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Greetings and happy spring from the Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship! I am writing this column in my home office in south Louisiana; from my chair, I can see that all the trees in my backyard have fully budded out. I am also watching two Carolina wrens working hard on building a nest on the back porch. Spring is a time of transition and of dynamic change.

I am in transition myself; on December 31, 2018, I stepped down from serving as the director of LSU’s Center for Community Engagement, Learning, and Leadership, after serving in this 50% time administrative capacity for eight and a half years. I’ve been a faculty member for twenty-two and a half years, long enough to recognize that I’ve experienced several “career chapters.” I realize that at this moment, I am in one of those “between chapters” places. I also know that I tend to work “nose to grindstone” for long periods of time, like the line in the Steve Winwood song “Back in the High Life”: “But when you’re born to run it’s so hard to just slow down.”

And so in this current transition, I am endeavoring to be fallow on purpose, that is, to tie up a couple of things I’ve been working on, while making a conscious effort to NOT jump into the next thing just yet—even though I know what it is.

My motto for spring 2019 (and I’m contemplating making it my motto for the entirety of 2019) is “less is more.”

I had the pleasure of listening to Tania Mitchell during a conference keynote, where she talked about surveying former civically engaged students years later, and finding that, at least in the eyes of Tania and her colleagues, these former students were living admirable lives of service as professionals and citizens. And yet, almost all of this cohort talked about how they weren’t doing enough, and weren’t satisfied with their actions. Tania shared that this result made her wonder if we as civic engagement practitioners inculcate part of that ethos—that what you do is never enough. Her story has made me wonder as well—and I’m sitting with these thoughts in this fallow, in-between space.

At another conference, I was able to interact in a small discussion group with Julie Hatcher, who spoke about how her career was centered around the critical importance of structured reflection. And how, after many years of being ensconced in this paradigm, she has come to the conclusion that the unstructured, unscripted conversation can be every bit as transformative as the structured, scripted one. She came to this conclusion because in her research, people often cited an unstructured, unscripted conversation as the epiphany that led them fully into engagement.

Her story reminds me that sometimes, it’s the things that you don’t intend that wind up being transformative, like the way that a child will play with the box rather than the toy inside it. Or the way that the pool at the hotel is more fun than the trip to Disney.

Being deliberate about being unscripted has already felt, to this point, like something of a Renaissance, and a taking back of time. Three of the six members of my undergraduate research team are graduating this semester. I am recognizing how privileged I am to spend time with them as they prepare for their next life chapters, and how appreciative I am of our unhurried conversations.

If my nose had been on the grindstone, I wouldn’t have remembered that one of my students who graduated last year was traveling to Baylor to interview for the second time in two years for the graduate program of his dreams. I shared his disappointment (and surprise) when he didn’t get in the first time—this year, I remembered to get in touch to encourage and to try to smooth jitters shortly before he walked into the interview. Some ten days later, I was treated to this former national weightlifting champion contacting me while he was sobbing in the gym, in the middle of his workout, because he just found out that he got in to Baylor.

Another part of this Renaissance has been taking a little more time to read. And there is much to read, and to read about, in this issue of JCES, starting with Associate Editor Drew Pearl’s column on the changing nature of academic publishing. Research
articles detail new approaches to addressing timeless issues in community engagement, including negotiating power structures and ethical issues, as well as timely issues involving immigrant access to welcoming communities and effective health care. A practice-based article shares the story of success and struggle in transforming a community/university partnership into a community-based consortium. And four book reviews provide insight into in-depth studies on transformative civic engagement, storytelling, engaged research, and collective impact. I hope that you enjoy this issue of JCES and this season of transformation.
Open Access Publishing for Community Engagement

From the Associate Editor

Dr. Andrew Pearl is director of Community Engagement, Research, and Publications in the Center for Community-Based Partnerships at The University of Alabama

"U. of California System Cancels Elsevier Subscriptions, Calling Move a Win for Open Access" — Chronicle of Higher Education, February 28, 2019

"UC Drops Elsevier" — Inside Higher Ed, March 1, 2019

These headlines jumped to the top of the higher education news cycle as we turned our calendars from February to March this year. Elsevier is among the most widely known academic publishers, and according to their website, they seek to “help institutions and professionals advance healthcare, open science and improve performance for the benefit of humanity. Combining content with technology, supported by operational efficiency, we turn information into actionable knowledge. Elsevier empowers knowledge, which empowers those who use it” (https://www.elsevier.com/about).

According to the Chronicle’s story, the University of California (UC) system’s contract with Elsevier cost around $10 million a year for access to a wide range of academic journals published through Elsevier. Time will tell if this will be a harbinger of things to come and the first in a long line of universities canceling their expensive subscriptions with academic publishers, but this certainly has garnered a great deal of interest, and the academic publishing community is paying very close attention.

We often associate spring with a time for new beginnings, and this move could potentially represent an interesting shift in how we think about academic publishing—a shift at which the field of community engagement is at the forefront. As stated in the Chronicle headline, the UC System’s cancellation of their Elsevier subscription is being lauded as a “win” for the open access publishing movement. JCES is an open access journal, which is defined by the Directory of Open Access Journals as publications that “use a funding model that does not charge readers or their institutions for access” (https://doaj.org/faq/definition). In fact, a large majority of the highest profile journals in the community engagement field operate on a model of open access, which I think is something of which we can all be proud.

In community engagement, we understand that knowledge and expertise from outside the academy is fundamental to the work we do. JCES was founded on the tenet of “authentic community engagement,” which includes purposeful consideration of how the results of our community-engaged scholarship are disseminated. If this is the case, what message would we be sending to our community partners and other stakeholders if the scholarly artifacts of our work end up being hidden behind a subscription or other paywall? We might as well be telling our partners that even though they were essential to the work at every step along the way, they are not allowed to have access to our esoteric academic publications.

Academic journals like JCES provide scholars, practitioners, students, and community members the opportunity to share their work with a much broader audience. For faculty members, it is important to have their work recognized through a rigorous peer-review process that legitimizes their community engagement as a scholarly endeavor. For professional staff and administrators, it is valuable to be able to share best practices and lessons learned. Students not only are given a pathway for involvement in the research process, but are also shown ways to think about what they are learning in a broader context.

For community members, publishing in an academic journal validates them as valued contributors to the knowledge enterprise. The articles published in JCES are intended to demonstrate that students and community members play a central role in scholarship, and to paraphrase Ernest Boyer (1990), disseminating this work across the world in an openly accessible way goes a long way toward keeping the flame of scholarship alive (p. 24).

Reference

Conflicting Responsibilities: The Multi-Dimensional Ethics of University/Community Partnerships

Stephen Danley and Gayle Christiansen

Abstract

While there have been sharp critiques of university/community partnerships, most assume a dichotomous relationship in which universities privilege their own interests over those of community. There has been little theorizing or investigation of ethical responsibilities involved in such partnerships, and even less that acknowledges that communities are rarely unified and contain multiple different perspectives (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Using the principles of action research and reflective practice, we examine two cases of university/community partners as a means to investigate ethical responsibilities. Our cases demonstrate that there are multi-dimensional ethical responsibilities and that they have the potential to conflict with one another. That has dramatic implications for institutions hosting university/community partnerships. We argue that future research should examine the role of community boards as an oversight mechanism grounded in community that can address the often conflicting multi-dimensional ethical responsibilities within such partnerships from a community perspective.

Introduction

Universities have simultaneously pushed for civic engagement and partnerships with surrounding community (Ehrlich, 2000), while largely exempting such partnerships from formal ethics processes such as the Institutional Review Board (IRB). While such partnerships have largely been lauded, particularly in urban universities where many university/community relationships have a troubling history, there are an increasing number of scholars criticizing such partnerships as reifying local power structures and taking advantage of communities (Cruz & Giles, 2000; Bortolin, 2011). Embedded within these critiques is an acknowledgment of a complex ethical framework of such partnerships, but this complexity is rarely explicitly studied or theorized. In this paper, we use two case studies to show the multi-dimensionality of ethical responsibilities in such partnerships. We develop both theory for addressing this multi-dimensionality and apply that theory to the institutional level.

Our paper is grounded in a pair of partnerships. The first is between Rutgers University-Camden and the Latin American Economic Development Association (LAEDA), and the second between the university and North Camden Schools (New Jersey). These partnerships demonstrate the complex web of ethical responsibilities that we, as faculty and staff of an urban university, face when engaging in local partnerships. Faculty and staff, working on behalf of the university, face multi-dimensional ethical responsibilities across a networked community and university context. Those representing universities struggle to fulfill their ethical responsibilities to a myriad of local stakeholders, including university students, parents, municipalities, nonprofits, and others.

Ethical activity within community partnerships is not simply the result of IRB-mandated actions such as consent and minimizing risk. Ethical partnerships require attention to conflicting responsibilities on both the individual and university level. Here we focus on the wider ecosystem of ethical processes found in the university setting, a critical issue because the IRB process only covers the researcher-research subject relationship. We recommend that universities incorporate a community advisory board to ensure attention to these complex ethical challenges that often happen outside the purview of IRB. Such boards require further study but have potential to incorporate community voice in ways that help ensure community is treated ethically across the university. That is of critical importance in a networked system with multi-dimensional and conflicting ethical responsibilities.

Literature Review

The planning discipline challenges itself to engage community actors directly, and as a result has begun to address the myriad complexities of its ethical responsibilities. Qualitative researchers across sociology, anthropology, public policy, and other fields have adopted community-centric methodologies such as participatory action research
(Whyte, 1991) and questioned the ethics of the research world (Holman, 1987). Universities have been called to engage more directly with local community through partnerships and community service learning (Ehrlich, 2000), but such calls have largely avoided critical perspectives and explicit conversations about ethics. Some research celebrates the role of universities (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003) while a second layer of research is critical of such partnerships (Cruz & Giles, 2000; Bortolin, 2011). Here we bridge such critiques to widen disciplinary discussions about complex ethical responsibilities across disciplines and university/community partnerships, a process that informs our examination of our case studies.

Calls for universities to engage communities through service learning, civic engagement, and scholarship are nothing new. John Dewey (1897) famously called for such pedagogical advances more than a century ago. Ehrlich (2000, p. vi) defines civic engagement as “working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes.” Service learning is one way to extend student experiences beyond the classroom (Kenworthy-U’Ren, Zlotkowski, & Van de Ven, 2005). There is also a call for increased scholarship of engagement, a returning of the university to solve the greatest issues in society and contribute to the common good (Boyer, 1996). Lynton (1994) argues against the linear flow of knowledge from the university to practitioners, describing its creation as an ecosystem that has many directions and feedback loops in which discovery, teaching, reflecting, and sharing all generate new knowledge that can become scholarship. The most important issues of the time cannot be solved with technical rationality from the Ivory Tower, but are found outside where methods are arguably less scientific and the potential learning is more relevant (Schon, 1995). As such, the civic engagement discussion in the university setting is largely divorced from the wider discussion about declining civic engagement in the United States (Putnam, 1995; Levin, 2017; Clark & Eisenstein, 2013). Instead, universities are increasing such activities in an attempt to meet demand for experiential learning.

While university/community partnerships are often lauded, academics have developed several sharp critiques of these partnerships. Hartman (2013) chastises universities for foregoing their role as institutions that promote democracy, seeing instead institutions too intent on remainingapolitical. Others (Cruz & Giles, 2000) argue that community voices and community priorities are too often missing from such partnerships. And Bortolin (2011) argues that universities are serving themselves by privileging universities over the communities with whom they work. Some explicitly call for a social justice orientation to address these challenges (Marullo & Edwards, 2000). Each of these critiques indicates that there is a complex moral and ethical world underpinning such partnerships, but unlike in other disciplines, this literature does little to explicitly lay out such ethical complexities or build wider theory on how to address them. These critiques are the starting point for our own examination, but also a launching point to examine the complexity of these ethical responsibilities.

The practice of civic engagement draws heavily on theories of participatory planning, communicative action, and advocacy. In working with communities, the planner plays the active role of critical listening and works alongside community members to design through inclusionary dialogue and the practice of making sense together (Forester, 1988). The conversation is a collaborative effort that builds new networks and can lead to citizen empowerment (Innes & Booher, 2004). Davidoff (1965) calls for planners to be advocates for the individuals they work with in order to uphold democratic values.

Similarly, qualitative researchers have long pointed to the need for a wider ethical frame. Holman (1987) writes about the critical link between social science research and action. He draws heavily on feminist literature (see Oakley, 1981, p. 40) that points out that viewing qualitative interviews as the extraction of knowledge is insufficient:

Interviewers define the role of interviewees as subordinates; extracting information is more valuable than yielding it; the convention of interviewer/interviewee hierarchy is a rationalisation of inequity; what is good for interviewers is not necessarily good for interviewees.

Rather than this rational approach, ethical interviews need be seen as multi-directional,
with the questions coming from interviewees a critical part of the process. Indeed, to fail to answer such questions would be an ethical failing, a failure to treat interviewees like humans (Holman, 1987). The robust debate surrounding Alice Goffman’s (2015a) ethnographic research in West Philadelphia points to a similar theme. African-American scholars point to the danger of cultural appropriation, and question whether this was Goffman’s story to tell (Sharpe, 2014). Others challenge the ethical nature of her involvement in potentially violent activities, even going so far as to indicate that her actions constituted a felony for conspiracy to commit homicide (Lubet, 2014), or that she failed in her ethical obligation to give information to police officers regarding open crime investigations (Lubet, 2014). Goffman’s vigorous response to such critiques (Goffman, 2015b) points to a complex ethical landscape with multiple ethical responsibilities.

Both planning and qualitative research have traditions and a broad theoretical base for understanding ethical responsibilities. Both point to the complicated nature of these ethical responsibilities. University/community partnerships require a similar examination to avoid the abuse of power. We use these concepts of a complex ethical framework with multiple actors to analyze our two case studies of university/community partnerships.

Methods

This paper draws on several research traditions. First and foremost is reflective practice (Schon, 1995). Reflective practice captures knowledge created by the process of doing, or in other words, action. Reflection-in-action “makes explicit the action strategies, assumptions, models of the world, or problem-settings that were implicit” (Schon, 1995, pp. 30–31). The scholar or practitioner can then reflect on the reflection-in-action, further pulling apart and analyzing the action and the “strategies, assumptions, or problem-settings implicit in a whole repertoire of situational responses” (Schon, 1995, p. 31). This type of knowledge cannot be created in a laboratory experiment and must rely on action research.

Similarly, participatory action research (Whyte, 1991) embeds the views of a practitioner in all stages of research. Our research and authorship team includes the director of an after-school program who has participated in defining, conducting, writing, and presenting this research. Many advantages have been found regarding practitioners in research processes, including a research output that is more useful to those in the field. We believe that to be the case in our paper. In the ethnographic tradition, there is a wide-ranging debate surrounding the concept of “going native,” a term originally believed to be coined by Malinowski (1922). Malinowski argues that such an immersion is necessary. While this has traditionally been considered a conflict with the “objective” position of the researcher (Gold, 1958), scholars increasingly question whether such objectivity is possible (Minh-Ha, 2009; Harding, 1987; Rosaldo, 1993). Others argue that connecting personally to qualitative research subjects can lead to increased access and better information (Fenno, 1978). A third view has recently championed the idea of “being native” rather than going native (Kanuha, 2000). Kanuha argues that being a member of the community to be studied can bring critical context and understanding to a research project.

This concept is of particular importance to any university/community partnership, as such a focus on civic engagement encourages faculty and staff to live in the community surrounding campus and to engage in research in this community. The ideology behind university civic engagement traces the same lines as Kanuha’s arguments. Such concepts are doubly important in this case, as we are not just university employees but local residents and activists. Such context proved critical, not just in the carrying out of the community partnerships, but in our reflective process of researching them. At times, these partnerships bordered on controversial local conflicts and policies, and our knowledge as residents helped them navigate these troubled waters. But, as seen in the discussion of ethical responsibilities, the additional identity of resident, built on top of university representative, led to ethical challenges.

Finally, this research is based upon a pair of case studies. George and Bennett (2005, p. 5) argue that, “the case study approach—the detailed examination of an aspect of a historical episode to develop or test historical explanations that may be generalized to other events—has come in and out of favor over the past five decades.” These methods are appropriate here because of the need not to generalize directly to the wider array of university/community partnerships, but to build basic theory on ethical responsibilities as exist in fields such as planning and in the broader study of qualitative
research. In-depth examination of case studies is ideal for building such theory (Eisenhardt, 1989).

In summary, our research occurs at the intersection of multiple qualitative traditions. From case studies to reflective practice, participatory action research to ethnography as a “native,” this research focuses on in-depth examination of the ethical responsibilities of university/community partnerships. Such a strategy intentionally embeds perspectives of residents and practitioners into all stages of the research process, embracing the idea that such perspectives lead to a well-rounded and deeper analysis of the cases in practice (see Kanuha, 2000).

In this paper, we examine two cases of community partnerships in which we participated. The first is a loose affiliation of nonprofits, classes, an informal group of friends, and a planning authority organized by a faculty member. The second is a more formal partnership between Rutgers University-Camden and the North Camden Schools run by university staff. In each case, the collaborations were grounded in local community and local issues.

Faculty Partnership and Multi-Dimensional Ethics

The first partnership was between our Rutgers University-Camden class and the Latin American Economic Development Authority (LAEDA). Students in two classes worked with LAEDA to promote Dine Around Friday, as well as produce online restaurant reviews for a variety of local Camden restaurants. In both classes, students studied Camden and Camden’s economic development strategy and history as an academic complement to the partnership. LAEDA’s Dine Around was a direct response to these current and historical policy issues. The program linked downtown institutions to ethnic restaurants by providing a fixed-price lunch special on Fridays once a month. Rutgers University-Camden supported the effort by running a bus from campus to the lunch (paid for by the Office of Civic Engagement) and students organized an advertising campaign on campus.

As this collaboration was beginning, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) reached out to me regarding its Camden Food Plan. An early draft of the food plan included a recommendation to raise grant money for a position inside Camden city government to promote and provide reviews for local restaurants, similar to a role played by the city of Camden’s tourism office. However, community stakeholders pushed back, arguing that there were more critical things to use the (hypothetical) funds for in city government. During the course of that meeting, DVRPC proposed using students to conduct reviews as a viable alternative. Our class added the reviews to the syllabus, and to the existing partnership with LAEDA. As a result, Rutgers University-Camden students helped promote Dine Around, attended Dine Around, and wrote more than 70 restaurant reviews the following semester.

The shift in the focus of the partnership reflected the ways we were juggling a number of different ethical responsibilities.

A clear responsibility was to our students. Because Dine Around days were on Fridays during lunch and many of my students worked during that time, having students focus on restaurant reviews was a far more effective education strategy. They could do reviews on their own time, but the assignment helped them get out of downtown and experience firsthand the ways that development was reaching other neighborhoods in the city.

But the increased focus on restaurant reviews directly conflicted with the original ethical obligation to LAEDA—to support the Dine Around program as a way to support local businesses. As the partnership went on, LAEDA became concerned that the partnership was focusing more on the DVRPC’s suggestion of conducting restaurant reviews than on the Dine Around program, which was seeing a drop in attendance and publicity in its second year.

Similarly, we had an ethical responsibility toward the restaurants themselves. The DVRPC had been shocked when conducting their research regarding a Camden Food Plan that restaurants had prominent reviews on Yelp which cited not the food, but rather criticized the city, saying not to visit the restaurant because one might get shot. In sending students, most of whom had little experience in an urban environment beyond the confines of Rutgers University-Camden’s campus, reviews had the potential to be damaging rather than constructive. Students needed to be trained both in how to write reviews—though they caught on quickly to the informal writing style of online review services like Yelp—and made aware that their lack of cultural experience or exposure to ethnic food could cause them to write unwarranted negative reviews. This was specifically addressed within the curriculum, as well as in class time.
when students were asked to reflect and share their experiences.

Just as there were ethical responsibilities to students, LAEDA and the restaurants, we faced the ethical challenge of what was best for the wider community, a question that intersected with my own political beliefs as a resident of that community.

The underpinning theory behind working with LAEDA, DVRPC, and each individual restaurant was that doing so had the potential, in a small way, to help the city. Supporting local restaurants through Dine Around and reviews could help local businesses to tap into dollars that typically fled Camden in cars at the end of the workday. While this strategy seems relatively innocuous, it was a critique of local politicians and their development strategy. The CEO of LAEDA started Dine Around in part as a contrast to what residents saw as downtown-centric development strategies that rarely reached neighborhoods. The historical decision to invest much of the $175 million granted by the state in 2002 (Katz, 2009) in downtown institutions was particularly frustrating for residents who saw few jobs from Rutgers University-Camden, Cooper Hospital, a downtown baseball stadium, aquarium, and concert venue. A similar initiative providing tax breaks to major companies recently passed through the state legislature. The Economic Opportunity Act allowed multiple companies to move into the city, including Subaru, Holtec, and the Philadelphia 76ers, a basketball team that built their practice facility in the city. Activists argued that Camden residents themselves would see few jobs (Lamboy, 2015), and that the record of urban trickle-down economics was poor in the city (Katz, 2009). LAEDA was engaging in Dine Around and its broader food strategy as a strategic way of showing alternatives, that politicians instead of handing out close to a billion dollars in tax breaks to companies could support local businesses. But it was a deeply political act, one that carried an implicit critique of existing officials. That critique became explicit when the LAEDA CEO ran for mayor in the next electoral cycle.

Students reported back to me that these political considerations impacted them moving forward. Two separate students reported being questioned about their relationship with a “radical professor” when interviewing for jobs within the city—which they thought was a reference to us and the class. We have had frank discussions with others, particularly those with political ambitions, about the political implications of their work within the class.

These conflicts may seem small. On the surface, they point toward the critiques laid out within the literature, that university partnerships are inclined to focus more on university needs than community needs. But this partnership also points to something more complex: the many multi-dimensional ethical responsibilities within each university/community partnership, and that at times, these responsibilities may conflict with one another. As faculty, we have responsibilities to our students that may conflict with our responsibilities to our partners or even our own communities.

**Staff Partnership and Multi-Dimensional Ethics**

Just as with the LAEDA partnership, our partnership with Camden public schools, called Ignite, faced a variety of multi-dimensional and conflicting ethical responsibilities. This partnership began in 2010, when the Rutgers University-Camden’s fledgling Office of Civic Engagement met with Camden public schools to see what it could do to support education in the city. The superintendent, noting the loss of after-school programming due to state budget cuts, committed funds to provide programming to the three Camden public schools in the North Camden neighborhood, the closest neighborhood to the Rutgers University-Camden campus. This initiative, started with work-study students serving a handful of students at each school, ballooned into a program to serve more than 300 students a day, multiple partners to provide programming, and a much larger paid student work force after Rutgers University-Camden won a five-year, $500,000 a year, 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant from the New Jersey Department of Education in the summer of 2012. (Retrieved from [https://www.camden.rutgers.edu/civic-engagement/camden-ignite/](https://www.camden.rutgers.edu/civic-engagement/camden-ignite/)) Additional funds came with greater accountability for a wider array of programming. The stakes were now much higher.

One of us was the director of Ignite and had a direct ethical obligation to university students. Students run and manage the Ignite program. They participate as assistant teachers, known as education ambassadors, managers of site operations, known as site coordinators, and club facilitators, or students who teach different enrichment clubs. Outside grant requirements and goals, the university has the additional goal for Rutgers University-Camden students to enhance their education through participating
in this off-campus experience. In Ignite, Rutgers University-Camden students engage directly in firsthand issues of urban education, poverty, and sociology. In building trust with families and youth they learn responsibility and leadership that will transcend to their future careers. Former Ignite ambassadors and site coordinators have leveraged their experiences in the program to land ideal careers after graduation, several as full-time staff working in these same schools.

