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The 15th Annual
Engagement Scholarship Consortium
Conference

Engaging for Change: Changing for Engagement

hosted by the
University of Alberta
in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

October 5 - 8, 2014

The University of Alberta invites engaged scholars throughout the world to the 15th annual Engagement Scholarship Consortium Conference, to be held in Edmonton, Canada with pre-conference days on October 5 & 6 and full conference on October 7 & 8.

Our conference theme is Engaging for Change: Changing for Engagement and will challenge scholars, students, and community partners to discuss international advances in the scholarship of engagement.

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
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The cover for this issue was designed by Antwon Key, a senior advertising major at the University of Alabama. Photos were supplied by the AcademIK Connections program at Penn State.
JCES Receives ESC Sponsorship, Names Nick Sanyal Reviewer of the Year and First Associate Editor

This edition of the *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship* comes to you all following the 2013 Engaged Scholarship Consortium (ESC) Conference hosted by Texas Tech in Lubbock, Texas. The conference brought together engaged scholars from the United States and beyond with a strong international presence. After an excellent presentation to the ESC Board by Editorial Assistant Vicky Carter and Production Editor Ed Mullins, we are quite pleased to announce that the ESC Board voted to have *JCES* be an official journal of the ESC. In so doing the ESC provides some monetary support to the journal, but more importantly this partnership provides an endorsement of sorts for *JCES*. Given the relative newness of *JCES* to the field of engagement scholarship, this support by the ESC reinforces the significance of *JCES* in the scholarly world. We share this sponsorship with the University of Georgia’s *Journal of Higher Education and Outreach*, a long standing engagement scholarship journal.

*JCES* was founded with an emphasis on the partnership aspect of engagement scholarship. Thus, we looked for concrete, meaningful ways to demonstrate our commitment to what we refer to as our own genuine brand of authentic engagement scholarship. We knew it was a risk to produce a premiere, scholarly journal that provided not only an outlet to academicians for their engagement work, but also provided a space for students and community partners to be heard. Despite being often touted as essential players in community engagement, students’ and community partners’ voices have not seemed to be equally valued in the scholarly arena. Although many scholars give lip service to students and community persons for having important things to say and making important contributions to engagement scholarship, there seems to be less confidence in their abilities or desires to be a part of the scholarly dissemination of the work to which they are so vital. We at *JCES* hope that our efforts to create a more inclusive environment for students and community partners to have their voices heard is only the beginning of a movement that not only “talks the talk,” but “walks the walk.” Through Student Voices and Community Perspectives pieces we invite all of you to work with a student or community partner to submit a reflective, opinion, or review piece for publication in *JCES*. I am sure that most, if not all of you, have a student or community person who has something meaningful to say. Carving out a little time to work with a student or community partner to assist them in expressing their ideas for publication is a small price to pay for all they give to us. This issue of *JCES* does not have a Community Perspectives piece, as we decided that we would rather not have one than have to solicit one. Thus, I ask that you consider becoming active in the effort to show community members, as well as students, that they are valued at all levels of the engagement process, from inception to dissemination.

As the new year approaches, we are pleased with the continued growth of *JCES* and its continued significance to engagement scholarship. We look forward to what the future holds for engagement scholarship and the contributions to be made by Nick Sanyal, *JCES*’ first Reviewer of the Year and the first Associate Editor of *JCES*. I am fortunate that Dr. Sanyal accepted the offer for the position and look forward to what we can do together. Take a moment and get to know Nick on the following page. Remember, *JCES* is also posted in its entirety at our website www.jces.ua.edu and continues to be printed in hard copy. As always, we rely on and welcome your feedback. Please let us know what we continue to do well and what we might do better. Thanks to all of you who have contributed to *JCES* in any way over the years, especially reviewers, contributors, production team, board members, and others. Without your contributions and hard work, *JCES* and its sustainable centrality to engagement scholarship would not be possible.
Nick Sanyal of the University of Idaho Named First Associate Editor of JCES and Reviewer of the Year

Editor Cassandra Simon has selected Nick Sanyal of the University of Idaho to be the first associate editor of the Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship, and its first Reviewer of the Year. Sanyal will oversee editorial reviews in natural science, the environment, and community design and perform other duties as directed by the editor.

