was evident in discussions about the importance of replicating the survey that was being developed in future projects and using pre-existing reliable and valid surveys with data that could be compared to ours.

The FMT developed a 20-minute survey that included questions about food access, food security, perceptions of the neighborhood environment, health conditions, participant background information, and behavioral patterns related to shopping, cooking, and consumption. While the positivists are more represented in the survey methodology, the content is reflective of community interests. The survey is a precursor for additional work that will include a focused attempt at obtaining more personal stories and patterns and relationships through mapping.

**Administering Surveys**

Fifteen survey sites were chosen based on their proximity to the study areas, their clientele offering a potentially representative sample to U.S. Census tracts in our study area, and their willingness to work with the FMT. The fact that it was a community-university research project helped open doors to gain access to various sites and helped the team gain exposure, including conversations with city council members and a food policy group. Prospective participants, regardless of their completion of a survey, were provided with a four page “Food Access Resource Guide” consisting of information about 40 local food pantries, free meal sites, community gardens, referral sources for a variety of food-related assistance programs, and financial and
transportation resources. The distribution of this guide reflects a key unintentional consequence of the FMT group. Members were more aware of resources and the importance of sharing these resources because part of the time at meetings was devoted to sharing information about events and programs. Since time was spent on members’ underlying values of this work, it is not surprising that a guide would be an important way to share important information with survey participants who were food insecure.

Universities have institutional power and we relied upon our university networks to recruit student volunteers to be trained to administer the surveys. The FMT had several discussions about who would deliver the surveys to residents living across our study area, with many community FMT members in particular wanting to train people outside of the university to administer the surveys and be paid for their time. Ultimately, it came down to feasibility in terms of financial resources and time. Ohio State students are always looking for educational and research experiences beyond the classroom, and many faculty members saw this as an opportunity to educate students while also conducting research.

This method was highly successful, and 25 students attended a training led by the project coordinator to deliver the surveys. This experience was extremely valuable to students. After data collection was complete, we provided students with examples of how their work could be translated for their personal résumés and also asked them to reflect on their experiences. We asked students to discuss how they became involved, what surprised them about the experience, what was challenging for them, what they learned about themselves, what skills they learned, how it related to their coursework or career path, what they learned from the people they met, and what they felt were the community’s most pressing needs. The student quotes included here are reflective of many students’ experiences.

This experience has helped me to prepare for my personal research by providing me with a degree of familiarity with the process of conducting research, and also by adding to my knowledge and experience in the arena of food access/food security. Both my practice placement and my master’s project will likely build upon this experience.

It was challenging for me to listen to some of the stories people had about their experiences around food. Some of the interviewees would answer the questions with stories from their past, and some of these stories were heartbreaking.

I feel that I learned a lot about some of the issues surrounding food from a first person perspective. In several of my classes there have been discussions about food deserts and poverty in the area, but this experience has helped me put a face on those problems.

Students reported improving their communication skills, learning how to work with others, understanding research protocols, practicing patience at slow sites, and recognizing the importance of actively listening to people taking the surveys. Several students have continued their involvement by attending monthly meetings, writing reports and manuscripts, presenting at conferences, coding data, entering data, and analyzing data.

**Status of Research Project**

During the time we have been working together, interest has grown significantly around developing a citywide food plan and addressing the food insecurity that exists. Several of our FMT members are affiliated with a new 18-month collaborative initiative with city, county, and nonprofit advocacy groups. We anticipate our research project will help inform the food plan and serve as an important component of neighborhood community conversation and surveys the group is conducting. Our FMT is analyzing over 900 surveys. The group has agreed that results must be disseminated in multiple ways, as we have maintained the importance of easy access and transparency throughout the past two years. Any scholarly manuscript that will be submitted to a peer-reviewed academic journal would have an accompanying output for public consumption. This could be a brief summary, infographic, video, press release, or web-based document. For example, FMT members interested in looking at geographic disparities of food access across neighborhoods using geo-coded points of participant data will also create web-based profiles that are accessed through clicking on an area of the map of interest. We have developed a 100-page descriptive report.
of all 10 representative ZIP codes. ZIP codes were used because many of the community agencies involved have eligibility and programming tied to the ZIP code in which people live. We are also finalizing an executive summary that will be available on our website and include preliminary maps. Lastly, we developed two-page infographics about food access, food security, and health for each ZIP code. These have been disseminated to community groups and are being used for educational purposes, grant writing, and dialogue about developing intervention specific to the needs of those communities.

Self-Assessment of Our Research Process

Group Membership

Characteristics of effective community-university partnerships include working together to understand goals and interests, co-creating a research agenda that meets all needs, seeking outcomes that will make people feel like their time has been well spent, and reminding the group that part of the process is also engaging in sharing knowledge and building the capacity of the work together (Holland & Gelmon, 1998). Open communication about expectations between community-university partnerships and flexibility during the engagement process is also important (Baum, 2000). Our FMT has always operated as an open group. During the formation of the core community-university team, it was clear that different stakeholders had different needs. These needs were often reflective of professional responsibilities and personal values. The FMT members sought ways to build trusting relationships with one another, despite sometimes having competing interests. For example, some academic partners desired to produce published research papers and explore the development of integrated methodologies and “big data” sets for future interdisciplinary partnerships, while other team members (community and university) had an interest in informing policymakers through the research. Some community members expressed an interest in having baseline data to inform grant applications about community issues or to inform the development of community-based interventions. In order to reconcile the interests of a large number of professionals from the community and university and to account for changing membership, we revisited values and goals through a University Extension-facilitated conversation in the winter of 2014. FMT members also have the opportunity to check in periodically during routine research meetings, and the PI has made an attempt to meet with members to ensure their needs are being met. This process is time consuming, but open communication has been crucial and being realistic about expectations is vital for the collaborative process (Baum, 2000).

For our team, it was important to share explicit needs and recognize that when we moved to develop the first research project, some interests would not be prioritized, though they may be part of a broader research agenda addressed through a different project. Since the group was formed to explore a wide range of issues together and we have been meeting for nearly three years, it is expected that some attrition will occur and new members with assets, interests, and values will participate. This makes the group more dynamic, and sometimes more challenging as interests, values, outcomes, and future projects must continuously be communicated.

Addressing Expectations

Our FMT group boasted members from the community and university who were driven by (and some trained in) dismantling racism and oppression because of the view that it was an underlying issue of the distinct health disparities and food insecurity faced by residents across our study area. In reality, our study does not change the current socio-political climate of our city, though it has the potential to be read by policymakers. This continues to be a challenge for university researchers and amplified in the development and sustainment of community-university relationships. If the ultimate goal is to have a city in which all people have access to enough food for optimal health, baseline studies and incremental change can be trying for communities, especially those who have been marginalized and do not see change occur (Green & Mercer, 2001). In reality, our FMT members have had to practice patience with the research process and the time it takes to develop and nurture relationships and learn about each other’s motivations (Reid & Vianna, 2001). We needed a starting point and subsequent project to begin our work together, but the FMT members recognize that we must invest in this project as a longitudinal partnership (Begun, Berger, Otto-Salaj, & Rose, 2010) to see large-scale change happen in our community.
Addressing Power Dynamics

The FMT recognizes that the university has institutional power, and since the university provided the grant to the group, on some level, that money is a source of power. One of the issues that was brought up was compensation for time. University members did not receive any release time or extra salary for their participation in the research project. Benefits of the work beyond money include stronger networks among university faculty and researchers, better relationships with community partners, and opportunities to conduct translational research that may lead to publications, funding, and improved health and social conditions. Community members were motivated more by the possibility that this work could inform policy, help agencies in the development of community-based interventions, and complement their work. The meetings were generally held on campus, which made it easier for university members to attend, but harder for community members, who generally had to drive or bike to the large campus, find parking, obtain a parking pass or pay for parking, and navigate traffic back to their work space. Several people asked the PI whether any of the $50,000 could go for their time since, in many ways, membership on the FMT was not mandated for their job and they were fitting it in to their work (in hopes it would be meaningful and productive). The FMT hired a project coordinator who was a recent graduate and research assistants. Two paid research assistants were community members, but others were students who received compensation. We raffled off grocery gift cards to survey participants and provided food and water as an appreciation of their time. It deserves some thought in the future about different models for compensation for community-university research teams in order to keep momentum going and to recognize the value of people's time and contributions to this work.

Most team meetings were led by the PI and the paid project coordinator, though they used information from conversations with team members to inform the process of meetings, methods used to engage members, and topics of importance for the agenda. Ultimately, the power rested with the PI, and this is important to recognize since the PI is a university faculty member from a social work discipline. Future work together is likely to have a shared leadership model to ensure opportunities for others, though generally if grant-funded the authority rests on the PI for the project. If more funding comes from the university, for example, care should be made to ensure that current and potential community partners are engaged and equal partners in the process.

Several decision-making processes related to the research project had to be made, which inevitably left certain communities out of the survey area. While the FMT made every attempt to be sensitive to communities that had potentially experienced research fatigue, the survey area limited our work geographically in a way that left out communities that have been underserved and are disenfranchised. For example, our city has the second largest Somalian population in the United States (American Immigration Council, 2015), 14 percent speak a language other than English, and over 5 percent are Latino (U.S. Census, 2014), yet the communities in the geographic area we surveyed do not include a large percentage of these subpopulations. Many of the families live just outside of the study area near an airport and a casino that employ many immigrant residents. Thus, our FMT’s first project — while inclusive of low-income residents, persons who are homeless, African American residents, and senior citizens who live in the study area — suggests that our future work must extend to areas that are more inclusive. In addition, of course, attention must be paid as to how to engage with community agencies and residents in those areas to ensure that research is done with the community, as opposed to doing research on the community. This may mean modifying questions, employing translators and interpreters, or approaching research with different methods that are more exploratory, like focus groups. It may also mean that we spend a considerable amount of time building relationships and communicating about intentions.

Another decision that was made based mostly on feasibility was limiting our survey administrators to university students (except for one community partner who also administered surveys). For our community partners who work on issues related to poverty, providing short-term jobs and experiences could have been a valuable financial contribution to community residents and an opportunity for residents to be engaged more in the process. In future projects, especially as it relates to communities where English is not the first language most people speak, this may be a valuable asset that residents can provide. More
conversations among team members will need to address the underlying reasons community members should conduct the surveys, including issues like IRB certification and approval (without a university email address), training time, and logistics regarding the handling of surveys and confidential data.

The FMT is exploring including more community voices in the project. While this mapping project is unique because we now have geo-coded primary data from a large metropolitan area (i.e., not reliant upon national level data), the team would like to proceed with engaging residents in more conversations about their experiences now that baseline data have been collected. Participants are interested in conducting in-depth interviews or video/photography-based journaling to better understand perceptions about people and their food environment, what types of social supports exist, and, literally, how the community appears at different times. Recently, grants have been written to engage residents in HEAL MAPPS (Healthy Eating Active Living: Mapping Attributes using Participatory Photographic Surveys), which endeavors to support documentation of people's experiences about the food and health in their community in order to facilitate conversation and action (Oregon State University Extension, 2016).

Conclusion

The issues our FMT is addressing require collaborative networks of partners embedded in the community and university. Interdisciplinary teams require thoughtful considerations of time devoted to team-building exercises, paying particular attention to understanding members' values. Teams must find points of convergence, develop mutually agreed upon common language, and openly discuss needs and expectations. Periodically, teams should re-visit intentions, especially with open groups. Teams should find ways to ensure that power is distributed equitably, recognizing the diversity of skills, networks, and ideas. Our example provides a set of processes and decisions used to build a strong community-university collaboration that seeks to work together to improve the community's health and well-being.

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Sustaining University-Community Partnerships in Providing Relationship Education

J. Mitchell Vaterlaus, Linda Skogrand, Brian J. Higginbotham, and Kay Bradford

Abstract

Several relationship education (RE) programs have been implemented and funded through state and federal initiatives. Forming and sustaining university-community partnerships have been proposed as one way of maintaining these programs at the community level. Using a qualitative descriptive approach five Cooperative Extension faculty members articulated their experiences with university-community partnerships in providing RE programs in their counties for three years. Faculty members explained their purpose for developing partnerships, their leadership and roles within their partnerships, and how they maintain and evaluate their partnerships.

Disseminating research-based information from a university to rural communities and urban neighborhoods has been described as one of the “critical challenges for higher education” and the “true test and value of our research and outreach programs” (Richardson, 1996, p. 2). The Cooperative Extension System (CES) strives to meet this challenge by extending university research, resources, and programming into every United States county (Goddard & Olsen, 2004; U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2011). As a literal extension of land-grant universities, CES accomplishes its purpose of disseminating information at community level through the formation of university-community partnerships. These partnerships are not a new phenomenon and many evaluations of these partnerships are available (see Rubin, 2000). The current study is an evaluation of university-community partnerships in providing relationship education (RE) at a county level.

University-Community Partnerships in Relationship Education

RE has become widespread with federal financial support for strengthening relationships in the United States (Fincham & Beach, 2010). Evaluative efforts are emerging as to the effectiveness of RE. Two published meta-analytic studies indicate there are small to moderate effects in relationship quality and communication improvement for middle-class couples (Hawkins, Blanchard, Baldwin, & Fawcett, 2008) and for low-income couples (Hawkins & Fackrell, 2010) who participate in RE. Federal support for RE programming has targeted low-income couples (Ooms & Wilson, 2004). Historically, the majority of RE programs have been for Caucasian middle-class participants, and recruiting low-income couples for educational purposes traditionally has been difficult (Ooms & Wilson, 2004). Research on providing RE for low-income couples is indicating the university-community partnerships are essential in reaching these low-income audiences (Hawkins & Ooms, 2010; Vaterlaus, Bradford, Skogrand, & Higginbotham, 2012). CES faculty members (also referred to as agents in some states) have the opportunity to form new and cultivate existing community partnerships as they strive to provide RE at a county level (Vaterlaus et al., 2012). Additional evaluative research is needed on how university-community partnerships are sustained.

Sustainability of University-Community Partnerships

Evaluation of university-community partnerships in providing RE education is just beginning to emerge (Carlton, Whiting, Bradford, Dyk, & Vail, 2009). They interviewed members (n = 9) of a university-community partnership formed to provide RE within a state healthy relationship initiative. Ethnographic case studies elucidated individual perspectives of the challenges in forming university-community partnerships (i.e. people, relationships, vision, and structure) and the refining factors (e.g., communication, conflict resolution, commitment, and teamwork) that determined if the partnership would be successful. Their model suggested that successful
university-community partnerships occur when there are strong interpersonal skills within the people in the collaboration.

University-community partnership scholars have compared the formation and sustainability (maintenance) of these collaborations to interpersonal relationships (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Stewart & Alrutz, 2012). Like the formation of a romantic relationship, Stewart and Alrutz (2012) stated that there is a relationship initiation process between the university and community partner that involves both organizations identifying the potential rewards, costs, and abilities in meeting each others' expectations. Further, before formation is finalized compatibility must be assessed through common goals, values, and objectives. Extending on the metaphor of interpersonal relationships, the sustainability of the university-community relationship requires that partnering organizations recognize that relationships are not linear (Stewart & Alrutz, 2012). Maintenance occurs when there is structure to the partnership and a defined way of gaining regular feedback from the community partner concerning the partnership. Also, the university should find ways to affirm the value of their community partnership, e.g., public presentations that acknowledge partnership, public awards recognizing partner, celebrating successes together (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Stewart & Alrutz, 2012).

The Lewin Group's (2003) model for forming successful partnerships in providing RE includes a maintenance plan and is consistent with the aforementioned recommendations. They suggest that the partnerships should have a guiding vision and goals, structure and leadership, and make their collaborative efforts visible to the broader community. Building on these recommendations, Futris (2007) and Holland and Glemon (1998) recommended including an evaluation component for university-community partnerships. Evaluation includes identifying the outcomes of the partnership in providing the actual RE programs. Futris (2007) also suggested that evaluation of the collaboration itself should be achieved by asking questions about whether the right people are in the partnership, the level of involvement of the partnering organizations, the accomplishment of common goals, partner satisfaction, and how to sustain the partnership.

Futris (2007) stated that partners should evaluate how they can sustain their efforts in providing RE and, in some circumstances, funding sources. In many instances it is the university that has challenges in maintaining the relationships. This statement was included in a recent symposium on university-community partnerships:

One of the principal challenges of building successful partnerships between academic programs and community organizations is to maintain an ongoing and sustained engagement of the university partners. The community experience with academic initiatives has all too often been one of dropping in and dropping out, where faculty research agendas and course-related pedagogical objectives dominate both the nature of collaborative relations and the partnership structure (Allahwala, Bunce, Beagrie, Brail, Hathorne, Levesque, von Mahs, & Visan, 2013, p. 54).

This challenge is exacerbated by the nature of external funding mechanisms. Many of the current efforts to implement RE are being funded by federal and state initiatives (Fincham & Beach, 2010). Due to uncertainty of future funding, established partnerships may be the method of maintaining RE at a community level. The current study used a descriptive qualitative approach to evaluate factors of university-partnership sustainability among Extension faculty members who have been partnering with community organizations to provide RE for three years.

Method
As part of a larger statewide Healthy Relationship Initiative, CES faculty members (also referred to as Extension agents) in Utah completed proposals for funding diverse RE activities in their counties. In their proposals, county CES faculty explained ways they would reach low-income participants and indicated potential community partners. The data for this particular study was gathered during the faculty members' third annual funding cycle. In this third year, 21 faculty members received funding and were required to complete reports throughout their grant year, indicating successes, challenges, and requests for technical assistance. They also voluntarily participated in interviews for evaluative purposes. Five faculty members who were finding success and discussing their university-community partnerships were
identified to participate in a specific evaluative component of the grant. These same faculty members participated in a 3-year longitudinal case study investigating the evolution of university-community partnerships (see Vaterlaus, Skogrand, Bradford, & Higginbotham, 2015). In their third year, they were asked specific open-ended questions to identify how they sustained their university-community partnerships, which was not discussed in the case studies. Responses to these open-ended questions are the focus of this study.

Sample

Five Extension faculty were invited to participate in the IRB approved evaluation of their university-community partnerships. All five Extension faculty members consented. The faculty members were all female, Caucasian, and married. Two of the participants lived and worked in urban counties and three lived and worked in rural counties. Extension faculty members offered a variety of RE courses in their counties, including one-time RE events and series of classes.

Data Collection and Analysis

Extension faculty members were provided an emailed interview protocol at the conclusion of their third year of providing RE in their county with grant funding. This allowed faculty members to reflect on three years of experience with university-community partnerships. An emailed interview method was used in an attempt to avoid interviewer bias, to collect experiences unobtrusively, and to collect data from the five faculty members around the state in a timely manner. The portion of the emailed interview relevant to this study included four open-ended questions/prompts: (a) what was your purpose for developing relationships with the specific organizations or groups you worked with?; (b) talk about the structure of your community relationships; (c) what factors have sustained your community relationships?; and (d) how do you evaluate your relationship with different partnerships?

Due to the relative newness of university-community partnerships in RE a qualitative descriptive design was utilized (Sandelowski, 2000). A qualitative descriptive design requires researchers to stay close to the data, and “the description in qualitative descriptive studies entails the presentation of the facts of the case in everyday language” (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 336). Responses from each of the Extension faculty were compiled into one data file. Responses were organized under each open-ended question/prompt. One researcher read through the responses several times to gain a sense of the totality of the data (Bodgan & Biklen, 2007). Common descriptive themes were found to be directly related to the topics of each question/prompt. A second researcher validated these themes by consulting the data independently of the first researcher.

A second data set was constructed through qualitative content analysis (Sandelowski, 2000). Responses (line-by-line) were coded/placed together under relevant descriptive themes within each question/prompt. Prior to constructing this data set codes were given to each faculty member in order to determine how many faculty members provided information on each descriptive theme. This data set was used to construct the results section focusing on the faculty members’ words and the “facts of the case” (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 336). A second researcher again reviewed the results section in conjunction with the original data set. When there were discrepancies in theme identification and coding between the two researchers both researchers returned to the data to develop consensus about the participants’ lived experience.

Following the write up of the results a variation of member checking was employed (Vaterlaus & Higginbotham, 2011). Two Extension faculty members (one from a rural and one from an urban county) were emailed the completed results section. They were asked three structured questions to identify the accuracy of the descriptive themes from a personal, general, and professional perspective. Minor suggestions and changes were incorporated into the final results.

Results

The major themes represent the open-ended questions/prompts from the interview. These themes were selected because the purpose of the descriptive study was to describe participants’ experiences in their words about sustaining university-community partnerships. The faculty members talked about (a) the purpose of forming their partnerships; (b) the structure of their partnerships; (c) how they maintain partnerships; and (d) how they evaluate their partnerships.
Purpose for Forming University-Community Partnerships

When Extension faculty members were asked about their purpose for developing university-community partnerships, they specifically addressed university needs that could be met through partnership formation. University needs included existing audiences, locations to hold events, and contributions of other resources. They also talked about what they looked for in a purposeful partnership—avoiding the duplication of services, common goals, and reputability.

All five Extension faculty members specifically spoke about obtaining access to participants. They used words like “existing,” “to reach audiences,” “already in place,” and “access” to talk about having an audience for which to provide RE. A faculty member from a rural county explained:

> Our target audience for this grant is young adults from 18–30 years old, people we can teach healthy relationship skills that they can use in strengthening their relationships. So we look for groups, entities, and individuals that serve this population and also have common goals where we can work in tandem to provide relationship education while they provide other information/services. A faculty member from an urban county explained, “I have developed many relationships in order to be able to reach audiences that can benefit from the material.”

Three of the faculty members explained that resources such as “food,” “venues,” and “locations” were made available through their collaborations. Three more spoke specifically about the increased attention for their programs that could come through formation of a partnership. For example, one faculty member from an urban county said, “I form partnerships to gain more visibility for advertising programs in the community.”

Additionally, two faculty members’ responses resonated with this statement, “I think avoiding duplication of services and not re-inventing the wheel are other great reasons we develop relationships with other groups.” Another two stated that they looked for organizations that had “common goals.” Finally, two faculty members specifically talked about finding “reputable” organizations. A rural faculty member explained, “We look for groups and stakeholder individuals who have strong credibility, good reputations, existing infrastructure, and positive ties with the communities in the county.”

Structure of University-Community Partnerships

The faculty members reported, in general, that they did not have a formal leadership structure for their university-community partnerships. The majority, however, did state that there was formality in structure in terms of meetings, but less formality in maintaining consistent contact. Faculty members also explained that community partners did take on specific roles in the implementation of RE.

All five faculty members spoke specifically about the frequency of meeting with and contacting their partners. A faculty member from a rural county explained, “Initially the [partnership] met quarterly, but in the past year, membership voted to meet monthly.” Another faculty member (rural county) discussed a variety of meeting schedules with different partners. She said, “We meet with some groups once a year, some groups twice a year, some groups quarterly, and other groups monthly.” Email was the preferred method of keeping in contact between meetings and with people from partnerships who couldn’t attend the meetings. A faculty member from an urban county stated:

> While some do not attend the meetings in person, I make an effort to get them involved via email so they can be a part of the decision-making process [Partnership] members often help me get ideas for upcoming events or speakers via email.

Two of the agents specifically stated that there was not a formal structure to their university-community partnerships. Three faculty members stated that they took the role as leader of the partnership. For example, one faculty member in an urban county said, “Generally I’m in charge of the group, but they provide me with feedback and ideas for the grant and upcoming activities.” Three faculty members explained that roles, although informal, were in place. Community partners’ roles were said to be to “share ideas,” “advertise,” “provide feedback,” “attend RE events,” and “teach” at RE events.
Factors That Have Sustained University-Community Partnerships

All five faculty members talked about “common goals” as being the key to sustaining their university-community partnerships. Three faculty members talked about the common qualities of “passion” and “diligence” in their partnerships as sustaining features in their common goals. A faculty member from an urban county stated:

Having a common passion to help members of the community to improve their relationships has sustained the relationships of the partnership. I think it’s that passion that keeps people involved when they don’t “need” to be because their internship is over or their job position in the community changes—and not everyone has that same passion. I’ve had interns that finished their “required” hours and they didn’t want to help any more unless they were going to get paid—kind of sad. For those involved for a long time, getting paid seems to be more of the “icing on the cake” rather than the reason they do it.

Another faculty member from a rural county explained, “I think common goals and purposes really do help sustain our community relationships.”

Two of the faculty members specifically talked about the frequency of meeting with their partners as a sustaining factor, although their responses were conflicting in the frequency of meeting. However, both concluded that flexibility was the quality that sustained the partnership. For example, one faculty member from a rural county said:

We seem to have a stronger working relationship, commitment, and productivity rate with groups we meet more frequently with. However, we need to stay flexible and meet with other groups that don’t meet as frequently, as they also are key players and give valuable input and contributions.

A second urban county faculty member stated:

I also think that NOT meeting frequently has been helpful. People are busy and it’s hard to be a volunteer with so many things going on; having quarterly meetings and allowing people to give feedback via email keeps them involved. I think people want to be involved but they also like flexibility or they probably wouldn’t keep helping.

Evaluating University-Community Partnerships

Faculty members reported that they do not formally evaluate their university-community partnerships. They did state that they informally evaluated partnerships through feedback from the community partner. Faculty also informally evaluated the partnership through assessing the partners’ level of involvement.

All five faculty members stated that they did not formally evaluate their university-community partnerships. For example, one faculty member working in a rural county said, “I haven’t done any formal evaluations.” A faculty member from an urban county stated, “I don’t have any formal evaluation process.” However, all five faculty members also indicated that they informally evaluated their partnerships. A faculty member from a rural county stated, “We do not use a formal evaluation instrument or tool developed for each group, but utilize informal methods before, during, or after our meetings.”

Three faculty members specifically used “feedback” from partners to informally evaluate their university-community partnerships. Three faculty members stated that they used the involvement of the partner to evaluate the partnership. One faculty member from an urban county asked herself several questions in the evaluation of partnership involvement. She said:

We evaluate it by their involvement. Are they attending the meetings? Are they replying to emails? Are they getting the advertising out to their partners/clientele? Are they attending the actual programs? We have found that this is a good indication of whether or not they are ACTIVELY partnering with us.

Another faculty member explained that she viewed it as a reciprocal evaluation of her involvement and the community partners’ involvement. She explained:

I’d say I look at the amount of effort they are willing to put into the partnership and if they aren’t being very accommodating to help us with our efforts, I start
questioning if we are still having the same goals, and if things don't improve, I start looking at other partnerships to put my energy into. On the other hand, I try to give more energy to those that contact me often and look for new ways to partner or to expand etc. So, I guess I evaluate the partnerships based on the amount of effort put in on both sides of the partnership, and ultimately the outcomes of the events. If the cost is greater than the return, then I look at making efforts to either balance the relationship or move the energy I’m exerting to a new partnership that seems more engaged.

Discussion

The current study described the lived experiences of Extension faculty members who formed university-community partnerships to provide RE in their communities. Evaluations of university-community partnerships in providing RE are just beginning (Carlton et al., 2009). Researchers have suggested that the formation and sustainability of university-community partnerships is similar to the formation and sustainability of interpersonal relationships (Bringle & Hatch, 2002; Stewart & Alrutz, 2012). The current study found some support for propositions within this metaphor. Also, Futris’ (2007) propositions for university-community partnership sustainability imply that formal structure, leadership, and evaluation of partnerships may be essential for sustainability. Our findings found some elements of formality within partnerships, but most of the sustainability efforts occurred informally within the university-community partnership.

Consistent with the metaphor of interpersonal relationships (Bringle & Hatch, 2002; Stewart & Alrutz, 2012), Extension faculty identified the purpose and potential rewards of establishing university-community partnerships in providing RE. It is clear from these Extension faculty members that one of the most important purposes of forming partnerships was to more effectively reach their target populations. Extension faculty members sought to benefit in forming partnerships with those who already served this population and those who might help recruit class participants. It is unclear if the benefits were reciprocated because the community partners were not interviewed. However, faculty members informally evaluated their community partners’ satisfaction by continuously monitoring their partners’ level of involvement.

Previous research on university-community partnerships has implied that sustainable partnerships have defined leadership structure and roles (Futris, 2007; Stewart & Alrutz, 2012). It appears that among the faculty members that partnership leadership and roles were present, but not formally defined. Community partners took on a variety of roles and most of the faculty members served as the leaders of their partnerships.

Like the sustainability of interpersonal relationships, an established way of providing feedback and continued contact are thought to sustain university-community partnerships (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Stewart & Alrutz, 2007). The faculty members’ experiences provide some validation for this proposition. Faculty members talked about structuring meeting times, making contacts (e.g., phone, email), and being flexible with meeting frequency. There was formality in the frequency of holding meetings. One faculty member specifically stated that through a formal process, discussion and voting, the university-community partnership changed their frequency of meeting.

Common goals among university-community partners were thought to be the main ingredient of partnership sustainability. Faculty members indicated that there was a common passion to provide RE education for their community—a finding that corroborates observations by Futris (2007) and Stewart and Alrutz (2012) that common goals are important in the formation and sustainability of university-community partnerships. Faculty members did not just select community partners who had existing audiences to teach, but found partners who also had the vision of the benefits of providing RE in their county.

None of the faculty members reported that they formally evaluated their university-community partnerships. However, university-community partnerships were informally evaluated. Despite the informal nature of the evaluation, faculty members implicitly followed Futris’ (2007) recommendations to identify common goals, evaluate partners’ level of involvement, identify if the right people are in the partnership, and partner satisfaction. Monitoring the level of involvement of the community partner was the primary measure for evaluation. Faculty members
gleaned evaluative information about a variety of areas of their partnership through this informal evaluative approach. Carlton and colleagues (2009) implied that strong interpersonal skills were essential in sustaining university-community partnerships. An informal approach to the evaluation of university-community partnerships may be more consistent with the strong interpersonal skills needed in partnerships—possibly decreasing the vulnerability or conflict that could arise in a formal evaluation of the partnership.

Conclusions and Implications

There are limitations to note in the design and sample of this study. The current study used a homogeneous sample and future research on university-community partnership sustainability should attempt to recruit faculty members from more diverse contexts. Additionally, faculty members discussed the reciprocal nature of partnerships. Evaluations in the future should attempt to include stakeholders from the community to better understand partners’ perceptions of sustainability.

Evaluations of university-community partnerships in terms of RE are just beginning (Carlton et al., 2009), and much of the current literature on university-community partnership sustainability represents theoretical propositions and recommendations (e.g., Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Futris, 2007; Stewart & Alrutz, 2012; The Lewin Group, 2003). This study adds to the literature by identifying and validating previous propositions and recommendations for sustaining university-community partnerships. For example, identifying community organizations that can provide needed benefits and common goals were found to be important not only to the formation process but the sustainability of university-community partnerships among faculty members.

Findings in this study pose some questions concerning the implementation of formal versus informal mechanisms in university-community partnership sustainability. Some of the partnerships were sustained in formal ways as suggested by The Lewin Group (2003), Futris (2007), and Bringle and Hatcher (2002). For example, participants in this study indicated that one of the formal ways they sustained their relationships was by holding meetings. However, many of the ways they developed, maintained, and evaluated their university-community relationships were less formal. They indicated they looked for groups that served their target population, that could provide a venue for classes, and that could help recruit class participants. They sustained their partnerships by way of emails which were sent as needed. They also evaluated their partnerships informally by the extent of their involvement, the level of activity, and the amount of effort the partners put into the collaboration.

Given our study’s findings, departure from existing literature on the suggested formal mechanisms for university-community partnership sustainability, there appears to be a need to conduct research about the less formal ways to sustain partnerships. For example, what do Extension faculty mean when they report looking for partners that have common goals and are reputable? Or, when a faculty member said they had to gauge how much meeting time was optimal to keep people involved, how did they assess this? One might speculate that much of what happens in understanding partnerships is informal, but with additional research we may be able to more clearly understand the dynamics of those informal strategies. Future research focused on the process of informal evaluation of university-community partnerships would create more specific recommendations for training Extension faculty in how to sustain university-community partnerships and, in turn, possibly increase the sustainability of community RE programs.

References


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Engagement Education: A Model of Community-Youth Engagement in Rural Appalachia

Sharon Casapulla and Michael E. Hess

Abstract

In this paper we present a framework for teaching and learning that applies Boyer’s definition of engaged scholarship to K–12 education by engaging students, teachers, and community members as partners in learning in a reciprocal relationship that strengthens schools and communities. We call this model, which emerged during a community-based project with rural high school students, engagement education. In this model, teaching and learning are place-focused, project-based, asset-driven, and democratically oriented. We present the framework that lies at the intersection of the four approaches mentioned above by first describing each approach individually. We discuss each component of the engagement education framework within the context of the school and community-based project from which it emerged. We share the findings from a qualitative analysis of the students’ reflections at the completion of the project. Finally, we discuss implications for engaged scholars working with rural communities and schools.

Introduction

Educators, community organizations, and community members are increasingly concerned with the declining engagement of youth in their communities (Flanagan, Beyers, & Žukauskiene, 2012; Melaville, Berg, & Blank, 2006; Putnam, 2001). The issue of declining civic engagement among youth is particularly acute in rural communities, many of which are facing significant economic hardships and outmigration of some of the best and brightest young people (Carr & Kefalas, 2010; Corbett, 2007), often referred to as the “rural brain drain.” Schools are central institutions in many rural communities, first and foremost educating the future decision-makers in the community but also providing opportunities for engagement and participation of community members. These challenges of outmigration and declining civic engagement of rural youth present opportunities for communities and schools to re-engage youth through meaningful collaborations between schools and the local community (Melaville et al., 2006). In the ecology of education, schools and communities are linked and solutions to problems in each must be addressed by using the talents of each (Longo, 2007).

It is our contention that schools can offer students opportunities to understand their local communities as well as support and foster their development as citizens. Wood (2005) noted that schools should prepare students to be engaged, active, and reflective citizens of our democracy. The idea of developing engaged and active citizens is at the heart of the authors’ understanding of education. Dewey (1897) wrote, “I believe that education, therefore, is a process of living and not a preparation for future living” (p. 7). We, too, contend that schools should not only prepare students for future engagement as citizens but should create opportunities for students to be engaged, active, and reflective citizens in their communities.

Boyer (1996) defined engaged scholarship as “…connecting the rich resources of the university to our most pressing social, civic, and ethical problems, to our children, to our schools, to our teacher, and to our cities …” (p. 32). In this paper we present a framework for teaching and learning that applies Boyer’s definition of engaged scholarship to K–12 education by engaging students, teachers, and community members as partners in learning in a reciprocal relationship that strengthens schools and communities. We refer to this model, which emerged during a community-based project with rural high school students, engagement education.

The theories of place-based education (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Rural Schools and Community Trust (RSCT), 2013; Smith, 2002; Smith & Sobel, 2010), project-based learning (Thomas, 2000), asset-based community development/community capacity development (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Yosso, 2005), and democratic education (Checkoway, 2013; Dewey, 1907; Freire, 2000; Yosso, 2005) have informed our work as educators. It is at the intersection of these four theoretical models that we found engagement education to occur. Put simply, we propose engagement education to be: place-focused, project-based, asset-driven, and democratically oriented.
In this paper we will present the framework that lies at the intersection of the four approaches mentioned by first describing each approach individually. We will then discuss each component of the engagement education framework within the context of the project from which it emerged. We will share the findings from a qualitative analysis of the students’ reflections at the completion of the project. Finally, we will discuss implications for engaged scholars working with rural communities and schools.