The Rutgers University-Camden students bring to Ignite a passion for working with youth. At some school sites where teachers are overworked and burned out, they are a burst of energy at the end of the day. The students are not, however, seasoned teaching veterans. The Rutgers University-Camden students often struggle with managing student behavior and planning engaging lessons given their inexperience. When regular staff observe unaccompanied students in the hallway or a Rutgers University-Camden student unable to quiet a loud classroom, they question Ignite’s ability to provide academic enrichment for their youth. This model of Rutgers University-Camden students managing and leading Ignite presents an ethical dilemma because even though it reaches university goals of students enhancing their academic learning through real-world experience, using student staff in this way conflicts with the goals promised to school administrators and perhaps students and families to keep students safe and learning. It is also unfair to the Rutgers University-Camden students, who are thrown into a position for which they are not prepared.

To help resolve this dilemma, we had to change the model. One change was the creation of the Master Teacher role. This individual is a school-day teacher who co-manages the site with the student site coordinator. The Master Teacher knows the students well from working during the school day and has the experience to step in and assist with managing classrooms if issues arise. And the Rutgers University-Camden students still receive leadership and management experience. Another shift we made was toward additional school-day teachers to teach clubs after school, and to provide Rutgers University-Camden students with set plans and activities. This took the Rutgers University-Camden students out of the role of writing lessons, for which they lacked expertise. We also added professional development for students at weekly meetings in order for them to gain additional skills held by school-based professionals, and we focused on Rutgers University-Camden student retention because veteran student staff could more easily engage and manage large groups of students.

We also had an ethical responsibility to program partners that, in some cases, receive grant funds to teach different enrichment clubs such as choir, visual arts, aquatic science, and athletics like cycling, tennis, and soccer. The relationship with each partner is different as each has its own needs, their reasons for partnership with Ignite differ, and their goals do not always align with those of the university or the grant-maker; at times the needs of partners conflicted with one another and program goals. For instance, we found tennis coaches taking a good amount of program time having students learn about healthy eating at the expense of practicing on the court. Through discussions with the tennis partner staff, we learned one of their funding sources required them to spend a certain amount of time teaching nutrition. From a program standpoint, we already had the Rutgers University-Camden School of Nursing providing youth nutrition lessons as it provided nursing students real-world health education experience. By having our tennis partners focus on similar topics, the students were doubling up on nutrition at the expense of learning a new sport. To resolve this issue, the tennis partners were able to have conversations with their other funders regarding how Ignite can show that the students receive the nutrition education. In many ways the tennis partner could show their funders increased outcomes because with a different partner assisting in nutrition education, they can spend more time on tennis skills. What looked like a conflict between partners emerged as a synergy upon closer inspection.

We also had an ethical responsibility to the schools with whom we partner. These partnerships have become increasingly challenging as the educational landscape of the North Camden neighborhood changes. When Ignite began in 2012, the neighborhood had three district schools all managed by the Camden Board of Education and one parochial school managed by the Catholic Partnership Schools. In 2013, the state took control of the school district, appointing a superintendent and making the school board advisory. Camden Public Schools became the Camden City School District. This created changes to the North Camden Schools. One school has been closed and a second transformed into a Renaissance School (a New
Jersey construct in which the school is open to those in the neighborhood, public money supports the school, and the school is operated by a charter management organization), a traditional charter also opened, leaving only one original district school remaining.

As all those at the Camden Public Schools who first came to the table with Rutgers University-Camden to voice the need for after-school programming are no longer with the school district, there is a continual need to pitch the Ignite program and prove the ability to meet school leader needs. However, as with some partners, we found some school leader visions do not align with Rutgers University-Camden goals or grant expectations. For instance, at one school site the school leader thought Ignite should focus on math and literacy test prep in order to increase standardized test scores. In her opinion, there was no room for enrichment. Then, at a different school a push for educational enrichment proved challenging for the reason that school leadership believed the school day challenged students enough and that after-school time was best utilized for relaxing. These beliefs clashed with grant requirements to show positive outcomes in enrichment activities. It took multiple conversations from different stakeholders to show test scores could increase through the inquiry-based, hands-on approaches pursued in the enrichment clubs. Trying to meet the needs of what seems to be constantly changing school models and leaders is exhausting. The only relief seems to be North Camden youth and families who have not changed over this time period and who have become some of Ignite's strongest advocates.

With the university focused on university student experiences, partners paying attention to the needs of their funders, boards, missions, and school leadership still trying to make sense of a changing school landscape, we wondered: who was concerned about the needs of our youth? We believed the most important program constituency are North Camden students and their families. The Ignite mission is to spark student discovery through exposing students to new opportunities and to create lifelong learners. This is not an explicit goal of the grant, the university, partners, or the schools, but in getting to know the students, their stories, and their families, coupled with my experience as a former teacher, social justice advocate, and Camden resident, it proved challenging to encourage student staff to focus on their needs as student learners, the requirements of program partners, school leaders, or the university goals in themselves. We found ourselves alone at times in this pursuit for quality programming for our North Camden students and families as some students were wrapped up with gaining their experience in the field, the university seemed focused on promoting the program as part of its growing reputation as a civically engaged institution, and the schools at times focused on keeping the youth busy. We found ourselves asking, who ensures we are being responsible for the needs of the youth given the other competing priorities? And what would happen if we weren’t motivated by the need for social justice? How would such a program with potential to provide greater opportunity be expected to do so?

Reconceptualizing Ethical Responsibilities as Multi-Dimensional and Conflicting

Wessels (2015) asks what are the ethical obligations and responsibilities of community partnerships. That question reorients our understanding of the ethics of university/community partnerships. Many critiques of these partnerships focus on a dichotomy of university and community. Doing so makes a mistake often found in education settings, assuming there is one unified community rather than a diverse array of interests (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Our cases show something similar. In our cases, there were a multitude of ethical relationships and responsibilities within each partnership. Our cases and experiences point to the need to reconceptualize the ethical responsibilities of university/community partnerships as multi-dimensional and potentially conflicting. This type of a shift has already happened in other disciplines. For example, our understanding of government and governance have shifted to consider the impact of networks (see Kooiman, 1993; Sørenson & Torfing, 2005). Our cases indicate the same needs happen within the study of university/community partnerships. They need to be reconceptualized as networks rather than a dichotomy between university and community.

From that starting point, a model of networked university/community relationships emerges from our case studies. The model starts with two tenets drawn from the extensive literature, then adds two tenets from our case studies:

1. University/community partnerships are embedded within a wider power struggle between universities and communities (Cruz & Giles, 2000).
2. Universities have ethical responsibilities within that political context (Hartman, 2013).
3. There exists a network of actors within these partnerships, each with their own ethical responsibilities. We highlight faculty, staff, students, partners, and community as stakeholders in our cases, but it is possible to imagine university administration, others within the nonprofit sector, and more as part of this network.
4. The existence of a multi-dimensional ethical landscape means that there may be conflicts across these multi-dimensional ethical responsibilities.

Implications for the University

We contribute to the literature on university/community partnerships by building a theoretical model that considers how such partnerships are nested in networks, and those networks are the sites for multi-dimensional ethical responsibilities with the potential to conflict with one another. While others have provided wide-ranging critiques of such partnerships (Cruz & Giles, 2000; Stoeker & Tryon, 2009; Bortolin, 2011), none have systematically looked at the multi-dimensionality of these ethical responsibilities along with strategies for addressing it. This contribution has implications for our understanding of these partnerships, but also implications for both individuals and institutions.

As individuals, we used a variety of strategies to address the challenges of conflicting multi-dimensional ethical responsibilities. We made it clear to community when we were required to wear our university hat and when we were free to speak as residents. We avoided controversy when we felt it would damage the partnership. We overcommunicated, making sure partners knew the challenges and conflicts as they arose and how we chose to handle them. And we strove for continuity in our projects to ensure community partnerships were built upon strong relationships. We lay out these principles in more depth in Danley and Christiansen (2017) where we examine the implications of working in such contexts—particularly for white educators—reaching the guiding principle that “we focus on relationship-building and investing locally in both business and people” (p. 15).

Here we build upon that individual framework, highlighting the institutional implications of these multi-dimensional and conflicting ethical responsibilities. How should a university address these challenges? As Wessels (2015) notes, there is little university infrastructure for addressing the ethical implications of university/community partnerships. What little infrastructure exists, such as the IRB process, is not particularly adept at working in such a multi-dimensional space. Little civic engagement activity is captured by IRB. Faculty classes must only use IRB protocols if they are conducting research, and staff activities do not fall under the IRB umbrella at all. Furthermore, IRB review is designed to specifically protect members in the study, focusing on issues such as consent. It is unclear that such a formal process can adapt a set of hard and fast rules for such cases, and a process similar to IRB also runs the risk of having a chilling effect for faculty and staff by creating a cumbersome process.

University strategies need infrastructure to directly address these multi-dimensional, conflicting ethical responsibilities and to ensure that ethical action toward a networked community. Within partnerships, strategies like reflection (Jacoby, 2009) are effective. There is potential in peer-coaching circles like Iowa Campus Compact’s “Teach to Teach Initiative,” though that initiative will require further study and evaluation. But we argue that there is a wider systemic need for community to be represented in the governing of these partnerships. If IRB is designed for the research process, and faculty is obligated to prioritize students, then who in the system represents community?

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln has taken a direct approach to address this gap in infrastructure for university/community collaboration by commissioning joint advisory boards (Shah, 2018) for it. These boards incorporate community members and provide a critical oversight function from the perspective of the community. Enacting community-centric boards as oversight also avoids the potentially damaging process of requiring IRB for university/community partnerships, something that could simultaneously dampen enthusiasm for partnerships by creating extra barriers to such work, and put such partnerships within an IRB process that is not designed to handle these types of ethical challenges and might misunderstand the dynamics at play.

On the surface, some form of community advisory boards—perhaps housed within a civic engagement office or an office of service learning—is an elegant solution. It incorporates community
voice into the process, in turn acknowledging that relationships are multi-dimensional and there is a need for partner and community input.

A community board also holds the potential to bring a more holistic approach to community relationships, one that does not silo community concerns within a civic engagement shop that deals specifically (and only) with such partnerships. Too often, acting ethically toward community requires actions beyond the scope of a narrow partnership. In particular, we find that elements of community within our partners are often impacted by a focus on student safety by the university outside of the partnership. For example, at Rutgers University-Camden, a busing system that keeps students from walking local streets undermines community businesses or nonprofits eager to connect to university students. Spatial exclusion works the other way, as community members have restricted access to facilities such as libraries and the university gym, making it harder for grassroots partners to access university resources during the partnership. When these complaints are brought up within the context of university/community partnerships they are exceptionally hard to deal with—the faculty or staff in such partnerships rarely work directly with facilities or students in these ways. A community board provides a natural landing place for these issues, and widens the scope of possible ethical behavior by the university. It also provides a potential space where community members could take a more active hand in training for and curating discussions about university/community partnerships, and, in doing so, ensure ethical responsibilities to community are directly addressed. Including community voice in these processes is critical to a social justice orientation.

The study of such boards is still in its infancy (see Shah, 2018). Community boards would need to be carefully constructed to avoid token participation (Arnstein, 1969) in which community members have little power over actual proceedings. Similarly, community boards would need to avoid the political trappings of selecting a narrow band of community partners to serve on them. Ideally such boards would capture the voice not only of partners working with the university, but also grassroots partners who may have a harder time meeting university requirements for partnership, and community members who may not feel represented by the nonprofit organizations in their community. Lastly, community boards would need to be careful to be constructive spaces that provide value to community, not simply another “ask” of universities to community members.

Despite these challenges, the early returns from community boards are promising (Shah, 2018). They hold potential to provide institutional space for universities to acknowledge and act upon the complex ethical nature of multi-dimensional and conflicting ethical responsibilities.

From both a practical and theoretical perspective, the multi-dimensionality of university/community partnerships is of critical importance. Our model of ethical responsibilities in these collaborations contributes to the literature by developing a theory of multi-dimensionality grounded in two case studies at Rutgers University-Camden. These case studies show a multitude of ethical responsibilities to different actors in a networked context, and demonstrate how such multi-dimensionality comes into conflict. That is the foundation for our model, which builds upon existing understandings of university/community partnerships as (1) embedded in the power struggle between universities and communities (Cruz & Giles, 2000) and (2) that universities and individuals have ethical responsibilities within that context (Hartman, 2013) to argue that (3) these responsibilities happen in the context of a network of actors and thus are multi-dimensional and (4) that the multi-dimensional nature of ethical responsibilities within such partnerships means that there may be conflict across these differing responsibilities. We hope that this study provides a foundation for both further study of the implications of such complex ethical responsibilities, and the basis for addressing these issues on campus in multi-dimensional ways.

References


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Power and Negotiation in a University/Community Partnership Serving Jewish Teen Girls

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Abstract

University/community partnerships involve collaborative work with great potential and risk. This work can allow for productive exchanges that improve the quality of programs and enable broader dissemination of innovative ideas and practices grounded in feminist and social justice ideals. However, institutional demands and individual commitments introduce complications. This paper examines the complex power dynamics that emerge from cross-institutional partnering and program delivery in the context of a feminist education and youth-led participatory action research program for Jewish teen girls. Specifically, we examine the previously under-studied topic of university/community collaboration in which the participating institutions are similarly situated in structures of power. We explore how power dynamics and the partners’ shared and differential strategic goals were negotiated within a context of distinct institutional mandates, with a focus on the pressures of time, funding, and developing youth participatory action research with relatively privileged youth. We discuss implications and strategies for navigating complex university/community engagements that enable balanced, long-term, and sustained partnerships in which mutual interests are served.

Overview

Cross-institutional partnerships between universities and community organizations can allow for productive exchanges that improve the quality of programs and enable broader dissemination of innovative ideas and practices grounded in feminist perspectives and social justice ideals. However, institutional demands and individual commitments complicate collaboration. This paper examines the complex dynamics that emerged from a cross-institutional collaboration that included program delivery in the context of a feminist education and youth participatory action research (YPAR) program for Jewish teen girls, originally developed by a community organization in New York City, and currently being facilitated in Chicago as a university/community partnership. In this paper, we build on the work of scholars who have begun to apply critical perspectives to community-engaged scholarship, highlighting that university/community partnerships are complex and shaped by relations of power (Amen, 2001; Kindred & Petrescu, 2015; Sandmann & Kliewer, 2012; Sandmann et al., 2010; Sandy & Holland, 2006). We begin with a brief description of our feminist education and YPAR program, the Research Training Internship (RTI). We then review existing scholarship that focuses on the opportunities, challenges, and tensions that emerge when universities and communities partner within a context of complex power dynamics. We also provide a brief overview of relevant literature on participatory action research. Using RTI as a focal point, we then articulate our primary research goals and research methodology framing this paper’s analysis. Finally, we explore two emergent themes and tension points negotiated throughout our university/community project: (1) how power dynamics and differential needs and strategic goals impact the negotiation of engagement in this university/community collaborative program, and (2) implications and strategies for navigating complex university/community engagements that enable balanced, long-term, and sustained partnerships.

Research Training Internship Program

The university/community collaborative program RTI, from its inception, was guided by a commitment to critical, feminist inquiry and community-engaged action toward social justice. This project involves three primary groups: Ma’yan (a Jewish feminist educational organization based in New York City), the JUF (JUF), and three...
DePaul University faculty members from different disciplines (Women’s and Gender Studies, Social Work, and Education) working together as a team.

RTI originally was developed by Ma’yan. After this organization ran the RTI program successfully for several years, they became interested in facilitating its expansion to additional sites. In this context, Ma’yan reached out to university and community stakeholders in Chicago; as a result, RTI currently is being facilitated in Chicago as a university/community partnership. The program annually brings together a group of approximately 12–15 Jewish high-school-aged girls from the Chicagoland area to engage in collective critical reflection and inquiry on their immediate social context and broader societal injustices; to cultivate leadership capacities for critical dialogue and social action with other teens and adult allies inside and beyond the Jewish community; and to build strategic partnerships among feminist scholars, activists, and Jewish community members. In this program, we seek to engage youth from backgrounds of relative privilege to critically interrogate the ways in which they may be simultaneously impacted by systemic privilege and oppression, and in the process, reevaluate their beliefs about themselves, others, and the world (Berilla, 2015; Goodman, 2010). Grounded in a feminist theoretical and pedagogical legacy, our work directs attention to the root causes of social problems.

Through this lens, we seek to deepen understanding of the ways in which personal identities, experiences, and structural positionalities relative to privilege are implicated in the systematic oppression of others (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1994; Okun, 2010; Richie, 2012) as part of a larger goal to cultivate a more active citizenry working to change current structures (Muzak, 2011; Stoudt, 2009; Stoudt, Fox, & Fine, 2012).

RTI is co-facilitated by a social work professional from the JUF, and a graduate student in Women’s and Gender Studies from DePaul University. It is important to note that at this point in time, there is no university course associated with this community-based project. Rather, the Women’s and Gender Studies graduate assistant works under the supervision of participating faculty members to co-facilitate the program and collaborate on research affiliated with this project. Moving into the future, however, we are in the planning stages for the development of a course in which university students and high-school-aged students would work together to develop and implement a participatory action research project.

In its pilot year (2014–2015), RTI ran as a 15-month program that consisted of twice monthly sessions. In its second and third years (2015–2016, 2016–2017), the program was revised to align with a 10-month academic calendar. In the context of the bi-monthly sessions, the high school students received instruction in feminist theoretical and social justice education, and the design and implementation of participatory action research, ultimately developing their own youth-led research project. For purposes of this analysis, youth-led participatory action research is defined as a philosophy and methodology that seeks to engage youth directly in collaborative critical inquiry, creating opportunities for them to investigate social issues that directly impact their lives, probe the systemic bases of these issues, and strategize actions to prompt social change (Bautista, Bertrand, Morrell, Scorza, & Matthews, 2013; Fals-Borda, 1991; Reason & Bradbury 2006; Torre & Fine, 2006).

Collaborative Efforts Between Universities and Community Organizations

Two decades ago, the Kellogg Commission’s landmark report called for increased engagement by universities in their communities (1999). Over these last two decades, partnering with local communities has become a strategic part of fulfilling the service mission of higher education (Begun, Berger, Otto-Salaj, & Rose, 2010; Tinkler, 2012). University/community partnerships often are framed from the perspective of universities serving as an intermediary (Fehren, 2010), or intervening on behalf of marginalized communities and organizations (Morrell, Sorensen, & Howarth, 2015), a model of asymmetrical power that positions the university as the large institution of power and the community partner as the organization that needs assistance and stands to benefit from the university’s resources, support, and expertise (Morrell et al., 2015; White, 2010). As White (2010) observes, the university almost always is richer, has greater professional capacity, controls more resources, and is more politically connected than the community with which they are working, although the community can sometimes be the more powerful partner (Van de Ven, 2007). Indeed, the social and political contexts within which partnerships exist produce complex power relations and inform differentials

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in need (Sandmann & Kliewer, 2012; Sandmann et al., 2012; White, 2010).

Scholars argue that community-engaged projects ideally should promote equitable partnerships characterized by mutuality and reciprocity (Boyer, 1990; Boyer, 1996; Sandmann & Kliewer, 2012). Mutuality is evident when partners are interdependent and all participate in the relationship and benefit equitably (Saltmarsh, Hartley, & Clayton, 2009; Still & Goode, 1992). Reciprocity, while dependent on specific community-engaged contexts (Dostilio, Brackman, Edwards, Harrison, Kliewer, & Claton, 2012), appears as an arrangement in which authority and responsibility for knowledge production are shared (Saltmarsh et al., 2009). Sandy and Holland (2006) describe a vision for ideal university/community partnerships in which the partners develop a mutually beneficial agenda, understand the capacity and resources of all partners, collaboratively participate in project planning, attend to the collaborative relationship on an ongoing basis, share design and control of project directions, and continually assess the partnership processes and outcomes. Working toward meeting such ideals, community-engaged scholars and community organizations must be mindful of, and attentive to, differentials in power that affect mutuality and reciprocity in the processes, purpose, and outcome (Stanton, 2007).

Nonetheless, there exist myriad documented challenges in developing and maintaining sustained collaborative university/community relationships (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Harkins, 2013). It is typical for each partner to define the collaboration around self and common interests and goals (Amen, 2001; Sandmann & Kliewer, 2012; White, 2010), often centering on the partners’ motivations, organizational systems and culture, and time (Begun et al., 2010; Morrell et al., 2015; Sandmann & Kliewer, 2012, Wallace, 2000), with a very limited understanding as to what motivates and drives the other institution’s decisions relative to the joint project (Langan & Morton, 2009). For example, it is often the case that university faculty are, at least to some extent, motivated by the institutional pressure to both bring in research funding and produce scholarly materials and publications. The community partner likely has different emphases, and may be motivated by such things as a responsibility to their community client base, funding, and service enhancement (Kindred & Petrescu, 2015; White, 2010).

Additional complexities and tensions can arise in university/community partnerships as a result of different cultural contexts between higher education and community-based organizations, in particular, the focus each institution brings to the knowledge production enterprise (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). In today’s era of the commodification of knowledge (Sandmann & Kliewer, 2012), scholars are increasingly calling upon universities to bring critical attention to the politics of knowledge in their community-engaged work (Kane, 2012). This is not to suggest that universities’ knowledge production expertise is not highly valued. Rather, as Amen (2001) advocates, universities should acknowledge that their relationship to the community is based on their expertise in the production and dissemination of knowledge, and communities should turn to the university for the knowledge it has to offer. That said, critical theoretical perspectives that emphasize the workings of power in the social construction of knowledge (Freire, 1970; Sandmann et al., 2010) suggest that to achieve an ideal of reciprocity, as well as to create knowledge that has real applied value for the challenges facing communities, equal power sharing in the process of conceptualizing and implementing knowledge production projects must be emphasized (Kane, 2012; Sandmann et al., 2010). Furthermore, in an effort to build authentically mutual relationships, some community-engaged scholars have called for universities to partner with community organizations around participatory action research, driven by shared goals of social change that serve to “mitigate [university] dominance” (Sandmann et al., 2010, p. 10). These community-engaged scholars also emphasize the utility of knowledge based in critical inquiry and analysis, linked to intentional action that challenges social injustice (Campbell & Lassiter, 2010; Morrell et al., 2015; Siemens; 2012; Tinkler, 2012).

Although a detailed review of YPAR is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to note briefly the utility of this kind of research in terms of balancing power as universities and communities come together to develop new knowledge. YPAR has traditionally been an inquiry framework, through which youth, most impacted by structural inequalities and violence, have found a voice through which to act as social critics and agents of change (Fine, 2018; Torre & Fine, 2006). In recent decades, it also has emerged as a meaningful approach for studying and involving privileged
youth in important social inquiry into how power and oppression operate, and the role that privilege plays in producing, sustaining, and normalizing social injustice (Stoudt, Fox, & Fine, 2012). Thus, while common tools for critical consciousness-raising and conducting YPAR projects rely on the lived knowledge of marginalized communities (Cammarota & Fine, 2008), the invisibility of privileged youth’s structural advantage complicates this strategy in working with privileged populations (Stoudt, et al., 2012). As Reason and Bradbury (2006) argue, an exemplar for inquiry based on a pedagogy of the privileged is one that includes inquiry processes that engage those in positions of power in a critical interrogation of their structural advantages, as well as prompt an emerging commitment to collective responsibility and solidarity, rather than a pattern of retreat or passive compassion for disadvantaged others (Stoudt, et al., 2012).

Beyond the complexities that YPAR with privileged youth embodies, community-engaged scholars also most recently have focused critical theoretical attention on the university/community relationship as its own important unit of analysis. (Cruz & Giles, 2000; Sandmann et al., 2012; Sandy & Holland, 2006; White, 2010). Our research contributes to this growing body of literature, focusing attention on the relatively under-studied topic of university/community collaboration in which the participating institutions are similarly situated in structures of power. Sandmann and Kliwer (2012) have noted “how the structural organization of an institution can produce forms of power that undermine the viability of engaged partnerships” (p. 24). Our work builds upon and interrogates this idea, and in particular, takes up two questions: (1) how power dynamics, differential needs, and distinct strategic goals impact the negotiation of engagement in this collaborative program; and (2) implications and strategies for navigating complex university/community engagements to allow for the development of balanced, long-term, and sustained partnerships.

