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One of the best parts of my job as a faculty member is directing the LSU Community Playground Project; we collaborate with communities to design (and sometimes build) playgrounds that reflect the unique aspects of the community that the playground ultimately serves. Last summer, a county extension agent named Robin Landry connected my team to a rural community some 80 miles south of Baton Rouge. Bayou L'Ourse is a census-designated place five feet above sea level with a population of almost 1,800 people. The community has a nice public park, but its playground is dated—the community's park and recreation board (all volunteer) wanted to update the playground, but its members weren't sure how to proceed.

Last June, my team met Amber Cavalier, one of the board members, to tour the park and to get new playground suggestions that Amber had already collected from the community. Amber's husband and children came out to meet us as well—the children provided ancillary entertainment as we took notes and dimensions in the sweltering summer heat. The need for updated equipment was evident as we watched Amber's daughter traverse overhead rungs on a large, faded playhouse; her younger brother was clearly used to being carried, and my team members took turns holding him as we completed our work and conversations. My team was inspired by the pretty location, specific requests, and by the friendly interaction during their visit, and they quickly created a playground design concept for the park.

When I contacted Amber regarding the team's progress, she asked us to present the design concept to the entire park and rec board for approval at their next monthly meeting. In preparation, the team practiced their presentation multiple times, improving content and delivery each time, as “getting it right” is an iterative process, as well as a critical priority for successful partnership. I knew that there were about 10 board members, and I printed out color copies of the presentation slides because I thought that some members would like to have a hard copy in front of them during the presentation.

On August 1, I drove a departmental vehicle with the four members of my team who had worked on this project, two of whom were new to the team, and two veterans. I eased into conversation with my students, the leisurely kind when you know that you have miles to go, and the inspiring kind with people you know are extraordinary. One member shared that she was nervous about public speaking because she had faltered during a previous presentation. All team members, including me, told her her tricks for dealing with nerves and told her that they “had her back.”

We arrived on time and walked into the community center located next to the park. We were ushered into a tiny, square room. Board members were packed around the small conference table, and a few members of the public who had come to watch were seated in chairs immediately behind the table and pressed against the perimeter of the room, except for the wall that held the presentation screen. We took the last remaining chairs behind the table while Amber ran to get a couple more, which she somehow squeezed in, so that everyone had a place to sit. We were crowded, but ready.

I began passing out hard copies of the presentation while the students stood up—because there was no room to maneuver, they prepared to present from the back of the room.

“Where's your flash drive?” Robin asked.

“Our presentation is on Google Drive,” one of my students answered. He walked over to the computer to log on to Google Drive.

“We don't have WiFi!” Amber supplied with a laugh. “We're supposed to get it soon, but right now, we don't have any.”

“No problem,” my student replied. “We'll use a hot spot on our phone.” I thought to myself, ‘great idea,’ but alas—we were in such a rural area that the hot spot didn't work either.

I have worked with communities for more than 20 years and I have made my share of erroneous assumptions along the way, enough so that I have illustrative stories for my students on the importance

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1 Unincorporated area
of learning your community partner and the ways that assumptions can sometimes corrode the trust in any partnership. In this moment, I realized that I had made an assumption, one that, if I had thought about it, could have been avoided. It wasn’t like I had never heard of the lack of Internet access in rural communities—I just wasn’t thinking about that—or thinking to ask those kinds of questions.

As I looked around the room, I realized that my inattention to the privilege of living in an urban area wasn’t the only thing at play. Amber was still smiling. “This is great,” she said. “Stories like this give us more ammunition to speed up our access to WiFi!” But Amber knew us—the rest of the board did not. I could feel their collective wariness. I could see them looking at us, really looking at us. Men clad in construction boots, embroidered work shirts, and ball caps were looking at four women and a man from the big city up north. One of us was wearing a hijab; another was not born in the United States. I thought about my student, the one who shared that she was nervous about presenting—we hadn’t even started yet and already things were not going to plan. I worried about her composure.

“We’re going to present to you on a phone,” one of my team members said confidently, “Y’all follow along on your paper copies.”

I didn’t have enough hard copies of the presentation slides for everyone in the room, but the community members leaned toward the table and the board members shared their papers, while the students pulled up the presentation on a phone. The students kicked off their presentation with the kind of confidence that comes from having practiced something so well that you can do it in your sleep. About a minute into the presentation, I felt the tension in the room start to dissipate. Two minutes later, as the team moved into an overview of the new playground design, I felt the sizzle of “lock in,” that magical moment when you feel the trust and excitement of the people you’re working with.

The students baton passed the phone as they moved through the overview of the design, the elements that they suggested to bring maximum “fun factor” and honor to the community, and the choices for which they needed further board input, which were based on interest and budget. If the student who shared her nervousness of presentation was in fact nervous, it wasn’t evident. At all. Every single one of my students nailed that presentation—I treasure the feeling of immense pride I have in my team almost as much as I treasure the synergy that happens when partnerships blossom—I found myself reveling in both feelings at once.

When the students finished their presentation, there wasn’t applause. Instead, there was excited talk amongst the board members. We had been given a budget and we stayed within that budget—but the conversation around the table made clear that the actual amount of funding that the board possessed was three times higher than the number we were given. And the board members were prepared to go far higher than the initial figure.

“We want it. We want all of it. Don’t change a thing,” one of the board members said, while others nodded and chimed in yes. I made notes on the decisions we had asked the board to make on equipment choices to reflect that they wanted “and” instead of “or” regarding some equipment.

“Can you run us the calculation with that rubber track surface instead of that wood mulch?” We executed that calculation in the room, and the price increase was hefty, but the board seemed to take it in stride.

“So you say you can write us this bid spec with everything you just presented, and then give it to us to move forward from there?”

When I assented, they said, “Okay, then. Prep that spec with the extra equipment and with the rubber stuff.”

We left the meeting as the board moved on to other business, but not before each member got up, shook hands with each of us, and said thank you while looking us straight in the eye.

We were jubilant as we got back into the university vehicle—because the park and rec board consisted of volunteers, the meeting was held after work hours—it was 7:00 p.m. and we were hungry. We stopped at a nearby Subway attached to a gas station—other than the two roads that staked out the intersection for the building, the only thing visible for miles in any direction was agricultural fields. Kids had left their bikes unlocked on the curb near the entrance, and the students remarked on how this was impossible to do on campus without having your bike stolen. With food and drink in hand, we continued easy conversation on the way home, including the team congratulating the student who had been nervous. She felt like she had gotten to a better place. Somehow, I felt like I had too.

This experience was one of my favorites of 2019. It reminded me that the human condition isn’t about perfection, it’s about recovering when
you make a mistake. It’s about grace and the ability to keep an open mind when people are different from you—especially when people who are different from you falter. It’s about the ability to rally around a common cause, and about the power of teamwork and preparation.

These are some of the themes that echo in this issue of the journal. Many of the articles in this issue focus on the importance of relationships and the critical role of students. In the article entitled “Civic Engagement for the Future Criminal Justice Professional: Serving the Underserved in a Correctional Setting,” Kimberly Collica-Cox details the research and engagement facets of Parenting, Prison and Pups, a program designed to enhance the ethic of care for students who will work with incarcerated women in their future careers, as well as the agency of the women themselves. Our next article, by Hodge et al., examines the relationship between community engagement and integrated knowledge translation as applied to addressing poverty issues. These authors talk about the key role that relationships play in sustainable partnerships. The remaining articles focus on civic engagement efforts that have positively impacted youth who are members of low-income families; children in the foster care system who are transitioning to college; a community-based participatory research program involving undergraduate student researchers; and Latino children who are deaf or hard of hearing, respectively.

Our Student Voices section includes articles on the importance of understanding and engagement. Finally, please peruse our book review section, in case you would like some thoughtful reading. I wish each of you happy, inspired reading!
In January 2020, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching announced the recipients of the most recent cycle of the elective Community Engagement Classification. A total of 359 institutions now hold this prestigious designation that celebrates the purpose of community engagement as “the partnership of college and university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good” (https://www.brown.edu/swearer/carnegie/about).

Congratulations to all institutions that received the designation, and especially everyone at those institutions who worked so hard to earn the recognition. As anyone who has been intimately involved in the process knows, it takes a lot of hard work to coordinate the effort of applying to Carnegie in order to demonstrate a commitment to authentically engaging with community partners. These campus leaders should take the time to celebrate and engage in some well-deserved self-care.

But then it’s time to take a deep breath and dive back in with renewed enthusiasm. Earning the classification is certainly worthy of celebration, but in reality, we are doing a disservice to our communities, students, and colleagues if we treat this announcement as though we are simply crossing a finish line; institutions with this perspective are destined to be one-time designees. Rather, the Community Engagement Classification should be treated as a launching point. The process of applying for Carnegie should be an exercise in self-assessment that identifies areas of strength and opportunities for continued growth. Carnegie provides us with the opportunity to intentionally direct institutional resources and focus momentum to further centralize community engagement to our missions. This way, as our students, communities, and institutions evolve, we can ensure that our community engagement work is responsive to those changes and remains relevant.

Since the announcement of the first cohort of Carnegie Community Engagement institutions in 2006, a lot has been written about the classification. For example, an entire edition of New Directions for Higher Education was dedicated to the lessons learned from the first wave of Carnegie Community Engagement institutions (Sandmann, Thornton, & Jaeger, 2009), and a comprehensive guide to applying for the designation has been developed (Saltmarsh & Johnson, 2018). Others have reflected on the intentions, process, and impact of the classification (e.g., Driscoll, 2008; 2014; Zuiches, 2010). A relatively new endeavor is going to continue to increase what we can learn about community/university engagement in U.S. higher education.

Since 2017, Brown University’s Swearer Center for Public Service has served as the administrative home for the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification. This move is a part of the Swearer Center-hosted College and University Engagement Initiative, which has the stated goal of “[contributing] to the fields of community engagement and social innovation through collaboration with students, faculty, community partners, institutions of higher education and networks for community engagement and social innovation” (https://www.brown.edu/swearer/about). Due to a commitment to advancing the field and a tremendous amount of work on the part of the team at the Swearer Center, the entire Carnegie Community Engagement Classification dataset is now open access and freely available to researchers. The Swearer Center especially encourages graduate students and junior scholars to utilize the data, citing the high costs often associated with gaining access to datasets in higher education. The Swearer Center should be applauded for their efforts—this move is likely to...
bring attention to an understudied area of research and demonstrate to graduate students and early career scholars that there is a tremendous amount of ground to be broken. I am hopeful that one area of continued exploration will be developing a better understanding of why institutions decide to apply for the designation, and how they leverage the designation to further institutionalize community engagement on their campuses.

For example, according to the press release from the Swearer Center, 119 institutions received the classification as a part of the 2020 cycle, 44 of which received the classification for the first time, and 75 of which were re-designated. Interestingly, of the 121 institutions that received the designation in the 2010 cycle and were required to re-apply to maintain the classification, 44 of those institutions (~36%) chose not to pursue reclassification. Contrast this to the 2015 cycle, when 188 institutions were required to reclassify, and only 26 chose not to do so (~14%). Another disparity between the 2015 and 2020 cycles is the success rate for first-time applicants. In 2015, 83 of the 133 first-time applicants received the classification (~62%), while in 2020, only 44 of the 109 first-time applicants received the classification (~40%). Certainly there are any number of factors that may have led to these, and likely many other, disparities between classification cycles, all of which can be explored through theoretically grounded research questions and explored empirically, at least in part, through this newly available dataset.

This insight will be invaluable to those leading the efforts to receive the Carnegie Classification in the future. The more we are able to be clear-eyed about the purposes of Carnegie, how community engagement is prioritized on our respective campuses, and what it takes to earn and leverage the Carnegie classification, the more effective we can be in our work, and the better we can co-create with our community partners and students.

References


Civic Engagement for the Future Criminal Justice Professional: Serving the Underserved in a Correctional Setting

Kimberly Collica-Cox

Abstract
This project—Parenting, Prison, and Pups—is designed to help students think as socially responsible persons, in addition to understanding and caring about the world they will enter as criminal justice professionals. By becoming civically aware and involved, these students will be servicing one of society's most underserved populations, female prisoners and their children. This program involves college students in remediating some of the most difficult problems within our criminal justice system, namely prisoner rehabilitation. Moreover, involving research as another level to this project is vital to understanding the effectiveness of this jail-based program, in addition to accurately investigating the experiences of participating students. This article not only examines the process of designing and developing a unique civic engagement experience for students, but discusses how four agencies were brought together as community partners to serve female prisoners, while simultaneously conducting research on an important criminal justice intervention.

Background and Rationale
Introduction: Why This Program Was Needed
Within three years of release, 67% of prisoners in the United States will recidivate (Durose, Cooper, & Sydner, 2014). In a 2006 secondary data analysis of Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) recidivism data, 60% of female offenders are rearrested after release, 40% have new convictions, and 30% return to prison (Deschenes, Owen, & Crow, 2006). According to this report, women with violent crimes are not likely to reoffend but women with nonviolent crimes, who comprise the majority of female prisoners and who will be released into the community after shorter periods of incarceration, are more likely to reoffend when compared to their violent crime counterparts. Overall, incarcerated women face many challenges upon release (for example, access to housing, employment, child care, mental health services, substance abuse treatment, medical care, and transportation), which makes it difficult to overcome structural issues (e.g., poverty, racism, classism, sexism), for which they have little control (Belknap, Lynch, & DeHart, 2016). Most incarcerated women are non-white, unmarried, and have children. They have a history of unemployment, abuse, and mental health disorders (73% of female prisoners compared to 55% of male prisoners), and they are more likely than men to be arrested for nonviolent crimes (Haywood, Goldman, Kravitz, & Freeman, 2000; James & Glaze, 2006). These women need to be the primary focus of rehabilitative and reintegrative policy.

Disruption to the mother-child bond as a result of incarceration is devastating for mother and child alike. Most significantly, their children suffer from a myriad of issues, including depression, social exclusion, family instability, anxiety, substance use, early criminality, conduct disorder, antisocial behavior, poor educational attainment, educational underperformance, school failure, mental health issues, limited future income, physical ailments, and unhealthy intimate relationships (Aaron & Dallaire, 2010; Christain, 2009; Mears & Siennick, 2015; Miller & Barnes, 2015). With 70% of incarcerated women responsible for a minor child, 1.7 million children are affected by having a mother behind bars (Maruschak, Glaze, & Mumola, 2010). Children of color are disproportionately affected. They are seven and a half times more likely than white children to have a parent in prison, and Latino children are more than two and a half times more likely than white children to have a parent in prison (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). Children of an incarcerated parent are also six times more likely to be involved in the criminal justice system, further affecting communities of color (Purvis, 2013).

It is clear that jail-based women need programming more than any other correctional group. Due to the smaller numbers of female prisoners, programs are more likely to be piloted with male prisoners (Clark, 2009; Lahm, 2000). Because of their shorter periods of incarceration, and hence quicker return to the community, interventions that help them but also have the ability to impact their children are essential.
With all of these factors in mind, a parenting program for jail-based women was designed, implemented, and evaluated. Without programs in place to rebuild connections and enhance parenting skills, the children of these mothers are likely to repeat the mistakes of their mothers (see Purvis 2013). To inspire future criminal justice workers, a civic engagement component was integrated into this jail-based program. Undergraduate university students enrolled in the professor’s civic engagement/service-learning corrections course serve as teaching assistants during the jail-based parenting classes to help coordinate and instruct group activities. It is highly important to expose students to experiences in the corrections setting as corrections is a neglected field in criminal justice and one of the least preferred career choices of criminal justice students (Collica-Cox & Furst, 2019; Courtright & Mackey, 2004; Kelly, 2015; Krimmel & Tartaro, 1999). Interestingly, non-majors express interest in this course and even though they might not be interested in pursuing a career in criminal justice (e.g., film majors, business majors), they are interested in learning about and working with corrections populations, a topic often mysterious to many.

The average citizen, like the average criminal justice student, does not possess a true understanding of the inner workings of the corrections system (Dowler, 2003). Corrections knowledge appears to be based upon movies, television shows, or media reports, which often inadequately portray the jail and prison subculture (Collica-Cox & Furst, 2019). The only way one can truly understand the inner workings of the system is by immersing one’s self in the environment, which is what these students are able to do through Parenting, Prison, & Pups (PPP). This paper discusses the major components of PPP and program implementation within the corrections setting, as well as the benefits and challenges of designing this type of civic engagement course for undergraduate students, which is inclusive of a research component.

Civic Engagement

Service-learning courses prepare students to become socially responsible and some encourage political and social participation within the community (Ferraiolo, 2004; Markus, Howard, & King, 1993). They help students achieve personal growth through reflection (Sanders, Oss, & McGearry, 2015). Such courses are needed more than ever; research shows that the larger public’s interest in civic engagement is dwindling (Brisbin & Hunter, 2003). Civic engagement courses are impactful, valuable, and effective for students (Manikowske & Sunderlin, 2013). Students who participate in service-learning are more likely than other students to become involved in civic engagement activities and they are more likely to commit to participating in future civic engagement activities (Knapp, Fisher, & Levesque-Bristol, 2010; O’Leary, 2014), even after graduation (Astin, Sax, & Avalos, 1999). Besides establishing strong connections between theoretical foundations of knowledge and practical applications, students achieve résumé experience, which can make them more competitive when applying for employment.

The Current Civic Engagement Course

Students who enroll in Strategies to Corrections Administration, a 300-level course, have the opportunity to study and practice innovative approaches to criminal justice administration in a corrections environment. They are able to work in a challenging, yet rewarding field. The nature of this work often makes it difficult to obtain approval for students to work directly with prisoners. Students are exposed to working in the field of corrections with a population that is highly disadvantaged and greatly underserved. As previously stated, corrections is a neglected field in criminal justice and one of the least preferred career choices of criminal justice students. This course exposes them to an undervalued career that is grounded in service but a career that also offers excellent pay and benefits, including in retirement. The students learn the importance of not only building community, but also becoming an integral component of that community. Learning takes place both inside and outside of the classroom. Students have the rare opportunity to share this unique learning experience with one another. The diversity and background of the student body is fairly reflective of the background of the population this program will serve. Our students are primarily comprised of first-generation college students. Of the 28 students participating in the first two civic engagement classes, 36% (n=10) are persons of color. Female prisoners are exposed to others who are similar to them but made different choices. They can see that different choices lead to different paths, allowing these students to serve as role models.

During the regularly scheduled class time at Pace University, the professor and students take
time to reflect upon the parenting classes at the jail. Students spend a majority of the semester learning about prisoner rights (or lack thereof) through the examination of major federal court decisions. Students examine how these decisions (for example, decisions related to health care, religion, privacy, etc.) impact the management of a corrections facility. Programs like PPP are discussed as a management tool to increase prosocial behavior and improve institutional and post-release conduct. Considerable time is spent examining a model of intersectionality, which not only highlights gender differences but examines racial and economic disparities within our criminal justice system. Recent statistics show that while men’s incarceration rates have remained stable, women’s rates have increased (Minton & Zeng, 2016). Even in states that have experienced an overall decrease in their incarcerated population, men’s rates decrease at a higher rate than women’s rates (Sawyer, 2018).

Regardless of declining incarceration rates in some areas, persons of color are still disproportionately represented in the American criminal justice system with the imprisonment rate for white females (49 per 100,000 white female residents) almost half when compared to the imprisonment rate for black females (96 per 100,000 black female residents) (BJS, 2018). This issue is evident in the first two jail classes, where women of color comprise the majority of PPP’s sample. Out of 20 participating women, 65% (n=13) identify as a woman of color.

**Student Roles**

Pace University has two campuses. One campus, located in Westchester County, is a suburban campus, approximately 30 miles north of upper Manhattan. The other campus is in downtown Manhattan, positioned in the heart of New York City’s financial district. During the spring semester, students enrolled in the corrections class in Manhattan work with prisoners at the Metropolitan Correctional Center (MCC), a federal jail managed by the Bureau of Prisons. Students enrolled in the corrections class in Westchester during the fall semester work with prisoners at the Westchester County Department of Corrections (WCDOC), a county jail in the New York metro area. Students complete 20 service hours outside of the classroom. In addition to service hours, students have academic components that include maintaining a journal and completing a reflection paper at the end of the term.

Since most students are not 21 years of age, they cannot become badged volunteers for either jail; hence, they can only enter each facility up to a maximum of four times in a given calendar year. Since students are not receiving formal training by the jails, they are provided training by the professor, who has over 20 years of experience working in corrections, in how to work effectively in the corrections setting. This training includes information on security protocols, interacting with prisoners, engaging with staff, and so on. Students are never alone with the prisoners and are always closely supervised by the professor during their time in the jail. Students rotate in and out of classes to assist the professor with teaching the classes. Students are instructed in the parenting curriculum, providing them with lifelong parenting skills, and they assist in imparting this knowledge to female prisoners by coordinating and facilitating group activities. In addition, students receive training in Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) and attend an hour-and-a half AAT training and a one-hour human-canine team training session. Both trainings are provided by The Good Dog Foundation, a nonprofit whose mission “is to ease human suffering and promote recovery from trauma and stress using animal-assisted therapy services that are recognized as among the most innovative and reliable in the United States” (retrieved from https://www.idealist.org/en/nonprofit/2051c323eaff48078db6a2259a5a6d3e-the-good-dog-foundation-new-york).

Students also take a field trip to East Jersey State Prison in Rahway and meet with the Lifer’s Group, a group of male prisoners serving a minimum of 25 years to life. They have an hour question and answer session with the Lifer’s Group, which proves to be one of their most impactful experiences. Since this class is working primarily with jail-based women, this trip exposes them to other corrections populations (e.g., male inmates, prison-based inmates). In order to assess the impact of this type of service-learning experience on participating students, students are asked to complete a pretest and posttest survey. The pretest asks questions regarding demographics, perceptions of prisoners and punishment, career goals, and feelings about civic engagement and involvement in community service. The posttest ascertains students’ feelings about the overall course, whether their views on prisoners and punishment changed, and if their career goals and/or their future commitment to civic engagement changed.
The Parenting, Prison, and Pups Program

PPP is based upon Parenting Inside-Out (PIO) (see http://www.parentinginsideout.org/), an evidence-based parenting program for female prisoners that incorporates the use of dog-assisted therapy that helps women process their feelings more effectively. To serve these women, and help them to reconnect with their children, PPP involves a partnership between Pace University’s two campuses, a nonprofit agency, a federal jail, and a county jail. Employed as a high-impact learning process, this program effectively integrates dogs into a highly structured curriculum for animal-assisted therapy and learning within the jail setting.

Animal-based programming utilized within the corrections setting has promising results (Furst, 2006). AAT has numerous benefits. It reduces stress, lessens anxiety, improves emotional well-being and behavior, decreases depression, enhances communication and reading skills, and lowers blood pressure, heart rate, and perceived feelings of loneliness (Dunlap, 2010). AAT can assist female prisoners with long histories of trauma to mediate the relationship between adults that enables more open and useful communication (Jasperson, 2010). Dogs can facilitate a connection of trust and acceptance (Brazier, 2014); they facilitate a secure environment (Silcox, Castillo, & Reed, 2014), which in jail/prison can be difficult to achieve. Dogs also provide a source of affection (Silcox et. al., 2014) which, because of the prisoner’s separation from family, has been lacking. Dogs are essentially non-judgmental and loving (Cusack, 1988); one can tell them anything without fear of rejection. Based on preliminary data, the presence of dogs suggests similar health benefits for students enrolled in this course. Students are given a posttest questionnaire on the last day of class about their experiences in PPP. All participating students thus far (n=28) say the presence of the dogs makes them feel happy, safe, and comfortable. For example:

Dogs are awesome and I will take any reason to be with them, so a class with dogs is the best [They make me feel] safer.
Dogs kept me calm. They were good assistant teachers (20-year-old male student, Westchester Campus).

For PPP, an established evidence-based parenting curriculum PIO was chosen. Previous research finds that PIO participation among Oregon State prisoners decreases depression, lowers substance abuse, increases parental participation, enhances parenting skills, reduces parental stress, and reduces recidivism (Parenting Inside-Out, 2015). Utilizing an evidence-based curriculum as the foundation for this program was important, especially when the program was presented to potential community partners. Unlike other parenting programs, this one incorporates cognitive behavior skills, it is outcome based, and its design is learner-centered (Eddy & Clark, 2010). The curriculum is enhanced and topics are augmented to include AAT. The professor is trained and certified in PIO. Additionally, Pace University is licensed by PIO to allow her to provide this parenting program for female prisoners.

In view of the transitional nature of the jail environment, PPP must be provided at least two times per week in order to maximize the number of prisoner program completers. Since one’s length of stay in the jail can be relatively short, it is clear that extended programs run the risk of losing a majority of the participants. This condensed schedule actually works well during the course of an academic semester because the professor has time to bond with and train students prior to beginning the jail program and there are a few weeks remaining in the semester after the conclusion of the last jail parenting class to process and reflect upon their experiences.

Each parenting class is approximately two hours and includes the following topics: Parenting styles, effective speaking skills, effective listening skills, effective problem-solving, bonding through play and reading, the child’s job and the parent’s job, directions and encouragement, and time out with back-up privilege removal; also, rules, rewards, and consequences; yoga, meditation, and stress management; cardio pulmonary resuscitation (CPR); first aid and automated external defibrillator (AED); home and children; healthy adult relationships; and the reunification/graduation day.