Component 1: Place-based Education

Learning takes place in context (Brown et al., 1989), which includes cultural, social, political, and geographic dimensions. Yet, preparing young students to work in a global economy often is context-neutral, in a sense ignoring and devaluing what is closest and most important to them: their local community. This narrow focus on life beyond the local can result in a disconnect between what is taught in school and the knowledge and skills valued by families and students outside of school (Corbett, 2007; Gruenewald, 2003; Shamah & MacTavish, 2009). The construct of place-based education encompasses many characteristics that Dewey (1897, 1916, 1938) proposed and refined in the early 20th century. For education to be engaging to children, learning must be student-centered, meaningful, relevant, and grounded in the lived experiences of students (Dewey, 1907; Melaville et al., 2006; Shamah & MacTavish, 2009; Smith, 2002; Smith & Sobel, 2010).

The RSCT defines place-based education as:

- The school and community actively collaborate to make the local place a good one in which to learn, work, and live.
- Students serve as scholars and citizens, doing sustained, standards-based academic work that draws upon and contributes to the place in which they live while providing connections to and understanding of the global context.
- The community supports students and their adult mentors in new roles as learning deepens and contributions to community and economic development expand.
- Schools mirror the democratic values they seek to instill, arranging their resources so that every child is known well and every child’s participation is needed and wanted.
- Decision-making about the education of the community’s children is shared, informed by expertise both in and outside the school.
- Educators, students, and community members expect excellent effort from each other and review their joint progress regularly and thoughtfully, using multiple measures and public input to enlarge assessments of student performance.

The RSCT (2013) further delineates the characteristics of quality place-based education:

- Teachers operating from a place-based model develop meaningful lessons around issues of local importance, things about which students and their families care. In a place-based classroom, students become knowledge-creators as opposed to passive information receivers. Their questions and concerns are valued and determine the direction of the learning process (Meier, 1995). This requires skill and flexibility on the part of educator, but also engages the professional creativity that most educators value but is so often constrained by textbooks and packaged curricula.

Because the curriculum is grounded in the local, place-based education offers students the opportunity to practice the skills involved in being active citizens. Students engaged in place-based education build meaning around local places and increase their awareness of their role as inhabitants of a particular place and the responsibilities that go along with it (Melaville et al., 2006). Research has shown that students in place-based classrooms demonstrated higher levels of stewardship behaviors than their peers who were in classrooms that did not utilize place to the same degree (Von Secker, 2004).

The benefits of place-based education extend beyond increased achievement in the core academic areas. Athman, Ernst, and Monroe (2004), for example, found that using the local environment as context for learning had positive effect on students’ critical thinking skills and disposition toward
critical thinking, skills that are highly valuable for future education, employment, and active citizenship. Furthermore, place-based learning has been associated with increased attendance, lower dropout rates, increased parental and community involvement, higher aspirations and expectations for student learning, and overall increased enthusiasm for learning (Duffin, Chawla, Sobel, & PEER Associates, 2005; Liebermann & Hoody, 1998; Melaville et al., 2006; Shamah & MacTavish, 2009; Smith, 2002; Smith & Sobel, 2010).

Component 2: Project-based Learning

Dewey (1938) emphasized the connection between experience and education. Subject matter should not be learned in isolation; educators must engage students in solving the real issues of present life, and teach skills as a “means of attaining an end goal which make direct vital appeal” (p. 19). Experiential learning takes many forms; the one we will focus on here is project-based learning. Though he acknowledged a lack of a universally accepted model for project-based learning, Thomas (2000) identified five characteristics of project-based learning: (1) centrality, (2) a driving question, (3) involves constructive investigation, (4) student-centered, and (5) authenticity. In a review of the literature on project-based learning, Thomas concluded that there is ample evidence to suggest that project-based learning can enhance the quality of students’ learning and is an effective method for teaching communication and decision-making skills, planning, and problem-solving. Furthermore, Thomas found evidence for “unintended and seemingly beneficial consequences” (p. 34) of project-based learning including increased professionalism and collaboration on the part of teachers, as well as increased attendance and improved student attitudes.

Component 3: Asset-based Community Development

Issues concerning communities are often addressed initially by a deficit-driven approach focused on the needs, problems, and deficiencies within communities. Community developers and researchers have outlined the inherent problems with this deficit-driven approach indicating that community members in under-resourced communities can begin to see themselves as deficient (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Asset-based community development (ABCD) (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993) offers an alternative capacity-oriented approach that focuses on identifying and mobilizing the assets that exist within communities. Asset-based community development begins with identifying the gifts of local citizens, then bringing citizens together via local associations, then finally bringing associations together (Habermas, 2001) for community change. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) emphasize the importance of community engagement in community development, stating, “All the historic evidence indicates that significant community development takes place only when local community people are committed to investing themselves and their resources in the effort” (p. 5) Scholars and community partners have applied the ABCD model in underserved rural as well as in urban communities to address varied community issues in multiple contexts (Atkinson, Desmond, Saperstein, Billing, Gold, & Tournas-Hardt, 2010; Boyd, Hayes, Wilson, & Bearsley-Smith, 2008; Nam, 2014; Shabazz & Cooks, 2014).

Component 4: Democratic Orientation

The ABCD approach is inherently democratic. A democratic orientation in education serves to ensure a democratic society exists by providing students with opportunities to practice democratic skills and to develop democratic values and attitudes (Apple & Beane, 1995; Counts, 1939; Dewey, 1916; Kelly, 1995; Ligon, 2005; Mursell, 1955; Parker, 2003; Sehr, 1997). Dewey (1938) describes six characteristics of democratic education: (1) the celebration of expression and cultivation of individuality, (2) inspired free activity, (3) learning through experience, (4) the acquisition of skills and techniques by means that make direct vital appeal, (5) the utilization of the opportunities of present life for educational exploration, and (6) becoming acquainted with a changing world.

Apple and Beane (1995) identified seven elements that are foundational to democratic education:

1. The open flow of ideas, regardless of the popularity, that enables people to be as fully informed as possible.
2. Faith in the individual and collective capacity of people to create possibilities of resolving problems.
3. The use of critical reflection and analysis to evaluate ideas, problems, and policies.
4. Concern for the welfare of others and the common good.
5. Concern for the dignity and rights of individuals and minorities.
6. An understanding that democracy is not so much an ideal to be pursued as an idealized set of values that we live and that must guide our life as a people.
7. The organization of social institutions to promote and extend the democratic way of life.

Hence, at a minimum in democratically oriented education students participate in setting the direction of learning and have learning opportunities that include hands-on projects, community connections, meaningful student governance, opportunities to develop personal relationships, and conflict resolution skills. In summary, a democratically oriented classroom is one where teachers facilitate student participation, and student ideas and experiences are central to the educational process.

Facilitating democratic education requires a democratic orientation on the part of the teacher. A democratic orientation to education requires a high level of trust in people (students) and a core belief that people have the capacity to understand and resolve the issues and challenges facing them (Mursell, 1955). This plays out in the culture of the classroom. Furthermore, democracy as a “cultural way of being” (West, 2004, p. 68) demands a faith in the social nature of democracy that moves it beyond the procedural and into the people (Boydston, 1987). A faith in people to be active, participatory, and responsible is at the core of our understanding of democracy and democratic education.

The Intersection: Engagement Education

These four approaches (place-based education, project-based learning, assets-based community development, and democratic education) have guided our work as educators in secondary and post-secondary classrooms and are central to our vision of the teaching and learning process. During our work with community members and high school students in 2012, we recognized a new model emerging—one that exists at the intersection of the four approaches. This framework, which we refer to as engagement education, engages students and community members as partners in the teaching and learning process, the goal of which is understanding and solving local social, civic, and ethical problems. We define engagement education as: place-focused, project-based, asset-driven and democratically orientated.

Each element of the engagement education model represents a different component of teaching and learning: who (community members as assets), what (community project-based), where (local community), and how (democratic orientation) of the teaching and learning cycle (see Figure 1). The who describes the individuals involved in the teaching and learning and helps refocus us as faculty to turn the focus away from external expertise and toward community members as integral to the teaching and learning process. The what refers to the content which, in this model, arises from a problem or project that is grounded in the local community. The where grounds the learning in what is local. Finally, the how frames the culture of the classroom and describes how we interact and engage with each other. In the next section, we will describe the four components of the engagement education model, (a) place-focused, (b) project-based,
Overview of the Clock Project

We began work on the clock project in the fall of 2012. This project was a collaboration among our university, a local community organization, the county historical society and the local high school to research, restore and rededicate a 107-year-old clock which stood in the center of the town square at the train depot.

Place-focused

Engagement education is place-focused and the local community is the context for learning. This clock project took place in a small rural community in southeast Appalachian Ohio. The township has a population of approximately 4,480 and a rich history in coal mining. Similar to other rural areas this community struggles with the structural challenges facing many rural communities: high poverty, high unemployment, under-resourced schools, aging population, youth outmigration, lack of access to health care, and inadequate housing (Duncan, 1999). In 2009 the median household income in the township was $24,152. The local school district consists of one elementary and one middle/high school. In 2014, the average daily enrollment for the entire district was 860 with 69.35 percent of students on free or reduced lunch (Ohio Department of Education, 2014b) and a 97 percent four-year graduation rate (Ohio Department of Education, 2014a).

There are numerous local non-profit organizations that serve youth in this community. Two local nonprofits had been working with the county historical society and museum to secure funding from a local grantor to restore the historic clock. While the planning for the clock restoration was underway, conversations were simultaneously happening in the township about how to engage local youth in leadership development activities1. We saw an opportunity to connect community needs and local youth using a place-based approach. We met with community leaders and leaders from the two local nonprofits to discuss ways that local youth could be involved in the work of restoring the clock.

The leader from the one of the nonprofits recruited four individuals from the community including an individual from the county historical society who agreed to attend the class meetings. This group of five became the core group of community mentors, volunteering weekly throughout the semester.

We needed to identify a teacher who would work with the mentors. The local school superintendent suggested we talk with a sophomore language arts teacher who might be interested in integrating this project into his curriculum. We met with the teacher and he agreed to give up one class period per week for the spring semester. We would meet with the class of students once before the end of the fall semester to introduce the project and the mentors, intending to get the work underway in spring semester.

To situate learning in the community the mentors worked with students to plan local field trips based on the needs of the workgroups. One workgroup visited the clock repairman. A second workgroup visited the historical society museum to find answers to questions about the clock. Another group visited local sites in the town to learn about local history of their town and the clock. We were surprised to find out that even though most of the students had lived in the town their whole lives, many had never been inside many of the buildings in their town nor spoken with the community members about the town’s history.

Another principle of place-based education is that students serve as scholars and citizens, doing sustained, standards-based academic work. As this was a sophomore language arts class it was important to the teacher, students and the community members to be attentive to the English Language Arts standards. We found that many of the standards were easily addressed within this project. Students were purposeful in their use of technology, researching history of the community and developing presentations for various community groups about the clock project. The students maintained individual writing journals and made weekly entries. The class read “Where I am From” (Lyon, n.d.)—a poem (and poem form) that engages place in a very personal way—and eventually created their own “I Am From” poems describing their connection to their home and community. We selected several readings from Kettle Bottom (Gilliam Fisher, 2004) by Diane Gilliam, an Appalachian poet who came to the town to facilitate a poetry workshop with the students and mentors. The students’ (and mentors’) poems from the poetry workshop were subsequently published in a book that was presented to the community.

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1 Community Leadership workgroup meetings were being held in the township as a result of a Promise Neighborhood planning grant. The first author was present at the community leadership workgroup meetings along with several of the local leaders who eventually became mentors in this project.
A town so filled with life, people going away and coming to town. These people just come by to see my face, but as time goes on, those people are becoming less. As time goes by, I feel sicker and weaker as if I am falling apart. We come to this current time; I am no longer helping people the way I used to. I feel as if I am dying. As I am fading, a man appears. He says that I am broken and that he wants to help me. The man picks me up and takes me to a place of healing; he knows my state of health. To help me heal to make me feel as if I am whole again and to get me back in shape. He gets me all the new parts and takes out the old. I feel as if I am reborn. The man pulls me into his arms and tells me we are going home. As I head back to this little town, all the memories, sad to know that many of the people won’t be here. I brace myself. I have arrived, home at last, and much to my surprise, I see people, a lot of people. As I come to the center of this town, I see all the old faces and some new faces. I am happy to be here, I am back at home, and if anything I feel whole once again. I am so honored and so privileged but I finally figured out who I am. I am the clock.

This student essay shows how place-based education can help students make connections between academic expectations and their communities. The clock project grew from a real community need. The group had real deadlines to meet. The primary outcome was the restoration of the clock, but the secondary outcomes were also very meaningful to the students and the community and included a book of student and mentor writing and artwork, landscaping around the train depot and a student web blog. The final culmination of the class project was the reveal of the restored clock at a community event which drew over 250 individuals. Students read their poems to the community members gathered for the clock unveiling. The students showed a clear sense of pride in their work, in the clock and in their community that day. Conversely, the community mentors and other community members expressed their pride in the young people involved in guiding the clock restoration.

Project-based

Engagement education is project-based and a driving question pushes the work forward. At the first meeting with the class, the community mentors engaged the students in a conversation about the clock. We structured the discussion in the following way, leading to the driving questions:

- **What We Know**: The mentors presented a brief history of the clock with historical facts and images.
- **What We Remember**: A community member and mentor shared a series of personal stories of the community about his memories of the town and the clock. He then facilitated a conversation with students about their memories of the clock. Many students had personal stories and memories associated with the clock and the depot where it once stood.
- **What We Don’t Know**: The first author facilitated a discussion which allowed the students and community mentors to explore what was not known about the clock.
- **What We Want to Learn and Do**: The second author led a discussion that allowed students to brainstorm ideas related to what they had an interest in knowing and doing related to the clock. These ideas became the driving questions around which the curriculum and project work were structured.

The phrase “respect the clock” came up during the discussion with the students and surprised the mentors. This phrase suggested an emerging sense of ownership and pride in the clock. The students reviewed the list of ideas and questions and grouped them into categories which became their work groups: (1) celebration group, (2) social landscaping group, (3) navigation group and (4) history and future of the clock. This student-generated list drove the rest of the project development.

After the first week, we met with the class weekly for approximately one hour for eight weeks. After a brief meeting with the whole class, we generally broke into smaller workgroups, each group facilitated by a community mentor. With the larger group goals in mind, each group determined its focus. A timeline emerged from the groups’ planning: a celebration would be planned for the end of the semester that would coincide with a community reunion over a holiday weekend. The unveiling of the clock would occur at this event. This deadline made the project very real.
Asset-driven

The engagement education model is asset-driven, operating on the principle that every community’s greatest asset is its people. When people with similar interests join together their strengths are multiplied in the associations they form. The strength and capacity of the people and local community organizations in the township was easy to recognize. Community members were front and center throughout the project as project leaders, classroom mentors and as experts called on to teach during local field trips. Prior to our involvement, a local nonprofit had secured funding from a local foundation to restore the clock. Other than some technology (i.e., laptops, digital voice recorders and digital cameras) we brought very little from the outside other than our time and attention. This sent a message that we were committed to the project, but believed in the capacity of the community.

Students often do not have the opportunity to study the assets that exist in their communities. We were reminded of this reality in our first meeting with the students when we asked the students “What is beautiful about your community?” Their collective response was: “Nothing is beautiful about our community.” The students were painfully aware of the deficits within their community, but had not had the opportunity to explore the complexity and beauty of the place of their everyday lives. We saw and heard this sentiment change over the course of the project as evidenced by this student quotation: “I love history and I especially love learning about the town. I’ve lived here my whole life and never would have imagined how much history there really is here.”

Democratically Oriented

Engagement education is democratically oriented. From the first classroom session, we aimed to foster a democratic orientation in the classroom through the open flow of ideas via group discussion and critical reflection where all ideas were valued (Apple & Beane, 1995). At first students were reluctant to speak up, but the mentors reinforced that all ideas are worthwhile and this project encouraged input from each of them. The class made decisions regarding various aspects of the clock restoration with student input, discussion and voting.

Prior to the first meeting with students and throughout the semester, we met with the mentors to discuss the project and the strategies for engaging students. Since the larger purpose of this initiative was youth leadership development and civic engagement, we were all interested in ways to facilitate those processes. One of the community members was familiar with the intergenerational model of youth leadership development and shared that approach with the group (Southern Echo, n.d.). We shared readings and discussed various pedagogical models (i.e., place-based education, project-based learning, democratic pedagogy and asset-based community development) to get “on the same page” about how we would interact with the students, value and validate their voices and move the project forward.

Measuring Student Impact

There is a growing body of literature aimed at measuring the impact of experiential education on youth (Duffin et al., 2005; Melaville et al., 2006; Qualters, 2010; Scott & Graham, 2015; Yates & Youniss, 1996). In this kind of work there are clear and often very tangible outcomes (e.g., a restored clock, book of student writing, new relationships) but there are also personal and interpersonal outcomes that are more difficult to measure. Yates and Youniss (1996) found that three developmental concepts were associated with participation in service: agency, social relatedness and moral-political awareness. Multiple studies investigating the effects of participating in service have indicated that students who participate in service activities report an increased sense of self-awareness and self-confidence and personal responsibility (Newmann & Rutter, 1983). Service can increase a sense of connectedness and belonging and moral-political awareness—“heightened moral feelings and reasoning—leading to civic activism” (Yates & Youniss, 1996, p. 86).

We saw students fully engaged in their work while we were in the classroom. Community mentors talked about being stopped by friends and neighbors in the bank or the grocery store to discuss the project, wanting to know more. The mentors shared that parents told them their children were excited about going to school. The teacher working with us on the project described seeing the students in his class grow in ways he never expected. Most importantly, we heard the students themselves tell us how meaningful this project had been to them. One of the students sent this email to the second author in the first few weeks of the project:

Hey, this is [student name] from [school name] High School. These are the pictures
you asked me to send you! Sorry it took so long. As I mentioned earlier today something came up last time I had a chance to send them and I had to leave. I have to send them from my grandmother’s computer, and I finally got back up here to get them to you. One of the photos is of a meat market that was located where Certified is now, right beside the depot. If you look closely in the background there is a train car. So cool! I really am enjoying this project. I love history and I especially love learning about the town. I’ve lived here my whole life and never would have imagined how much history there really is here. I have interviews booked up to my chin with elders who have lived here for many years. I’m also getting a book that is supposed to have a lot of good information in it. A lady my mom talked to knows someone with a bunch of old things from the town that I plan on photographing and bringing into class.

Just thought I would let you know where we are in getting resources within the social landscaping group!

I’m so glad I get to be a part of this, and I will see you next Wednesday!

Other students in the class echoed these sentiments. As a final assignment and to better understand the impact of the project, we asked the students to write about their experiences in the class by responding to the open-ended prompt: “What did you learn from participating in the clock project?” Twenty-one students completed the reflection. We conducted a content analysis on the student responses to the prompt. To do this, we initially open-coded the responses (Charmaz, 2014), line by line, to establish an initial set of codes. We then completed focused-coding, a process comparing codes then grouping significant and common codes into categories (Charmaz, 2014), which resulted in six broad themes. We will describe the results from the qualitative analysis of the student responses in the next section.

Results of Analysis of Student Reflection
The six themes that emerged from the student responses are: Personal Growth, Relationships Across Generations can be Transformative; Setting an Example; Development of Pride in Local Community and Relevance of Local Knowledge (Table 1). Students described a process of Personal Growth; they began to recognize capacities within themselves they had not previously recognized. Some of the students redefined themselves (i.e. I am…). Students also recognized the importance of Giving Back to their communities, and articulated the personal satisfaction that results from civic engagement (i.e. “It gives me a good feeling to help.”). We saw that Relationships Across Generations can be Transformative. Intergenerational learning was a new experience for these students, but after the initial discomfort, relationships formed. Mentors spoke about how meaningful these relationships had become. Another theme that emerged was Setting an Example. As the exemplar quotation in Table 1 describes, students saw and heard examples of individuals who make a difference in their community. The last two themes—Development of Pride in Local Community and Relevance of Local Knowledge—are closely related. Students valued the opportunity to learn about their local community in class and the result is a broader sense of pride in their local place.

Educational Impact and Conclusions
We have defined engagement education as place-focused, project-based, assets-driven and democratically oriented. We argue that this model allows for multiple ways to engage the learning and teaching process. Specifically, when students and teachers are involved in engagement education with community members they identify real-world problems and these problems serve as the basis for curricular driven exploration and solutions. This type of learning offers students real-world application and practice in the development of both discipline-specific content and the development of critical thinking skills needed to solve complex community driven problems and function as active, engaged citizens. Importantly, students are challenged to develop flexibility in their thinking and be resourceful in identifying possible solutions to important community issues. When all aspects of learning are integrated, the connections are clear and education makes sense to students.

Once the students involved in the clock project engaged the local, with committed community partners, inside a democratically oriented classroom they began to see the assets of their community. We found that when the “community provides the context for learning” and “when student work
focuses on community needs and interests, and community members serve as resources and partners in every aspect of teaching and learning” (Rural Schools and Community Trust, 2013), students develop pride in their communities and communities develop pride in their young people. One student comment is representative of the power of this model of education to help youth develop as engaged citizens. She said, “I have learned that being part of a community project does make a difference in your life.” Engagement education can be a model in which rural schools, community members and engaged scholars can capitalize on the talents and strengths of the other to strengthen local communities.

Table 1. Themes in the Student Responses to Final Reflection on Clock Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Exemplar Student Quotations</th>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Growth</td>
<td>I still see myself as the same kid, but people have told me how much I have changed and how I have really stepped up. It helped me be who I am today. I need to stop being a wuss and step out of my shell a bit. I can speak in front of people without missing a beat. I am very intelligent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of Giving Back</td>
<td>I have learned that being part of a community project does make a difference in your life. The Clock Project is a good way to connect with my community and my classmates. It gives me a good feeling to help. People are happy we are asking them things. People smile and laugh; sometimes they sing songs for us. Especially the old people, it brings joy to the old people to know that we care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships Across Generations Can Be Transformative</td>
<td>Miss D., — a wonderful woman and amazing friend. S., — I adore her! At first I wasn’t comfortable about it but as time went on I realized that we were taught but we also taught them things. It was different, but cool to work with different age groups in class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting an Example</td>
<td>You are recognized by the difference you have made in the community. Because of what you are doing someone is going to look up to you and be as helpful as you are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Pride in Local Community</td>
<td>I learned that the township still has pride in itself. We’re good people, we’re smart, and we’re not afraid to take pride in our community. There’s a lot of potential in this community for students and for everybody.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relevance of Place — Local Knowledge</td>
<td>It’s awesome that we can learn, celebrate and talk about [Town Name], my hometown, in class. [The township takes] pride in our community.</td>
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References


About the Authors

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Engaging Citizens and Transforming Designers: Analysis of a Campus-Community Partnership Through the Lens of Children’s Rights to Participation

Victoria Derr, Laura Healey Malinin, and Meredith Banasiak

Abstract
While an engaged citizenry is often the goal of community service learning, the rights of children to be active agents in this process are largely considered in a separate academic literature. Yet community service learning and children’s participation share much in their goals and approaches to engagement. This paper analyzes a campus-community partnership between undergraduate environmental design and middle school applied science students. The partnership began as a way to promote participatory design processes for the redesign of a middle school and evolved to a proactive co-design program. We describe the goals and approaches to service-learning employed through the partnership, and critique the evolution of the program through the realm of a participation model that has emerged from three decades of children’s participation research. By analyzing a campus-community partnership through this framework, we hope to deepen the discourse on approaches to and evaluation of successful service-learning programs.

Introduction
Campus-community partnerships are typically undertaken to promote meaningful engagement and to enrich traditional pedagogies through experiential learning. Similarly, children’s participation research and advocacy promotes engaged learning through the inclusion of children in decision-making and transformative education (Malone & Hartung, 2010). Both bodies of literature address many of the same topics and goals. Rarely do the two literatures intersect. This paper brings together these two literatures through the analysis of a campus-community partnership between university undergraduates and middle school students. We identify the common threads of each literature, describe the goals of each type of initiative, and critique the evolution of a seven-year partnership using a Seven Realms of Participation model that emerged from analysis of 30 years of children’s participation research (Francis & Lorenzo, 2002). This model is used to illustrate a process of growth and to inform awareness about the strengths and shortcomings of campus-community partnerships.

Common Threads
Campus-community partnerships that promote service-learning and children’s participation scholars and advocates share much in their approach and concern for authentic, dialectic partnerships. Both view the relationship as transformative: faculty, university students, community partners, and children all can be deeply affected by exchanges that give voice to and address issues of real concern (Carroll, LaPoint & Tyler, 2001; Chawla, 2002; Malone & Hartung, 2010). In addition, service-learning and children’s participation both must address issues of equity and barriers to participation that exist within university-community and child-adult relationships (Angotti, Doble & Horrigan, 2011; Carroll et al., 2001; Derr, Chawla, Mintzer, Cushing & van Vliet, 2013; Hou, 2011; Malone & Hartung, 2010; Sutton, 2012). Both need to extend beyond descriptions of the types of activities and interactions that occur to also include the degree of influence and types of impacts among those involved (Gelmon, Holland, Seifer, Shinnammon & Connors, 1998; Iacofano, 1990; Malone & Hartung, 2010). And finally, effective service-learning typically involves reflection and reflective practice (Angotti et al., 2011; Carroll et al., 2001; Sandy & Holland, 2006). Gauging similar reflections among children participants is sometimes challenging, and identifying impacts perhaps even more so, because “it is within the adult-centric structure that all children’s participation comes to be recognized” (Malone & Hartung, 2010, p. 33). Yet it is these challenges that make children’s participation in service-learning an area of particular significance. Recent initiatives to reinstate democratic education into schooling (e.g., IDEA, 2012; Westheimer, 2008) further support the need for stronger linkages between service-learning and children’s rights to participation in meaningful, real-world issues (Carroll et al., 2001; Fusco, 2001).
Children's Rights and Engaged Learning

Discourse on children's rights to participation began with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which recognizes that dignity and equal rights of all people are the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace. The Declaration promotes health and well-being, education, and opportunities to participate in government and civic activities (United Nations, 1948). Though the Declaration specifically states that these rights should be extended to all people, child advocates in the 1980s promoted the drafting of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). This led to the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) support of the Growing Up in Cities Initiative (Chawla, 2002; Lynch, 1977). The goal of these projects was to create opportunities for genuine participation of children in development and planning their cities (Chawla, 2002). These projects have provided a framework for the inclusion of children in a variety of projects, primarily focused on planning and urban design.

While engaged citizenry is often the goal of community service learning, the rights of children to be active agents in this process is largely considered in a separate academic literature (e.g., Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2010). Yet the inclusion of children's rights to participate in community life and decision-making about the places where children live is a natural ally and potential contributor to the scholarship of community service learning. Children's rights scholars and young people themselves have expressed both the need for and desire to participate in decision-making in real-world contexts (Chawla, 2002; Derr, Chawla, Mintzer, Cushing & van Vliet, 2013; Driskell, 2002; Malone & Hartung, 2010; Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2010; Westheimer, 2008). Focus has been given to young people's heightened awareness and agency around international and environmental issues (Chawla & Heft, 2002; Hart, 2001; Malone & Hartung, 2010) but can be equally significant at the local level, where issues of disparity or sustainability also exist (Derr et al., 2013; Tolman & Pitmann, 2001). For example, this model of participation could readily extend to place-based environmental education and environmental justice (e.g., Toman & Pitmann, 2001; Gruenewald & Smith, 2008), as well as science education (Hulleman & Harackiewicz, 2008) or science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) programs, which promote experiential learning (Thiry, Laursen, & Hunter, 2011).

Models of Participation

The process and authenticity of engagement has been critiqued in the planning profession, with Arnstein (1969) providing a ladder of citizen participation, in which the rungs of the ladder represent levels of engagement, from non-participation to consultation to high levels of control and power-sharing. This ladder was later adopted for children (Hart, 2001). Though the ladder has been heavily used and referenced in the children's participation literature, Hart himself suggests its time has passed (2008) and that there are multiple models of participation depending on the purpose and intent of a project. Other models and analyses of children's participation both simplify and give detail to types of participatory practice. For example, Lansdown (2010) examines approaches to measuring the extent, quality, and impacts of engagement. She classifies the extent of engagement into three levels: consultative participation, in which adults seek children's views on issues; collaborative participation, in which children and adults have a greater degree of partnership and where there is opportunity for engagement at any stage of decision-making, or project implementation; and child-led participation, in which children are given the opportunity to initiate activities and advocate for themselves. Chawla and Heft (2002) also describe characteristics of effective participation. Among these are conditions for competence, in which children are given real responsibilities, play a role in establishing goals and decision-making, and have opportunities to be heard and to influence the process. They describe this ability to exert control over valued aspects of one's life as a universal contributor to psychological well-being. Francis and Lorenzo (2002) describe seven realms of children's participation based on a review of 30 years of participatory practice (Table 1). Among these realms are the Learning Realm, in which projects focus on imparting knowledge and changing perceptions in educational contexts, the Needs Realm, in which children's participation is used to better understand their needs, and the Proactive Realm, in which projects strive for children's empowerment and substantial change through participation. In the Proactive Realm, conditions for competence balance children's empowerment with the need for tangible outcomes.
Though there are notable exceptions, frequently service-learning courses with children and youth involve a transference of knowledge rather than with young people serving as co-producers of this knowledge, placing them in the Learning Realm rather than a participatory Proactive Realm (Francis & Lorenzo, 2002). Not only does this leave little room for engaged and critical thinking that can lead to competence of school children (Chawla & Heft, 2002; Westheimer, 2008), it also does not allow university students the opportunity to participate in the transformative educational process that community service learning was designed to provide.

The ability for young people to actively engage with university students in service-learning course formats is significant for both partners. For example, service-learning that is integrated into the curriculum is more likely than co-curricular volunteer service to foster a desire to promote racial understanding and activism and to increase levels of critical thinking among university students (Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000). Service-learning can also increase understanding of content more than classroom study alone, in part through its experiential pedagogy and integrated reflective practice (Eyler, 2009). In addition, for service-learning to truly be transformative, it must challenge boundaries between academia and community and in-

<table>
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<th>Realm</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
<th>Lasting Contribution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Romantic</td>
<td>“Ideological” period Children are active designers and can “do better” than adults</td>
<td>Often ignored adult input, leading to marginalization of ideas</td>
<td>Continues to provide ideological focus of children’s participation</td>
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<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>“Planners for children” Adult advocacy for children</td>
<td>Often avoided official decision-making processes; children not directly involved</td>
<td>Techniques to engage children in large and complex projects</td>
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<td>Needs</td>
<td>“Social scientists for children” Research to understand children’s environmental needs</td>
<td>Children sometimes not participants in research studies</td>
<td>Foundational understanding of children’s environmental needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>“Children as learners” Environmental education as focus of participation</td>
<td>Does not always lead to changes in physical environments studied</td>
<td>Emphasis on learning and social change as outcomes of participatory process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional</td>
<td>“Children as adults” Children expected to perform and have same knowledge as adults</td>
<td>Ignores the child-centered and spontaneous desires of children within a participatory process. Can result in limited change or authentic participation.</td>
<td>Provides greater awareness of importance of children’s participation</td>
</tr>
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<td>Proactive</td>
<td>“Participation with vision” Empowering children &amp; adults for genuine and shared participation</td>
<td>May not be possible in every situation; facilitators may need special training</td>
<td>Recognizes children as children and provides associated frameworks for participation; increases perceived control</td>
</tr>
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Table 1. Seven Realms of Participation (Francis, 1999; Francis & Lorenzo, 2002; Hester, 1999)
clude reflective practice (Angotti, Doble & Horrigan, 2011; Eyler, 2009). When children’s active participation is excluded from the process of engagement, not only are barriers maintained, but the process reinforces the discrepancy that young people feel and express when they say no one cares what they think. However, when young people are included as active agents in service-learning, the effect can be transformative for undergraduates and children alike.

An Evolving Partnership

The Children, Youth and Environments Center for Community Engagement (CYE) is part of the University of Colorado (CU) Program in Environmental Design (ENVD). CYE supports research, teaching, and outreach projects that promote children’s health, safety, and welfare through environmental design. At the forefront of these efforts has been promotion of the rights of children and youth to participate in the design of their own environments. Both ENVD and CYE have a long history of incorporating community service learning projects into undergraduate education. Often these projects arise when community members come to ENVD or CYE with an identified need for environmental design services (planning, architecture, or landscape architecture) and the undergraduate design students provide those services to fulfill course requirements or through independent studies. The campus-community relationship typically ends with completion of the design project. We describe here a campus-community relationship between CYE/ENVD and a local public middle school (Casey) that began similarly in 2007, and has since evolved into an ongoing partnership. An analysis of the first seven years of this partnership considers the different relationship structures and potential benefits of children’s participation in campus-community partnerships and serves to bridge theoretical models from the two literatures. In the following sections we use the Seven Realms of Participation Framework (Francis & Lorenzo, 2002) (Table 1) to describe each stage in the evolution of the partnership as a cycle of application and analysis (Table 2). This participation model helps to organize and analyze the evolution of the partnership while also allowing analysis of the effectiveness of the campus-community partnership.

Evolution One: Youth Voice and the Advocacy Realm

When the local school board decided to replace the Casey Middle School building located near the University of Colorado campus with a new energy-efficient facility, CYE welcomed the opportunity to engage the middle school students in the design of their school building. The CYE/Casey partnership began with a participatory planning activity that included students from the middle school, the project architects, and ENVD students and professors. The project also had strong support from the middle school principal. The goals of the activity were to collaborate on ideas for the design of the new middle school and to generate a mutual dialogue about sustainability in general. Upon completion of the participatory planning activity, a Casey teacher sponsored an after-school design club where CU graduate students worked with a small group of Casey students. The goal of the design club was to elicit greater participation from the Casey student community in the new school design. Guided by the CU students, members of the design club interviewed and surveyed their peers and school staff to identify features of the existing school they liked and disliked and brainstormed sustainable ideas for the new facility.

Evaluation of the first evolution of the campus-community partnership between CYE and Casey was conducted through interviews with Casey students and teachers, the project architects, and the CU graduate students who participated in the design club (Table 2). With respect to the primary goal of incorporating Casey student ideas into the new facility design, the impact of students’ participation on school design outcomes was difficult to assess. The interviews suggest that youth participation may have had some influence on the decision to retain the historic facade of the original middle school in the design of the new sustainable building. Through the participatory design process it became evident that the facade was meaningful to school students and staff. However, during the same time period, a neighborhood organization was also involved in efforts to garner community support to save the historic facade and this group organized the fundraising that ultimately made it possible to incorporate the two architecturally significant walls from the original structure into the new school design. This phase of the project was also impacted by timing: the architectural firm was under a tight timeline and utilized a design advisory team whose meeting times did not always match the middle school schedule, thus limiting the ability of Casey students to participate. The secondary goal of fostering dialogue about sustainability was much easier to assess, and both participating Casey
Evolution Two: Sustainability Ambassadors and the Learning Realm

Building on the successes of the first evolution, the structure of the campus-community partnership expanded to include environmental design undergraduates enrolled in an elective course titled Sustainable Planning and Design. With construction of the new school building underway, the focus of the partnership also shifted from the Advocacy Realm to the Learning Realm with the goal of preparing Casey students to be “sustainability ambassadors” for the new school facility. Casey students continued to participate through the after-school design club, but club activities were now led by CU undergraduates and focused on

Table 2. Partnership Evolution. Analyzed Through the "Seven Realms of Participation"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Realm</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Evaluation Tools</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evolution 1:</td>
<td>Students engaged in thinking about their school’s design with professionals, faculty and graduate students serving as advocates in translating their ideas into designs.</td>
<td>Interviews with middle school students, teachers, project architects, and graduate students</td>
<td>After school approach engaged a limited number of students; motivation for participation varied; impacts were limited by timing and entry into process; participation at this realm helped move the partnership to the learning realm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Evolution 2:</td>
<td>A design club encouraged middle school learning about sustainable behaviors and “green” features of new school with undergraduates acting as teacher/mentors.</td>
<td>Written reflections by faculty and undergraduates</td>
<td>After school design club was popular, but actual learning and social change were difficult to assess in this informal setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evolution 3:</td>
<td>Undergraduate course/middle school elective involved weekly participation in middle school curriculum. Students collaboratively immersed in a living laboratory to evaluate the school function based on student needs.</td>
<td>Pre- and post-course assessments and written reflections, project artifacts, middle school written reflections, direct observations</td>
<td>Intrinsic motivation of middle school students was linked to extent of experiential, “hands-on” learning methods. Undergraduates held preconceived notions about design and participation that were challenged through the partnership. More direct and structured experiences in a formal course format allowed for more transformative experiences among students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Evolution 4:</td>
<td>Shift in the course structure emerged from feedback requesting greater desire for engagement in design-based and place-based activities. Focus was on empowering participants to address issues in their immediate lives through design and implementation</td>
<td>Course survey; focus groups; undergraduate pre- and post-assessments; written reflections; project artifacts; middle school written reflections; and direct observations</td>
<td>Some middle school students showed greater locus of control during experiential, “hands-on” activities. Provided format for dialogue around issues of desired campus aesthetics and school culture between students and authorities. Resulted in transformations of participants on both sides of partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactive</td>
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staff and CU partners considered this a successful outcome of the campus-community partnership.