**Methodology and Analytic Overview**

Although the RTI partnership involves three groups, this analysis focuses primarily on the two Midwest-based partners for this project: DePaul University faculty members and the Jewish fund/federation. It is important to note that our partners from Ma’yan are aware of, and fully supportive of, the development of this analysis without their full participation. Furthermore, while the research component of the RTI project involved an Institutional Review Board approved research proposal to fully explore youth experiences and perspectives as a result of their participation in RTI, the current paper offers a different analytic lens, focusing on retrospective reflections (Curwood, Munger, Mitchell, Mackeigan, & Farrar, 2011) by members of the Midwest-based community partners on the first three years of this partnership.

To ground this interrogation, we use two sources of data. First, as we’ve mentioned previously, our perspectives have been informed by our ongoing observation and work with three cohorts of RTI, one from August 2014 to December 2015, a second cohort from August 2015 to June 2016, and a third cohort from August 2016 to June 2017. Over these three years, as well as during the planning phases in 2013 and early 2014, we met with our community partners to conceptualize the program, develop a mutual vision of project goals and objectives, develop an agreement about the roles and responsibilities of all RTI partners, participate in ongoing project planning, attend to challenges that arose over several years, and assess program processes, outcomes, challenges, and areas for future development and growth. At least one member of our research team has attended all program sessions to chronicle observations and to provide programmatic support. Second, over the last three years, we engaged in a series of ongoing structured conversations that included the DePaul University faculty members, graduate assistants, and our community partners from the Jewish fund/foundation. These conversations have generated rich narratives informed by our individual roles and responsibilities in the program and our institutional homes, our academic backgrounds and disciplines, as well as our experiences in various forms of community-based and interdisciplinary work. Our analytic approach in this paper involves a structured reflective process that moves beyond simply reporting on these conversations to a more integrated treatment of the thematic content embedded within these narratives (Furman, Kelly, & Nelson, 2005).

In this context, our analysis foregrounds a thematic orientation that emerged for us as we considered the ways in which this university/community partnership involves an ongoing process of negotiation that gets balanced and re-balanced over time as the different partners seek to work together to develop a youth-focused
program and meet their distinct institutional roles and mandates. In this paper, we consider how power dynamics and the partners’ shared and differential strategic goals were negotiated within a context of distinct institutional mandates and explore the implications of our analysis for creating balanced, long-term, and sustained community/university partnerships.

**Negotiation of Differential Needs and Strategic Goals**

Central to current understandings of university/community partnerships are the social and political structures that contextualize these collaborations and shape power differentials and dynamics between partnering institutions (Sandmann & Kliewer, 2012). As discussed previously, the power relationship between the partnering institutions in RTI deviates from the conventional pattern in which structures of power and privilege favor the university (White, 2010). Indeed, the university partner in RTI can be described as an institution of power. DePaul University is the largest Catholic university in the country, is recognized as a leader in community-engaged scholarship, employs in excess of 925 full-time faculty members as well as 1,900 term or adjunct faculty, many of whom are recognized as national experts in their respective fields of study, and has strong financial and institutional supports that frame the service mission of the university. Furthermore, many of the community-engaged projects with which DePaul University faculty members participate involve bringing their expertise to relatively under-resourced urban communities. DePaul’s community partner in the program is similarly situated as a large urban organization characterized by substantial institutional resources and social influence. The JUF is the central philanthropic institution supporting Chicago’s Jewish community and one of the largest not-for-profit social welfare institutions in Chicago. In 2015, the organization raised approximately $2,000,000 that supported their network of partner agencies and raised additional funds through government and private foundations, corporate gifts, support foundations, and a variety of other sources. Of particular importance for this analysis, the organization has a strong commitment to engaging the community’s youth through informal education and outreach experiences for young people designed to strengthen their Jewish identity and connections to community (Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, 2015).

RTI Chicago was initiated after our partner organization in New York City contacted the lead author of this paper about a potential partnership with DePaul University, and in particular with the community-based research initiative she directs. With an interest in piloting their successful RTI program in cities beyond their local area, in partnership with DePaul University faculty members, they began a process of reaching out to a variety of stakeholders in Chicago’s Jewish community to search for a local community-based partner for this program that would serve Jewish female identified youth. At an initial community meeting involving a variety of Jewish social service agencies and stakeholders in Chicago’s Jewish community, staff members from the JUF indicated a strong and impassioned interest in partnering with DePaul to deliver and study this program. Indeed, the organization already had identified a staff person who they thought would be an ideal fit for facilitating this program. The DePaul University partners agreed—we all had a strong initial sense of partnership and interpersonal fit at the beginning of this engagement. The fund/federation’s lead staff person on this project has graduate degrees in Women’s and Gender Studies and Social Work, and expressed a strong interest in, and foundation for, a program solidly grounded in feminist theoretical and pedagogical frameworks.

The university and community partners started RTI with a fully articulated and shared commitment to feminist education focused on interrogation of the systemic and interconnected nature of systems of power, oppression, and privilege (i.e., gender, sexuality, race, culture, social class, and religion), as well as ideals of social justice, youth agency, Jewish identity, political solidarity, and collective responsibility. Bringle and Hatcher (2002) argue that as community-engaged projects are beginning, university and community partners are well advised to focus intentionally on their process of relationship initiation, which depends on effective communicating about the potential rewards and costs that might be expected as a result of the collaboration. We were intentional and structured in the initiation phase of this project, with over a year of planning and coordination, and each partner signing formal letters of agreement about our respective roles and responsibilities. Moreover, although community engagement scholars have discussed the problems that can arise as a result of relational tensions surrounding the particular institutional representatives assigned

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to work on a community-engaged project (Amen, 2001; Begun et al., 2010), our partnership was initiated with strong interpersonal relationships that have helped us sustain the viability of the project in the face of emergent tensions that were not anticipated fully at the project's inception.

Initiating collaborative working relationships is merely a first step. Relationship maintenance, intentionally working to sustain viable partnerships, has been identified as the next necessary phase in building effective university/community partnerships (Begun et al., 2010; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Strand, Marullo, Cutfforth, Stoecker, & Donohue, 2003). Positive interpersonal relationships may mitigate, or possibly postpone, tensions between universities and community partners, but they cannot eliminate them altogether (White, 2010). Thus, to effectively negotiate the tensions that are to be expected as part of a complex university/community partnership, focus and purpose are necessary to maintain institutional relationships. According to Bringle and Hatcher (2002), relationship maintenance processes should foreground the development of interdependent partnerships characterized by frequent interactions, shared governance, and ongoing assessment of project outcomes.

During the first year of the RTI program (2014–2015), the partnership envisioned by both the university faculty and community partner fell somewhat short in terms of putting forth the requisite time and effort necessary to maintain our relationship as a wholly joint enterprise. As Amen (2001) discusses, successful collaborative efforts require that partnering organizations purposefully adapt individual practices to the goals for which the partnerships were formed. Our analysis indicates that each partner in this joint enterprise seemed to initially encounter institutional impediments to full collaboration involving a substantial commitment of time. Such challenges reflect the analyses of other community-engaged scholars who contend that time can be a tremendous challenge for university/community partnerships (Morrell et al., 2015). For us, the time constraints felt pressing for both the university and community partners, sacrificing time, during the first year of programming, to deplete and assess the RTI program partnership, in favor of other institutional roles and mandates (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Sandmann & Kliewer, 2012). This time pressure not only impacted the time allocated for meeting as a leadership team, but also the way time was structured in the RTI program meetings. For example, the primary facilitator articulated her feelings about the pressure of time at the end of the first cohort, observing:

There's never enough time to talk about systematic racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, education, like there are a million 'isms.' There are a million systems. It's impossible to give a real social justice education.

At the end of the first year of the program, we recognized this limitation and openly discussed with our community partners how we might better balance our professional roles and mandates and meet the needs demanded of a shared, reciprocal partnership. As we reviewed the progress of the program over the first year, in preparation for the second year, we agreed to prioritize time for more regular communication, a trend that continued into the third year of the program, and now into the fourth. Paradoxically, this sense of time pressure was a point of convergence for the university and community partners and resulted in a measure of compromise to our joint enterprise. Indeed, this reflective analysis has helped us understand how time pressures created obstacles as we endeavored to shape a university/community collaboration in which each participating institution was able to adapt its institutional imperatives and mandates to foreground the shared goals of the collaborative project (Amen, 2001; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002).

To say a bit more, time pressures were experienced, and created obstacles, within two distinct domains. First, as reflected above by RTI's community partner facilitator, there never seemed to be enough time for full critical interrogation of the multiple systems of power, privilege, and oppression that shape the young people's lives, largely as a result of the scope of issues that needed to be addressed within a 10-month period as a foundation for the participating young people to develop, conduct, and present their culminating youth-led action research project. These programmatic time pressures thus limited our ability to fully develop the feminist and social justice elements of the program, based in a commitment to disrupting inequalities and providing opportunities for collective activism to realize a more just world (Ayers, Quinn, & Stovall, 2009; Hackman, 2005). Such a pedagogical approach was thus partially, but not fully, realized largely as a result of pressing time constraints.

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Second, time constraints felt pressing for both the university and community partners, and therefore, frequent interaction that involved ongoing debriefing and assessment of the complexities involved in our RTI program values and foci (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Sandmann & Kliwer, 2012) was too often sacrificed as we prioritized other institutional roles and mandates. This time pressure impacted the time we allocated for meeting as a leadership team. We often felt overly time pressed to prioritize regular team meetings during which we would have the opportunity to process programmatic questions and emergent tensions experienced by the participating individuals and institutions, and assess the ways in which the program was both meeting and falling short of articulated values and goals. As the RTI program developed within those first two years, we needed to stay in more consistent and direct communication about the complications and complexities that were arising. Certainly, if representatives from two institutions, embedded in very different cultural contexts, can be expected to navigate these complex power dynamics, focusing close attention on whose culture is dominating when making decisions (Kindred & Petrescu, 2015), substantial time must be allotted to open a space and process for challenging conversations and negotiations (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Sandmann & Kliwer, 2012; Strand et al., 2003). Too often the university faculty members would prioritize our need to fulfill our teaching, administrative, publishing, and service commitments to the university. Furthermore, our community partner who facilitated the program was an extremely capable leader. She took charge of curriculum planning and programming, and we were often quite happy to know that she could run the program largely without our substantial input and time investments. We now have come to understand the ways in which we prioritized time may have limited our ability to fully meet goals of full reciprocity and mutuality that framed this collaborative project.

A power imbalance thus emerged as the JUF responded to the program’s initial success and the community praise they were receiving as a result of the outstanding leadership opportunity they were providing for Jewish teen girls. The young people were invited to speak at a variety of community events, prominent members of the community expressed their desire to financially support this innovative program, and at this point, RTI seemed to move in the direction that Jewish communal leaders were envisioning for youth programming. For example, when reflecting on Jewish communal support for the program, the primary facilitator (from our community partner organization, the fund/federation observed that, “As long as it (the RTI program) was good for Jews and the Jewish community, the funders were happy.” We began to see how the structural organization—with its apparent emphasis on Jewish identity, youth leadership, meeting the expectations of stakeholders and constituencies, and attracting funding from foundations and individual donors—produced forms of power that undermined the collective and mutually agreed upon feminist and social justice goals for this partnership (Kliwer, 2013; Sandmann & Kliwer; 2012). Specifically, at the program’s inception, all project partners agreed on a set of common program emphases and goals grounded in a commitment to intersectional feminist approaches that highlight the workings of intersecting systems of power, privilege, and oppression in young people’s lives. Moreover, we all agreed that RTI participants’ interrogation of their own relative race and class privilege would be a central programmatic goal, in the hopes of cultivating a sense of collective responsibility toward social justice and transformation.

At this time (end of the first year of programming, and shaping the second year as well), we perceived a shift in priorities driven by the institutional mandates of the community partner in this project. For example, it advocated for a public presentation of the Jewish teens’ research project in the context of a major Jewish festival, rather than holding the event on the university campus, as had been the case at the end of our first year. Holding this public presentation at the Jewish festival was not problematic in and of itself. Rather, our critical reflections make clear that this decision demonstrated a prioritizing of Jewish communal stakeholders’ interests in celebrating Jewish youth achievement and programmatic success, all of which was strategic for creating opportunities for future funding. While this is understandable, it sits in tension with the collaborative program’s feminist and social justice informed projects goals.

While the university partners understood the necessity for funding to sustain this program, we also became concerned that such mandates were being prioritized. Thus, during the second year of RTI, we came to a deeper understanding that financial resources create a base of power
to direct a project’s strategic vision (Kindred & Petrescu, 2015), and these issues need to be taken into account and discussed intentionally and with full transparency in order to maintain shared project goals and visions, rather than prioritizing one of the institution’s interests. Ultimately, these are ongoing tension points that have to be continuously negotiated as part of successful, long term, and sustained collaboration.

It is important to note here that we in no way attribute ill intentions on the part of the university’s JUF partners. Rather, this analytic process has helped all of us develop a keen awareness of the substantial challenges both universities and communities can encounter when they work to transition from an emphasis on gains for one’s own institution to a focus on mutual benefit, accommodation, and joint outcomes (Begun et al., 2010; Morrell et al., 2015). Moreover, the challenge of time constraints discussed previously has particular relevance here. Certainly, if representatives from two institutions, embedded in very different cultural contexts, can be expected to navigate these complex power dynamics, focusing close attention on whose institutional mandates take priority when decisions are being made (Kindred & Petrescu, 2015), substantial time must be allotted to open a space and process for conversations and negotiations (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Sandmann & Kliewer, 2012; Strand et al., 2003).

As this example illustrates, collaboration between universities and community-based organizations may require that they adapt their goals and ways of doing business to the purpose for which they formed their initial partnership (Amen, 2001). Although this ideal was perhaps not fully realized in the first two years of our collaboration, the end of the second year presented us with an opportunity to openly address power dynamics as they emerged in our ongoing work together. To this end, we held a full team meeting/retreat in which all program partners and staff (i.e., university graduate assistants, the JUF participating staff, university faculty members) participated. To ground our dialogue during this meeting/retreat, we stepped back to reconsider the values and principles that guided the RTI as it was originally conceptualized. The original purpose, as we jointly re-articulated, was to center critical reflection on, and assessment of, Jewish teen girls’ social context, as well as broader issues involving societal inequities and injustices. RTI was meant to involve young people in critical inquiry in a collective fashion, and to take steps to address issues involving social change and social justice. More specifically, RTI is grounded in a commitment to develop the capacity for teen girls to engage critically with social issues that impact their lives through a feminist lens; cultivate leadership capacities that will enable these youth to engage in critical dialogue and social action with other teens and adult allies inside and beyond the Jewish community; and build strategic partnerships among feminist scholars, activists, and Jewish community members.

Centering on how the program can reflect these shared priorities and goals in a more balanced way, we talked at length at this meeting/retreat about ways to maintain a focus on intersectional feminist thought so that power, privilege, and oppression remained a key thread throughout the program. When asked to provide feedback, one university graduate assistant commented, “We just need to do a better job of constantly relating everything that we are learning back to intersectionality and systems of power and privilege and oppression.” As a result of these transparent and sometimes challenging conversations, we were able to start a third RTI cohort on a different footing that reflected a shared understanding of the need to engage in ongoing renegotiation of power dynamics in our university/community partnership. Such ongoing navigations are integral to long-term and sustained partnerships that, according to Harkins (2013), remain elusive for many university/community collaborations. Thus, beginning in our third cohort, our entire team recommitted to a program focus on intersectional feminist learning. The university partners also gained a more nuanced understanding of the priorities of the JUF, and came to understand that feminist/social justice work can align with other goals such as youth achievement and leadership development. Indeed, all university and community partners took this opportunity to stress our initial emphasis on youth-led work, and thus came to realize through our feminist informed lens that our multiple program goals need not be in competition and conceptualized as either/or, but rather as both/and (Anzaldúa, 1987; hooks, 2000).

Conclusions and Implications for Future Work

Our research on the workings of institutional power in community-engaged projects helps move the field forward to more thorough analysis and nuanced understandings. As an initial matter, our work focuses attention on the relatively under-studied topic of university/community
collaboration in which the participating institutions are similarly situated in structures of power. This study thus deepens understanding about the workings of institutional power in community-engaged projects, and highlights the need for future inquiry in this direction.

Our findings uncover particular institutional challenges to full and reciprocal collaboration in university/community partnership, and suggest strategies that all community-engaged scholars would be well advised to take up in their community-based work. First, each institution involved in a partnership brings specific knowledge, skills, and expertise to the relationship, and each needs to intentionally marshal their resources for the good of the joint enterprise. This very well may mean working counter to their individual institutional cultures and imperatives, and instead adopting an ethic of full cooperation based in a stance of epistemic humility.

Furthermore, the implications of research on collaborative work involving institutions that are similarly situated in terms of power extends far beyond this one dynamic. Indeed, the preponderance of university/community partnerships tends to follow the more typical pattern of power asymmetry in which the university is the large institution of power and the community partner is the organization that needs assistance and is positioned to benefit from the university’s resources, support, and expertise (Morrell et al., 2015; White, 2010). Our work suggests that community-engaged scholars need to hold themselves accountable to the communities with which they work, such that they consistently attend to the workings of power, and its potential for exploitation. As well, we offer the field a sharpened mindfulness about institutional power that shapes all community-engaged work; scholars should work against co-opting community-based projects, and instead commit themselves over the long term to collaborative work that brings to life feminist and social justice values grounded in epistemic humility.

Returning to the issue of time, effective work with youth—in particular, work focused on feminist and critical YPAR—requires deep interrogation of the multiple systems of power, privilege, and oppression that shape young people’s lives. As we’ve discussed in this analysis, such interrogation is complex, multi-layered, and, thus, takes time. In the context of our work with relatively privileged youth, our findings are consistent with existing scholarship that has highlighted that for those in positions of relative privilege, recognizing the systemic nature of one’s privilege can be overwhelming. The intense feelings that often emerge require that youth grapple with new and potentially uncomfortable awakenings (Catlett & Proweller, 2015; Nagda & Gurin, 2007; Okun, 2010; Tatum, 1992), a process that can be expected to take substantial time. Community-engaged scholars should expect and plan for this time commitment when undertaking this kind of work.

The third year of RTI provides an exemplar for this type of feminist critical engagement with youth, and culminated in a particularly rich and unique participatory action research project that met multiple program goals previously discussed. The participating youth in 2016–2017 conducted a project designed to interrogate and disrupt rape culture and created strategies for disseminating the results of their scholarship into the community in a creative and accessible fashion. In particular, the RTIs found that rape culture is not talked about enough in the Jewish community and decided to create a feminist Passover Seder on rape culture, with the intention that Jewish community members can find meaning and connection in the intersection of rape culture and religious rituals. The RTI participants centered their action within intersectional feminist thought, creating opportunities for shared reflection on issues...
of power, privilege, and structural inequities including violence, of relevance to their lives as well as the communities in which they live.

As the field of community-engaged scholarship increasingly takes up integration of YPAR, our work provides lessons about the unique challenges that scholars can expect when using participatory action research as a method of knowledge production, as well as a teaching tool, with largely privileged youth, and within the context of privileged institutions. The contributions of our work build on the work of scholars who previously have applied feminist and critical social justice perspectives to their YPAR work with privileged youth (e.g., Stoudt, 2009; Stoudt et al., 2012), facilitating a learning context in which young people can develop critical consciousness of how power operates in their lives, how it can adversely affect others, and how to work in solidarity with marginalized groups. We recognize that privileged youth often struggle with barriers to examining their privileged identities (Goodman, 2010), and therefore have strengthened our belief in the pedagogical utility of bringing differently situated groups of youth together. Bringing diverse groups of young people into partnership to conduct participatory action research holds great potential in particular in terms of “bringing together distinct forms of wisdom and experience to study theoretically, empirically, and politically, the structures and dynamics of injustice” (Stoudt, et al., 2012, p. 181).

Finally, the community partner in the case of our project secured the majority of funding for our work. As a variety of scholars have noted (Kindred & Petrescu, 2015; White, 2010), more power is generally held with the organization that is responsible for funding the project. Our research findings point to the need for transparent communication and negotiations involved with creating and sustaining funding for collaborative projects. In so doing, the partner who generates the greatest resources will not end up driving the partnership and therein instantiating a power imbalance that has the potential to compromise the values of collaborative feminist and social justice oriented work. As argued in The Revolution Will Not Be Funded (2007), social justice initiatives are not well served when the mandates and imperatives of funders take center stage in shaping community-based projects. Drawing on this idea, a central conclusion and contribution of our work is that funding should not be the lever that drives collaborative partnerships and the directions that they take. Future inquiry is well advised to further mine this complex relation of power at the center of university/community engagement.

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Civic Capacity and Engagement in Building Welcoming and Inclusive Communities for Newcomers: Praxis, Recommendations, and Policy Implications

Michael Guo-Brennan and Linyuan Guo-Brennan

Abstract

As newcomers, immigrants and refugees contribute to social and cultural diversity, and play an important role in communities’ social and economic development. However, their talent, energy, and entrepreneurial spirit and skills can only be fully harnessed when the communities are welcoming and inclusive. Drawing from a two-year qualitative research study conducted in the Province of Prince Edward Island, Canada, this paper examines the degree of civic capacity, along with policies and practices related to building a welcoming and inclusive community for immigrants and refugees. Through examining civic capacity and high-impact practices and programs to support the integration of immigrants and refugees, this paper shares new insights on how community stakeholders interact with each other to support or subvert the inclusion and equity in the community and offers policy implications and practical recommendations on building welcoming communities for immigrants and refugees in small communities.

Introduction

As immigrants settle in Canada in record-high numbers, national origin and linguistic diversity in the schools, cities, towns, and provinces continues to grow. Between 2000 and 2018, Canada admitted an average of 255,000 immigrants each year (StatCan, 2019). Many smaller provinces and local municipalities across Canada are becoming more ethnically, culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse. The changing demographics of these communities present new challenges for leaders, including meeting increasing demands of culturally responsive policy and services, reducing sociocultural friction caused by racism and discrimination, and dealing with the emerging tension and stress in governmental systems. This paper introduces immigration policy and trends in Canada, analyzes the impact of changing demographics on small urban centers, presents the challenges faced by newcomers, and shares the findings of a two-year study exploring promising practices in building inclusive and welcoming communities in a small Canadian province. Following the recommendations for building welcoming and inclusive communities, this paper concludes with policy recommendations and implications on enhancing equity and inclusion in communities with increasing newcomer populations.

Immigration Policy and Trends in Canada

With a long immigration history, Canada is a nation of immigrants and the descendants of immigrants. Immigration is not only a powerful demographic force for the Canadian population, but also has strong influence on the social, cultural, political, and economic development in the nation (Edmonston, 2016). Immigration policy in Canada is structured around two main categories: permanent residents and temporary visitors. Aside from voting/running for political offices and holding jobs that need a high-level security clearance, permanent residents in Canada get most benefits that citizens receive, including free public education, health care, employment eligibility, and protections under Canadian law and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Government of Canada, 2018). As of 2016, 22% of the Canadian population was foreign-born and one in five a visible racial minority (Statistics Canada, 2017a). Newcomers in this paper refer to the immigrants and refugees who have been granted permanent resident status and lived in Canada no more than five years.

While large provinces and metropolitan cities continue to see an increasing number of newcomers, smaller provinces and cities are receiving higher proportions of the newcomer population. For example, most of the established residents in Prince Edward Island (PEI)—the smallest province in Canada—are descendants of Scottish, English, Irish, and French immigrants. During the past decade, the total foreign-born population in PEI increased from 1% to 10% (PEI Statistics Bureau, 2017). The top 12 source countries for recent immigrants and refugees...
in PEI include China, United Kingdom, United States, Philippines, Netherlands, Germany, Iran, India, Syria, Nepal, Bhutan, and South Korea. Most newcomers reside in Charlottetown, the capital city with a population of 67,820 residents (Statistics Canada, 2017b).

Civic Challenges Faced by Newcomers

Newcomers face common challenges and barriers when they adapt to life in a new country, including language barriers, unemployment or underemployment, racism and discrimination, exclusion and inequality, poverty, unfamiliarity with the new culture and education system, securing quality housing, accessing health and legal services, and transportation. The challenges faced by refugees may be even more acute due to their prior life experiences in war and areas of conflict and the lack of preparation/orientation to move to a new country (Stewart, 2011).