To provide the CPR certification, the professor formulated a limited liability company that became an American Safety and Health Institute training center. She and two volunteer instructors provide a full-day training to certify the students and prisoners in CPR (for adults, children, and infants), first aid, and AED. The women prisoners and the students are nationally certified for two years. This is an important component to the partnering facilities because prisoners can use this certification to augment their résumés. The last parenting class, the reunification and graduation day, celebrates
those prisoners who complete the parenting course. The families of the prisoner participants are invited to the jail for a graduation ceremony. The college students get involved by decorating, coordinating activities for the children, and talking with the family members. Food is served, which is generously provided by both facilities, and regular visiting rules are suspended, which allows women to have complete physical contact with their children. Two reunification and graduation days have taken place thus far and the students really enjoy it. One student said it gave the prisoners “a sense of accomplishment and pride.” It is satisfying for the students to see the prisoners receive their certificates and know that their hard work and commitment to the program is worthwhile. This course inspires some of the students to become more civically engaged. As one student said:

This course has truly shifted my views on rehabilitation and I feel I am leaving this class a better person. I loved every minute of this and wish I could take it again. I am planning to pursue more volunteer work (18-year-old female student, NYC Campus).

Students learn that giving of oneself can really make a positive difference in the lives of others. Two examples:

This experience really lit a fire in me to give back. More people should do things like this. I hate when people complain about matters such as crime and jails/prisons, but do nothing to learn about them. Don't complain unless you offer help. Also, overall I have been inspired by how much a few hours of civic engagement can really affect others (19-year-old female student, NYC Campus).

This was a class on humanity as much as civic engagement or criminal justice. We got to see a population that is looked down upon, stigmatized, and ridiculed, but hearing them really hit me in the heart (20-year-old male student, Westchester Campus).

PPP began with PIO but not with AAT (the parenting class without the therapy dogs) at both facilities. It was important to wait to fully integrate the dogs into the program for several reasons: 1) It allowed the professor to become more familiar with the parenting curriculum and solve any operational problems (e.g., clearances, space); 2) it allowed the students to have input regarding whether the class design and implementation is successful; students are also able to propose suggestions for improvement; 3) it provides baseline data to compare whether there are enhanced effects by augmenting the curriculum with AAT; and 4) it gives The Good Dog Foundation, PPP's nonprofit partner, a greater opportunity to understand how the dogs could be most effectively utilized.

To assure the safety of the dogs and optimize integration of AAT, The Good Dog Foundation recruits licensed mental health professionals who have dogs. Eight mental health professional-handler/dog teams are trained and certified by Good Dog, undergoing an intensive six week training program; they receive additional training from the professor in the parenting curriculum and in working effectively in the corrections setting. They also receive a formal volunteer training by the respective jail. Four teams are chosen for each jail location. This part of the program began in February 2018. Data collection continues.

Building Community Partnerships

In order to provide this unique experience for college students, the professor held numerous meetings with community stakeholders to present the idea and to discuss security concerns, as well as program logistics. The professor, who has 20 years of experience working with incarcerated populations, has established working relationships with both corrections facilities prior to PPP's implementation. She worked with them to discern programmatic needs and wants. There was a two-year development and implementation process. At the end of this process, a strong working relationship had developed among the partners.

Program Benefits

PPP has the ability to significantly benefit these community partners. Anticipated benefits were presented to PPP’s community partners during the program development stage.

PPP’s university partner. The program benefits Pace University students by providing an opportunity they would not otherwise have. As one student commented:
Beyond the fact that I really enjoyed this class, I never would have thought about or probably had the opportunity to work in the environment that we did (22-year-old female student, Westchester Campus).

All program participants (n=28) stated that they enjoyed taking this class as a civic engagement course and they enjoy the service they provide. According to one:

I learned more than I believe I could have in a book or class and found the overall knowledge and experience irreplaceable (25-year-old student, NYC Campus).

Twenty-nine percent are now considering corrections as a career, and 46% said they would consider working in a jail/prison as a result of their experience with PPP. According to a 21-year-old female student from the Westchester Campus:

This class opened my eyes to so many job opportunities and hands-on experience.

By being a part of this program, students can gain multiple benefits:
1. They have the opportunity to work with an underserved population, while also engaging with several community partners.
2. They can develop parenting skills and strategies to utilize in their own lives; while witnessing parenting in action and volunteering their time to support prisoner parenting goals, they are learning social responsibility.
3. They not only understand the myriad of issues faced by corrections populations but also learn to care about this population and their surrounding communities, particularly when/if they enter the field as criminal justice professionals.
4. They can identify what they expect from the course at its onset and reflect upon their experiences working in the corrections setting upon course completion.
5. They can develop active learning skills through practice and experience; they develop the ability to multitask, sharpen analytical skills, and address their own feelings regarding those who break the law.

This program is well received by the students, creating a registration wait list each semester. As a result, it appears, according to two students, to be a good recruitment and retention tool:

Beyond the fact that I really enjoyed this class, I never would have thought about or probably had the opportunity to work in the environment that we did (22-year-old female student, Westchester Campus).

I would recommend this class to students who don't even attend Pace University (22-year-old female student, Westchester Campus).

This was definitely one of the best classes I've taken at Pace University, and it was very rewarding (21-year-old female student, NYC Campus).

**PPP’s nonprofit-based partner.** PPP benefits The Good Dog Foundation by allowing it to reach a new population. The Foundation is interested in providing service to incarcerated populations. This new opportunity widens its service base and allows it to gain expertise working in a new field. With the research component, Good Dog has additional empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of its methods, which is important for its funders.

**PPP’s government partners.** PPP benefits MCC and WCDOC by providing a free and valuable service for their prisoners. Corrections facilities are under pressure from the Department of Justice to focus on rehabilitative and re-entry initiatives, yet, they routinely lack money and staff to provide such programming on their own. This project, which is free to both jail facilities, helps them to meet that goal. Nationally, female prisoners, because they are smaller in number than their male counterparts, suffer from a paucity of programs, especially in the jail setting. This course provides female prisoners with a valuable resource to help enhance their parenting skills and such skills will benefit their children. The course focuses on soft skills, such as communication skills, which are also important to employers. Inmates are certified in CPR, first aid and AED, which is another valuable asset for potential employment. Furthermore, the presence of dogs appears to enhance staff morale. Although not a direct goal of PPP, it is a noticeable effect.

**Research and Assessment**

**The Development**

The implementation and development of PPP is a two-year process primarily because of the addition of the research component. Planning and implementing the program portion would take less than one year. However, it is clear that for sustainability, funding is required, and in order to apply for funding, data is needed. By including a research component, credibility is provided to PPP.
and the Pace students are able to see and understand how this process works as well. One undergraduate student is able to serve as a research assistant to the professor each semester. A benefit to faculty, who want to include a research component, is that a program design like PPP is the pinnacle of academics—it combines teaching, research and service. There is the additional benefit of mentoring students academically and professionally. Two research projects developed from PPP. One involves prisoner mothers and one involves participating college students. The process of obtaining permission to conduct research with prisoners is a long process requiring three IRB approvals (e.g., Pace University and the two respective jails), rather than one. Permission to conduct research with the students participating in this program required a fourth IRB approval, which was submitted through Pace’s IRB.

A pretest and posttest quasi-experimental design is utilized to evaluate the differences between prisoners who complete the two-month parenting course with AAT, with a group who complete the same course without AAT. It is important to run both groups first at each facility without the dogs in order to determine the best way to integrate the dogs. Besides the professor and her students being present for these parenting classes, a representative from The Good Dog Foundation attends every jail class.

Administration of the Survey

Each facility helps to recruit prisoners for PPP. Prisoner participation is voluntary and women are recruited by the jail’s education staff. Requirements for participation include having at least two months of time remaining on one’s sentence (which is difficult to guarantee in a jail setting) and a child or grandchild 24 years of age and under where the prisoner serves as the child’s primary caregiver. Although not always accurate, staff is more likely to know if a prisoner will be incarcerated for the duration of the program; prisoners are often unclear about their release date or may not be honest about their release date. Fourteen prisoners began the PPP class at MCC, with 10 completing. In WCDOC, 14 prisoners began the PPP class, with 11 completing. Some of these women are unable to complete because they are either transferred to another facility or they are released. All prisoner participants are interviewed before the start of the program and all remaining participants are interviewed again at the conclusion of the program.

Pretest and posttest data, inclusive of scales measuring levels of stress, anxiety, depression (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995) and self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965), among the prisoners are collected via one-on-one interviews with the PI of the project. Interviews, which can last 30 minutes to an hour (depending on the length of the women’s answers), are conducted with the women at their respective jails in a confidential setting. Open-ended questions measure the level of contact/involvement with children, confidence in parenting (Berry & Jones, 1995; Korjenevitch, Dunison, & Kopko, 2010; Kramer & McDonnell, 2016; Parenting Inside-Out, 2015), and overall feelings regarding the implementation of AAT within the course. Interview questions examine disciplinary rates. The Human-Animal Interaction Scale (HAIS) is used to measure the level of human-animal interaction following each AAT session (Fournier, Letson, & Berry, 2016). A comparison of both groups determines the effect of AAT on promoting engagement and retention, key elements of the learning process. The first classes without AAT took place during the 2017 academic year and the classes with AAT began during the 2018 academic year. The only differences between the classes is the presence of the canine teams; all other factors remain constant. However, in the group without AAT, after posttest data collection, the women prisoners are surprised with an AAT visit.

Student Assessment

In order to assess the impact of this type of service-learning on students, students are also asked to complete a pretest and posttest survey utilizing both qualitative and quantitative measures. The pretest asks questions regarding demographics, perceptions of prisoners and punishment, career goals, feelings about civic engagement and involvement in community service. The posttest ascertains students’ feelings about the overall course, whether their views on prisoners and punishment changed, and if their career goals and/or their future commitment to civic engagement changed. Many of the questions regarding civic engagement are borrowed from a questionnaire utilized by Pace University’s Center for Community Action and Research. They previously used these questions to understand the experience of Pace students who enroll in civic engagement courses. By utilizing a modified version of this pretest and posttest questionnaire, the professor can evaluate whether students who participate in this jail-based
service-learning course are likely to modify their views regarding prisoners, punishment and civic engagement, after completion of this course. It is hypothesized that these students will commit to future civic engagement. The only students included in the study are students who register for Strategies in Corrections Administration. So far, 28 students from both campuses have participated; 15 from the NYC Campus and 13 from the Westchester Campus. Data collection is ongoing. There is the opportunity to see if outcome measures change after full integration of the dogs into the program.

Challenges

Flexibility and Patience

Besides the lengthy approval process, there are and continue to be several challenges to the administration of PPP. None of these disadvantages, however, outweigh the benefits of the program. Students must remain flexible and have a great deal of patience. Security issues may require moving participants from one area to another during class or may prevent PPP staff from entering the facility on a given day/night. Students understand that although the parenting class is two hours, the actual time involved in administering the class is approximately three hours. Clearing security, missing gate clearances (these are needed to allow the students entrance), a delayed count (prisoners are counted several times per day and no one enters or leaves the facility during this time), lockdowns, etc., can all add to the required time. Class may also be slightly chaotic at times as prisoners may be called in and out of class for medication, lawyer’s visits, etc. Students serve as another set of eyes for the professor and should be alert during the parenting classes. After each class, the participating students on that day and the professor debrief and they debrief a second time with the entire class. Concerns regarding prisoners or operational procedures can be discussed at that time. Students can also reflect on challenges or progress, or students can address their own emotional concerns. For example, one student shared with the prisoners about her two brothers who suffer from heroin addiction. She received tremendous support from the prisoners and her fellow students. In another class, students and the professor received an unpleasant lesson when one of the prisoner mothers was released a month early (often they are released directly from court). Without a plan in place (her plan was for the following month), she connected with a former boyfriend and overdosed. Participants learned of her death in the middle of one of the parenting classes. The professor allowed the prisoners and the students to process the news. Surprisingly, both the prisoners and students wanted to continue with the remainder of the class. Such experiences, albeit highly unpleasant, provide students with a realistic view of the criminal justice system and give them the opportunity to assess whether it is the right career path for them.

Professionalism

Students must be professional and should receive an orientation prior to working in the facility. Since they are not badged volunteers, they do not receive a formal orientation from the jails; this responsibility is left to the professor. If the professor fails to properly orient the students, the students may do something, unknowingly, that jeopardizes the entire program (e.g., giving an inmate a certain type of pen or a piece of gum, both of which are contraband). Students have to dress professionally, be on time, and not interfere with staff as they are performing their duties. Nothing can be given to prisoners at any time; students cannot bring anything into the facility. All of the items brought for class require prior approval and a gate clearance. All of these items must be counted and taken with the professor and her students when they leave. Students are typically nervous for their first class but after the first class are excited to be there and understand how to best interact with the prisoners. The professor never leaves the students alone with the prisoners and there is always a corrections officer in close proximity.

Organization

Organizing this course can be challenging for both the students and the professor. The most difficult and time-consuming portion is developing an idea that the students could feel passionately about. The “idea” sets the tone for the entire experience and if the students enjoy the service they are providing, it will help them to overcome the challenges they may face. If students do not feel positive about the service they are providing, it could be difficult getting them to consistently commit to their days and hours, which could negatively affect the program. The students are integral to PPP. Prisoners are often asked to break into smaller groups to complete assignments. The students are paired with the groups and help to keep groups on task. Their presence alleviates any issues regarding literacy because, if needed, the students can take charge of reading and writing for
the group. In one of the classes a bilingual student was instrumental in translating some of the more difficult concepts to a prisoner who had Spanish as her primary language.

One of the challenges students face is time management. The students will need to manage their time wisely in order to complete the required 20 hours of service. The professor will have to organize his/her schedule as well because this is equivalent to teaching another course. Organization is also involved in collecting all of the background forms and having them processed, compiling a list of items and gaining approval for those items (all which are necessary to properly conduct the parenting classes), making schedules for which students are attending the jail on which days, etc. All of these things must be done prior to the start of classes. Since the students also visit East Jersey State Prison, background forms and clearances must be collected and processed for both facilities. Once students commit to attending a class, they cannot change or switch with another student. If there is an issue, such as a student is sick, they miss the jail class and the student and the professor have to devise an alternative activity to make up the missed service hours. Many students appear to lack motivation initially (e.g., they did not want to wake up early or attend a night class) but after attending their first parenting class, the majority of the students complained that they wanted more time in the jail. One student, who was forced to miss a jail class because of a sports-related concussion, tried to convince her athletic trainer and the professor to allow her to attend. Her medical issues prevented her attendance and she was visibly and verbally upset about her inability to go to the jail.

Transportation

Students have to be able to easily get from campus to the jail and vice versa. Both jail facilities are close to the respective campuses, which was a strong consideration when developing PPP. Transporting students is more of an issue at Pace’s suburban campus, where public transportation is not as easily accessible. In Manhattan, the students and the professor meet at her office and walk as a group to the federal jail. It is approximately a 10-minute walk, which makes transporting students easy. In Westchester, most students do not have their own cars. Driving students becomes a challenge and walking is not an option. Even though the jail is five miles from campus, the professor is primarily responsible for their transportation. She has to arrive at campus early and can only transport a certain number of students at any given time. Luckily, some students drive and can assist with carpooling on certain days/nights.

Funding

The professor applies for internal grants, the receipt of which allows her to provide amenities for the students, such as food for the day of the three-hour Good Dog training. A graduation celebration for the students is also held, with food, at the end of the semester; all students receive certificates of service and internal grants help to fund this portion. Internal grants are also used to purchase supplies for the program and to pay for transportation for the field trip. The bigger funding issue is the money needed for PPP’s community partner to train and pay the therapy teams. The professor was finally able to secure outside funding, which covers such costs for the next two years. Ample time must be taken to identify and apply for funding opportunities. This can be challenging to a professor who is simultaneously trying to develop and implement a program, in addition to data collection. The professor is still in the process of submitting additional funding applications.

Discussion

According to Noddings (2005), one of an educator’s jobs is to teach the students how to care. Students cannot care about the “other” if they do not know the “other.” Prisoners can be characterized as the “other.” A closed system, far from the eye of the public, they are a population locked behind a fortress-like wall, often forgotten, and rarely cared for by the general community. This service-learning project puts students in touch with the “other” and helps them to learn that caring about these forgotten persons subsequently allows them to care for their own communities. PPP participation can form the basis for good citizenship, even if one is not a criminal justice major. This course creates a moment of connection. If this type of service-learning course proves to be effective, it will continue to serve students on both campuses and can prove to be an excellent admissions and retention tool for universities and/or departments. For faculty, projects such as PPP combine teaching, research and service, the three areas required for tenure and promotion.

Projects like PPP provide a unique educational experience for college students. Students who participate in this program are all positive about their service and many are considering corrections as a possible career. It is an experience that can
prove to be impactful and transformative for all involved partners, but most importantly, the students. Creating programs like this can be time consuming for faculty but create an opportunity to rejuvenate a love of teaching, especially when there are so many perceived benefits for so many people. Not only are students civically engaged, faculty are as well.

Most importantly, while working in community-based settings, it is important to be responsive to the specific context of the community being served, in addition to the needs of the collaborating community partners. A program is strengthened when multiple approaches are integrated (PIO and AAT) to address an important community-identified issue. Educators interested in providing similar programming need to be open and flexible to approaching this work from multiple perspectives in order to be effective. Strong partnerships, coupled with dedicated participants, are likely to have a positive impact on all involved.

References


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Relationships Are Key to Overcoming Barriers Posed By Election Cycles: A Qualitative Description of Canadian Integrated Knowledge Translation Partners

Lesley Hodge, Maria Mayan, Sanchia Lo, Solina Richter, and Jane Drummond

Abstract

Community engagement is central to a research process called integrated knowledge translation (IKT), which is characterized by the co-creation of knowledge among various partners. Families First Edmonton used an IKT partnership model to address poverty issues over a 15-year period. The purpose of this study is to describe barriers to the sustainability of this IKT partnership and how these were overcome. We generated interview data with 23 IKT partners who worked with or within municipal and provincial governments; we used qualitative description to frame our data and conventional qualitative content analysis for data analysis. Partners described the ways in which election cycles threatened the sustainability of the IKT partnership and posed barriers to their work. Three barriers were identified by partners: 1) narrowed windows of opportunity, 2) muddled directions and priorities, and 3) changed project partners. According to partners who collaborated across academic, government, and community settings, relationships offset these barriers through various mechanisms, including long-term relationship building, ongoing contact, and a recognition that while success may be subtle, resulting ripple effects can have important impacts over time. Relationships represent an important investment for partners who continue to work in narrow time frames imposed by election cycles. Partners indicated that relationships are a key strategy to ensuring sustainability of the IKT partnership and can have a farther-reaching impact than policy change.

Background

The process of community engagement has long been used as a way to involve those most affected by a problem in collective action to create relevant and meaningful solutions. The World Health Organization (2017) defined community engagement as a “process of developing relationships that enable stakeholders to work together to address health-related issues and promote well-being to achieve positive health impact and outcomes” (p.12). Community engagement is not a single event; rather, it is a “socially situated phenomenon” that involves iterative and long-term processes that are sustained by a shared concern (Johnston, 2018, p.30).

Community engagement is enacted in various forms, from community service-learning—enabling learner and community growth (Stewart & Alrutz, 2012)—to community-based participatory research focused on achieving research goals and building community capacity (Mosavel, Winship, Liggins, Cox, Roberts, & Jones, 2019). Regardless of form, community engagement is built on similar principles and common characteristics. Similarities include relationship- and trust-building, collaboration, transparency, and community-capacity building.

Community engagement is also central to a research process called integrated knowledge translation (IKT), which can be better understood by contrasting it with a more familiar term, knowledge translation, which refers to efforts that enhance the uptake of existing research knowledge, such as the use of actionable messaging or accessible language (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2015). IKT is similar and more interactive; it does not privilege research knowledge over other forms of knowledge and is characterized by the co-creation of knowledge among various partners (Kothari, Sibbald, & Wathen, 2014). In IKT, researchers solicit involvement from partners throughout the entire research process so that their work is more relevant to the context of application. The ultimate goal of IKT is change, primarily in the form of bringing research knowledge to action.

In bridging the knowledge-to-action gap (Graham, Logan, Harrison, Straus, Tetroe, Caswell, & Robinson, 2006), researchers and knowledge users have been urged to come together in IKT partnerships. A partnership, as defined by the World Health Organization (2009), is a “relationship between two or more parties based on trust, equality, and mutual understanding.
for the achievement of a specified goal” (p. 2). In IKT partnerships, the specified goal is research use or application. Consequently, we use the term IKT partnership to describe a collaborative process wherein researchers work across organizations, disciplines, and levels of government to conduct analyses and develop products that are relevant for decision-makers in the intended context of application.

Further research is needed to understand IKT partnerships, as IKT partnerships often tackle complex issues that require a diversity of perspectives and significant time investments. However, a recent scoping review conducted by Gagilardi and colleagues (2016) found that IKT initiatives were poorly described and seldom guided by any theory. To our knowledge, IKT partnership goals of research uptake are rarely accomplished easily or quickly, and there is no work dedicated to investigating the sustainability of IKT partnerships. Accordingly, scholars have long identified the need to further assess and understand what unique mechanisms contribute to the success of IKT partnerships (Kothari, McCutcheon, & Graham, 2017; Kothari & Wathen, 2017).

A known barrier for making any meaningful progress or change (including research use) is short political terms of leaders. In fact, a recent systematic review found that short political terms often prevent elected governments from tackling long-term objectives, a phenomenon referred to as political short-termism (Farrer, Marinetti, Cavaco, & Cosgongs, 2015). Since researchers engaged in IKT often work with government leaders and civil servants as IKT partners to tackle seemingly intractable health and social issues, more knowledge is specifically needed on how election cycles pose barriers to the long-term goals and sustainability of an IKT partnership.

Families First Edmonton

The IKT partnership under study created and executed a research project called Families First Edmonton. The original goal of the project was to gather local research data from low-income families in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada that would deepen an understanding of the impact of family poverty locally. The impetus to conduct this project was twofold: First, recent cutbacks to the health and social service sectors created a shared concern among partners for those living in poverty, and second, partners saw an opportunity to work together across sectors and build on existing research that supported needed change. This partnership worked together for more than 15 years. While the partnership formed at the turn of the century (2002), it took years for the study to be developed (2005), for families to be recruited (2006), for data to be collected in full (2011), for complex analyses to be conducted (2012), for partners to understand and communicate the results within their organizations (2013–2015), and then for the results to be shared beyond the partnership (Drummond, Wiebe, So, Schnirner, Bisanz, Williamson, Mayan, Templeton, Fassbender, 2016). The project charter (Families First Edmonton, 2003) provides further detail about the partners that represented a research team, two levels of government (municipal and provincial), and organizations serving the community.

Following the completion of data collection in 2010 (when the partnership had originally planned to formally conclude meetings), partners recognized the power and potential in the data and re-identified themselves as Putting the Research to Work (PRW). In 2011, partners used IKT as a concept to guide their work further. We intentionally generated interview data during this time to gain further insight into how the PRW partnership sustained and transitioned into the knowledge to action phase of the long-term project. The insights generated during this phase are explicated in this study. During this time of transition that we analyzed, sustainability was often under threat as reorganization and restructuring affected many of the PRW partners.

If IKT partnerships are going to address complex health and social issues over the long term, then the sustainability of IKT partnerships must become a priority. Thus, the research question guiding this inquiry was: What were the greatest barriers to the sustainability of the IKT partnership and how were these overcome? Since there is significant overlap between the concept of IKT and community engagement, we will consider our findings in light of existing research knowledge in the community service-learning and community-based research fields.

Methods

We approached the above stated research question using a qualitative descriptive design as described by Sandelowski (2000; 2010). Qualitative description was chosen as it originates from an interpretive paradigm and entails a comprehensive, coherent, and useful “description and summary of the phenomenon” (Mayan, 2009, p. 53) in the
“everyday language” of the partners (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 336). Furthermore, qualitative descriptive studies produce “data-near” findings (Sandelowski, 2010, p. 78) while allowing “room for the unanticipated” (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 336).

Recruitment

Email invitations were sent to 23 key PRW partners inviting them to participate. These individuals were community/funder/service provider (n=6), government (n=8), and research (n=9) partners, who were: 1) a current or previous PRW partner and 2) knowledgeable about PRW and its history. These inclusion criteria allowed us to gather perspectives from diverse partners that crisscross different sectors (community, government, academia), levels of governments (regional, municipal, provincial), and jurisdictions (recreation, transportation, income support, housing).

Sampling

Consistent with qualitative descriptive methods, our sampling approach was purposeful. To deeply understand the phenomenon, 23 partners who were highly involved in PRW were purposively sampled. Four of the partners were interviewed twice. In total, 25 interviews (seven in 2010 and 18 in 2012) were conducted; two dyad interviews took place (one in 2010 and one in 2012). This number is comparable to similar qualitative descriptive studies (Mason, 2010) and considered in light of other factors that affect saturation (Morse, 2000). While partners in this study were heterogeneous in the sense of representing different organizations and sectors, they had a shared interest (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002) in using research to improve the health and well-being of families living in poverty. This commonality among partners helped us to understand the phenomena more rapidly and to achieve saturation.

Data Generation

The interviews ranged from 30 to 90 minutes in duration. The wide range in time span occurred due to the varying levels of detail divulged by different partners who were interviewed. Generally, questions moved from obtaining past history with the partnership (e.g., “Can you describe your history with the PRW project?”) to inquiring about current events (e.g., “What are the current system priorities in your organization and the language used to describe them?”) and, “Who is seen as a credible source of information by your organization?”) and future directions (e.g., “What are the leverage points in your system?”). Two co-authors (Mayan and Lo) were selected to conduct the interviews as they had the longest established rapport with the partners. The interviewers used prompts to clarify responses (e.g., “What needs to be done within your organization to put the research to use, given some of the things you just spoke of?”).

Analysis

We used an inductive, iterative, and abductive process of qualitative content analysis, which is “the analysis strategy of choice in qualitative descriptive studies” (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 338). More specifically, we used the conventional approach delineated by Hsieh and Shannon (2005). The entire set of transcripts was read repeatedly to obtain a sense of the dataset as a whole and read again to derive codes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Sections of the text/data that were persistent (Mayan, 2009) and key thoughts and concepts were captured (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In addition, memoing was used to document how the analysis was modified according to demands imposed by the data (Mayan, 2009). As is common in qualitative inquiry, the research question was changed based on emerging data and moved from inquiring about barriers, facilitators, or strategies related to IKT partnerships to the sustainability of these partnerships.