**Evolution Two: Sustainability Ambassadors and the Learning Realm**

Building on the successes of the first evolution, the structure of the campus-community partnership expanded to include environmental design undergraduates enrolled in an elective course titled Sustainable Planning and Design. With construction of the new school building underway, the focus of the partnership also shifted from the Advocacy Realm to the Learning Realm with the goal of preparing Casey students to be “sustainability ambassadors” for the new school facility. Casey students continued to participate through the after-school design club, but club activities were now led by CU undergraduates and focused on...
Evolution Three: School Design and the Needs Realm

The third evolution of the campus-community partnership arose from another structural change in the nature of the relationship as well as a response to undergraduate observation and feedback. In this evolution the partnership comprised of Casey students enrolled in an applied science elective class and CU undergraduates enrolled in an elective course titled Design For and With Schools. The course became part of the middle school curriculum, thus addressing the irregular attendance experienced through after-school participation. However, although the Casey course was an elective, not all students enrolled were enthusiastic about the class content or the incorporation of design activities, which were required in order for them to pass the class. The CU course change reflected a shift in goals toward the Needs Realm of participation. In the Needs Realm, rather than focusing solely on the sustainable features and design of the school (Learning Realm), undergraduate students also began to ask questions, through mapping and discussions, about how the school impacted students’ learning, experiences, and attachments. The curriculum shifted to understanding children’s needs in the design of a learning space and viewed the middle school as a “living laboratory,” in which students and undergraduates jointly explored how the school did or did not meet middle school students’ needs.

Evaluation of the third campus-community evolution came from undergraduate pre- and post-course assessments and written reflections, project artifacts, middle school written reflections, and direct observations (Table 2). Outcomes suggest that the middle school applied science students were overall less intrinsically motivated to participate than design club participants, but they generally became highly engaged when class activities involved “building” something and/or addressed concrete issues they perceived as personally important. Reflections and assessments from the CU students revealed that the “living laboratory” approach helped design students understand the complex relationships between design processes, pedagogy, administrative policy, the physical manifestation of design in the school building, and school culture.

Once the new school facility opened, undergraduates anticipated that the architectural features of the new “green” school would improve understanding of sustainable design and increase sustainable behaviors. They were surprised to find...
that although middle school students were proud of their new school building, they were unhappy about some aspects of their environment and had misperceptions concerning the sustainable school features. That the green school building was intended to serve as a “teaching tool” was not, by itself, sufficient to support increased understanding or behavioral change. For example, although the building was designed to promote energy conservation by making energy-efficient building systems (such as photovoltaic panels) highly visible, students misinterpreted this information by assuming these systems provided all the energy required to operate the school and felt less need to engage in energy-conserving behaviors. Additionally, the high level of environmental control necessary to fulfill school goals for a sustainable and zero waste campus appeared to cause some middle school students to feel disenfranchised in their community. Undergraduates frequently described how their experiences often did not align with preconceived notions about how middle school students would use, care for, and feel about aspects of their school environment.

**Evolution Four: Praxis and the Proactive Realm**

In the Proactive Realm, children and adults are empowered through genuine and shared participation (Table 1). This stage in the partnership is characterized as proactive because it empowered both Casey and CU students to envision and create their own projects. This evolution was informed by feedback suggesting middle school engagement increased during design-based and place-based activities and a desire to incorporate a more significant “Praxis” experience for undergraduates during their junior year in the CU program. Praxis is a term used to describe significant, community service learning opportunities in environmental design that incorporate both practice and reflection. In this way it builds upon Paulo Freire’s ideology that praxis is “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (Freire, 1986, p. 33).

The Learning Spaces Praxis experience for CU students consisted of two required and integrated courses: a service-learning seminar and an environmental design studio. In the seminar course, undergraduate students continued to work with the Casey applied science students. However, the focus of the course shifted to a problem-identification approach with the goal of co-discovering issues in the school that could be addressed through participatory design processes and implemented by the undergraduate and middle school students. Together Casey and CU students worked to identify an issue of importance to the middle school students, developed a design intervention using participatory processes, and collaboratively constructed/implemented their design in the school campus.

To date, two design-build projects have been completed by the partnership: a “sustainability garden” and an outdoor informal learning space. In the studio course, undergraduates transferred knowledge they gained during the immersive campus-community partnership activities about the relationship between pedagogy, process, and place to inform the design of other schools and/or learning spaces. In both studio projects the undergraduates applied their understanding of participatory design processes to engage stakeholder input on design strategies.

The focus of the fourth evolution of the campus-community partnership was to empower participants to address issues in their environments that they could improve through design. In this phase, partners used a “problem-finding” approach where the Casey students and undergraduates jointly identified issues and opportunities in their school, including its physical design and curricular strategies. These issues are co-designed through design recommendations, design-build projects, and school planning initiatives. Undergraduate students were provided opportunities to transfer knowledge from Casey to other situations, and were empowered to manage a real construction project including writing a project budget and construction schedule, purchasing supplies, and organizing build sessions. Outcomes were assessed through course survey and focus groups, undergraduate pre- and post-course assessments and written reflections, project artifacts, middle school written reflections, and direct observations (Table 2).

A key theme that emerged from the program evaluation was that both middle school students and undergraduates felt they were transformed by the experience. Undergraduate students noted that some middle school students who exhibited low control over their environment were empowered during the “build” phase of the project. At the outset, these students had claimed that they did not believe their ideas would make a difference. Yet as the project progressed, and their ideas started to become real, CU students noted a marked difference in the attitude and engagement of these students over the course of the semester.
CU students communicated a significant increase in their perceived level of competence toward becoming professional designers both as a result of their participatory design-build experiences through the campus-community partnership and the transference of lessons learned to new school design contexts. In their reflection papers, CU students also expressed a greater awareness for and appreciation of the value of young people's participation in the design process.

Analysis of the Partnership Evolution

Advocacy Realm

Analysis of the campus-community partnership evolution reveals that the cycle of application and evaluation improved program goals and outcomes as well as depth of participant engagement and learning (Figure 1). The first evolution of the campus-community partnership highlights some of the challenges that may be faced when working in the Advocacy Realm of community participation. In this realm, participants are often not directly involved in decision-making processes. Instead, specialists advocate for inclusion of issues into a final product. While the intent of the partnership was to include children as active participants in the design process, the timing and timeline of activities did not consistently allow this to occur. For example, in the first design club, only a small number of Casey students were significantly engaged in the partnership and motivation to participate was influenced by the fact that the students who were asked to give input on the school design would not reap the benefits of their efforts. By the time construction on the new building was completed, they would be attending high school on another campus. Similarly, the tight timeframe of the architectural firm limited the ability of students to consistently participate in dialogue and decision-making, thus reinforcing the concept that adults can advocate for children's ideas without their direct participation (Table 1). The greatest benefit of the first campus-community partnership evolution appears to be increased understanding by the participating middle school students about design processes and factors of sustainable design. Middle school students also talked with peers about their experience, thus fostering greater interest in the elective course. This helped to facilitate a culture of participatory, collaborative work. It was these successes that informed the goals and structure of the second evolution of the campus-community partnership.

Learning Realm

The Learning Realm of participation was emphasized in the second evolution of the campus-community partnership, which intended to encourage sustainable behaviors of the Casey students. It was this stage of the project that allowed for greater attention to students needs and desires for their school. For example, in the second design club, a greater number of students were engaged and motivated by the potential for their designs to be implemented. By the time construction on the new building was completed, they would be attending high school on the same campus as their peers. Similarly, the architectural firm was able to incorporate the input of students who had a greater understanding of the design process and the potential benefits of their efforts. This facilitated a culture of participatory, collaborative work, which helped to facilitate the development of a culture of design-thinking and sustainable behaviors.

Needs Realm

Building on the Learning Realm, this stage of the project allowed for greater attention to students' needs and desires for their school. For example, in the second design club, a greater number of students were engaged and motivated by the potential for their designs to be implemented. By the time construction on the new building was completed, they would be attending high school on the same campus as their peers. Similarly, the architectural firm was able to incorporate the input of students who had a greater understanding of the design process and the potential benefits of their efforts. This facilitated a culture of participatory, collaborative work, which helped to facilitate the development of a culture of design-thinking and sustainable behaviors.

Proactive Realm

Greatest potential for transformative community service learning; includes aspects of all other stages and realms. Resulted in tangible outcome and increased competencies.

Advocacy Realm

Provided an entry-point to the school at initial stages of the partnership. While engagement was limited on this stage, it did provide some tangible outcomes. Timing of this realm earlier in the design phase might have facilitated more tangible outcomes.
students through educational experiences related to the “green” features of their new school building. CU undergraduates primarily assumed roles of teachers or facilitators of learning. Although the design club appeared to be popular with the Casey students, it was difficult to assess whether participation impacted sustainable behaviors and social responsibility. One tension in campus-community partnerships has been between the goals of students for learning and community partners for efficiency (Mills, 2012). A potential benefit of partnerships that engage university students with K–12 students in the Learning Realm is that the learning goal is shared fairly equally. Operating within the Learning Realm, however, can be limiting for both groups of students if there are no specific and tangible outcomes. In this phase of the partnership, for example, while emphasis was given to sustainable behaviors, there were few tangible outcomes that represented true change, either in the physical environment or the social supports needed for behavioral changes to occur. Research in the environmental education literature suggests that increased knowledge about a subject is not enough to effect changes in behavior. People must also have a sense of efficacy, or belief in their ability to act, as well as opportunities to act before they will change their behaviors (Bandura, 1997; Chawla & Derr, 2012). Partnerships that operate solely in the Learning Realm tend not to increase competencies or opportunities to take action, and thus are limited in their overall impact.

Needs Realm

The Needs Realm of participation revealed that undergraduates have preconceived notions about school design that are challenged during immersion in the school environment when experiences do not align with expectations. As “social scientists” they can have difficulty interpreting observed behaviors and sometimes make assumptions about motivations behind observed behaviors that may be unfounded or untrue. These shortcomings, however, are largely overshadowed by the transformations in knowledge and understanding about the complexity of factors experienced by the undergraduate participants through immersive teaching, research, and design activities with middle school students.

Here again, the tension between undergraduates’ readiness to engage with a community partner can conflict with the community’s desire for ready engagement (Mills, 2012). In order to be effective, undergraduate students require training in a suite of skills that go beyond their typical professional competencies, to include those of social researcher, community facilitator, or educator. Design students at this level can be disadvantaged in performing as desirable community partners in cases where project delivery is the expectation because they have not fully developed the skill sets expected for professional practice. While their expertise in product delivery (design and construction) is limited, they are able to share experience in creative problem solving and environmental ethics.

However, it was within the Needs Realm that students began to work toward a co-construction of knowledge, wherein undergraduates considered social and cultural experiences of the school and its students (Carroll, LaPoint & Tyler, 2001). They learned to understand students’ values and interests. In the context of school design, undergraduates gained a deeper understanding of the connections between middle school student interests, pedagogical activities, educational needs, and the physical function of the school building. In the Proactive Realm, K–12 school teachers may also take on the responsibilities of educating college students about these issues. Sandy and Holland (2006) discuss that “one of the most compelling findings [in campus-community partnerships]...is the community partner’s profound dedication to educating college students” (p. 34). Through these interactions, undergraduate students began to see young people as peers in a process. This shift is important in understanding what comprises a transformative experience in a campus-community partnership. By asking questions about how a community perceives and uses a space, they begin to understand the “other,” and in so doing may be transformed (cf, Hou, 2012). These social connections to community partners can be the most educationally significant aspects of a service-learning experience (Cushing, Bates, & Van Vliet, 2013).

Proactive Realm

Participation in the Proactive Realm provides even greater opportunity for transformation on both sides of the campus-community partnership. This realm can also produce the most challenges. The opportunity for middle school students to ideate and implement environmental designs in their school in itself is transformative. Students are rarely asked about the design or function of their schools and are even less frequently asked about school policy. Proactive engagement helps
students see that they can have an impact in their school community and thus provides the sense of efficacy and opportunities to act that are critical components in behavioral change (Bandura, 1997; Chawla & Derr, 2012). If an engaged citizenry is an important goal of campus-community partnerships, facilitating proactive experiences would seem to be a key indicator for how to empower people to actively engage in their communities.

For the undergraduate design students, participation in the Proactive Realm may ultimately better prepare them to become “citizen designers” who practice socially and environmentally responsible design. Undergraduates in this realm expressed a sophisticated understanding of students and their cultures, teachers and their needs, and the internal functions of the school environment. In future iterations, it will be important to better align expectations of community partnership outcomes with the level of expertise which undergraduate students can provide. In the same way that undergraduates studying in a pre-medicine curriculum would not be expected to execute medical procedures, it may not be appropriate to expect third year design undergraduates to have the competencies to manage a design-build project. Two approaches to address these issues are possible: i) to simplify projects and revise expectations for tangible outcomes; or ii) to adjust the undergraduate curriculum so that it can better support such partnerships.

Under the first scenario, simplifying projects may be able to produce tangible outcomes for some projects. However, since the projects that are both designed and built through the partnership can also be correlated with the strongest outcomes for both partners under the seven realms model, reverting to earlier iterations with simpler project scopes may undermine the gains achieved in these later partnership evolutions. New undergraduate curricular developments are testing the feasibility for this course to occur as an elective studio during the final year. It is anticipated that such a structural change will enhance the quality of engagement because undergraduates will be self-selecting this experience, and will have a year’s worth of additional skills and competencies.

Additional challenges to the Proactive Realm may include tensions that can form between students and campus administration, parents or other partners in the decision-making phase of a project. At times, youth needs, desires and creative expressions may be different from those of administration and adults. As an example, an area near the front entrance of Casey had been designated for students to re-design. Students elicited input from peers, teachers, administrators, and parents to create a “sustainability ecosystem” concept for the space that included murals, painted flower planters made from hard-to-recycle materials including metal barrels, plastic pipes and rubber tires, and fruit and vegetable gardens. This space was designed and installed through the partnership. Once installed, some parents and administrators did not agree with the aesthetic choices made for the space. The installation was pulled up and over time, replaced with more standardized planters. Reflecting on this, partners may have thought they were working well within the Proactive Realm, where children and adults share in the participation process (Table 1). However, once the installation was completed, it became clear that partners had been at least partially operating in the Romantic Realm, where children’s ideas were idealized and did not align with the formal landscape design some adults expected at the front entrance to the school building. This was addressed in future semesters in two ways: (i) by carefully coordinating with administration future locations for permanent installations that would influence the campus environs, and (ii) by experimenting with smaller scale design challenges that improved the classroom environment of the partnering teacher. This latter approach also helped address the disparity between undergraduate design competencies and project demands. These smaller scale projects allowed the partnership to operate in the Proactive Realm while also working with appropriate skill sets. Results were positive for both middle school and undergraduate students, but perhaps not as profound as those projects where students were able to permanently transform their school.

These challenges exemplify the barriers and tensions often found between campus-community partnerships. If ignored, these tensions can lead to negative consequences or a dissolution of a partnership (Dumlao & Janke, 2012). Yet active dialogue, and an evolution in the understanding and values that each person brings to problem solving, have helped to reduce these barriers.

Conclusion

Campus-community partnerships are typically undertaken to promote meaningful engagement and to enrich traditional pedagogies
through experiential learning. There are many factors that consistently describe a successful partnership. These include cooperative goal setting and shared power and decision-making. These factors are consistent with the Proactive Realm of children’s participation. Both allow for genuine sharing in a participatory dialogue and process. Successful partnerships also create opportunities for reflection and transformation. This tends to happen in longer term partnerships that address real issues of concern and produce tangible outcomes. These relationships also present opportunities for dialectic, reflective, and transformative experiences that break traditional barriers to authentic participation. Effective partnerships seek to produce individuals who are competent and empowered and produce tangible outcomes.

The Casey-CU case illustrates a process for growth through iterative changes to the campus community partnership and curriculum. The growth model we present provides a framework for increasing awareness about where partnerships fall in realms of participation. This can allow critical analysis of the partnership but also can help frame goal setting and desired processes for evolving to a new realm as well. The case example also illustrates how sometimes partner goals are disrupted. The seven realms framework provides a tool for analyzing and communicating where a project lies and what might be needed to help it grow. Despite some challenges, this long term relationship has helped illustrate the importance of critically evaluating where a partnership falls in its degree and type of participation at any given time. Ultimately, greater awareness of the realms of participation helps partners see how they can better meet the goals of service-learning for transformation and reflection.

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London: Earthscan.


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The MaTE Tool—Enabling Engaged Scholars at a Regional University

Patrick A. Crookes, Fabienne C. Else, and Kylie M. Smith

Abstract

Providing institutionally recognized evidence of community engaged scholarship has long been problematic for engaged scholars when applying for recognition through promotion or probation pathways. To combat this, the University of Wollongong [in New South Wales, Australia] developed an online tool for use by engaged scholars to track and measure their engagement activities in a consistent and institutionally recognized form. This article outlines the process that was undertaken to develop the online system for measuring and tracking engagement (the MaTE tool). It outlines the initial recognition of the key issues arising from a comprehensive review of the literature; the drafting process undertaken to develop a prototype for the tool; and the interview stage and subsequent re-drafting process and finalization of the tool. The article concludes with a consideration of future directions for the tool and its further implementation at the university.

Introduction

The modern scholarship of engagement was first espoused by Ernest L. Boyer in the mid-nineties (Boyer, 1996) however, evidencing community engaged scholarship (CES) for academic recognition and reward has proven problematic. Like all areas of scholarly achievement, measuring, tracking, and evidencing CES are integral to its reputation and academic legitimacy within the higher education sector (Holland, 2001b). Unfortunately, the unique nature of this scholarship does not always lend itself to the more traditional and accepted forms of scholarly evidence often prioritized in recognition and reward structures. This is creating institutional barriers for engaged scholars in receiving recognition and reward for their valuable work (Cuthill & Brown, 2010; Jaeger & Thornton, 2006; Macfarlane, 2007; Ward, 2003), an issue that recently became apparent at the University of Wollongong (UOW).

The evidencing and reward issues that existed for CES scholars at the UOW (a large regional Australian university) became fully apparent in 2011 during a university-wide promotions review project. For this project a series of interviews with faculty (28 in total) were undertaken, where it quickly became apparent that CES work was misunderstood, unrecognized and unrewarded in the university’s promotional process (Crookes, Else, & Smith, 2015). Whilst faculty at the university appreciated CES and felt it was worthwhile, they did not believe it was recognized in promotion processes. They suggested that this was because the scholarship itself was poorly understood across the university and that CES did not provide enough recognizable, scholarly evidence, with one individual claiming that CES needs to provide “some hard evidence.” Another (senior management) academic stated that CES “is not recognized or rewarded, it is appreciated, which is not the same thing.” This low perception of CES appeared to have had a major impact on how Faculty chose to focus their academic activities, with not one of the 28 interviewees stating that they would risk going to the promotional board with CES as their primary focus.

In an attempt to redress this issue at a university level, the project team created an online repository tool called the Measuring and Tracking Engagement (MaTE) tool that aims to capture a wide variety of CES evidence. The goal of the tool is to go beyond traditional forms of evidence (such as journal articles and grants) and allow the scholar to log all forms of unique CES work in a personalized data repository. This repository can then automatically format this data into a personalized report for the individual, a report that can later be utilized as supporting documentation for their work in a variety of contexts, both internal and external to the university.

This article outlines the process that was undertaken to develop the MaTE tool prototype. It discusses the initial recognition of the issues, the drafting process, the interview stage and subsequent re-drafting process and finalisation. It concludes with a consideration of future directions for the tool and its further implementation at the university.
CES: Misunderstood, Unrecognized and Unrewarded

In order to come to a greater understanding of the issues that emerged from the initial promotion-review interviews, an extensive literature review was conducted on the subject of CES (Smith, et al., 2013). This literature review revealed that the issues that appeared to plague engaged scholars at the university, were not unique and had already been identified by CES scholars internationally. The difficulties that CES focussed scholars have in relation to recognition and reward are now widely recognized (Cuthill & Brown, 2010; Duke & Moss, 2009; Jaeger & Thornton, 2006; Macfarlane, 2007; Maurana, Wolff, Beck, & Simpson, 2001; McDowell, 2001; Rice, 2002; Rudd, 2007; Saltmarsh, Giles, Ward, & Buglione, 2009; Ward, 2003) as are the various problems surrounding evidencing and measuring this unique form of scholarship (Adams, Badenhorst, & Berman, 2005; Arden, Cooper, & McLachlan, 2007; Garlick & Langworthy, 2006; Hart & Northmore, 2011; B.A. Holland, 2001b, 2009; Rudd, 2007). From the literature, it is apparent that the lack of recognition or reward of CES is interwoven with issues surrounding evidencing, measuring and assessing such work. As CES does not always produce the same recognized forms of evidence as the more traditional scholarships of research and teaching, it is often seen as outside of the “real work” of scholars (Ward, 2003, 2).

Displaying exceptional achievement in CES is also more complicated than presenting the more widely recognized academic outputs, such as high impact journal publications or large research grants. Some evidence has shown that this has led senior staff to discourage junior staff from CES work on the basis that it is not as career-enhancing (Jaeger & Thornton, 2006). Due to this culture of scepticism toward the success and legitimacy of CES, faculty are also inclined to leave their engaged work unpublished as “grey” literature (Hart & Northmore, 2011), or alternatively, to reclassify it under the scholarships of “research” or “teaching.” Consequently CES becomes increasingly less visible in the published academic sphere thus creating a circular process that perpetuates the notion of CES as a side project or outside of the main work of the university (Cuthill & Brown, 2010). Such notions support a culture of disinclination, with faculty continually placing CES beneath other scholarships and pursuing career focus areas considered to be more scholarly, legitimate and rewarded.

In order to address the status and perceptions of CES, the literature makes it clear that the way forward lies in tracking and evidencing tools or processes that recognise and legitimise the variety of CES work. However, despite evidencing and measuring processes becoming more common on an institutional scale (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2006), there is still little information available for the individual who wishes to track and evidence their CES activities for probation, promotion or other recognition purposes. Yet leading CES scholars such as Barbara Holland maintain that this process is integral to the success of promoting CES for reasons such as academic legitimacy, image, reputation and accountability (B.A. Holland, 2001b). Therefore, as no tool or process currently existed to enable scholars at the university to track or evidence their CES activities, the promotions project team decided to embark on the process of creating a prototype.

Creating A CES Enabling Tool: What Did We Want To Achieve?

Before the project team could begin the drafting phase of the tool, it had to come to some decisions about what the tool aimed to achieve. Questions were raised as to how the tool would function and what it would produce, such as:

1. What type of evidence was it going to collect?
2. What would it produce for the individual?
3. Was it going to capture impact and outcomes?
4. Was it going to be useable by the university or just the individual?

While many of these questions could not be answered with finality until later in the process, it remained important that they were considered at the earliest stages of development to establish clear direction for the drafting stage.

In discussing what type of evidence would be collected, it became apparent to the project team that there was still a great deal of dispute as to what constituted CES work in the first instance. Without a proper understanding of what constitutes a CES activity, it is nearly impossible to illustrate with any certainty what type of evidence can be produced by such work. The question of what actually constitutes CES is often a major issue and barrier to its promotion within institutions and due to this, it seemed important to adopt a credible definition before proceeding any further. In con-
ducting the literature review it became apparent that while there is no universal definition of CES or “engagement,” there are some highly employed definitions currently circulating. The project team decided to use the most consistently adopted definition (B. Holland & Ramaley, 2008) created by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, which defines engagement as:

[T]he collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in context of partnership and reciprocity (2006).

This definition was chosen because it is highly recognized and prioritises the mutually reciprocal nature of CES; acknowledging that there needs to be an exchange of knowledge that is beneficial to both partners, rather than a top-down imposition of “research findings” from the academy. This moves away from notions of volunteerism and provides for scholarly, sustainable partnerships that produce effective outcomes and impact for all parties. While the project team recognized that a definition would not solve all disputes as to the nature of CES, it would still act to exclude activities or work that did not involve external communities, collaboration, beneficial exchange and reciprocal partnerships—all integral aspects of CES work.

After establishing how CES would be defined, the process of deciding what type of evidence the tool would collect became simpler, if not final. It was obvious that the process of discovering what type of CES evidence was produced at the university could not be elaborated on with any conclusiveness until interviews had been conducted and those involved in CES work were able to explain the scope of their work. As the interviews were planned for a later stage of the development process, the literature review was heavily relied upon in the early stages as the major source of information on engagement evidence. Some of the evidence sources supported in the literature were surveys, observations and logs, interviews and journal articles (Holland, 2001a), peer review, published articles, academic presentations, exhibitions of work, letters of recommendation, awards or public recognition (Wise, Retzleff, & Reilly, 2002), annual community reports, annual engagement forums (Adams, et al., 2005), engaged societies, engaged networks, teaching material and courseware, articles in the popular press, acting as a reviewer for engaged papers, educational programs (Macfarlane, 2007), mission statements, policy documents, report studies (Winter, Wiseman, & Muirhead, 2006), and public lectures, public debates and art exhibitions (Winter, et al., 2006). While the sources in the literature were clearly not exhaustive, this snapshot gives an indication of the variety of evidence that might reasonably be taken into account and this helped create parameters for further development.

The project team was mindful from the outset that the tool needed to produce something for the individual scholar. The aim then was that after the scholar had entered their data into the system, the tool would be capable of providing reports that could be used as recognizable sources of evidence. This report would lay out the data that had been input and allow scholars to include or exclude certain entries, depending on the intended use of the report. This report could be used for promotional purposes or for other instances in which the user may wish to display their CES work, such as applying for a community grant or an external award.

Another major issue that needed to be considered was the level of specificity of data to be collected and consequently displayed. Would the tool collect data that would evidence traditionally recognized impact and outcome measures? Ideally the project team wanted to collect as much evidence of scholarly impact and outcomes as possible, in order to help establish CES as a legitimate career path in academia. However, the collection of impact and outcomes in a tool that aimed to be as simple and usable as possible appeared to be inconsistent with the very nature of engaged impact and outcomes. The idea that the tool could provide a single “metric” of tangible impact and outcomes, was abandoned in the early stages of the actual drafting as it became apparent that evidencing impact and outcomes was an extremely varied process (depending on the activity type) and that ‘metrics’ were antithetical to the usability of the tool. Nevertheless, capturing wider forms of impact and outcomes remains a future aim of the project and may eventually form an extended branch of the current program. Members of the team have subsequently been involved in professional development work at the university, focusing on assisting staff to write high-quality impact statements based on their activity data (Smith, Crookes, & Crookes, 2013).
The last question to be addressed prior to the major drafting process was whether the tool would provide outcomes for the university or just the individual. One of the aims of the MaTE tool initially, was to come to a greater understanding of what CES activities were actually being undertaken at the university and therefore it seemed short-sighted to create a tool that failed to provide the university feedback as to the range and extent of its CES impact. In acknowledgement of this, it was decided that (if the tool was implemented university-wide) the university would be able to collect data at least at a superficial level from the database, in order to assess the strength of its involvement in certain CES areas.

Creating the MaTE Tool

In creating and drafting the MaTE tool, there were three distinct phases of development. These were the initial drafting and prototype programming phase; the faculty trials and interview phase; and the final revision phase.

Phase One: The Initial Draft and Prototype Programming

During this phase, several data input categories were developed in which the user was to enter basic information that was then logged as a data entry and added to their personal Activities Index. These initial categories were:

1. Academic and Professional Training
2. Engaged Grants and Other Funding
3. Engaged/Engagement Publications
4. Presentations/Conferences
5. Community Engaged Learning
6. Engaged Nominations and Awards
7. Professional Association Memberships
8. Events
9. Media Interactions
10. Consultancies
11. Other Engaged Activities

Each of these categories collected information through either free text boxes or scroll lists, from which the user could choose a variety of common options. The scroll lists also allowed the user to write their own answer if none of the options adequately described the data they were inputting.

Once material had been logged in these categories and automatically added to the Activities Index, the data could then be converted into a personalized report through a reporting function. This report function created a PDF of all the data that the user chose to place into it from their Activities Index. This meant the user was able to create customized reports, depending on what they were using the document for. For example, if a user was creating a report to apply for a community grant, they may choose to only select the most relevant or significant evidence for that application.

In order to test the usability of the tool at this early stage, an email was sent out within the (then) Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences, asking that interested scholars send their most recent promotional documentation to the project team for their CES data to be input into a new prototype database tool. The aim of proactively and manually inputting this data was that when the prototype was complete and data entered, interviews would be set up with these scholars and they would be asked about how well they felt the tool reflected their CES work; how they would like such a tool to function; and what they would like it to produce. Ultimately 17 faculty staff, from junior to very senior academics, sent their data through to be input into the tool.

Phase Two: Faculty Trials and Interviews

By June 2013, the initial prototype of the MaTE tool had been completed and the project moved to the next stage, which involved trialling the tool with the scholars who had sent their data to be populated within the tool. The Faculty interviews were conducted between the period of June and October 2013, in which 14 of the 17 Faculty who had sent their data were contacted for a follow-up interview. All 14 agreed to be interviewed, although only 12 of the interviews were completed in the timeframe. During these interviews, the interviewees were systematically taken through each of the data-input categories outlined and asked whether they understood what each section was aiming to capture and whether they felt that the categories successfully captured their CES work. During the interviews, many issues were raised about the prototype. While some concerns were singular to a particular type of work or discipline, others appeared problematic across the CES spectrum. It was these common issues that led to significant modifications of the MaTE tool.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, it soon became clear that the majority of the interviewees were unsure of what work fitted into CES. While many had
some general view of what they felt CES was, individuals would often bring up certain activities and question whether the tool would recognise them as CES. An example of this was one scholar who worked for a certain amount of hours every week at a health facility. This work maintained their clinical relevancy and contributed to their CES research and teaching in a practical way as it informed them of real community issues at a local level. It also created a community partnership through which the scholar could engage in CES research and promote community engaged learning. However, a major issue was the fact that the scholar was paid by that health facility on a separate basis from the University, for this work. So did that constitute CES? While there is often a clear and apparent line between CES work and other work, in some cases there is no clear-cut answer as to whether or not an activity is CES. Therefore the project team had to consider how they could reform the tool to promote and remind scholars of what genuine CES work was, while not devaluing or limiting the scholarships unique scope.

The first widespread “technical” issue that became apparent in relation to the tool, was that the majority of interviewees found that it was not clear what evidence the categories were aiming to capture from their titles. Two titles were considered especially problematic—“Service Learning” and “Professional Association Memberships.” Of the interviewees, 10 openly stated that they had no idea what “Service Learning” meant or implied just by looking at the title. When the concept was explained to the interviewees using some of the popular notions of service-learning espoused by well-known CES scholars such as Barbara Holland (Holland, 2001a, 2004; Holland, Driscoll, Spring, Kerrigan, & Gelmon, 2001), the interviewees maintained this work they did engage in, yet would not have realized that is what the title meant. “Professional Association Memberships” was equally problematic, but from a different angle. In this instance, nine of the interviewees felt that they did understand the title, but argued that it was not appropriate to capture the breadth of data that was expected to be input. The main assumption about the term “Professional Association Memberships” was that it only included external professional associations that the scholar paid to be a member of on an annual or other basis. To address this, the project team had to reflect on the terminology that had been used in both instances, as well as consider how the purpose of each category could be made more apparent to the users. The team also asserted that an individual could choose to insert any data they wish, if they perceive it to fit under a heading.

Another concern expressed by a number of the interviewees was whether the prototype created a “doubling up” of certain forms of evidence. The idea of ‘double-dipping’ was considered highly problematic by five of the interviewees who presented concerns as to the separation of “Consultancies” from “Engaged Grants and Other Funding.” These interviewees felt this presented a crossover between categories as often consultancies were a key part of a scholar’s engaged funding sources. As consultancies had been placed in a separate category to cater for the many types of consultancies that existed (both paid and unpaid), putting consultancies together with funding as the interviewees suggested, was not compatible. Nevertheless, when it was explained to the interviewees that the reporting function allowed them to pick and choose what evidence they presented, the concern of “double-dipping” was generally alloyed as the scholars could enter the same evidence in both categories and ultimately only present one data entry in the report (usually in the form that was most relevant to the report’s purpose).

While the concerns outlined above are quite broad in relation to the tool (such as titles and overlaps), it was surprising for the project team to find how problematic certain wording could be in relation to simple data collection. Within each of the categories there were sets of questions that were structured to be answered through free text, scroll lists or simple check-boxes. The aim of these questions was simply to capture a broad overview of the evidence source, yet one of the seemingly simplest check-box style questions in the “Engaged Grants and Other Funding” section, resulted in being one of the most highly contested aspects of the tool. The question was phrased as simply “Are you a lead investigator?” with a “Yes” box that could be checked or left unchecked. The reason the project team had chosen the term “lead investigator” was that it did not want to imply a certain type of grant provider through the use of provider specific jargon. Nevertheless, it remained important that the category could recognise that some scholars have a much higher or intense role in the achievement of a grant or funding than others. Of the interviewees, six identified this specific question as being highly problematic.
The general concern of all the interviewees appeared to be that people would check this box if they were named on the grant or funding source, despite their level of involvement in achieving the funds. There were several suggestions made by the interviewees as to how the question could be restructured, such as:

"Are you a chief investigator or associate investigator?"
"Are you the first named investigator?"
"Are you the principal investigator?"
"Are you the lead investigator?"

It is important to note that the majority of the interviewees who suggested a change in terminology were generally in favor of the terminology used in the grant bodies that they dealt with most, such as the Australian Research Council (ARC) or the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). While the concerns raised by these scholars were legitimate, the project team remained hesitant to implement any terminology from specific grant bodies, as they felt this would tend toward discouraging or devaluing funding sources or grants that came from other bodies, such as community grants. The aim of this tool needed to remain on enabling the individual and in using terminology from sources that certain scholars may not engage with (such as the ARC or NHMRC). There was a possibility that this would promote the disinclination toward CES evidencing, one of the main issues the MaTE tool aimed to address.

**Phase Three: Final Revisions**

After the interviews were completed, the third phase of development was to make revisions based on the issues that had emerged. While many small and relatively minor changes were made (e.g. extra options given in scroll lists, altered wording in some of the questions) there were several significant changes made to the tool.

The first major change was the introduction of a final and compulsory check-box at the end of each category. This check-box took the form of a statement, which the user has to agree with before being able to enter and save their data input. The statement is as follows:

This item meets the definition of engagement in that it involves collaboration with external communities (such as business, industry, schools, governments, non-governmental organisations, associations, indigenous and ethnic communities and the general public), responds to a community need and/or is undertaken in a context of mutually beneficial partnership and reciprocity.