For newcomers, the initial years of transitioning to new societies and countries are critical because their cross-cultural identities, described by McIntyre, Barowsky, and Tong (2011, p. 11) as “the intricate and delicate blending and mixing of the values, behaviors, and languages of the old country with those of the new one,” and their perceptions on the new society and country are important determining factors in the success of their integration (Cities of Migration, 2018a). Research on immigrants and refugees indicates that belongingness—the psychological sense that one fits in and is accepted in an environment—is a fundamental need of newcomers and is associated with many positive outcomes, such as greater social cohesion, better employment opportunities, enhanced quality and equality, and more positive health outcomes (Kanu, 2008; Mackay & Tavares, 2005; Neufeld, Matthes, Moulden, Friesen, & Gaucher, 2016; Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009; Walton, Cohen, Cwir, & Spencer, 2012).

Examining and enhancing the capacity to build welcoming and inclusive communities for all is an urgent task faced by governments, policymakers, and practitioners because this is the first step to better support the personal, social, cultural, educational, and economic development of newcomers as well as an important strategy to increase community engagement in building a more just, equitable, and inclusive society for all citizens with diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds (Esses, Hamilton, Bennett-AbuAyyash, & Bursten, 2010; Guo-Brennan & Guo-Brennan, 2018).

Characteristics of a Welcoming and Inclusive Community

Recognizing that knowledge and understanding concerning welcoming and inclusive communities for immigrants and refugees is still emerging and challenges exist in reaching a consensus on a systemic approach, we conceptualize a welcoming and inclusive community as culturally competent that welcomes people from all backgrounds, demonstrates commitment to inclusion and equity, and has the capacity to enable individual development and well-being, regardless of one’s abilities, ethnicity, cultures, languages, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, and country of origin (Cities of Migration, 2018b; Esses et al., 2010; Guo-Brennan & Guo-Brennan, 2018; Hamilton & Moore, 2004; McBrien, 2005; Pathways to Prosperity: Canada, 2018; Rutter, 2006).

The characteristics include positive attitudes toward diversity and inclusion, policy and procedures that fight racism and discrimination, programs and resources to meet newcomers’ needs, social integration and cohesion between locals and newcomers, culturally responsive public services for newcomers, and equal engagement and economic development opportunities for newcomers (Cities of Migration, 2018a; Esses et al., 2010; Guo-Brennan & Guo-Brennan, 2018; McBrien, 2005; Pathways to Prosperity: Canada, 2018). Location, history, existing population, and diversity are important factors that influence community welcoming ability and inclusiveness. To properly assess whether a community is welcoming and inclusive, both processes and outcomes need to be considered (Esses et al., 2010).

The literature related to social justice, diversity, equality, and intervention for immigrants and refugees has emphasized the significance of a systematic approach to improving the inclusion and equity for newcomers; however, there is little empirical evidence to illustrate how these systems are currently functioning to achieve this objective (Banks, 2016; Rutter, 2006; Stewart, 2014). One potential approach discussed in this paper is to improve justice and equity by strengthening civic capacity and developing community coalitions to fight racism and discrimination to reduce tension and conflict between social, ethnic, and racial groups, to support the economic, social, civic, and political integration of newcomers and to benefit the communities in which newcomers settle (Feeuverger & Richards, 2007; Li, 2005).
Civic Capacity to Build Inclusive and Welcoming Communities

Civic capacity refers to the involvement of various actors in different sectors of the community in a problem-solving effort. Civic engagement is the application of that capacity (Brennan, 2012; Stone, Henig, & Jones, 2001; Wong, Shen, Anagnostopoulos, & Rutledge, 2007). In addressing the challenges of building welcoming and inclusive communities for newcomers, the level of civic capacity is demonstrated through a broad coalition of actors, including leaders from municipal and provincial governments, the business community, non-governmental organizations, grassroots community organizations, educators, and newcomers (Cities of Migration, 2018a; Guo-Brennan & Guo-Brennan, 2018). The work involved in creating welcoming and inclusive communities is multilayered and complex. It requires a process that creates a shared awareness and knowledge of each others’ needs and realities, trusting and collaborative relationships among different stakeholders, time to act and reflect on fighting racism and discrimination, and the capacity building and engagement at both the organizational and community levels (Guo-Brennan & Guo-Brennan, 2018; Jones & Lee, 2017). Municipal governments play an important role in building welcoming and inclusive communities as they function at the most practical level and are the most closely involved in the lives of all citizens (Cities of Migration, 2018a).

Research Purpose and Questions

This paper is developed based on an interdisciplinary study that explored promising practices in building welcoming and inclusive communities for newcomers through examining the direct and indirect interactions that newcomers encountered with community stakeholders in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada. Specifically, this study addressed three research questions:

1. What are newcomers’ perceptions and expectations for a welcoming and inclusive community?
2. What policy and practices are adopted to build welcoming and inclusive communities for newcomers?
3. What needs to be done to foster greater civic capacity and engagement in building welcoming communities for newcomers?

Methodology and Methods

The study adopted a qualitative design with a continual and dynamic data collection and analysis process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Conducted in a series of phases that spanned two years, the study was purposefully developed to allow for a reciprocal process of learning, investigating, problem-solving, and continual collaboration with stakeholders, community members, and research participants. To understand the broader context as well as newcomers’ needs and expectations, research data was collected through multiple methods as identified in the literature, including document analysis, focus groups, program observations, and semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

Immigration policies and programs at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels were collected and analyzed to identify support systems and resources contributing to welcoming and inclusive communities for newcomers. Researchers conducted 50 semi-structured interviews and five focus groups. In total, 71 participants volunteered and were invited to participate in this study. Representing the community of stakeholders with diverse backgrounds, the participants included representatives for non-governmental organizations (20), newcomer parents (16), newcomer youth (14), educators (10), public officials and administrators from the federal, provincial, and municipal government (8), and refugees (3). Refugees were the most difficult to reach for this study. Proper protections in place by the federal government and the service-providing agencies to protect this vulnerable population, and fear of refugees themselves to discuss their status limited our ability to collect some data for this research. Newcomers who did participate in this study came from China, Iran, the Netherlands, India, United States, England, Central Africa Republic, Syria, South Africa, Korea, and Bhutan.

Individual interview protocols were designed for each cohort of participants. Interviews were structured with a series of predetermined questions as well as optional follow-up questions based on given responses. Questions for immigrants and newcomers focused on their experience coming to Canada including if they felt Canada, and PEI were welcoming. These same participants were asked about the availability of services, including job training/career counseling, if these services
met newcomer needs, and what more needed to be done to better meet the needs of newcomers to build a more welcoming community.

Parents and students were asked specific questions about the schools and efforts to create welcoming schools and the services available for immigrants, including refugees. Those directly involved with providing services for newcomers and refugees, including government policymakers and service providers, as well as staff at nonprofit organizations, were asked about immigration policy, responsibilities and roles of various actors, as well as funding for immigrant services. All participants were asked what needed to be done to better support refugees.

All interviews were fully transcribed verbatim by trained research assistants to capture every utterance and nuance of the interviewee. In addition, 10 program observations were conducted to learn about high-impact programs, practices and models for building welcoming and inclusive communities. All program observations were documented based on a prepared protocol by the primary researchers or trained research assistants. A continuous process of sorting, theorizing, analyzing and interpreting data was adopted throughout this study. Data codes, themes, and interpretation were developed, organized, and digitally coded by using software NVivo 11. Triangulation and cross-member checking were used to ensure accuracy and validity. Pseudonyms were used in this paper to protect participants’ confidentiality.

Findings and Discussion

Through an analysis of the collected data, findings are identified based on three main categories: (1) newcomer perceptions, (2) challenges and barriers, and (3) promising practices. Within these broad categories, themes were chosen and presented to discuss civic capacity and engagement in building welcoming and inclusive communities.

Newcomer Perceptions Toward PEI: Friendly but not Welcoming

Most immigrant participants in this study perceived the PEI community as friendly but not welcoming. They reported that PEI is a friendly island because most community members would greet them on the street, at the church, and in the schools. However, the interaction between newcomers and local community members rarely went to deeper levels. Most participants in this study did not feel they were welcomed by local community members because very few people had taken an intentional interest in the life stories of the immigrants and refugees. Mary, an immigrant from South Africa, shared her experiences:

I felt the people on the streets, in the churches, in the shops were very friendly... but they do not make friends easily. I feel like there are two groups, immigrant and refugees and then islanders. We live on a farm, when we first started living on the farm, our neighbors never came to meet us. Where as in South Africa if you move into a new neighborhood, your neighbors would come over with soup in the winter, or like sandwiches and say hello. Nothing like that here. The store we went to, after about five years, one of the employees called me by my name.

One term frequently mentioned by newcomers when sharing their perceptions about the unwelcoming characteristics is their identity as people who “come from away” (CFA). These are people who were not born on the island but now take up residence on PEI. This status is not limited to newcomers; anyone, even fellow Canadians from other provinces can be labeled with the CFA brand. A shared concern by newcomers was that they were in disadvantaged situations in job hunting, business opportunities, and meaningful social connections once they were defined as CFAs.

Refugees, on the other hand, felt more welcomed and grateful for the country and local community. Talking about her impression of Canada and PEI, Rene expressed her appreciation by saying:

I left my home country because of war and lived in a refugee camp in Ghana for nine years. I am a widow with two daughters. God helped me settle down in Canada last year. I am so grateful and pray that God bless this country because many people come together to help poor people like me. People came to meet me at the airport on the day we arrived, brought me to a home, gave me some presents and seven hundred Canadian dollars for food. They provided us an apartment, the clothes for my kids, and helped connect my kids with schools. They also found the...
way to drive us to the hospital. They are very good to us and I greatly appreciate all the help they gave to us.

Challenges of Building Inclusive Communities

Limited support services. Unlike a large metropolitan area, where there may be dozens of community organizations that offer support services for newcomers, PEI has only one settlement organization—PEI Association of Newcomers to Canada (PEIANC). Newcomers rely heavily on this organization for most support services. Some participants indicated that in a small city it was better to have a centralized agency to obtain settlement and integration services. All participants identified PEIANC as a service hub for newcomers to get settlement information and assistance needed in education, health care, employment, and public services. In addition to PEIANC, faith-based organizations and English language training institutions were also identified by newcomers as their primary sources of support. These community organizations provided the opportunity for newcomers to learn local cultures and make connections with local community members. Due to the many challenges faced by newcomers related to language barriers, language training institutions played a significant role in connecting newcomers to each other and to help them develop the intercultural awareness, understanding, and communication skills needed for living and working in a new country.

Unrecognized foreign credentials. Employment or business discrimination was mentioned by nearly all newcomer participants. Most newcomers who immigrated to PEI were professionals in their home countries and earned a living as engineers, accountants, teachers, health-care providers, or successful business managers/owners. Most of them were not able to continue their former professions because of the lack of employment opportunities or tremendous barriers of getting their professional accreditation or license recognized in Canada. Aanya worked as a registered nurse in India for 10 years and could speak five languages, including English. Talking about her impression about Canada and PEI, Aanya said:

I consider Canada overall is a welcoming country, except for the area related to our profession. I was a Registered Nurse in India. I did everything I could to get my nursing credential and license recognized, but was always told that “I don’t have this or that experience.” After trying for two years, I gave up and quit the process. It was a heartbreaking experience. There should be some help to the professionals. I knew some doctors are working as taxi drivers.

Barriers in public services. Stakeholders in the public sector encountered greater challenges in creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for newcomers. Most participants in public services such as policing, health services, legal services, and parental involvement in education reported difficulties in interactions with newcomers due to linguistic and cultural differences. Talking about the challenges in providing culturally responsive policing services, a police official said:

Any contact with the police, be it a traffic accident, or other reason, is a time of high anxiety and stress. It could cause or involve injury. Let’s suppose the police encounter is a nice clean accident with no injuries. The police show up and they find the two parties involved. Imagine the situation if one party does not fully grasp English and may not fully understand what is happening…. Situations like this have demanded the police department to make a conscious effort to learn the difference between violent behavior caused by mental challenges and behavior caused by other issues, such as language, culture, etc.

Other barriers. Other barriers to inclusion identified by participants include youth employment discrimination, difficulties accessing health care due to language barriers, concerns about the quality of public education, insufficient public transit and municipal services suitable to newcomers, lack of social engagement opportunities with local community members, and the absence of newcomers’ voices and opinions in the public decision-making and political systems.

Promising Practices in Building This Kind of Community

Municipal government’s leadership. Municipalities’ efforts to mobilize resources and build support for newcomers included subsidized
public transportation, collaborating with settlement agencies and organizations to offer free sporting programs and facilities for newcomers, creating city-wide events that celebrate diversity and inclusion, and collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce to support newcomers’ needs for business opportunities and networking. Further actions can be taken by local government leadership to build a more inclusive community, including reducing language and cultural barriers for newcomers in accessing public services, reducing social and employment discrimination, creating a more open and supportive business environment for newcomers, promoting better understanding among citizens of the struggles of minority communities, and taking broad-based sustained action to build inclusion and a welcoming community for newcomers.

Municipal government’s leadership role in building inclusive and welcoming communities is critical to achieve successful outcomes. This was emphasized by one senior government official who participated in this study:

No one can build inclusion and diversity alone. Do we have a role to play in building welcoming community, absolutely! We should be at the table with school boards, with sport PEI, with newcomer’s association, with the university, colleges, and major employers. I think we should all have a role.

Alignment with existing priorities, initiatives, and networks. Responding to the rapid demographic changes caused by immigration, the Charlottetown municipal government has made efforts to deliver linguistically and culturally responsive city services. Municipal leaders have promoted inclusion and diversity through programs and policies such as expanded public transportation service routes to meet the needs of newcomers, municipal recreational programs and facilities that cater to non-Canadian cultures, tourist information in different languages, and municipal government sponsored holiday celebrations and activities that reflect diverse population and traditions. One participant shared how public transportation planning was transformed by and for newcomers:

Some non-Canadian cultures are more inclined to walk or to participate in unorganized activities, so we invest in active transportation, such as walking trails and bicycle routes. We have a wonderful trail system that runs behind the university. The city made a three-year plan to make active transportation as a key component in city planning and development. We just voted to invest $100,000 in the first phase of lighting the trail system so it can be used at night.

Public transportation systems were important for many immigrants and refugees, particularly when they first arrived in a community/country without a vehicle and/or local driver’s license. This initiative’s planning and implementation was successful and widely supported because it was connected to the city’s Community Sustainability Plan, an existing element of the municipality’s long-term strategic plan.

Integrated immigration settlement services. Settlement services refer to the programs and supports designed to assist immigrants to settle and make the necessary adjustments for a life in their host country and community. While some newcomers saw the limited sources for information and assistance as a barrier, others appreciated the ability to access all services through one primary agency. As the primary nonprofit organization that serves newcomers, PEIANC provides integrated settlement and integration programs/services, administers language training placement, offers interpretation and translation services, assists newcomers with employment and business development, connects newcomers with the local community through outreach programs, and provides services to immigrant students and their families. The centralized and integrated service system was emphasized by most participants as a strength and solid foundation for building a welcoming community. A governmental official with many years of working experience in the immigration sector commented that:

We have one of the few EAL (English as Additional Language) and FAL (French as Additional Language) intake systems in the country that allows immigrants and refugees to be assessed and placed properly. From a case management standpoint, they are given the proper resources that meet their needs. In many other jurisdictions, a refugee or a
newcomer shows up in a school system without being assessed. Schools do not have advanced warning or have no understanding of their needs. From a functional standpoint, we know about the individuals, we know about their needs and can properly plan to put a program together to help those individuals get through the school system.

Enhancing Newcomers’ Social Capital and Connections. Social capital contributes to a sense of belongingness and refers to the resources that newcomers may draw upon as needed to enhance productivity, facilitate upward mobility, and realize economic returns (Portes, 1998). It consists of networks and relationships based on reciprocity, trust, and shared values. Social capital enables immigrants and refugees to develop the sense of belonging through trusting relationships and gain access to and information on various resources helpful to their new lives in the host country (Coleman, 1991). Most newcomer participants in this study expressed their strong desire to form meaningful social connection and interactions with both newcomers and local community members.

A number of strategies have been adopted on the island to strengthen immigrants and refugees’ social capital and connections. For instance, PEIANC offers a number of programs and services specifically designed for enhancing newcomers’ social capital and connections. These programs include: Community Connections Program, Multicultural Education Program, Community affiliations, Holiday Host Volunteer Program, Immigrant Women’s Support Group, Ethno-cultural Organizations in PEI, and the DiverseCity Multicultural Festival. These programs provide opportunities for both newcomers and local community members to connect socially, culturally, and professionally and contribute to a sense of unity and belongingness.

Reducing racism and discrimination. Newcomer youth participating in this study reported social segregation in schools and how social segregation affects their confidence, identity, and psychological well-being. Similarly, adult immigrants and refugees experienced economic and employment discrimination caused by business and cultural racism.

Recognizing that racism plays an important role in causing social and economic inequality and discrimination of newcomers, community stakeholders have taken several initiatives to bring community stakeholders together to fight against racism and discrimination. One such initiative is PEIANC’s annual Youth Anti-Racism Challenge, a creative competition to encourage youth to explore the meaning of anti-racism. Scheduled to coincide with the International Day for the Elimination of Radical Discrimination (March 21), this event attracts many students and parents and plays a critical role in increasing school and local community awareness and understanding of racism and discrimination. The event also provides opportunities for both newcomer and Canadian-born youth to work together to fight against racism and discrimination.

Recommendations for Civic Capacity Building

Participants in this study made numerous suggestions on how to strengthen civic capacity and engagement to develop a more welcoming and inclusive community for all. Integrated with our critical literature review in this field, we recommend the following strategies to enhance civic capacity in the process of building welcoming and inclusive communities. Governments’ willingness to be responsible for following through with the vision and commitments to promote inclusion and equity is critical in building an inclusive community for all.

We recommend the provincial and municipal governments in PEI take the following actions to demonstrate greater accountability toward building welcoming and inclusive communities:

- **Develop a strategic plan or action framework to build a coalition to enhance inclusion and equity in the community.** This includes articulating this vision in all council documentation and planning. Clearly state building such a community as a political imperative and desired management competency in all government activity. Evaluate and report strengths and achievements at both the organizational and community levels. Inspire and demand that all governmental organizations serve as a role model to other institutions by demonstrating a genuine commitment to minority communities.

- **Create a shared vision and action plan.** Developing a shared vision of an inclusive and equitable community is an important
first step to engage stakeholders and community members to form a sense of ownership in inclusive community building. This is particularly important and effective for small communities like PEI due to limited opportunities and resources for newcomers. We recommend that municipal governments identify and engage all community stakeholders in developing a shared vision for building inclusive communities free from all forms of racism and discrimination. This vision should be reflected in all key public policy areas to inspire community stakeholders and members to take actions toward this shared goal.

- **Strengthen local ownership and community partnerships.** Partnerships, either informal alliances or formally constituted bodies, are key to making progress. These partnerships are most effective when there is a commonly defined vision, which brings together potential institutional and community stakeholders. Data collected in this study indicate that building an inclusive community involves cross-sector stakeholders, including governmental organizations, public institutions (e.g., schools, universities, colleges, health institutions, law enforcement), nonprofit organizations (e.g., settlement agencies, faith-based organizations, legal aid), business organizations, and community members/volunteers. Stakeholders in the private sector, such as restaurants, car dealers, pharmacies, grocery stores, banks, and real estate agencies have shown motivation and extended outreach to newcomers and have played a more active role in welcoming and including newcomers. Many larger business organizations have employed newcomers or increased the diversity of their employees in response to the needs of newcomers as well as an increasingly diverse clientele.

- **Work to promote inclusion and equity in the society, requiring the broad involvement of committed groups of people.** For this to happen, the issue needs to be carefully framed in a way that builds inclusion for all stakeholders. It is important to build a supportive, relationship-based network for practitioners based on a sense of “common cause.” We recommend that provincial and municipal governments incorporate the mandate of building this kind of community through public policies and governance structures based on the insights gained from stakeholder groups and leaders/advocates who are knowledgeable about inclusion, access, and equity barriers faced by minority communities. This approach will lay a foundation for developing and communicating a vision for the future that speaks to a “just society for all,” ensuring a process that bridges difference and builds bonds, and reaches agreement on a common understanding of language.

- **Create more opportunities for education and awareness.** The literature identifies the importance of education and public awareness to create a welcoming environment for immigrants and refugees (Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, 2010; Cities of Migration, 2018a; Esses et al., 2010; Lund & Hira-Friesen, 2013). Asked about what needed to be done to make the country and city a more welcoming community for newcomers, most participants suggested more education and awareness. However, participants interpreted education and awareness differently, based on the mission and activities of their organizations. Governmental actors see education as strategies to increase public awareness of immigration policy, goals, and trends in provincial and national contexts. For actors in settlement service agencies, education and awareness means greater outreach to inform the local community about the types of newcomers arriving on PEI, their unique needs, issues and concerns, to clarify the concerns and misunderstandings associated with immigration policy and practices, and to communicate how a community can work together to address the unique issues and concerns related to newcomers.
and their impact on the local community. Newcomer participants in this study identified local residents’ understanding and awareness of the new cultures in PEI and Canada, the opportunities to interact with local residents, and the ability to identify strategies they could adopt to deal with the racism and discrimination as critical components to feel more welcome. Local community members expressed their desire for more opportunities to learn about newcomers’ cultures, backgrounds, and the ways they could socialize or communicate with newcomers without offending them due to culturally inappropriate topics or behaviors. Data collected in this study clearly indicate that creating more opportunities for education and awareness based on individuals’ and organizations’ needs and priorities can be a desired and effective approach for everyone in building up civic capacity and engagement in creating welcoming and inclusive communities.

- **Strive for a better coordinated refugee settlement.** All provinces in Canada receive a proportionate share of refugees as the result of Canada’s policies toward humanitarian compassion and relief efforts. Refugees are usually placed in each province based on their basic needs for safety and protection by the federal government. However, refugees coming from certain regions or situations, particularly those who have lived in refugee camps for a long period of time, may have unique needs that may challenge community capacities. Smaller communities, where the educational, cultural, psychological, and health services and facilities may be limited, may not be prepared to meet their unique needs. We recommend that refugees with high needs be placed in larger municipalities or communities with demonstrated capacity to provide needed services and facilities. Small communities struggling with funding and sufficient culturally responsive services may lack the capacity to provide the quality services necessary to meet the needs of all newcomers.

- **Challenge language inequality in policy, planning, and services.** Language plays an important role in building welcoming and inclusive communities because it is not only an inalienable component of one’s cultural identity, but also the most important tool for economic, social, and political engagement and empowerment (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). Exclusion caused by language was reported by the majority of newcomer participants in this study. Many encountered difficulties communicating with teachers, doctors, and police during critical events. To build inclusive communities for immigrants and refugees, language inequality and barriers in all sectors in the society need to be examined, recognized, and challenged. We recommend both the public and private sectors increase linguistic awareness and expertise, encourage teaching/learning of languages other than English and French, and celebrate linguistic diversity as a strength for intercultural skills needed for living and working in an increasingly interconnected world. Local universities and community colleges may serve as important partners in this effort by connecting international students with communities and service agencies as language experts or by working with local service agencies to support language services and other needs. This could reduce exclusion and build stronger connections within the community.

**Policy Implications**

Findings from this study have significant implications for public policies to build welcoming and inclusive communities for newcomers, particularly in smaller municipalities and communities where the culture and population have undergone considerable change in a short period of time. Building welcoming communities requires a shared vision with goals and objectives to reduce racism, discrimination, and exclusion. The articulation of this shared vision should be reflected in public policy, as well as municipal council and school board documentation and planning. There should be open and public acknowledgment of a commitment to this vision, and support mechanism for those who are working toward it. A framework for the development of strategies to build inclusion and equity and reduce
racism and discrimination should be developed collaboratively and shared as a tool to inspire all community stakeholders and members to act. Partnerships and collaborations are essential for the success of shared governance structures and for maximizing resources and communicating best practices. These partnerships would increase civic engagement and should include local and regional government, local service providers, and public schools and universities.