Ethics and Rigor

To ensure rigor, we used Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) criteria for trustworthiness and Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, and Spiers’s (2002) verification strategies. Feedback was obtained from central partners early and incrementally to verify our developing preliminary categories. The University of Alberta’s Health Research Ethics Board approved the project. Written informed consent was obtained prior to data collection.

Findings

In response to the research question, “What were the greatest barriers to the sustainability of the IKT partnership and how were these overcome?” partners identified that election cycles and in particular, three specific barriers associated with election cycles, were the greatest threat to the sustainability of the IKT partnership. Partners also described how relationships helped offset
each of these barriers. In short, barriers created by election cycles narrowed windows of opportunity, muddled directions and priorities, and changed project partners. Relationships among IKT project partners offset these barriers through expedited work, improved strategy and position, and a shifted partnership culture (see Table 1).

**Election Cycles Narrowed Windows of Opportunity**

Election cycles were described as being disruptive to the progress of IKT partnerships. In particular, partners expressed that election cycles promoted short-term planning for issues that required long-term attention. This structural issue made it difficult for partners from all levels of government to obtain commitment and funding for projects addressing issues that extended beyond their current political lifespan. One civil servant involved in PRW since its inception remarked:

Unfortunately, we still live in a four-year cycle...we're talking about extrapolated savings [in PRW], so generationally, we're gonna see a difference in things or you're gonna see a difference in the amount of emergency care, but it might not be this year. It might be NEXT year...not in that four-year period. We've never been able to sell it in a way that current people are gonna accept it and move on something that they may not reap the benefits from. It might be the NEXT group that gets the glory.

In addition to short-term goals, partners described the need to move quickly to have research on a given priority generated, which contributed to a sense of urgency to produce results faster than researchers had the capacity to do. Failing to demonstrate improvements or cost-savings within these time frames jeopardized potential for future funding—"a catch-22" situation. One researcher explained:

With the new administration, the new Premier...things are moving...[We are] going to have to be extremely timely with [our] analysis if [we want] to at all maximize any of the work...[we] put into this project...now's the time.... The pace is going to be very fast now going forward, partially because government has this new administration and they want to maximize it.

**Relationships Expedited Succeed**

Relationships offset the barriers associated with narrowed windows of opportunity so that the partnership could continue through multiple pathways. By having relationships with partnership members, some of the bureaucracy was removed and partners were able to connect with others informally, such as through a phone call, a coffee, or quick email, whereas, as one civil servant said: “...before…it would have been sending an email to their director to ask for somebody.” By going to the people that they know, rather than asking for permission, the partners could begin their work more efficiently. This approach aided partners in creating, identifying, and capitalizing on opportunities faster.

Through ongoing conversations, partners recognized that the final research results, to be determined in five years (from a longitudinal study), were no longer addressing the government's current priorities or answering the most important question. To maintain interest, partners used their collective wisdom and connections to inform the generation of interim results relevant to today's government. Furthermore, government partners recognized that while election cycles narrowed windows of opportunity, relationships allowed researchers to take advantage of these windows of opportunity. As one civil servant explained:

I made sure that I had relationships with the people creating the bigger things that I knew were happening and would talk to them about what we were trying to do.

Through their relationships, governments' partners also shared the internal language and priorities so that research inquires could be generated and positioned accordingly. As one partner put it, “so if you understand the ideology, then you WORK it.” Another civil servant in a different level of government advised:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers to Sustainability of the IKT Partnerships</th>
<th>How Relationships Offset Barriers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narrowed windows of opportunity</td>
<td>Expedited work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muddled direction and priorities</td>
<td>Improved strategy and positioning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Changed project partners</td>
<td>Transformed partnership culture</td>
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Table 1. Summary of Findings
Right now we have huge fiscal problems… we need to frame [our work] in a way that fits into the current economic picture…so that we’re making reasonable requests…. If we put [our work] into some perspective of…something we could do in this market. So, it may not be…our full meal deal, but can we actually start and move something without it being huge cost…then we have some hope of moving something forward.

A partner described interim results as a “lever to keep partners involved.” Interim results targeted at current political priorities and within the scope and jurisdiction of decision makers (i.e., things they could influence) were leveraged to justify ongoing partner involvement and sustainability of the partnership.

**Election Cycles Muddled Direction and Priorities**

Another reason that election cycles disrupted partnership progress was related to uncertainty about upcoming priorities and direction. Given the potential for changes in leadership, project partners working in government did not know what would be upcoming “opportunities” in their respective departments. Partners recognized that priorities shifted and were challenged because what might be right one day might not be the next. A seasoned community partner noted, “Some really neat initiatives have just fallen off the table over the years” because “a minister changes, a CEO changes, a manager changes, or somebody changes and their priorities are all of a sudden, not those priorities.”

During the time leading up to an election, partners working within and close to government noted that it was unlikely that any new changes or projects would be supported. Actual priorities were also unclear for some time following changes in government. One researcher partner discussed this uncertainty:

[The new] government could look good for us…. This could be a pro or con for us. I’m still not clear…. [It] could be an opportunity for us if they…want to partner with us and use our data to help them make decisions…. If they are just using the budgeting profile [as] a means to justify cuts…spitting polish on it. Again, until we see some real action, it’s hard to assess whether this is good or bad.

**Relationships Improved Strategy and Positioning**

Through informal relationships and off the record discussions, IKT partners accessed timely information that informed their work when they felt rudderless. These conversations were sometimes referred to as “meetings after the meeting.” As one research partner put it, “There’s nothing too formal about how we work together.” Even when “really busy,” one community partner expressed, “when you need me, you just have to yell loud enough and call often enough that I will always respond…and I will make it important for me.” Similarly, a researcher noted, “Anytime they want to meet and hear about what kind of data we have and what’s going on, [we will] meet with them…..” Government partners also demonstrated this opportunity even when they were moved off the project. This informal way of working together helped partners access more information, in a timely manner, which was important for mitigating uncertainty and informing their work.

While the timing might be off, partners valued the social capital generated through their relationships. One partner noted that her “world got a little bigger” with “the connections that I’ve made and the people that I’ve met,” which permitted work beyond the project. As one community partner explained:

I meet people in this work that I don't know if I ever would have met if I wasn't involved in the work. I don't even know what they are good for until I know what I need them for, you know what I mean?… Sometimes the conversations aren't in the right time or the right place, but just the fact that you made the connection, you can connect dots at a later point; this opportunity helps us to make connections out in the community…that I don't work with on a day-to-day basis.

Similarly, a researcher noted an example of a connection made with a government partner that led to future IKT work:

They are ecstatic about the potential to move forward, not with respect to this [upcoming] deadline. They don't care about that. What they want to do is potentially map out a well-thought-out project where we can talk about what they want, what they need, all of that, and take our time with it.
These ongoing relationships also engaged funders by helping them to see the value in investing in our data and laying the grounds for future work with partners across sectors.

**Election Cycles Changed Project Partners**

One of the biggest frustrations expressed by the partners was the removal of project partners due to the changing composition of leaders and restructuring departments following elections. This meant reorganization of staff and losing involvement from valuable government partners who could think outside the box, and had a history with or a real passion for the project.

Precious resources were required to orient newcomers to the IKT partnership project, who were also adjusting to their portfolio internally. A civil servant explained:

> We are always starting over and trying to bring somebody up to speed and then engage them.... To do that and move forward at the same time, it's a lot of time spent—so if we want this to move, there's got to be some continuity in who some of the people are.... You need some commitment from somebody that actually...lived through it [and can explain it], and at least lived through a piece to get it pulled together.

Furthermore, newcomers posed a risk to the IKT partnership. Partners from all sectors (community, government, and university) recognized that because latecomers may not have as much investment, they also may not have as much commitment. Partners speculated that this lack of interest could be due in part to fulfilling a commitment made by their predecessor, by having less passion about the topic, and/or by a lack of understanding or agreement with previous choices/decisions made by the partnership.

Partners voiced concern for the ongoing need to legitimize their work. Those with a long-standing history were capable of managing questions and speaking well of the project; however, when newcomers joined, partners expressed feeling “fearful, because...it just takes one comment to stop one person, right? Then you are trying to catch up,” which could result in less interest from stakeholders in the project. On the other hand, long-term partners trusted that partners with a shared history could maintain project momentum.

**Relationships Transformed Partnership Culture**

Relationships helped provide a deeper understanding and appreciation of another's perspective across different professional spheres, instigating a culture shift within the partnership that changed how partners informed and made decisions.

Through involvement with the PRW project, partners from all sectors reported that their work changed in small but significant ways. For instance, government and community partners recognized that one of the biggest things the project did for them was make them realize the importance of research, which led to a realignment of duties and improved funding reports. This culture transformation happened as partners gained respect for each other's expertise or business, which explained, as various ones said, why it takes so much talking, why things don't change fast, and why they hardly ever change the way you thought they should in the beginning.

Conversations that involved critical thought exposed inconsistencies and hidden assumptions underlying the partnership's work. A community partner described how this thinking changed their agency:

> We've seen changes within our own agency that I can directly or indirectly attribute to our involvement with Families First...it's gone from just “you deliver the information, we receive it,” next “order of business” to “what about this?” and “how did this impact?” or “what [are] the next steps?” To me, that's really encouraging.

Partners across sectors recognized that small ripples created by relationships may have an impact that is more important and/or much greater than a policy change would. They recognized, according to one, that they were part of a project “trying to build something in the cracks or between the sectors” (e.g., “a policymaker, a provider, an agency, a funder”) in pursuit of a common goal. Following an election, and subsequently stalled progress, one research partner said:

> They changed the whole structure of the government again. It is hard but I think those relationships are really important even though the people are going to change. I think we've established an expectation that we speak to each other.
Partners regarded relationships as critical as a policy change for two reasons. First, as one said, since more than one policy was needed to address poverty, partners valued partnership or community conversations because this interaction helped “build capacity to make change” through “taking a common approach, [using a] common language,” and “coming together to use… common sources of data.” As another explained:

“It’s not like one policy—we just gotta change this policy for income support and everything will be better. No, it’s about everybody coming to the same table, you just keep working together.

Similarly, a government partner discussed the need for a multi-pronged approach to poverty:

“The [provincial government]…won’t fix it [poverty]. Local government won’t fix it…. Individual families won’t fix it…. Maybe everyone is sort of trying to understand it together and think about how to…start to make steps in the right direction.

Discussion

Our findings described how relationships were critical for sustaining the progress and momentum of a partnership poised to address a social issue within their community. Moreover, the insights about why and how relationships can offset barriers associated with election cycles have implications for the conduct and application of research amidst shifting platforms of stakeholders and ideologies.

Relevance of Findings to Knowledge Translation and Scholarship of Engagement

Our findings respond to Kothari and Wathen’s (2013) broader call to highlight the power and process of IKT. Likewise, our findings build on the scholarship of engagement literature, which shares principles and practices common to IKT (Barker, 2004; Denis & Lomas, 2003). Barriers to partnership work exist across both fields. Researchers studying civic engagement (such as service-learning, for example) have long reported that individuals from communities and universities have different—often competing—reward structures, priorities, and timelines (Bringle, Clayton, & Price, 2009; O’Meara & Jaeger, 2016). Despite these differences, partnership work requires significant investments in time, energy, and funding for seemingly little payout or traditionally defined success (Volchok, 2017). Our findings add to this knowledge by redefining success. That is, our partners explained that while a reduction in the problem being addressed may lead to success in the short term, changing expectations and culture about relationships across sectors and organizations could lead to more long-term and lasting changes.

Furthermore, our findings demonstrate why and how relationships add value to partnership projects. In studying a similar partnership, Bowen and Martens (2005) found that community partners cited their relationships as “the greatest project accomplishment” and necessary for “completion of deliverables or reports” (p. 207). Furthermore, systematic reviews have consistently found that relationships between researchers and policymakers have increased research use (Innvaer, Vist, Trommald, & Oxman, 2002; Lavis, Oxman, Denis, Golden-Biddle, & Ferlie, 2005; Oliver, Innvar, Lorenc, Woodman, & Thomas, 2014). Why? Partners in our study posit that the knowledge and information garnered through the cultivation of relationships, characterized by mutual trust and shared knowledge, allowed partners to move more strategically when windows of opportunities arose.

Last, our findings also support literature on teamwork in a service engagement context. John Gastil (1992) has long theorized that small groups can create ripple effects for social change and civic engagement. The complex mechanisms of these ripples, however, are still being unpacked in his prolific work (Gastil & Xenos, 2010; Gastil, Knobloch, & Kelly, 2012). However, we know that frequent communication is one element that is necessary for high performance in successful teams (Barrick, Bradley, Kristof-Brown, & Colbert, 2007). Interestingly, partners in our study reported tremendous value in informal communication but cited time as a barrier to sustaining their work. One interpretation of our findings may be that time per say is not a barrier; rather, the re-orientation of new partners to the project over a long period of time disrupted their work and shared culture. This interpretation holds unique implications for higher education and service-learning.
Recommendations for Individuals and Organizations

Our findings elucidate the challenge of developing and maintaining a sustainable program of research amidst shifting platforms of stakeholders and ideologies. Nevertheless, they underscore the importance of continuity in the planning and implementation of long-term partnership projects. We present three key take-away messages for readers who practice community engagement:

1. Invest in long-term relationships. Perhaps the most obvious takeaway from our research findings is to recognize how long-term relationships can be leveraged. More specifically, our partners explained how they moved nimbly to accomplish goals through the use of informal interactions (e.g. having “meetings after the meeting”) and mutual availability (e.g. if partners “yell loud enough”). Partners agreed these characteristics (i.e. availability and informality) were supported by a shared history. On the contrary, partners emphasized that the loss of involvement from long-term partners challenged the momentum of their work and we suspect, the group dynamic as a whole. The impact of the lost involvement from key partners leads to our second takeaway point.

2. Continue to connect. We recommend that those working in partnership projects make a concerted effort to maintain existing relationships during times of transition or uncertainty. Our partners who worked with and within government cited that government leaders often had unclear and shifting priorities, which outpaced their analysis and had the potential to render their work less relevant and useful. This threat was neutralized when partners gathered together and used their collective wisdom to generate interim results that would maintain interest among funders and knowledge users of their work. As such, we recommend partners engage in ongoing conversations and meetings throughout shifts at broader organizational and/or political levels.

3. Success is subtle. The majority of researchers well know that traditional metrics of success do not provide a full picture of the reach or impact of their work. As our partners have explained, long-term relationships can create tremendous value through maintaining momentum and circumventing challenges. Therefore, it is important to advocate for faculty and institutional support to cultivate these valuable relationships. Researchers working in collaboration with others can further document and publish the nuanced benefits created through relationships. Furthermore, individuals who sit on recruitment and evaluation committees could consider how to support the involvement of candidates and/or employees in their community. This redefinition of “success” can create an important culture shift and, more importantly, encourage engagement within local communities.

Areas for Future Work and Strengths/Limitations

The phenomena of relationships within IKT and community-engaged scholarship warrant more attention. Our interview questions were not solely focused on relationships or election cycles. Future studies investigating IKT or other community-based partnerships could (through refined questions) generate more insight about the impact of quality relationships on research use before, during, and after election cycles. For example, researchers could ask more refined questions about how specific characteristics of relationships—such as informality, availability, and history—shaped their work. This questioning could further delineate what Scriven (1999) coined the “black box” of research use in government settings (p. 75). Second, we echo Wiltsey Stirman and colleagues (2012) that more knowledge is needed on other factors that shape sustainability and research use more broadly.

The opportunity to learn from IKT partners, who have extensive experience and a shared history in a large, longitudinal project, is rare. However, we recognize the context and timing of interviews may have influenced our findings. Namely, partners were interviewed in the aftermath of the 2007–2008 global financial crisis, a time of fiscal austerity in Canada (Ruckert & Labonté, 2014). This context may have contributed to partner’s feelings of uncertainty, as well as partners’ precarious and inconsistent availability with external projects. Further research could examine relationships among IKT partners during periods of economic growth and prosperity.

Furthermore, our interviews coincided with intense support for a new political party in Alberta—the Wild Rose Alliance. The party’s ideologically distant (Westlake, 2015) platform on the far right of the political spectrum may have influenced the uncertainty and political forecasts of those interviewed, whose careers and clientele in the health and social services would likely have suffered under a Wild Rose Alliance regime. The political and economic turbulence, however influential, may have also led to greater depth and insight about the impact of election cycles.
Conclusion

This paper highlights the significance that relationships hold for IKT partnerships and community-engaged scholarship. Ironically, partners anticipated that relationships—albeit difficult to measure and rarely the sole marker of a successful IKT project—are a key strategy to ensuring sustainability of the IKT partnership, and can have greater impact than policy change alone. Relationships represent an important investment for partners who continue to work in narrow time frames imposed by election cycles. While our findings do not indicate that relationships are equivalent to success (e.g., reducing poverty or even the impact of poverty on health), they explain how relationships can sustain partnerships and enhance research use in the government sphere. We found relationships made possible through IKT partnerships provide a platform where ongoing dialogue serves to cultivate research use throughout turbulent election cycles. As such, we suggest that relationships within and across organizations should be viewed as an investment, and deliberately nurtured and embraced in plans for IKT, so that partners can continue to make incremental strides toward a shared goal.

References


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Promoting Civic Knowledge and Political Efficacy Among Low-Income Youth Through Applied Political Participation

Yesenia Alvarez Padilla, Mary E. Hylton, and Jennifer Lau Sims

Abstract

Studies indicate growing disparities in youth civic knowledge and political efficacy based on socioeconomic status, parental educational attainment, and race. Most studies of youth political participation focus on the effect political efficacy and civic knowledge have on political participation. Few report on the effect political participation has on political efficacy and civic knowledge. This article describes an intervention that coupled civic literacy workshops with applied political participation to increase the civic knowledge and political efficacy of low-income, ethnically diverse high school students. Over three years, 47 high school students enrolled in Upward Bound participated in a six-hour civic literacy workshop. Upon conclusion of the workshop, students spent a day meeting with legislators and attending legislative hearings. Results indicate increases in political efficacy and significant increases in civic knowledge among the youth after both the workshop and the visits with elected officials.

While both civic knowledge and political efficacy have been shown to positively influence the rates of political participation of youth (Galston 2001; Manganelli, Lucidi, & Alivernini, 2014; Reichert, 2016), it is likely that there is a reciprocal relationship between these variables. Direct political participation enables youth to put their knowledge into practice and gain more confidence in being active in policymaking processes. Specifically, the opportunity to discuss issues of concern and practice skills through political participation may foster gains in political efficacy and civic knowledge, furthering the likelihood of future participation (Beaumont, 2011; Feldman, Pasek, Romer, & Jamieson, 2007; Levy, 2013). Beaumont (2011) suggests that experiences that allow students to practice political skills and participate in political settings are useful means of attaining greater political efficacy and political equality. These experiences can help promote further participation by youth from underrepresented groups as they gain the confidence, skills, and willingness to be politically engaged.

Opportunities to engage youth from underrepresented groups are particularly important given growing disparities in political efficacy and civic knowledge. Low-income youth and youth of color score lower on tests of civic knowledge than do their wealthier, white peers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). The lack of civic knowledge and subsequent decline in political efficacy among these youth may reflect feelings of alienation from political processes. Laurison (2015) argues that inequalities in political participation are related to more than a lack of skills or knowledge. Those youth who are low income may also feel that they are not entitled to be politically engaged or express their political opinions (Laurison, 2015). Therefore, it is essential to engage low-income youth in political experiences that incite the expression of political opinions and concerns. Through these experiences youth may feel more connected to civic processes, be more inclined to express their political opinions, and be politically engaged in the future.

This article describes an intervention that coupled civic literacy workshops with applied political participation to increase the civic knowledge and political efficacy of low-income, racially, and ethnically diverse high school students. The intervention was held in the spring of 2016, 2017, and 2018 with three separate groups of students enrolled in a local Upward Bound program. Evaluation data indicate that the intervention was effective in increasing civic knowledge and somewhat effective in increasing political efficacy among the youth.

Literature Review

Political Participation

Civic engagement describes a wide range of actions that are taken individually or collectively to affect the circumstances of community members (Ekmal & Amnå, 2012). These actions can involve participation in voluntary associations, community groups, making donations, and discussing politics
Political participation is typically seen as a form of civic engagement, where individuals and groups seek to effect political decision-making (Ekman & Amnå, 2012). They also distinguish between latent and manifest forms of political participation. Whereas manifest forms are observable and intended to directly influence political institutions, latent forms are indirect and may serve to influence politics in the future.

Manifest forms of participation include practices that are directly aimed at influencing decision-making bodies. These activities may include: voting, contacting public officials, working with political parties, or buying certain products or basing lifestyle decisions on political beliefs (Ekman & Amnå, 2012). Manifest forms can also occur outside of political institutions (e.g., protests or demonstrations). By contrast, latent forms of participation can be as simple as following social or political issues. While most high school students are not old enough to vote, and therefore, cannot participate in electoral forms of participation, they can participate in most of the other manifest and latent forms of participation. For example, youth can testify before policymaking bodies, lobby, and attend and organize rallies, protests, and issue forums.

Unfortunately, there are significant disparities in political participation. Those who are more educated and at a higher socioeconomic position are more likely to be politically engaged than those who are in lower socioeconomic positions, less educated, or racial minorities (Syvertsen, Wray-Lake, Flanagan, Osgood, & Briddell, 2011; Gaby, 2016). This inequality in political engagement is persistent across time (Gaby, 2016). Members of higher socioeconomic groups may have access to more resources, like community organizations, and opportunities to engage in political activities (Manganelli et al., 2014; Gaby, 2016). Lessened political participation by youth from disadvantaged groups can serve to perpetuate inequalities as political institutions are not held accountable for the concerns of these youth (Jörke, 2016). Therefore, it is essential to engage youth from underrepresented backgrounds.

Civic Knowledge

Civic knowledge includes the skills and information needed to participate in a democratic society. A report by the National Center for Education Statistics (2011) found that 64% of high school seniors had at least a basic level of achievement in civics, while only 24% of 12th graders were at or above a proficient level of civic knowledge. There are also differences based on socioeconomic status and race, where those who are eligible for reduced-lunch or are a part of a minority group, score lower than their wealthier, white peers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).

In order to promote the participation of youth, it is important that they have the civic knowledge needed to be able to effectively participate in their communities (Cambell, Gould, Jamieson, Levine, McConnell, McKinney-Browning, & Smith, 2011). Galston (2001) illustrates the benefits of fostering the civic knowledge of youth. He argues that civic knowledge allows youth to gain an understanding of their personal or group interests and an understanding of how public policies can affect those interests. In addition, civic knowledge promotes trust in institutions and public officials, with a better understanding of political events (Galston, 2001).

The development of civic knowledge may also have a greater impact on those who are the least represented in government, including minorities and those that are low-income (Cambell et al., 2011). Furthermore, increased levels of civic knowledge have been found to promote political participation (Chaffee & Cohen, 2012; Galston, 2001; Cambell et al., 2011).

Civics courses and civic education programs have been used as a means of fostering civic knowledge in youth. Most high school students take a course in civics before graduating (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). In addition, there are service-learning programs, which combine regular class instruction with community service, and involve interactions with political institutions (Feldman et al., 2007). These types of programs have been found to promote the civic knowledge and political efficacy of youth where students are able to learn to access political information and discuss political issues that are relevant to them and their communities (Feldman et al., 2007). Service-learning programs that foster civic knowledge and political efficacy have been found to promote political participation up to a year after students completed the program (Pasek, Feldman, Romar, & Jamieson, 2008).

In general, activities that focus on political and civic issues that are relevant to youth and provide avenues for action are more likely to foster political participation (Kahne & Sporte, 2008; Feldman et al., 2007; Pasek et al., 2008).
Political Efficacy

Bandura, as cited in Levy (2013), defines self-efficacy as one's own judgment of their ability to perform tasks. Political efficacy is a type of self-efficacy involving the extent to which individuals feel they can participate effectively and influence political affairs or decisions. (Finkel, 1985; Levy, 2013). Political efficacy has been found to promote political participation (Feldman et al., 2007; Finkel, 1985; Pasek et al., 2008; Reichert, 2016). Experiences that increase political efficacy can help mediate political participation inequalities (Beaumont, 2011).

The perceived purpose of political participation results in two different forms of political efficacy, internal and external. According to Finkel (1985), the view that political participation should be beneficial to individuals and their development is related to theories of participatory democracy. From this perspective, Finkel describes internal political efficacy as the extent to which the individual believes he or she has the skills or knowledge to participate politically.

External political efficacy is based on the presumptions of mobilization of support theorists, who argue the purpose of political participation as legitimizing the government and fostering trust toward authorities (Finkel, 1985). In this case, the purpose of political participation is to maintain support for political institutions. It is the extent to which individuals feel their needs or desires are being met by the government, and the responsiveness of authority (Finkel, 1985). Thus, internal political efficacy is the perceived ability the individual has in acting to participate politically, while external efficacy involves the feeling that the same individual's actions will make an impact and elicit a response from political institutions (Finkel, 1985).

The Impact of Political Participation

There is substantial support for the importance civic knowledge and political efficacy have on the likelihood of youth participating politically (Finkel, 1985; Galston, 2001; Manganelli et al., 2014; Reichert, 2016). Youth who have more civic knowledge and feel they can make a difference are more likely to report the intent to be civically engaged, despite their socio-economic background (Manganelli et al., 2014). Reichert (2016) suggests that political efficacy has a greater effect in translating civic knowledge into the intention to participate.
Political participation is a means of fostering the skills, trust, and knowledge that can increase the political efficacy of youth, which then may result in sustained political participation.