The creation of this statement check-box was in direct response to the concerns of the interviewees as to what may constitute CES for the purpose of the tool. This statement is based on the Carnegie definition (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2006) and aims to remind users before they finish inputting their data as to what CES is and make them reflect on whether a given activity meets that definition. While the tool cannot control what people may input, if users wish to submit their report for promotional or other purposes, they will now have to justify how their activities reflect that statement.

The second major issue that needed to be addressed post-interviews was the need for further clarity with regard to the categories and the type of evidence they aimed to capture. The first step was changing the problematic titles of “Service Learning” and “Professional Association Memberships.” “Service Learning” therefore became “Community Engaged Learning” and “Professional Association Memberships” became “Professional Memberships (external).” But while these titles attempted to provide some further understanding, the project team was aware that this was hardly likely to solve the problem in full. Therefore it was decided that under each heading, a short description would be laid out for users so they could see (and hopefully understand) what the category wished them to input. The descriptions are laid out in the online tool as follows:

1. Academic and professional training. Academic and professional training refers to all relevant academic/scholarly courses and training you have undertaken.
2. Engaged grants and other funding. Grants or funding you have either received from a community or external partner body or received from the University of Wollongong to undertake engaged activities/projects.
3. Engaged/engagement publications. Publications you have produced that focus...
on engaged scholarly work, improving or critiquing the scholarship of engagement or are created for an engaged audience (i.e., community/industry groups).

4. Presentations/conferences. A presentation you have made to an engaged audience (i.e., community or industry professionals) or a conference or other presentation about engaged projects or activities.

5. Community engaged learning. Community engaged learning is where you have created student-faculty working relationships that effectively support and use community-based partnerships in learning (i.e., student placements with community organisations).

6. Engaged nominations and awards. Awards or nominations you have received from the university in recognition of your engaged work or from an external community body in recognition of your work.

7. Professional memberships (external). All external memberships, community bodies and professional associations that you are involved with (could include being a member of a professional association, a reviewer for a journal, being on an accreditation board, etc.).

8. Events. Engaged events, functions, workshops etc. that you have coordinated, hosted or facilitated. Such events constitute engagement when they have a community audience or focus on engaged topics, engaged research and community-identified issues.

9. Media interactions. Media interactions that focus on engaged projects, activities or events undertaken by you.

10. Consultancies. External community or industry bodies that have engaged your expertise within the field to receive advice or particular work.

11. Other engaged activities. Other work that has involved an external community, body or group and responded to a community need in a context of partnership and reciprocity.

These descriptions aim to make the input scope of each of the categories clear while reaffirming what CES activities are to the user.

While it is optimistic to assume that these changes have resolved any-and-all issues that engaged scholars may have with the MaTE tool, they do aim to address the primary concerns that emerged in prototype trials and interviews. Key to all of these changes is a push for clarity in relation to what CES is and how it can be identified by the individual. Though people will always bring their own interpretation to such areas, the MaTE tool aims to promote legitimate CES activities through continual reiteration of what this scholarship is and how it relates to the work of the university. In doing so, it is hoped greater understanding will prompt more academics to reconsider their preconceptions of this unique scholarship and come to consider it as a viable career path, or at least a way of strengthening the work they already do by encouraging greater engagement with communities. It is also important to note that while the individual MaTE reports will be available to academics for their own purposes (such as supporting promotion and probation applications; seeking external accreditation and/or funding), the tool will also be useful for university organisational purposes to verify CES activities and their impact at individual, unit and institutional levels. At the individual level this will be doubly useful because CES activities are now incorporated into the evidence accepted for promotions purposes (Crookes, et al., 2015).

Conclusion and Implications for the Future

Currently the MaTE tool is awaiting adoption and implementation approval from the university executive. In the first instance, it is intended that it be implemented across the newly formed Faculty of Science, Medicine and Health (SMAH), as well as being made available to Fellows of the UOW’s new Wollongong Academy of Tertiary Teaching and Learning Excellence (WATTLE). If the tool is made available to a teaching-focused group like WATTLE and a heavily research-focused faculty like SMAH, the project team aims to foster conversation on the value of CES as a scholarship that runs across many areas of academic activity. By promoting the presentation of scholarly CES evidence, the MaTE tool may ignite further interest in the benefit of engaged scholarship, both as a unique and standalone area of activity and as a way of doing and engaging in the areas of research and teaching. This will in turn work to break down the negative cultural perceptions regarding CES that have permeated staff
career development approaches in recent years. It is important to acknowledge that the current university data collection approach (which does not include CES) should not continue, because without collecting data and evidence of CES, the university makes the tacit assertion that it is not valued. As the initial project interviews showed, the issues surrounding CES are university-wide and therefore the benefits of this tool would be highly applicable across all faculties.

Once approved, the MaTE tool is expected to shed some light on the CES work being done across the university. This project has highlighted to the project team the amount of CES work that is actually being done by university staff; however, this work is almost uniformly not being presented or promoted as CES due to the relative lack of importance afforded to this scholarship. By promoting the wide variety of CES work that is being done (initially through use of the university data collection function via MaTE), we hope that these activities can be brought to the fore, in the same way that has happened with quality research and teaching in the past. The university will also be able to document community engagement activities and highlight key partners, data which may also be useful in reporting to government about engaged activities and asserting a broader range of impact than is presently possible.

There are plans for the tool to be improved and increased in scope in the future, for example with the incorporation of a "Project Function." The aim of such a function would be to allow users to put in much wider and detailed aspects of their work such as projects that would link to various aspects of evidence they had already input. The function would promote the evidencing of scholarly impact and outcomes through greater data capacity. This more in-depth aspect of data collection could be added on to the current model and this would acknowledge the complex and interrelated nature of CES and further promote the collection and presentation of unique forms of evidence that are so often the hallmark of valuable CES work. Another option to be considered is the merit of expanding the utility of the MaTE Tool to non-academic staff of the university, many of whom face the same issue of a lack of recognition as faculty for the vital engagement work they undertake.

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Decision Points in Academic Leadership Development as an Engaged Scholar: To Lead or Not to Lead

Nicole Thompson and Nancy Franz

Abstract

Academics have a variety of career paths available to them, yet it can be difficult to determine what career opportunities will lead to beneficial professional and personal outcomes. As engaged scholars, we seek academic leadership positions that allow us to make a difference in the world, either directly or indirectly, using our unique skills, experience, teaching, and research. To help engaged scholars determine if academic leadership opportunities are appropriate for their aspirations, this article provides career paths experienced by two engaged scholars, criteria they use to select or forgo leadership positions, and lessons they've learned as academic leaders who are also engaged scholars.

Introduction

One of the benefits of being a faculty member is the variety of potential career pathways available to us. In our experience, it is not just a linear rise up the ladder. Many of us struggle with what route to take as we explore the pathways of our career. We want to take on new challenges to learn and grow but as engaged scholars, we also want to make a difference in the world (Franz, Childers, & Sanderlin, 2012). Academic leadership roles can help meet these aspirations and in fact can provide an important multiplier effect—being able to make a difference more deeply or more widely. Sometimes taking on an academic leadership role comes from national recognition of our engaged scholarship. Leadership roles can also arise naturally due to providing a unique niche that we fit at the right time. As academics contemplate taking on new academic leadership roles there is little guidance from peers and in the literature on what criteria to use to accept or forgo leadership opportunities. This seems especially true for engaged scholars shaping their career paths. Gelmon, Blanchard, Ryan, and Seifer (2012, p. 22) state, “faculty members are often left to piece together their own community engaged scholarship career development with little institutional support.” In this article we reflect on our experiences and criteria we have used to shape our academic leadership path as engaged scholars.

Academic Leadership

Definitions of “leadership” vary across higher education scholars and practitioners. Green and McDade (1994) view leadership in higher education as positions such as governing board members, presidents, senior administrators, academic deans, administrative managers, department chairs, and faculty leaders. Bischetti (2001, p. 129) expands the definition by saying, “Leadership is not limited to a position but is rather a dynamic, fluid group process of influence that unfolds and shifts according to its members’ talents, energy, and commitment.” Other scholars define leader as a person who enables positive change (Bringle, Games, & Malloy, 1999) or a values-based process for fostering intentional change (Astin & Astin, 2000).

Academic leadership is valued for creating positive social change, a supportive environment, sustainability, reciprocal care, and shared responsibility by increasing the number of people on campus who become committed to change and effective social change agents for the common good (Astin & Astin, 2000; Bringle et al., 1999). These leaders are expected to also improve competence of individuals, reduce turnover, maximize people’s strengths, create institutional renewal, foster shared goals and common understanding, improve communication, promote pluralism, and catalyze institutional change (Green & McDade, 1994).

The difficult job of being an academic leader requires self-knowledge, authenticity and integrity, commitment, empathy and understanding of others, as well as technical knowledge (Astin & Astin, 2000). In reality, educational leaders, similar to leaders in other organizations, spend much of their time as managers of people and processes serving as a tool for change and a filter for what takes place in their educational unit (Starratt, 1996). Faculty can contribute to educational leadership through critical thinking and sharing research and scholarship that clarifies the meaning of leadership and identifies best practices for leadership and leadership education (Astin & Astin, 2000).
Several scholars have professed a need for transformative and shared leadership rather than hierarchical, directive leadership for more effective higher education (Astin & Astin, 2000; Green & McDade, 1994; Outcalt, Faris, & McMahon, 2001). Transformative educational leaders build a community less focused on competitiveness and hierarchy by pursuing meaning and social change, empowering others, experimenting with organic management, and being cognizant of the ethics of administering educational units (Astin & Astin, 2000; Starratt, 1996). This transformative work requires an interdisciplinary approach, envisioning colleges and universities as citizens, supporting perpetual learning, turning individual work into collective work, and shared leadership that is dispersed and participatory (Bringle et al., 1999; Fitzgerald, Burack, & Seifer, 2010b; Green & McDade, 2001; Outcalt et al., 2001). Transformative leadership treats leadership as a relational process and the educational unit as a social system (Hoy & Miskel, 1982; Outcalt et al., 2001).

Academic Leadership Development for Engaged Scholars

The importance of good academic leadership is clear, yet little is done to help academic leaders do their job (Green & McDade, 1994; Peters, Alter, & Schwartzbach, 2010). Academic leadership development for engaged scholars has become especially important as more universities add high level leadership positions to institutionalize civic engagement (Research University Civic Engagement Network, 2007). Gelmon et al. (2012) maintain that professional development mechanisms for engaged scholars are hard to find, especially "sustained, longitudinal, multidisciplinary, experiential, and competency-based faculty development programs" (p. 22) that provide critically important networking and support. Successful academic leadership development programs also include deep conversation about leadership, reflection about common purpose, and problem solving using intellectual assets to help emerging academic leaders learn how to develop trust and become champions (Astin & Astin, 2000; Bringle et al., 1999).

Faculty often find it difficult to become leaders due to the rigid career movement system in academe (Green & McDade, 2001). A focus on quantifying faculty productivity for public accountability and a culture of faculty individualism can also be a barrier to taking on leadership roles for engaged scholars who believe in qualitative processes, collaborative leadership, and collective work (Astin & Astin, 2000; Colebeck, 2002; Middaugh, 2001). Some engaged scholar leaders navigate this culture by aligning their work with institutional mission (Calleson, Jordan, & Seifer, 2005), sharing their intellect more widely for collective work (Lynton, 1995), or taking on leadership roles so they can shape a collaborative culture (Astin & Astin, 2000). Ellison and Eatman (2008) suggest engaged scholars have five career stages: building knowledge, developing skills, mentoring, doing scholarship, and exercising leadership. For the fifth stage they suggest public scholars take on leadership roles such as coordinating or co-coordinating programs, projects, curriculum development, and grant proposals, speaking, leading committees and national associations, and serving as chair or dean to impact academic culture.

Engaged scholars seeking leadership roles are beginning to see an increase in formal and informal professional networks and professional development opportunities to build leadership skills and support (Weerts & Sandman, 2000). National leadership development opportunities for engaged scholars include Campus Compact, Community Campus Partnerships for Health, Engaged Scholarship Conference, Imagining America, Higher Education Network for Community Engagement, International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement, and Engagement Academy for University Leaders (Fitzgerald et al., 2010b). Select universities have also successfully implemented competency and cohort-based models of professional development for engaged scholars. Best practices include conducting self-assessment, creating a personal faculty development action plan including specific goals and strategies, leadership skills development, campus dialog, faculty fellowships, learning communities, and co-editing a book (Blanchard, Strauss, & Webb, 2012; Jordan et al., 2012; Hamel-Lambert, Millesen, & Harter, 2012).

Engaged scholars are potentially natural leaders since their scholarly goals contribute to the public good and a purpose beyond themselves (Bringle et al., 1999). The principles of engaged work—fairness, justice, empowerment, participation, self-determination, and knowing the community, its constituents, and its capabilities (Clinical & Translational Science Awards Consortium, 2011)
also lead to successful transformative leadership. The values and beliefs held by engaged scholars help them exercise leadership that promotes turning individual work into collective work, social justice-centered scholarship, increased value for applied work, and rewarding applied work (Bringle et al., 1999; Fitzgerald, Burack, & Seifer, 2010a).

The literature provides some insights into being a successful academic leader and also on academic leadership development for engaged scholars. However, no literature exists on the pathways engaged scholars take on their academic leadership journeys and the criteria they use to accept or forgo academic leadership opportunities. Therefore we share our personal pathways and criteria to add to the literature and to spark research on this important topic.

**Thompson’s Academic Leadership Story**

When I entered the academy in 2004, I was joint-appointed. My academic home was in the College of Education. I served 50 percent of my time as a tenure-track faculty member teaching in and developing a middle level teacher education program. The other 50 percent of my time was spent developing a research initiative focused on the early care, education, and health of young American Indian and Alaska Native children. It was my work with American Indian and Alaska Native young children and their care providers that launched my career in engaged scholarship. I competed for and was awarded a fellowship with the National American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start Research Center (NAIANHSRC) housed at the University of Colorado-Denver. While engaged in the work associated with this fellowship, I had the opportunity of meeting and working with Dr. Hiram Fitzgerald. This serendipitous meeting occurred as Dr. Fitzgerald served as a methodological/research advisor for the NAIANHSRC. It was Dr. Fitzgerald who introduced me to the scholarship of engagement and helped me to see that much of the work I had been doing was engaged.

As my understanding of engaged scholarship grew so did my opportunities to serve and lead. Not only did I complete my fellowship at the NAIANHSRC, but I also took the Photovoice research training I received and shared it with several colleagues; two of whom have since completed engaged research projects using the methodology I shared. I have mentored three graduate students through the Photovoice methodological process as well. Opportunities to share research approaches as well as to lead in more traditional formats began (and continue to) present themselves once I embraced being an engaged scholar. Since that time, I have served as a disciplinary area program coordinator, an elected member of faculty senate, and co-chair of the University-wide Engaged Scholarship Committee, all of which is in addition to the traditional leadership roles faculty in my department and discipline are expected to fill. In 2015 I received tenure and took on the role of assistant department chair.

The decisions I have made impacting my career and leadership path have been significantly influenced by my background and environment. As a descendant/member of the Menominee/Mohican tribe, some of the opportunities afforded to me are offered first because I am American Indian and second because I hold a doctoral degree in education. Selecting the opportunities to serve and lead both within my ethnic and heritage group and in the universities where I have been/am employed has been a challenge as many possibilities exist in both contexts. Guidance from family, coworkers, and senior scholars has helped me determine how to shape my path as many of the opportunities I have been presented have come to me rather than me looking for them. The decision to take on or leave academic leadership positions has also been impacted by personal life events. I am the mother of four young children and place their well-being above my academic career, and have made choices to benefit my family that, in some ways, delayed my career development. I did not earn tenure officially until 2015 as I chose to stop my tenure clock for one year and then leave a position in 2011 where promotion and tenure had been granted. These choices were hard ones to make, but essential for my personal life. And they did not have a negative impact on my leadership trajectory as an engaged scholar.

**Franz’s Academic Leadership Story**

I began my work as an academic in 1981 as an instructor of youth development with the University of Wisconsin-Extension. By 1987 I was an associate professor and in 2002 a full professor. My work focused on bringing the research of the university to the people of Wisconsin located along Lake Superior through the 4-H Youth Development Program. I served twice as a
department head of county Extension offices, a member of the faculty senate, chair of the promotion and tenure committee, and many other leadership roles in my department and discipline. In 2003 I became the associate director of the Iowa State Cooperative Extension and through that position led multi-state and national Extension initiatives and professional associations. In 2006 I accepted a position as an Extension Program development specialist at Iowa State and focused on research related to transformative learning and engaged scholarship. In 2010 I became the associate dean for Extension in the College of Human Sciences with oversight for 4-H and Extension Families programs at Iowa State University. In this role I focused on research and practice to enhance the measurement and articulation of the public value of university-community engagement and creating conditions for transformative learning. In 2014 I retired from Extension and became professor emeritus in the School of Education at Iowa State to continue to support graduate students and engaged scholarship.

My career path of taking on and leaving academic leadership positions has been deeply impacted by my environment. All the academic positions I have held were brought to my attention by peers who invited me to apply for the job. Encouragement from coworkers in each academic unit helped me move into new positions. The decision to take on or leave academic leadership positions has also been impacted by personal life events. I chose to leave my position in Iowa State for three years to gain a PhD at Cornell University because I was disappointed in the organizational decisions being made by university leadership. I wanted to specifically study leadership and other topics to directly impact Extension organizational development. I also chose to leave Extension leadership and move back to a full-time faculty appointment at Virginia Tech so I could give more attention to a family member fighting cancer. I also chose to leave my last academic leadership position so I could more fully explore my engaged scholarship and mentor and assist others in their engaged scholarship. I now serve as a consultant and volunteer helping higher education and nonprofits more effectively monitor and measure engagement and produce impactful and appropriate engaged scholarship.

Criteria for Accepting or Forgoing Academic Leadership Opportunities

As the decision to step into leadership or out of it is a critical one, having relevant criteria to consider during this process can be incredibly helpful. I (Thompson) was struggling with the direction my career would take; I felt that I was at a turning point—having submitted my tenure and promotion to associate professor dossier and having new opportunities on the horizon—I was not sure which path I wanted to take. While attending the 2014 Engaged Scholarship Conference in Edmonton, I had the opportunity to experience Dr. Nancy Franz’s presentation related to faculty development. As I sat and listened, I thought, I need to follow–up with her, she gets it.

Dr. Franz graciously agreed to continue the conversation over breakfast. The following criteria for accepting or forgoing academic leadership opportunities were generated across three broad areas of consideration (i.e., personal, professional, and institutional) during our discussion.

**Personal Considerations**

As Dr. Franz reminded me, before any major career decisions are acted upon, four criteria related to one’s personal well-being must be considered. Will this move further ignite your professional passion? It may seem common-sense to think, will I enjoy this new opportunity? Sometimes it is important to step back, reflect and consider whether or not the move will lead to work that you will enjoy. Also, it can be important to analyze the new platform the move will place you on. Will the new position allow you to continue work that you are passionate about or will it allow you to rekindle a joy lost?

After determining if or how the new position allows for the development of professional passion, goals must be determined. How will the new opportunity and your role within it allow you to attain career goals? Will the role help you attain personal goals as well? How will the new role contribute to your overall success in the field?

Now that your passion and goals have been thought about, the next consideration relates to your values. Of utmost importance is identifying how the new leadership role will enable you to model and extend your values. On the flip side, you should also consider if or to what degree you may have to compromise your values for this role. It is not always a given that a new opportunity will align with your value system. Thus, you have to determine how much you can or cannot compromise.

The final consideration focuses specifically on you (i.e., the person considering the change). The final area of reflection rests on personal
development. You ought to spend time thinking about how the new role will challenge you and where it may lead. It is true that we cannot predict the future, but we can do our best to be prepared for it. Thus, before making a major professional transition, all of the personal implications ought to be thought out.

**Professional Considerations**

As engaged scholars, who we are is deeply connected to what we do and value. Therefore, when considering professional opportunities, knowing how engaged scholarship relates to the position is vital. It should be clear if or how the new role allows for the deepening and expanding of your engaged agenda. Once you know how the position aligns with your engaged orientation, you will know how to proceed and if the opportunity is relevant to you.

If the position aligns with your engaged orientation, a reflection on resources should take place next. First to consider are professional resources—are there enough resources for you to be successful in this role? If the answer is yes, then you should consider if you have the personal resources to succeed. Reflecting on resources will require an unbiased examination of your workplace, what you possess and what you will need to fulfill the position.

A final professional consideration is about your skill set. You need to know if the leadership role will allow you to use your skills in effective ways. Further, you need to think about how the role will enable you to develop or refine skills needed for your position.

**Institutional Considerations**

As some professional opportunities are permanent and others are temporary (e.g., interim), knowing the organization, its context and with whom you will be working is necessary. With regard to the organization, it is important to determine if the role you are considering will help improve the effectiveness of the organization. Will your new position create a more efficient work place? And, will you be more effective in the organization as a result of this leadership role? If the opportunity is a win-win, then everyone benefits. If not, you have to decide how much compromise you can tolerate to accept the opportunity.

The organizational context must also be examined. You need to ask yourself some tough questions. Can you succeed and help others succeed in the current environment? Is your supervisor someone who can support you, your vision, and your engaged scholarship as a leader? Does the institution value and reward engaged scholarship in promotion and tenure as well as other mechanisms? Answers to these questions should be clear before considering who you might work with in the new position. In either move—into or out of leadership—colleagues make a difference. Who you will work with is a make or break decision point Dr. Franz gave several experiences where colleagues were significant influences on her decisions to move or stay put.

Consideration must be given to how the new role will allow you to build and maintain fulfilling partnerships with academics and community partners. After all, who you are working with has a tremendous impact on how you work and where that work will take you and your partners over time.

**Lessons Learned and Insights on Academic Leadership Opportunities**

Interpersonal relationships are critical for successful academic leadership (Diamond, 2004) and are a hallmark of engaged scholarship. The values, skills, and knowledge needed to conduct engaged scholarship, especially community-based participatory research are remarkably similar to those needed to be successful academic leaders. As such, serving in an academic leadership role provides new opportunities for engaged scholars to discover, develop, and disseminate new knowledge about engagement and their own scholarship.

We have found that consistent with research on academic leadership positions (Gelmon et al., 2012) substantive and impactful faculty leadership development often requires external funding, ongoing support, and tools. Professional organizations and their services such as the Community Campus Partnerships for Health (CCPH) (Seifer, McGinley, Blanchard, Jordan, & Gelmon, 2012) can help reduce barriers to community-engaged careers in academia. Coaching has also been an important support for engaged scholars as leaders (Franz & Weeks, 2008).

Research shows qualities of a successful scholar for leadership include integrity, perseverance, and courage (Glassick, Huber, & Maeroff, 1997). We find these leaders focus on the outcomes for the communities they work with, not just the processes or management issues related to leadership. These leaders specifically seek
positions that make a difference in the world. They are not just concerned with academic measures of funding, publications, and academic titles or power and prestige. Successful engaged leaders also serve as connectors across individuals, groups, and topics to help reveal and catalyze leadership opportunities.

Our observations of successful engaged leaders reveal that they aren’t afraid to create or attempt something new. These leaders pursue positions that allow flexibility in how they are carried out so the position becomes their own and supports their needs, skills, and interests. They are not afraid to do what makes them stronger, better, and wiser professionally and personally. This vision often requires taking risks and innovation to reveal academic leadership opportunities.

Most importantly, our advice for those aspiring to be successful engaged academic leaders is to remember that family matters. It is important to do what matters for you by being true to yourself instead of holding yourself hostage to other people’s expectations. Find a way to make your own path within the boundaries of higher education and seek mentors to help discover your own unique approach to academic leadership. There is no handbook on the one way to be a successful academic leader.

Summary

Academics have a variety of career paths available to them yet it can be difficult to determine what career opportunities will lead to beneficial professional and personal outcomes. As engaged scholars it is especially important to find academic leadership positions that allow us to make a difference in the world either directly or indirectly using our unique skills, experience, teaching, and research. As academic leaders who are also engaged scholars, we want to focus not just on the processes or management issues related to leadership but also the outcomes for communities we work with. To assist engaged scholars in determining if academic leadership opportunities are appropriate for their aspirations as engaged scholars, they need to consider specific personal, professional, and institutional criteria to select or forgo leadership positions and heed lessons learned by previous engaged academic leaders.

References


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Beyond Collaboration: Principles and Indicators of Authentic Relationship Development in CBPR

Fay Fletcher, Alicia Hibbert, Brent Hammer, and Susan Ladouceur

Abstract

Authentic relationships, crafted through an ongoing process of engagement that results in shared priorities, are essential to working with, versus for, in or on community. Using a comparative analysis of a CBPR case study with two rural Métis communities, authors present shifts in individual attitudes and behaviors that represent principles for authentic relationship development. Reciprocal capacity building, relational accountability, and honoring cultural and personal boundaries are principles for authentic relationships that may be generalized across contexts to inform CBPR. Based on a process of collaborative inquiry, the authors propose two indicators of authentic relationships, including adaptability, as shown in decision-making, and shared values, reflected and achieved through inclusive reflexive practices. Using quantitative and qualitative methods to explore authentic relationship development made apparent the absence of authentic relationships in one case study. In conclusion, authors present the discussion and ultimate decision to step back from program delivery when authentic relationships are lacking.

Introduction

Authentic relationships, crafted through an ongoing process of engagement that results in shared priorities (Bull, 2010) are essential to working with, versus for, in or on community. This article explores the steps taken to establish authentic relationships in community-based participatory research (CBPR) using a case study of CBPR with two rural communities: one that demonstrates an authentic relationship, and one that demonstrates collaboration as a first step toward an authentic relationship. The Métis Settlements Life Skills Journey (MSLSJ) project is a multi-faceted service delivery and research project. The objective of MSLSJ is to offer and evaluate life skills summer camps for youth over several years in multiple Métis Settlements in Alberta. These camps build individual and community resiliency as a means to reduce drug misuse and violence and improve the long term health of the community and its members.

Israel, Schulz, Parker, and Becker (1998) promote the use of CBPR methods in public health research, as the approach allows researchers to look at the social and environmental factors involved in health outcomes and to apply health knowledge in community settings. With this approach, we prioritize the participation of non-academic researchers (Métis Settlement members) to co-create knowledge. Furthermore, CBPR is recognized by national funding organizations as a desirable approach to research with marginalized communities (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2008), establishing an expectation that researchers will engage communities in meaningful ways as partners throughout the research process (Wallerstein & Minkler, 2008). We discuss the association between respectful, authentic relationships and the quality of research outcomes through an examination of the depth and frequency of engagement with two communities.

Our approach to CBPR supports ongoing reflection and information sharing as a way to generate growth and new ideas while actively engaging with the project. This approach promotes adaptability for both project implementation and research objectives, and builds upon the characteristics of CBPR to build long-term partnerships that recognize the context of each community, based on shared expertise and ownership (Horowitz, Robinson, & Seifer, 2009; Israel et al., 1998; Israel, Rowe, Salvatore, Minkler, Lopez, Butz, Mosley, Coates, Lambert, Potit, Brenner, Rivera, Romero, Thompson, Coronado, & Halstead, 2005).

One of the most critical characteristics of CBPR is the initial contact and relationship building (Bull, 2010; Fletcher, 2003). Yet this is also the characteristic most often at odds with academic engagement and research due to the time, energy, and funding required to establish and nurture reciprocal, respectful, and long-term relationships with community members (Chino & DeBruyn, 2006; Israel et al., 1998). We have previously documented the challenges of balancing a service delivery program within an overall research project (Fletcher, Hammer, & Hibbert, 2014). While
we acknowledge that the university does not operate as a non-profit organization tasked to provide community services, we support Dempsey’s (2010) suggestion to promote the perspective of academics as collaborators with communities to address local issues and needs. To this end, the case study presented contributes to our understanding of the role of time and funds in developing authentic relationships for success in CBPR.

Collaborations are fundamental to CBPR; for CBPR projects to benefit communities and their members, both service providers and researchers must adopt the approach of working with, rather than for, in, or on communities. Academic researchers and service providers, including public health workers, have frequently been accused of conducting “helicopter projects” or “drive-by research” (Horowitz, Robinson, & Seifer, 2009, p. 2,626), which causes negative perceptions and makes it difficult to obtain community participation for either service delivery or research. While collaborations—working with a community to identify and address local concerns—are essential to CBPR, we believe that the objective should be to move beyond collaboration to authentic relationships. Nurturing authentic relationships is more likely to result in the full benefits of CBPR. To this end, contributing author Susan Ladouceur is a member of the Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement (BLMS) and is the MSLSJ project’s Community Camp administrator.

Stories from the MSLSJ project inform the three proposed principles for authentic relationships in research partnerships discussed below: Reciprocal capacity building, relational accountability, and honoring cultural and personal boundaries. Further, our ability to achieve authentic relationships as we apply these principles in CBPR, are captured through two indicators of authentic relationship development: 1) adaptability and flexibility of community and university team members and, 2) shared partner values. In other words, the presence of adaptability and shared values in the research partnership indicates that we have reached a level of authentic relationships.

These concepts emerged during thematic analysis of qualitative data collected through interviews, focus groups, and debriefs. Based on our experiences, these principles (reciprocal capacity building, relational accountability, and cultural/personal boundaries) apply across contexts and are relevant to researchers who strive to maximize the impact of CBPR. In contrast, the indicators (adaptability and flexibility and shared values), discussed in detail, emerged from the data, and may not be generalizable to other contexts.

The MSLSJ partnership with BLMS provides a case study of the benefits of moving beyond collaboration to building authentic relationships with community partners. In contrast, the second community (S2) provides a case study of CBPR in the absence of authentic relationships.

The PI summarized the process this way:

The general thinking is that it’s a research project and it’s about impacts and outcomes, [but that’s an incomplete picture]. It’s [also] an examination of how we begin to measure engagement and decide whether that engagement is at a stage where we can continue, or not, if [research] is supposed to be a two-way process.

Authentic Relationships

The importance of establishing authentic relationships as a precursor to ethical research with Indigenous peoples in Canada has been previously documented. Bull (2010) and Fletcher (2003) have outlined 26 suggestions for implementing CBPR relationships with Indigenous communities. Initial investment in consultation is paramount to effective collaboration due to historical, political, and social processes affecting Indigenous communities. However, all Indigenous communities do not necessarily share the same social environments. We do not propose to outline a set of indicators to show authenticity in all relationships. To maximize the benefits of CBPR, researchers should nurture authentic relationships throughout all phases of the project, whether service delivery or research. Yet, we explore in this article, “How do you actually gauge a relationship being authentic?” (PI).

Academia has a long tradition of interest in the authentic. Beginning in the 15th century through the 20th century, authentic objects became valuable commodities, and ideas of authenticity created conditions of social differentiation between groups of people (Mursic, 2013). Commodities, such as cultural artifacts and artwork, become transformed into authentic objects because they are “bound to a particular socio-cultural context …defined by its region of origin, material used for production, the production process and the local actors involved in it” (Fillitz & Saris, 2013, p. 11). Today, the contemporary search for authenticity represents a desire to appropriate and consume objects representative of different cultures.
(food and clothing are two of the most ubiquitous) and old traditions (such as forms of spirituality), as well as “true expressions of emotions and ideas” (Fillitz & Saris, 2013, p. 9). In other words, authenticity includes representations of deep human connections as a way for people to find meaning in their lives (Sjorslev, 2013). In this way, authenticity may be considered personal and subjective, related to an inner core of the self (Taylor, 1999). However, as Sjorslev (2013) argues, it is in joining the personal and the collective, or the social, that meaning is made in the process. Where and when people interact, authentic relationships may be established. It is authenticity as representative of deep human connections that we focus on in this examination of authentic relationship development in CBPR.

Authentic relationships formed through service delivery and research involve an active and deliberative decision to co-learn with the community, to privilege community knowledge, and to conceive of our program and research goals as shared experiences rather than deliverables. Authentic relationships are about sharing personal experiences through an open and active process of regular engagement. The purpose is not to use authenticity as a means of differentiation from the “other” but as a process to bridge diversity to form a new relationship based on strengths. Authentic relationships are not a final achievement, rather they are fluid and fragile assets that are established and nurtured through our actions. The potential for authentic relationship is enhanced when the principles of reciprocal capacity building, relational accountability, and cultural and personal boundaries are practiced by researchers and community members alike.

Three Principles of Authentic Relationship Development

Reciprocal capacity building. In research completed by Viswanathan, Ammerman, Eng, Garlehner, Lohr, Griffith, Rhodes, Samuel-Hodge, Maty, Lux, Webb, Sutton, Swinson, Jackman, & Whitener (2004), co-learning and reciprocal transfer was one of three essential elements of CBPR identified by all research partners.

Relational accountability. Relational accountability is grounded in work by Indigenous scholar Wilson (2009), who writes about the sense of relational accountability created by the connecting of head and heart in CBPR. Author Fletcher’s own experiences led to an understanding

Honoring cultural and personal boundaries. The proposed inclusion of established cultural and personal boundaries as a principle of authentic relationships is absent in existing literature. Boundaries, as the term is used in the field of psychological counseling, refers to geographical, cultural, physical, and personal boundaries essential to maintaining order and a clear identity. Boundaries “promote health, inner peace, safety, confidence, exploration, expression, positive relationships, and service to others” and allow “an identifiable shape to emerge around your beliefs and preferences. Defining boundaries produces a confidence within you that lets others know what you have to offer” (Black & Enns, 1997, p. 10). Further, cultural boundaries exist between communities and are formed through differences in language, behaviors, attitudes, skills, and experiences. We propose that maintaining cultural boundaries is one way to nurture and sustain authentic relationships. Knowing your personal (service provider, researcher, relative) and community boundaries (for example, Settlement’s openness to “outsiders,” university ethics board) proved to be an important aspect of maintaining respectful and authentic relationships.

Métis Settlements Life Skills Journey
Background

The Métis are an Indigenous group in Canada, some living on eight self-governed Métis lands called Métis Settlements, which are only present in the province of Alberta. The objective of the MSLSJ research project is to offer and evaluate summer camps for youth 7–14 years in multiple Settlements in Alberta, building individual and community resiliency. The PI has collaborated with Indigenous communities in CBPR projects since 2005 (Baydala, Sewlal, Rasmussen, Alexis, Fletcher, Letendre, Odishaw, Kennedy, Kootenay, 2009; Baydala, Letemdre, Ruttan, Worrell, Fletcher, Letendre, & Schramm, 2011; Baydala, Worrell, Fletcher, Letendre, & Ruttan, 2013; Baydala, Fletcher, Rabbit, Louis, Ksay-yin, & Sinclair, 2016—in press). We have published on community engagement through needs assessments (Fletcher, Hibbert, Roberson, & Asselin, 2013) and on reflexive research practice (Fletcher et al., 2014) as part of this project.
It is important to note that the ultimate goal of the MSLSJ project is to engage the community in such a way that the university and community, together, build individual and organizational capacity to support the delivery of the summer camp program beyond the life of the research project. Sharing experiences, while a precursor to an authentic relationship, does not guarantee it. Rather, to build authentic relationships, intentional and consistent attention before and during CBPR activities is required. Acknowledging that relationships are dynamic and in need of constant attention enhances the research process, outcomes, and impacts. A retrospective look at the MSLSJ project revealed that the key to sustaining authentic relationships has been an inclusive iterative process of critical reflection. The complexity and potential benefits of reciprocal capacity building, relational accountability, and defined cultural and personal boundaries are often underestimated in CBPR. Research goals cannot simply be measured using empirical scientific models (Chino & DeBruyn, 2006).