Meeting the needs of newcomers to a community requires policy and practices targeting a broad range of areas and services, including the provision of services targeting their basic needs (e.g., shelter and medical services), employment needs (e.g., language and employment skills development programs, business development training), and social connectedness (e.g., diversity awareness campaigns and culturally sensitive programming). In smaller communities, there are often discrepancies between newcomer needs and current available services, such as public transportation, housing, language learning, social inclusion, etc. In addition, English/French bilingualism generates inequality and exclusion within a multicultural/multilingual society and community. We recommend cultural marginalization and linguistic issues be considered as significant aspects in policymaking and in providing services, programs, and opportunities responsive to newcomers’ needs.

In addition to policy gaps and funding issues, systemic racism and absence of public awareness are also important factors that can hinder the development of inclusive communities, particularly for refugees and immigrants. We recommend that governmental and nonprofit organizations, as well as universities, work together to share with the public the political, social, and financial challenges to build inclusive and welcoming communities as they strive to overcome systematic racism and to help newcomers integrate. Individuals and organizations who have demonstrated commitment and passion for achieving a more just and equitable society for all need to be recognized and celebrated. Media and public education and training for creating an inclusive environment and opportunities to build understanding relationships and trust among stakeholders are fundamental to sustain success, and should be available to citizens in a continuous effort.

**Implications for Municipal Governments**

Municipal governments play a critical leadership role in building welcoming and inclusive communities. Developing a shared vision and strategy for reducing racism, discrimination, and exclusion in local communities is the most important role municipal government leaders can play in this process. Such communities require a broad consensus among local actors, including government and education, business and nonprofits, and representatives from the newcomer and local communities. Local government actors should play a leading role in ongoing and open conversations and communications among these actors about community strengths, weaknesses, and challenges. Devoting appropriate time and resources to build lasting cross-cultural understanding and relationships and to provide culturally and linguistically responsive public services for newcomers should be a priority as it not only serves the public interests, but also demonstrates governments’ commitment to the equity and inclusion of all community members.

Raising public awareness on racism and building capacity to fight against discrimination remains a challenge for local leadership. Through collaborative partnerships, effort should be made to increase public awareness and reduce racism and discrimination. Municipal governments, the education sector, the business community, and nonprofit organizations may organize and partner to increase public awareness on immigration through marketing campaigns that highlight the financial, social, and cultural opportunities and challenges associated with newcomers and immigration. Sharing newcomer portfolios on governments’ websites, successful immigrant businesses, life stories of immigrants and refugees, newcomers’ positive contributions to local communities, and demographic data of newcomer students in the public schools and universities can be excellent strategies to increase public awareness on the significance of diversity and inclusion for community engagement.

Access to local services is often a challenge for newcomers in small cities and communities. Local government can play an important role in reducing these challenges by providing culturally and linguistically responsive public services. For instance, a municipal government’s website integrated with Google Translate is a clear indication that a local government is attuned to the needs of newcomers as the technological integration
allows newcomers to access a wide range of public services and information. Expanding public transportation services and adjusting the schedules of these services based on newcomers’ needs are indicators of a city’s efforts in building inclusive infrastructure capacity. In addition, inviting newcomers to share their voices and views in the economic and political decision-making process can ensure programs and activities offered by municipal governments are inclusive and welcoming.

Conclusion
Building welcoming and inclusive communities for newcomers is a multilayered and complex task demanding cross-sector resources, innovation, and commitment. Small urban centers and communities often encounter greater challenges and barriers in this work because of the history, location, and limited resources. A systematic approach, including leadership engagement, a shared vision, trusting community relationships, broader community awareness on immigration, and commitment to fighting against discrimination, is critical to build capacity at both the organizational and individual levels.

Effective public policy and action plans to build welcoming and inclusive communities require knowledge and awareness of successful experiences and best practices. By sharing a deeper understanding of the existing issues related to inclusion, access, equity, racism, and discrimination in a small Canadian province, we hope to sustain the positive efforts/outcomes catalogued here while inspiring innovative strategies to better support the personal, social, cultural, educational, and economic development of newcomers, as well as increasing community engagement in building a more just, equitable, and inclusive society for all citizens.

References


About the Authors

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Asset Mapping and Focus Group Usage: An Exploration of the Russian-Ukrainian Population’s Need For and Use of Health-Related Community Resources

Jennifer C. Anglin, Tina Kruger Newsham, and Matthew Hutchins

Abstract

Community resources are an important aspect of preventive medicine and can also provide support to individuals with existing medical conditions. However, resources may not address all population groups within the community equally, and immigrants, who frequently face cultural and language barriers, are often unable to access the full range of healthcare resources available in the community. The purpose of this study was to gain insight on healthcare needs, attitudes, and access of a Ukrainian immigrant population in a large town in northern Indiana. Focus groups were conducted as a first step to creating connections upon which a community-based participatory research project could be built. Findings revealed cultural barriers (lack of understanding of health insurance options or value, belief that similar services were less expensive in the Ukraine) and language issues (lack of translation services or resources written in languages other than English or Spanish) were key barriers to accessing healthcare resources in the community. Concerns about dental care and its expense were also voiced. Future efforts might build on these findings by exploring policies and practices that affect various immigrant groups’ access to community healthcare resources. Recommendations for such efforts are also discussed.

Introduction

Value of Community Healthcare Resources

An individual’s health is not only determined during a visit with his or her clinician. Lifestyle choices and decisions that affect health are also shaped by factors outside the clinic walls. Due to the power of the sociocultural environment, patients’ health decisions and outcomes can be either won or lost at the community level.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2008), people see their primary care provider an average of four times per year. Given that most appointments last approximately 10 minutes (Gottschalk & Flocke, 2005) that computes to approximately 40 minutes per year in which a person is directly involved with their primary provider. Taking this into consideration, it is not likely that good health can be properly maintained through patient-clinician interaction alone.

Healthcare-related community resources are both available and positioned to assist in educating and supporting people with a myriad of opportunities. Also, according to the Community Preventive Services Task Force (2016), a highly regarded group of professionals who make evidence-based recommendations and gap analyses, community resources are recommended to address multiple health conditions. However, Porterfield, Hinnant, Kane, Horne, McAleer, & Roussel (2012) reported that patients receive less than half of the preventive services recommended to them, highlighting an area ripe for improvement in the delivery of healthcare-related resources.

Previous efforts to engage with immigrant communities have resulted in improved capacity for communities to address health threats. For example, faculty from East Carolina University partnered with the Hispanic Community Development Center to address threats to the health of Latinx immigrants, an engagement effort that resulted in bilingual educational programming, extensive testing for HIV, and the securing of funding through grant-writing efforts (Larson & McQuiston, 2012). Efforts of a public health department in Charlotte, NC, through partnership with faith-based organizations, were successful in engaging Russian immigrants in physical activity programs, although participants did not achieve targeted weight loss (Slisenko, 2018). As demonstrated by these and other efforts, working with (as opposed to in or for) immigrant communities is the best approach to addressing threats to the health of vulnerable populations, including Slavic immigrants.

Overview of Barriers to Immigrants Accessing Healthcare Resources

Given the limited participation in community-based preventive and education services related
to health among the general population, the presence of other impediments to access (e.g., language barriers, lack of familiarity with the area) can have significant negative effects on individuals accessing such resources. When newly immigrated to a community, it is likely that people will be unfamiliar with or hesitant to use the recommended services simply because of their lack of familiarity with the community. Compounding this fact, newly arrived immigrants are likely to suffer from culture shock and language barriers. Furthermore, “minority groups are especially likely to have a different understanding of health…” (Benisovich & King, 2003, p. 135), due to practices in their native countries, which may include no preventive health measures. In addition, the Slavic population studied here stated their culture prefers naturopathic and alternative medicine interventions before seeing a physician. These unique and deeply ingrained practices can easily result in lack of compliance with medications and provider recommendations.

Since the passing of the August 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), studies have shown how immigrants arriving even legally into the United States are at risk for healthcare disparities (Derose, Escarce, & Lurie, 2007). The vulnerability of immigrant groups is compounded by delays and restrictions due to political mandates and immigration laws. Undocumented immigrants are summarily denied financial assistance, but even those immigrants who enter the United States legally (after the August 1996 passing of PRWORA) are ineligible for federal assistance such as Medicaid for five years after entering legally (Levinson, 2002). This ruling remains for the state of Indiana, which allows lawfully permanent residents to be eligible for emergency Medicaid assistance for five years. After the five year period, these citizens are eligible for full Medicaid coverage (Indiana Family and Social Services, 2019).

Multiple studies have delved into the mysteries of acculturation with immigrant groups. Some studies found immigrants to be vulnerable, to be resistant to acculturation, and to feel isolated as they adjust to their new normal (Benisovich & King, 2003; Katigbak, Foley, Robert, & Hutchinson, 2016; Martin, 2009). With cultural differences abundant, it is necessary for a community to recognize the differences and internal challenges faced by different cultural groups. As the world’s melting pot, it is the responsibility of communities in the U.S. to take cultural and language differences as well as religious and acculturation factors into account, particularly as immigrant groups are often underrepresented and their “voices have been…muted” (Quintanilha, Mayan, Thompson, & Bell, 2016, p. 1).

Just one of the disparities of U.S.-born citizens and legal immigrants, such as language barriers or healthcare insurance, has been shown to impact the health of immigrants negatively (Larson & McQuiston, 2012), but rarely are disparities a single source of impact to an immigrant community. According to Derose et al., 2007), disparities in health care result in a lack of consistency of health care. This situation leads to decreased preventive care, communication with healthcare staff, understanding of a disease, and carrying through with medical recommendations, medications, and treatments. Some work has been done to identify strategies to addressing such issues caused by the challenge of immigrants accessing health care. For example, Meyer, Martinez, Mauricio, & Ip, (2013) published a handbook for training volunteers to serve as community health workers to focus on medication management with immigrants; yet, how immigrants approach the health system in their new country is not well understood.

In 1964, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act mandated that federally funded health organizations provide interpreters at the patient’s request (Derose et al., 2007). However, as a result of limited English proficiency from many immigrants, this right is not known of or followed through with. When combined with a busy physician’s office and a challenging or unknown process to obtaining a credible interpreter, this valuable connection can be overlooked, resulting in more disparities of health in the immigration population.

Looking specifically at Russian-Ukrainian (Slavic) immigrants, they, too, show special needs as they go through the acculturation process. In the Ukraine, medical practices remain underfunded since that country’s independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, and, according to Marya Dmytriv, MD, MPH, the “Ukraine is probably about 50 years behind the U.S.” in technology and treatment (Human Practice, para. 3, 2014). Also, due to the still-developing healthcare system in the Ukraine, Dmytriv said, “Illnesses aren’t validated if they’re not symptomatic” (Human Practice, para. 9). Thus, Slavic people may be used to living with silent diseases such as hypertension or high cholesterol untreated until a major health event occurs, such as a heart attack or stroke.

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Although not an overwhelming percentage of the population, Slavic residents have unique healthcare desires and requirements that need to be addressed. To the best of our knowledge, no research has been done on Slavic immigrant health needs, but this is an important topic as research indicates that, “immigrants are a subset of the ethnic minority population with myriad health risks and health needs that are poorly understood” (Katigbak et al., 2016, p. 211). Therefore, the goal of the current study was to capture the stories of the Slavic population and to understand their wants, needs, and barriers to obtaining community healthcare resources.

Framework for This Study

To help situate this project, we provide here a brief description of how the first author established the necessary foundations for implementing this study. This project was the perfect marriage of two interests of mine; I am interested in the availability, accessibility, and impact of community resources, and I have always been fascinated by other cultures and traditions. When I first moved to the county where this study was conducted, I lived next to a first-generation Ukrainian immigrant family. Meeting the Ukrainian family piqued my interest in their culture and traditions. The son of the family spoke English, and we developed a friendship. This unplanned intersection of my interests and my social circle helped to create this project, as the subject of accessing healthcare resources came up with my neighbors. Together, we developed a plan to implement this study.

A little background research helped set the stage for our approach: According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, heart disease is the leading cause of death in Elkhart County, where the current study was conducted (CDC, 2014). The other leading causes of death include stroke, lung disease, and cancer (CDC, 2014). Addressing the underlying health conditions of obesity, physical inactivity, lack of social support, and tobacco usage can decrease deaths from these largely preventable diseases. There are community resources available to assist primary care providers’ interventions to address and support residents. Unfortunately, newly arrived immigrants may have barriers in accessing this help.

Our first objective was to create a database of health-related community resources and to prepare asset maps of these resources, stratified by categories: fitness, nutrition, social support groups, prevention, and education. The methods used for developing the directories and asset mapping were grounded on the logic of the asset-based community development (ABCD) model (Kretzman & McKnight, 1993). The ABCD process focuses not on deficiencies of a community, but rather on the community’s assets and skills within individuals, associations, and institutions that can be shared to build and strengthen the area and its people. “In the ABCD approach, a community explores, describes, and maps its assets and then uses the assets to develop solutions to a specific social issue within the community such as: homelessness, hunger, access to healthcare, or poverty” (Lightfoot, McCleary, & Lum, 2014, p. 59). By focusing on the strengths already existing within the community, the people in the community can be empowered and can develop a sense of healthcare self-efficacy.

Following the creation of the healthcare resources database, our second objective was to better understand the health needs and barriers to accessing available community resources through focus groups. As the U.S. is home for many first-generation Slavic immigrants, we thought that data gathered from this population could provide a unique perspective on the health interests and needs that currently may or may not be addressed locally and more broadly.

The long-term aim of this study is to connect immigrant patients with resources needed to make a positive change in these residents’ health, well-being, and self-efficacy.

Methods
Participants

Members of a primarily first-generation Slavic church were invited to participate in focus groups. Three different dates were announced, and church congregants were encouraged to sign up for one of the dates if they were interested in participating. A target of eight to ten participants was set for each of the three focus groups. A total of 19 participants joined the three focus groups with an average of six per focus group. The pastor of the church plus the primary researcher’s neighbor encouraged congregants to participate to give them an opportunity to discuss their perspectives, desires, and concerns. The church was chosen because many first-generation Slavic immigrants have a strong faith, making the local church a safe and common location for congregating and sharing information.
Measures

This project was a mixed-methods case study with a heavy focus on qualitative data. Data gathering in focus groups began with a brief paper survey to capture basic demographic information, such as age, years lived in the U.S., and comfort levels with reading and speaking English (see Table 1 for a complete list of survey questions). The survey was in English with a Google-translated version following in Russian. The appropriateness of the questions and the accuracy of the translation was reviewed and approved by a first-generation Slavic-American (the first author’s neighbor).

Qualitative data was then acquired by facilitating open-ended and in-depth discussion with Slavic-American residents focusing on: awareness of community healthcare resources, needs for resources, health concerns, and barriers to accessing healthcare resources in the community. These open-ended questions were also written in English and Russian and approved for appropriateness and translation accuracy (again, by the first author’s neighbor; see Table 2 for a complete list of focus group questions). While the focus group sessions were held in spoken English with participants who were only fairly comfortable speaking

Table 1. Demographic Survey Questions Each Participant Answered

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<tr>
<th>Survey Questions – Please answer below</th>
<th>Питання опитування – Дайте, будь ласка, відповіді</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What is your age, in years? ________</td>
<td>Ваш вік, в найближчі роки?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Are you male or female (circle one)?</td>
<td>Ви чоловік або жінка?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Male (чоловік)</td>
<td>b. Female (чоловік)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What is the highest level of education you have completed (circle one)?</td>
<td>Який найвищий рівень освіти Ви закінчили?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Less than high school (менш середньої школи)</td>
<td>b. High school graduate (середній)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Some college (гр. середньо-технічна)</td>
<td>d. College graduate (випускник коледжу)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Post-graduate degree (стипендій фундаментальну наукову)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. In what year did you move to the United States? __________</td>
<td>В якому році ви переселилися до Сполучених Штатів?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How good would you say your spoken English is (circle one)?</td>
<td>Як добре ви сказали б ваш курси розмовної англійської мови?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Very good (Дуже добре)</td>
<td>b. Good (добре)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Fair (гр. ярмарок)</td>
<td>d. Poor (бідних)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. How good would you say your written English is (circle one)?</td>
<td>Як добре ви сказали б ваш письмову англійську мову?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Very good (Дуже добре)</td>
<td>b. Good (добре)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Fair (гр. ярмарок)</td>
<td>d. Poor (бідних)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. How would you rate your overall health?</td>
<td>Як би ви оцінили ваш загальний стан здоров’я?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Very good (Дуже добре)</td>
<td>b. Good (добре)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Fair (гр. ярмарок)</td>
<td>d. Poor (бідних)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Discussion Questions Presented to Each Focus Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The following questions will be asked for discussion.</th>
<th>Наступні питання будуть задані для обговорення.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What does being healthy mean to you?</td>
<td>Що означає бути здоровим для вас?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How would you compare your definition of health to other Americans?</td>
<td>Як ви порівняте ваше визначення здоров’я для інших американців?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What are some health concerns of Ukrainian-Americans living in Goshen?</td>
<td>Які проблеми зі здоров’ям українських американців, що живуть в Гошен?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How do you get information about health-related issues?</td>
<td>Як отримати інформацію про проблеми, пов’язані зі здоров’ям?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What is your opinion of the community resources providing healthcare support or preventive services to residents of Goshen?</td>
<td>Яка ваша думка про ресурси спільноти, які надають підтримку медичних або профілактичних послуг жителям Гошен?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What healthcare community resources are you aware of in the Goshen area?</td>
<td>Які медичні ресурси громади вам відомі в області Гошен?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Have you ever used any of those healthcare community resources?</td>
<td>Ви коли-небудь використовували будь-який з цих медичних ресурсів?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Why/why not?</td>
<td>Чому / чому ні?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. What resources would you be interested in having available?</td>
<td>Які ресурси ви були б зацікавлені в тому, щоб доступно?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. How likely are you to go to an English-speaking community resource?</td>
<td>Як ви, ймовірно, поїдете до медичного ресурсу спільноти на англійській мові?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. How likely would you be to go to a healthcare resource if the time, location, and topic was of interest to you?</td>
<td>Як ви, ймовірно, буде йти до ресурсу охорони здоров’я, якщо час, місце і тема для вас інтересні?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
English, the language barrier was mitigated by having the questions written in both English and Russian. In addition, some participants were fluent in English and were able to help with translation when appropriate.

**Procedures**

Data collection occurred via three focus groups. Focus groups can be successful with minority populations for several reasons. First, the researcher can learn from the interaction between the participants. Also, the interviewees are likely to be more open and share thoughts with others from the same background and can build trust in discussing health topics. In addition, people are typically more comfortable around peers (Quintanilha et al., 2016). Therefore, every effort was made to ensure that the focus groups entailed a comfortable and enjoyable open discussion between participants and the researcher. If an interviewee was uncomfortable with any question, he or she was advised not to answer it. It was understood that the primary researcher, not being a part of their cultural group, might raise some suspicion and reluctance, as “researchers have historically encountered challenges to accessing and recruiting those from under-represented groups” (Katigbak et al., 2016, p. 211). By using focus groups with pilot-tested questions, it was hoped that the participants would be more comfortable talking about issues with other people who share their own customs and language. Each focus group was led by the primary researcher with an interpreter available as needed. Pilot-tested questions were asked and discussions easily formed. Participants were excited to share their needs, attitudes, and insights on health care.

The phenomenological method was the basis for the qualitative data collection in this study. Creswell (2003) defines this phenomenology as describing “the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or the phenomenon” (p. 14). The concept under examination was health-related community resources. Focus groups were conducted until saturation of results was achieved. Data saturation—met once no new information or data was being expressed—is imperative for quality and validity (Creswell, 2003).

At the start of the focus groups, it was explained that the goal of the project was to develop a partnership in speaking and listening in order to hear needs and barriers. The aim was to recognize the group as a unit of identity and offer members the opportunity to be heard. Focus groups were employed as a democratic process between the experts (those being interviewed) and the research techniques used by the researcher. The two parties remain co-owners of the discussion, data, and results.

Each focus group began with reading the consent form, which had also been translated into Russian for participants’ convenience. After reading the consent forms and providing time for questions and answers regarding the focus groups, each participant signed the form. All study procedures were reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at Indiana State University.

**Analysis**

The results of the focus groups were analyzed using QSR NVivo software, version 11. Using this software, it is possible to organize large quantities of qualitative data for analysis. Themes were brought forth by coding, or labeling, the data. By segmenting the data provided by the participants of the focus groups, relevant themes were discovered and documented.

The quantitative data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel, version 10. Information from the demographic survey was entered, and graphic representations were created for visual displays of the quantitative data.

**Findings**

**Initial Findings from ABCD Community Resource Search**

In Goshen, Indiana, where the study took place, there is a wide variety of healthcare resources available. However, minimal resources were available to people who do not speak English or Spanish (see Figure 1). A language category of “N/A” was created for those resources where language was not necessarily needed to use the resource. For
example, screening resources are all listed as “N/A” as these include community blood pressure machines in chain retail stores and screenings provided by hospitals, which are required to provide translation upon request. Fitness was also a category with a large number of “N/A” resources, as the city studied has many miles of walking and bicycling trails available to the community for fitness and enjoyment.

Another approach to examining the available resources was to consider what programs were available based on various health conditions (see Figure 2). Educational opportunities most frequently existed for people with diabetes, where, due to the multitude of fitness opportunities with the parks and recreation department, there are a high number of potential opportunities for fitness for all residents.

Findings from Focus Groups

Three separate focus groups were held with representatives from the Slavic population. Data saturation occurred as themes were reoccurring at all events. A total number of 19 participants joined the focus groups and spoke freely about existing healthcare resources in the community, barriers to accessing those resources, and the wants and needs of the Slavic population in regard to health care.

Among the participants (n=19) were 13 women (68.0%) and 6 men (32.0%). Ages of participants ranged from 20 to 77 years of age (M=46, SD=18.5), and the total number of years in the U.S. ranged from 2 to 23 years (M=14, SD=4.8). Table 3 contains other demographic information of the participants.

Analysis of qualitative data showed common themes demonstrating needs, desires, fears, and concerns regarding healthcare community resources (see Figure 3).

Table 3. Results of the Demographic Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean (SD) or n(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6 (32.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>13 (68.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>46.4 Years (±18.5 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>6 (33.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>4 (22.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>6 (33.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-graduate degree</td>
<td>2 (11.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in the United States</td>
<td>13.9 Years (±4.9 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort with speaking English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>6 (31.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>3 (15.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>6 (31.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>4 (21.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort with reading English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>3 (15.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>3 (15.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>2 (10.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>9 (47.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-rated health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>5 (26.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>9 (47.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>3 (15.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>2 (10.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. Resource category based on disease. This chart shows disease-based programs for cardiac and diabetic residents. Of the need demonstrated in the Slavic community, screening, weight management, nutrition, and fitness are of minimal want. Support and education are the key areas of need but these resources are the least abundant.

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There is a significant lack of education/support groups, especially regarding diabetic and cardiac issues. However, translation services and education in Russian is a need, as even participants with fair to good spoken English skills are more confident speaking in their native language. Participants identified many challenges to their engagement in the medical system in this community. They were uncomfortable accessing emergency services because of a lack of awareness of urgent care services and because of high fees associated with such services. As one participant reported, “Urgent care? We are not aware. We won’t go to emergency because it costs too much.” Another participant similarly expressed that, “Russians and Ukrainians don’t know about urgent cares.”

Health insurance (or lack thereof) also served as a barrier to accessing healthcare resources among the participants. As one participant indicated, “The majority of us don’t have insurance. If it’s required for work, we have it.” Health insurance may be particularly problematic for newer immigrants: “But the Ukrainians who just get here and don’t speak English, they don’t understand. They go without insurance because they think it’s a waste of money. And it is.”