**Case Study**

Founded in response to a reported continual decline in the political engagement of young adults, the Civic Literacy Project provides targeted workshops on policymaking processes and advocacy strategies followed by a coordinated day of applied political participation. This project targets youth who are racially and ethnically diverse, and who are from low-income families. The goal of the Civic Literacy Project is to increase the civic literacy and political efficacy of those groups who have historically been underrepresented within political processes. The project is headed by a university faculty member who works with first-generation college students to deliver the workshops and arrange/supervise the legislative visits. These college students volunteer for the project and are able to earn hours toward their required internships. The college interns are trained by the faculty member and, as a result, acquire skills in community and political engagement. To reach the desired participant population, the Civic Literacy Project partnered with a local Upward Bound program.

Upward Bound is a federally funded, intensive college preparatory program designed to provide first-generation, income-qualified high school students with free college preparatory services and support to develop the skills and knowledge essential for successful admission, persistence, and completion of postsecondary education. The local Upward Bound program serves approximately 246 students attending eight high schools. This program emphasizes the engagement of their students in personal and professional development activities, including university diversity dialogues, service-learning opportunities, internships and civic engagement opportunities. Coming from first-generation, low-income backgrounds, Upward Bound families are often consumed by attempting to meet basic human needs; making it difficult to emphasize U.S. history, governmental functioning, and political issues. The Upward Bound-Civic Literacy Project partnership addresses this limitation by providing a space for students to learn about governmental processes and their own potential for advocacy within the context of issues of relevance to the students.

The college interns worked with Upward Bound staff to develop recruitment fliers and to recruit students to participate in the Civic Literacy Project. Through these recruitment efforts, Upward Bound students were invited to participate in a six-hour civic literacy workshop as well as a subsequent day of legislative engagement at either the state or federal level. Upward Bound provided support for their students to attend the workshops and legislative activities, including transportation, snacks, lunch, and parent permission forms. The Civic Literacy Project delivered the content of the workshops and helped in the coordination of the state-level legislative activities. Upward Bound coordinated the legislative events at the federal level, which included with the students’ congressional delegation during trips to Washington, DC.

Workshops and legislative advocacy days were held once during the spring semester of 2016, 2017, and 2018. The 2016 and 2018 workshops focused on the federal legislative process, while the 2017 workshops and advocacy focused on the state legislature. Although the level of policymaking differed, the structure and basic information provided during the training were consistent across years, and were facilitated by the university faculty member and college interns. Workshops began with an in-depth overview of the legislative process, from bill drafting through committee hearings to floor votes. Students then discussed the various points during the legislative process in which citizens can exert influence as well as the methods for influencing policymaking, such as testifying, face-to-face visits, letter-writing campaigns, phone calls, and emails.

Students were trained on how to concisely tell their stories in ways that persuade others to consider their policy positions. Students were instructed that concise, targeted stories ending with an explicit ask could serve as the basis of a testimony during a legislative hearing, the foundation of a face-to-face visit, or could be adapted as a letter to a policymaker. During this training, students used a structured worksheet to develop stories based on their personal history or something that they have observed firsthand. After completing the worksheets, students took turns reading their stories in pairs, receiving feedback from both their immediate peer partner as well as the college interns.

The workshops ended with a presentation by the college interns about the legislators with whom the students would be meeting during
their legislative advocacy day. The purpose of this presentation was to remove the mystery that often surrounds elected officials. This presentation included biographical information such as where a legislator grew up, their family background, educational background, and previous occupations or political positions held. Additionally, information regarding the legislator’s legislative history and current leadership roles was provided. This information included: committee memberships, committee chair positions, leadership roles, and current relevant bill sponsorship.

After the workshops, the Upward Bound students had the opportunity to participate in a day-long legislative event. During 2016 and 2018, the students traveled to Washington, DC to join Upward Bound students from across the country. During the meetings with their U.S. senators and congressional representatives, the students used the stories they developed during the workshops to educate their Congress people on the role of TRiO programs (originally three, now eight U.S. federally funded programs designed to increase access to higher education for economically disadvantaged students) in the lives of first-generation college students.

Given prohibitions on lobbying, the Upward Bound students focused on educating their legislators during these visits rather than asking for support for a specific policy position. During the spring of 2017, the Upward Bound students traveled to the state capitol, where they met with former Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval and many of the legislators representing their respective districts. The trip to the state legislature was coordinated by the Civic Literacy faculty member and college interns. These students focused on school safety.

The students shared their stories of school violence with legislators and were able to discuss their experiences as prospective first-generation college students with the state’s governor.

Methods

This study utilized a pre-post survey design that included 16 quantitative questions and four open-ended questions. Three groups of Upward Bound high school students, a total of 47 students, participated in civic literacy workshops and political participation events during three separate academic years. These students completed pretests immediately before the start of the civic literacy workshop, and posttests immediately upon completion of the workshop. They also completed a posttest upon completion of the visits with elected officials. Altogether, 120 surveys were collected among the three groups of students, including 44 pretests, 47 posttests completed immediately following the training (posttest 1), and 29 posttests completed after the political participation opportunities (posttest 2). It should be noted that the 2016 group of students was not asked to complete the second posttest. The study was reviewed and approved by the University of Nevada Reno Institutional Review Board.

The pretests and posttests contained six questions on political efficacy and 10 civic knowledge questions. These questions were designed to elicit feedback about the effectiveness of the civic literacy program promoting civic knowledge and political efficacy. The political efficacy questions were derived from questions used in the American National Election Survey (Niemi, Craig, & Mattei, 1991). Participants indicated their level of agreement with these six political efficacy statements using a five-point scale. The civic knowledge questions were based on questions used in the civics portion of the National Assessment of Educational Progress taken by middle school and high school students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). In addition, the authors created three questions to test the students’ ability to identify local public officials and representatives. Finally, posttests asked the youth to respond to four open-ended questions regarding their experiences and resulting confidence in participating politically. These questions provided the youth an opportunity to share a wide range of information pertaining to their prior preparation for and experiences in the project. The first and second open-ended questions asked students what their high schools had done to help them learn about their government as well as what more they would like to know. The last two questions asked specifically about what they learned through participating in the event. No identifying information was collected from participants.

Survey responses were entered into SPSS for analysis. Frequencies, including descriptive statistics, were run on pretest and posttest data. In addition, Friedman’s ANOVA tests were run to analyze the differences in civic knowledge and political efficacy between pretests and both posttests. Due to the ordinal level of the data, the nonparametric Friedmann’s ANOVA was used to address the presence of three repeated measures (pre, post, and second post). Due to the differences in response rates between pretests and the two
posttests, a subset of 29 responses from those who completed all three tests was used in calculating the Friedman's ANOVA. Summative content analysis was used to analyze the four open-ended questions. As demonstrated in Hsieh & Shannon (2005), open-ended responses were analyzed through identifying the frequency of specific terms that were then examined to determine themes.

Results

Altogether, there were more females (72%) than males (28%). Responses regarding racial and ethnic identity were open-ended. Students primarily identified as Hispanic or Latino (64%), white (15%), Pacific Islander (6%), Asian (3%), Filipino (3%), and biracial (3%). Six percent of the sample did not identify with a specific group, identifying as human. Students were predominantly between the ages of 16 (31%) and 17 (47%). The remaining students were 14 (2%), 15 (7%), and 18 (13%). Most of the students had taken one government related class (41%), while 29% had taken two or more classes and 30% had not taken any. Given that Upward Bound students are recruited as aspiring first-generation college students, approximately 90% of students had parents who had not obtained a college degree.

The students evidenced substantial increases in civic knowledge scores following the workshops and political participation. Prior to the workshops, students scored on average 4.6 out of 10 on the measure of civic knowledge. Relatedly, only 8% of students scored the equivalent of a “B” (8) or higher on the pretests, while 61% scored a “D” (6) or lower. After the workshops, students scored an average of 7.9 out of 10, with 66% scoring the equivalent of a “B” or higher. Similarly, students scored even higher on the posttest following their day of political participation. The average score on the civic knowledge measure after the political participation event was 9.4. Ninety-two percent of students scored the equivalent of a “B” (8) or higher after engaging in legislative advocacy, with none of these students scoring lower than 7 out of 10.

A Friedman's ANOVA revealed that differences in civic knowledge scores between pretests and both posttests were significant ($X^2(2) = 20.84, p = .000$). Post hoc analysis with Wilcoxon signed-ranks tests was conducted with a Bonferroni correction applied, resulting in a significance level set at $p < .017$. There were significant differences between the pretest and the posttest given immediately following the training ($Z = -5.28, p = .000$) and between the pretest and the posttest given following the day of political participation ($Z = -3.06, p = .002$). In addition, the difference between scores on the posttest given after the training and the posttest given after the day of political participation was significant ($Z = -2.56, p = .010$).

Students also evidenced increases in political efficacy on five of the six items (see Table 1). The students evidenced steady increases in disagreement with three of the political efficacy measures: “People like me don’t have any say about what government does.” “Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can’t understand what is going on.” And, “If public officials are not interested in hearing what people think, there is really no way to make them listen.” Disagreement with these statements is indicative of political efficacy. Similarly, on statements in which agreement indicated political efficacy, the youth reported increasing agreement after the training and their political participation. These items include: “In a democracy like ours, the people have the final say about how the country is run, no matter who is in office.” And, “There are many legal ways for citizens to influence what the government does.” It should be noted that on the latter item, students reported higher agreement at the first posttest and then during the second posttest. Similarly, on the item “I don’t think public officials care much about [what] people like me think,” participants evidenced increased disagreement between pretest and the first posttest. However, the level of disagreement dropped between the first and second posttests for this item, ending at only 2.3% higher than the ratings from the pretest.

A Friedman’s ANOVA found that the differences in agreement between pretests and posttests on the following items were not significant: elected officials care ($X^2(2) = 3.21, p = .200$); people have a say in what government does ($X^2(2) = 2.71, p = .258$); government and politics seem too complicated ($X^2(2) = 2.67, p = .263$); and people have the final say within a democracy ($X^2(2) = .3.97, p = .137$). The differences in agreement reported on pretests and posttests on the item indicating a belief that there are legal ways to influence government was significant ($X^2(2) = 6.02, p = .049$) as was the difference in agreement on the item that asked whether or not students believed public officials could be made to listen the public ($X^2(2) = 6.37, p = .041$).
Once again, post hoc analysis with Wilcoxon signed-ranks tests was conducted with a Bonferroni correction applied, resulting in a significance level set at \( p < .017 \). On the item that asked agreement about legal means to influence government, only the difference between the pretest and the posttest given immediately following the training was significant (\( Z = -2.92, p = .003 \)). There was no significant difference between pretests and the posttest given following the political participation (\( Z = -2.00, p = .45 \)) or between the first and second posttests (\( Z = -.198, p = .843 \)). On the item that asked students agreement that public officials could be made to listen, the Wilcoxon signed-ranks tests revealed no significant differences between the pretest and the first posttest (\( Z = -1.69, p = .091 \)), between the pretest and the second posttest (\( Z = -2.13, p = .033 \)), or between the first and second posttests (\( Z = -.221, p = .825 \)).

Posttests were also analyzed to determine whether there were any differences in scores across the three years of project implementation. A Friedman’s ANOVA found no statistical difference in civic knowledge scores across the three years (\( \chi^2(2) = 2.039, p = .361 \)). Similarly, Friedman’s ANOVAs found no significant differences on all but one of the political efficacy items. When comparing scores on political efficacy for the posttest taken after the workshop, we found a statistically significant difference (\( \chi^2(2) = 6.138, p = .042 \)) on the item that states “If public officials are not interested in hearing what the people think, there is really no way to make them listen.” On this item, a Wilcoxon signed-ranks found a significant
difference between the 2016 and 2018 scores \( Z = -1.259, p = .011 \). While the means for all three years evidenced that the youth disagreed with this statement, the level of the disagreement fell in 2018.

Due to the ordinal level of the data as well as the lack of second posttests from the 2016 cohort, Wilcoxon signed-ranks tests were run on the political efficacy measures for the posttests taken after the legislative visits in 2017 and 2018. These tests revealed only one significant difference between years. Specifically, students in the 2018 cohort were significantly more likely to disagree with the statement “I don’t think public officials care much what people like me think” than were those in the 2017 cohort \( Z = -3.108, p = .002 \).

**Open-ended Responses**

Students were asked what their high school did to help them learn about their government and legislative processes; many students did not answer the question or said their schools did little. Some mentioned learning about politics in their classes. A few students mentioned learning about state representatives and bills currently in debate. When asked what they wished they knew about Congress, policy, or government, these students mentioned an overall desire to know anything and everything about the government, particularly how the government functions. A couple of students mentioned an interest in learning about how to become involved in politics.

When asked about what they learned these same students described insights they gained about public officials. They noted that public officials are like normal people and that the officials listened to what students had to say. Students noted different ways to influence political decision-making and realized that their contributions matter. Students learned that they can make a difference in their community. One student wrote, “What I have to say, or even think matters to my assemblypersons, senators, and governor. My voice is important to my community.”

When asked what the most rewarding aspect of their day was, many students enjoyed meeting with public officials, as demonstrated by one student, “I learned that you can make a difference in... different ways. The assembly people are really nice and they do listen to what we say.” Another student enjoyed “getting to meet our local politicians and seeing them as people rather than people in suits.” Many students specifically enjoyed meeting with the governor. Some students enjoyed sitting in on a committee hearing and seeing their colleagues testify in favor of a school safety bill. In addition, students mentioned feeling more confident and encouraged to participate politically.

**Discussion**

This study examined the effect of applied political participation on the civic knowledge and political efficacy of three ethnically diverse cohorts of high school students enrolled in a local Upward Bound program. Similar to findings of previous studies (NCES, 2011), students in this study evidenced low levels of civic knowledge prior to involvement in the civic intervention. However, students evidenced substantial gains in civic knowledge after the workshops and after their engagement in applied political participation. As stated previously, the civic literacy workshops emphasized pragmatic understanding of legislative processes as well as legislative leaders. Theses emphases were tailored to fit the target for change for the subsequent political participation. The pragmatic and applied nature of the workshop content may be more relevant to youth than are the abstract principles often emphasized in one-semester government courses. Specifically, focusing on abstract principles of government and democracy can result in a perspective that largely ignores the historical and current institutional oppression inherent to government and experienced by youth of color. By contrast, sharing information about legislative processes and roles as a means of helping people learn how to influence change results in civic knowledge that can be useful in challenging these systems of oppression.

In addition to the pragmatic and applied workshops, results from this study indicate that engagement with policymakers and legislative processes increase students’ civic understanding/knowledge. The applied nature of political participation may result in greater interest in civic knowledge among youth. Based on these results, it is recommended that programs that seek to increase civic knowledge incorporate opportunities for youth to engage with policymakers around topics of interest to the youth. It is also recommended that potential targets for political participation also include local government, particularly city and county policymaking bodies.

Levels of agreement on all but two of the political efficacy items illustrate steadily increasing efficacy. However, these increases were only significant for two of the items. There are several
possible explanations for the lack of significant increases in political efficacy. First, the youth started at high levels of political efficacy as is reflected by the pretest ratings, leaving less room for growth. These high initial ratings might reflect idealism unique to this sample of Upward Bound students. Specifically, all of the youth selected to join the Upward Bound program are high achieving. Furthermore, through its emphasis on supportive services, Upward Bound might increase the overall efficacy of participants, resulting in students who feel efficacious in many differing arenas.

A second explanation is that the political participation opportunities within this intervention may only effect certain aspects of political efficacy. As noted by Beaumont (2011), socio-political learning processes, experiences in a politically active community, focus on political skills for action, political discourse, and pluralistic contexts can serve to lessen the impact background has on gains in political efficacy. To significantly effect certain areas of political efficacy, students would need to participate in different types of activities. The results of this study suggest that significant changes in political efficacy occurred in some items rather than others based on the types of activities the students engaged in. To have a broader impact on the political efficacy of students it may be necessary to expose them to different political activities.

While still reporting increases between pretest and posttests, on two items participants evidenced decreases in political efficacy between the first and second posttests. On these items, students evidenced sharp increases in efficacy after completing the workshops, but then less efficacy after the political participation opportunities. The decrease between first and second posttests might reflect the optimism conveyed during the training juxtaposed with the reality of visiting legislators. Despite these decreases, participants still reported higher efficacy on these two items upon the conclusion of their political participation than they did prior to participation.

Analysis of open-ended responses suggests that students were receptive to the political participation experiences. The responses by the students suggest that meeting public officials was particularly effective, as well as participating in a committee hearing. Students also demonstrated an interest in learning about the functions and processes of government. The varied grade levels of students were demonstrated by the differences in exposure the students had of government lessons in their classes. These findings provide support for the importance of using political participation experiences to increase students’ political efficacy and likelihood of being politically active in the future.

While few differences in scores on the posttest were noted across years, the two items that did have significant differences warrant further examination. The decrease in disagreement between the 2016 and 2018 cohorts on whether or not people can make elected officials listen may indicate a growing frustration with current electoral processes. The workshops for both of these cohorts focused on the federal legislative processes. However, the 2016 cohort completed their workshop and advocacy prior to the outcome of the 2016 presidential election, while the 2018 cohort witnessed the heightened polarization of that election. Unfortunately, whether or not this difference persisted after legislative advocacy could not be evaluated due to a lack of second posttests for the 2016 cohort. In contrast, the difference in scores on the item related to “whether or not public officials care…” between the 2017 and 2018 cohorts may reflect differences in the level of focus. The 2017 cohort focused on state legislative processes, whereas the 2018 cohort focused on Congressional processes. The experiences advocating in these contexts look substantially different. For example, Congressional delegates have full staffs dedicated to constituent services, whereas the state legislature at which the students advocated have limited staff. This finding illuminates a need for further study on the differential effects advocating at federal, state, or local levels may have on political efficacy.

There are various factors that limit the implications of the study. The sample size consisted of a total of 47 students, making the results ungeneralizable to the general population. Future efforts to examine the effects of political participation on civic knowledge should involve larger groups of youth, including youth who may be less academically inclined than are those students who participate in Upward Bound. In addition, the cross-sectional design of this study limits the ability to examine the long-term effects of this civic intervention. Therefore, it is unknown how the workshops and political participation experiences will affect future rates of civic literacy, political efficacy, or political participation. To address this limitation, future studies could employ longitudinal measures to examine the effects of political participation on the long-term
political efficacy and civic literacy of low-income, ethnically diverse youth. Finally, the inability to track individual student responses across pretests and posttests resulted in a missed opportunity to better understand student growth and development evident in the open-ended responses on the posttests. A matched pair design as well as a more in-depth qualitative component to the study would allow future research to understand what it is about applied political participation that leads to change among participants.

Conclusion

Traditional civic programs emphasize abstract thinking and understanding of U.S. history, governmental functioning and constitutional issues, but not application. Students are expected to remember and debate constitutional or historical issues from a modernist perspective, as though there is a right and wrong way to “know” government. Given these pedagogical trends, it is no wonder that those students whose life experiences have been heavily influenced by oppression evidence lower rates of civic knowledge and political efficacy. This study supports the use of applied political participation as an effective strategy for increasing civic knowledge and political efficacy with low-income, ethnically diverse high school students. In preparing for and subsequently engaging in legislative advocacy, these youth increased their understanding of government as well as their belief that they can effectively influence it. These increases in knowledge and efficacy are important steps in ensuring that youth from historically disenfranchised or oppressed groups have the tools needed to effectively challenge oppressive social and economic structures.

References


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Introduction
A majority of youth in foster care aspire to attend college (Courtney, Terao, & Bost, 2004; McMillen, Auslander, Elze, White, & Thompson, 2003). Research shows that 84% of 17–18-year-old foster youth want to go to college (Research Highlights on Education and Foster Care, 2014). Unfortunately, many will face challenges that impede their educational pursuits. When attempting to transition to college, many of these youth face daunting obstacles, including navigating the college application process, a lack of preparation for independent living, a lack of supportive adults, insufficient financial resources, and inadequate emotional support to cope with the academic demands and social stresses related to college life (Batsche, Hart, Ort, Armstrong, Strozier, & Hummer, 2014; Day, Dworsky, & Feng, 2013; Gillum, Lindsay, Murray, & Wells, 2016). Without proper preparation and connections to services and resources, their transition to college tends to be unsuccessful. Policies and programs that support college completion are necessary to understanding factors that assist foster youth when they enroll in college (Okpych & Courtney, 2017). With increasing attention being devoted to college access for foster youth, engaged universities, through pre-college programming, are working to reduce disparities in access to higher education (Edwards, 2010; Jackson, Colvin, & Bullock, 2019).

Pre-college programs serve as a highly visible form of public engagement with the community (Kellogg Commission, 1999). Though the term “pre-college” is applied in many ways, the term here refers to campus-based college access programs (Edwards, 2010). Pre-college programs can be found at postsecondary institutions across the country and offer opportunities for students to prepare academically and socially for higher education, as well as expose students to campus living and learning experiences to increase their independence and self-confidence (Edwards, 2010; Jackson, et al., 2019). Without coordinated investment and central organizational structure and support, pre-college programs may not yield their greatest impacts of enrolling students from underserved populations and improving retention rates of underserved students, as well as increasing college completion rates for this group (Edwards, 2010). For these reasons, creating collaborations between community-based organizations and universities can be a powerful strategy to achieving a vision that is impossible when such entities work alone (Gajda, 2004).

Collaboration is predicated on establishing strategic alliances between local service organizations and communities (in this instance the university community) to increase access to resources (Bailey & McNalley-Koney, 1996). Through partnerships, the collaborative comes together to develop a plan for the direction of program creation and to enhance service delivery (Bailey & McNalley-Koney, 1996). As such, interorganizational collaborations can be used to increase participation and representation from many groups (university faculty, social service personnel, community-based organizations, community leaders and stakeholders, etc.) that would otherwise be excluded (Cnaan Sinha, & McGrew, 2004).

Abstract
Developing programs to assist youth who are transitioning from foster care to college is key to their success. Although the number of campus programs that serve youth from foster care has grown over the past 10 years, the number of pre-college programs has not grown at the same pace. Universities are in a unique position to create pre-college programs to serve youth from foster care. Building strong community collaborative partnerships can assist pre-college programs in developing program components to address the needs of youth transitioning from foster care into college. Using an interorganizational community-based collaborative framework, this article will discuss key components to building a successful collaborative. The National Social Work Enrichment Program will be highlighted as an example of the pre-college program model.
The literature is sparse regarding programs that address the establishment of interorganizational community-based collaboratives to develop pre-college programs for foster youth. The Child Abuse and Neglect User Manual Series (2010) (retrieved from https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/umsugg/) recognized that comprehensive community partnerships could be a useful approach to addressing the diverse needs of youth in foster care. The purpose of this paper is to begin to fill that gap in the literature by providing a conceptual examination of the National Social Work Enrichment Program (NSEP), created as a collaborative with a diverse group of community partners: the Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR), social service agencies (Boys & Girls Club, YMCA, Focus on Senior Citizens, The Arc of Tuscaloosa County, Caring Days Adult Daycare, Friendship Baptist Church, Temporary Emergency Services, Community Services of West Alabama, and Five Horizons Health Services), Toastmasters International, Tuscaloosa County Health Department, and The University of Alabama, which provides a six-week on-campus summer camp experience for foster youth. Before discussing NSEP in more detail, the next section will discuss the key components to building a successful collaborative through an interorganizational community-based collaborative framework.

Approaches for Pre-College Program Capacity Building

Several theories exist that explain the development of collaborations within social service-oriented alliances (Reitan, 1998); however, Bailey and McNalley-Koney’s (2000) framework of interorganizational community-based collaboratives offers distinguishing features. The framework emphasizes the human and organizational components such as leadership, membership, and environmental linkages needed to implement interorganizational efforts. The interorganizational community-based collaborative framework also considers the necessary system components such as evaluation, decision-making, resources, and policies (Bailey & McNalley-Koney, 2000). Accordingly, there are external and internal factors that can impact the outcomes of interorganizational collaborations.

In their framework of interorganizational collaboration, Bailey and McNalley-Koney (2000) focus on partnership building among organizations and individuals who unite to work collectively through common strategies toward a shared goal. Strong community collaboratives are key to the success of pre-college programs designed to serve youth transitioning from foster care. Pre-college programs must collaborate with organizations that are equally committed to the college success of this population. The interorganizational collaboration is accomplished through integrating eight core components: leadership, membership, environmental linkages, structure, strategy, purpose, tasks, and systems. Using these components, the framework emphasizes an understanding of key processes inherent to the development of collaboration (Bailey, 1992).

Leadership

As the first core component of the leadership collaborative framework, leadership includes the individuals and/or organizations that formally or informally guide and direct the activities of the collaborative. Furthermore, Northouse (2010) asserts that leadership is a method in which an individual influences a group to achieve common goals. Bailey and McNalley-Koney (2000) report that leadership may consist of one or both of the following: a) the organizational leader(s), or the convening organization(s); and b) the individual leader(s) or the entrepreneur(s). Leadership establishes direction by creating a vision and developing strategies to accomplish long-term goals; aligns people by communicating goals and ensuring their commitment to the mission; and motivates and inspires people by meeting their needs and appealing to their values and emotions so that they remain energized and move toward the mission (Kotter, 1990). The director of the pre-college program should serve as the leader of the collaborative partnership. Therefore, the director has the primary responsibility of building the pre-college program. As an effective leader, the director should be both assertive (guiding and directing) and responsive, articulating the larger vision of the alliance while constantly being aware of its smaller elements and how all the elements relate to the whole (Bailey & McNalley-Koney, 1996).