“We are extremely pleased that Dr. Sanyal has agreed to be our first associate editor,” said Dr. Samory Pruitt, vice president of Community Affairs at the University of Alabama, vice president of the Engagement Scholarship Consortium, and publisher of JCES. “Nick has played a key role in the growth and scholarly reputation of the journal and this appointment is recognition of that role.”

“A member of the Editorial Board since the journal’s inception, Nick has been one of our most loyal reviewers,” said Dr. Simon. “We are pleased he has agreed to accept this additional responsibility.”

Response from Dr. Sanyal, University of Idaho, on Being Named Associate Editor of JCES

Agreeing to serve as the first associate editor of JCES has brought on moments of pride and a sense of opportunity, interspersed with moments of sheer panic! When asked by Samory Pruitt to consider this position I was humbled; JCES has rapidly moved into a position of excellence and now serves as one of the flagship publications in the field. I am delighted to serve JCES as an associate editor. Not only does it allow me to serve a field that my students and I are passionate about, but it will indeed be a special privilege to serve with and learn from the best—the JCES editorial team is second to none!

I currently serve as associate professor and coordinator of Undergraduate Studies in the Conservation Social Sciences Department (College of Natural Resources) and in the University-wide interdisciplinary Bioregional Planning and Community Design Program.

I have 25 years of research, teaching, and outreach in the human dimensions of conservation planning. In partnership with my students, I have worked on numerous service-learning projects focused on conservation planning in rural communities. I have presented at regional, national, and international conferences and workshops, including the Northwest Community Development Institute, American Planning Association, International Symposium of Society and Resource Management, World Wilderness Congress, and the International Union of Forestry Research Organizations.

My research and outreach have served many agencies and organizations including the National Park Service, EPA, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, NASA, U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Boeing Company, the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research and numerous state agencies and county and municipal governments in Idaho, Washington, and Nevada.

My work has been recognized with the UI Faculty Award of Excellence for Interdisciplinary or Collaborative Efforts (2012), the UI Alumni Award of Excellence in 2010 and 2012 for student mentoring, and the 2011 ASUI Student Leadership Award for Advising and Community Service. I earned the UI Vandal Pride Award for Excellence and Leadership in Teaching (2004), UI Faculty Award of Excellence in Teaching (2003), was appointed as a University Service Learning Fellow (2003). I was recognized with the 2001 Idaho Governor’s Take Pride in Idaho Award for my outreach and research contributions to Idaho’s tourism and recreation industry. I have also been recognized as the Outstanding Instructor and Outstanding Researcher in the UI College of Natural Resources.

Through my work I have sought to understand the relationship between communities and the working landscapes and wildlands around them. My brand of conservation planning recognizes that central to our use, enjoyment, planning, and conservation of resources are functioning, and often resilient, communities. My work has involved using and teaching qualitative and quantitative research and survey methodologies, public opinion measurement and planning theory. My pedagogical model of choice is community-based service-learning.

Service-learning is all about becoming better citizens. By engaging ourselves with a community through service-learning we come away with first-hand knowledge of the significance of conservation science and research as applied to a working landscape. We also gain an understanding of the intricacies of real world, small-town social and power systems. Finally, we are enriched with a fuller appreciation of the relationships between community, sustainability, conservation, and heritage.

An early goal I have is to see more first-time authors, students, and community partners published in JCES. As a JCES board member and reviewer I have read so many compelling manuscripts that just need the structure and organization to better convey their story to make a significant contribution to the scholarship of engagement. By enhancing the connections to existing knowledge and practice we can expand the transference of their knowledge and become a more inclusive platform for a larger community of scholars.
Collaborating for Improved Delivery of Health Care Services in the Horse Racing Industry: A University Interdisciplinary Program

Whitney A. Nash and Rhonda D. Buchanan

Abstract

This research describes the collaboration between the University of Louisville School of Nursing, the Latin and Latino Studies Program, and the Kentucky Racing Health and Welfare Fund to provide low to no cost comprehensive health care services to the backside workers (behind the scenes) in the thoroughbred horse racing industry. An integral part of this program is the Latin American and Latino Studies (LALS) internship, which provides students the opportunity to fulfill their requirement while providing a much-needed service to the racing industry’s primarily Hispanic population. Students complete a semester-long internship that enables them to refine their translation/interpretation skills in Spanish while developing a broader understanding of the impact of cultural determinants of health. Students have reported the experience to be professionally and personally rewarding and have identified it as “life-changing.”