As indicated in the previous quote, cost is also a significant barrier to accessing healthcare among this population. Both high costs of health care and concerns regarding how exactly to pay those costs were reported. One participant said, “How do bills work? The bills keep coming. The bills come from so many places for one doctor visit. So many things for one visit. There are a lot of hidden fees.” Another participant indicated that, “We like to pay in cash,” which can be challenging when a bill is delivered later. Some participants were aware that there are lower cost healthcare options, but they were not aware of how to locate or access those options: “What clinics can we go to if we don’t have a doctor, clinics that doctors volunteer at that are less? We don’t know where we can go to see a doctor who is less expensive.”

When discussing needs and desires, participants also focused on education and support in the Russian language. One participant with diabetes stated, “I don’t have education, and I don’t know where to get education. I get insulin at the doctor, but I still don’t know anything about it.” Medicare and Medicaid services are misunderstood, and the Russian-speaking population is in need of education on what is available and how to enroll. Five of the 19 participants were age 65 or older, meaning they are eligible for Medicare. Each focus group revealed questions on which Medicare offering(s), A, B, C, and/or D, participants needed. Furthermore, some were eligible for Medicaid, but unaware of how to go about enrolling in those services.

Aside from needing education and struggling with insurance and payment issues, one specific medical specialty that was discussed often was dental care. The cost of dental care in the U.S. is very high, especially when compared with costs in the Ukraine. According to one participant, “It’s expensive here and it’s hard to find dentists here. It costs one tooth per ticket [back to the Ukraine]. You can buy ticket and go [to the Ukraine] and fix all your teeth as much as you can fix one tooth [in the U.S.]” In a couple of extreme cases, participants reported pulling their own teeth due to lack of an available, affordable dentist when needed. Again, translation and access are paramount in situations such as these, so no human being is suffering.

Finally, cultural beliefs also affected the Slavic population’s access to health care. The fact that they look to home remedies first keeps the population out of a medical clinic…unless the home remedy doesn’t work. First generation immigrants are used to raising and growing organic food, hard manual labor,

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**Figure 3.** This chart shows the top needs and wants of the Slavic population that participated in the focus groups. Calculations are based on the number of times a participant initiated a discussion in one of these categories.
and a strong spiritual life. Thus, participants deemed some health factors such as dietetics, fitness, mental health, and weight management as not necessary or inappropriate. Preventive care, such as vaccinations and well visits are also not sought out, “…unless it is needed for papers or our job.” Thus, the medical system in the U.S. plays a minimal role in Slavic-American life for most immigrants. However, when appropriate, they are in need of an entry point to care, translation, and explanation of payment.

Discussion and Future Directions

This study applied mixed methods to address the questions of what health-related resources were available in a small Midwestern community with a large Ukrainian immigrant population as well as the perceived health-related needs of that population. Findings may inform future efforts to address the healthcare needs of immigrant populations as these groups may be particularly vulnerable to health threats, while simultaneously facing significant barriers to accessing community resources for health. Community-based participatory research (CBPR) principles informed the study design, and asset mapping followed by focus groups was essential to the success of this study.

The Slavic community, contrary to barriers other researchers have encountered when desiring to work with an under-represented group (Katigbak, 2016), was very accessible in this study. A key reason for this accessibility was the first author’s personal connection with members of the Slavic community. Others interested in working with immigrant populations should build on personal ties that may evolve outside of a professional context (e.g., health care or research). Forming meaningful connections with community members, relying on the expertise of the target population, and following through on suggestions provided by participants helped to build the necessary relationships for this project. Others should work to build similar connections with members of the target population in future efforts to address the health needs of immigrants. Tinkler (2010) shares a variety of strategies for building successful partnerships as well as identifying issues that disrupt such efforts, noting that a direct connection with the community strengthened a successful partnership (and was lacking in a less successful effort).

Relying on focus groups for data collection provided an outlet for participants to share similar experiences, reinforce others’ thoughts, and build off each other’s stories. The lived experiences shared by participants provided the phenomenological foundation and reinforced previous literature that first-generation immigrants can feel isolated as they go through the acculturation process (Benisovich & King, 2003; Katigbak et al., 2016; Martin, 2009). The current project facilitated establishing meaningful relationships, which is the crux of any effort to develop effective community interventions.

The key findings of the current study revealed that the Slavic population has needs and wants in regard to health care, and that they face barriers in obtaining the information they want and need. Barriers facing this population are categorized into two areas: language and financial.

As expressed in both literature (e.g., Larson & McQuiston, 2012) and focus groups, language is the most significant of all barriers immigrant populations face. The language barrier alone identifies the Slavic population in the U.S. as a vulnerable population, meaning that they are “…at increased risk for poor physical, psychological, and social health outcomes and inadequate healthcare” (Derose et al. p. 1,258). Language barriers can delay medical care until a life-threatening event occurs. The survey portion of the current study provided similar evidence that language barriers are obstacles to healthcare access and can negatively affect the health of the Slavic population. Medical clinics and immigrant advocacy groups should be tasked to promote health among immigrant populations and should focus on identifying available translators and educating providers and the public about the mandate that federally funded health organizations are required to provide interpreters at patients’ request (Derose et al., 2007).

Finally, the complexity of the U.S.’s managed care system is a hurdle to gaining access to care. As revealed by participants in the current study, misunderstandings of Medicare, Medicare Part D, and Medicaid can prevent or delay access. Multiple questions were brought up in all focus groups as to which Medicare plan was needed and how to obtain Medicaid. With most Slavic immigrants uninsured, except for Medicare when they turn 65 years old, medical care is out of reach financially for many members of this population. The participants deemed commercial health insurance as an unnecessary waste of money. A few immigrants did have commercial insurance...
through employers but, “…immigrants have poor access to medical care, even when they are insured” (Migration Policy Institute, 2013, p. 7) as, per the focus group, they are unaware of the process of seeing a clinician especially due to language barriers. Interventions to address this barrier to healthcare access might incorporate trained volunteer community health workers, as suggested by Meyer et al., (2013). Helping immigrants understand what resources are available (both free of charge and on a fee basis), as well as benefits of and sources for procuring health care, may help immigrants increase access of healthcare resources. Furthermore, these volunteers might be trained through the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services’ National Training Program (n.d.), which helps people “better understand and educate others about Medicare, Medicaid, the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and the federally facilitated health insurance marketplace” (para. 2).

McClelland, Ingram, Caballero, Garcia, & McCarville, (2011) developed a toolkit (vetted through Community Partnerships for Health) to support immigrant women accessing available resources in their communities. While that project focused on women experiencing domestic violence, the lessons learned may apply to immigrants seeking to access healthcare resources as well. The McClelland group recommends as a first step that community agencies be familiarized with the needs of immigrants, and that all relevant agencies be identified and brought into efforts to meet the target population’s needs. They then recommend that referral roles and responsibilities be identified and that trainings be implemented to coordinate community efforts. Also, efforts to address the needs and wants of immigrants related to accessing health care might follow a similar path of familiarizing providers with immigrants’ needs, identifying relevant agencies (as was done here through ABCD asset mapping), then establishing referral protocols and coordinating agency efforts.

The Slavic community is a close-knit and faith-based community. Information of interest to the community will spread via word of mouth, as did the request for focus group participants. This community is a hard-working and thriving group of people who come from a background much different than most other U.S. citizens. This community comes from a land of conflict, tension, and war. They enrich the U.S. landscape, though their quiet lifestyle might go unnoticed. It is, therefore, the duty and privilege of communities in the U.S. to make sure this population’s needs and wants do not go unnoticed, and that action be taken in order to accommodate their healthcare wants and needs. Education is the simplest action a community can do, once the need has been identified, as in the current study, to promote health, healthy lifestyles, and medical coverage. By supporting these basic human rights, communities will be healthier and more productive, and self-efficacy will be a norm of all of the citizens.

As with all research efforts, there were both strengths and weaknesses associated with the current study. Some of the strengths included the full involvement of the focus group participants. They were open and appreciative to have someone, even an outsider, care enough to want to listen and help with their health care. The participants and translation assistant were tremendous assets to make sure that participants’ stories were heard and understood. Weaknesses of the study included the limited number of participants who were able to join the focus groups. Although saturation of data was achieved, everyone has a different story. More personal stories may have further strengthened the identification of the needs of this community. Another weakness was that the primary researcher did not speak Russian. Although excellent translation was provided, there remains a gap in understanding of the feelings and nuances of the participants’ stories.

In conclusion, this study lays the groundwork for addressing the healthcare needs and wants of the Slavic population in Goshen. Moving forward, CBPR practices may be best suited to addressing the needs identified through the current study. CBPR can reduce disparities to health care by meshing the invaluable first-hand information of the population with the knowledge and guidance of a researcher. The spokespeople from the population and the researcher become partners while identifying key challenges as they learned from each other with the common goal of reducing healthcare disparities. The information gleaned through this study can be used as researchers and members of the Slavic population work together to develop and implement strategies to improve access to and utilization of community healthcare resources for Slavic immigrants.

Development of a solid, evidence-based set of community resources and services along with volunteer community health workers would be assets to immigrants and the communities in which they live and work (both the county in
which the current study was conducted and beyond). Although some areas of needs, such as dentistry and cost of dental health, are not going to be remedied by this study, it does underscore the importance of future advocacy efforts for immigrants. The needs and wants were stated and validated through three focus groups, and the resources are available. Once the educational and language barriers between the needs and wants are addressed and a bridge to the existing resources is built, a healthier community can be achieved with this population, whose members quietly co-exist in the community.

References


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Community-Based Participatory Research and Sustainability: The Petersburg Wellness Consortium

Maghboeba Mosavel, Jodi Winship, Valerie Liggins, Tiffany Cox, Mike Roberts, and Debra Jones

Abstract
The principle and practice of sustainability is critical in community-based participatory research. Actively planning for and building community capacity to ensure sustainability is even more critical in research involving underserved populations and underrepresented minorities. The perception of researchers engaging with the community until their research needs have been met, then leaving the community with minimal, if any, benefits, has all too often been the reality in these communities. This paper offers a case study of how an independent community consortium was borne from an academic/community research partnership in Petersburg, Virginia. We discuss lessons learned and practice implications as we describe the evolution of, and challenges associated with, cultivating a sustainable independent coalition.

Introduction
Academic research projects have received well-deserved criticism for engaging in helicopter research that focuses primarily on the research goals without developing a plan for building capacity and creating a sustainable system that will live on well after the research funding has ended. Community-based participatory research (CBPR) as a highly engaged framework provides the ideal context within which to plan for continued engagement in targeted public health issues (Israel, Schulz, Parker, Becker, Allen, & Guzman, 2010). However, while sustainability is a concept integral to CBPR, it continues to be a component that, while acknowledged, is most often relegated for future research projects. Realizing a sustainable impact beyond the necessarily prescribed research focus is often difficult for academic/community partnerships. What are the best approaches to support ongoing efforts in a systematic and structured manner and how can these initial academic/community partnerships be transformed to address health disparities beyond the initial scope of a research project? The aim of this paper is to describe how an academic research project can inform and support the development of a sustainable, independent community coalition. We discuss lessons learned and practice implications as we describe the evolution of, and challenges associated with, cultivating an independent coalition started by a research partnership in tandem with the concurrent implementation of the research.

CBPR and Sustainability
Communities have become increasingly skeptical of researchers who are primarily focused on the research goals and fail to develop a plan for sustainability at the onset of a community-based research program despite realizing the limitations of grant funding. Particularly in research involving underserved populations and underrepresented minorities, the perception of researchers engaging with the community until their research needs have been met, then leaving the community with minimal, if any, benefits, has all too often been the reality (Dancy, Wilbur, Talashek, Bonner, & Barnes-Boyd, 2004).

The principle and practice of sustainability is critical in CBPR. Implicit in the principle of sustainability is a commitment for partnerships, relationships, knowledge gained, and capacity building to extend beyond the research project or funding period (Hacker, Tendulkar, Rideout, Bhuiya, Trinh-Shevrin, Savage, Grullon, Strelnick, Leung, & DiGirolamo, 2012; Israel, Krieger, Vlahov, Ciske, Foley, Fortin, Guzman, Lichtenstein, McGranaghan, Palermo, & Tang, 2006). Importantly, this also means that relationships between individuals or organizations are maintained in support of continued collaboration even if the original project initiated through the academic/community partnership is not continued (Israel et al., 2006; Israel et al., 2010). Interconnected with sustainability is the concept of building local capacity to sustain partnerships and programs (Andrews, Newman, Meadows, Cox, & Bunting,
projects helps to re-establish the credibility and trustworthiness of researchers and their institutions and to rebuild trust between academia and under-represented and minority communities and populations.

While sustainability is an acknowledged outcome in CBPR and there are examples in the literature of CBPR projects that have sustained beyond the initial research project, as well as descriptions of facilitators and challenges to sustainability, there is a visible gap in the literature related to the actual process and steps involved in moving toward sustainability. The purpose of this paper is to address this gap and to describe the process by which the Wellness Engagement Project (WE Project)—an academic/community partnership focusing on obesity reduction and prevention—initiated and implemented an independent coalition, the Petersburg Wellness Consortium (PWC), to maximize the continuation of a city-wide health disparities agenda beyond the focus on obesity.

Community Context

Petersburg, Virginia was once a thriving industrial community. One of its largest industries was tobacco. At one time the tobacco industry employed more than two thirds of Petersburg, Virginia’s workforce. Even though the largest company involved in tobacco production, Brown and Williamson, left the city in the mid-eighties, the after effects are still palpable (Schneider, 2016). The remnants of this loss can be seen in struggling neighborhoods with dilapidated housing and abandoned factories. In addition, these losses have bred an environment of financial mismanagement. In 2016, Petersburg was forced to undergo significant financial audits and investigations (Buettner, 2016a), the outcome of which led to several leadership terminations and resignations (Buettner, 2016b). Presently the city is facing dire economic problems (Adam, 2017).

The collective inability to move on, the struggle to forget a past that was seen by many as golden years, can be understood more if the topic is broached over coffee with a local church group, or dinner and drinks in a downtown pub. Informal discussions conducted by one of the PWC leaders (co-author) on the perceived reasons for Brown and Williamson’s departure from the community may vary in detail but all revolve around bad political decision-making or corporate greed (Wikipedia, 2017). It is still unclear if the desire to abandon a union-backed workforce for less organized employees was the dominant factor behind the

2012; Hacker et al., 2012; Israel et al., 2006). When CBPR projects facilitate learning, skill-building, and networking opportunities, provide technical assistance, and sometimes even funding, community capacity can be strengthened, thus preparing the community to take control and address issues of importance for the long term (Hacker et al., 2012).

There are, of course, significant challenges to ensuring sustainability in CBPR projects, including limitations of time and resources needed to grow networks and transfer knowledge, and the frequent struggle to maintain the morale and energy of diverse partners for the long term (Israel et al., 2006). Nevertheless, the literature provides examples of effective sustainability in academic/community partnerships through building trusting relationships, recognizing the value of all partners’ perspectives, gaining a commitment to collaborative principles and providing a structured organization, including a leadership succession plan (Hacker et al., 2012; Israel et al., 2006).

The Harlem Community and Academic Partnership (HCAP) and Khmer Girls in Action (KGA) are two such examples. Both are currently non-profit organizations that began as CBPR projects. Loss of funding and later the loss of their primary academic partner spurred HCAP to reassess their future. These catalysts resulted in the remaining partners’ decision and commitment to ensure sustainability of their mission by becoming a stand-alone, independent entity (Harlem Community and Academic Partnership, n.d.). Similarly, the KGA was built from a CBPR project through Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice (ACRJ) and their Health, Opportunities, Problem Solving, and Empowerment (HOPE) project. After a successful implementation of the HOPE project, KGA was formed by the community as an independent organization to continue the empowerment efforts of the HOPE project with a focus specifically on Cambodian girls and women in the Long Beach community (Cheatham-Rojas & Shen, 2010).

Following the tenets of CBPR, researchers must be willing to relinquish a project back to the community, or better yet, build it in partnership with the community. By doing so, not only does it ensure sustainability of the project, but it sends a strong signal to community members that the researchers are there to support them and the community’s identified needs, and not just there to benefit from conducting research “on” the community. A commitment to sustainability in CBPR projects helps to re-establish the credibility and relevance of researchers and their institutions and
decision to leave, or the possibility of a decreased tax burden, or the reluctance of city government to provide land for expansion. All conversations shared one common theme: a perceived lack of regard or consideration by the corporation for the citizens who would be left behind in a state of economic hopelessness. This perception of “being disregarded and used” is a theme interwoven into the public discourse and is integral to the question of who can be trusted in community matters.

With a current population of approximately 32,000, the majority (77%) of Petersburg residents are black, 15% are white, 5% are Hispanic/Latino, and 3% are mixed or other races (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). With an unemployment rate nearing 7% (U.S. Department of Labor, 2017) and a median household income rate substantially lower than that of Virginia as a whole ($32,000 compared to $55,000) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017), it is not surprising that the poverty rate is 28% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017) and 100% of public school students in the City of Petersburg receive free breakfast and lunch through the USDA Community Eligibility Provision (Virginia Department of Education, 2017). Petersburg’s overall health ranking is the poorest in the state according to the Robert Wood Johnson County Health Rankings (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2018). Approximately 45% of Petersburg residents are reportedly obese (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2018), and the city has significantly higher rates of cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and kidney disease compared to the rest of the state (Virginia Department of Health, 2015).

The Wellness Engagement (WE) Research Project

University Partner

As a health disparities researcher at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) in Richmond, Virginia (30 miles north of Petersburg), the first author became involved in the Petersburg community through a research project focusing on cancer disparities among African Americans. Using community-engaged strategies including photo-voice, focus groups, and town hall meetings, the author sought to understand the community’s attitudes, beliefs, and barriers to cancer prevention and treatment (Mosavel & Ports, 2015; Mosavel, Rafie, Cadet, & Ayers, 2012). As often occurs during community-engaged research, through the numerous listening sessions with the community, engagement with the community and multiple community partners, the author became familiar with the health needs in Petersburg, including the manifestations of the social determinants of health. In addition, she recognized that alongside the dismal health rankings, there were many existing local assets that could be further cultivated, as well as community partners diligently working to address community need. This engagement provided the context and relationships necessary to design the WE Project.

Community Partner

Pathways, Inc., is a Petersburg-based non-profit organization with a mission of being “a neighborhood partner building pathways to education, employment, good health, and a revitalized community” (Pathways, 2018). Since its founding in 1995, the organization has established itself as an anchor in the community through extensive outreach and programming. In support of its educational mission, Pathways provides diverse programming including youth workforce and leadership development and re-entry support for those recently released from the criminal justice system, as well as financial and job coaching services for those currently in the workforce. The organization also fosters community revitalization through affordable housing, food distribution programs, and community engagement. Finally, Pathways operates the city’s only free medical clinic and offers a variety of health and wellness classes to the community.

Partnership Established

It is within the context of Petersburg’s ongoing economic challenges and health profile of being ranked as lowest in Virginia (133 of 133) in both health factors and outcomes (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2018), that the VCU researcher approached Pathways, which had an established community presence, to collaborate on a National Institutes of Health grant opportunity to improve health outcomes in Petersburg.

In 2012, in preparation for the grant application, Pathways and VCU conducted several community meetings with various stakeholders (community-based organizations, faith community, residents) to determine the community’s priorities and identify the salient health concerns. As a well-known organization with particular strength in grassroots organizing, Pathways was able to assemble diverse stakeholders at relatively short notice, culminating in the participation of more than 30 different community organizations and residents.
The conclusion of these meetings resulted in a community-identified research focus, overall support for moving forward with the project, and interest by many in directly participating in the project if the research project was funded. The community meetings also brought light to the community’s mistrust of researchers and concern that any benefits derived from the project would end when the research was completed.

The WE Project

Feedback from the community meetings was used to inform the focus of the proposed research project: obesity. The proposed project would include a comprehensive needs assessment to identify the community’s strengths and resources for addressing obesity, the community’s perception of obesity, and to identify potential community-wide interventions that could be implemented to address obesity. From the needs assessment, a community-based obesity intervention would be developed and tested. Furthermore, in response to the community’s concern about “helicopter” type interactions with researchers, an additional aim of the proposed project was to establish a community consortium to address obesity. Furthermore, VCU and Pathways both discussed sustainability as a major concern and agreed that there was an obligation, regardless of funding success, to: (a) address the need for community-based organizations to have a forum to discuss health issues and (b) maximize the city’s limited resources through networking. Consequently, harnessing the momentum that was created by the community meetings, the Petersburg Wellness Consortium (PWC) was established and began to meet monthly even before the WE Project was funded.

Subsequently, the WE Project was funded in 2013 as a three-year planning grant to use a CBPR approach to focus on obesity. From 2013–2016 the WE Project conducted a community-engaged needs assessment utilizing strategies such as asset mapping, a community survey, “house chats” (Mosavel, Ferrell, & LaRose, 2016) and town hall meetings to inform the development of a pilot intervention to increase physical activity and improve dietary quality and intake in Petersburg. Instrumental to the CBPR approach, the WE Project hired and trained 18 community residents as Wellness Ambassadors, who had the dual role of being community researchers as well as health advocates. Furthermore, a Community Health Leadership Council (CHLC) consisting of 10 leaders of various organizations, healthcare providers, and community-based partners was established (Figure 1). The CHLC was a community advisory board that met regularly with the research team to provide feedback and advice as the research protocols were developed and implemented. Most importantly, four of these CHLC members (and co-authors on this paper) were active in the PWC from its inception and became instrumental in solidifying the structure of the PWC and ultimately moving the PWC toward independence.

Establishing an Independent Consortium

WE Project Support (2012–2013)

From its inception, the intent was for the PWC to function as an independent body of community leaders coming together to address health in

Figure 1. PWC Structure

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### Table 1. Distinction and Alignment Between WE Research and PWC Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>WE</th>
<th>PWC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2012 | • Community meetings in spring 2012 to determine health priority for Petersburg  
• WE Project grant submitted | • PWC established by VCU and Pathways  
• Monthly meetings begin  
• Consultant hired to work with PWC to define mission and purpose |
| 2013 | • WE Project funded  
• Community health leadership Council (CHLC) established  
• Wellness ambassadors hired and trained  
• Developed walking club toolkit  
• Ambassadors start walking clubs  
• Ambassadors provide training and support for Million Mile Challenge | • PWC continues to meet monthly and work on mission and organizational structure  
– organized by WE Project and CHLC  
• Wellness ambassadors join the PWC  
• Launched Million Mile Challenge |
| 2014 | • Data collection begins (asset mapping, survey, house chats, etc.)  
• CHLC meetings  
• Supervise student interns to support PWC | • Million Mile Challenge continues  
• PWC continues to meet; support community activities  
• WE and council members provide "reluctant” leadership  
• Strengthen community presence with table/booth at community events  
• Cameron Foundation Health Summit  
– introduced PWC to RWJF coaching program |
| 2015 | • WE Project study implementation  
• CHLC meetings  
• Wellness ambassador trainings  
• Host community events  
• Data dissemination  
• Building capacity of PWC  
• Supervise interns to support PWC  
• WE Project lead submit DentaQuest Foundation grant to explore oral health disparities | • WE lead investigator establishes PWC team, applies and is awarded RWJF Roadmaps to Health Action Award  
• PWC steering committee established  
– includes select CHLC members  
• Stakeholders convening meeting  
• Bylaws approved  
• DentaQuest funding supports PWC capacity building  
• First workgroups established  
– Youth health & wellness  
– Chronic illness  
– Oral health  
• PWC members participated in walking tour with First Lady of Virginia to highlight challenges in the city’s infrastructure and healthy food availability |
| 2016 | • Walkability audit  
• Built environment beautification  
• PhotoVoice exhibition  
• Data dissemination | • First PWC board of directors elected; WE Wellness ambassador elected as Secretary  
• PWC independent |
| 2017 | • Ongoing capacity building and training of community residents as health advocates | • Monthly board meetings  
• Workgroup meetings and activities  
• PWC publishes its first annual report |
Petersburg, thus extending beyond the work of the WE Project (Table 1). The work of the PWC was primarily led and supported by the WE Project staff, including several CHLC members. For example, the WE Project coordinator was responsible for coordinating PWC tasks, interacting with PWC members, and any follow-up required; additionally, CHLC members alternated in facilitating and leading PWC meetings (Table 2). In the initial meetings, presentations were made to differentiate the purpose and role of the WE Project as separate from the PWC; however, the extensive participation of WE Project staff, including the Wellness Ambassadors, contributed to continued confusion by some of where the WE Project ended and the PWC began.