**Methods**

Critical reflection involves the process of reflexivity and the recognition that the researcher, the community, and their biases are part of the social realms they study (Robben, 2007). Critical reflection is the active process of “looking back” in order to move forward. It creates regular opportunities for all participants in the project (community members, service providers, and researchers) to openly discuss and express their thoughts, interpretations, and assumptions. Through shared participation in the reflexive process, individuals have the opportunity to better understand one another’s emotions and ideas, foster mutual trust, recognize accountability to shared priorities, honor cultural and personal boundaries, and work together toward achieving shared goals.

Earlier MSLSJ publications document using collaborative inquiry in the form of ongoing, regular debrief sessions to share information and encourage reflection on program development (Fletcher et al., 2014). Reflexive activities help researchers adhere to the principles of CBPR. A comparative analysis of two communities provides insight into relationship development and the progression from collaboration to authentic partnerships. Shifts in attitude and behavior can be mapped against the principles of authentic relationships: community partners felt that university-based team members acted in ways that demonstrated accountability to community needs and priorities; community members acted in ways that showed they felt accountable to the research goals; and both community and university partners evolved from a focus on individual to community and university capacity building through the establishment of networks between and within communities. In one case (BLMS), readers will see stakeholder commitment to shared program and research goals and expectations that contributed to authentic relationship development and successful implementation and evaluation; in the other case (S2), we present the difficult decisions made in the absence of authentic relationships.

**Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement and Settlement 2: A Case Study**

Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement (BLMS) is located in north-central Alberta, 167 kilometers from the nearest major city. According to the 2011 national census, its population was 492, with 85 children in our summer day camp’s age range, and more than 95 individuals in our camp facilitator age range (Statistics Canada, 2012). Settlement 2 (S2), with a population similar to BLMS, is located further yet from the nearest major city.

The MSLSJ partnership was established with BLMS in 2010. After over two years of community meetings, a needs assessment, and program development, the first summer camp was delivered and evaluated in 2013. In contrast, the first meeting with S2, and the beginning of the relationship, took place in January of 2013, just five months prior to the pilot program delivery. Table 1 provides quantitative data on engagement with both Settlements from 2010 to September of 2014, covering in-person meetings between university staff and community partners and community employment. The impact of an authentic relationship to CBPR success has been most evident in the decision to not proceed with the service delivery and research at S2. For that reason, we have limited the presentation of qualitative data to the period leading up to that point. Emails sent and received between community and university partners have not been catalogued, although they do show that when the communication was predominantly unidirectional from the university to community, there were no opportunities for face to face meetings and relationships building. The decision to

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1Settlement 2 has not been named due to lack of permission.
Table 1. Frequency of Selected University-Community Engagement (BLMS and S2), 2010–2014

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BLMS*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLMS</td>
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<td>0.4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Full-time equivalents of community employment</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
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include only in-person meetings and community employment in the table provides an overview for comparison rather than a comprehensive analysis.

In BLMS, the time between first contact and implementation is three years, employing at least one and up to three full-time employees for the majority of the time. In contrast, our collaborative relationship (S2) had only six months between contact and implementation with a short term, part-time employee. Notably, qualitative data from S2 are lacking, as is a participating community co-author, reflective of our lack of authentic relationship. In the section that follows, we first present a case study of authentic relationship development with BLMS. Using BLMS as a case study, we present two indicators of authentic relationship, adaptability and shared values, with the contribution of each principle to that indicator.

Results

Indicator: Adaptability

The community needs/readiness assessment, completed in collaboration with the local advisory committee (2010–2013), provided an opportunity to demonstrate adaptability on the part of both community and university, contributing significantly to authentic relationships. It was made clear from the outset of the partnership, that community members would determine whether the funding opportunity fit with their priorities. If so, the community would determine the content and inform the implementation of the service program and research. The impact of adaptability is summed up by a community facilitator:

Even though the U of A [University of Alberta] could be in the right 100 percent [of the time] that will still rub people [community members] the wrong way. So, I appreciate how they came in here like that and that they are so willing to learn, listen, and make changes if need be.

That commitment and willingness to adapt has been tested and proven key to success several times in the years since.

Honoring cultural and personal boundaries. In 2013, facilitator training took place over 37 days: 16 in Edmonton, 12 at BLMS, and 9 at S2. Although consideration was given to the potential difficulty of community employees adapting to city life, the impact of this change was underestimated. Sixteen days in a major city proved to be overwhelming for some community members. Credit goes to our facilitators and community coordinator for teaching us the importance of being community based (not just placed).

Based on facilitator focus groups and interviews, training in 2014 was condensed to 24 days; 20 days at BLMS and 4 days in Edmonton. The willingness on the part of the city-based team members to commute and live in the community for facilitator training as well as camp implementation was a strong show of support and commitment to the community. Data from 2014 speaks to the benefits of hosting training at BLMS in increased participation by community guests in preparation for visits to camp, community awareness of the program, sense of community ownership over the program, and amount of activity at local administration, recreation, and cultural centers. BLMS Camp Administrator Susan Ladouceur describes 2014 training as…

[a] lot better in the settlement, a lot better for all of them [community facilitators], because they didn't have to leave home. They didn't have to worry about traveling or how they were going to get to where they were going or getting lost and getting distracted.

Reciprocal capacity building. A 180-degree shift to one of the foundational objectives of the research was required to achieve the flexibility
demanded of authentic relationships. This shift required a revision to academic team members' concept of capacity building as well as an opening of personal and cultural boundaries, particularly on the part of community facilitators. Capacity building goals shifted toward building the capacity of non-community team members to engage and collaborate with community. The shift to reciprocal capacity building came in response to a request by the facilitators and Susan Ladouceur to recruit and hire a university-based individual with camp director experience to lead the summer camps in 2014, coupled with the selection of university-based facilitators to work in the community. Facilitators opened the doors to their community and were excited to teach university students about Métis people and Settlements while maintaining professional relationships and honoring cultural and personal boundaries. For example, one of the university-based facilitators became a baseball coach in the community, extending her stay to accommodate this. Susan Ladouceur describes the benefit: “I think it made a big difference to have [the university camp director] there every day, all day. Even their debriefs at the end of the day were much better than they were last year.”

Honoring cultural and personal boundaries and reciprocal capacity building resulted in the flexibility required to relocate and adjust the duration of facilitator training, experiment with a combined cohort of community and university facilitators, and hire a university trained camp director for 2014. In a weekly debrief during facilitator training, one participant shared that community facilitators did not see the two University of Alberta students as “university people.”

Relational accountability. University and community partners alike exhibit adaptability to get the job done. This willingness to do whatever it takes arises out of shared vision, practices, and experiences. As Susan Ladouceur states, “When the camp is happening and everybody’s out there, everybody shares responsibility of doing whatever needs to be done.” This accountability is counted as an indicator of authentic relationships because decisions are based not just on accepting individual and community needs, but intentionally building project expectations and goals around those needs.

Similarly, the importance of building relational accountability with leadership and community members should not be underestimated. Community members from BLMS compare the relational accountability developed at BLMS with its absence in S2:

I don't think the life skills project that happened in the summer at BLMS would have been as successful if they never had that good of relationship with the members and Council. We were never given too much of an opportunity to build a relationship with S2, so that definitely plays a big part in how successful we (BLMS members leading the program in S2) want the programs to be. I don't think you can really help a community if you don't have a positive relationship with not only the leadership but with the members (BLMS community research assistant).

Accountability is counted as an indicator of authentic relationships since decisions and actions are based not only on recognition and acceptance of individual and community needs, but are also intentionally built into project expectations, time lines, and goals.

Indicator: Shared Values

Shared values as indicators of authentic relationships are most apparent in personal stories told during interviews, focus groups, and debriefs. At various points in the delivery and evaluation of the MSLSJ program, community and university team members began to feel accountable for each other's success (relational accountability) and had established cultural and personal boundaries that allowed difficult questions or issues to be discussed. These two principles, relational accountability and established boundaries, resulted in the internalization of one another’s unique and shared values; the university’s requirement for research activity and outputs; the community’s desire for a youth life skills program; and the shared desire to have a positive impact on Métis people’s health and wellness.

Relational accountability. Mutual respect exists between the BLMS camp administrator and university partners. Susan Ladouceur says,

There is respect on both ends, because that is how it is with people that I work with. If you don't respect somebody, then you're not going to do the best for them.
This respect arose out of those numerous in-person meetings and community events. At BLMS, we held 5 focus groups, had 25 in-person meetings in the community, 2 teleconference meetings, and maintained up to 3 FTEs of employment from 2010–2014. Furthermore,

There is a lot of trust … They don’t check up on me to see if I’m at work or not because they trust me enough to know that I’m doing what I’m supposed to be doing. The trust needed to work completely by distance is built through interactions over time.

Susan Ladouceur has demonstrated her accountability to the success of the project, taking on increased responsibility to achieve shared goals. When asked about her role and official title, she replies, “Yeah, but I don’t know what it is [laughs].” This speaks to her evolving role as administrative assistant, program developer, and camp administrator—she is most concerned with remaining active and adaptable to the program as it unfolds. This also speaks to her internalization of the value of research and her contribution to the research goals. For example, she expressed a growing interest in speaking about the research to Settlements provincially, nationally, and internationally. Her commitment to assist with building relationships with other communities is significant to achieving the research goals. Author Hibbert noted that, after years working together, there is a clear understanding with Susan Ladouceur as to the research goals in addition to the service delivery needs of the project.

**Honoring cultural and personal boundaries.**
Both university team members and MSLSJ facilitators have mentioned that non-community members need to learn the workings of the community to build positive relationships. For example, it is common to hold a wake at the local recreation center after the passing of Métis Settlement members. As non-members of the Settlement, it is important to understand that closing public buildings and workplaces is the norm and that all research and associated services are moved or postponed, and employees have a paid day off. Policies that respect local ceremonies and events associated with grief and loss also promote healthy boundaries.

Similarly, the family responsibilities of single parents were respected through flexible hours and days off. An assumption made by the principal investigator that 7 hour days and 35-hour work weeks were preferable was soon dispelled as community employees made family and child needs a priority. According to the BLMS community research assistant:

> The university gave a lot of support in everything that they would do, just being open to different people and knowing that everyone has their own life. They played a big role in supporting the program.

**Reciprocal capacity building.** After the first year of training, researchers realized that providing community facilitators and the camp administrator with a more in-depth foundation and background of the research objectives would result in improved impact and outcomes. Facilitator training in May of 2014 began with a brief presentation of the larger research project by the PI and research team so that facilitators were aware of how and why they may help achieve research goals. Being introduced to the researchers, their motives and beliefs, and the history of the program, contributed to the development of an authentic relationship.

The extent of shared values was evident in the degree of participation in reflexive discussions. As community members served successive years on the advisory committee, remained employed by the project, or returned to seasonal work year after year, their thoughtful and critical input during interviews, focus groups, and debriefs reflected growing capacity and healthy boundaries.

Susan Ladouceur played a large role in bridging between community members and university employees. She represents the community’s values at university team meetings, but also represents the university in a community setting through active employment. In early 2014, after recognizing that the community voice was absent from the cooperative reflective inquiry process, she was asked to join the regular debrief sessions. During one conversation, she articulated shared values and the moment she became aware of the impact of shared values, the point at which individuals do things not because they have to, but because they want to:

> There’s some people who do stuff that are not…they just do the stuff and it doesn’t come from the heart but just because it’s their job to do it. So a lot of people don’t go to these functions that happen because of that and that’s the first time I said it
like that cause that's what I just realized. 'Cause it doesn't come from the heart, just because they have to do that, they do it, right? And there's a big difference in when you want to do something compared to when you have to do something.

Discussion

Stories about MSLSJ project progress from 2010–2014 demonstrate suggested principles for authentic relationships in research partnerships: reciprocal capacity building, relational accountability, and honoring cultural and personal boundaries. The indicators and principles of authentic relationship presented previously align with the principles of CBPR. Analysis of qualitative data collected through interviews, focus groups, and debriefs resulted in two indicators of our progress in achieving authentic relationships: adaptability and flexibility of community and university team members and shared partner values.

Indicators that mark the transition from collaboration to authentic relationships in the MSLSJ project were adaptability/flexibility—shown in the decisions team members made to contribute to project progress—and shared values, shown in the examples from inclusive reflexive practices such as team debriefs. These indicators show the principles of authentic relationships at work. While relational accountability and reciprocal capacity building have been mentioned in the CBPR literature, our use of cultural and personal boundaries as a principle of authentic relationships is unique to the literature. Shared meaning is created within healthy but defined boundaries, so that each community—and each role within that community—contributes to a shared social understanding with cultural and personal confidence and respect. Meaning is made in the doing of things, in the active participation expressed as shared social group activities (Sjorslev, 2013).

Based on our experiences, these principles were critical to authentic relationship development, apply across contexts, and are relevant to researchers who strive to maximize the relevance and impact of CBPR. The indicators that emerged from our data, however, are considered specific to our project, so may or may not be generalizable to other contexts. This speaks to the importance of working with communities in CBPR, recognizing the extent of diversity between Indigenous communities. BLMS exemplifies the benefits of moving beyond collaboration to authentic relationships with community partners. The transition of academic partners from collaboration to authentic relationship, from research to partnership, from head to heart, is captured in the following:

The general thinking [in academia] is that it’s a research project and it’s about impacts and outcomes, [but that’s an incomplete picture]. It’s [also] an examination of how we begin to measure engagement and decide whether that engagement is at a stage where we can continue, or not, if [research] is supposed to be a two way process. (PI)

In contrast, S2 served as a lesson on the importance of authentic relationship and provides an opportunity to reflect on the difficult decisions that are made in the absence of authentic relationships. The decision to not implement camp at S2 was not taken lightly, as the PI stated:

The price of [not] doing a readiness and needs assessment at S2 needs to be considered due to the apparent lack of capacity to be engaged to the level required to go ahead with another summer camp in 2014.

The following stories document signs of our inability to practice the principles of authentic relationship.

The first sign that we have not progressed from collaboration to authentic relationships with S2 is our inability to form a local advisory committee, without which it has proven difficult to have regular communication with stakeholders. In the absence of an advisory, there was no opportunity to establish commitment through shared experiences, no opportunity to be responsive to community needs or priorities, no opportunity for inclusive reflexivity, and no shared values.

The second sign was our inability, despite several attempts, to hire local settlement employees. Without a camp administrator at S2 prior to summer 2014, the onus would fall to Susan Ladoucer to create awareness at S2, coordinate with a community contact to register campers, and to manage the camp itself. She said, “It’s hard if I don’t know half the people in [S2] for me to be able to go and do that. It’s much easier if [someone from S2] does it.”
In an attempt to build the relationship with S2, a meeting was set with Settlement Council. Essentials for camp implementation were laid out; a community coordinator and facilitators would be hired, a facility for camp booked, and accommodations for facilitators provided. In return, all the expenses, training, and evaluation required to run a summer camp would be provided by the university. Meeting each other’s expectations builds the relationship as both community and university contribute to the success of the camp and research (relational accountability) and contribute to program revisions and implementation (reciprocal capacity building).

Despite enthusiasm on the part of local leadership and positive feedback that “camp was great” and “everybody loved it,” the relationship began to feel like a free service to the community rather than a research partnership with the community. Debrief participants shared that, “We were just a convenient camp for S2.” In contrast, engagement and relationship building at BLMS resonated with deeper meaning and was representative of an authentic relationship.

The decision not to run the MSLSJ program at S2 in 2014 was difficult, but necessary. This decision represents a parameter that both the university and community partners at BLMS set for this project: that the community would actively contribute to both the development and delivery of the program. At the crossroads of this decision, the authentic relationship of BLMS stood out yet again. Committed to the project and the children, Susan Ladouceur, on behalf of BLMS, opened the doors for children at S2 to attend camp at BLMS. This is significant as it speaks to the BLMS facilitators’ recognition of the benefits to both children and research in the successful implementation at S2 in 2013. Through the efforts of a newly hired camp administrator in June 2014, a community van was commissioned to transport children from S2 to BLMS. This decision was positive as, “They just blended right in with all the other kids” (Susan Ladouceur).

One of the most difficult challenges for researchers working in CBPR projects is to ask the question “What if the community does not yet have the capacity to collaborate and advocate for the changes they want to see?”, as in S2. Rather than alter the service delivery/research project, exclude them from future participation, or eliminate future attempts at communication (all actions felt to be punitive rather than community based and responsive to community realities), the university team continues to seek out connections and take steps, however small, that may result in authentic relationship. Things—actions, responses, experiences, and results—do not just happen; they happen because of relationships and connections between people. Principles and indicators of authentic relationships are not merely analytic tools for results, but have proven useful in assessing what can be learned about our research relationships, what strategies contributed to the progress of the project, and what we can do to improve our research outcomes and impacts.

The implications of our findings may be useful to CBPR that combines service delivery and research. Our experiences suggest that the benefits of maintaining authentic relationship in all phases of a project, sharing reflexive experiences in the process, outweigh potential costs (e.g., time and money) when the shared goal is to contribute to positive changes with community members. Researchers entering into CBPR projects who move beyond simple collaboration will maximize CBPR processes and outcomes. Continued expansion of MSLSJ with additional Métis Settlements in Alberta will provide additional insight into principles and indicators of authentic relationship development.

Conclusion

Our experiences have reinforced our belief in the subtle but critical difference between collaborative and authentic relationship so much that we have dedicated all discretionary funds in our current grant to the establishment or refinement of authentic relationship with future community partners. This approach will broaden and strengthen relationships with and between settlements for future sustainability. Ongoing discussions among all team members about future service delivery strategies and research proposals speak to an authentic relationship.

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Opening the Web of Learning: Students, Professors, and Community Partners Co-Creating Real-Life Learning Experiences

Guy Nasmyth, Catherine Etmanski, and Sabine Lehr

Abstract

This article documents an example of a successful learning partnership for an activity called the Leadership Challenge (LC), an experiential learning design used by Royal Roads University (RRU) in its Master of Arts in Leadership Program. The LC is based on a co-learning model in which professors create the conditions for students’ learning; community-based organizations bring an authentic challenge as a scenario for learning to the students; and organizations, professors, and students all learn from one another throughout the process. We believe this experience is an example of how genuine partnerships between universities and community organizations can be created in which community partners are squarely placed in the center of the academic experience, rather than being treated as peripheral. Written from the perspective of representatives from both the university and the community service organization, this article also documents the limitations of this activity based on the short time frame allowed.

How can community organizations and universities partner for mutual benefit? What does authentic collaboration and community engagement entail? As the notion of engaged scholarship has gained momentum over the past few decades, questions such as these have challenged members of community interested in partnering with universities and engaged scholars alike. As a contribution to the scholarship of community engagement, this article documents an example of a successful learning partnership for an activity called the Leadership Challenge (LC), an experiential learning design used by Royal Roads University (RRU) in its Master of Arts in Leadership (MAL) Program. The LC is based on a co-learning model in which professors create the conditions for students’ learning; community-based organizations bring an authentic challenge as a scenario for learning to the students; and organizations, professors, and students all learn from one another throughout the process. We believe this experience is an example of how genuine partnerships between universities and community organizations can be created in which community partners are squarely placed in the centre of the academic experience, rather than being treated as peripheral.

Written from the perspective of representatives from both the community organization and the University, this case builds on the theme of impact in community-university relationships by exploring the nuances of a particular LC that occurred in 2013. From a pedagogical perspective, this case illuminates a problem-based, experiential, real-time/real-life open-ended learning challenge. That is, it did not aim to provide fixes to problems; rather, it intended to open up possibilities for mindful reflection and improvement. This case exemplifies the importance of entering into community-university relationships with the goal of ongoing mutual learning, thus moving forward from a transactional approach which frequently focuses on unrealistic expectations of fixing problems. The success of this LC is examined in the context of creating a relationship of trust, the backgrounds of those involved, and the development of realistic expectations on all sides in regard to the scope and limitations of the LC. It begins by introducing the context of engaged scholarship as well as the pedagogical design of the LC activity. It then details the specific community-university relationship outlined in this case and concludes with reflections on values, limitations, and lessons learned.

The Context of Engaged Scholarship

Over the past three decades, universities have demonstrated an increasing interest in community engaged scholarship (Gibson, 2006; Hall, 2009). Vogelgesang, Denson, and Jayakumar (2010), for instance, described a significant turning point when the 1999 U.S.-based Kellogg Commission “challenged institutions to renew their
commitment to address the pressing issues of the day” (p. 438). Sandmann, Thornton, and Jaeger (2009) likewise suggested that universities’ current turn toward community engagement is “a natural evolution of their traditional missions of service ... along with their commitments to the social contract between society and higher education” (p. 1). In Canada, this kind of scholarship also has deep roots (Etmanski, Dawson, & Hall, 2014). Hall (2009) has documented how the Extension Unit of the University of Alberta was established in 1912 with a mandate for outreach and engagement. Likewise, the Antigonish Movement during the 1930s and 40’s linked research, adult education, community economic development, and social action to support economically depressed communities living in Atlantic Canada’s fishing communities (Welton, 2001). The scholarship of engagement (Boyer, 1990; 1996) and the notion of engaged scholarship (Fitzgerald, Burack, & Seifer, 2010) have informed much of the current momentum around partnerships between community-based organizations and universities.

As these and other engaged scholars have suggested, we are living in an historical moment where there is increased value placed on scholars who see engagement as scholarship with not on community. Etmanski, Dawson, and Hall (2014) have stated,

There are two defining characteristics of this body of research: it is action-oriented and it is participatory. An orientation to action means that the researchers, whether as members of the community or outsiders, commit to supporting the community in improving conditions in some way. What, exactly, constitutes meaningful action is an ongoing debate and will vary under different circumstances. ... [Likewise], the word participatory means that the intended beneficiaries of the research (i.e., community members) have significant control over some if not all parts of the research process: from problem-definition, to research design, data collection, representation, and dissemination of findings (p. 8).

Despite good intentions and a growing body of scholarship outlining helpful responses to frequently encountered challenges, community-university relations continue to be riddled with complexities and hurdles. In the pages that follow, we acknowledge these through documenting how two organizations came together for the purpose of this activity.

Leadership Challenge Background

Royal Roads, formerly a military college, was reborn as a public university in 1995. It is a small university just a short drive from Victoria, BC on Canada’s west coast. Much smaller than the University of Victoria, RRU focuses on applied and professional programs at the undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral levels. The MA in Leadership is among the university’s longest-running programs. The LC is used in several of RRU’s graduate level programs as an opportunity to extend our students’ understanding of theory and how theory can apply directly to practice. In the case explored in this paper, the LC was used in the first term of the MA in Leadership program. The first term includes a two-week residency period in which students come together face to face, attend small seminars, larger plenary sessions, and participate in a variety of learning activities. The residency period forms an intense learning environment, and it is within this context that students connect theory to practice using the LC as a vehicle for enhancing their learning.

The LC is similar to a business case study in that it involves a complex narrative and is intended as a vehicle for the application of theory to practice. At the same time, it is not like a case study in that it is a real, unresolved issue currently being experienced by a client organization, which we call a sponsor. Students at RRU addressing a LC are applying theory to practice through analyzing a relevant and current issue with a sponsor organization, and making creative recommendations to assist the sponsor move forward with a complex and often ill-defined challenge.

The notion of grounding and extending learning through the application of theory to practice in this manner is itself grounded in constructivist learning. The theory of constructivist learning, with early roots in the work of Piaget (Rohmann, 1999) holds that learning is a process of meaning-making and that we tend to make meaning and construct knowledge socially. Of equal importance, especially when considering the LC as a vehicle for learning leadership, constructivist learning also holds that learning can be most effective when undertaken in the context of social groups with diverse membership.
Significantly, in the constructivist paradigm, “learning proceeds from previously assimilated learning acquired through interaction with the environment” (Rohmann, 1999, p. 304). In a group setting such as the LC process, the diversity of the group adds significantly to the richness of both the learning and the experience. In such a setting, reality is not objective, but rather a construction; different people will construct different meaning as a result of experiential and cultural backgrounds. Constructions are built socially through interactions between people with diverse backgrounds (Rohmann, pp. 363–364).

The LC serves two purposes for the students. The first, and perhaps the most obvious, is to provide a forum in which they can apply the various theories and models we present in seminars and through course reading. The second purpose of the leadership challenge is to provide an opportunity for students to live and practice their own developing theories and frameworks of leadership and teamwork, both critical elements of the MA in Leadership. This lived experience may have more value for both learner and sponsor than may seem initially obvious.

Since the LC occurs during the two-week on-campus residential period of the first term of the program, the experience of working in teams to complete the LC activity provides an in vivo experience of generating an effective organization based on the concepts and theories they are learning. Although the lived experience of teamwork may seem clear, it has been our experience through many years of using this approach that the students are working in teams that reflect the functioning of organizations, they are more capable of empathizing with any potential struggles facing the sponsor organization. Even though their own classroom-based organization is temporary, and perhaps somewhat artificial, they still come together in community much as our community sponsors organize to accomplish their own purpose.

When LC teams become microcosms of real-world organizations in this way, they are reflecting Senge’s (1990) notion of microworlds. In much of his early writing, Senge’s conceptualization of microworlds suggested that the role of members focuses much more on research than it might in their workaday roles in the so-called real world outside of the classroom setting. Because the vast majority of our students are themselves leaders in their own organizations, the ideals of the microworld can and often do become reality. In these cases it becomes the students’ job to reimagine reality. The learning in such cases can be profound.

We are often told that the experience of a residency, consisting of seminars, workshops, and especially addressing the LC, is transformative.1 Such feedback is consistent with MacKeracher’s2 (1996) view of such learning experiences: “Learning is transformative because it has the potential for developing change. Personal meanings and the personal model of reality can be changed during interactive and constitutive processes” (p. 9). This is significant in that, in our view, learning leadership is a complex process. Unlike some other disciplines, the construct of leadership is elusive; it defies right answers and encourages a constructivist approach to learning. The constructivist approach encourages a necessarily learner-centered mindset: “The learner centered approach focuses primarily on the learner and the learning process, and secondarily on those who help the learner learn” (MacKeracher, p. 2). The subtle shift this brings to our teaching practice is both daunting and rewarding.

As faculty members, we see ourselves as facilitators rather than teachers in the more traditional sense. Of course this does not mean that we avoid theory; rather, we present it and then step back, allowing our students to make their own meaning, and apply it as they choose. Research shows that knowledge is much more likely to be remembered or recalled in the context in which it was originally learned (Bridges, 1992, p. 9).

The leadership challenge approach can be considered as a form of “problem based learning” as conceptualized and explicated by Bridges3 (1992). “Problem based learning is an instructional strategy that uses a problem as the starting point for learning. The problem is one that students are apt to face as future professionals” (p. 17). With roots

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1See Agger-Gupta and Etmanski (2014) for further details on the transformative elements of the first residency term.

2Dorothy MacKeracher’s work informed the design of early iterations of this program when it was the Master of Arts in Leadership and Training.

3Edwin Bridges’s work informed the design of early iterations of this program during which residencies were five weeks in duration and included at least four separate leadership challenges.
in both constructivism and problem-based learning, the LC encourages not only the ideals of the microworld, but also greater motivation and orientation toward success (Bridges, 1992).

The LC has become a core element of first-year studies in the MA in Leadership at RRU. Serving as both an opportunity to apply theory to practice, as well as a platform for practicing leadership in a microworld, it adds richness to the learning and lived experience of graduate education. As a mechanism for working in partnership with community sponsors, the LC has paved the way for students and faculty to apply relevant theory toward advancing community initiatives.

Overview of the Process of Developing a Leadership Challenge

The process we undertake to complete the LC, even though complex and often somewhat emergent, does involve some predictable elements. As a starting point, we partner with representatives from a sponsor organization who identify an organizational challenge with which they are currently grappling. These representatives are invited into the classroom to make a presentation during the first week of our first-term residency. As one of their assignments for the first term courses, the students work in teams to come up with proposals to address the challenge and then make presentations back to the organizational representatives in the latter part of the residency.

Student engagement with the sponsor organization comprises a 60- to 90-minute briefing involving the Executive Director (ED) and perhaps other senior organizational leaders who come to RRU to present their challenge. During this session students have a chance to ask questions of the sponsor. A telephone conference call later in the week with the key sponsor individual (ED or other senior leader) allows students to ask more questions and check assumptions once they have immersed themselves in the challenge. Finally, the sponsor returns a last time to RRU in the second week of the residency to attend the student team presentations.

Sometimes sponsor organizations hear about the LC through word of mouth and approach us independently. At other times, we reach out within our School’s broad network of contacts to find a suitable organization that wishes to participate in this mutual learning experience. Normally a contracted faculty member (what RRU calls Associate Faculty members) is hired to write an 8-20 page overview of the LC, including the context of the challenge, information about the organization and its current successes, a description of the key issue the senior leaders are interested in addressing through the challenge, and parameters for the assignment.

The overarching question asked of the sponsor is, “What organizational challenge or opportunity are you currently facing that you would be comfortable sharing with the MAL students, and that you think would benefit from the insights of our mid-career student teams applying leadership principles?” The process of working with the sponsoring organization is highly collaborative to develop an appropriate challenge open enough to allow students to apply both their individualized knowledge as leaders in their own organizations as well as the knowledge they are learning in the residency and through their readings.

To begin our selection process, the faculty team gathers names of possible sponsor organizations, often informally reaching out in our networks to see whether there might be interest amongst our contacts. We bring the names of all potential sponsor organizations forward to the faculty team planning meeting to determine which would be the best fit. Once the faculty team has agreed, the contracted Associate Faculty member makes a formal meeting request to the potential sponsor organization to provide an overview of the LC format and explain what can be expected. Sometimes this meeting includes several representatives from the identified sponsor organization. If the organization agrees to participate, they are asked to sign a consent form as part of the RRU ethics review process for student learning involving real-life scenarios.

The contracted Associate Faculty member then drafts a document (assignment description) that includes a brief literature review to help frame the challenge, typically involving both publicly available sources as well as pertinent information on the organizational context offered by the sponsor (e.g., internal documents the organization is willing to share). This document also includes student deliverables for their final team assignment (a presentation and paper).

Where possible, we also ask the sponsor to return the following year in the cohort’s second residency to give a brief (approx. 30 minutes) update on what has actually changed within their organization in the interim. This lets the cohort know what kind of impact the team presentations
had for the organization and provides an opportunity for dialogue between students and sponsor.

Although we have a preference for working with non-profit organizations, any organization willing to travel to RRU for the purpose of this activity is a possible sponsor organization for a LC. We seek to partner with a new organization four times per year according to our first term residency schedule.

Although the approach is in some ways linear as described, in practice it tends to unfold as an emergent process. Student teams may choose to collaborate, or may see the LC as a competitive process. Conflict may emerge within or between teams. Diverse levels of relevant expertise on teams may result in wonderfully creative recommendations or, alternatively, may stifle creativity. Faculty interventions may enhance or discourage excellent teamwork. For teams to achieve a level of success, “control is replaced by a toleration of ambiguity and the ‘can-do’ mentality of ‘making things happen’ is modified by an attitude that is simultaneously visionary and responsive to the unpredictable unfolding of events” (Westley, Zimmerman, & Patton, 2006, p. 20). As such, it would appear that recognizing and working with a complex and emergent process where ambiguity and responsiveness are essential becomes critical in achieving levels of success.

The July 2013 Leadership Challenge

In the spring of 2013, the community service organization (CSO) that chose to partner with RRU was undergoing a significant change process. Under a transfer agreement that the province of British Columbia (BC) had with the federal government, this CSO was moving from a BC-funded environment to direct contracting with the Government of Canada. The new funding model came into effect as of April 2014. Because the federal government places significant emphasis on a specific kind of reporting accountability, the new contracting and funding model was set to bring changes for many staff in the agency, including capturing vital client service data in a federally designed database, quarterly cash flow forecasts, and performance assessment/outcome reporting. For many of the CSO staff members, especially the frontline workers who for the most part had little administrative background, this change entailed dealing with administrative procedures to a much larger degree than under the BC funding model. All staff members were required to undergo administrative training to cope with the requirements of the new system.

For the purpose of the LC activity, the ED, Mary Smith, and one of the managers and co-author of this article, Sabine Lehr, requested support in coming up with some innovative ideas on how this organizational change process could be led and managed. They hoped the students’ ideas might support them in creating an engaging and rewarding learning experience for the staff, rather than a burdensome and (for some staff members) frightening change process.

One of the challenges that Mary and her leadership team faced at that time was that those who had chosen to work for this particular CSO had been attracted to the organization for reasons other than quantitative reporting. Furthermore, their skills were more conducive to the work at hand and perhaps less to their soon-to-be expanded administrative function. At the time this CSO joined with RRU to set the parameters of the LC, the executive team observed that this organizational refocusing was becoming confusing and demoralizing to their staff members. Even the manner in which the administrative training was set to take place (i.e., mostly through webinars) was perceived as at odds with the spirit of face-to-face, interpersonal client-based work, especially considering that most frontline staff had mother tongues other than English and varying degrees of competence with computers and electronic media. Yet, had staff members not adopted this new reporting structure, and had not learned to do it well, the CSO would have been at risk of losing funding and staff members would have been at risk of losing their jobs. As the ED articulated at that time, “we want to prepare them, not scare them” (personal communication, 8 July 2013). In the face of these challenges, how could the CSO, the ED, and the senior leadership team create and reinforce a positive, respectful message that this change was necessary? How could that message be shared most effectively?

The Students’ Task

Each LC team was asked to make recommendations to the sponsoring organization regarding actions and perspectives they might adopt in order to help them achieve their goal of maintaining excellent communication and preparing their
staff for the upcoming change without generating fear or losing their ongoing commitment. Each team's task was to:

- Provide a clear definition of what the team considered the essential issues or challenges that needed to be addressed in order to inspire the shift;
- Outline a clear picture or vision of what the ideal future could look like, as well as a set of indicators by which progress could be monitored and that spoke to the achievement of success;
- Propose a clear leadership strategy, or a set of integrated strategies, that the CSO leadership team and other stakeholders could utilize and apply to their current challenge and that would remain relevant as they moved forward with a mindful approach to preparing and moving through imminent change. Students were asked to draw upon the knowledge and learning from seminar and plenary sessions; however, they were not to be limited to residency topics only. Rather, they were encouraged to be open to thinking outside the box and consider all frameworks and models that might be relevant to this challenge;
- Provide a clear overview of the opportunities, barriers, and risks to implementing their recommended strategies, along with tangible ideas about how these opportunities might be leveraged and how barriers might be overcome; and
- Provide short and long term concrete plans or recommendations for action around an effective approach to shift the organizational culture in response to this externally mandated change.

Each team was expected to produce a concise, written action plan of approximately eight pages addressing the above requirements; make a 12-minute presentation to the panel highlighting the key elements of their plan; and anticipate and respond to questions from a panel of representatives from the CSO.

It was clearly noted to the students that the CSO had graciously volunteered to share this LC with the RRU class. They had done so partly in search of possible solutions to their ongoing challenge and partly in the spirit of community to assist the MA Leadership students achieve success. The instructors asked that the students join in this spirit of mutual learning and mutual respect by maintaining confidentiality and doing their best to find viable possible responses to the challenge. When questioning the CSO, presenting possible solutions, and responding to questions from the panel, students were asked to remember this commitment to community and respectful communication. Finally, students were reminded that addressing this challenge was, above all, a learning opportunity. While addressing the significant organizational concerns presented to them, they also were encouraged to learn from the team experience and the application of the effective and authentic leadership practices promoted in this program. As students participated in each seminar or plenary activity during residency, instructors asked that students consider how they might immediately apply lessons learned in the LC team process or product.