On the first Saturday in May, the city of Louisville, Kentucky receives worldwide attention for hosting the most exciting two minutes in sports, the Kentucky Derby. What many don’t realize is the amount of work that takes place behind the scenes the other 364 days of the year on the backside of Churchill Downs to prepare for this world-class event.

The demographic make-up of individuals traditionally conducting the daily operation of the thoroughbred horse racing industry has changed over the past two decades. In the mid-twentieth century many of those who cleaned the stalls and fed and cared for the horses were African American.

At many racetracks today, Hispanics account for the majority of backside workers, an increase that reflects the growth in the Hispanic population in Jefferson County and the entire state over the past decade. This growth is a reflection of Hispanics becoming the fastest growing demographic segment in the United States. An unpublished report prepared for the Kentucky Governor’s Office of Minority Affairs by the director of Research and Statistics for the Kentucky Education and Workforce Development Cabinet states:

Between the 2000 and 2010 census, when broken down by race and Hispanic origin, Kentucky’s non-Hispanic white population grew by 137,642, or 3.8%, and accounted for 46.3%, or less than half, of the state’s population growth; our black population grew by 41,526, or 14%; and our “official” Hispanic population grew by 72,897, or 121.6% (Crouch, 2011, p. 1). The 2010 census indicates that in Jefferson County the Hispanic population has increased from 12,370 in 2000 to 32,542, a 163% increase. According to Crouch, “official” census counts in Kentucky are much lower than the actual figure. Crouch believes the undocumented Hispanic population is significantly larger—probably, perhaps two to four time larger. While no statistics are kept on this silent community, those who are intimately involved in the horse racing industry would most likely agree that employees on the backside are now predominantly Hispanic.

Both African Americans and Hispanics are disproportionately impacted by diminished access to health care. At least one in three Hispanics and almost one in five African Americans are uninsured in the United States (Mead, Cartwright-Smith, Jones, Ramos, Siegel, and Woods, 2008). In fact, 2009 data show that in the United States, four in ten individuals from low-income families have no insurance coverage. This lack of coverage makes them six times less likely to receive care (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2009). Adding to this dilemma is the higher rates of disease within these groups. Hispanics and African Americans are more likely than Caucasians to suffer from diabetes (Mead et al., 2008), new HIV infections (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007), and many forms of cancer (American Cancer Society, 2007).

Historically, the Kentucky Racing Health and Welfare Fund provided health care coverage to qualified individuals through a variety of local providers. This organization receives its funding from the state. The revenue is generated from uncashed pari-mutuel tickets. When individuals have a winning ticket but fail to cash it in, this money is returned to the state. Part of this money
is used to supply the Fund. Due to the backside workers’ inconsistent schedule available and the hours providers were typically available, many clients would receive care from an unending variety of primary care providers. This resulted in lack of care coordination and the overutilization of diagnostic testing. The board of directors of the Fund felt a centralized location of care provision, as well as a coordinated effort between the Fund and care provider, was needed.

The Partnership

To address the need for health care services for backside workers, the University of Louisville School of Nursing and the Kentucky Racing Health and Welfare Fund established the Kentucky Racing Health Services Center (KRHSC) in 2005 to coordinate primary care services for backside workers. This partnership also provided the university a site for clinical preceptorships, initially for nursing and medical students. While this form of training is central to the professional preparation of nursing and medical students, this unique clinic also provides the University of Louisville with the opportunity to enhance its mission of service to the community. In fact, the University of Louisville is within walking distance of the KRHSC and Churchill Downs.

The KRHSC provides student-facilitated services delivered under the direction of School of Nursing faculty. Basic health screenings, primary care, and referral coordination form the foundation of the health service center. When established, Spanish language translation and interpretation services were provided by a network of volunteers; however, as the client base grew, it became obvious that a more formal mechanism to deliver language services was needed.

The KRHSC was developed specifically to serve the backside, including Churchill Downs, Turfway Park, and Ellis Park. The workers are not employees of the racetrack but of the individual horse trainers. Because many of the trainers have only a few employees, it is cost-prohibitive for them to provide health care insurance.