The WE Project and CHLC understood the importance of distinguishing between the WE research project and the PWC (community coalition); to this end, early in its inception, the WE Project funded a consultant to work with the PWC and interested community stakeholders to develop its initial mission and organizational structure. Two planning sessions were organized soon after the PWC was established to obtain input from community organizations about their visions for the coalition. Feedback from these planning sessions was overwhelmingly positive and indicated a strong desire and need for collaborative efforts to improve health in Petersburg. Feedback included:

- Community development organization leader: “I see PWC as operating as a well-organized and well-informed group of local service providers and stakeholders who are making real change in the improvement of health in Petersburg.”
- Medical center manager: “A community team of pooled resources working together to improve the health and wellness of Petersburg residents and the community.”
- Virginia Cooperative Extension faculty: “I would like to see the PWC be the ‘glue’

**Table 2. Evolution of PWC’s Organizational Structure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Organizational Structure</th>
<th>Changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>PWC overseen by WE Project and CHLC leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Proposed Organizational Structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Headed by 2 co-chairs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- one community-based organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- one non-community-based organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Three working groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Health events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Nutrition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Physical activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5-member steering committee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Co-chairs + working group representative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technical support team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Provided by WE Project</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Actual Organizational Structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PWC overseen by steering committee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part-time coordinator/administrator (WE Project)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Workgroups established:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Chronic disease</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Oral health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Children/youth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Organizational Structure per PWC By-Laws</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Board of Directors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Chair</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Vice chair</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Secretary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Treasurer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Representative from each work group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 2 Petersburg residents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Employee from Crater Health District</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Representative from youth organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Standing Committees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Children/youth health and wellness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Chronic disease</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Oral health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
that binds the health resources of the city together. Help to determine what resources we have, which are significant, what is lacking and to make sure that the residents have knowledge of and access to the resources.”

- Regional government representative: “Over the next few years I see the PWC as the lead coalition taking action to improve health for the Petersburg community with strong citizen participation.” Local business leader: “Success for the Petersburg Wellness Consortium would be to see various wellness programs enacted in different parts of the City of Petersburg.”

- Regional health organization representative: “Petersburg Wellness Consortium, in collaboration with the City of Petersburg and other private and public stakeholders, must be dedicated to promoting health and wellness in Petersburg.”

Feedback from the community meeting was used to identify the overall vision for the PWC—a vision statement that is still used today: “We envision Petersburg living in excellent health and wellness.” The feedback was also used as a starting point to define the purpose, mission, and values of the PWC (Table 3). The engagement of the community in an intentional and thoughtful manner also provided the core foundation of the PWC as a coalition that embraced the involvement of the community.

Despite the community consensus that a collaborative effort to address health in Petersburg was needed, defining and agreeing on the PWC’s mission and goals and separating its purpose from that of the WE Project remained challenging in large part because of the leadership overlap between the two groups. In addition, there were varying ideas of what role PWC should play in the community. There were also different views on what constituted “community” for purposes of the coalition membership—some contended that it should be mostly residents, others indicated a balance of residents and organizations. Another issue of concern was not being able to align the PWC’s mission and goals with individual and organization agendas. PWC spent much of its meeting time discussing varying opinions. However, in the absence of structure for receiving input, these

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vision</th>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We envision Petersburg living in excellent health and wellness</td>
<td>To work together to create and optimize partnerships and identify resources to improve Petersburg health and wellness</td>
<td>The Petersburg Wellness Consortium is an alliance of community partners and stakeholders. The PWC provides an opportunity to build a local, well-represented coalition that can maximize existing resources, and help to establish a shared agenda to reduce health disparities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We envision Petersburg living in excellent health and wellness</td>
<td>To improve Petersburg’s health and wellness by optimizing resources and partnerships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We envision Petersburg living in excellent health and wellness</td>
<td>To improve Petersburg’s health and wellness by optimizing resources and partnerships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Evolution of the PWC Vision, Mission, and Purpose

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discussions frequently went off-task, were unproductive, and could at times become uncontrolled. Providing input with no process perpetuated the group’s state of confusion and frustration. The continuance of this state led to discouragement, increased frustration, and ultimately some members leaving the group.

**Toward Independence (2014–2015)**

From its onset, this strong presence and identification of WE key leaders with the PWC led to several opportunities as well as challenges. It resulted in justifiable confusion about the interconnection between the WE research project and the focus of the PWC, and the overlap of responsibilities led to a perceived blurring of the boundaries between the PWC and the WE Project. The WE Project primary investigator and CHLC members were committed to keeping the PWC going. However, due to the desire for the PWC to be independent, they were reluctant to fully step in as formal leaders: They were the leaders (in action and perception) but were not fully comfortable with stepping into this role. Further complicating this perception, membership in PWC and the WE Project overlapped, leading to multiple role identities. For example, an individual could be a CHLC member, PWC member, and have to represent their organization. Juggling these multiple roles and determining which identity was salient at what time further highlighted the challenge of developing an independent identity for the PWC and, in hindsight, might have made it difficult for new leaders to emerge.

Transparent differentiation between the focus, identity, leaders, and milestones of the WE Project and PWC became a major deliverable expressed both by the “reluctant” leaders and various community partners. Monthly meetings continued with a focus on various health-related activities, yet without a formal organizational structure, the PWC was unable to commit to a clear agenda. It was this need to launch the PWC on a truly independent path from the WE Project that resulted in the team seeking opportunities to cultivate targeted efforts at developing an independent infrastructure through adopting a more formal structure and electing new leadership.

The opportunity to steer the PWC toward autonomy was set in motion with the 2014 Healthy Communities Regional Summit hosted by the Cameron Foundation, whose representative was also a CHLC member and one of the PWC’s “reluctant” leaders. The Cameron Foundation is a local organization that supports the work of area non-profits through grant funding and educational opportunities; in this case, the Cameron Foundation was hosting an event targeting organizations involved in addressing health. While the Health Summit event was separate and independent of the PWC, members and leaders of the PWC were in attendance as the event was open to health-focused community organizations.

During the summit, a representative from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s (RWJF) County Health Rankings and Roadmaps Program was a guest speaker and provided examples of how other cities have successfully addressed health in their communities. He offered examples of cities in similar situations to Petersburg and described how a RWJF coaching program, which provides customized guidance to organizations that are working with their communities to improve health outcomes and health equity, helped facilitate the building of partnerships and collaborations, which ultimately helped the cities create a path out of their troubled situations. Following the presentation and questions about the coaching program, the speaker issued a challenge for the City of Petersburg to explore this resource.

Seeing the potential of the PWC to lead efforts in Petersburg to improve the culture of health, the Cameron Foundation organized a meeting with a RWJF County Health Rankings representative and the WE Project leader (at that time, also a “reluctant” leader of the PWC) shortly after the Health Summit. The WE Project leader was encouraged to apply for a coaching grant which, if acquired, would assist the PWC toward independence as a coalition. Subsequently, the WE Project leader presented the opportunity to PWC members who readily agreed that the grant was worth pursuing. Per guidance from the RWJF coach, the WE Project leader assembled a diverse coaching team (four CHLC members—YMCA, Virginia Cooperative Extensive Service, Cameron Foundation, Crater Health District—and the Petersburg city manager) and in March 2015 the application was submitted.

In May 2015, the PWC was awarded a Roadmaps to Health Action Award, part of the County Health Rankings and Roadmaps program of the RWJF (Cameron Foundation, 2015). The award provided a year of tailored coaching assistance to the steering committee and strategic planning sessions with PWC membership in order to operationalize the infrastructure and bylaws of the organization. The award also provided $10,000 to support the PWC’s work. With the academic
primary investigator as team leader, the coaching team formed the Steering Committee that spearheaded the transition of the PWC from an unstructured community partner network to a formal coalition with bylaws and an independent board of directors.

Formalizing the Coalition (2015–2016)

The Roadmaps to Health Coaching benefited the PWC by providing a more formalized process for which to consider its goals. Through regular teleconferences with their community coach and utilization of the Roadmaps to Health Action Center toolkit (www.countyhealthrankings.org/take-action-improve-health/action-center), the PWC steering committee identified and worked through a series of action steps to further refine its mission, purpose, and organizational structure. Of significant benefit was the focus on transformational leadership and cultivation of the steering committee’s leadership capacity.

Strategic planning and engagement. Among the first tasks assigned by the community coach was to develop the group’s vision, values, and mission statement. Although the PWC had a written mission statement from the beginning, the mission lacked clarity on a common focus for all members. The group had continually struggled to identify a clear community agenda within the broad context of health improvement. The coaching process provided an opportunity for the steering committee and PWC members at-large to review, revise, and refine their goals.

Guided by the principles of community engagement, collaboration, and partnerships, the mission of the PWC was reaffirmed to improve Petersburg’s health and wellness by optimizing resources and partnerships. The purpose of the PWC was to provide an opportunity to build a local, well-represented coalition that can maximize existing resources and help to establish a shared agenda to reduce health disparities. Thus, the goal of the PWC was not to embark on individual projects, but to work with partners across all sectors doing work in the City of Petersburg to establish shared agendas while maintaining each organization’s unique identity, mission, and tasks. To this end, the PWC established three areas of focus and associated work groups: (1) youth health and wellness, (2) chronic disease, and (3) oral health.

Translating coaching concepts to the PWC membership. While the steering committee reported back to and obtained input from PWC members at-large throughout the coaching process, challenges persisted, particularly regarding representation and participation in the PWC. While most agreed there was a good mix of community, non-profits, civic, and government collaborators, often the statement was made there were not enough “community members,” not considering that individuals who were part of these organizations were also residents. Despite these challenges, it led the steering committee to self-reflect and engage in open and honest dialogue with each other and PWC members at-large. Development of bylaws ultimately settled the dispute. PWC membership would consist primarily of community partners (who work in Petersburg) and community activists who are residents. Furthermore, it was decided that two-thirds of the board of directors must be residents.

As the PWC infrastructure improved, the coalition gained new, committed members as well as some attrition as others found the new goals and structure to be misaligned with their organizational goals or time commitment. Currently there are 28 organizations represented at PWC meetings, in addition to many Petersburg residents not affiliated with these organizations.

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Table 4. PWC Programmatic Accomplishments

- Successfully launched the Million Mile Challenge - recorded more than 700,000 miles of activity in Petersburg
- Established community walking clubs to encourage physical activity
- Provided a local resource for citizens and organizations searching for health-related ideas and solutions
- Hosted health days and back-to-school events to promote healthy behaviors
- Co-sponsored and planned a 3-day summit on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and trauma informed care (TIC).
  - Providing ongoing training on ACEs and TIC in the community
- Provided technical support and resources to community after-school and out-of-school programs
- Served as co-sponsor for the City of Petersburg Healthy and Equitable Communities Workshop, which will result in technical assistance opportunities to assist the work groups in strategic planning
- Provided technical and moral support to city leadership as they work to address health issues in the community
- Provided networking opportunities for youth and adult staff and volunteers in the community focused on health issues

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Process for developing bylaws and new board of directors. Once a need for formal bylaws was determined through the coaching process, a committee was selected to develop the bylaws and policy and procedures for the PWC. In addition, a second committee was selected to serve as a nominating committee for PWC’s first elected officers. Both steering and non-steering committee members were included on these committees.

Following creation of the bylaws, PWC members at-large voted on and approved the bylaws, policies, and procedures in June 2016. The PWC finally had a framework to ensure continuity through documentation of the process and procedures for meetings, leadership positions, elections, and committees. Furthermore, the PWC established its formal leadership when it elected its first board of directors in October 2016. To assist with the onboarding process of new officers, the steering committee continued to meet with the newly elected board for the first year.

Independence Achieved (2016–Today)

The coaching process, resources, and tools provided by the Roadmaps to Health Action Award (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2017) facilitated the formal establishment of the PWC through: (1) the creation and adoption of the organization’s bylaws; (2) the formation of three work groups: chronic disease, youth health and wellness, and oral health; (3) the development of the PWC website; (4) the election of the first leadership team; and (5) the development of the policies and procedures for the PWC. The PWC has effectively sustained operations as an independent, community-led alliance with independent leadership separate from the academic/community research partnership.

The PWC is now an autonomous organization intending to eventually seek 501(c)(3) status and is an exemplar of a sustainable organization intentionally established by a CBPR partnership. The PWC is continuing to grow in its new identity and structure and is proving to be a resilient and adaptive organization as evidenced by successful problem solving, diversification of its partners, and increased community impact (see Table 4 for programmatic accomplishments).

Lessons Learned

Establishment of the PWC was envisioned as a way for an academic research project to realize its commitment to sustainability by building on the strengths and resources within the community—concepts that are aligned with the principles of CBPR (Israel et al., 2010); and while ultimately successful, the process was not without its challenges.

Relationship Building and Equitable Partnership

Clarity of communication, consistency, and patience are important for organizational change and formation. In the forming stage of building a coalition, there will be many opinions on its development. There should be room for these opinions, positive and negative, to be heard, valued, and respected. Inclusion of all members in a structured way leads to commitment and ownership of the group’s progression, whether their input was used or not. A formal organized structure for hearing and considering opinions and managing meetings is essential. It is equally important to have a constructive way of handling conflict or dissenting voices amongst the groups. These voices have the potential to derail the group’s progress if not addressed appropriately. By establishing processes early on, the group will be better positioned to adapt to changes in the future.

At its onset, the PWC had no formalized process for deciding leadership and the perceived authority for a few to make decisions became a point of contention. CHLC leaders, those who would become the steering committee, became its leaders organically, yet, they were hesitant to acknowledge these roles due to a lack of formalized decision-making and their desire for the “community” to lead. In resisting the leadership role, the steering committee turned to the academic primary investigator, who in turn wanted others to lead with the result that the steering committee still did the work and only considered themselves as temporary leaders.

The development of the PWC into the independent organization it is today required that its members coalesce as a team to determine its future path and develop a strategic plan, vision, and mission. An important lesson learned was the necessity of taking time to form and establish relationships, not only within the community, but among members. Without a foundation of respect and trust, the organization would remain fractious and could not move forward; adopting formal procedures and bylaws greatly contributed to transparency and trust, a common agenda, and more importantly, a process for resolving differences of opinion. The reluctant leaders realized that their unwillingness to directly lead was also contributing to confusion. There must be a committed core group of members willing to step
fully and visibly into leadership for groups to progress. Ensuring a solid foundation and common understanding among the leadership filters down to all members and helped establish the PWC as a trustworthy organization within the community.

Another lesson learned was the importance of ensuring all stakeholders were at the table. While community organizations were aligned with a mission to improve health in the community, it was understood that it would be difficult to actually enact real change without buy-in from the city government, whose support would be essential for community-level policy changes. From the beginning, the PWC had cast a wide net for engaging community organizations, including city officials, in the organization. However, the intentional decision to include the Petersburg city manager on the PWC’s steering committee offered an important opportunity for collaboration. As the partnership developed and trust was built, it led to gradual acceptance by the city leadership, thus providing legitimacy and perception that the PWC had a capacity to make actual change in the community.

Furthermore, we learned that it is important to keep partners engaged but still respect divergent organizational capacities and time constraints. It is recommended to work with partners to identify specific ways they can be involved that are actionable, particularly for partners that may not be able to attend regular meetings. This will help them to stay engaged without perceiving it to be too great a burden or a waste of time. Identifying commonalities will strengthen partnerships and open new opportunities for the coalition.

Capacity Building

Individuals and organizations bring to the table diverse skills and resources that may or may not include the knowledge and skills needed to establish a community consortium from the ground up. A critical lesson learned by the PWC is that while putting key individuals from influential organizations in the same room once a month for an entire year broke multiple organizational barriers, built lasting relationships, and announced to the entire city that reducing health disparities was of paramount importance to the community, it did not automatically lead to a structured way in which to operate nor to efficiently address the issues it hoped to address.

Obtaining the RWJF grant provided the capacity-building opportunity the steering committee needed to understand the coalition-building process. One of PWC’s biggest steps forward was for the steering committee to fully “own” their leadership roles and become transformational leaders by creating the formal policies and procedures that could support new leadership.

Understanding that the theoretical version of change is different than the actual experience of change was also an important but difficult lesson to learn. In the case of the PWC, there was an understanding of the changes to come related to structure and process, yet actualizing those changes produced some frustration related to adapting to the new way the group would have to think and communicate. For example, the work groups understood the new process for developing their work plans and submitting them to the PWC Board for approval. However, this required the work groups to be thoughtful about what they wanted to pursue, plan, and prepare in a way they weren’t required to before; they could develop their own activities, but they also had to accept responsibility for the completion or non-completion of work. Through open discussions and training about the new processes, PWC members’ capacity to actualize the changes was strengthened. As members engaged in the new processes, the benefits became clear, as PWC meetings became more efficient and more activity goals were accomplished.

Conclusion

Building a sustainable and independent consortium that was borne from an academic/community research partnership is feasible and necessary; yet, it has its own set of challenges, especially working toward autonomy. Perhaps one of the most valuable lessons learned was the importance of having a clear goal and willing leaders. Coalition building is complex and can be fractious; however, developing and implementing agreed-upon procedures with transparent leadership can greatly facilitate this process. Finally, the importance of creating a fun, supportive environment evident by ample doses of humor is vital to nurture the ongoing work of coalitions.

The process of forming the PWC is an example of how an academic research project, in spite of numerous challenges, can facilitate the growth and build the capacity of an independently led consortium to ensure the community’s needs will be addressed beyond the research project.
References


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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 Katherine Rose Adams (katherine.adams@ung.edu) for a current list of books available to review. Reviewers are also welcome to suggest titles.

Dr. Katherine Rose Adams
University of North Georgia Book Review Editor
Creating Spaces for Transformative Civic Engagement in Higher Education

Reviewed by Felipe A. Filemeno
University of Maryland, Baltimore County


In *Transformative Civic Engagement Through Community Organizing,* Maria Avila argues that civically engaged teaching and research are transformative when they produce long-term cultural change in individuals, institutions, communities, and society in the direction of democracy. Transformative civic engagement moves society away from neoliberalism (the world as it is) and toward a welfare-oriented democratic state based on social reciprocity (the world as it should be). Transformative community/university partnerships educate students for responsible citizenship and create knowledge that is responsive to community problems and the public interest. To perform this role, civically engaged teaching and research need to bring together on-campus and off-campus stakeholders as co-creators of social change, combining their interests, knowledge, and resources in genuinely reciprocal ways over several years. These criteria exclude mere student volunteerism as well as one-way provision of technical assistance by scholars to communities.

Avila argues that neoliberalism is fundamentally at odds with academic civic engagement. Under neoliberalism, universities, faculty, and students act exclusively as economic actors pursuing individual gain through short-term market transactions. In the welfare-oriented democratic state, universities, faculty, and students are socially responsible actors embedded in long-term relations of reciprocity oriented to collective welfare. Avila uses the terms neoliberalism and market interchangeably, which generates confusion. Her critique is actually directed at neoliberalism (and its tendency to completely subordinate the university to a market logic) and not to the market (which can coexist with public institutions and social reciprocity). Aside from the ultimate goal of democratization of society, Avila’s approach does not assume or impose goals for community/university partnerships. Civically engaged scholars help communities develop their own voices and pursue their own goals.

Avila’s model is inscribed in the paradigm of community-based teaching and research, with its emphasis on reciprocity and power-sharing between university and communities, and in the tradition of liberal arts education, with its emphasis on the education of socially responsible citizens. The focus of the book is on the application of community organizing to the creation of the institutional infrastructure and leadership to support community-based teaching and research. A key feature of this institutional framework is a reward system (including hiring, tenure, and promotion policies) that encourage (or at least do not punish) civically engaged scholarship.

Her approach to community organizing is constituted by four practices: (1) one-to-one or small group meetings to build relationships and identify potential community leaders and their fundamental motivations for civic agency, (2) building a collective of leaders, (3) understanding and using power, and (4) ongoing critical reflection by individuals and groups about the organizing process. Avila developed this model through a critical reflection on her decades-long experience with community organizing at multiple universities and communities, especially at the Industrial Areas Foundation and at Occidental College. In her own words, the book is “a narrative of my personal and professional journey of over a decade, and how I have gone about cocreating spaces where democracy can be enacted” (p. 17). Avila’s reflection included several conversational interviews, through which she and her interviewees (faculty, administrators, students, and community partners) shared stories about civic engagement in an atmosphere of relaxation, thereby cocreating the knowledge that resulted in her approach. The conversational interview is a methodological contribution of the book, which Avila develops when discussing one-to-one meetings.

Although the book focuses on community organizing for the creation of institutional spaces and leadership to support community/university
projects, Avila’s approach can also be applied to cases in which community organizing is the actual goal of a community-based research or teaching project. In such cases, the scholar would not work just as another community organizer, because scholars possess a specific type of knowledge and resources and work under particular institutional constraints and expectations. Expertise in qualitative research could enable a scholar to conduct the one-to-one or small group meetings for community organizing and then to analyze those conversations. The analysis would be oriented not only to the actual organizing process but also to theoretical questions. Expertise in political sociology could enable a scholar to facilitate the power analysis step of community organizing, including the mapping of actors, resources, and relationships that can foster or hinder community development. Again, this analysis would be oriented both to the organizing process and to theoretical questions. A scholar could also apply techniques of data collection and analysis in the evaluation that is integral to the critical reflection practice of community organizing. If a scholar is an expert in civic leadership development, the scholar can also provide leadership training for community members and students.

More broadly, the general principles of Avila’s transformative civic engagement—critical thinking, reciprocity, democracy—can guide community/university partnerships that do not necessarily involve community organizing. Avila wrote an important book for those who are unsettled by the deterioration of our public sphere but think that university civic engagement, under the right approach, can foster democratic societies.

About the Reviewer
Felipe A. Filemeno is an assistant professor of political science and global studies at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. He holds a PhD in sociology from Johns Hopkins University, where he was a Fulbright scholar.
Using Storytelling as an Effective Teaching Tool and Community Builder

Reviewed by Rebecca Rose
University of North Georgia

Story-based community projects use storytelling to generate productive discussion, make connections, and share diverse perspectives. Storytelling can spark transformative learning inside and outside the classroom (Maslin-Ostrowski, Drago-Severson, Ferguson, Marsick, & Hallett, 2018), and can initiate conversations that lead to community building (Dixon, 1995; Kim, 2001; McKnight & Block, 2010). The Akron Story Circle Project grew out of a larger interdisciplinary initiative, which sought to capture these collective memories and express them via art projects and performances that culturally enrich the community (Behrman, Lyons, Hill, Slowiak, Webb, & Druessi, 2017). Designed to weave a “tapestry of community” (Research Center, 2008), the Story Circle Project provided a structured, equitable environment where memories of events and people from the Civil Rights Movement would be shared. The chapters contained in the book would be of interest to those interested in teaching methods that invite an open, thoughtful, and honest dialogue about race. This topic is as critically important in today’s turbulent racial climate as it was in 2007, the year Rethinking Race launched as an annual event at the University of Akron (UA).

The Akron Story Circle Project was the most successful community effort within a larger multi-city initiative, the Color Line Project (CLP). As acclaimed Story Circle practitioners, John O’Neal and Theresa Holden established the CLP and wrote the book’s foreword, which provided context, background, and motivations for the ambitious community-based projects (Behrman et al., 2017). CLP’s goals included the formation of partnerships between community members, arts organizations, and educators in Akron and across five other cities. The partnerships’ objectives included implementing Story Circles, a technique used to collect personal reflections and experiences from the Civil Rights Movement. Story Circles generated enhanced levels of understanding via structured discussions. Participants in the Story Circles included University of Akron students and community residents, and occurred both in classrooms and in community venues. O’Neal and Holden (Behrman et al., 2017) also stressed the timely nature of capturing stories from Civil Rights Movement participants, before those firsthand stories were lost forever. CLP’s desired outcomes included the creation of art and performances from the stories to enhance and benefit current and future residents of the participating communities.