Impact of Leadership Challenge on the Sponsor Organization

This LC, which we collaboratively entitled “Leadership, Communication, and Mindful Change,” addressed a major shift in the CSO’s primary funding relationship with government that came into effect as of April 2014. As was expected from the outset, the new contracting and funding model brought changes for many staff in the agency, including new database requirements, quarterly cash flow forecasts and other accounting procedures, and enhanced evaluation outcomes reporting. When the CSO was approached by RRU with regard to becoming a sponsor for the Leadership Challenge, the agency embraced the opportunity to explore with RRU leadership students how this change process could be led and managed innovatively. Specifically, as described previously, the CSO was interested in turning the process that was perceived as burdensome and potentially frightening by many, into an engaging and rewarding learning experience. Throughout the process, starting with the first meeting during which RRU LC leaders and the CSO’s ED discussed the basic parameters of the challenge, it was apparent to Sabine that RRU regarded and treated the challenge as a true partnership with the community organization. It was clear that the community partner’s needs were squarely placed in the centre of the learning experience, rather than being treated as peripheral, as is so often the case when community organizations are
merely used as sources of data for research or as recruitment grounds for research participants.

From Sabine’s perspective, the instructors very skillfully led the process of creating a problem-based, experiential, real-time/real-life open-ended learning opportunity that did not aim to provide simplified fixes to the challenge, but opened up possibilities for mindful reflection and improvement among all participants. The final meeting with the students where the CSO representatives were presented with eight sets of recommendations was characterized by a sense that the CSO was in the driver’s seat to facilitate the discussion, with the instructors deliberately assuming a background role. Following the final presentation, the CSO received the students’ written papers, together with a DVD with recordings of their oral presentations. This practice is further proof of the instructors’ commitment to working with community partners in an authentic manner based on the principle of equality of partnership.

Following participation in the LC, the CSO implemented several concrete ideas that emanated from this process. In the fall of 2013, Sabine Lehr, co-author of this paper, was appointed as transition manager at the CSO to set a clear signal for staff that there was going to be intentional leadership over the coming months. In this way, the change process shifted from being a looming thing to having a familiar face and a person attached to it whom staff could contact with any questions.

One student team had structured its presentation around William Bridges’s (1980) transition model that distinguishes between the external change process and the internal transition process. The team designed an interactive experience of moving through the three zones of “ending, losing, letting go”, “the neutral zone”, and “the new beginning” (Bridges, 1980). Inspired by this presentation, the CSO decided to recreate this experience during an all-staff meeting less than four weeks away from the final switchover to the new funding model. There was an incredible sense of solidarity and camaraderie in the air as everyone present participated in this symbolic act of transition.

Several student teams had stressed the importance of organizing an open space or learning day where staff would have the opportunity to reflect on the change and transition process outside of their regular work environment. Finding funding for such a day can be difficult for a non-profit society; however, luck was on the CSO’s side. For several times in a row, they had put in an application for the “Once-a-Quarter Strategic Think Space Day”, offered free of charge to a non-profit organization by four local innovators who believe in empowering non-profit change-makers. In spring 2014, just after the change had been implemented, the CSO was successful in their bid, and on June 11, 2014, 38 staff members participated in a workshop focused on team building and managing change. Participants left the day feeling re-energized and inspired by their past work. One exercise in which the staff members participated involved a self-assessment of where they saw themselves in the transition process. The results were then plotted on a graphic.

The CSO also took the students’ advice to provide thoughtful and adequate support to staff very seriously. When the time came to train staff on the new client database, the CSO arranged for a trainer to fly in from another part of the country so that training could be provided face-to-face in a computer lab group setting, rather than relying solely on Web-based training (the mode in which most agency staff received their training). This format helped staff navigate their fears of the new technology by providing a friendly collegial environment in which staff members were able to help one another.

In terms of the bigger picture, the RRU instructors’ outstanding leadership and practice around community-based approaches helped the CSO to reconceptualize the lens through which they viewed the upcoming change from a negative challenge to a positive challenge. As a result, not only was this partnership helpful in terms of supporting the CSO’s organizational transition, it also highlighted useful practices (as well as some limitations) for engaged scholarship more generally. We will discuss these in the final section below.

Discussion

There are several benefits to having a community organization and university forge a partnership for the purpose of this activity. As representatives from RRU, we hope that this LC experience enables all participants, including the organizational sponsor, the students, and the faculty team to benefit by deepening their understanding of how leadership concepts and theories can be applied in the context of a real-life, real-time organizational challenge. Students in particular, emerge from their first term with more refined leadership skills and return home to have a greater impact in their own organizations and communities. Such
learning reflects the ideal of what Botkin, Elmandjra, and Malitza (1979) originally referred to as “anticipatory learning” when exploring different conceptualizations of organizational learning. Significantly these authors emphasized that anticipatory learning is a participatory approach to learning focusing on innovation and building capacity to address emergent challenges in an increasingly complex world. Current and former students regularly report the benefits of anticipatory learning which is often the result of utilizing the notion of microworlds in teaching and learning (Senge & Fulmer, 1993). Moreover, we hope that the sponsoring organization benefits from having a cohort of 40 or more mid-career professionals make a concentrated effort to apply their skills, knowledge, and passion to an organizational challenge. When the LC is particularly successful, the sponsoring organization is better able to serve the members of its community with improved leadership ideas and processes.

Based on the case outlined, here we describe two key supporting factors of this particular community-university partnership, which include the value of relationship and prior knowledge as well as putting the community organization’s needs first. In the spirit of reflexive practice, we also outline key limitations as the potential for superficiality in student analysis in a classroom-based activity bounded by set timeframes. We offer these reflections and lessons learned here for the purpose of furthering the dialogue on engaged scholarship.

The value of relationship and prior understanding. A nuance of this particular community-university partnership is that Sabine (as a representative from the CSO) and Catherine (as a representative from RRU) had known one another and worked together on various projects for approximately nine years prior to this LC experience. This means that when Catherine initially reached out to Sabine to find out whether her organization might be interested in joining this LC activity, a foundation of trust was already established for both parties. Although Guy was later hired as the lead to connect with Sabine, the ED, and other individuals in the organization with whom he did not have a prior relationship, each was introduced to the other through a trusted colleague, thus smoothing the way from the start. This value placed on relationship building is reflected in literature pertaining to engaged scholarship in general and community-based research more specifically (Etmanski, Dawson, & Hall, 2014).

Related to this point were other nuances around the specifics of the individuals involved in this case. As it turned out, the ED was a graduate of RRU and had experienced a similar LC activity in the context of her own graduate studies. She was therefore familiar with the learning intention behind this activity, which meant that it did not require as much background explanation on behalf of Guy and Catherine. Similarly, Sabine wears both an academic hat and a CSO hat. As a key member of this CSO’s leadership team, Sabine was the lead member of the panel invited to attend the students’ presentations in the second week of their on-campus work. She also took the time to come back to RRU when the students returned to campus the following year for their second on-campus residency, at which time she provided them with an update of how their recommendations had been taken up by the CSO, and which changes had been implemented. On both occasions, faculty members observed how effectively Sabine communicated with the students. It was evident that she was a skilled educator in her own right in that she understood how to validate their contributions while also offering authentic feedback. Her commitment to the students’ learning experiences was exemplary. It is unusual for RRU to partner with organizational sponsors who also have experience teaching at a graduate level and can therefore appreciate the students’ learning goals as well as rightly holding high expectations around the benefits of this activity to their organization.

While in this particular case, the foundation of trust already existed between the school and the CSO, this is not always the case. Very often there is no existing relationship between an LC sponsor and the individual writing the LC. In such cases building a foundation of trust is among the first priorities. Early meetings and phone calls often involve very open and emergent conversations exploring potential topics, but also simply raising to a level of consciousness one another’s realities; building relationships. As we teach our students, “Relationships are the very heart and soul of an organization’s ability to get any job done” (Short, 1998, p. 16). Building comfortable relationships with LC sponsors and potential sponsors is a critical factor in ensuring the success of the initiative, and success with the LC means a real benefit for the sponsor as well as a potentially transformational learning experience for the students.
Putting the organization’s needs first.

From the perspective of the CSO, the experience of partnering with RRU on this activity differed in a number of important ways from more traditional university-community interactions they had experienced. First and foremost, according to Sabine, the relationship was characterized by mutual respect, trust, and equality. In particular, this meant that the focus of the relationship was an issue identified by the community organization, not by the university. As such, the intervention resulted in direct and concrete support of the organization. This organization is approached regularly with requests to gain access to the client base they serve, sometimes from desperate students or faculty members who are crunched for time and have exhausted other possibilities. Although this CSO values its relationships with universities and has a desire to support students as one aspect of their community service, they have noted that often there appears to be little understanding around the need to exercise sensitivity in facilitating relationships with their clients. In contrast, rather than seeking access to their (potentially vulnerable) clients, this project was focused on supporting employees of this CSO as well as changes in the organizational structure, which reflects the project’s location in a program focused largely on organizational leadership.

In addition, it was generally felt that costs and benefits of participation were carefully balanced in order not to create a strain on the nonprofit’s limited resources. Although there was no direct reimbursement for the time spent by members of the CSO, all materials produced by students (reports and a video recording of presentations) were handed over in their entirety to the organization, thus maximizing learning and impact. Moreover, RRU dedicates contract funds to the lead faculty representatives for the LC rather than expecting them to do this work off the side of their plates, thus resourcing the relationship-building time required up front. Guy’s particular approach to developing a LC is to make it as easy as possible for organizations to partner with RRU and this includes holding meetings/conversations at a location that is most convenient for representatives from the organization. With the exception of the two visits to campus when the students are in residence, representatives from the university go to the CSO instead of the other way around.

Limitations in this model.

Etmanski, Dawson, and Hall (2014) have suggested that the type of engaged scholarship projects that find fertile ground in the academy are typically “ones that do not destabilize the status quo too drastically, or that integrate better into pre-existing institutional structures, e.g., timeframes for courses or project funding” (p. 9). In this sense, the LC is indeed required to fit directly into the timeframe of when the students are on campus for their residency. Given the two-week timeframe of their on-campus experience, students have just a little over a week to analyze the organizational challenge and report back. As a result, despite students’ and faculty members’ best intentions and the collective number of hours they dedicate to this project, their analysis can only ever reflect ten days’ work. Although student teams’ presentations are normally thoughtful, well-polished, and well-intended, some are, of course, more helpful to the organization than others. This means that following the morning of presentations, representatives from the organization need to wade through a large amount of data (their own notes, the students’ reports and presentation slides, along with the video recording if requested) to find the recommendations or possibilities that are best suited to their context.

In addition, the design of the assignment has students working in eight independent teams. Although communication between teams is encouraged to help to avoid unnecessary repetition, thus providing the greatest value for panel members, inevitably some repetition occurs when teams present to the panel one after the other. A little repetition might be considered useful in reinforcing key points, but often the repetition is based on concepts students are learning from their first term textbooks and is therefore somewhat predictable.

Over the years, faculty members have considered various options for mitigating this design challenge. One option has been to coordinate teams in such a way that each team takes on one aspect of the challenge; however, the risk of this design is that this student group might be perceived as the experts in this one area, instead of one of several teams offering suggestions in the spirit of mutual learning. Moreover, there is the possibility that this divided as opposed to holistic approach could reproduce challenges resulting from silos already present in the organization. Experience has shown that this kind of coordinated design works best when it emerges from the students
themselves, rather than as a top-down mandate from the instructors. Nevertheless, this discussion still raises questions about how much repetition is truly in the organizational sponsor’s best interest.

Finally, there is a minimal risk that students who do not have a full understanding of both the sponsor organization and the leadership concepts and theories taught in the first term may inadvertently ask insensitive questions or during final presentations where they may make unsound recommendations. Every caution is taken to ensure students ask questions and present their proposals in a respectful, humble, and appreciative manner reflective of the values promoted in the MA Leadership program. Nevertheless, faculty members cannot control all spontaneous comments offered in conversation, nor is this their intention. As mentioned, all parties must be prepared to enter into this agreement with the highest of respectful intentions, acknowledging that this is an opportunity to exercise leadership and learning all around.

Concluding Thoughts

This article has shared lessons learned about engaged scholarship by documenting a particular iteration of a particular learning activity at RRU. The key contribution of this case to the scholarship of community engagement is its focus on mutual learning as opposed to setting unrealistic expectations around fixing problems. In the case of this and other LCs, mutual learning includes benefits to the sponsor as well as the students. Anecdotally, over the years both have reported significant learning and positive change. Indeed years and even decades after graduation, students recount stories of transformational learning through the leadership challenge process. We have also highlighted the value of relationships and putting the organization’s needs first as essential components of a successful community-university partnership. In offering these reflections, our hope is that others may take what has been useful from our experiences and apply it to their own practice.

References


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Abstract

Practitioner attitudes about low-income patients may impact clinical care and outcomes. Poverty simulation, employing low-income community volunteers, is an effective teaching tool in improving attitudes toward poverty among health professions students. This study explores the experiences of these essential simulation volunteers who share their stories with student participants. Focus groups were conducted with low-income community members who staff resource tables during poverty simulations. Data were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using a grounded theoretical approach. Participants spoke of the systemic nature of poverty and identified multiple barriers to healthcare access. Perceived lower quality of care, mistrust in health professionals, and a lack of continuity of care were discussed. In regards to the simulation, participants were empowered through sharing their stories with students, and offered suggestions for program improvement. Simulation provides a forum for community members to educate the future healthcare workforce on systemic barriers faced by low-income populations.

There are clear links between poverty and disparities in healthcare access, utilization of health services, and health status, risk factors, and outcomes (Adler & Newman, 2002; Fiscella, Franks, Gold, & Clancy, 2000; Fiscella & Williams, 2004; Meyer, Yoon, Kaufmann, Centers for Disease, & Prevention, 2013). U.S. adults living below the poverty threshold are 2.5 times more likely to suffer from depression, have greater risk for heart disease, hypertension, and stroke, and have reduced life expectancy compared to those above the poverty line (Blackwell, Lucas, & Clark, 2014; Crimmins, Kim, & Seeman, 2009; Pratt & Brody, 2014). The intersectionality of race/ethnicity, geography, educational attainment, and other social statuses may further exacerbate health inequities in low-income populations (Bowleg, 2012). Even with expanded access to health insurance, patients living in poverty face additional barriers to care and treatment compliance, such as transportation, time, and other competing priorities (Hall & Lord, 2014; Jacob, Arnold, Hunleth, Greiner, & James, 2014; Syed, Gerber, & Sharp, 2013). With more than 45 million Americans living in poverty, 40 percent of which reside in the South, it is essential that the future healthcare workforce training in this region understand the challenges faced by low-income patients (Beach et al., 2005; United States Census Bureau, 2013; Wear & Kuczewski, 2008).

The Community Action Poverty Simulation (CAPS) is an experiential tool used to educate groups about the day-to-day realities, struggles, and stresses faced by low-income Americans (Missouri Community Action Agency, 2015). The ultimate goal of the program is to change attitudes toward poverty and the poor. During the simulation, participants are assigned to role-play the lives of low-income individuals, and are tasked with attaining, food, shelter, and basic necessities throughout four 15-minute weeks. Participants must navigate and access services from various community agencies and social services, which are staffed by low-income volunteers.

The University of Louisville Health Sciences Center Office of Diversity and Inclusion offers the simulation to health sciences faculty, staff, and student groups, with an adapted emphasis on the role poverty plays in healthcare processes and outcomes. Working with community partners, low-income volunteers with first-hand experiences of poverty, homelessness, and accessing social services are recruited to staff the simulated community agencies and businesses. The agencies represented in the simulation are broad and include a community health center, police department, pawn shop, school, grocery, bank, quick cash center, daycare center, community action agency, interfaith center, homeless shelter, employer,
mortgage company, utility company, and department of social services. Volunteers are instructed to treat the participants in the simulation the way they were treated when seeking help from these agencies in the real world. Following the simulation, many of the volunteers share their stories with the participants during a debriefing period, which is a critical and powerful component of the program.

Current literature on poverty simulation demonstrates that the exercise is effective in changing attitudes and beliefs about poverty among participants, including health professions students (Menzel, Willson, & Doolen, 2014; Noone, Sideras, Gubrud-Howe, Voss, & Mathews, 2012; Patterson & Hulton, 2012; Steck, Engler, Ligon, Druen, & Cosgrove, 2011; Strasser, Smith, Pendrick, Denney, Jackson, & Buckmaster, 2013; Vandsburger, Duncan-Daston, Akerson, & Dillon, 2010). However, the perspectives of these essential volunteers are yet to be explored. Qualitative studies have provided a valuable forum for low-income population to have a “voice” while providing insight into the challenges they face in accessing community resources and services (Bender, Thomp- son, McManus, Lantry, & Flynn, 2007; Canvin, Jones, Marttila, Burstrom, & Whitehead, 2007; Edin & Lein, 1997; Newman, 1999). Such studies have generated an understanding of poverty as it is experienced and of the complex web of ideas and practices that surround policies designed to eradicate it. Within community engagement activities, universities are called to gather feedback from community partners to monitor satisfaction, assure equitable benefits for the community, and avoid the potential for community exploitation (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of these essential simulation volunteers who share their stories with student participants.

Methods
Design and Sample
The study utilized a qualitative descriptive research design and an analytic inductive method of data collection and analysis to assess the experience of low-income volunteers who serve as resource providers during a poverty simulation. This study fit well within the qualitative research paradigm, as this is the first to explore the perspectives of simulation volunteers (Creswell, 2013).

Participants were recruited to focus groups from a convenience sample of 19 volunteers who participated in a November 2014 simulation. Poverty simulation volunteers are referred through community agencies and non-profit centers that provide services for low-income individuals. The following criteria were required for enrollment into the focus groups: minimum age of 19 (no maximum age), prior experience as a volunteer in a CAPS simulation, and the ability to speak and understand English. Eighteen of the 19 adults who served as volunteers in the preceding simulation participated in the study. Of the focus group participants 13 (72 percent) were male, and 5 (28 percent) were female, and were mostly African American (89 percent). Written informed consent was obtained from participants. The University of Louisville Institutional Review Board approved this study.

Focus Groups
Three focus groups were conducted immediately following a November 2014 CAPS simulation. The authors developed a semi-structured interview guide comprised of open-ended questions with built in flexibility for the moderator (Gillham, 2000). This ensured consistency across multiple focus groups, assuring that the moderators would ask the same questions in the same sequence (Morgan, 1997). Questions centered on experiences living in poverty, utilization of community resources and healthcare services, personal strengths, and their experience serving as staffers within a poverty simulation.

The interviews were held in private rooms near the location of the preceding simulation. Three of the authors served as facilitators, as the data were collected simultaneously. The focus groups lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and were captured through digital audio recording devices and transcribed verbatim by an outside agency. Participants used pseudonyms so that no names or personal identifiers were attached to audio files or transcripts. Participants received lunch and a $20 gift card for their time and effort.

Data Analysis
Analysis of focus group transcripts employed a grounded theoretical approach. Grounded theory identifies patterns and themes, then builds concepts and connects them together into a theoretical explanation that accounts for the lived experiences of those studied (Charmaz, 2006). The primary and secondary authors performed independent initial line-by-line open coding analysis in QSR NVivo 10. The coding authors then met to resolve any discrepancies in open codes, and jointly
performed axial and selective coding for theory development. As themes and patterns emerged, the transcripts were again reviewed to code any relevant data that were previously overlooked.

Results

Four main conceptual findings emerged from the data analysis: the systematic nature of poverty, barriers and mistrust in the health system, empowerment through simulation involvement, and suggestions for simulation improvement. A discussion regarding the findings within each theme and contextual statements from participants is provided.

Systematic Nature of Poverty

When asked about experiences with poverty, participants spoke of major gaps in systems, and described the difficulty in accessing social services. It was perceived that systems were developed by persons with no experience of poverty with policies derived from political considerations. They felt as though current policies create an inescapable, defined class system. In discussing poverty, one participant defined it as:

Poverty is, first of all, not having anything. Then, through continually trying to be responsible and productive member [of society], what I’m able to obtain, there’s so many obstacles to get it and then once I get it, the expenses of living takes it all away. I’m right back on step one… …They enact laws or rules and regulations to prevent us from having enough to just survive. …That’s what poverty is to me. I have to be honest. It’s a systematic demise of people.

Participants identified multiple flaws in the “system” of social services and community agencies. Within the system there are unclear and undefined processes that must be learned. Service agencies and their employees do not teach one how to navigate the network of agencies, applications, and processes. These hidden processes are learned by experiences of failure or through other members of the community. The processes are often lengthy and impractical given the circumstances of the clients they are intended to serve. Participants felt like the system is designed for them to fail as agencies place unnecessary barriers that create an inescapable, vicious cycle of poverty. A formerly homeless African American man illustrated this point in the process of applying for food stamps:

Trying to get food stamps is very hard for a homeless person. I know because I dealt with it. First off you have to have a letter stating that you’re homeless. Some homeless people do not stay inside, they stay outside, so it’s rough. They go through trying to get a letter or proof of them being homeless on anything out here that you try to get. Any type of services that you need to get if you are homeless they want to see some type of documentation.

Another formerly homeless man discussed a similar impractical documentation practice required for him to enter into a housing program:

I’ve been homeless for the last three years and it took me three years to obtain a place of residence again. It didn’t come easy. They want you here at a certain time, then they want to actually come... If you say you’re homeless they want to actually see you outside sleeping on a piece of cardboard. The night that the guy that came and did the assessment on me, I told him I slept over there… I stayed at my buddy’s house that night, but I was down here at 5:30 in the morning when he rolled up… I grabbed a couple pieces of cardboard and a blanket and laid it out… Had I not shown up that morning I could very well be one of the guys that’s walking down the street with two, three backpacks with all my possessions in it right now. I could still be in that situation.

However, participants identified several strengths that aid in navigating systemic challenges. They continue to live their lives despite poverty and its many challenges. Many discussed their own spirituality, and described how faith motivates them to persevere, aiding in resiliency. Participants also discussed the sense of community and helping others as a source of strength. They described friendships and teaching and assisting others in the navigation of social services and community agencies.
Experiences accessing healthcare were described as largely negative. Similar to other agencies they must navigate on a daily basis, participants felt that accessing medical care required them to navigate yet another complex system. Common experiences were long wait times for appointments and a lack of continuity of care. One participant summarized that the lack of continuity of care among providers and agencies:

If they can get around to you and learn what the problem is, some of these places will do that, you know. [They] try to help you…but you just wonder how will I [get] this and that. You have to be examined and everything but then again just put on [another] waiting list.

In addition to systemic problems, participants felt like the majority of healthcare professionals merely “tolerated” them, and did not necessarily care about them. They perceive that they are provided unequal treatment and a lower quality of care. An African American female explained:

My experience with the doctors and the dentists, once they perceive that you are poor or you're on Medicaid or something they're not as forthcoming with the medical care that they would give somebody else…the wait time is longer, the treatment plan is different.

A white male concurred:

I feel like if you don't have a whole lot of money and you're just someone like me, they're just trying to get you in and out. They don't really care. They treat you differently. They look at you funny.”

In addition to the general lack of trust for healthcare professionals, participants also commented on the lack of diversity within the healthcare system.

Moreover, simulation volunteers indicated that medical care was often not a major priority when compared to other competing financial and temporal priorities such as finding food and shelter. Monetary costs associated with copayments for visits and prescriptions and the cost of time have an impact on the utilization of medical care. Participants indicated that, similar to clinicians they've seen in practice, the health professions students in the simulation lacked in knowledge of health insurance systems. An African American female described how she observed this lack of knowledge among simulation participants:

Another thing that I was a little in awe of is the fact that the people who are coming to us, their lack of knowledge that it costs. They had this look like, “I have to pay a copay with Medicaid or Medicare?” Or how much they had to pay with their insurance. The experience was that a lot of people didn't know or weren't versed on how much money it really costs to go to the doctor.

Overall, participants felt like they were an afterthought in the healthcare system, and longed for a forum to voice their concerns.

Empowerment through Simulation Involvement

In discussing their experiences as volunteers in the simulation, the response was unanimously positive. This was the first time many were provided with the opportunity to share their story and have a voice. The volunteers enjoyed serving as teachers and being the experts during the simulation process. Their hope is that their contribution will impact change on campus as well as have an impact on the practice of health care. An African American male described the mutual benefit to both health professions students and community volunteers:

Let me say, these students are receiving something and we are receiving something that we never had before. It was talked about in circles, but to be put out in an open forum like this, you know. They are able to hear and be concerned, a little bit more concerned, they lend a little bit more of an ear to us because we are interacting with each other. Which is the beginning of change… This is a smile for us. This is encouragement for us.

Many expressed gratitude for the opportunity to share their narratives with the simulation participants during the debriefing. An African American male described his experience sharing his story:
I did something I didn’t even think I was going to do. I didn’t know I was going to come in here and get up and share with anybody. Usually mum’s the word… [but] something came over me, go here, share your experience with some people that never had the experience of any of this. Maybe this’ll prevent them in the long from shunning and looking different at [patients] that are homeless or not in the best of situations when they see them.

Overall, the volunteers felt valued and respected, with all volunteers wanting to come back to serve and share their stories in future simulations.

**Suggestions for Simulation Improvement**

While they enjoyed the experience, the volunteers did have several insightful suggestions for improvement. They perceived that participants lacked exposure to poverty and had a limited understanding of systemic issues in poverty and health care. They viewed the simulation as an important first step for health professions students to learn about and gain empathy for the poor. However, more education is needed. One volunteer described poverty as something you truly have to live to understand:

> It’s almost like picking cotton. I can tell you about picking cotton, but until you cut your hand, until you reach in and stick your hand and you get pricked, you have no knowledge of that. I could say I picked 100 pounds a day. But [you won’t understand] until you have the cuts on your hand.

Recommendations were made to include real life experiences as student curricular requirements such as taking the bus, staying in a shelter, walking to all appointments, spending the day without money or a phone, and standing in a social services line.

Some volunteers felt that students perceived the simulation as just another class or a game. Very few students took the opportunity to engage in further conversation with the volunteers after the completion of the debriefing. Participants suggested that more time be spent with the students to share their stories. An African American female explained:

> They probably would have gotten more out of it if they had an opportunity to have a one on one with the actual people who had [shared] their story, to actually sit and be within the same vicinity with this person rather than being in a big group and hearing somebody telling their story over on that side of the room and on the other side, because they get up and leave en masse [at the end].

It was recommended for students to have additional time to talk in small groups for further discussion and deeper engagement with the volunteers. They also acknowledged that the impact of the simulation on students may not be fully evident today, as these stories and experiences may change the way they see, approach and care for low-income individuals in the future.

**Discussion**

This study contributes to the limited literature on poverty simulation, providing insight into the perspectives of low-income volunteers who serve as pillars for the exercise. Participants spoke of the systemic nature of poverty and shared barriers they experienced in accessing healthcare and other social services. This was the first time many were provided with the opportunity to share their story, particularly with an audience of future healthcare professionals. The volunteers enjoyed serving as teachers and experts during the simulation process. Thus, this served as an empowering experience for the volunteers. The volunteers also provided several important suggestions for program improvement which will aid in future simulations.

Participants identified perceived gaps in knowledge regarding poverty, health care, and social services among health professionals and health professions students. This underscores the importance of exposure to low-income populations for health professions students. Participants recommended more time for in-depth discussions with health professions students in small groups as an enhancement to the simulation. While health professions students may have exposure to low-income populations in clinical settings, further dialogue is needed to foster compassion and understanding (Wear & Kuczewski, 2008). Future simulation programs may be more effective in instilling empathy for the poor among students if they are more realistic, require dialogue, and allow more time for critical reflection.
Several limitations in the study should be considered. Because of the qualitative nature of the study, data were comprised of self-reported experiences. This study utilized a convenience sample because of the focus on the experience of low-income poverty simulation volunteers. As a result, participants were primarily African American and male, which may not be representative of the experience of all low-income populations. In addition, the sample size was small, which also limits the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, several of the participants knew each other, which may have impacted the information that they were willing to share about themselves with other participants.

Overall, the conceptual findings that emerged from the data demonstrate both a benefit for low-income volunteer participation in poverty simulation and identify areas for program improvement. Poverty simulation provides not only a learning experience for students and a forum for community members to educate the future healthcare workforce on systemic barriers faced by low-income populations. This study contributes to the poverty simulation literature in confirming that serving as a volunteer is an empowering experience for low-income community members.

References


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Evaluation of Messages to Promote Intake of Calcium-Rich Foods in Early Adolescents

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Abstract

Parental practices influence intake of calcium-rich foods and beverages (CRFB) in adolescents. This study aimed to test two posters promoting such parental practices for comprehension, cultural and personal relevance, and ability to motivate parents to encourage CRFB intake. Interviews were conducted with 14 Hispanic and 6 Asian parents to evaluate two posters entitled “Good play starts with calcium” and “Strong families start with good nutrition.” Responses were reviewed for themes. For “Good play,” both racial/ethnic groups of parents understood the message to provide CRFB. Only Hispanics, however, recognized the connection between calcium and strong bones. For “Strong families,” both groups had difficulty understanding that foods pictured were calcium rich. Both posters were considered culturally and personally relevant; however, not all respondents indicated motivation to provide CRFB. Modifications are needed to emphasize the connection between images and taglines and calcium intake for use in a future intervention to improve CRFB-promoting practices.

Introduction

Though osteoporosis is not considered a childhood disease, it may originate early in life, particularly during the age range of 10 to 13 years, during the period of peak bone acquisition (Fiorito, Mitchell, Smiciklas-Wright, & Birch, 2006; Matkovic, Goel, Badenhop-Stevens, Landol, Li, Ilich, Skurgor, M., Nagode, L.A., Mobley, S.L. Ha, E.J., Hangartner, & Clairmont 2005). As there is no cure for osteoporosis, preventative measures, particularly during childhood and adolescence, are key to preventing bone loss and degradation later in life. Adequate calcium intake during this time is necessary to reach and maintain optimum bone mineralization and density (Burrows, Baxter-Jones, Mirwald, Macdonald, & McKay, 2009; Fiorito et al., 2006; J.O. Fisher, Mitchell, Smiciklas-Wright, Mannino, & Birch, 2004; Huncharek, Muscat, & Kupelnick, 2008; Matkovic et al., 2005; Matkovic, Landoll, Badenhop-Stevens, Ha, Crnecvic-Orlic, Li, & Goel, 2004; Vatanparast, Baxter-Jones, Faulkner, Bailey, & Whiting, 2005).

In the USA, intake of calcium-rich food and beverages (CRFB) declines during early adolescence (Larson et al., 2009; Moshfegh, Goldman, Ahuja, Rhodes, & LaComb, 2009). An analysis of data from 2001–2008 of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) found that early adolescents aged 9 to 18 years had the greatest incidence of not meeting their calcium requirements compared to other age groups (Wallace, Reider, & Fulgoni, 2013). Various factors led to the inadequate CRFB intake observed, including displacement of milk with soda, juices, sports drinks, and sugar-sweetened beverages (Frary, Johnson, & Wang, 2004; Hanson, Neumark-Sztainer, Eisenberg, Story, & Wall, 2005; Nielsen & Popkin, 2004), eating away from home (Briefel & Johnson, 2004; Cluskey, Edelfesen, Olson, Reicks, Auld, Bock, & Zaghluol, 2008), and perceptions, particularly of girls, that milk and other dairy products are unhealthy and fattening (Auld et al., 2002). While osteoporosis prevention and calcium promotion campaigns are often aimed at adult and elderly individuals, focusing on children and adolescents as at-risk populations may prove to be just as effective (Holmstrom, 2013; Lee, Lowden, Patmintra, & Stevenson, 2013; Tussing & Chapman-Novakofski, 2005).

Food and nutrient intake among adolescents are strongly influenced by socioenvironmental factors, with parents playing a key role in influencing calcium intake of youth (Auld et al., 2002; Cluskey et al., 2008; Monge-Rojas, Nunez, Garita, & Chen-Mok, 2002; T.A. Nicklas, 2003; Patrick & Nicklas, 2005; Reicks, Ballejos, Goodell, Gunther, Richards, Wong, Auld, Boushey, Bruhn, Cluskey, Misner, Olson, & Zaghluol, 2011). Family meal patterns, parental attitudes, and encouragement of consumption of CRFB are among the factors
that influence intake in youth (Cluskey et al., 2008; Larson, Story, Wall, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2006). Other feeding practices that have been shown to influence CRFB intake include making CRFB available, role modeling, and setting rules and expectations (Edlefsen, Reicks, Goldberg, Auld, Bock, Boushey, Bruhn, Cluskey, Misner, Olson, Wang, & Zaghoul, 2008; Olson, Chung, Reckase, & Schoemer, 2009; Reicks et al., 2011). CRFB intake also differs according to race and ethnicity and is based on the background and practices of the family, with certain racial/ethnic groups being particularly at risk of low intake (Larsson, Orsini, & Wolk, 2013; Nicklas Qu, Hughes, Wagner, Foushee, & Shewchuk, 2009; Novotny, Boushey, Bock, Peck, Auld, Bruhn, Gustafson, Gabel, Jensen, Misner, & Read, 2003). Several studies have demonstrated that Asian and Hispanic children, for example, have a lower overall median calcium intake compared to non-Hispanic white children (Cluskey, Wong, Richards, Ballejos, Reicks, Auld, Boushey, Bruhn, Misner, Olson, & Zaghoul, 2015; Moshfegh, Goldman, Ahuja, Rhodes, & LaComb, 2009; Novotny et al., 2003).

To address the problem of inadequate intake of CRFB in adolescents and inform the development of interventions, a previous study sought to understand the motivations underlying parenting practices to improve intake of CRFB in adolescents (Richards et al., 2014). The authors describe the motivations to perform three parenting practices (making CRFB available, role modeling, and setting rules and expectations for healthy intake), and note that messages focused on these practices and the motivators of child health benefits and parent emotional rewards should be developed (Richards et al., 2014). Based on these findings, a set of messages with accompanying images was created to promote the three aforementioned parental practices among Asian and Hispanic parents. Preliminary testing is needed to confirm whether the parental motivators and benefits for each parenting practice featured are appropriately communicated to encourage CRFB intake of early adolescents. This study aimed to test the receptivity of parents to these messages with respect to comprehension, cultural and personal relevance, and potential to motivate parents to encourage CRFB intake in early adolescents, as well as obtain information on overall impressions of messages and suggestions for improvement.

Methods

This study was conducted at three universities in three states—Minnesota, Oregon, and Utah—and utilized qualitative methods as part of a multistate research project. All research activities were approved by the institutional review board of each participating university.

Message/Poster Development

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) guided message development as the underlying theoretical framework (Wilson, 2007). The ELM posits that personal relevance of messages is an important consideration in motivating individuals to act (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Ability to comprehend the message also plays a central role in determining whether individuals will process the message and subsequently alter behavior (Wilson, 2007). Thus, both motivating individuals about the topic and ensuring they are capable of understanding the message are key in achieving behavior change (Wilson, 2007).

Using the ELM as the guiding framework, one researcher created poster prototypes based on qualitative data previously collected from parents. Message/poster development was based on three parental factors (making CRFB available, role modeling, setting healthy expectations for CRFB intake) shown to be associated with CRFB intake and involved tailoring of messages to attitudes and characteristics of Asians and Hispanics. To cater to those with limited literacy, the posters relied

Figure 1. Good Play Starts With Calcium Poster

Figure 2. Strong Families Start With Good Nutrition Poster (Asian)

Figure 3. Strong Families Start With Good Nutrition Poster (Hispanic)
on images and metaphorical representation of messages. Messages were titled “Good play starts with calcium” and “Strong families start with good nutrition” (Figures 1–3).

Participant Recruitment

A convenience sample of 20 parents (MN [n=5]; OR [n=12]; UT [n=3]) was recruited through fliers, email, word-of-mouth, personal contacts, and presentations at various sites, which included after-school programs, schools, community centers and faith-based groups. To be eligible for the study, participants had to be parents or guardians of 10–13 year olds, the primary food preparers/buyers of the household, self-report as either Hispanic or Asian, and able to speak and read English. Each parent provided consent for participation prior to the interview.