Membership

Within the Bailey and McNalley-Koney (2000) collaboration framework, membership is identified as the second core component. Membership consists of the remaining participants not included in the leadership, who commit to work with united leaders to accomplish goals.
The membership of an organizational unit actually comprises multiple affiliations (i.e., members participating on behalf of any agency and members representing themselves and/or their communities) (Bailey & McNalley-Koney, 1996). These leaders, members, and community groups represent the primary stakeholders of the collaborative (Bailey & McNalley-Koney, 2000). Stakeholders are those individuals and community groups who have a vested interest in the success of the collaborative and possess varying resources pertinent to the collaboration (Shemer & Schmid, 2007). Almog-Bar and Schmid (2018) note that it is important to assess the options, motivation, and commitment of the stakeholders to establish a community partnership. The pre-college program director should identify the initial members of the collaborative. In the case of pre-college programs for foster youth, a representative from an agency that serves youth transitioning from foster care would be an important member. A university representative would also be a key member of the collaborative. The director should also consider the membership needed to support the delivery of the program curriculum. For example, if developing leadership skills were a program component, the director would want to see if there is a local Toastmasters International chapter that would be interested in being a member of the collaborative to assist with leadership training and development. Other members may also include a foster parent and a former foster youth who has graduated from college. Members from the university such as a dean of student affairs, housing director, and financial aid director should also be a part of the collaborative partnership.

Environmental Linkages

Leaders and members should solicit the assistance of environmental linkages, the third core component. Within this framework, Bailey and McNalley-Koney (2000) describe environmental linkages as the relationships between the leaders of a collaborative and members of other external organizations and individuals. Laverack (2006) explains that environmental linkages relate to the connection of a community to other communities or resources. Environmental linkages often contain the history of the community and its needs. As such, they can often be used to identify external environmental forces that support or oppose the development of strategic alliances. The organizations and individuals involved in these linkages are not formal members; instead, they provide support for its efforts by donating meeting space, providing funding, or referring consumers (Bailey & McNalley-Koney, 2000). For these reasons, the environmental linkages may be critical to the collaborative’s existence. Environmental linkages for pre-college programs should include child welfare agencies that serve youth transitioning from foster care. The state and/or county child welfare agency could not only refer youth to the program but may also provide funding for a pre-college program. At the university level, a dean and/or program director in a school of social work may also be an important environmental link for the program. The social work program may be willing to donate classroom space for meetings. The social work program may also assist the pre-college program director in leveraging other resources (e.g., faculty and staff speakers, access to campus facilities, and transportation) on the college campus, including students to serve as mentors or program assistants.

Structures

As stakeholders are identified, the collaborative alliance should develop a specific structure and strategies for achieving the collaborative’s purpose. Within the collaborative framework, structure refers to the way in which people and tasks are organized within the collaborative to achieve its purpose (Bailey & McNalley-Koney, 2000). A formal collaborative structure allows for meaningful engagement of partners, but formats vary based on the issues being addressed (Jolin, Schmitz, & Seldon, 2019). These include how committees are arranged, the way decisions are made, the extent to which policies and procedures are formally defined, and the manner in which functions and services are assigned. Without a structure to manage the scope of work, collaboratives cannot identify what strategies and tasks positively contribute to goal attainment. Successful collaborations are able to develop a strategic plan with a shared mission statement, shared goals, defined responsibilities, and a detailed action plan (Capacity Building Center for States, n.d., retrieved from https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/about-states/).

Pre-college programs must identify the best structure to support the work required to serve youth. Committees could be formed that address areas that impact the population most often. For example, youth transitioning from foster care may
have challenges identifying housing for scheduled university breaks. A committee could be formed within the collaborative to address this specific challenge.

**Strategy**

Within Bailey and McNalley-Koney’s (2000) model, strategy refers to the means through which the collaborative seeks to achieve its purpose. Strategy includes the extent to which leadership and members agree on ideology, articulate activities and programs, and perform collaboratively. Clarke and Fuller (2010) define collaborative strategy as the joint determination of the vision and long-term collaborative goals for addressing a given social problem, along with the adoption of both organizational and collective courses of action and the allocation of resources to carry out these courses of action. The fundamental strategy is to collaborate, or work together, to increase the impact of services and products provided (Bailey & McNalley-Koney, 2000). Therefore, the strategy should embody the shared values, purpose, and goals of the stakeholders. When serving youth who are transitioning from foster care to college, stakeholders must be committed to providing programs and activities that provide youth with the knowledge, skills, resources, and support to successfully transition.

**Purpose**

Purpose is the sixth core component of the interorganizational collaboration framework. Bailey and McNalley-Koney (2000) argue that the purpose of the collaborative is whatever the alliance seeks to jointly achieve (e.g., allocate resources, provide services, or suggest policies). The purpose can also be described in the collaborative’s mission and overall goal, with an emphasis on end result. Who the participants are, what they do, and how they all come together to do it are three different components in articulating the mission and goals of the collaborative. In essence, the purpose of the collaborative unit is to serve as the ground on which the unit is built, and embody the shared values that bond the collaborative together. Therefore, the purpose provides the foundation for the development of collaborative components as well as synthesis of its various components. A collaborative formed to provide a pre-college program for youth transitioning from foster care has a mission and overall goal of successful high school graduation and college enrollment for the youth. All program activities should focus on this outcome for program participants.

**Tasks**

Bailey and McNalley-Koney (2000) suggest that neither the purpose nor the strategy of a collaborative can be achieved without first identifying the tasks appropriate to fulfilling the objectives. Accordingly, tasks are the specific activities that collectively enable the collaborative to operationalize its strategy and accomplish its purpose. The outcomes of the tasks are the basis for achievement of the larger goals of the alliance. The collaborative body is ultimately responsible for the oversight of tasks in pursuit of the shared goals. Examples of tasks that may be considered by a pre-college collaborative include recruitment strategies for program participants, ways to market the program, development of a curriculum, and a research and evaluation plan.

**Systems**

The final core component of the collaborative framework is the systems. Systems are the operating ties that hold the collaborative structure together. Within the collaborative, systems include the established mechanisms for budgeting and resource allocation, inter- and intra-collaborative information flow, decision-making, communication, planning, administration, human resource management, and evaluation (Bailey & McNalley-Koney, 2000). According to Funderburk, Damron-Rodriguez, and Simmons (2006), systems proved critical to effective program operations: a master work plan with monthly and yearly timeframes; a unified calendar to coordinate activities; and member (individual and organizational) rosters. Systems also aide in ensuring information flow, such as lines and methods of communication designed to target appropriate contacts and streamline communications. Communication methods can include in-person committee meetings, individual phone contacts and meetings, and email contacts regarding meetings and notices (Funderburk, Damron-Rodriguez, & Simmons, 2006). Streamlining communication with members helps prevent information overload, while retaining member focus on specific roles and tasks (Funderburk, Damron-Rodriguez, & Simmons, 2006). For example, pre-college programs have to determine how information is shared among partners. Creation of a website and email are foundational tools that can be used. The program may choose to contract with
an outside program evaluator while creating internal systems to manage budgets and human resources.

Model in Action

NSEP is one example of a pre-college program that has existed for 10 years in the state of Alabama. NSEP has relied on strong collaborative partnerships as a key to the success of the program. It serves foster youth who are upcoming high school juniors and seniors and recent high school graduates. Youth are referred to the program via self-referral and referrals from social workers. The NSEP staff also recruits prospective youth through social media (primarily Facebook), attendance at county independent living program (ILP) meetings, and the monthly regional ILP meetings. Youth interested in attending NSEP must complete a two-page application and submit a brief essay that discusses personal goals, including college goals and how participation in NSEP would help reach those goals. Final approval for program participation is given by a state DHR ILP coordinator. Youth are chosen based upon completion of the required documentation (application and essay), a recommendation from the social worker, and no major behavioral concerns as determined by a review from DHR. Youth and social workers are notified by email immediately following DHR approval. A welcome letter is sent, along with a list of items needed while staying on campus.

Although the program has operated at multiple sites (Alabama State University, Alabama A&M University, and The University of Alabama), it is now held solely on the campus of The University of Alabama. This shift is due to funding constraints and more fully developed collaborative partnerships between The University of Alabama and community partners. During the six-week campus experience, youth live in a residence hall, eat in university dining facilities, use on-campus recreational facilities, and attend various workshops in the School of Social Work classrooms. Additionally, social work students at both the bachelor’s and master’s level are hired to serve as program assistants and mentors. As program assistants, these students live in the residence halls along with the youth and provide ongoing supervision of youth throughout the duration of the program. Program assistants lead exercises such as icebreakers and team-building exercises. They also lead workshops on topics such as the transition from high school to college.

Program assistants serve as a link between the program, youth, and agency partners.

Community partners work together with NSEP staff to deliver the core program components of NSEP: college readiness skill development, employment skill development, leadership skill development, and healthy relationship skill development.

College Readiness Skill Development

College readiness describes the complex, interconnected set of skills, traits, habits, and knowledge that students need in order to go to college and be successful (Arnold, Lu, & Armstrong, 2012). On-campus partners are key to the development of college readiness skills for youth in NSEP. The campus partnership begins with the Office of Academic Affairs, which approves youth applications as visiting campus scholars. This designation allows youth to obtain campus identification cards. These campus identification cards give youth access to campus facilities and other amenities such as laundry facilities in the residence halls or printing in the computer labs. A consistent location for all program class time is an important next step. NSEP partners with The University of Alabama School of Social Work for classroom space to host college readiness workshops. The college readiness component includes speakers from several offices on campus that conduct presentations on various college readiness topics. For example, admissions and recruitment staff share keys to completing the college application successfully. Financial aid officers discuss the Free Application for Federal Student Aid and applying for scholarships. A representative from the housing office shares the process for obtaining housing and the benefits of living on campus. An academic advisor meets with the youth to discuss the importance of connecting with academic advising and its impact on college success. The registrar defines this role and why students need to know about the office. The Center for Academic Success presents tips on how to be successful in college, including study skills, note-taking skills, test-taking skills, and time management. The Office of Disability Services shares resources for students on the college campus and the support that is available. The police department discusses campus safety. The Student Affairs office reviews the importance of students connecting to campus organizations during their freshman year. The University Recreation Department shares information about health and
wellness and the connection to success as a college student. Students who are a part of the campus support program for foster youth conduct a panel presentation. They share their personal foster care stories and also share tips to be successful in college. NSEP program staff also lead workshops on topics such as the transition from high school to college, living with a college roommate, and tips on conquering freshman fears.

Visits to college campuses throughout the state are an integral part of the college readiness component of the program. Each Thursday during the six weeks, youth are transported in vans to tour college campuses around the state of Alabama. Youth visit four-year colleges and universities, as well as community and technical colleges. The entire group visits at least 15 college campuses during the program. The college tour experience focuses on public institutions because the state recently launched a scholarship called Fostering Hope (Alabama Fostering Hope Scholarship (n.d.), which covers tuition and fees for eligible youth enrolled full-time in a post-secondary certificate or undergraduate degree program at a public institution. Eligible youth may attend any of the state's 42 public community and technical colleges, four-year colleges, or universities. However, private colleges and universities are not part of this program.

**Employment Skill Development**

Employment skill development entails an activity-based approach that helps youth learn about employer expectations, work environment dynamics, and the required skills for workplace success (Klein, 2018). NSEP partners with local social service agencies to provide employment skill development opportunities for each youth. Agency partners (such as Boys & Girls Club, the YMCA, Temporary Emergency Services, etc.) were selected because most have a volunteer component to their services. These agencies also employ professional social workers or staff with social service backgrounds who can serve as supervisors for the youth. While developing basic employment skills, youth also learn about areas of social work practice.

Youth work three days per week, Monday through Wednesday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. The workday ends at 2 p.m. so that youth are able to attend afternoon classes. NSEP drivers transport youth to and from work sites. Youth receive a weekly monetary stipend of $150 for successfully completing work assignments. Work assignments vary at each site but may include clerical work, assisting with activities with agency clients, assessing inventory, conducting home visits with workers, and assisting with community events.

In addition to job training at local agencies, youth develop résumés and learn the basics of completing applications for employment. Youth also attend workshops led by NSEP staff on key soft skills needed to be successful in the workplace. At the end of each workday, youth return to the classroom to debrief about their day. They discuss highlights from the day, including what they enjoyed most, what challenges were experienced, and what lessons were learned. Youth also identify areas where growth and understanding are needed.

**Leadership Skill Development**

Leadership skill development refers to engaging in activities that promote youths' ability to guide peers on a course of action and shape their opinion and behavior, along with cultivating youths' ability to examine their own strengths and weaknesses and set and carry out personal and vocational goals (National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, 2013). Leadership skill development is the third primary program component of NSEP, which collaborates with Toastmasters International's Tuscaloosa Club #858 to offer its Youth Leadership Program. Toastmasters International's mission is to "empower individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders" (retrieved from https://www.toastmasters.org/about/our-mission). The Youth Leadership Program is a workshop consisting of eight one- to two-hour sessions that enable youth under the age of 18 to develop communication and leadership skills through practical experience. NSEP youth meet with volunteers from Tuscaloosa's local Toastmasters chapter one evening per week during the first four weeks and two evenings per week during the fifth and sixth week. Youth operate in leadership roles, using the Toastmasters meeting model. They learn to evaluate their own speaking ability; prepare and give speeches; give impromptu talks; control their voice, vocabulary, and gestures; and give constructive feedback. During the last meeting of Toastmasters, youth compete in a speech contest and the winner delivers their speech at the NSEP closing luncheon celebration.

Leadership skills are also developed as youth participate in a weekly community service project. Youth collaborate with program staff to identify
projects of interest based upon community needs. In the past those projects have included partnering with a local nursing home and playing bingo with residents, organizing a Habitat for Humanity store, developing care packages of toiletries for the families of children who are hospitalized unexpectedly at a local hospital, organizing a local food pantry, and serving food at a local homeless shelter.

**Healthy Relationship Skill Development**

Healthy relationship skill development focuses on building and supplementing key interpersonal skills such as communication and conflict resolution as youth learn to make choices regarding sexual behavior. Healthy relationship skill development also includes helping youth form and maintain healthy family, peer, and network relationships (Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, 2018).

NSEP partners with the Tuscaloosa County Health Department to deliver the fourth component of the program: healthy relationship skill development. The Tuscaloosa Health Department receives state grant funds to deliver an evidence-based curriculum called Making Proud Choices. The curriculum provides youth with the knowledge, confidence, and skills necessary to reduce their risk of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), HIV, and pregnancy by abstaining from sex or using condoms if they choose to have sex. The program has four major elements. The first element focuses on goals, dreams, and adolescent sexuality. The second is knowledge, covering information about the etiology, transmission, and prevention of HIV, other STDs, and teenage pregnancy. The third focuses on beliefs and attitudes. The fourth focuses on skills and self-efficacy, covering negotiation refusal skills and condom use skills and providing time for practice, reinforcement, and support. The role of sexual responsibility and accountability is stressed, and the curriculum teaches youth to make responsible decisions regarding their sexual behavior, to respect themselves and others, and the importance of developing a positive image. Youth discuss what constitutes sexual responsibility, such as condom use, and learn to make responsible decisions regarding their sexual behavior (Resource Center for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention, 2018). Trainers meet with youth once each week, usually Friday mornings from 9 a.m. to noon to deliver the curriculum.

**Benefits of Collaborative Partnerships**

There are a number of benefits of collaborative partnerships. The Nutcache website, “Benefits of Collaboration Between Organizations and Teams” (n.d.) highlights five benefits: synergy, sharing resources, overcoming obstacles, increased community awareness, and access to constituents and funding. The sum of the whole is bigger than the sum of each part expresses the basic meaning of synergy (Covey, 1989). Working together collaboratively can result in greater accomplishments as compared to each organization working on its own separately. Organizations committed to partnering with a pre-college program that serves foster youth are able to rely on the strength of each organization to develop a program that addresses multiple areas and needs. The second benefit of collaborative partnerships is sharing resources. As funding is being cut at every level for social service programs overall, it is critical that organizations partner to share resources. For example, NSEP wanted to address the relationship challenges experienced by foster youth, so a partnership was formed with the Tuscaloosa Health Department. NSEP has youth and the Tuscaloosa Health Department has funding and trained staff to deliver content. Forming a collaborative partnership benefits both organizations and ultimately benefits youth.

The third benefit of collaborative partnerships is overcoming obstacles. When pre-college programs face obstacles to serving foster youth, another partnering organization may be able to step in to assist. For example, NSEP youth needed basic toiletry items and other supplies during the program, so NSEP reached out to a partnering agency, Temporary Emergency Services, to donate those items to each youth instead of having to use funds that were earmarked for other needs. Increased community awareness is a fourth benefit of collaborative partnerships. Each collaborative partner has relationships in the community and will share information regarding the efforts of the partnership. This increased community awareness could lead to additional partners and potentially additional funding for the program. The final benefit addressed is access to constituents and funding. This benefit is key to the sustainability of a pre-college program. For example, NSEP’s partnership with Alabama DHR has provided a sustained source of funding to implement the program each year. The partnership with Alabama DHR also provides access to eligible youth each year.
Challenges in Building Collaboratives

Due to the complexity of interorganizational collaborations, challenges will emerge as partnerships are established and developed over time. Braganza (2016) argues that due to a lack of scholarship that focuses on the challenges and tensions within collaborative relationships, members of interorganizational collaborations are often not adequately equipped to foster, strategize, or prioritize these relationships. Challenges related to interorganizational collaboration may include imbalanced power, impeding cultures, poor communication, resistance to change, complex technical and logistical processes, and limited relationship maintenance (Follman, Cseh, & Brudney, 2016). While evidence suggests that partnerships are an effective way for organizations to address complex social problems, there is often inadequate funding available to support partnerships (Riggs, Block, Warr, & Gibbs, 2014).

In a study that examines the activities, organizational characteristics, and relationships among cross-sector partnerships, senior officials across the government, nonprofit, and business sectors report that their organizations faced power struggles related to funding allocation and ownership of projects along with competing views on work procedures (Almog-Bar & Schmid, 2018). Correspondingly, Adams (2019) identifies the unequal power distribution embedded in collaborative community-academic partnerships (CAPs). Because academicians tend to have greater access to funding, time, and resources and possess greater expertise than community stakeholders on specific topics, power differentials exist within these collaboratives. Additionally, there are often conflicting goals and interest in CAPs. Begun, Berger, Otto-Salaj, and Rose (2010) suggest that academicians engage in CAPs to advance their research agendas and to increase opportunities for promotion and tenure, while community stakeholders join CAPs to improve outcomes and policies centered around health, social factors, and employment for community members.

Braganza (2016) found that dedicating time, managing conflict and competition, overcoming biases, and establishing roles, responsibilities, and goals were the major challenges interorganizational collaboratives encounter. Interorganizational collaboratives cannot be successful if there is a lack of intentional investment in time for cultivating partnerships, building values, and establishing lines of communication. Furthermore, if little to no protocols are in place to address inevitable conflicts, collaborative efforts can be hindered.

Collaboration is often needed to address complex issues; however, this may entail building interorganizational collaboratives with competing organizations. Because members of interorganizational collaboratives often compete for the same funding, hidden agendas may be present, which can impede on the development of positive relationships among organizations. Preconceived ideas and prior knowledge about other organizations within the collaborative, along with different views about social issues, can also interfere with relationship building. Additionally, lack of clarity on the roles and responsibilities and the inability to establish clear goals can create a limited commitment among members within the interorganizational collaborative (Braganza, 2016).

As a pre-college program, NSEP has managed potential CAPs challenges successfully. The skilled leadership and experience of the NSEP program director has made a key difference. The program director wears the hat of both an academician and practitioner. The program coordinator also has extensive experience in university settings (admissions and recruitment, student affairs, etc.) as well as social service practice experience with community agencies. These skills allow NSEP to successfully navigate the university community and agency community to ensure the needs of both groups are met while also ensuring that youth transitioning from foster care have a successful pre-college experience.

Implications for Community Collaborative Partnerships

While there are disadvantages and advantages to developing collaborative partnerships, evidence shows that partnerships are an effective way for groups working together to address pre-college service delivery (America's Promise—The Alliance for Youth, 2004; Rogge & Rocha, 2004; Brooks, Wertheimer, Beck, & Wolk, 2004; Leiderman, Furco, Zapf, & Goss, 2002). College institutions have the potential to improve the collaborative partnership (Edwards, 2010; Rogge & Rocha, 2004). The university partner can not only provide staff and faculty with various expertise to deliver program components, but may also have faculty with skills to develop measures and collect data to evaluate the effectiveness of the collaborative, including its successes and areas needing improvement. These measures could aid the
pre-college program in improving its functioning and contribute to the collaborative’s sustainability. Given that scholars have identified partnerships between stakeholders as a key mechanism to bridging the gap to improving service delivery, the science of collaborative partnerships becomes increasingly important for sustainability of the effort (Chambers & Arzin, 2013; Viswanathan, Ammerman, Eng, Garlehner, Lohr, Griffith, Rhodes, Samuel-Hodge, Maty, Lux, Webb, Sutton, Swinson, Jackman, & Whitener, 2004). The NSEP collaborative partnership illustrates that, when developed well, partnerships can be fruitful and have the potential to change the way pre-college services are offered to marginalized youth desiring to attend college.

Conclusion

Pre-college programs designed to serve youth transitioning from foster care is one strategy that can be used to improve college access for this target population (Kirk & Day, 2011). With the multiple challenges experienced by foster youth, pre-college programs should consider building strong community collaboratives to strengthen the program. Bailey and McNalley-Koney (1996, 2000) offer a collaboration framework that can serve as a guide for building effective pre-college programs. Although community collaborative partnerships present many challenges, the benefits of these partnerships are positive results for youth in the form of additional resources, relationships, and support. Community collaborative partners who come together to fulfill a shared vision of supporting youth as they transition from foster care to college can develop a pre-college program that prepares youth for college success. These pre-college collaborative partnerships could ultimately improve the post-secondary educational outcomes of youth from foster care.

References


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Introduction

Community-Based Participatory Research for Undergraduates

The Association of American Colleges and Universities identifies undergraduate engagement in research and service-learning/community-based learning as two of 11 high-impact practices that promote student retention and engagement (Kuh & O’Donnell, 2013). One way to bridge these two high-impact practices is through course-based community-based participatory research (CBPR), a partnership approach to research that calls for the engagement of community and academic partners in all aspects of the research process with the goal of achieving social change (Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 1998). Service-learning is an experience-based approach to learning where students work on projects in service to communities (Mason & Dunens, 2019). When integrated with service-learning, CBPR focuses on collaboration around research involving higher level research skills and incorporates civic engagement and social justice components (Martinez, Perea, Ursillo, Pirie, Ndulue, Oliveira, & Gutel, 2012; Nyden, 2003). In contrast to traditional research in which research may simply take place within a community, CBPR takes place with communities and engages community members, integrally, in the determination of research agendas and the conduct of the research itself (Israel et al., 1998; Minkler & Hancock, 2003). While there are examples of undergraduate student engagement in both research (Greenawald, 2010; Jansen, Jadack, Ayoola, Doornbos, Dunn, Moch, Moore, & Wegner, 2015) and in service-learning (Anderson, Royster, Bailey, & Reed, 2011; Cashman & Seifer, 2008), and examples of courses where students receive training in the principles of CBPR, there are fewer examples of courses that offer training in research fundamentals that also apply these concepts in the field through direct engagement with surrounding communities (Deale, 2017; Martinez et al., 2012; Paul, 2006). The CBPR literature is largely focused on research collaborations of trained academics.
and community partners (Israel, Krieger, Vlahov, Ciske, Foley, Fortin, Guzman, Lichtenstein, McGaraghan, Palermo, & Tang, 2006; Levine, Becker, Bone, Stillman, Tuggle, Prentice, Carter, & Filippeli, 1992; Nyden, 2003; Schurman, 1996) and in some cases on graduate student engagement in this type of work (Trush, 2011; Upadhyaya, May, & Highfield, 2015); however, there is limited evidence of undergraduate engagement in CBPR.

Undergraduate student participation in CBPR can be beneficial for both students and their community partners. Engagement in this type of research can help students learn and apply appropriate research methods and can promote the acquisition of skills in communication and partnership development (Martinez et al., 2012). CBPR also empowers students to engage with local community members to create change (Weinberg, Trott, & McMeeking, 2018). In the same way that CBPR can promote the development of faculty research networks (Nyden, 2003), so too can CBPR develop early career students’ professional and community networks. Furthermore, CBPR has the potential to provide community partners with access to research tools such as data analysis software and peer-reviewed literature databases, and ultimately promote research agendas that address community interests (Caldwell, Reyes, Rowe, Weinert, & Israel, 2015).

Though CBPR offers a number of benefits, some potential barriers exist that are unique to the undergraduate context (Allison, Khan, Reese, Dobias, & Struna, 2015). Students in the process of being trained in research themselves often lack the contextual knowledge and professional experience instrumental to working with communities, and thus may not be well-positioned to be effective research partners. They may also lack the cultural humility to understand their own identities or positionalities and how they surface in interactions with community members (Paul, 2006), which can challenge partnerships. Furthermore, undergraduate students do not always come to an academic setting with pre-existing community relationships to serve as a basis for partnership, though this is suggested as a critical strategy for engaging in CBPR (Minkler & Hancock, 2003). Students commonly take new courses every semester and are encouraged to participate in career exploration through short-term internships and opportunities, which may hinder the development of sustainable community partnerships (Fontaine, 2007; Martinez et al., 2012). These many challenges can affect a key principal of CBPR: the promotion of collaborative and equitable partnerships. Considering these challenges, it is important to explore effective and innovative strategies, such as course-based opportunities that promote undergraduate student engagement in CBPR by supporting partnership initiation.

Overview of a CBPR Course

We describe a classroom-based CBPR initiative: Medford and Tufts Community Health (MATCH) that took place in the academic year 2015–2016. The goal of MATCH is to promote the engagement of undergraduate students in a CBPR community-campus research experience. The MATCH initiative is implemented through the course Community Health Theory and Practice, a year-long seminar course in CBPR led by a Tufts Department of Community Health faculty member with expertise in CBPR. The Department of Community Health offers students opportunities to study health from a multidisciplinary perspective; moreover, students are trained to consider the social determinants of health and to critically evaluate the systemic issues that affect individuals, communities, and populations. The Department of Community Health is located within the School of Arts and Sciences at Tufts University, a small, private, liberal arts college in New England. Tufts has an undergraduate student body of around 5,500 students. The surrounding city of Medford, Massachusetts was founded in 1630 and established in 1892 (City of Medford, 2019). Medford has a population of 57,765 residents. The community is 73.1% white (not Hispanic or Latino), 8.7% black, 9.7% Asian, 5.3% Hispanic or Latino, 0.1% American Indian, and Alaskan Native, and 3.2% multi-racial, with a 21.6% immigrant population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). The median household income is $86,204. The largest industries in Medford include health care and social assistance; educational services; and professional, scientific, and technical services (Data USA: Medford, MA, n.d.).