The book’s introduction informed the reader of the criteria necessary for implementing effective Story Circles, and revealed Akron’s relationship with race historically. The Story Circle facilitators followed guidelines that were adapted from a process developed by John O’Neal: Facilitators received training beforehand to learn techniques that guide the group toward telling personal stories about race, as well as carefully listening to the stories of others. A critical distinction was to define a story as a personal recollection rather than opinions, debates, or arguments. While a group member is revealing their story, the group listens with openness, acceptance, and without comment or disruptive facial expressions. Each member of the group received an allotment of time for telling their story, with an option to remain silent during their time. The skill of learning to listen to other’s stories yields a safe environment that promotes a new level of understanding for the participants.

The book offers six chapters written by the professors who described the use of Story Circles as a teaching tool within their classrooms or at a community venue. The disciplines included political science, communications, social science research, art, and theater at the University of Akron. Additionally, Story Circle outreach events happened in nearby neighborhoods significantly impacted by the Civil Rights Movement. These six chapters describe the pedagogical value of using Story Circles as an engagement technique, and assess the positive outcomes generated from hosting productive discussions during Rethinking
Race, the annual cocurricular event at the university. The final chapter reflects on lessons learned and the positive outcomes from the Story Circles.

The first chapter, “Teaching about Racial Conflict with Story Circles,” describes two sequential courses taught by Bill Lyons, professor of political science. He confessed the common apprehension that teachers experience before giving up total control of the classroom with techniques such as discussion-based teaching. He invited Story Circle experts John O’Neal and Teresa Holden to lead the initial sessions. Afterward, students documented their impressions and reflections in a reaction paper and then in a researched central themes paper. His class held the following semester included many returning students from the first class who signed up because they valued the Story Circle approach. The chapter concludes with an assessment of using the technique, along with samples of student work.

Patricia S. Hill’s “Let My Story Speak for Me: Story Circles as a Critical Pedagogy” also discusses Story Circles as an instructional strategy within her Intercultural Communication class. This narrative offers solid pedagogical theory that supports the application of using Story Circles as an instructional strategy and the specific assignments used in the class. One of the assignments is also a reaction paper, but includes instructions to analyze the stories to answer three questions.

The third chapter, “Story Circles and the Social Science Toolkit,” considers the differences between a group interview or focus group and a Story Circle. After studying data types, collection techniques, and analysis tools, students in two upper-level social science courses received instruction on the development of narrative elicitation prompts with the purpose to compare data gathered from Story Circles and focus groups.

Donna Webb’s “Once Upon a Time: Story Circles and Public Art in Cascade Village” branches out from the classroom into the community. The chapter describes the creation of a public art exhibit based on stories collected from a historic downtown neighborhood that has existed since the mid-1800s. When Akron became a major industrial center for the rubber industry, factory jobs brought in huge numbers of white Southerners and African Americans, a mix that culminated in the formation of one of the largest Ku Klux Klan chapters in the northern United States (Tully, 2011). Akron experienced a riot attributed to racial tensions in 1900. The Civil Rights Movement brought attention to the neighborhood and the memories collected from the Story Circles reflected experiences from the era.

Amy Shriver Druessi’s “Story Circles: A Powerful Tool in the Multifaceted Toolkit for Rethinking Race event and its use of Story Circles from its inception in 2007 through 2012. Data provided in the chapter reveal the value participants placed on their experience from attending the events and shared selected survey comments written by students.

Chapter 6, “The Akron Color Line Project Public Performance,” contains the play’s script, written using the stories collected from the Akron Story Circle Project and stories from the city’s history books. The actors perform on stage using a backdrop comprised of projected contemporary photographs of the Akron neighborhoods where many of the stories took place.

The final chapter ties the chapters together and assesses the use of Story Circles for teaching and in the community. The chapters reinforced the value of fostering deliberative and structured conversations that became possible in a public setting via Story Circles. The author (Behrman et al., 2017) convincingly called for providing more and sustainable outlets for civil discourse in our classrooms and communities with the purpose of bringing together people with opposing points of view.

The book’s chapters attempted a unique style in their presentation format. In an attempt to incorporate running discussions with all the authors, their reactions and comments to the content appeared in embedded gray “chat” boxes throughout each chapter. Unfortunately, this technique served more to distract from otherwise compelling narratives. Perhaps, separating out the added commentary, or removing the boxes entirely and placing them within their own chapter, would improve the readability of the narrative and eliminate the need to flip pages back and forth to resume the flow of ideas contained within the text.

With some irony, note that the placement of conversation boxes directly within the chapter content could be likened to violating Story Circle guidelines that proscribe uninterrupted story telling. Additionally, the visual difficulties of reading the small font printed within gray boxes compromised the benefit of the additional commentary. Preferably, at the point where the gray box conversation begins, placing a marker
could alert the reader to a box located in a sidebar, rather than blocking the progression of the narrative. While some of the added commentary added context and backstories of mixed relevance, much of it offered little more than positive displays of support from colleagues for the author’s work as it unfolds in the narrative.

Each chapter in *The Akron Story Circle Project* clearly shows the versatility and effectiveness of incorporating Story Circles across several disciplines. The book’s content is profoundly useful and inspirational for seeking ways to incorporate iterations of the Story Circle technique into other disciplines and/or classroom situations, in addition to discussing/collaborating with colleagues. The book successfully demonstrates that students respond to hearing authentic experiences of others, which opens their minds to listening to diverse perspectives, thereby bringing people together.

**References**


**About the Reviewer**

Rebecca Rose is an associate professor and the Interim Assistant Dean of Libraries at the Cumming campus of the University of North Georgia (UNG). She currently serves as the librarian for UNG’s Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Academy, as well as for the University System of Georgia Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Fellows Program.
Engaged Research as a Tool for Change at Different Levels

Reviewed by Amanda Wittman
Cornell University


I started reading Engaged Research and Practice expecting to learn new frameworks to support engaged research and learn from case studies about the practical application of such frameworks. And while this exists, in excellent ways, what I found instead was a primer on using engaged research as a tool for change: change at partnership, institutional, and policy levels. Through an in-depth look at The National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good (The National Forum) as a strategy to redirect scholarship about higher education “to guide strategies that might eliminate barriers to access, systemic inequality, problems associated with increasing corporatization, and declining public support for education” (p. 23), this book made me ask questions about scaling change efforts, institutionalizing change, and the role of engaged research in the fundamental work of community engagement to promote and support change.

In our efforts at Cornell University to re-orient the university to its founding principles of “knowledge with a public purpose,” we spend a lot of time thinking about change. We discuss transactional and transformational change, scalability of change mechanisms, student learning as evidence of individual’s change, and faculty networks as loci of culture change. And sometimes, though we draw on evidence and research about these topics, these conversations can lead me to feeling like we are in a vacuum, with few guideposts along the way. Into that vacuum, Overton, Pasque, and Burkhardt have stepped, and strung together a collection of chapters that provides clear signs for others to follow.

As a bit of an organizational systems nerd, I found the first two chapters, “Engagement for the Common Good” and “Scholarship and Activism on Behalf of Higher Education’s Public Good Mission,” to be fruitful discussions of how to set up an initiative within the academy with a social movement orientation at its core. From definitional considerations to organizational context, these chapters should help any group that identifies as a change unit within their home institution.

Part Two, “Engaging the Community Level,” forces the reader to reconsider the ways that we set up research partnerships. The section provides constant reminders that how we set these up organizationally matters—reciprocity and collaboration are not just values of engaged research, but are daily practices and choices to be made. The National Forum itself was founded in an ethic of sustainable, community social change, and in this section, the authors and the researchers work through how that manifests itself through specific research related to a civil rights organization and a young people’s educational opportunity network. Pasque’s chapter on “Collaborative Approaches to Community Change” fits well at this point, providing the theoretical support to contextualize the previous chapters.

The questions that open Part Three, “Engaging the Institutional Level,” ask “How do colleges and universities engage with society? How might colleges and universities pursue social problems to ignite social transformation around fundamental matters of inclusion” (p. 109); these made me sit up and think “now we’re getting to it.” The authors in this section are committed to looking at the academy as a potential catalyst for change, but are clear-eyed about the challenges this poses. I found Southern, Wisell, and Casner-Lotto’s chapter focused on the community college especially informative, with practical strategies gleaned from engaged research with educational leaders who are at the forefront of addressing the unique contexts posed by immigrant students.

Part Four, “Engaging Policy Discussions at the State and National Levels,” explores The National Forums’ efforts to share the results of their engaged research efforts to influence institutional and public policy. Reyes, Kamimura, and Southern provide another useful organizational narrative of creating and sustaining a change initiative, this time with a specific advocacy approach to help advance the
public good mission of colleges and universities. Martinez and Duan-Barnett both illustrate how research findings can help reframe institutional state-level policies. These chapters all confirm the overall thrust of the book, that engaged research — when done well — supports change efforts in meaningful ways.

I have left my favorite aspect of the book to last: the reflective narratives that are stitched throughout the sections. These are individual student reflections that add depth and interest to the overall book, and carry with them the weight of the impact of The National Forum's work.

While I was pleasantly surprised by the underlying themes of change, this could have been made more explicit in the early stages of the book. And at times the two-pronged approach of showcasing examples of engaged research alongside the more theoretical chapters was jarring to read. However, the questions this book raises and its clear usefulness as a guide to thinking through key elements of social change initiatives on campus and in research lead me to recommend it to administrators, scholars, and students for whom the questions of scalable change resonate. This volume will certainly provide productive road signs to follow.

Acknowledgment
The editorial team of the *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship* would like to acknowledge and thank Stylus Publishing for providing copies of the book for this review.

About the Reviewer
Amanda Wittman is an associate director in the Office of Engagement Initiatives at Cornell University where she supports faculty, graduate students, and staff interested in developing and deepening community-engaged teaching and research. Her PhD is in political science and international relations from the University of Edinburgh.
The Potential of Collective Impact: Moving the Work of Literacy Coalitions Forward

Reviewed by Terry S. Atkinson and Kimberly L. Anderson
East Carolina University


**Introduction**

Amidst the growing realization that it takes a community-wide effort to bring about substantive and long-term changes in the literacy status of its citizenry, more than 300 literacy coalitions have formed in the U.S. since the 1980s. While literacy coalitions may vary somewhat in focus and/or scope, a common feature is the organization of community stakeholders to promote, enhance, and coordinate accessibility of literacy opportunities for community members. In our own community, coalition members have organized around the common goal of substantially increasing the number of children who read on grade-level by the end of third grade, with an agenda focused on providing rich early literacy resources and learning opportunities for all children. Our work with the organizers of this coalition over the past two years has immersed us in the complexities of getting such a collective impact effort off the ground and moving forward. Even with early consensus about a goal in place, determining a plan for achieving it through the collective actions of many has proven to be a much more challenging feat than we had anticipated.

Upon reading and reflecting on *Does Collective Impact Work? What Literacy Coalitions Tell Us*, we gained valuable insights that could have guided us to avoid potholes and detours along the way had we discovered this book earlier. Beyond improving our hindsight, however, Frank Ridzi and Margaret Doughty also help to focus our vision for the future, particularly with regard to moving toward best practices and measuring impact. We expect that others will conclude the same, ranging from those with an interest: (1) learning about or establishing literacy coalitions, or (2) the general notion of collective impact, an approach to solving complex social problems through structured multi-sector collaboration.

**Overview**

This book offers a deep examination of literacy coalitions as one example of collective impact community coalitions. In making the case for focusing specifically on literacy coalitions, the authors note that these can be considered “lynchpin coalitions” given that most social problems are related to literacy in some way. Moreover, focusing on one specific field allows the authors to draw valid conclusions about collective impact efforts that ruled out differences in impact and structure attributable more to variance in goals, rather than the nature of the collaborative community efforts to attain them. Four questions unify the book's content and provide the focus for its chapters: (1) What do typical coalitions look like?, (2) How do funders across the country regard coalitions?, (3) What evidence exists to document that coalitions have impact?, and (4) What emerging best practices might guide coalitions to be more effective?

The book’s introduction describes community coalitions as a national civic engagement movement growing significantly since 2000. Bolstered by the belief that coordinating cross-sector efforts has greater potential to result in large-scale social change than the siloed attempts made by individual groups, collective impact coalitions typically exhibit several key conditions for success identified by Kania and Kramer (2011). These include a common agenda, a centralized organizational structure and staff, a system of shared measurement, ongoing and regular communication, and activities that are coordinated and
support the efforts of others involved. The notion of collective impact is not new, as evidenced by our national history of grassroots social movements such as the rise of labor unions, farm workers’ rallies, or women’s suffrage movements. While collective impact community coalitions and social movements both seek to bring about change, they differ in that coalition efforts are typically organized by community leaders who define success through specific impact measures from the outset. Social movements, on the other hand, tend to arise from grassroots groups that seek social or political change.

In considering an overview of previous coalition research, the authors document that the literature has been dominated by case studies, rich with detail, but lacking in generalizability to other communities or circumstances. In Chapters One through Three, the authors look across many literacy coalition cases to: (1) identify how coalitions form, structure themselves, accomplish sustainability and engage with funders, and (2) determine whether communities with coalitions are better situated than those without. Through brief descriptions of a variety of coalitions, the authors make the case that the value coalitions can bring to their communities goes well beyond the programs they run, to the bringing together of multiple stakeholders in an ongoing and structured way. These collaborations themselves are an important outcome, as they make future collaborations around different problems more likely. Chapter Four addresses the quantitative gap in coalition literature by providing an in-depth analysis of the first-ever national coalition database (Literacy Funders Network). In considering data from more than 50 coalitions, prominent coalition theories evident in extant case study literature are used to frame multiple factors associated with better comprehensive performance and outcomes. Of note is Butterfoss’s Community Coalition Action Theory (2007), suggested as an exemplary logic model for how coalitions should function and be structured. Using this model as a framework, the authors conclude that longer sustained coalition viability, success in increasing community resources, and accomplishing changes in local policies or systems are relatively consistent markers of coalition success. Nevertheless, they caution that continuing research is needed in order to paint a broader picture of best practices and promising impact. In proposing future direction, it is recommended that existing and emerging coalitions invest heavily in data infrastructure to document and measure impact, and that future researchers seek data sets from coalitions with track records of ten or more years.

The book’s conclusion suggests promising future possibilities for multi-sector community-wide collaborations. Meant to ameliorate intractable social problems such as poverty, low-literacy, or inequity in health service access, notable collective impact efforts of the past are leading to more strategic and informed current collaborative interventions to amplify what individual partners or organizations might do alone. As suggested by Bradley and Katz (2013), complex social problems that have become entrenched over long periods of time rarely have simple solutions. Thus, community leaders have become increasingly aware that launching and supporting collective impact coalitions have much greater potential for creating substantive change than searching for individual heroes or silver bullets. Looking to and learning from past cases, such as those featured in this book, can provide helpful guidelines to ensure longer-term coalition success. Some examples include broadening and deepening revenue streams, linking key community partners and infrastructure, and identifying individuals with the grit, tenacity, and passion to lead coalition efforts. Last, consistent with the collective impact notion of benefitting from the synergy of others, the authors recommend that a coalition’s base of support and collaboration can be broadened through affiliation with an alliance of like-minded coalitions.

Featured throughout the book as an example of one firmly established alliance, the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading (CGLR) is bolstered by the reputable sponsorship of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The CGLR represents a national collaboration among states, government agencies, foundations, non-profits, business leaders, and communities focused on increasing the number of students in a community who read proficiently by third grade. CGLR has contributed significantly to increased numbers of community coalition efforts since its inception in 2010 by offering resources, direction, and structure to more than 300 communities across the United States. Standing on the shoulders of others, such as a network like CGLR or experts like Ridzi and Doughty, can jump-start efforts to launch and sustain collective impact community coalitions. The authors offer convincing data and a wealth of resources for planning and implementation that can potentially lead
to promising collective impact ventures well worth the pursuit.

After reading and discussing this book with members of our local early literacy coalition, our work and insight has benefited from Ridzi and Doughty’s broad analysis of literacy coalitions across the past thirty years. Their conclusions have helped us value the potential of connecting and coordinating existing community partners, rather than launching forward with new models and initiatives. Further, this book has served and will continue to serve as a valuable resource as our literacy coalition’s collective impact work moves forward. In reaching out to many of the individuals and organizations mentioned in this book, our efforts have been supported in ways we could have never achieved alone. Communities wishing to achieve sustainable, long-term results will likely find the chapters equally rich with important information and unlimited potential for learning more.

References


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About the Reviewers

Terry S. Atkinson and Kimberly L. Anderson are faculty members in the Department of Literacy Studies, English Education and History Education at East Carolina University, where they teach literacy education courses and are involved in community-engaged research focused on early literacy.
The mission of the Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship (JCES) is 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. JCES accepts all forms of writing, analysis, creative approaches, and methodologies. JCES is a peer-reviewed journal open to all disciplines. Its purpose is to integrate teaching, research, and community engagement in ways that address critical societal problems through a community-participatory process. Normal publication frequency is twice a year, though special issues on timely topics are published occasionally.
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Manuscripts are sought that contain substance, context, and clear language, along with the relevant philosophical, historical, and theoretical principles that underlie the work.

*JCES* encourages submissions to allocate authorship credit based on individual disciplinary conventions. All questions related to authorship should be negotiated prior to submission to *JCES*.

Manuscripts must be submitted electronically in Microsoft Word with a separate cover page containing the manuscript title, the author’s or authors’ names, position/rank/title, department/college/institution, mailing address, telephone number, and email address, and four to six topical/methodological keywords at the bottom. Indicate on the cover page the section of *JCES* for which the document is intended—Traditional, From the Field, Community Perspectives, Student Voices, or Book Review (see Types of Manuscripts). This is usually a straightforward decision, and no change of category will be made by the editors without first conferring with the corresponding author.

Our blind review process requires that two copies be submitted. One copy must include author names and other identifying information removed, is sent to the reviewers, who make one of the following three recommendations to the editor: accept, revise and resubmit, or reject. Both the blind and non-blind copies must be submitted together. All submissions and inquiries must be emailed to jces@ua.edu.

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Authors of accepted papers must obtain and provide to the editor on final acceptance all necessary permissions to reproduce in print and electronic form any copyrighted work, including photographs and other graphic images. Authors wishing to display video associated with their published document should first upload the video to YouTube and then send the relevant link to jces@ua.edu.

Manuscripts that comply with our standards will be distributed for review within two to four weeks of submission. Consistent with a thorough scholarly review, authors will be notified of a decision in a timely manner.
Types of Manuscripts

All manuscripts (Traditional, From the Field, Community Perspectives, Student Voices, and Book Reviews) are accepted on an ongoing basis. All submissions and inquiries for all types of manuscripts should be sent to jces@ua.edu.

Traditional
Manuscripts for this section run the gamut of engagement research. Examples include theoretical and descriptive research employing a variety of research methods, from survey to content analysis, from experimental to historical, from grounded theory to case study. Topics range from mistakes and subsequent adjustments by research teams in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina; food insecurity causes and solutions; issues of Cooperative Extension in university/community partnerships; fostering individual and university resilience with at-risk youth; theoretical, conceptual, and methodological foundations of community engagement; research and evaluation issues within service-learning programs; how disasters can provide opportunities for research on civic engagement and service learning; community issues that inform political participation among college students; evaluating academic/community partnerships in matters of health, finance, education, politics, family, spirituality, and many, many more. Ninety percent of our submissions fall in the bread-and-butter category.

From the Field
A second important segment of the journal is devoted to less theoretical, but no less important, from-the-field research. This section of the journal, also refereed, is reserved for studies that are likely to have a practice or case-study orientation. Research that emphasizes best practices, practice wisdom, and applied knowledge is especially appropriate, with less emphasis on theoretical foundations. Examples from previous submissions include how being jailed affects the health of homeless women; social change resulting from the political, cultural, and economic systems of Indigenous peoples; how a university team of faculty and students established a thriving partnership in Tunisia; the development of contemporary engineering skills through service learning abroad; discovering that collaboration is the key to tourism in Southern Appalachia; how creating a health partnership network enriched a rural community; and many more.

Community Perspectives
While community partners may also serve as authors or co-authors of manuscripts in the first two categories, most community submissions to JCES fall in the Community Perspectives category. Community insight and resources are key elements in engaged scholarship, and JCES welcomes submissions that describe, analyze, assess, or offer critiques of community-engagement activities. Community Perspectives are more informal and eclectic in topic, writing style, analysis, and presentation. Previous submissions include a federally funded grant that addressed obesity issues in the Alabama Black Belt; an interpretive essay about the opioid epidemic in Northern Kentucky; a model mental-health partnership that other urban areas could replicate; and many others.

Student Voices
Students are involved in all categories of manuscripts accepted by JCES, but Student Voices is the section where their words receive special attention. In this section, students have explored how they came to discover the importance of engaged research in their educational development. They have commented on numerous special projects, highlighting the rewards and frustrations encountered. Examples include Al’s Pals, a superlative school-based mentoring relationship between college volunteers and elementary school students; a collaboration between undergraduate students and their faculty advisor in South Africa to help a community while expanding their own intellectual horizons; efforts by a group of students to educate other students about service and nonprofit organizations that help foster a lifetime of service commitment beyond graduation; and
lessons learned from a small village health fair to further transform lives and embrace diversity through cultural synthesis. These and other submissions to Student Voices have added spice to the JCES menu and more such submissions are encouraged.

Book Reviews
The review of timely books devoted to the scholarship of engagement is essential to the advancement of the field. From the outset, the editor and book review editor of JCES set an ambitious goal of five or more books to be reviewed in each issue. Classic reviews have included Fitzgerald, Burack, and Seifer (Eds.), Handbook of Engaged Scholarship; the role of anchor institutions in community engagement for economic development; several books on the similarities and differences between the concepts of “service” and “engagement”; how engaging parents and other constituencies breathes life into K–12 schools; and many others.

JCES Review Process*

Manuscript Receipt
- Editor scans for style and documentation standards, requests revisions if necessary
- Editorial staff assigns manuscript number, sends acknowledgment email to corresponding author (usually, but not always, the first author)
- Editor selects appropriate reviewers

First Review
- Editorial staff sends manuscript to reviewers, with review form and return due date
- Editor reassigns manuscript if reviewer unable to complete review
- Editorial staff sends reminder email one week in advance of due date
- Editorial staff sends reminder email one week after due date if review not yet received
- Editor receives reviewers’ evaluation and rating forms

Editor Options
- Editor accepts manuscript (proceed to Edit for Publication)
- Editor sends corresponding author the recommended revisions and requests resubmission
- Editor rejects manuscript (end of process)

Revise and Resubmit Instructions
- Editorial staff notifies author of publication decision
- Editorial staff sends to corresponding author a letter regarding the decision, reviewer comments, and manuscript with edits and tracked changes
- Editorial staff requests resubmission within four weeks

Resubmitted Manuscript and Second Review
- Editor scans for compliance with reviewer evaluation; if necessary, author is sent request for further revisions
- Editorial staff sends to the original reviewers the revised manuscript, a copy of the original manuscript with editor’s and reviewers comments and tracked changes, the review form, and a copy of the letter to the corresponding author
- Editorial staff requests return of second review within two weeks

Editor Options Following Second Review
- Editor accepts manuscripts (proceed to Edit for Publication)
- Editor accepts manuscript with minor revisions
- Editor ensures minor revisions have been made (proceed to Edit for Publication)

Accept with Minor Revisions
- Editor sends corresponding author notification of decision to accept with minor revisions and requests a final revision within two weeks

Edit for Publication
- Final editing and proof reading by editor and editorial staff
- Editorial staff sends proof to corresponding author
- Editorial staff negotiates editorial changes with corresponding author
- Editorial staff sends official copyright forms for corresponding author’s signature

Publication

*Authors’ names on all documents viewed by reviewers, including manuscripts, letters, emails, and other identifying information, are masked throughout the process.
The Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship is published at The University of Alabama by the Division of Community Affairs for the advancement of engaged scholarship worldwide.