Interviews

The goal of the interviews was to ensure that messages were comprehensible, culturally and personally relevant, and would motivate parents to encourage intake of CRFB in adolescents, as well as to gather information on impressions of the messages and suggestions for improvement. Interviews, which lasted about 15–20 minutes, were conducted with parents and/or caregivers in public and private settings, such as sports complexes, university meeting rooms, parks, community centers, libraries, and homes, dependent on the preferences of the parent.

A standard protocol for message testing was used at each site. Interviewers from each research team were trained on use of procedures to collect the qualitative data. Due to high population densities of certain racial/ethnic groups within the targeted regions, MN and UT research teams interviewed only Hispanic parents, while the OR team recruited both Hispanic and Asian parents. Researchers at each site recruited parents to evaluate 2 out of 3 messages related to calcium availability and intake (Figures 1–3). Both sets of parents were shown the same “Good play” poster (Figure 1). The “Strong families” posters catered to either Asian (Figure 2) or Hispanic (Figure 3) parents and were presented to parents based on their racial/ethnic background. To maintain consistency across states regarding data collection, periodic meetings were held with principal investigators to ensure compliance with the protocol.

The interview guide was developed by members of the multistate team. Questions elicited information on comprehension of the messages, cultural and personal relevance, and motivation to encourage CRFB intake (Table 1). Further questions asked about the overall impression of the poster, including suggestions on how to improve posters. Individual institutions compensated parents with cash, gift certificates/cards, or promotional products (e.g. water bottles). All interviews were audio recorded, and each site compiled interview data and transcribed interviews verbatim.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Results from all sites were compiled and two researchers (YM and JB) used the thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Miles, 1994) to code the transcripts. Responses pertaining to the three topic areas (comprehension, cultural and personal relevance, and ability to motivate parents to encourage CRFB intake) were open coded independently by parental race/ethnicity and poster. The two researchers then compared and discussed codes to determine recurring concepts and resolve any discrepancies. Common ideas were identified as themes by poster and ethnic group for each topic area.

Table 1. All Questions Posed in Interviews With Parents (n=20) of Adolescents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic Area</th>
<th>Items on Interview Guide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>What is this poster telling you to do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Relevance</td>
<td>Is this poster culturally acceptable to you? Why or why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Relevance</td>
<td>Is the information in this poster important to you personally, as a parent? Why or why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation to encourage CRFB intake</td>
<td>Would seeing this poster move/get you to do ____________________________?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Fill in this blank by referring to “Comprehension”— what they say it’s telling them to do.] (Probe: Are you already doing this?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impression/Improvement</td>
<td>What do you like or dislike about this poster? (Probe: How could we make this poster better? What about the pictures? What about the words?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

Demographics

Of the 20 parents who participated in the study, 6 self-reported as Asian and 14 as Hispanic. Parents were between 31–40 years of age. The majority had completed some college degree or technical school, were not born in the USA, and had lived in the USA for more than 10 years.

Interview Findings

Themes and exemplifying quotations from interviews for each poster are shown in Tables 2 and 3.

Good Play Starts with Calcium

Comprehension

While this poster aimed to convey the message that CRFB are important to allow children to be active, and that activity promotes strong bones, most Asian parents did not note the connection between CRFB intake and strong bones, or the importance of activity. Only a few Asian parents commented on the depiction of sports and the importance of calcium to being active. Several Hispanic parents, however, made the connection between calcium intake and being active. Most Asian and Hispanic parents noted that CRFB were necessary in their children’s diets, but those who did not connect calcium and sports made more general statements about the need to eat healthy and encourage physical activity. A few Hispanic parents stated the poster reminded them of foods containing calcium and the importance of consuming CRFB.

Cultural and Personal Relevance

The majority of the Asian parents stated that the poster was culturally acceptable, particularly because soccer is universal. It was also educational to them in terms of what foods contain calcium. Hispanic parents reported that soccer is a popular pastime among Hispanic families. These parents said that foods pictured represented foods that everyone ate, so the message was not specific to one ethnic group. The poster was personally relevant because it was important to them for their children to be more active. Several Hispanic parents mentioned that they themselves are active and eat healthy so they would encourage the same type of lifestyle for their children. They stated

| Table 2. Responses to the “Good Play Starts With Calcium” Message |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| **Topic Area**   | **Themes**       | **Exemplifying Quotations** |
| **Comprehension**| Asian            | Foods pictured contain calcium |
|                  |                   | “It shows the milk, orange juice, beans, and yogurt. I can see that they are rich in calcium.” |
|                  | Hispanic          | Foods pictured contain calcium |
|                  |                   | “I need to include milk, juice with calcium.” |
|                  |                   | Calcium needed for activity |
|                  |                   | “I think it’s more toward if you are active then you need calcium.” |
| **Cultural Relevance**| Asian | Soccer is culturally relevant |
|                  |                   | “Yes, it’s acceptable. My son is playing in a soccer team.” |
|                  | Hispanic          | Soccer is culturally relevant |
|                  |                   | “Yeah. Soccer. It’s very Latino, it’s very common.” |
| **Personal Relevance** | Asian | Reminder to buy CRFB |
|                  |                   | “Yes, it reminds me to buy those food to my children.” |
|                  |                   | Informati ve to know sources of calcium |
|                  |                   | “The ball directly tells me that it is about sports and those food tell me about calcium.” |
|                  | Hispanic          | Reminder to buy CRFB |
|                  |                   | “If I saw it at the market, it would remind me that I do need to include those foods...they still need the calcium.” |
|                  |                   | Goal setting for the family for healthy eating and exercise |
|                  |                   | “One of my goals every year is to have healthy food and being active.” |
| **Motivation to encourage CRFB intake** | Asian | Already providing CRFB to family |
|                  |                   | “I usually buy a lot of fruit and vegetables for my child, also calcium-rich juice, but not milk.” |
|                  |                   | Motivation to buy/consume healthy food and CRFB |
|                  |                   | “The calcium is a big front...there’s also a clue about ‘calcium is an essential part of your healthy child’s everyday diet.’” |
|                  | Hispanic          | Already providing CRFB to family |
|                  |                   | “...that my kids will be able to play sports and if they fall...I’ll be calmer because I know I already gave my son a glass of milk.” |
|                  |                   | Motivation to be active and to buy/ consume healthy food and CRFB |
|                  |                   | “We have to make sure our kids are active. Also, we need to feed them well. So it’s balanced.” |
|                  |                   | Reminder of what foods have calcium |
|                  |                   | “It’s a reminder that there’s calcium in these foods.” |
that the poster contained information related to the goals that they would like to achieve for their family. Both Asian and Hispanic parents mentioned that the poster was personally relevant as a reminder to buy CRFB.

Motivation to Encourage CRFB Intake

Asian parents reported that the poster would motivate them to buy CRFB, including dairy and vegetables. Hispanic parents were also motivated to increase their children's calcium intake, especially if their child was physically active. Hispanic parents were again reminded which foods contain calcium and to provide them to their families. Both sets of parents stated that they were motivated to cook and eat healthy in general, and mentioned that they already encouraged CRFB intake by purchasing CRFB so they were available at home.

Strong families start with good nutrition

Comprehension

Asian parents felt that the poster was encouraging them to consume healthy food, particularly vegetables. They reported that the poster presented foods to be included in family meals, and emphasized the importance of eating together. Hispanic parents also stated that the message was to provide their families with healthy, well-balanced meals, but did not mention the importance of CRFB specifically. They also noted that eating together helps create stronger familial bonds. Hispanic parents better understood the message that calcium was good for their whole family, but there was generally little mention among both Asian and Hispanic parents that the foods pictured contained calcium and should be provided for adequate intake.

Impression/Suggestions for Improvement

Asian parents had few suggestions for improvements to the poster. A few parents stated that the image of the soccer ball connected the message to sports and the food images showed foods that contain calcium, so it was easy to relate calcium to being active. Some parents mentioned that text was needed to indicate that foods pictured contained calcium. Hispanic parents stated that images of CRFB were appropriate and reminded them to eat these items. A few parents suggested including images of other sources of calcium, such as soy milk, as well as translating text into Spanish.
Cultural and Personal Relevance

Both groups stated that the message was culturally and personally acceptable. The poster portrayed the Asian cultural values of having balanced food intake and including lots of vegetables in their dishes, though participants noted that salad is usually not part of Asian food preparation. All Hispanic parents also reported that the poster was culturally relevant. The family in the poster looked Hispanic, and participants stated that it was fitting to include some foods, such as beans, related to Hispanic cuisine. More ethnic-appropriate foods were also suggested. Like the “Good play” poster, it reminded Hispanic parents to provide healthy food, especially CRFB, to their children. Both groups said the poster was personally relevant because it was family oriented.

Motivation to Encourage CRFB Intake

Most parents in both groups did not specify that posters would motivate them to encourage CRFB intake in their children. Most indicated motivation to provide healthy food in general, though some Hispanic parents did mention encouraging CRFB intake specifically. Both groups of parents stated that families should prepare and eat meals together. Meals should be healthy, have a variety of options, and contain a balance of nutrients.

Impression/Suggestions for Improvement

Most Asian parents stated that they liked the images in the poster, but some, such as the salad, were not relevant to the Asian culture. They also suggested that the images be made clearer, as they had trouble identifying foods pictured. They stated that it was unclear how the image of a family enjoying a meal related to the text on CRFB intake, and that the text was crucial to understand the poster’s message. Hispanic parents thought it beneficial to include food images showing a variety of CRFB and that the Hispanic family made it more relatable. They did, however, suggest translation into Spanish. They also suggested including more images of culturally sensitive foods.

Discussion

The current study is the first to evaluate messages geared toward parents of early adolescents based on previous findings regarding motivating parents to promote intake of CRFB in their children (Reicks et al., 2011; Richards et al., 2014). While messages performed well in terms of cultural and personal relevance, modifications are needed to improve comprehension and ability of messages to motivate parents to encourage CRFB intake.

Feedback indicated that messages may be useful in promoting intake of CRFB in this population, as a number of parents found that the posters reminded them to provide CRFB to their children and lead healthy lifestyles. Other studies have also demonstrated that feeding practices featured may improve CRFB intake in adolescents. Regarding making CRFB available, for example, studies demonstrate that calcium intakes are higher among youth whose mothers take and provide calcium supplements and/or drink milk compared to those who rarely or are never served calcium-rich foods and supplements (Fisher, Mitchell, Smiciklas-Wright, & Birch, 2001; Ulrich, Georgiou, Snow-Harter, & Gillis, 1996).

In addition to making CRFB available, role modeling has also been shown to improve CRFB intake in adolescents. In a randomized controlled trial seeking to evaluate an osteoporosis prevention program, for example, mothers who increased their calcium intakes also reported an increase in their children’s intakes (Winzenberg, Oldenburg, Frendin, De Wit, & Jones, 2006). In the current study, the “Strong families” poster featured parents modeling desirable behaviors, as evidence suggests this practice promotes adolescent CRFB intake. However, in the current study, parents gleaned more general information from this poster, stating that adolescents should perform healthy behaviors. While featuring modeling may promote positive responses, it is evident that fine-tuning is needed to elicit responses related specifically to CRFB.

Parental expectations have also been shown to be important, with findings from Project EAT demonstrating that mothers with high expectations had children with lower BMIs (Berge, Wall, Loth, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2010). Further, setting rules and expectations is positively associated with dairy availability and higher dairy consumption among children (Vollmer & Mobley, 2013). In the current study, posters communicated messages supporting parents in their expectations for adolescents to consume CRFB through making CRFB available. In modifying posters, it will be important to retain the emphasis on all three parenting practices featured, including setting expectations.

A key component of interviews performed in the current study was assessment of message comprehension. Hispanic parents comprehendid-
ed that the “Good play” poster advised them to provide CRFB to their children to build strong bones for activity and that the “Strong families” poster conveyed the importance of CRFB for the family. Conversely, several Asian parents had difficulty understanding the messages, and neither group comprehended that foods pictured in “Strong families” contained calcium. Of note, previous studies have revealed a lack of knowledge of calcium food sources across populations. A survey administered to 90 African-American mothers, for example, indicated that 16 percent of women did not correctly identify any calcium food sources (Zablah, Reed, Hegsted, & Keenan, 1999). As parental education is positively associated with calcium intake, interventions should focus on promoting awareness of dietary guidelines, calcium-rich food sources, and risks associated with inadequate calcium intakes (Klohe-Lehman et al., 2006; Parmenter, Waller, & Wardle, 2000; Reicks et al., 2011). Parental knowledge of calcium food sources also relates to positive parenting practices associated with calcium intake in children (Gunther, Rose, Bruhn, Cluskey, Reicks, Richards, Wong, Boushey, Misner, & Olson, 2015). Modifications to posters should emphasize that food images contain calcium and increase awareness of dietary recommendations.

Parents in the current study found both posters culturally relevant. However, both groups desired more ethnic-specific foods featured. Further examination of message surface structure, which encompasses the target population’s observable behaviors such as food choice, is needed (Resnicow, Baranowski, Ahluwalia, & Braithwaite, 1999). Attention to both observable behaviors and the populations’ values is crucial in designing messages (Resnicow, Jackson, Braithwaite, DiOrio, Blisset, Rahotep, & Periasamy, 2002). In further addressing cultural relevance, the diversity of the Asian and Hispanic populations and subgroups targeted must be acknowledged. Preferred vocabulary and food choices may differ depending on country of origin and other factors (Council & Mitchell, 2006; Kaiser, 2008; Maskarinec et al., 2015; Nguyen, 2008; Rahman, Khattak, & Mansor, 2013). The Mexican diet, for example, differs substantially from the Hispanic diet in the Caribbean (Council & Mitchell, 2006; Kaiser, 2008). Differences in food preference demonstrate that accounting for cultural diversity is important, as messages tailored to broad populations may not be relevant to some ethnic minorities.

In addition to generally finding both posters culturally relevant, parents generally found both posters personally relevant. Importance was placed on children’s physical activity, which they encouraged. In addition, parents noted the personal relevance of the theme of “family” in the “Strong families” poster. Previous studies have demonstrated the high importance placed on familial relationships, including those fostered through family meals, in both Asians and Hispanics (Auld et al., 2002; Campos, Ullman, Aguiler, & Dunkel Schetter, 2014; Fulkerson, Neumark-Sztainer, & Story, 2006; Fulkerson, Story, et al., 2006; Larson et al., 2009; Larson et al., 2006; Marquis & Shatenstein, 2005; Melbye, Ogaard, Overby, & Hansen, 2013; Videon & Manning, 2003). Parents in the current study appreciated the family meals pictured, indicating the appropriateness of this content for the target audiences.

While both posters generally performed well, interviews revealed that a number of parents perceived posters to be promoting healthy food generally, rather than CRFB specifically. Messages should further emphasize the connection between foods pictured and calcium through simple phrases, avoiding complicated messages that the audience may misinterpret (Snyder, 2007; Wilson, 2007). In addition, translation of phrases into the language of the target population may further increase relevance (Snyder, 2007; Wilson, 2007). CRFB pictured must also be evaluated for cultural relevance and may include maize-based products (e.g. corn tortillas) for Hispanics and nori (dried seaweed) for Asians.

After modification, final posters may be used to develop an osteoporosis prevention program, and may also be incorporated into programs promoting intake of CRFB. As environmental factors may prevent long-term behavior change, such as the widespread availability of energy-dense foods (French, Story, & Jeffery, 2001), messages should be supplemented with other intervention components. Policies that support opportunities for change, as well as concurrent access to key products and services are crucial to promote behavior change (Wakefield, Loken, & Hornik, 2010).

Strengths/Limitations

The study has several strengths. First, study participants consisted of Asian and Hispanic parents from various states, two groups that are at risk of inadequate calcium intake. Preliminary testing allowed for evaluation of relevance of the posters
for the two target populations to inform further tailoring. Secondly, several different parenting practices shown to be associated with CRFB intake in adolescents were targeted in the posters, incorporating previous findings. Lastly, parents provided feedback on how to improve posters, which could increase posters’ ability to improve CRFB intake.

This study also had various limitations. First, convenience sampling was utilized, and parents were recruited from areas close to the research teams’ universities, limiting generalizability. Secondly, comprehensive demographic information was not collected. Although the Asian and Hispanic populations are ethnically and racially diverse, no information was collected regarding identification with more specific segments of the population. This information would allow for further tailoring of messages to meet the needs of these heterogeneous populations. Third, no information on dietary intake of the family was collected, so effectiveness of messages in impacting practices and behaviors of families is unknown. Lastly, a number of parents reported that they already provided and encouraged intake of CRFB and healthy food, indicating that they may already be motivated to perform the behaviors.

Conclusion

This study evaluated two messages designed to motivate parents to encourage adolescent intake of CRFB. Though parents reported that the posters would motivate them to provide healthy foods and beverages to their families, messages should more clearly indicate the importance of providing CRFB specifically. Modifications are needed to further address both the surface and deep structure of messages and emphasize the connection between messages and calcium intake. Additional testing should be conducted on revised messages. Tailored messages may then be used in development of osteoporosis prevention programs, and may also be incorporated into existing programs promoting intake of CRFB. Such programs will seek to improve feeding practices of parents of early adolescents and promote parental behavior changes to help early adolescents meet their calcium requirements to prevent osteoporosis in later life.

References


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Field Notes From Jail: How Incarceration and Homelessness Impact Women’s Health

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Abstract

A multi-disciplinary team explored the journey they took with female inmates to develop a collaborative research strategy among the university, community organizations, and the correctional facility. The team consisted of academic researchers, inner city physicians, social workers, nurses, Aboriginal art therapists, Aboriginal cultural consultants, correctional healthcare administrators, and inner city chaplains from non-profit organizations. This paper describes how the team reflected on the journey to determine the impact of incarceration and/or homelessness on the health of female inmates, as they (the team) patiently waited for ethics boards and administrative approval; negotiated correctional center lockdowns; and became exhausted from trying to reconnect with women who were released from incarceration. The researchers discovered what kept them passionate about helping female inmates work through multiple hurdles that included housing, child custody, employment, probation appointments, and counseling. These administrative and operational challenges strengthened the team’s resolve to support these vulnerable women.

Female inmates have a high incidence of mental illness, substance abuse, sexually transmitted infections, and healthcare needs relating to reproductive health and intimate partner violence. Our research team had the privilege of working with this protected population, releasing the voices of one of the most silenced and vulnerable populations in health care (Prilleltensky, 2005). Our collaborative team used a participatory action approach with the female inmates to address the impact of incarceration and homelessness on their health. The intent was to provide a deeper understanding of female populations within correctional facilities, regardless of the unpredictable nature of short-term correctional facilities, the complexity of establishing a participatory action team, and the challenges of upholding rigorous research strategies within a jail. We share some of our insights to encourage scholars from all backgrounds to conduct community-based research; to involve the female inmates in resolving their own issues; to pursue the collective answers provided by the women within the correctional facility; to leave products within the correctional facility, such as “A Woman’s Guide to Health in Jail”; and to teach stakeholders to reflect on the voices of the vulnerable women that are returning to the cities and communities after incarceration.

Literature Review

The incarcerated women who took part in our participatory action research project are a subset of a growing worldwide group of female inmates (Wamsley, 2006; van den Bergh, Gatherer, Fraser, & Moller, 2011; Dauvergne, 2012). In Canada, there is a disproportionate number of Aboriginal women within the female inmate population (Mahoney, 2011). Women typically enter a correctional facility in poor health and have more chronic medical and mental health conditions (Binswanger, 2010), as well as a higher burden of infectious disease (including HIV and other sexually transmitted infections) when compared with their male counterparts (Altice, Marinovich, Khoshnoo, Blankenship, Springer, & Selwyn, 2005; Covington, 2007). Upon release, these women often return to communities that suffer from poverty, health disparities, and social exclusion (Salmon, Poole, Morrow, Greaves, Ingram, & Pederson, 2006). They have been separated from family; their children may be living in formal or family foster care; and their employment opportunities may be decreased, all as a result of incarceration (Freudenburg, 2001; Binswanger, Redmond, Steiner, & LeRoi, 2012).
The wide range of issues that incarcerated women face provides an opportunity for conducting health research studies that could lead to not only improved individual health outcomes but also within the communities to which they return. Unfortunately, the history of research on inmates is wrought with examples of coercion, involuntary participation, and the introduction of illness or disease without the knowledge or consent of the subjects (Cislo & Trestman, 2013; Byrne, 2005). In reaction to these abuses, strict regulations on such research were implemented and incarcerated individuals became recognized as a “protected population” by the research ethics boards. The result is that inmates are one of the most under-studied populations in health care (Bible, 2011). Additionally, due to the over representation of the Aboriginal population within correctional facilities in Canada, it is imperative to conduct such research in a culturally sensitive manner (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research, 2010). In recent years, there has been a growing momentum for ethical and clinically focused research to decrease health disparities within this vulnerable population (Cislo et al., 2013). Research that invites inmates to identify their needs and participate in the construction of appropriate solutions is very rare (Harris, 2010).

**A Roadmap to the Participatory Action Journey Within A Correctional Facility**

There are four legs to our research journey within the correctional world. First, we explain the unique focus of our study: understanding female populations within correctional facilities. Second, we discuss the partnerships that developed within our participatory action research team, including the funding and the passion and the multi-disciplinary collaboration. Third, we describe the actual implementation of the project, including surveys, focus groups, and post-release interviews. Finally, we discuss the “road less traveled”: the unpredictable environment within correctional facilities.

1. Understanding Female Populations Within a Correctional Facility

The large remand facility where the female inmates reside is located in a medium-size Canadian city. The facility accommodates 1,500 to 1,900 male and female inmates. Women represent a small portion of the total population; there are three women’s units with a capacity of 100 to 150 female inmates. Remand facilities, or “detention centers,” are pre-sentenced facilities where inmates await criminal justice proceedings. These facilities are an important entry point for health care to reach a traditionally difficult population. Because women tend to commit non-violent or drug-related crimes, the majority of the female inmates within the correctional system are held within either remand or provincial facilities (Dauvergne, 2011). Further, female inmates suffer from high rates of mental health issues, drug or alcohol dependency, and blood borne viruses (van den Bergh et al., 2011). Women who serve shorter sentences have been noted to make more healthcare requests and use services more frequently than those with longer sentences (Hyde, Brumfield, & Nagel, 2000). However, women report mixed perceptions of healthcare services that they have received during incarceration. Studies with female inmates report difficulties accessing care and/or medication, and that healthcare staff are felt to be non-empathetic (Douglas, Plugge, & Fitzpatrick, 2009; Sered & Norton-Hawk, 2013; Young, 2000).

2. Establishing a Participatory Action Team

   **a) Funding Is Critical But Passion Is Foremost**

This research study began when a diverse group of women came together to apply for a unique funding opportunity. This opportunity arose through a community-based housing organization that provides leadership and resources aimed at ending homelessness in a medium-size Canadian city. Applications for seed grants were available for individuals interested in generating community-based research in key priority areas related to homelessness. This funding opportunity not only supported innovative partnerships between academic and community-based organizations, but also recognized the vulnerable population of women within the correctional system as a priority area for programs to help bridge community-based housing and support services to enable these women to heal, stabilize, have their children returned to them, and live together in a healthy, supportive, congregate environment (Annual Report 2015). Although the study team included members with diverse expertise, each member had experienced firsthand the frustration and injustice of the barriers imposed on these women in accessing and maintaining basic health and housing as they revolve between correctional facility and the community. It was this central experience that bound the team together and committed them to provide voices to the women who walk this journey alone. The funding
application was put forward with the support of the correctional facility’s administrative department and was awarded in November 2012.

b) The Multi-disciplinary Collaboration

The planning of the research study started with regular meetings with multi-disciplinary team members in January 2013. The study team consisted of 12 members who brought together their expertise from Aboriginal cultural and health consultants, correctional health, social work, infectious diseases, family and women’s inner city health, mental health, community correctional services, and community-engaged research. We understood that this would be challenging due to the high turnover and short length of stay of the female inmate population. To ensure Aboriginal worldviews were a central part of this project, we used a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach to guide the study whenever possible. The CBPR approach allowed alignment with guidelines for conducting research with First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada, which states that Aboriginal people should be given the option of a participatory approach to research (Government of Canada, 2010).

3. Implementing the Mixed Methods Process

The initial research project was a mixed methods study that had three parts: 1) A structured survey of 330 female inmates concerning their current health and housing situation; 2) four focus groups with 4–6 female inmates; and 3) semi-structured individual interviews with a subset of focus group participants shortly after release. Surveys, interview guides, study information sheets, and consent forms were revised several times by the multi-disciplinary team. This study received ethical approval through the University of Alberta Ethics Research Board. Unfortunately, this process was delayed due to the vulnerability of the population being studied and required a presentation before the full ethics board. Next we sought administrative and operational approval through the correctional facility’s research review process. Finally, we received approval through the third review board: the provincial health authority organization that was responsible for the correctional health department of the facility. Overall, the approval process took six months out of a 12-month grant funding timeline, an important fact that the researchers must include in the timelines they provide to their funders.

a) Surveys

Survey questions addressed access to medical and mental health care during incarceration and in the community, overall medical and mental health needs, and perceptions of risk to one’s health and safety during incarceration and in the transition to the community. Even after this careful distillation of questions, the female inmates needed the research team to explain many of the questions because they were beyond their comprehension. For example, when the women were asked how many children they have, they did not know how to respond. While they are incarcerated, someone else is responsible for their children. They may have been responsible for their partner’s children, or another family member’s children, as well as their own biological children. When asked how many pregnancies they had, they wanted to know if that included miscarriages and abortions, and the babies that were taken from them at birth.

Preplanning was critical in the survey process; three individuals from our study team were selected because they had no conflicts of interest. After numerous attempts to access the women at their assigned units, the study team members established the best day and time to conduct the surveys was on weekends and holidays after the morning meal, because there were no court, legal or medical appointments and programming for the female inmates on those days. Alternatively, afternoons on weekdays were also noted to have less conflicts with the women’s scheduling. Prior to entering the women’s living unit, they prepared consent forms, contacted the canteen (also known as commissary) for food items, assembled the gift bags, and loaded the survey cart. By utilizing tools such as “bed boards,” the team was able to identify new participants and keep a confidential record of those who had already completed surveys. The most feasible place to explain the study, obtain the consents, and conduct the surveys was on the women’s living unit; otherwise correctional officers had to escort the female inmates to and from the Health Centre. Obtaining the consents just prior to administering the surveys was essential because the length of stay in a remand environment is often short with an unpredictable release date. Contacting the unit correctional officers in advance and briefing them on the purpose of the study upon arrival kept everyone informed. The survey team’s positive attitude with both the correctional officers and the inmates was crucial to the ongoing success of the study.
A total of 331 surveys were completed. The female population is small with high turnover, which made the number of eligible recruits unpredictable, so any strategy to make the process more pleasant was critical. Our dedicated team discovered that sunny days were the most successful because the women could go into the enclosed outdoor areas to complete their surveys in relative privacy. This process took a year to complete.

b) Focus groups

The study team presented an overview of the project to interested correctional healthcare staff and officers, inviting them to participate in the research process to help recruit eligible women for the study. Eligibility criteria included: 18 years of age or older; ability to speak English; ability to comprehend and consent to study procedures; housed within the general female population; and living in the catchment area of the city in which the correctional facility was located. If correctional facility staff came across eligible women interested in participating in the study, they were asked to provide the potential participant with a study information sheet. Women on the general population unit were made aware of the study through an advertisement poster. This poster was designed by an Aboriginal artist and an Aboriginal study team member. The artwork depicted the female figure standing in the light of the full moon; the moon encompasses the teachings of women. The poster artwork and symbolism are shown in Figure 1. Once eligible women were identified, the study protocol was reviewed and informed written consent was obtained by a study team member. Many of the study team members also provided health care to this population, either within the correctional setting or in the community, and due to this either existing or potential relationship, they could not ethically take part in recruitment or data collection.

Four focus groups totaling 21 were conducted, each lasting approximately 60–90 minutes. Women were provided with approved edible products from the facility’s canteen service worth $10 per participant after completion of each focus group. The focus groups were conducted between August and October 2013. Each focus group was conducted by two experienced qualitative interviewers in a room located in the healthcare unit. In order to ensure the interviews were conducted in a culturally competent manner in keeping with Aboriginal values and traditions, an additional Aboriginal study team member with expertise in Aboriginal health issues and traditional healing practices was also present during the focus groups. These team members were essential in creating an environment of trust and increasing the rapport with, and comfort of, the individual participants. A prayer flag used in a sacred pipe ceremony was gifted to the project to use as a “talking cloth.” Originally a rectangular piece of cloth, the prayer

Figure 1: Poster Artwork and Symbolism

Design and Artwork
Rebecca Martell and Jean Tait, First Nation Art Therapist/Artist
Date
March, 2013

Description of Artwork
- Grandmother Moon = symbolizes the full moon, which encompasses all of the Teachings of Women.
- Water = symbolizes Grandmother Moon’s control over the water on Mother Earth. Women are connected to the power of the moon and water through the flow of their menstrual cycle, in the creation of new life within the sacred water of their womb, and with the life force they carry into the world as female beings.
- Female figure wrapped in a blanket = symbolizes the creation of personal safety.
- Stylized skeletal form within female figure = symbolizes both inner strength and an awareness of physical health.
- Roofline over female figure = symbolizes the need for safe housing.
flag was folded and sewn into a circular shape, which symbolized Grandmother Moon on our project poster. Also taken from the poster, the stylized image of a woman was drawn on the face of the talking cloth and illustrated the inherent strength of every female being. Women in the focus groups who held the talking cloth were granted the right to speak without interruption. In this way the talking cloth controlled the flow of conversation. At the same time, as they held the cloth and shared their stories, the women wove their narratives into the very fabric of the cloth. Upon project completion, the stitches of the talking cloth were unraveled. Returned to its original state, the prayer flag was tied to the branch of a tree at the time of the full moon. This symbolized an unraveling of the women's stories, along with the return of their sacred thoughts and words to the care of our female protector, Grandmother Moon. The majority of our population self-identified as Aboriginal people and they expressed their appreciation for taking the time to make the focus group feel safe and using the talking cloth to ensure that their stories were honored.

c) Post Release Interviews

Post release interviews proved to be the most challenging. Numerous attempts and strategies were employed by the study team to retain women within the post release period with limited success. Once released, interviews became lower on the list of priorities after housing, food security, social assistance appointments, their dependents/children, work, and other appointments. We were initially unable to contact many participants upon release as participants' phones became disconnected, they quickly returned to incarceration, or no longer wished to participate. Due to the labor-intensive process involved in trying to conduct post release interviews and our limited success despite numerous attempts, we aborted further efforts after one interview. Instead, we recruited two female inmates who had experienced multiple episodes of incarceration to ensure the validity of our results based on their understanding about women's experiences during the post release period.

4) The Unpredictable Nature of Correctional Facilities

There are many challenges to conducting research within the structure of a correctional setting (Cislo et al., 2013; Byrne, 2005; Apa, Bai, Mukherejee, Herzig, Koenigsmann, Lowy, & Larson, 2012). One of the primary objectives of correctional facilities is to provide a safe and secure environment; it is a predictably unpredictable environment that can challenge research schedules. Some of the delays can be planned for and some require adaptability. First, correctional facilities are subject to cessation of movement due to medical or security emergencies, lock-downs, shift changes, and head counts. These events may delay or even cause cessation of the research. Second, retaining research participants is also challenging due to a variety of factors: transfers, releases, court dates, segregation, mealtime, programs, visits, and medical and legal appointments. Third, researchers put increased demands on the facility by requiring officers for escorting researchers, transporting inmates off the unit, and providing extra security.

These challenges are inherent to the correctional environment and the research timeline may be disrupted and/or delayed; but this is a realistic part of conducting research in a correctional facility. Because our study team was comprised of many individuals that were either employed within correctional health or familiar with the correctional environment, many of these challenges were manageable. Even so, our study was still subject to many of these systematic challenges and delays.

Discussion

Imagine that you are entering a world that you have only seen on television; you are part of a team that will conduct a participatory action research study within a correctional center. Prior to beginning your research your team has to provide an itemized list of everything that is required to conduct your research; this list must be pre-approved by the officer at the front desk. You arrive at the correctional facility and discover that safety and security are the priorities in this correctional setting, and all else is secondary (Cislo et al., 2013). As a member of the study team you must undergo a criminal record check in advance and you are obliged to respect the contraband policies (no cell phones, pages, credit cards, etc.). Failure to comply with correctional facility protocols may not only compromise safety procedures, but may also compromise the study, as the officers may view the team as a risk to the facility's safety and security. The next step is entry into the correctional facility to meet the extensive research team. The research study team gathered in the boardroom is there to determine female inmates' lived experiences prior to incarceration, during incarceration, and post-release into their communities. Around the table there are 12 different health professionals and experts from within the correctional facility. The initial plan is very ambitious: a survey, focus groups, and post-release interviews. The team identifies several challenges: maneuvering within a secure correctional facility; accessing a vulnerable population; and reporting delicate information that affects policy and procedures within the facility and the community. This
paper described the research that was defined in that prison boardroom, and the personal and professional journey of four members of the research team. We explored what it takes to conduct participatory action research within a community-based setting, alongside members of a vulnerable population.

The opportunity to conduct research within a correctional facility should ultimately result in benefits for the inmates, the staff, and the facility (Cislo et al., 2013). Correctional facilities are unique, unpredictable, and focused on security; therefore, collegiality with the correctional officers is critical (Apa et al., 2012). Correctional officers were informed about the purpose of the study and the exact protocol that we would follow, which made it easier for the team to enter the correctional facility's units or bring female inmates to the health clinic for the focus groups. Also, assistance from employees working in the canteen and on the health unit was essential.

The team estimated that it would take three months to obtain consents and complete 330 surveys. Two of the research team members initially tried to collect consents on Mondays and conduct the surveys on Wednesdays. They realized that combining these tasks, selecting weekends and holidays to avoid conflicting activities, and conducting the surveys outside in the courtyard were essential strategies to reach this population. It took a year.

The 21 women who took part in the focus groups allowed us to experience their “intensive interaction” between the correctional system, the community, and their homes (van den Bergh et al., 2011). The four focus groups were conducted under proper security within the health unit. We recognized the importance of including Aboriginal cultural and health consultants because the majority of the women self-identified as “Aboriginal” (Mahoney, 2011). Therefore, we used a “talking cloth” that each woman held when she shared her wisdom, while the others demonstrated their respect by remaining silent. This culturally sensitive symbol helped the women engage in open and frank discussions and established an environment of trust. This allowed us to collect data that preserved the perspective and the cultural fabric of the women whose experiences were being studied.

The women shared their experiences about their past struggles with lack of consistent health care, precarious housing, nutritional needs, and finding a family physician after they were released back into their communities. Without ongoing support, these women may return to a vicious cycle of recidivism into addiction and survival crime when they return to a community. The findings from the research have been published by the research team in an article entitled “The Impact of Homelessness and Incarceration on Women's Health” (Ahmed, Angel, Martell, Pyne, and Keenan, 2016).

In this complex environment, the members of the community, both staff and inmates, served to guide the process of locating and using appropriate knowledge. Those who govern the correctional facility provided access into their complex system. The staff identified the appropriate participants within the community, and provided information about the resources available to the women in the correctional facility and the community. The female inmates kept it real by challenging the researchers to create more appropriate survey questions; these women helped interpret the focus group results by creating a graphic that represented the link between housing, health, and recidivism (Ahmed et al., 2016). The participants in our study said that by seeing the results of their focus groups they felt that their ideas had been liberated; their consciousness, confidence, and abilities were raised.

By sharing the research more broadly throughout the correctional facility and with stakeholders, we demonstrated the potential benefits of starting a Women's Health Clinic, which has recently been established at the correctional facility. The female inmates and the research team co-created a booklet for the female inmates and staff that details the resources within the correctional facility and the community. We have received correctional administrative approval to share our results with the correctional healthcare staff and officers and the general women's population using brochures, presentations, and workshops.