Overview of the Course Model

To put the lessons learned presented in this paper in context, we first provide information on our course model. Students in this course form an academic team and the intention is for them to work together on a research project with community collaborators. The combination of the academic team and the community collaborators is referred to as the “MATCH team.” In 2015–2016,
the academic team consisted of 13 undergraduate students majoring in Community Health (five sophomores, two juniors, and six seniors). Each week, the academic team met for 50 minutes during the fall 2015 semester and 75 minutes during the spring 2016 semester. Students rotated facilitation and note-taking roles for each class. During class sessions, the students and instructor checked in about research progress. The class was intentionally designed such that participating students were expected to spend a significant amount of time outside of the classroom in Medford to understand the community landscape, speak to partners across sectors, and collaborate on project initiatives. Students also received training in qualitative research methods, data analysis, and research ethics and were required to complete human subjects training to prepare them for participation in research.

Course Goals

Though the learning objectives of the course entailed student-community collaboration on a community-driven research project, the instructor was new to the community in 2015 and did not have existing partnerships in the Medford community. Thus, she tailored the course goals for this cohort of students to focus explicitly on partnership development. Given the complexity of this task, a significant portion of the first semester was spent developing partnerships. The instructor also incorporated a second goal, a research component, in the form of a community needs assessment. The research component was largely accomplished in the second semester. The research project was implemented with the support and consistent input of the two community partner authors, and the findings were of interest to and shared with other partners in the City of Medford. These efforts to develop partnerships created a strong foundation for community-initiated projects in all subsequent years for this course with new cohorts of students.

The research involved semi-structured qualitative interviews with staff from Medford-based organizations and was intended to help students gain a better understanding of community context and perceived health needs of the Medford community. The course's research component entailed data collection and a thematic analysis of interviews with 28 community residents and members of various community organization sectors, including 13 city government groups, 8 education, 11 non-profit, 3 health care, and 2 faith-based organizations. All research activities were approved by the Tufts Institutional Review Board. Through this research, the students identified community concerns about mental health and substance use, housing prices, the need to improve walkability and bikeability of the city, gentrification, and a need to promote a sense of community in an increasingly diverse city.

While we intend to share the findings from the actual research project in greater depth in a subsequent paper, the present paper focuses specifically on student learning, student engagement, and overall reflections on the initiation of community partnerships. Thus, we do not explicitly discuss student reflections on the research conducted with community partners. The intended audience of this paper not only includes academics in higher education, but also educators at other levels, such as middle schools, secondary schools, graduate schools, and post-graduate continuing education programs.

Partnership Initiation Process

The partnership initiation process, which is the focus of this paper, was complex and presented a unique learning opportunity for students. Acknowledging that it was important to not replicate existing work that was likely taking place in the community already, the instructor encouraged the students to first initiate contact with partners internal to the university who had connections to the Medford community. Thus, one of the first meetings was with the Medford-Tufts community relations officer, a co-author on this paper, who was uniquely positioned to provide historical and organizational context regarding the Tufts and Medford relationship. She served as a valuable bridge to the community given her dual role as a Tufts employee and a Medford community member. This partner introduced the academic team to the second key community partner who had a leadership role in the City of Medford.

Ultimately, these two partners remained most closely connected to MATCH’s work and served as advisors and mentors throughout the partnership development and research process. They also connected the academic team to a wider group of partners in Medford as a result of their involvement in Medford Health Matters, a local coalition of residents, community organization representatives, human and social service providers, and government officials who aim to foster an environment of wellness and healthy
lifestyles for all of Medford. Connecting with the two partners initially provided the students with an entry point into the Medford Health Matters meetings, which the academic team began to attend monthly. Through these meetings, the academic team was able to design the research project based on community needs and gained a deeper understanding of Medford’s organizational landscape and how these organizations operated within the community. These community organizations included more than 60 stakeholders in education, faith-based organizations, historical societies, and the arts.

**Methods**

Given the lack of literature specifically on partnership initiation in the context of applied CBPR courses for undergraduates, we undertook a multi-step process at the end of the course to identify lessons learned and key steps forward, related to partnership initiation, for future cohorts of students. First, the course instructor and two student members of the academic team met in person and via phone every 3–4 weeks for 1–1.5 hours to reflect on the partnership building experience and to generate a list of preliminary lessons learned. After this initial list was developed, one student member and the course instructor met individually with each of the two community partner authors to conduct hour-long unstructured interviews regarding their perspectives on partnership initiation and undergraduate student engagement in CBPR. The conversation included questions about challenges to academic/community partnerships, aspects of the course that worked well, and recommendations for future students interested in CBPR. Notes from these two meetings were transcribed and shared with the other student members of the research team. This content from the community partner interviews was then synthesized and integrated to develop the final list of four key lessons for CBPR partnership initiation among undergraduate students.

**Theoretical Underpinning**

This course emphasizes both CBPR principles and the application of these principles through intensive experiential learning. According to the Association for Experiential Education, experiential education is “a teaching philosophy that informs many methodologies in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people’s capacity to contribute to their communities” (Association for Experiential Education, n.d., para 1). While academic departments of public and community health provide students with rigorous content and methods training to ultimately improve the health of populations and communities, a survey of employers conducted by the Association of American Colleges and Universities and Hart Research Associates (Kuh & O’Donnell, 2013) found that less than one-third of employers believed college graduates had sufficient preparedness in communication and analytical skills. Taking part in experiential learning opportunities through CBPR can enable students to develop these skills and teach students how to initiate long-term collaborations.

**Lessons Learned**

**Lesson 1: Provide students with opportunities to reflect on personal privilege and practice humility.**

Although students enter undergraduate education privileged or marginalized in different ways, as undergraduates, they share common privileges associated with attending a higher education institution that is important to continually recognize and reflect upon. These privileges include access to resources such as research methods courses, faculty who can scaffold learning experiences, access to journals and databases, institutional review boards, meeting workspaces, and technology such as data analysis programs. In addition, undergraduate students are privileged to engage in academic exploration and experimentation via short-term learning experiences, an opportunity distinct to the undergraduate student experience. Students are not expected to demonstrate the same professional expertise as faculty or graduate students, or the same level of professional accountability as community partners. Their mistakes are more easily forgiven, and perhaps even expected and assumed to be a hallmark of personal growth and learning.

In the cohort of students who participated in the CBPR course, many students recognized that they were representatives of the university, but they first and foremost saw themselves as “learners.” For students who are working to initiate CBPR partnerships, their identities as learners provides the flexibility of not being tethered to a predefined research grant or existing collaboration. These
privileges should be acknowledged by the students and attended to explicitly before students engage in CBPR partnerships through classroom discussions and in-depth reflections.

We have found that instructors should provide explicit opportunities for students to acknowledge their privileges and practice humility. In the CBPR course, students were encouraged to continually reflect on their privileges through discussions within the academic team. These discussions were designed to help students consider and acknowledge where power is perceived to sit in partnerships in order to ensure that the academic voice was not overrepresented in the research process to the detriment and disadvantage of community partners. These discussions included an emphasis on the value community members bring to research partnerships. Students were given an opportunity to practice humility when they attended community meetings and were encouraged to learn how to listen and communicate respectfully, often taking a back seat in these community conversations. Finally, students were continually reminded about the importance of carefully navigating relationships in the community and the potential consequences of poor relationships on future cohorts of students. Though their involvement in the course and partnership was time-limited, they were well-aware that the repercussions of their involvement extended beyond their enrollment. Ultimately, these discussions and opportunities to reflect were fruitful and well-received by students, enabling students to foster more effective partnerships within the community.

To address the fact that students were privileged to engage in a short-term learning experience, several features of the course attempted to mitigate disruptions in partnerships caused by different groups of students cycling through the course each year. First, the course required a full-year commitment from students, and the same professor taught the course year-to-year. This structure allowed for continuity of relationships and transfer of historical knowledge. Second, the instructor was mindful about staying in contact with community partners when the class was not in session. Third, all the final reports and presentations developed by the student team were shared with the next group of students. Finally, the course instructor would informally debrief with the community partners after each year to ensure that each new cohort of students engaged in a learning experience that was informed by the experience in the prior year.

Lesson 2. Individuals with dual roles can provide the historical context of university/community relationships and facilitate partnership initiation.

In CBPR, community members play a central role in guiding the goals and implementation of a project and can provide important perspectives on the community’s historical context; however, it is also important to first gain understanding of the history and nature of the academic institution’s engagement in the community. In an effort to facilitate partnership building and understand the history and context of community/university relations, the academic team reached out to a member of the Tufts Community Relations Department, also a co-author on this paper, who served in dual roles as Director of Community Relations within the university and as a board member of Medford Health Matters, a community coalition. Ultimately, through continued engagement with students in the course, this person became the academic team’s entry point into the community and a “community champion” of the students and their work. She provided critical insights into both the university operations and relevant cultural norms and political considerations within Medford that the academic team used to orient themselves in the community.

This community champion also facilitated connections for partnership development. At an early community meeting attended by the academic team, she chose to leave her seat around a conference table where Medford Health Matters board members sat and very intentionally walked over to sit with the academic team. This gesture indicated her support of the students and provided them with more credibility in the community meeting. The team maintained a relationship with this champion throughout the course of the project through regular email and in-person communication about project progress. Ultimately, this partner introduced the academic team to their second community partner author, a leader in the city of Medford, who provided additional key introductions to other community members.

Lesson 3: Undergraduate students should assess their individual and collective research skills and communicate these skills to community partners in efforts to initiate partnerships.

Undergraduate students who are early in their career may struggle to identify skills that may be relevant for CBPR projects or lack confidence in these skills. Given that the academic team was comprised of second-, third-, and fourth-year students,
students were asked to identify individual and collective strengths in terms of preparedness for research collaborations at the beginning of the course. To do this, the academic team conducted an initial assessment of strengths, skills, and content areas of expertise relevant to research through individual reflection and group discussion and also identified areas for skill development, such as qualitative data analysis. These discussions allowed students to reflect on what they could learn from one another. Furthermore, these discussions enabled the students to better understand what they might offer to community partners through research collaborations.

It is not enough, however, to internally assess team skills. Partnerships with student teams have the potential to add to the capacity of community partners, who often have long lists of tasks to accomplish, limited time, and limited funding. However, student teams also need to communicate their skills to community partners, so partners can best envision how to collaborate. In order to facilitate this, the academic team began to regularly attend Medford Health Matters meetings. They introduced themselves at one of the early meetings and provided a brief overview of the course. These meetings provided students with an opportunity to learn about the community and make partners aware of the existence of this course and their availability as a resource to community organizations. Attending these meetings yielded some interest in collaboration; for example, a partner also presenting at Medford Health Matters requested that the academic team develop a small health communication tool to be distributed in the community, recognizing that a student on our team had experience with health communication messaging. This small project represented the first acknowledgment of the fact that the academic team had something to offer to the community. Furthermore, taking this project on demonstrated the academic team’s willingness to collaborate on both small and bigger research projects.

Lesson 4. Relationships within academic teams must be consciously and carefully fostered.

Relationships between community and academic partners are central to CBPR; however, relationships within academic teams are equally critical for the success of CBPR projects. Undergraduates often come to college and are met with opportunities to assist professors in somewhat limited aspects of faculty research. While these opportunities can strengthen research skills, there are further benefits to authentically engaging undergraduates in all aspects of the research process (Jansen et al., 2015). We learned that it is critical to invest time and energy into teaching undergraduates to collaborate effectively. This task involves providing them with opportunities to develop relationships with each other, build trust, and practice collaboration with community partners.

In the CBPR course, the academic team used several strategies to promote relationship development. There were many opportunities for students to share meals, which provided them with spaces for informal conversation and peer engagement at a more personal level. For example, each classroom meeting included a breakfast provided by the instructor, and the team also shared meals in the community. The instructor set up many opportunities for students to work together on research tasks (e.g., development of instruments, data collection, traveling to and from community meetings). This work often involved pairs and small groups, allowing students with different participation and learning preferences to have an opportunity to contribute in varying ways. In addition, students rotated weekly class facilitation responsibilities, giving them an opportunity to both lead and follow. This task enabled students to feel more accountable.
to each other. As the semester progressed, the initial nervousness students felt in contributing their thoughts during the research process was diminished and each member of the team was more comfortable sharing ideas or expressing discomfort in a group setting. These strategies ultimately promoted group cohesion. (See Figure 1 for a summary of lessons learned.)

**Limitations**

Several limitations related to these reflections should be noted. First, this paper reflects lessons learned related to CBPR partnership initiation elicited from a small group of undergraduate students at a small, private, liberal arts college. Thus, the findings may not be generalizable to other populations of undergraduate students in different universities and settings. Second, the course model represents a year-long course with the same group of students. Most undergraduate courses are one semester long, and thus the experiences of students in this course may be atypical of other similar course-based CBPR partnerships.

**Conclusions and Future Directions**

Despite these limitations, the lessons shared in this paper are vital for instructors and undergraduate student researchers to consider as they initiate CBPR partnerships with communities. Conducting CBPR as an undergraduate student comes with unique benefits as well as challenges that are distinct from those experienced by more senior researchers. Undergraduates carry particular privileges as students at higher education institutions. Explicitly attending to these privileges early on in the process of partnership initiation is critical. In addition, learning more about the history of the relationship between their institution and the community is important and can be facilitated through partnerships with internal “champions,” particularly those who serve in a dual role in the community. Furthermore, student researchers must first assess their own strengths and skills so that they can effectively communicate them to the community partners. Finally, instructors should recognize the importance of building relationships both between student and community partners as well as within student research teams. CBPR courses provide undergraduate students with the unique opportunity to learn in a format that can be valuable to both students and community partners. These courses can strengthen students’ core understanding of community-engaged research approaches as well as expand their experiences working within various communities. Despite the potential impact of this experience on undergraduate students’ education, CBPR classes are extremely rare. The key lessons we highlight here are essential for universities interested in fostering community partnerships because they shed light on the importance of authentically engaging communities in respectful and useful ways.

The lessons learned may facilitate the sustainability of academic/community partnerships and further aid new and innovative approaches to CBPR that include undergraduate involvement. This course’s partnerships provided the basis for future work on CBPR courses taught at the undergraduate level. As mentioned, we are currently developing a manuscript focused on student learning outcomes for five cohorts of students who have completed this course in the past five years, paving the way for future cohorts of students to develop community collaborations.

![Figure 1](image-url)
References


About the Authors

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A Community-Based Participatory Research
Project Involving Latino Families of Deaf and
Hard-of-hearing Children

Tanya L. Flores

Abstract
The community-based participatory research project described in this paper was designed to help Spanish-speaking families of deaf and hard-of-hearing children gain access to necessary health, education, and local resource information. The project was motivated by the need to improve communication between medical and education resource centers with Spanish-speaking families. This paper reports on the specific methods and implementation of the partnership approach, the development of the project, and lessons learned for future projects of this type.

Introduction
In Utah, the population of deaf Latino children is growing and these children tend to stay in special programs longer than their non-Latino deaf peers. One of the main reasons is the longer delay period between the time of initial diagnosis and the time of hearing-specific intervention. This delay of up to two years correlates closely with delays in language acquisition, which in turn affects schooling (Bennet, 1988; Cohen, Fischgrund, & Redding, 1990; Yoshinago-Itano, Sedey, Coulter, & Mehl, 1998; Moeller, 2000; Genesee, 2007). There is a lack of proper access to health and education program information by Latino families during crucial decision-making times. This includes decisions about hearing aids, cochlear implants, and American Sign Language (ASL), or spoken language education routes.

The primary goal of this community-based participatory research (CBPR) project was to facilitate access to educational resources regarding deafness for Spanish-speaking families by providing oral and written materials in Spanish. This included basic information about audiology and the deaf child’s experience, along with information about the local resources available. In addition to the language barrier, there were cultural and financial considerations that were taken into account for the project’s success. A few unexpected challenges that surfaced throughout the process will be discussed here, as well as how they can be prevented or resolved in the future.

Background and Motivation
Deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) children from minority groups have been shown to experience greater difficulty in school than their non-minority peers (Bennet, 1988). Despite growing research on DHH populations, minimal research attention has been paid to the language development of children from non-English language backgrounds (see Guardino & Cannon, 2016). In the United States, these groups face several added challenges based on language barriers and, often, race-related discrimination.

In the 2015–2016 school year, the Utah School for the Deaf and Blind (USDB) served 936 deaf or hard-of-hearing individuals across the state, at least 530 of whom were children. For the past few years, approximately 30% of the deaf and hard-of-hearing children served in Salt Lake County were Latino children whose home language is Spanish (Salazar, 2016). Because Latino families want their children to learn Spanish and English, they tend to choose the spoken language route, rather than ASL once they connect with the USDB. Only one Latino child in the program is completely deaf (no hearing assistive devices) and attending the ASL program full time. Additionally, two of the preschool children attend the ASL program part-time, but their families do not use sign language at home. Our speaker series was open to and attended by Spanish-speaking families from all programs—ASL, Listening and Spoken Language, and Personal Independence Payment.
and also families not enrolled in any program. Our goal was to provide accessible information and answer questions about deaf issues in general.

By contrast to their hard-of-hearing peers who receive hearing aids before age 1, most Latino DHH children in Utah were fitted with hearing aids after the age of two. The delay in receiving any audio signal (including speech sounds) leads to a delay in the language development of both Spanish and English. This has resulted in Latino DHH children attending the USDB’s Listening and Spoken Language program two to four years longer than their non-Latino peers. Latino DHH children who leave Listening and Spoken Language also tend to move to full-time special education programs in their neighborhood schools rather than transitioning directly into traditional classrooms (Salazar, 2016).

Based on research from the fields of linguistics, speech science, and education (Bennet, 1988; Cohen et al., 1990; Cummins, 1992; García-Vázquez, Vázquez, López, & Ward, 1997; Collier & Thomas, 2004; Genesee, 2007; Ertmer, True Kloiber, Jung, Connell, Kirleis, & Bradford, 2012), the earlier the child is enrolled in early intervention, the greater their academic success rate. Similarly, if spoken language is the goal, speech production accuracy is correlated to the amount of time the child can access audio signal using a hearing device.

In Utah, there has been a need to improve communication with Latino families to encourage earlier medical action and/or earlier enrollment in any USDB program. This project is a collaborative effort by the author (principal investigator) and the community partner, the USDB’s Listening and Spoken Language program director, to address this need. Initially, we assumed delayed intervention was motivated primarily by financial difficulties; however, through conversations with the USDB staff and parents of the children, it became clear that the greater obstacle, at least locally, was the general lack of accessible information. Challenges include few qualified interpreters/Spanish speakers at every stage of the medical process, limited materials on the medical and non-medical options that are presented in Spanish or accessible English, and a general misunderstanding and/or dismissal of cultural differences surrounding deafness. Improvements are needed in terms of medical and educational information that is available to families in Spanish.

Currently, local Latino families receive limited, if any, written information in Spanish at the time of deaf diagnosis; there is one pamphlet regarding cochlear implants and a few handouts about medical services. These materials are provided in local medical (ear/nose/throat, otolaryngology) offices but are produced for national audiences and tend to use specialized medical language. Most of the written materials they receive, including hearing aid catalogs, are produced only in English. Additionally, none of our local ear/nose/throat offices have Spanish speaking medical staff. Non-English speaking families generally bring a bilingual family member, often an older child, to help interpret. While these children or family members may speak more English than the parents, they do not necessarily know any medical terminology or understand the scope of the medical issue. Older children interpreters (as young as 8 in this sample) may also lack the maturity to handle the situation.

Once families are connected to the USDB, which is optional, they do receive more help, though not necessarily in Spanish. The USDB does not produce any official Spanish language written materials; however, they do have a few Spanish-speaking employees who help serve the Latino families in their programs from infancy—the Parent Infant Program—through elementary school through the Listening and Spoken Language program. There are three Latino employees in this program who are native speakers of Spanish and several employees who understand and/or speak Spanish, including a pediatric audiologist. Although the ASL program serves DHH children longer (into adulthood) than the Listening and Spoken Language program (usually into second grade), the ASL program operates in ASL and English only. For Spanish-speaking families, the Listening and Spoken Language program is more accessible, but does depend on children having hearing assistive devices.

Creating accessible materials is critically important in helping Latino families make informed decisions for their DHH children in a timely fashion. Beyond the language barrier (and even for bilingual families where language is not the major barrier), there are also cultural differences regarding the perceived “permanence” of deafness and treating deafness in infants that are not being addressed. When asked directly, many of the parents in our program did not understand that a newborn deafness diagnosis required intervention. Several parents told us their children received different (conflicting) diagnoses at different screenings and so they thought the diagnoses were temporary or...
unreliable. A few of our Latino families also have deaf relatives in Spanish-speaking countries, and therefore had some experience with deafness being left untreated outside of the United States. The combination of these information-related factors are greatly contributing to delayed intervention among Latino families, despite the fact that most of these children qualify for hearing assistive devices that would improve their hearing.

A CBPR approach was adopted to help parents of deaf and hard-of-hearing children gain access to the health and local resource information they need. This partnership approach with parents encourages the participating families to be involved in all stages of the project, from planning to follow up. CBPR has been shown to be more successful than top-down approaches for educational projects similar to this one (Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 1998; Minkler, 2005; Henderson, Barr, An, Guajardo, Newhouse, Mase, & Heisler, 2013). This paper reports on the specific methods implemented, the development of the project, and lessons learned for future projects.

The Current Project

Together with parents, the project principal investigator and Listening and Spoken Language program director decided that a speaker series would be beneficial, since the information would be provided in Spanish orally and interactively. In each session, a local expert would present a different topic related to deafness and deaf children issues. Following CBPR guidelines (Israel et al., 1998, Henderson et al., 2013), the presentations were not only conducted in Spanish and presented in layman’s terms, but all materials were culturally sensitive and appropriate for the local audience.

The discussions following the presentations were just as critical as the presentations themselves. Following each presentation there was a scheduled question and answer session with the presenter, which provided the parents with time for the important conversations that they should be having with health care providers, educators, and community agencies. After the Q&A, there was a wrap up session led by a moderator where parents could talk about their own experiences. Parents were given note cards to ask any lingering questions related to the presentation topics; we followed up with them as needed. During the wrap-up session, we also announced the next presentation and fielded questions for the next presenter. The PI gathered these questions and shared them with the next presenter during a pre-session meeting so that presenters could include the information. The presenters appreciated this step as it helped them tailor their presentation for this specific audience.

At the end of the series, the PI compiled the presentation slides and handouts from all of the sessions, along with Spanish handouts from deaf education sites and local parent resource information to create a parent handbook. The handbook was distributed by USDB to the Latino families. The PI also distributed the handbook to local providers of deaf services including the University of Utah’s Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic and local ear/nose/throat medical offices. The university clinic not only serves DHH children, but is also a training site for graduate students in the speech-language pathology and audiology programs.

Participants

An average of 20 Latino families attended each session. At least one parent, and usually both, is a native speaker of Spanish. All of the families have a child between one month and 12 years of age who is deaf or hard-of-hearing. Many families have other children with normal hearing. All of the parents were normal hearing adults. Most families who attended live in Salt Lake County, and one regularly attending family came from Ogden, about an hour away.

Methods

Initial planning and preparation

The PI and the community partner, the USDB’s Listening and Spoken Language program director, met three years prior to the beginning of the CBPR project. The PI had been conducting a long-term linguistics research project with the same USDB children that this project serves. The director came up with the idea for the Spanish-language speaker series and the PI contributed the CBPR methodology and funding.

Grant writing for the series began almost two years before the first session. The budget included stipends for the presenters, but the larger budget requests were to cover logistical costs for serving this community. For the series to be successful, families had to be able to commit to the program. Based on work schedules, the presentations would have to happen on a weeknight, which required budgeting for major obstacles to the families’ participation. Therefore, the grant covered the cost of dinner, provided childcare with USDB trained employees, and we offered transportation/carpooling. The
grant also paid for a Spanish/English interpreter and the USDB provided ASL interpreters. The goal was to prepare for major obstacles to the families’ ability to attend the sessions.

The speaker series was planned as seven (roughly monthly) sessions to be held during one academic school year. The more detailed planning for the individual sessions began during the school year prior, when we met with a parent focus group to generate topics. The parents’ input led to the topics and then we recruited presenters for each session. We anticipated the hearing and language related topics, but the focus group was also interested in parenting strategies for special needs children in general. The sessions were originally planned as follows:

- September: Audiology and causes of deafness
- October: Language development for DHH children
- November: Strategies for parenting DHH children
- January: Counseling/emotional wellness for families
- February: Language research on bilingual DHH children
- March: Medical specialist session (surgeries, etc.)
- April: Parent-to-parent advice panel and resource handbook

Two sessions were moved around based on speaker availability, and we did not end up offering every session. These changes are discussed in detail in the following.

For the presentations, native speakers of Spanish were recruited, and interpreters were hired on-call for sessions that might have to be presented in English. Every effort was made to recruit local experts for the purpose of providing local resources to the families. For instance, we decided that it was better to have one of the local ear/nose/throat surgeons come with an interpreter than a Spanish-speaking surgeon from another state. Parents in the Parent Infant Program would therefore have a chance to interact with the surgeon who would actually perform their child’s surgery.

Once the speakers were selected, the PI met with each presenter before their presentation to review the language of the materials. Even the English-speaking presenters prepared slides and/or handouts in Spanish. We also discussed the parents’ questions and reasons for requesting the specific topic so that the presenters could tailor the information and prepare for possible questions ahead of time. Guest speaker hiring paperwork was also filled out at that time.