The aim of this research study was to facilitate the transfer of information throughout the correctional facility and its community, and to create opportunities to incorporate everyone's stories and exhibit the value of everyone’s voice. Through reflection, discussion, and participation, this insular community acknowledged the political and cultural barriers and allowed widespread participation. The obstacles were eventually overcome, resulting in a new understanding that people can move beyond their current, undesirable condition, toward a less alienating situation where even the silenced people find their voices and speak their truth.

Lessons Learned

The timeline for completing a research project in a correctional facility will take months longer than one in the community (Cislo et al., 2013). Potential delays are due to ethical considerations regarding research with incarcerated populations and the systematic challenges inherent to a correctional facility.
Having members on the study team who are familiar with the functioning of the facility is imperative in order to anticipate some of these delays.

Our original plan to conduct a three-part mixed methods study was quite ambitious. We spent a fair amount of time focusing on collecting the post release interviews and this took up valuable resources and time that could have been devoted to survey consent and completion. Even though we only completed one post-release interview, we were still able to validate the post release experience through “member checking” with women who had experienced the challenges of the post release period previously. Thus it is important to prioritize study objectives early and be flexible and creative with more readily available resources, especially when challenges arise.

Conclusion
Understanding and addressing the health of incarcerated individuals is one component of a comprehensive strategy to reduce population health disparities and improve the health of our communities. Many challenges exist in conducting research within a correctional facility. However, these obstacles can be addressed through partnerships with vested health and correctional staff within the correctional facility; in the community and in academic centers; by addressing the cultural needs of the population; and by engaging the population being studied through a community-based participatory research approach.

References


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**About the Authors**

Louanne P. Keenan is an associate professor, Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, Department of Family Medicine and director of Community Engaged Research at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada. Cybele Angel is a registered nurse with Corrections Health at Alberta Health Services in Edmonton, Canada. Rebecca Martell is a clinical associate in the Occupational Performance Analysis Unit with the Department of Occupational Therapy at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada. Rabia A. Ahmed is an associate professor, Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, Department of Medicine, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada.
Introducing *JCES*’ New Community Perspectives and Student Voices Editor

My choice to become the new associate editor for the Student and Community sections of *JCES* is a choice for voice. Juffermans and Van der Aa (2013) provide a five-facet conceptualization of voice in educational scholarship. Voice can refer to the actual discourse unit of analysis (talk itself). It can also refer to the approach we use to make sense of sense-making (content analysis of what is said). Voice can describe the will to be heard (speaking up) and also describe efforts to empower individuals toward this end (emancipatory action). Lastly, in these ways voice represents both a theory and a method (praxis) for democratic education and society, one in which everyone has a say in forging our collective future. This idea of the public commons in which perspectives are exchanged, examined, tested, tossed down, or taken up is critical to the narrative of U.S. history.

I’ve spent 13 years as a professor of education in a large university and I’m still looking for the public commons. Where is space for the multi-faceted voices and voicings of scholars, students, teachers, youth, parents, and community members to not just co-exist but co-contribute? My editorship at *JCES* is an attempted answer to this question. I’d like to make of this space a public commons.

These initial submissions serve both to introduce myself to the *JCES* readership and initiate this space.

The Student Voices pieces from Iowa State University undergraduates Zoey Spooner and Karson Westerkamp are examples of creative critical educational autobiographies. Zoey and Karson wrote them in response to an assignment in my Bilingualism, Bilingual Education, and U.S. Mexican Youth course. I asked them to narrate a moment when their lives taught them what being “U.S. Mexican” means. This is part of an enduring emphasis in the course on being reflective about ourselves in, of, and as the work of learning to teach all children well. Zoey’s essay about a restaurant scene and Karson’s poem about a school scene interpret for us their experiences as white-identified individuals within the broader (in and out of school) cultural pedagogy of Mexicanness. They provide us a glimpse of reproductive racial formation in motion. In subsequent writing, not published here, Zoey and Karson analyze their autobiographies by drawing on educational theory and relevant research, thus making their familiar selves strange to them. This helps achieve the ultimate purpose of developing intimacy with ongoing self-inquiry essential for educational excellence grounded in equity-based principles and practices.

The Community Perspectives piece is from Carla Dawson, program coordinator with Children and Families Urban Movement in Des Moines, Iowa. Carla oversees the middle-grades after-school gender-specific programs, the Backyard Boyz and the Whyld Girls. In my capacity as director of the ISU 4U Promise, I worked with Carla and a wider team of university and community partners to implement what we call Design Dialogues. The ISU 4U Promise “promises” tuition awards to fifth graders who graduate from two specific elementary schools in Des Moines and eventually enroll at Iowa State University. The core activity of Design Dialogues was to hear from these Promise-eligible youth, many of whom identify as U.S. Mexican (thus connecting their stories to those of Zoey and Karson), about their learning broadly conceived—where do they learn in their communities, where would they like to learn, how could they learn differently—in order to generate an action plan for ISU 4U Promise-involved change efforts. What is published here are remarks Carla made about youth impact as part of a presentation on this effort at the Cambio de Colores (Change of Colors) conference.
I hope these initial submissions help you get to know a bit about me, the work I do, and the values that led me to JCES. I hope you see in them examples of multi-faceted voice and voicings. Zoey and Karson are in the process of their own emancipation so that they can serve as allies in the emancipatory work of their future students. Carla is speaking out about how her young people are speaking up about their learning and, in this way, serving as our teachers. Me, Zoey, Karson, Carla and her Whyld Girls are together on these pages today. I invite others to join this public commons tomorrow.

References

Lady Researchers: Mapping Urban Community and Learning Spaces

Carla Dawson
(excerpt of remarks at the Cambio de Colores Conference, June 9, 2016)

Background
The ISU 4U Promise is an early commitment joint program of Iowa State University and King and Moulton elementary schools in the Des Moines urban neighborhoods. Design Dialogues is a community-engaged research project that serves youth in gender-specific after-school Children and Families Urban Movement (CFUM) programs by having them “map” the learning spaces in their community.

Carla Dawson Speaks from the Heart
In this relationship that we have throughout the Design Dialogues, ISU 4U came to us and said, “Because of your work with CFUM, we'd like to partner with you on doing the Design Dialogues.” We were like, “Hey, that's so good!” The kids go to one of the schools that ISU 4U is partnered with, Moulton Elementary, and have also been in the CFUM program since they were in kindergarten.

We have a breakfast program that we serve in the morning, and they come after school to a program called The Haven. The breakfast part of it started in 1968 by the Black Panthers at Trinity United Methodist. So it's not new in our neighborhood and it's directly across the street from the school. Because we have the kids that they need to work with in the community, and they're a captive audience, they come every day so it's not like we have to pull kids from all over because they are from the neighborhood.

We were thinking, “If kids start thinking about their neighborhoods in different ways, and about their communities in different ways, and seeing [themselves as] the researchers in their community and experts in their neighborhood that know what’s good and what’s not good in their school, then we can work with them.”

I am the coordinator of the program called the Whyld Girls, also named the Lady Researchers. And when we say, “Whyld Girls, Ladies, we're getting ready to do research.” They’re like, “Yes!” You would never think that sixth grade girls or ninth grade girls would really love to be researchers, but they are. The Whyld Girls program started 13 years ago because a lot of the girls in our community—and I live in that community so I can speak from experience—were having babies at young ages, were not finishing school, and were not making the best life choices for themselves. So we started the Whyld Girls program and we wanted to teach the girls that you have empowerment...help them learn that they have empowerment and what they can do with their life if they make different choices. If you make choices in sixth grade not to go to school, the outcome won't be so good when it's time to graduate. You're probably not going to graduate. So the Whyld Girls do that and they do it with zeal.

Our oldest Whyld Girl, who started the program when she was in fifth grade, graduated this year with her master’s from the University of Northern Iowa as a child psychologist. We have a Whyld Girl who just graduated from the University of Iowa; she got accepted into PharmD programs at Drake University and the University of Iowa. We have Whyld Girls who are in other colleges. Our senior Whyld Girl graduated as valedictorian from North High School with a 4.127 GPA and a 30 ACT.

We're talking about girls who look like a lot of you girls in here. We're talking about CFUM and I would say 45 percent of our girls are Latina, 45 percent are African American, 5 percent are Asian, and 5 percent are Caucasian. We’re talking about a diverse group of young ladies; we’re not talking about what everyone thinks about when they
think about kids. We’re talking about a group of girls who are changing their lives, changing their communities, and changing their families. Our Whyld Girls’ motto is: “We have wild dreams for ourselves, for our community, and for our world.” And then we say, “Go out and dream.” ‘Cause these are the dreams we have for Whyld Girls, but they also have them for themselves. And they also have them for the community and for the world.

Three of my Whyld Girls just received [recognition from] the Chrysalis Foundation4, a women’s empowerment foundation. It’s big; we’re talking about women who are power brokers, lawyers and doctors. They have 10 scholarships that they give out, and the Whyld Girls received 3 of the 10. So we’re talking about helping girls make better life choices.

So as you can see, you might not be able to read my shirt, but the Whyld Girls, and the Backyard Boyz5 came up with this shirt. It’s called the "alternative F word.” And the alternative F word is “Future.” They came up with this; it was not my idea. So working with ISU and having our girls map their community and their world, seeing what’s good in their community, seeing what needs to be changed, seeing how they fit as researchers and doing the change is helping them be the change that they want to see in their community.

You know it’s one thing if I can help myself, but it’s another thing if I can help somebody else. And we’re big about not only helping girls who are in Whyld Girls, but helping our community. For Whyld Girls to engage in steps to make their schools and communities better is a win-win! The Whyld Girls have dreams. To make a dream a reality they will learn in the process that it is better to work on solutions and not get stuck on the problem. Being an integral part of finding solutions makes you believe that you are the change the world needs.

Acknowledgments
Design Dialogues, Planning with African-American and Latino Youth and Parents for Educational and Environmental Development (Richardson Bruna, Greder, Rongerude, McNelly, & Bivens) — was funded through an Iowa State University College of Human Sciences Collaborative Intramural Seed Grant in fall 2014.

References

About the Author
Carla Dawson, program coordinator, Children and Family Urban Movement, Des Moines, Iowa

1The Haven is an after-school program offered during the extended school year at Moulton Extended Learning Center (mid July–May) that offers literacy enrichment, homework help, and recreation and creative activities for grade school children.
2The Whyld Girls is a gender-specific program of CFUM that focuses on girls in grades 6 through 12. It is designed to encourage self-development and to support.
3The PharmD degree program is a four-year professional program that prepares students for community or institutional practice, postgraduate education, or the many other practice opportunities available to pharmacists.
4The Chrysalis Foundation is a women’s empowerment foundation dedicated to increasing resources and opportunities for girls and women in Greater Des Moines.
5Backyard Boyz is a gender-specific program of CFUM that focuses on boys in grades 6 through 8 and designed to encourage healthy self-development and to support choices that result in meeting academic and life goals.
Privileged
Zoey Spooner

On a day, just like any other day,
My close family was going to meet my aunt and uncle's family
At my uncle's restaurant called
Mama Lacona's.

My family's white Honda Pilot stopped in its parking spot
And I hopped out while my dad was still turning off the car.
My new pink dress that flares up when I spin,
trailed behind me as I ran into the restaurant
Excited to see my favorite little cousin, Livi.

Her dad owned the whole restaurant,
So when I was with Livi,
I too felt like I owned the place.

Reaching the double doors before the rest of my close family,
I'm welcomed by my favorite little cousin
Who seemed to have been waiting to see me too.
She had a new bouncy ball.

We cut through the bar and kinda smokey area
To arrive to our personal playroom,
Also known in restaurant language as the “Party Room.”
Our time passed by the number of bounces of the ball
Not by the seconds that passed on the clock.
So, after probably not too many bounces,
my mom summoned us to our normal table because it was ready.

I ordered my normal raspberry iced tea with my rear sitting in my favorite chair next to the fireplace.
I colored the restaurant's coloring sheet like so many times before.
Bored and ready for more fun, I turned to Livi,
Whispering and asking if we could go to the kitchen.

(The kitchen was always alive.)
Livi nodded yes, so we snuck off from the table like we always did. Our parents checked where we were going and we giggled and said “The Party Room.”

We lied because we weren’t supposed to go the kitchen. The kitchen had big knives, hot ovens, and “Don’t be in the way of the Mexicans!”

We zigzagged our way to the kitchen, so that our parents couldn’t see where we were actually going. Pushing the door just far enough for our two little bodies to squeeze through, we shimmied our way into a place that seemed completely detached from the burgundy colored and dim lighted restaurant. It was a different world.

The Mexicans were singing along to their Mexican music, patting another Mexican’s back, and speaking in their Spanish secret code. The lights were brighter, and the spaghetti sauce smell was much stronger. The kitchen was the source of energy for the whole restaurant.

I followed my nose to the sweet caramel smells, the dessert station. I asked for some of the bread pudding that one of the Mexicans was making, already knowing that he would say yes. He gave me the delicacy that I asked for, no complaints.

Over time, I decided that Mexicans were really nice. They would always do what other people told them to do, no complaints.

I never wondered why the Mexicans didn’t eat in the restaurant like we did. Their place was in the kitchen, that’s just how it was.

They weren’t chefs, they were Mexicans.

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About the Author
Zoey Spooner is a senior in elementary education at Iowa State University.
Like My Teacher Told Me

Karson Westerkamp

Sitting in the classroom, listening to the teacher
Same old thing, he’s blaring like a speaker
Still, I’m listening—okay, only halfway
But hey, what can I say?
I’m only 8.
Life is great
I live in America, the home of the free
The land of the brave
Like the teacher was saying,
“We fought for our freedoms,
Men died for your rights” – men who were white

Like at the Alamo

When the Mexican army came to slaughter, our men
Took them forever from their women and children
It was a brutal massacre, a bad day for U.S.….Sorry, us,
But they fought valiantly, and died for their U.S. …I mean, country.
So we went from there
And within days
Stormed and took Santa Anna
Putting an end to those “Tejanos” barbaric ways.
It was then that I learned
What it would be
To be Mexican-American
In this “land of the free”;

They are descendants of savages
They are dangerous and dark
But above all, I recall:

“Remember the Alamo! Remember the Alamo!” Remember the Alamo?
Instructions to Book Reviewers

Book reviews published in *JCES* are intended to speak to a wide range of issues relevant to the scholarship of engagement. Reviews of books within the social sciences, natural sciences and math, medicine and health, the environment, law, business, philosophy, religion, and the arts and humanities are encouraged. All book reviews submitted to *JCES* should provide readers with a broad overview of the book, but should go beyond 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. Book reviews should introduce readers to literature that advances knowledge, provides practical advice, disseminates best practices, and encourages conversation and dialogue. Faculty members, administrators, staff members, students, and community partners are invited to offer their interpretations of the literature. If you are interested in writing a book review for *JCES*, please contact Drew Pearl (andrew.pearl@ung.edu) for a current list of books available to review. Reviewers are also welcome to suggest titles.
New Book Addresses “Lack of Guidance” for the Teaching And Practice of Community-Based Research

Reviewed by Elizabeth Dunens
St. Catherine University

Mary Beckman and Joyce F. Long, Community-based Research: Teaching for Community Impact.

Community-based research, or CBR, is “a partnership of students, faculty, and community members who collaboratively engage in research with the purpose of solving a pressing community problem or effecting social change” (Strand, et al., 2003, p. 3). Although this branch of community engagement in higher education has increased over the last few decades, Beckman and Long (2016) note a “lack of guidance” in CBR literature, specifically related to its teaching and practice (p. 3). Their publication, Community-based research: Teaching for community impact, addresses this gap in the literature. In the introduction, the editors candidly share “we are writing for us” — the ‘us’ referring to themselves and other faculty members “who want to not only know how to incorporate CBR into their teaching, but also do it in a way that attends to student learning aims while attaining positive effects in communities” (p. 10). While oriented to a faculty audience, this book will also appeal to coordinators of community engagement, and many chapters are relevant to community and student audiences as well. In a single volume, Beckman and Long (2016) give readers an understanding not only of the background, methods, and best practices of CBR, but also its range of possibilities and positive impacts for students, faculty, institutions, and communities.

Beginning with a forward by engagement scholar Dr. Timothy K. Eatman and an introduction from the editors, the book is divided into three parts. The first section provides contextual grounding for readers. As both Holland (1999) and Giles (2008) observe, historically there has been a lack of clarity and consistency in the terms and rhetoric of community engagement. In Chapter One, Frabutt and Graves elucidate CBR for readers by providing helpful diagrams of the associated terms, historical origins, principles, and approaches of this method of community engagement. Chapter Two builds on this foundation by moving from what CBR is to how it can result in community impact. In this chapter, Beckman and Wood frame the stages of CBR in terms of outputs, outcomes, and impact, and also provide a model for achieving community impact based on their own experiences with CBR. To guide faculty and practitioner use of this model, the authors present their CBR Diagnostic Table which, in tabular form, outlines important considerations for CBR researchers related to: participation, stakeholder groups, planning, goals, monitoring and revision. The tool is easy to understand and would be useful in both the planning and evaluation stages of CBR. Beckman and Wood also advocate for a focus on “longterm change” (p. 36) and consideration of partnership with existing coalitions and initiatives, referencing Kania and Kramer’s (2011) concept of collective impact. In Chapter Three, the perspective shifts to that of the community, and readers are prompted to reflect on important and challenging questions around the defining of community, as well as how motivations for engaging in CBR vary according to stakeholder identification (i.e., community member, student, faculty, etc.). In this chapter, Quaranto and Stanley advocate for understanding that (like most forms of community engagement) CBR is complex. Case studies and diagrams provide insight into the challenges of CBR partnership, as well as strategies for achieving synergy in relationship and collaboration. Part One closes with a chapter by Long, Schadewald, and Kiener which presents their findings from an empirical, theoretically-grounded study on faculty motivations for CBR. This study adds to extant research on faculty motivations for community engagement (Abes, Jackson, & Jones, 2002; Colbeck & Michael, 2006; 2008; Darby & Newman, 2014; Hammond, 1994; McKay & Rozee, 2004; O’Meara, 2008) by homing in on faculty motivations specific to CBR. Long, Schadewald, and
Kiener’s research suggests that intrinsic motivations and context influence faculty members’ initial involvement in CBR; however, over time, their motivations can change and grow as they engage in CBR and experience its “transformational effects in their classrooms, communities, and vocational paths” (p. 81).

The chapters comprising Part Two—the largest section of the book—revolve around student learning and community outcomes of CBR. The first chapter presents the POWER model, a CBR counterpart to service-learning’s OPERA model, which can be used by faculty members to design and actualize CBR. Pigza walks readers through each component of the framework’s acronym (Partnerships, Objectives, Working, Evaluation, and Reflection). This model, which Pigza describes as a “solidly community-oriented approach” (p. 94), in combination with Beckman and Wood’s CBR Diagnostic Table, is a valuable guide for both planning and assessing CBR that is authentically collaborative and community-based.

In the following chapters of Part Two we see this model in action through nine case studies. The case studies presented are diverse and provide readers with a sense of the extensive possibilities for CBR. Disciplines represented range from mathematics to Spanish, undergraduate and graduate-level courses are included, and CBR initiatives take place in both local and global contexts. As a coordinator of university-community engagement, this section, in combination with Part One, will be especially helpful for introducing faculty members to CBR as together they prompt imagination of the options of CBR for research and teaching while also providing the guidance necessary for implementation and success.

Part Three represents ongoing, large-scale CBR initiatives that will be of particular interest to those considering how individual CBR projects can evolve into long-term collaborations spanning multiple courses, disciplines, and departments. In Chapter 15, Dailey and Dax illustrate CBR’s potential to create generative impact with the example of a single CBR project conducted by students and faculty members in Rockbridge County, Virginia that resulted in the formation of a commission on poverty, policy change, and multiple CBR ventures. Chapter 16 by Kezar and Rousseau demonstrates the concept of collective impact with a case study of CBR at the University of Southern California completed in parallel with a larger community-organized effort to improve housing, education, employment, safety, and health in Los Angeles. In Chapter 17, Vinciguerra shares the example of an interdisciplinary, international CBR partnership between the University of St. Thomas and community partners in the Diocese of Port-de-Paix, Haiti. While the outcomes and impacts of this partnership are impressive (fair-trade coffee/artisan projects and an energy initiative), perhaps equally impressive is the process by which the partnership was established and maintained. Prior to beginning CBR, the community and university spent two years meeting and discussing the partnership and potential focuses for CBR. This case study is a reminder of the centrality of relationship to community engagement, and the fact that relationships take time. The final case study comes from one of the editors, Joyce F. Long, and echoes this benefit of long-term partnership to CBR. In this instance, University of Notre Dame faculty members, staff members, and students completed six related CBR projects over the course of seven years to increase parent involvement in high-poverty schools. Each case study in Part Three is unique and highly contextual; however, collectively they represent guiding principles and a vision for institutions, faculty, and communities to aspire to, where CBR is “multidimensional, interdisciplinary, strategic, co-constructed, and focused on impact” (p. 266–267).

Beckman reminds readers of the primary aims of this book: to provide “examples, strategies, tools, and insights for incorporating community-based research (CBR) into...teaching, advising, mentoring, and...curricular decisions,” and to “show ways this can be done to enhance the possibility that the research results will lead to outcomes and even long-term impact in [communities]” (p. 307). The editors and contributing authors of Community-based research: Teaching for community impact meet these goals with great success. The publication features key voices in CBR research, as well as community perspectives, and should prove an informative and enjoyable read for those seeking inspiration, understanding, and guidance on community-based research in higher education.

References


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**About the Reviewer**

Elizabeth Dunens is an adjunct professor and assistant director for the Center for Community Work and Learning at St. Catherine University in Minneapolis, Minnesota.
Trio of Books Makes Argument for the Power of Working Together for Community Change

Reviewed by George Daniels
The University of Alabama


It is often said that “two minds are better than one,” or that we can do “better together.” Such statements are reflective of the idea that multiple players can accomplish more than lone wolves or individual efforts.

When it comes to community-engaged scholarship, the idea of working together is almost always referring to universities or academic units working with those outside of the academic campus in the community. Community-campus partnerships are necessary for service-learning courses to be successful. By engaging with a community, we develop first-hand knowledge and an understanding of the intricacies of the relationship between community and academe (Sanyal, 2014). Evolving over time, community partnerships are powerful organizations that spur interaction among key parties and serve to focus tasks, guide decision-making, and facilitate communication (Judd & Adams, 2008). Such partnerships are cornerstones of engaged scholarship.

In the arena of engaged scholarship, rarely is the conversation about partnership focusing on those in the community working “better together;” more often, the focus is on bettering partnerships between those in the community and those in “the academy.” The three books reviewed in this essay feature a trend known as “collective impact.” When it comes to collective impact, community leaders and practitioners come together around their desire to improve outcomes consistently over time. With the goal of continuous improvement, data are used to improve an outcome and the collective impact becomes part of what is done every day (Edmondson, 2012).

Increasingly, collective impact is a necessary route to another cornerstone of engaged scholarship—problem solving. This review essay focuses on three different models and approaches to collective impact. While Stroh’s Systems Thinking for Social Change spotlights causal feedback loops within systems, Plastrik, Taylor, and Cleveland’s Connecting to Change the World points to the power of a generative network to have an impact on a social problem. Different from the previous two books, Edmondson and Zimpher’s Striving Together takes a case study approach in delivering lessons on collective impact by utilizing specific strategies for solving problems in the arena of education.

Previously, scholars have argued convincingly about the power of reciprocal partnerships that benefit all parties (Stewart & Alrutz, 2012). In their description and analysis of 10 cruxes for sustaining long-term, healthy relationships, the authors noted that those who are partnering in transformative relationships expect some kind of sustained commitment and change. Elsewhere, it has been said that the terms “relationship” and “partnership” are not interchangeable (Clayton Bringle, Senor, Huq, & Morrison, 2010). The former may be casual, short-term, and/or informal in nature while the latter has closeness, equity, and integrity. This distinction was especially important in Clayton et al.’s (2010) research with service-learning practitioners and researchers using the Transformational Relationship Evaluation Scale (TRES), which aimed to provide clearer nomenclature and tools to conceptualize, investigate, evaluate, monitor, and nurture partnerships.
To be effective, partnerships require both parties' extensive involvement that recognizes and legitimizes the process, as well as the creation of an organizational framework conducive for that involvement (McLean & Behringer, 2008).

In Connecting to Change the World, Plastrik, Taylor, and Cleveland introduce the idea that a generative network is not simply a set of people who voluntarily organize themselves for collective action to solve a large, complex social problem. The way they organize is critical to the success of the network. As they describe it, there are specific requirements, such as having minimal formal rules and structure while ensuring the decision-making is distributed throughout the network's membership. The members should be deliberate about building, strengthening, and maintaining ties with each other with the intended result being innovative creation of new products, services, and programs. These generative networks become robust and adaptive enough to continue to be effective while increasing their impact. Plastrik, Taylor, and Cleveland maintain that social-impact networks are not the same as social movements. The latter are usually big, much less coherent, and lack the focus of the former.

Connecting to Change the World offers one chapter with eight concrete elements necessary to start a social impact network—purpose, membership, value propositions, coordination/communication, resources, governance, assessment, and operating principles. Another chapter outlines a four-level connectivity scale that ranges from members simply being introduced to each other (Level 1) to the point where the members have built enough trust over multiple projects that they are comfortable seeking advice from one another (Level 4). These Level 4 connections are a critical element to building the strong core necessary for a social impact network. Later chapters explain the “C-A-P” sequence, through which members of a network “connect-to-align-to-produce” in order to develop their abilities for collective action and impact (Chapter 4), and detail how they evolve, mature, and become more complex (Chapter 5). Often, so much emphasis is placed on the problem to be solved that little attention is given to evaluating the collaboration of individuals or organizations. The final three chapters of Connecting to Change the World provide a framework for such an evaluation (Chapter 6), a strategy for re-setting the design if the group becomes stalled (Chapter 7), and three cardinal rules to build by (Chapter 8—trust the network, serve the network [but do not wait for it], and embrace vertigo.)

While Plastrik, Taylor, and Cleveland's book focuses on details of the network, Stroh's Systems Thinking for Social Change puts all of its attention on the “hows” and “whys” of what is changing. In other words, it was not about the players making change happen, but the change itself that is of primary importance. This book is built on the “creative tension” model of Peter Senge’s (2006) classic, The Fifth Discipline, which states that the energy for change is mobilized by a discrepancy between what people want and where they are. Stroh offers a four-stage change process of readiness, commitment, focus/momentum, and understanding/acceptance. These stages are not introduced until the fifth chapter of the book, which is organized into three parts. Part One reviews some of the classic wisdom on systems while linking those systems to what is needed for social change. Part 2 provides an overview of the four-stage change process, and the final three chapters focus on the future and how systems thinking can impact the process of strategic planning (Chapter 11), evaluation (Chapter 12), and one’s development over time (Chapter 13).

Both books, Connecting to Change the World and Systems Thinking for Social Change, offer step-by-step instructions for assembling people and organizations to bring about change in the community. The “theory” of Stroh's Systems Thinking for Social Change is complemented by the “practice” in Plastrik, Taylor, and Cleveland's description of the evolution of social change networks. At the same time, both provide ample material for the critical stages of assessment and evaluation, with Stroh going more in-depth about the processes of strategic planning and ways to track success and goal achievement. It is easy to see why the online bookseller Amazon identifies the two as “frequently bought together.”

In order to understand the whole concept of collective impact, one needs the third book of this trio—Edmondson and Zimpher’s Striving Together. Unlike Connecting to Change the World and Systems Thinking for Social Change, Edmondson and Zimpher offer a book of cases focused on K-12 education. The “lessons learned” approach that this book takes starts with a convincing account of the seven-year journey of three school systems in Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky as they work toward measurable results in student achievement after initially meeting to organize
a new college readiness program for low-income students. Although it was case-study driven, the book was not absent of models or theories. The second chapter outlined the Framework for Building Cradle-to-Career Civic Infrastructure, which has four primary building blocks or pillars: shared community vision, evidence-based decision-making, collaborative action, and investment/sustainability. This framework was followed in Chapter 3 by a report on a 2011 effort by a group of thought leaders who gathered in Portland, Oregon to outline what became a Theory of Change, built on the four pillars of the Framework for Building Cradle-to-Career Civic Infrastructure.

Edmondson and Zimpher report that more than 100 communities across the country have used this framework to guide their work. A reader of Striving Together will be short changed if the reader stops at just reading the case studies of collective impact that were done in Portland, Oregon (Chapter 4), Richmond, Virginia (Chapter 5), Seattle, Washington (Chapter 6), and Houston, Texas (Chapter 7). These four cases flesh out the journey described in the book's opening chapter: the collaboration in Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky with the StrivePartnership to improve education in the tri-state region that includes Southeast Indiana, Northern Kentucky, and Southwest Ohio. Soon after, other communities where residents connected with ideas of the StrivePartnership on education joined in, resulting in a national StriveTogether network of at least 30 communities serving as charter members. At the time Striving Together was published, at least 19 more communities had joined this network, with New Zealand, Malaysia, Canada, and the United Kingdom also expressing interest.

The response to the method of collective impact is an indication of just how hungry communities around this nation and world are for strategies that work when it comes to groups working together. It speaks to the need for clear guidelines for doing such work that can get results, which is ultimately why the author of this essay decided to review these three books. There is a plethora of examples of short-term collaboration, especially in the context of service learning. While Stewart and Alrutz (2012) argue that pursuing and maintaining meaningful partnerships between universities and communities or organizations is like sustaining healthy romantic relationships, these three books together suggest that for organizations coming together, the effort is deeper than romance.

A structural model and conceptual framework such as the one Clayton et al. (2010) offered as a result of their review of literature on relationship development in service learning and civic engagement is helpful, specifically in the context of research and theory-building. Establishing and defending one’s nomenclature (i.e., transactional vs. transformative) becomes a necessary goal in such work. But these three books offer more than nomenclature. Each book in its own way provides practical guidelines for community organizations working to achieve a particular end. Stroh’s end product is a system that can bring about social change, while Plastrik, Taylor, and Cleveland’s is a network that adds value while creating new knowledge or insight. And in writing about their efforts in collective impact, Edmondson and Zimpher’s goal was all about getting community players to work toward ways to curb the number of students dropping out of school and increasing their chances of going to college and being ready for careers.

In the spirit of full disclosure, the author of this essay did not just stumble upon these three books at an academic conference. They did not appear in the mail without an intentional search for answers to the problem of how to make and sustain a group of men who had organized in a relatively rural community to address a problem—the plight of men of color. With no clear leader in place, these mostly men of color had gathered for lunch to talk about the disproportionate number of young black men not finishing high school or ending up in trouble with the law. There were discussions about the lack of role models, despite the fact that there were multiple mentoring initiatives already in place. Why were these efforts not yielding results? After months of meeting, an attempt was made to “write-up” or assess the results of sponsoring a community forum and a series of mini-conferences for middle and high school boys. It was clear that part of the success of these events was that they were sponsored by multiple organizations scattered across a region where there were many small-scale efforts. When the small-scale efforts were connected, the “collective” part of collective impact is realized. What is needed now is a way to measure/assess the “impact” part of collective impact.

Based on the wisdom from these three books, this author has determined that the group who gathered to impact the number of young black men not finishing high school or ending up in
trouble with the law did not have systems thinking the way Stroh’s book suggests in mind. The group of men are just at Stage 1 of the Stroh’s four-stage model: readiness. Even though these men of color have worked together to sponsor a series of mini-conferences to reach young black men, there have not been enough intentional discussions about value propositions among the men from school systems, fraternities, churches, and mentoring organizations in rural communities working together like Plastrik, Taylor, and Cleveland suggest in their guidelines for having a generative network. It would be inappropriate for the group of men of color to join the Strive Together network as the work is larger than just cradle-to-career readiness. But the bottom line of this work is the depth of analysis that can be done about the work on improving the plight of young black men. Thanks to these three books, that analysis can be much better and the journey to change will be a little bit easier. Let the real work of building a sustained effort begin.

References


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INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS

The JCES Editorial Board invites the submission of manuscripts that relate to its mission: to provide a mechanism through which faculty, staff, and students of academic institutions and their community partners may disseminate scholarly works from all academic disciplines, with the goal of integrating teaching, research, and community engagement. All forms of writing and analysis will be acceptable with consideration being given to research and creative approaches that apply a variety of methodologies. Manuscripts that demonstrate central involvement of students and community partners and advance community-engaged scholarship will be given favorable consideration. Manuscripts should be free of all forms of bias, including racial, religious, gender, or ethnic.

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Nick Sanyal, Ph.D.
Professor of Natural Resources and Society
University of Idaho

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Manuscripts should be submitted in Microsoft Word with a separate cover page. They should be double-spaced in Times New Roman 12-point type. Article length, except in rare instances, should not exceed 25 pages, including text, tables, and references. Tables and other graphics should be submitted as separate documents with their place in the manuscript indicated. Do not include the abstract and cover pages in the page count.


A separate cover sheet with the name(s), affiliation(s), and other identifying information and contact information (addresses, phone 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.

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Regular and Research From the Field manuscripts that demonstrate central involvement of students and community partners and that advance community engagement scholarship will be given favorable consideration. Manuscripts should be free of racial, religious, gender, ethnic, or any other form of bias. Manuscripts submitted are for the exclusive publication in *JCES* and must not have been simultaneously submitted elsewhere. Submission of a manuscript implies commitment to publish in this journal. Authors submitting manuscripts to the journal should not simultaneously submit them to another journal. Nor should manuscripts have been published elsewhere in substantially the same form. Authors in doubt about what constitutes prior publication should consult the editor.

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This section of the journal is reserved for reports that are likely to have a practice or case study orientation. Manuscripts appropriate for this section provide a venue for certain kinds of research projects involving partnerships between academic institutions, communities, and students. Manuscripts that share best practices, practice wisdom, and applied knowledge are especially appropriate for Research From the Field. Context is an essential part of all engaged scholarly activities, and the reporting of them needs to be situated philosophically, historically, and theoretically if they are to systematically extend our knowledge and understanding. All submissions need to be described and examined through these lenses or some combination of them. Unique partnerships have the potential to make highly interesting pieces
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Students from all disciplines are invited to submit original work to the Student Voices section. All forms of writing, analysis, creative approaches, and methodologies are acceptable for this section. Specific types of submissions appropriate for the Student Voices section include commentaries, critical reflections, and opinion pieces related to community engagement and/or engaged scholarship. Given that engagement scholarship is such an interdisciplinary field in which there are many appropriate ways to best “tell the story,” scholarly contributions of many kinds related to the field of engagement scholarship are welcome and will be considered for publication. Manuscripts should be between 750–2,000 words. You can also see examples of published submissions on our website—jces.ua.edu.

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Community members working with academic partners from all disciplines are invited to submit original work to the Community Perspectives section. All forms of writing, analysis, creative approaches, and methodologies are acceptable for this section. Specific types of submissions appropriate for Community Perspectives include commentaries, critical reflections, and opinion pieces related to community engagement and/or engaged scholarship. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the field, scholarly contributions of many kinds related to the field of engagement scholarship are encouraged and will be considered for publication in JCES. Community Perspectives submissions are accepted on an ongoing basis. Manuscripts should be between 750–2,000 words in length. Examples may be found on the JCES website—jces.ua.edu.

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Book reviews submitted to JCES should give the reader a well-developed sense/description of the book, but should also go beyond description to discuss central issues raised by the text. Reviewers are encouraged to address how the reviewed book addresses theory, current scholarship, and/or current issues germane to the subject of the book and engagement scholarship. Reviewers may reference other material that has bearing on the book being reviewed, particularly when these sources have the ability to position the book within larger discourses regarding the topic. Like other submissions to JCES, book review manuscripts should be typed double-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman and follow APA reference style.
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