The Listening and Spoken Language director recruited teaching assistants, who were trained to work with DHH children, to provide childcare. Fortunately, since the sessions were held in the conference room of a USDB school, we were also able to use a preschool classroom and outdoor playground for the childcare service. The director’s office aide helped distribute our flyers to the families, and the Spanish-speaking teacher’s aide also called the families to remind them of the events. I also hired a parent to help during the sessions with room set-up, greeting families, signing children in for childcare, and helping everyone with name tags. We also put together flyers to announce the series, in Spanish and English (see Appendix A), and then flyers in Spanish to announce each session and speaker (see Appendix B for example).

Funding for the project came from the University of Utah’s community-based research grant, awarded to the PI. Using the funds required several training workshops from the university purchasing office in order to administer my own account, use the university’s online shopping program, and get my own purchasing card. For each event, I was responsible for hiring the invited speakers, ordering the catering, and paying all of our team members (childcare, driver, moderators, greeter/floater, and interpreter). I was also responsible for filing all the purchasing and payment paperwork with the administrator of my academic department.

**Implementation**

Sessions were held on the fourth Wednesday of the month from 5:30–7:30 p.m. Dinner was served during the first part, followed by the speaker presentation, and ending with a discussion time (see Appendix B). The program was structured as follows:

1. Families arrived and were greeted by PI/team members.
2. Families signed in and dropped off children for childcare.
3. Adults then proceeded to the meeting room for a catered dinner.
4. During dinner, team members continued to welcome families and talk to attendees.
5. The PI provided a welcome and introduction of the presenter.
6. Presentation
7. Q&A with presenter
8. Conclusion with parent moderator and/or PI
9. Childcare pickup

All speakers used visual aids, such as PowerPoint slides, handouts, and the whiteboard. Presentations were held in a large conference room at the USDB. Presenters tailored the language they used to ensure that technical information was accessible and clear. Many of the slides had provided definitions and images. Several presenters encouraged questions and dialogue throughout as well as after presentations.

A parent facilitator was hired to help initiate conversations and community building during the speaker series. Families were encouraged to ask questions throughout any part of the program. At every session, the PI asked the parents, teachers, and staff for feedback.

For every session, childcare was provided free of charge for families and we also provided transportation to one family. There were at least three childcare providers, a session moderator, a greeter/floater, a driver, and for one session, a Spanish-English interpreter.

Ongoing feedback was crucial to the design and implementation of the project. Team meetings took place periodically to evaluate and provide feedback on the series as it went along. Team members talked to the attendees before and after every session. Families could leave feedback anonymously on notecards provided at every session.

Parent Handbook

At the end of the project year, I compiled a resource handbook in Spanish for the families. This included the information from the speaker series presentations, additional Spanish handouts from the John Tracy Clinic and the Center for Hearing and Communication, and a directory of local resources for disabled individuals provided by a local parent center. The manual was given to the Latino families in the USDB programs, including Parent Infant Program, families in the University of Utah's Audiology clinic, and a few select local pediatricians, who could provide the handbooks to Latino parents at the time of the deaf diagnosis.

Since not all local medical offices have Spanish-speaking staff and timing is critical, it is our hope that the handbook can provide immediate access for years to come to Spanish language information that is informative without being medically technical. It should also encourage new families to seek out the services of the USDB.

Accomplished Goals

The speaker series succeeded in its primary goal of providing accessible information on deafness and childhood deaf issues to local Latino families. The series gave families the opportunity to ask questions of local professionals who work with deaf children, including a pediatric audiologist and the parent-infant deaf program coordinator. Parents also learned about how to help their child transition from a special program to a mainstream program during a session with a special needs educator. All of the Q&A sessions were very popular.

We also succeeded in connecting families with necessary services. For example, at least one family that was not already in the USDB system was invited to a session by the PI. This family subsequently enrolled in USDB services for the first time as a result of attending the series. The family set up an appointment with the USDB audiologist who discovered that the child actually needed two hearing aids; the child, who was 8 years old, had been using only one hearing aid for three years because one ear had a more severe hearing loss. Some existing USDB families also learned of additional services to those they were already receiving that are available through USDB, such as their battery replacement program. At least one Listening and Spoken Language teacher attended a session and connected with a family she was having a hard time reaching.

The series also facilitated a major step toward community building for local Latino families of DHH children, many of whom were meeting each other for the first time. At the first event, one of the parents took the initiative to create a Facebook group and invited all attendees to join. The idea is to facilitate communication within the group, exclusively parent-to-parent.

Although we did not conduct any exit surveys or official impact assessments this time, the PI did follow up with several families. In a follow up conversation, the newly enrolled family said they were very grateful for finally being connected with the USDB. As a result, they discovered their
8-year-old child needed a hearing aid in both ears; they commented that the second hearing aid has “changed her life.” Another family said that they hoped we would run another series next year.

Finally, the parent handbook created with the information from the speaker series and local resources was also a major accomplishment. This handbook will continue to serve as a resource of information for current and future Latino families.

Limitations, Lessons Learned, and Implications

One of the often-mentioned challenges of CBPR projects is that they are complicated by having multiple stakeholders (Israel et al., 1998; Henderson et al., 2013). Even when all stakeholders share a common goal, each person/organization may have secondary goals that they would like to accomplish. We had heard from several USDB employees that the majority of Latino families do not attend USDB events and often miss even required meetings with teachers and other school staff. With the successful attendance rate of our first event, various USDB staff quickly approached us with requests they had for specific parents. These requests most often included things like passing along information; however, in one case the staff wanted us to help convince a family to make a major decision about their child’s education. This created conflict to the CBPR educational approach we were trying to implement. By adopting a CBPR model, the goal was to empower parents to become full partners with us so that we could learn from each other how to better serve the DHH children. I did not want our sessions to become substitutes for top-down meetings. Along with this, I worried that the families would become confused about the purpose of the sessions and that we would lose their trust. Their trust was crucial and not easy for the PI to gain, being an outsider to the DHH community.

The second major lesson learned was about the importance of a completely supportive infrastructure. In this case, having an already established working relationship between the PI and the Listening and Spoken Language director (community partner) helped get the project off the ground and move the project forward as challenges arose. The two of us shared a vision and primary goals for this project and we were both committed to working with this community. However, we should have established a clearer plan for communication with the staff involved in the project from the beginning to ensure everyone was on the same page. I assumed that everyone we hired to help would support the university partnership and understand the benefits of the project; however, this was not necessarily the case. The places where support was lacking affected the team ambiance and also our publicity. The series lost momentum during the third session due to several logistical factors, including lack of publicity. Community partner projects are like delicate living organisms in that they can quickly fall apart when any of the logistical components fail.

Previous literature on projects working with Latinos, especially native speakers of Spanish, in presenter and leadership roles (Israel et al., 1998; Hicks Peterson, 2018). Although every effort was made to hire native speakers of Spanish, the parents were just as receptive to non-native Spanish speakers. It did seem, however, that the audience favored presenters they knew over presenters they did not know, regardless of race or language background. For this group, it did not seem to make a difference if the presenter was a native speaker of Spanish. Parents were grateful for presentations given in Spanish, even the one with the help of an interpreter. I think the reason is that in this community, families are used to working primarily with English-speaking service providers, so there is no expectation of having a Spanish-speaking provider. Importantly, these families have had positive experiences working with their English-speaking Listening and Spoken Language director, preschool teachers, aides, and audiologists. Even though the presenters were not all native speakers of Spanish, many of the members of the leadership crew were, including the PI, planning committee parents, and two session moderators.

As other researchers who work with Latino populations have also mentioned (DeNomie, Medic, Castro, Vazquez, Rodriguez, & Kim, 2019), winter weather presented a challenge to attendance. The series was scheduled to run during the school year but ended up having to take a longer break (beyond the regular winter school break) for extreme weather. It was an unusually cold winter with earlier and heavier snowfall, which made driving difficult for everyone, especially since the families commute from across a large valley and even outside the valley. This break in the middle of the series affected our ability to establish a commitment from the families and hurt our community-building efforts. Despite the challenges that come with summer scheduling, it would be more effective to run the series from
March through October.

We were also originally expecting extended family, such as grandparents, to attend the sessions, but only parents attended. The original flyers announcing the series explicitly invited all family members, but the individual session flyers were not as clear on that point. The phone call reminders may have also communicated parents only; that would be an important issue to address with the callers if extended family members are invited.

The childcare service for younger children, including the DHH children, was planned for and expected to be necessary. This service was indeed very popular and grew with every session. The surprise was that older children and teenage siblings also came to help take care of their siblings. We learned that the majority of teens and older children are taking on the role of caretakers for their DHH siblings at home. In the future it would be beneficial to include a program designed specifically for them during the sessions, perhaps a support group with a professional counselor.

If we run a future series, we would include an exit survey or impact assessment for the families to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the program. In fact, if we organize another series, it would be possible to invite attendees of this series to provide similar feedback during the planning stage of the next one.

Conclusion

The primary goal of this project was to help Spanish-speaking families of DHH children gain access to information they need to make informed decisions for their children.

This main goal was accomplished with the series and handbook. The project addressed health and cultural issues with materials, but more importantly, with an educational program created from within the academic/community partnership. The handbook compiled from this project was a major success and will continue to serve as a resource of information for future families. Due to having to cut the program short, the community-building goal was impacted. Despite the challenges, the project was worthwhile and the experience was valuable for everyone involved.

Appendix A: English-Language Text of Flyer Announcing the Entire Speaker Series

This series is provided by a University of Utah community-based research grant.

COMMUNITY SPEAKER SERIES

For Spanish-Speaking Families with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children — 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.
Dinner and childcare will be provided for families attending this event.
Located at the Utah School for the Deaf and Blind.

Appendix B: Spanish-Language Text of Flyer Announcing One of the Sessions

Esta serie es patrocinada por la beca para investigaciones en la comunidad de la Universidad de Utah

24 DE OCTUBRE 2018

Presenter, del Programa Parent Infant de USDB nos hablará sobre la comunicación con sus hijos, su desarrollo de idiomas, y las transiciones escolares de Programa Parent Infant a LSL a escuelas primarias. Esta es su oportunidad para aprender sobre las capacidades auditivas de sus niños y conocer a otras familias hispanas. Se proveerá cena y cuidado de niños, sin costo, para las familias que asistan a la charla*. La presentación será conducida en español.

Schedule:
5:30 – Introducción y dejar a niños con maestras
5:40 - Cena
6:30 – Presentación
7:00 – Preguntas con presentadora
7:15 - Discusión en grupo
7:30 – Clausura y recoger a niños

En el Centro Educativo Openshaw (detras de la escuela Jean Massieu) Salt Lake City, Utah 84106
References


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About the Author
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The Emotional Dimension of Community-Engaged Learning

We often think of learning as related to intellectual development alone. The student voices in this issue of *JCES* broaden our thinking to include an emotional dimension. Dania Bogle reflects on how the integration of community engagement enhanced not only the well-being of those she worked with in her project but her own well-being as well. Part of this impact was the experience, inherent to community-engaged work, of sensing how one's civic values are broadened when bound with others through meaningful relationships. Being open to new relationships, however, requires being receptive to points of view potentially at odds with one's own and the importance of civil values in navigating those differences. Adriana Deras and colleagues reflect on the potential of community engagement to define and then dismantle the empathy walls that insulate us from acknowledging and affirming ways of being, believing, and behaving that characterize worlds outside our own. Together, these reflections suggest that emotional development is a significant part of the intellectual growth we aim to promote through community-engaged projects. Importantly, both of these reflections speak to us from health fields. These voices seem to be saying that emotional nutrition is an essential part of a healthy learning diet.

Where does emotionally-rich learning come from? Community engagement is an immersive experience in social dynamics. At the beginning of the experience, one has to regard and respect the emotional climate of a community as part of the process of making sense of one’s (new) self within it. Emotional climate refers to “sets of emotions or feeling that are shared by groups of individuals implicated in common social structures and processes” (Barbalet, 1995, p. 23). As one continues to become more immersed through participation in the group activity of the community, one gains familiarity with these structures and processes. This heightens the possibility of acceptance within the group. With acceptance comes trust that one's participation in shared tasks will constitute a positive community contribution. This sense of successful interaction among members of a group generates positive emotional energy and can result in “confidence, courage to take action, [and] boldness in taking initiative” (Collins, 2004, p. 39); that is, it leads to learning.

As you read the reflections that follow, pay attention to the interplay between self and other in the case these authors make for community engagement. It is a case for feeling as part of knowing, where the community is best the classroom.

References


Katherine Richardson Bruna
Iowa State University, Associate Editor of Student and Community Engagement
Introduction

All but one of the authors of this piece are juniors and seniors in biological engineering at LSU. We were enrolled in a course on ethics and professionalism specific to our field. As part of our class we read, discussed, and wrote about the book *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* by Arlie Hochschild. The following essay represents our collective thoughts and answers to three reflective prompts about empathy walls, one of the central themes of the book, and their role and importance in civil conversation.

As young adults with impressionable minds in a politically charged climate, it is easy to feel secluded from our peers and the world around us because of our personal beliefs. This seclusion is not only a perception, but a shared idea that we think has deepened the divisiveness that plagues our modern society. These seclusions we have placed ourselves in can be dubbed “empathy walls,” a term used by Hochschild in her book.

Hochschild argues that empathy walls are made up of our own set of personal beliefs, emotions, and feelings, which may not always be rooted in facts. As a result, while we may often feel as though empathy walls are defense mechanisms we construct to keep others out, they also tend to keep us blocked in. The concept of empathy walls is a complex one, and the way they are built and maintained not only varies greatly from topic to topic, but from person to person. As a result, navigating empathy walls might involve crossing them or destroying them; some, in fact, may never truly be crossed or destroyed. Nevertheless, no matter an individual’s belief on what an empathy wall is, or how difficult it may be to cross one, we believe that examining our empathy walls is crucial to initiating civic engagement and making societal progress.

What Is an Empathy Wall and What Does It Feel Like?

An empathy wall can be difficult to imagine. It can be thought of as a brick or mortar wall or even as a cascading mountain. However, in some respects, an empathy wall isn’t even a wall at all. It is a disconnect, a place where we lose common ground with those of varying beliefs. It is the stopping point where our ideas become incompatible with someone else’s, and we begin to experience an “us vs. them” mentality. And while this one difference may be something that the two (or more) sides can never agree upon, it is important to realize that there are many other things in which common ground may be found. Interestingly enough, we are not always the “us” in the “us vs. them” empathy wall dilemma. On the contrary, sometimes we may find ourselves as the ones being blocked out, or the “them,” that is shut out by someone else’s empathy walls. In these circumstances, we may feel as if someone is closing us off, shutting us out, or even forgetting to give us a chance because of who they think we may be. When this occurs, it is important to remember that the person with the empathy walls is completely disregarding the chance that they have to see some view or opinion that they had previously not considered. This situation reminds us to not disregard others when dealing with our
own empathy walls. We think that empathy walls have different shapes and sizes and textures, which means that they need to be navigated differently. Finally, although everyone’s empathy walls may vary, they are central to a person’s experiences throughout their lifetime, or more simply, based on the fact that we all experience life differently.

How Is an Empathy Wall Built?

Every single person has a different story. We are each raised in different households with different political and religious views, and we have all encountered significant events in our lives that have had a great impact on the way we view the world. Some of us are an only child, some of us were raised by a single parent, some of us are adopted, and some of us were even forced to raise ourselves and our siblings. There is an infinite number of factors, based on both nature and nurture, that shape our unique outlooks on life. These differences, especially in today’s political climate, can prove to be a wedge that separates “us” from “them” with respect to many issues. If not addressed properly, this wedge can begin to form a barrier, or an empathy wall, which lies between what is “right” and what is “wrong.” It is, however, important to remember that our differences are what make the world what it is: dynamic, diverse, and colorful. Nevertheless, what sometimes occurs is that when we are faced with an opposing view, many of us fear that having “empathy” implicates that a belief, a solid pillar on which one’s life may be formed, must be changed in some way. This fear only further misconstrues the true meaning of empathy. Empathy is in no way, shape, or form, the absolute changing of one’s mind, or the rejection of one’s beliefs. On the contrary, empathy is the ability to understand and respect the differences of others, recognizing that regardless of whether or not we agree with them, we honor them.

Although fear is not the driving force behind the creation of an empathy wall, it is the mortar that ultimately cements it; believe it or not, we ourselves are the builders. Eventually, this fear and refusal to understand secludes us from anyone or anything that is different from what we have established as normal. This seclusion, over time, takes a more permanent, rigid form. Brick by brick, the wall between our safety net of familiarity and what we misunderstand is built, and more often than not, this construction occurs early in childhood. Even before we are willing and able to challenge what we know, our parents or other significant people in our lives supply us with our first foundation of bricks, a foundation that is later even harder to destroy. As a result, whether we like it or not, as we continue to grow, instead of tearing down the bricks we already have, we merely continue to pile on more.

Empathy walls are also built for the comfort of having like-minds surrounding you. It is easier to surround ourselves with like-minded individuals than people who challenge our opinions. It is this feeling of uneasiness and sometimes even offensiveness that drives us to continue to protect our walls. So over the lifetime of an empathy wall, we may begin to place images and labels on the wall. These false images reflect what we believe, or are told, that the group on the other side is actually like. With these images ingrained within our minds, we begin to feed on our fear of the “mysterious unknown” and thus start to lose sight of the other side. As a result, throughout this process, we begin to dehumanize the other side, trusting like-minded individuals but fostering contempt and hostility for anyone who attempts to challenge what we know.

What makes this issue even more complicated is that while we are building these walls to block out others, we are simultaneously being blocked out by the walls of others. This blocking results in a never-ending cycle that we believe is partially responsible for the lack of common ground we experience in society today.
How Do You Destroy or Cross an Empathy Wall?

Just like the first step to solving a problem is admitting that you have one, the first step to destroying or crossing an empathy wall is admitting that you have a misconception. Although identifying an empathy wall is definitely important, it is what we do afterward that can eventually bring about real change. One of the most effective ways of breaking down an empathy wall is finding common ground and embracing the differences. Through this effort, the wall can be removed brick by brick, until just a few bricks remain. These bricks can then be handled with much more ease than an entire wall. Sometimes a wall cannot be completely broken down, and as a result, it is worth it to attempt to cross the wall, or to at least peer over the top.

Another effective move to peer over the wall is to step away from our old, accustomed safe zone, and into an uncertain spot where we begin to challenge our beliefs. This process is how we regain a clear, true image of what, or who, we have been blocking out for so long.

However, in this process, we must not forget that there is strength in standing up for what we believe in. When we cross an empathy wall, we may be tempted to leave our own beliefs on the other side, knowing that we have them to fall back on, if we should return. This temptation can be counterproductive and ultimately a waste of time. It may, nonetheless, be equally as unproductive to cross with the intention of completely changing. For this reason, it is necessary to employ an open mind when peering over the wall. This open mind should facilitate unbiased exploration and allow for possible change, without demanding it. Because empathy walls are strongly influenced by pure emotion, it is also important to incorporate logic and critical thinking into the journey to empathy. These perspectives should be used to gain an accurate, objective view of each side's beliefs. Once we see what the other side is actually like, breaking down an empathy wall becomes a much more approachable goal.

Finally, the most important aspect of crossing or defeating an empathy wall is the requirement of action. Peering over a wall and getting to know the other side is a noble first step, but it is what we do with the information gathered that propels our world into the future. This action can take many different forms, and again, depends on the situation and the nature of the wall. For example, a simple action can be acknowledging the feelings of the other side or a small act of kindness. However, over time, these small actions can then blossom into genuine support and respect, or better yet, advocacy. For it is when we not only support someone else's beliefs, but also fight for them, that we can unquestionably say that we have defeated our empathy walls. Then, and only then, is a strong step taken on the road to civic engagement and societal progress and into the future: when we not only support someone's beliefs, but fight for them.

Every person is a piece of art that makes up the world, and every piece of art has a meaning and a story. Whether we are children, adults, or college students, we all experience empathy walls, or obstacles to this overall understanding, and for this reason, they must be acknowledged and addressed by everyone. Crossing an empathy wall is therefore an opportunity to appreciate this piece of art, or better yet, to influence more understanding and acceptance in our lives. One way we as college students can do this is through community engagement. By immersing ourselves in the community, our empathy walls may begin to open up, not only widening our views, but also our understanding of someone else's. Many people don't realize that the world is big enough to foster their beliefs and views without compromising the integrity of another's, until someone else makes them aware of it. When we immerse ourselves in the community, we have the opportunity to interact with those who can make us aware of it. As a result, community engagement is one way to bridge the gap between misunderstanding and empathy, thus opening up the opportunity to cross our own empathy walls and even inviting others to speak out about their own. We believe that this “bigness” is the profound impact that can occur when we engage with the community and tear down the empathy walls we have. And although such a future may seem idealistic and unattainable, these are the first steps to such a world, and the more people who know where to start, the better.

About the Authors

Except for Angelle Leger, who is now a medical student in the LSU College of Medicine, New Orleans, all of the authors of this piece were juniors and seniors in biological engineering at Louisiana State University at the time of this writing.
Community-Engaged Learning: Building Well-being One Relationship at a Time

By Dania Bogle

Abstract

This paper explores the potential of community-engaged learning to improve well-being by helping those engaged to develop good relationships. It was written when I was conducting research on the impact of community-engaged learning on student well-being and participating in community engagement, thus experiencing its positive impacts.

Community-Engaged Learning: Building Well-being One Relationship at a Time

My name is Dania Bogle, and I had spent 20 years as a sports journalist when I decided that I wanted to change careers. I enjoyed doing general research, and I thought it might be nice to make a full-time career out of that, but I also eventually wanted to do a job that would directly and positively impact the lives of others. As an undergraduate, I engaged in a community service project working at a primary school for children with special needs. This engagement gave me a deep sense of satisfaction as it helped me to fulfill a lifelong dream of giving back and also working with children, in which I had developed an interest as an adult. I didn't know then that the concept of that module was community-engaged learning. It was merely a compulsory course for students at my university. It was only after I chose to pursue a graduate degree and started reading on the proposed research project that I understood the true meaning of community engagement. I was drawn to postgraduate research investigating the impact of student engagement in community-engaged learning (CEL) because it focused on CEL's impact on student well-being. Throughout the course of my study abroad, I undertook community-engaged work to gain deeper understanding of student perspectives. Engagement served to improve my own international student experience, and helped me to practically apply to my own experience Seligman's (2011) positive emotion, engagement, relationships meaning, and accomplishment model. I used this model to assess the well-being of students in my study and I used it to examine if I was also experiencing well-being.

The Value of Community-Engaged Learning in Building Good Relationships

Although there is substantial research that having good relationships is essential to good health and well-being, I saw through my research that not a lot of focus is placed on this element of community-engaged learning. Much of my background reading pointed to CEL's influence on civic values, and indeed, throughout my interaction with students in community-engaged learning, giving back was a recurrent theme. As I have, students often expressed a sense of satisfaction from fulfilling their own vision of returning something to the community.

When Robert Putnam published his treatise on the decline in civic engagement, Bowling Alone, in 1995, he singled out technology as the primary source of disengagement, but I now understand that while technology indeed leads to isolation, so can migration. It was at this point that I also came to understand that good relationships can be a form of vaccination against poor mental and physical health. I witnessed firsthand the importance of good relationships through engagement, not only as a student trying to adjust to life in a new country, but also as a researcher. For instance, I learned that community engagement engenders well-being when students have continued contact with others. In my first few months of life abroad, I knew very few people. This was a very isolated time as I struggled to gain my footing. I joined a church community in my new town. Later on, one of our community-engagement activities was to go caroling at a day care center for senior citizens. One of the students in my study had conducted her CEL project at a day care center, and expressed that she felt deep acceptance during her time with the seniors. Although personally I believe the singing group's performance was not all that good, our attendance was well received, and I understood the sense of meaning and subsequent well-being that someone could gain from engaging in this activity. In addition, I met new people at the center and seeing me show up at a time when I could have been working...
on my thesis helped me to gain new respect in the
eyes of my fellow carolers. This helped us to form
a greater bond and these individuals would express
deep willingness to support me later on. My activities
were social in nature, but other students undertook
sport-based community-engaged programs and
these were particularly good at helping them develop
relationships because of the interaction, especially
in groups that it provided. My supervisors also
encouraged me to witness students in CEL modules
in active participation, which was best facilitated in
their sport-based initiatives. I decided that I could
apply the knowledge I gained and combine it with my
training in sport science by encouraging sport-based
community engagement. When I returned home, I
again volunteered at a school, this time proposing to
teach parents of children with special needs to practice
self-care by engaging in regular physical activity.

I was also encouraged to be civically engaged
by my supervisors, and as I continually sought such
opportunities, I became a student mentor. One of
the saddest moments during my time as a student
was seeing one of my mentees decide to drop out
of college. I had spent time with her outside of
school, even visiting her at work. I knew she was
torn, but the responsibility of doing her part in
taking care of family had led her to decide to put
off her studies. Students I encountered in my study
also had difficulty balancing family responsibilities,
undertaking part-time or full-time jobs, and finding
time to undertake the practical component of CEL. I
recognized the importance of having a good support
system when my mentee called me late one evening
to ask my advice on whether she should drop out
or not. Although my influence was not enough to
keep her in college, I think it was instructive that
she had someone other than family to call on for
advice, and I believe that this is one of the roles
that supervisors in community-engaged learning
can play. CEL programs present an opportunity for
students to develop relationships with individuals
in the community who may influence their future
education or career choices.

I also learned about different types of cultures
and subcultures, due to the range of individuals
I encountered in research and my own engagement.
I met individuals, most of whom I have not seen since,
because we are traveling different paths, but whom
I remember, and from whom I learned about food,
language, and how people engage in other countries.

My participation in an undergraduate CEL
project sparked my interest in conducting research
into community engagement at the postgraduate level
when the opportunity to do so arose. Further, having
completed master's degree study in community
engagement, I was motivated, even determined, to
continue research in engagement at the doctoral level.
My interest was piqued by the reaction of students in
the element of relationships, which appeared to me
to be the area in which the greatest impact was felt. I
believe that at its core, this is what CEL is truly about.
People want to help others and forming connections
can be the start of good relationships. I became
more convinced, for instance, that once adults take
the time to form better relationships with children,
they would have fewer issues with misbehavior. If
there is one thing that my research into engagement
taught me, it is that every child needs at least one
good adult in order to thrive. I remembered a time
when I too needed one good adult and I made a vow
to try to be the one good adult in the life of every
child that I encounter henceforth. I started putting
this into practice once I had completed my studies
and returned home, and saw instant results. Even
children once described as difficult, once I connected
with them, I found were no longer misbehaving at all.
I had given serious consideration to a degree in social
work before I opted to undertake a bachelor's degree
in sport science, and graduate training in community-
engaged learning gave me an opportunity to interact
with others, taught me patience, and gave me insight
into what life in a professional social sphere might
be like. I decided that I wanted to pursue a career in
health promotion, with focus on improving health
through connection and relationships. I believe
strongly that seeing the effect of CEL on the lives
of others and feeling its effect in my own life has
changed me forever.

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Dania Bogle is a public health advocate. A
Jamaican by birth, Bogle completed an MSc in Health
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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
Valuable Starting Point for Designing Place-Based Community Engagement

Reviewed by Laura C. Atkins
Jacksonville University


For many decades, universities have sought ways to lend a helping hand to communities struggling with inequalities in education, environment, housing, and physical and mental health services. Long-standing service-learning pedagogies and community engagement strategies employed in higher education address these types of social justice issues while enhancing students’ civic perspectives and development of professional skills. With continual changes in higher education, and a constant reach for growth, universities now seek to amplify their community impact beyond these forms of engagement. University leadership, educators, and community members must determine how to design more collaborative university/community partnerships, enrich the partnership outcomes, and strategically implement a comprehensive strategy to achieve these aims. These are the calls to action that Yamamura and Koth address in their book, *Place-Based Community Engagement in Higher Education: A Strategy to Transform Universities and Communities*. Overall, Yamamura and Koth aim to 1) demonstrate that universities can make more meaningful impact on communities by utilizing a concentrated place-based engagement strategy, and 2) provide a well-designed resource for universities and communities interested in exploring place-based community engagement. Yamamura and Koth bring a wealth of knowledge to the table via their combined backgrounds in teaching community-engaged courses and administering community engagement programs. They contend that placing strategic geographic boundaries on engagement will strengthen outcomes with more deliberate commitment between the university and the carefully selected place-based community. Their book reads like a guide for implementing and sustaining a place-based community engagement (PBCE) strategy. Overall, the authors demonstrate the beneficial impact of successful place-based approaches by highlighting specific outcomes at selected model PBCE universities. The authors openly acknowledge that unique characteristics of individual institutions and communities must provide the platform for selecting geographic area, focal points for service, and partnerships. Yamamura and Koth embed themes of exploration, change, flexibility, and place, and by design, they leave open many questions that inspire the reader to more deeply explore.

*Place-Based Community Engagement in Higher Education* is cleanly divided into three parts. In Part One, chapter one delivers an overall introduction to PBCE including explanation of important social and institutional problems that drive need for this strategy. They also provide an introductory comparison to other approaches, for example anchor institutions and service-learning (both of which more firmly place the university at the core of collaboration). In chapter two, the authors give an overview of existing PBCE models and the stages of the PBCE process. Chapter three introduces Yamamura and Koth's mixed-case study approach that included analysis of public materials from websites, strategic plans, and internal reports. The most interesting aspects of their data come from interviews with a variety of collaborators both within the universities and the surrounding communities. These personal insights are welcomed glimpses into successes and potential consequences of PBCE. The authors articulate the site selection method and explain that the five sampled institutions were each fresh examples of sustained PBCE that were not previously covered in existing research. Setting the stage for the diversity and power concerns addressed later in the book, they note that these universities are all mainly white and situated within racially diverse communities. The five universities are Drexel University, Loyola University Maryland, San Diego State University, Seattle University, and University of San Diego.
Part Two easily walks the reader through the three stages of PBCE: exploration, development, and sustainability. The authors effectively introduce important aspects of the stages while providing key examples from the profiled universities. Chapter four covers the energy-filled initial exploration phase and introduces how specific PBCE efforts emerge from catalysts specific to each university, such as emergence of new executive leadership or changing neighborhood dynamics. In this chapter, it is reassuring to see Yamamura and Koth direct attention to the importance of existing partnerships. Chapter five focuses on development of the PBCE model. This stage requires heavy lifting in areas of funding (both internal and external), faculty contributions, selection of strategic partners, and building organizational structure both on and off campus. Yamamura and Koth’s indications regarding organizational structure provide opportunity for those embarking on the PBCE journey to carefully consider how existing institutional personnel have a wealth of institutional knowledge that may be effectively partnered with the dynamic energy brought by those in newly crafted roles. Also in this chapter, the authors openly acknowledge critical projects familiar to community engagement professionals, including working with legal counsel and preparing the campus community for collaboration with diverse communities. Chapter six wraps up the section with explanation of the sustaining phase, touching on institutionalization via inclusion in strategic plans. The authors also introduce San Diego State University’s “virtuous cycle” concept, in which programs provide paths for community members to “enroll at the university and give back to their own communities, in many instances becoming leaders of the community” (p.91).

Part Three is a useful presentation of significant issues which could be potentially overlooked when considering a PBCE strategy. Chapter seven is worthy of keen attention because it shares perspectives of community partners and carefully demonstrates that they may have notably different views on the partnership, outcomes, and process. Yamamura and Koth include several community members’ concerns regarding diversity knowledge and student perspectives. The authors note that this establishes need for diversity training at all levels of the institution. In chapter nine, they assert the importance of assessment for program enhancement, storytelling for funders, and attainment of outside credentials. The authors wrap up the book by critiquing PBCE, including challenges of change and potential pitfalls of universities becoming contributors to one-side community change in the form of gentrification.

Overall, the book is most successful as a solid starting point for readers seeking an introduction to the PBCE strategy. Yamamura and Koth provide fundamental questions to facilitate deeper institutional discussions, and they end each chapter with summarizing points. They also make a worthy stand in support of the potential community-level benefits of PBCE. While demonstrating that place-based engagement occurs in stages, they adeptly convey similarities and differences among the five institutions’ experiences. It is refreshing that the authors bravely acknowledge the importance of experimentation and flexibility. They usefully note the effect of continual change on organization, funding, course offerings, and training. Yamamura and Koth also successfully tap into the importance of participation of multiple collaborators by including insights from experiences of staff, faculty, and community members.

For the many assets of this book, Yamamura and Koth overlooked the opportunity to thoroughly reinforce the concept of place. They do not directly address that the two San Diego institutions are located within 10 miles of each other nor that both have engagement strategies focused on the local school system. The authors suggest elsewhere that geographic boundaries of PBCE models often involve communities adjacent to their campuses (p. 18), so perhaps the reader can assume that the San Diego institutions are completely separate places and models. Yet, they could have directly addressed the concept of place by providing explanation of the San Diego institutions’ unique geographic proximity. In addition, the incomplete embrace of place was evident in the maps of the five geographical spaces. Figure 3.2 for Loyola University Maryland is detailed and contains essential demographic information including median income, reading proficiency levels, and percentage of community affected by food desert. This visual is a win for understanding place and reinforcing this concept. Unfortunately, the figures for the other four universities lack necessary visual information and do not provide rich insights into place.

Additionally, readers need to be savvy and weigh out the ability of the PBCE model to reduce social injustice, power imbalances, racism, and gentrification. Yamamura and Koth indicate the potential for gentrification prompted by PBCE, and the reader must consider how this may counter the social justice aims at the root of the endeavor. As noted by community members quoted in chapter seven, universities may not be prepared to fully address the depth of power imbalances that
affect the collaboration. Additionally, the virtuous cycle, resulting in community members becoming university students, is a positive benefit for individual uplift and empowerment. Yet, one needs to cautiously consider how showcasing this type of individual victory may enable institutions to overlook the greater majority of community members who remain with abundant needs.

*Place-Based Community Engagement in Higher Education* is an absolutely valuable resource for faculty, community engagement staff, university leadership, and community members who aim to deepen their collaborations. As Yamamura and Koth acknowledge, this is the starting point for those who are committed to exploring, digging deeper, and doing the hard work to achieve a goal of sustained, collaborative community engagement. A transformation to a PBCE strategy is not one to be taken lightly. While the case study examples demonstrate improvement in community impacts and university/community partnerships, the book cannot fully resolve some of the substantial issues that provide foundation for this work.

Remaining questions include: With a place-based strategy, what happens when communities in need of partnership are not adopted by the more selective university partner? How can this strategy play a role in addressing issues of racism and social injustice in wider society beyond the borders of the placed-based boundaries? How can institutions ensure that these carefully designed partnerships withstand the continual alterations in higher education priorities and institutional leadership? Readers seeking to transform their universities and communities should embrace the opportunity to learn from Yamamura and Koth’s text while having the foresight to consider these outstanding questions.

**About the Reviewer**

Laura C. Atkins is an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology and director of the Service-Learning Program at Jacksonville University. She teaches service-learning courses with a focus on food security, sustainability, and leadership.
Rebecca J. Dumlao’s fresh investigation of the various facets of communication and partnerships in community engagement and service-learning contexts could not be more timely, especially given the present political and sociocultural climate of the United States. At a time when higher education institutions are increasingly conscious of power dynamics that exist between themselves and community partners, Dumlao dives deep into the most integral component that determines the success of any ongoing partnership or relationship: communication. Departing from traditional approaches to collaborative efforts that rely on an identifiable leader that carries the majority of the onus, community engagement can and should frame collaborations as true partnerships that level the playing field and engage community members, as well as campus representatives as co-creators that harmoniously work together as equals from start to finish. By tapping into collaborative communication strategies to community-engaged work, hegemonic dynamics can be avoided and community needs can be appropriately addressed with local voices being represented and driving efforts from inception.

In *A Guide to Collaborative Communication for Service-Learning and Community Engagement Partners*, Dumlao extends theory of university/community partnerships into action by outlining a practical framework of collaborative communication principles and practices that can be applied to a variety of community engagement endeavors. By breaking down the elements of the framework into easy-to-understand terms, along with highlighting real-world examples and community stories of the framework being applied in practice, the author provides readers with a guide for novices on developing community/campus collaborations. Dumlao directs much attention to the importance of flexibility and adaptability required of all partners involved in community-engaged work, and hones in on the need for mutual trust, respect, and understanding in collaborative communication efforts, all the while remaining culturally conscious and mindful. In eight chapters, the author covers some of the basic principles associated with pursuing community-engaged work before diving into the components of the collaborative communication framework. The book sheds light on a myriad of the intricacies involved in university/community partner dynamics that require careful navigation throughout any collaboration, especially highlighting the various communication modes in which community engagement partnerships should be shaped and sustained.

The book opens by highlighting the need for personal reflection by all parties before attempting to successfully forge a new collaborative partnership. Building off of the importance of recognizing one’s own core values before acknowledging and working to understand the personal worldviews of partners, Dumlao leaves room for a more thorough exploration of the time and efforts that should be dedicated to developing deeper mutual understandings and relationships between partners with their unique roles, backgrounds, and multidimensional identities. As well, building on the initial intra- and interpersonal considerations involved with developing new community partnerships, the author introduces some of the nuances surrounding university/community partnerships, and opens by encouraging readers to ask themselves to reflect on community issues that the partnership will address. Dumlao briefly explains how any partnership or collaboration will involve both transactional and relational forms of communication, which include various dynamics of communication that are developed throughout the course of a partnership to best suit those involved, as well as the tasks or goals of the particular collaboration.

The most notable feature of the book, Dumlao’s collaborative communication framework, is described as an avenue of openness that values all partners’ views and contributions, which are used to create opportunities within their partnerships. Among the framework’s chief strengths seems to be the fact...
that Dumlao acknowledges that a “one size fits all” communication model would be inappropriate in any community engagement context, and the collaborative communication framework is rooted in the notion that partners will make communication choices that best suit their relationships and community engagement endeavors. Highlighting the fluid nature of the interactions between the framework’s elements, connect, converse, envision, commit, and partner patterns, Dumlao focuses on the book’s core message on collaborative partnerships, which emphasizes that partnerships are unique entities that are fostered by the different ways in which the partners openly approach reciprocally understanding the circumstances of their relationships. By investing in the overall needs identified, partners will utilize the collaborative communication framework in different ways and at different times in order to find their stride of what works best for their circumstances.

Following the detailed overview of the framework, Dumlao connects leadership practices to the framework. The book argues that the collaborative communication framework aims to promote unity rather than division in community engagement with a goal of building cohesive partnerships between communities that champion each other. Discussions about management of power dynamics present the claim that diffusing the distribution of power among all partners can strengthen relational communication and the overall collaboration process. Dumlao tackles some extremely important concepts linked to cultural differences and a dialectic approach to communicating with diverse community partners. She frames this approach to cultural contrasts as moving away from a “my way” versus “your way” of doing things, but rather forging an “our way” that serves as an intercultural compromise, respectfully considering contributions of all partners and their backgrounds. Emphasis is placed on partners making efforts to understand the core values of others, and maintaining a commitment to practicing cultural mindfulness that will aid in the building of their intercultural communication skills. Chapter 6 appears to cover some of the book’s most important topics linked to collaborative communication, though readers may have benefited from a deeper probing of strategies surrounding cultural differences and intercultural communication in a community engagement context. As opposed to condensing these topics to a lone chapter, highlighting cultural consciousness as a major theme could have been woven throughout the entire text as a critically vital and impactful consideration of community engagement partnership development.

However, the author offers some practical approaches for dealing with differences and conflicts that may arise between partners. Once again, Dumlao encourages readers to tackle contention respectfully and directly by drawing upon supportive communication techniques to defuse within-group differences or disagreements, and make efforts to manage emotions while keeping conversations productive with the focus on the good of the partnership and collaboration. Readers are provided with an overview of some creative, non-traditional modes of communication that will likely play a major role in the future of community engagement activities. Some examples presented include storytelling, artwork, webinars, short audio and video clips, and how these can each be linked to the collaborative communication framework as well as be used to help community-engaged work succeed and thrive in a digital, globalized society. Additionally, Dumlao provides an appendix of learning activities, which offers many detailed and easy-to-adapt examples of ways that readers can introduce, practice, or strengthen collaborative communication skills covered throughout the book.

Overall this versatile guide could serve as good reference for higher education and/or community partners that may be new to community-engaged work, and are interested in developing or coordinating service-learning collaborations between universities and communities. The book breaks down some of the most important elements surrounding the value of communication in building a collaborative partnership, and offers some great examples of practical application. This book seems best suited for an audience that is new to community engagement and seeking approaches to establishing sustainable relationships between campuses and communities. As our campuses, communities, and broader society find ourselves in a time of great need in terms of interventions aimed at bridging divides, an exploration of collaborative communication principles and approaches would be an excellent place to start on the path to progress.

About the Reviewer

Todd A. Harwell is a doctoral candidate in environmental sciences at Oregon State University.
A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition.
—Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) 
Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza

Anzaldúa's words create a beautiful yet haunting metaphor guiding readers into the malleable world of service-learning and community engagement in Reconceptualizing Faculty Development in Service-Learning/Community Engagement: Exploring Intersections, Frameworks, and Models of Practice.

Because categories of experiential learning are hands-on and self-reflective—recursive and symbiotic—faculty benefit from training that effectively enables them to collaborate with a wide constituency of stakeholders as they incorporate novel paradigms of pedagogy into service-based instruction. Practitioners, professionals, and faculty alike recognize that merely slotting service projects into higher education curricula misses the pedagogical goal of translating experiences into viable learning realities that ultimately instill behavioral change.

The underlying theme of this book places educational value upon these initiatives, serving as the clarion call to empower faculty to reconceive their roles as educators. Within this context, faculty learn to create and implement programs turning students into citizens concerned about transferring their knowledge into effective projects to serve community and society. The text also examines how faculty view themselves throughout the training and implementation processes, encouraging facilitators to guide faculty members through a graduated process of expertise and self-reflection.

The governing—but not sole—metaphor of borderlands probes whether service-learning/community engagement (S-LCE) in pedagogy and practice resides at a crossroads of faculty development and S-LCE, a path where these two paradigms meet, or whether S-LCE and its attendant milieu create a new, intentional—and perhaps liminal—space for discourse, engagement, and scholarship/research. Clearly, the audience covers a host of constituencies and stakeholders as the collection provides case studies and strategies as means of fostering engagement with S-LCE across campuses, across disciplines, across communities.

In “A Holistic Framework for Educational Professional Development in Community Engagement,” by Marshall Welch and Star Plaxton-Moore, the authors contend that doctoral students who may eventually teach in S-LCE and participate in community-engaged scholarship possess a dearth of competencies; therefore, they propose a broader view of equipping learners, from faculty development to professional education, providing a holistic model for professional progression. Following a review of the literature, they synthesize all precepts into a matrix for professional education for S-LCE stakeholders (e.g. faculty, students, administration, partners). Notably, the holistic framework provides the foundation on which all other essays build. In Chapter 2, “Faculty as Colearners: Collaborative Engagement and the Power of Story in Faculty Development,” Timothy K. Eatman lists three main objectives, to: a) reflect on the current landscape of the higher education and engagement movement, b) focus on colearning and possibilities for institutional change, and c) share insights from models. Eatman deliberates on the powerful implications of publicly engaged scholarship at that critical juncture between faculty and community partners, with his conclusion resting on models of transformation that arise from story—that is, sharing in order to create meaning and advance the mission of the university to do good work.
In Chapter 3, “Models and Genres of Faculty Development,” Emily O. Gravett and Andreas Broscheid argue for backward design as a point of origin for effective faculty development, that is, selecting the learning outcomes and then considering the product and process that will best create that educational experience. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 offer additional models preparing faculty to teach service-learning/community engagement. Chapter 4 includes three diverse case studies: Boise State University, in which three entry pathways for faculty determine their position in the overall training model; Georgia College and State University, in which practitioners progress from apprentice (novice faculty) to journeyman (grant-supported) to master and then fellow, these last roles demonstrating exemplary work and involve grants and fellowships; and Portland State University, in which programs fashioned allow for three levels of activities and implementation. Across all three cases, the prerequisites of scaffolded learning and stakeholder involvement emerged, as did the recognition that resource allocation and support structures should emphasize community needs.

Chapter 5’s “Learning Communities as a Creative Catalyst for Professional Development and Institutional Change” (Star Plaxton-Moore, Julie Hatcher, Mary Price, Carey Borkoski, Vanya Jones, and Mindi Levin) centers on faculty learning communities or the variation, community of practice. Both entities can employ strategies to overcome barriers to faculty engagement, for example, lack of resources, time constraints, and promotion limitations, while raising the profile of S-LCE initiatives. The authors present case studies to illustrate approaches to designing and implementing faculty learning communities at three universities—University of San Francisco, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, and Johns Hopkins University. Goals stretch from cross-disciplinary learning and support to defining public scholarship in the context of promotion and tenure to building online networks for enhancing faculty development in service-learning pedagogies. Appropriately, this chapter cites Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning, a theory privileging reflection and abstraction to translate new knowledge into practice, an excellent example of precisely what professors strive to achieve in teaching S-LCE practices.

For those with limited resources, Chapter 6’s “Mission-Driven, Low-Cost Creative Practices” (Anne Green, Anne Marie Keffer, Kim Jensen Bohat, Melody Bowdon, & Amy Zeh) offers insights into mentoring relationships, professional networks, and summer development as means to boost participation and unite scholars and practitioners, while Chapter 7, “Dynamics on the Edge: Exploring Roles and Intersections of Service-Learning and Community Engagement and Educational Development,” by the editors, reverts back to the metaphor of junctures between practice and scholarship and seeks to unite the case studies in the former chapters with the unit isolating challenges and opportunities. Further, here authors identify the distinctions between faculty educational developers and the more logistical role of the S-LCE professional, arguing for both as necessary components in a unified partnership that furthers understanding, awareness, and effective collaboration.

In Chapter 8 Chirag Variawa offers a multidimensional S-LCE self-reflection of his journey from student to teaching assistant to faculty member, while Stephanie T. Stokamer echoes throughout Chapter 9’s “The Intersection of Institutional Contexts and Faculty Development in Service-Learning and Community Engagement” those precepts in Chapter 7 regarding the efficacy of fostering collaboration between stakeholders in S-LCE. Issuing the trope of choreography for effective S-LCE performance, Gabriel I. Barreneche, Micki Meyer, and Scott Gross in Chapter 10 offer excellent advice for novices embarking upon S-LCE, replete with guiding principles and criteria for success, urging readers to step into the dance of partnerships with “mutual benefit, shared respect, and sustainable long-term” commitment (p. 260).

Finally, the closing two chapters issue a definitive call for faculty engagement. The potential exists, according to Sherrill B. Gelmon and Catherine M. Jordan in “Connecting Service-Learning and Community Engagement Faculty Development to Community-Engaged Scholarship,” for faculty and professionals to correlate their work in S-LCE with a scholarly focus in community engagement studies. Gelmon and Jordan open with a lucid presentation of the various and tangential types of scholarship in which practitioners, educators, and professionals contribute, offering a clear orientation to community engagement studies, scholarship of teaching and learning, and scholarship of engagement, all as possibly emergent from S-LCE pursuits. The final chapter, Richard Kiely and Kathleen Sexsmith’s “Innovation Considerations in Faculty Development and
Service-Learning and Community Engagement: New Perspectives for the Future,” addresses the hallmarks of high-quality S-LCE, while presenting a model for faculty development that situates itself directly in the experiential learning camp. The authors incorporate a model consisting of four lenses with which to view S-LCE as transformative in higher education, culminating with a fifth lens as point of departure for heady dialogue and critical self-reflection.

For someone not aware of the nuances within nomenclature or the distinctions between developers or trainers, this book proves difficult to navigate on one level, for it assumes familiarity with the complexities of S-LCE. The editors’ ethnographic narrative at the beginning becomes lost in the rest of the advanced primer, for it accords a self-reflective lens that does not necessarily add to the overview of faculty development in S-LCE. Borderlands, on the other hand, proffers an excellent metaphor for the juncture of faculty education/training, S-LCE, and scholarship. For one unfamiliar with the intricacies of S-LCE, continually referring back to the listed abbreviations and sorting through the distinctions therein is cumbersome. Although not the goal of the book, the necessity to unify terms, scholarship, and roles becomes apparent; perhaps including a glossary of definitions codifying nomenclature and references would provide clarity.

Overall, the book delivers an effectual blueprint for equipping faculty to teach S-LCE, with sound rationale, research, and studies; further, its honest approach to limitations and challenges rings true. While the essays’ trajectory directs readers from theory to framework (literature to design to implementation to expected outcomes), perhaps the book’s greatest strength resides in the numerous tables capturing value systems, matrices illustrating frameworks and case studies, and graphs orienting readers to model progressions and histories. Personal reflection questions in the introduction challenge readers to embark upon this journey through the borderlands of service-learning and community engagement, an apt metaphor for that crossroads at which we find ourselves, a crossroads where service to others promotes civic engagement, faculty evolution, and scholarship opportunity.

References


About the Reviewer

Crystal Shelnutt is a doctoral student in the Higher Education Leadership & Practice Program at the University of North Georgia. She is also a senior lecturer in the English department at the University of West Georgia.
The mission of *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.
Traditional submissions are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods empirical studies. We also welcome submissions that utilize new and emerging methodological techniques. Traditional manuscript submissions should be based on a solid theoretical or conceptual framework and the discussion of the research findings should include practical, theoretical, and/or policy implications. These submissions should demonstrate central involvement of students and/or community partners and advance the field of community engagement scholarship, and should not exceed 8,000 words.

From the Field articles have a practice or case study orientation and share best practices, practical wisdom, and applied knowledge. Context is an essential part of community engagement work; therefore, it is critical to situate From the Field submissions philosophically, historically, and theoretically in order to systematically extend our knowledge and understanding. Innovative partnerships that demonstrate central involvement of students and/or community partners have the potential to make highly interesting pieces for this section. From the Field submissions should go beyond a simple project description to include innovative lessons learned or best practice principles with strong application and practice implications. From the Field manuscripts should not exceed 6,000 words.

Students from all disciplines are invited to submit original work to the Student Voices section. All forms of writing, analysis, creative approaches, and methodologies are acceptable for this section. Specific types of submissions appropriate for the Student Voices section include commentaries, critical reflections, and opinion pieces related to community engagement and/or engaged scholarship. Given that engagement scholarship is such an interdisciplinary field in which there are many appropriate ways to best “tell the story,” scholarly contributions of many kinds related to the field of engagement scholarship are welcome and will be considered for publication. Student Voice manuscripts should be between 750–2,000 words. Examples may be found on the JCES website.

Book Reviews submitted to JCES should give the reader a well-developed sense:description of the book, but should also go beyond description to discuss central issues raised by the text. Reviewers are encouraged to address how the reviewed book addresses theory, current scholarship, and/or current issues germane to the subject of the book and engagement scholarship. Reviewers may reference other material that has bearing on the book being reviewed, particularly when these sources have the ability to position the book within larger discourses regarding the topic. Ideally, Book Reviews should not exceed 1,500 words.

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The editorial board of the Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship (JCES) invites the submission of manuscripts that relate to its mission: To provide a mechanism through which faculty, staff, and students of academic institutions and their community partners may disseminate scholarly works from all academic disciplines. A goal of the publication is to integrate teaching, research, and community engagement. All forms of writing, analysis, creative approaches, and methodologies are acceptable for the journal.
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