A distinctive feature of the KRHSC is that its development and implementation is managed solely by certified nurse practitioners who are full-time faculty members of the nursing school. Fortunately, the nurse practitioners have a practice allocation in their workload and part of the funding for the KRHSC covers their practice time at the Center. Undergraduate and graduate students from multiple disciplines, including LALS, nursing, Spanish, biology, and other volunteers, provide all other services at the KRHSC, such as patient flow and clerical support. In an era when there are fewer primary care physicians, this model is becoming more widespread. Several studies suggest that care provided by nurse practitioners is not only of high quality, but is also cost-effective and results in high patient satisfaction (Elsom, Happell, & Manias, 2009; Horrocks, Anderson, & Salisbury, 2002; Laurant, Reeves, Hermens, Braspenning, Grol, & Sibbald, 2006).

The KRHSC operates 13 hours per week. Full primary care services are provided three days a week. After speaking with the workers and the trainers, we determined that Monday and Friday midday and Wednesday early evening would best accommodate the workers’ schedules.

The KRHSC is housed in the basement of a refurbished schoolhouse within walking distance of the state’s busiest and most recognizable horse racing track, Churchill Downs. Individuals currently working on the backside, as well as their spouses and dependents, are eligible for free care under the Fund’s guidelines. Clients must have an appointment and must be seen the same day that they request care. During the peak season of May to November, it is common for the nurse practitioners to see 10–12 patients each, during a 5-hour clinic day. A list of area clinics that offer a sliding fee scale is provided to those individuals not meeting KRHSC eligibility criteria.

Each semester, various levels of nursing students spend a portion of their clinical rotation at the KRHSC. Student volunteers work with the nurse practitioner staff to evaluate and treat patients with a variety of medical conditions. Since 2005, there have been over 9,500 patient visits to the KRHSC. In addition more than 200 students in nursing, medicine, Spanish, and LALS have experienced primary delivery in this unique setting.

The program provides much needed support for the backside workers, and also provides training opportunities for University of Louisville students. However, an important element of this program is the level of civic mindedness students gain through their experiences while serving with this program. For example, they become more aware they are a part of a larger community and they participate in work that addresses inequities within the community (Colby, Ehrlich, & Beaumont, 2003). As the need for services grew, so did the learning opportunities for students. After the first year of service, it became clear that a more
developed and formalized program for language services was needed at the KRHSC, and in the fall of 2006, the KRHSC began to partner with the LALS Program.

Service to the community, whether in Louisville or abroad, has been the foundation of the LALS Program since its inception in 2000. Internships are a requirement for undergraduate students who minor or major in the program and an elective for graduate students who pursue the graduate certificate. Volunteer interns put their Spanish linguistic skills to good use and give of their time, energy, knowledge, and talents to more than 20 local organizations that serve the Hispanic community, as well as foreign organizations in Argentina, Bolivia, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, and Peru. After consulting with the LALS director, students are matched with an organization related to their personal career goals and interests. For example, pre-med students volunteer at the KRHSC, future teachers mentor Latino middle school students for Adelante Hispanic Achievers, (Hispanic youth development program) and those interested in careers in law may serve as interns to interpret the court system. Between fall 2006 and summer 2012, 20 LALS students had served as interns at the KRHSC.

The majority of the students who have completed internships at the KRHSC have been pre-med students with an advanced level of Spanish. Students who are native Spanish speakers and those who have lived or studied abroad in a Spanish-speaking country are best prepared for the opportunity. To aid in the standardization of student selection, the KRHSC implemented the Foreign Service Institute Language Proficiency Rating Scale. The range of proficiency is from elementary level to bilingual (Interagency Language Roundtable, 2011). Students complete this assessment and the KRHSC uses the results as a guide only. In addition to LALS students, selected Spanish language majors enrolled in the University of Louisville Honors Program also have the opportunity to intern at the KRHSC.

After an orientation period, LALS students work directly with the nurse practitioners to ascertain medical histories, interact with clients and families, and work as part of the interdisciplinary team. LALS students also have the opportunity to work collaboratively with health science students. Of the 20 LALS students, one is currently enrolled in medical school, two others have been accepted, and several others will be applying to medical or nursing school in the near future.

As part of the assessment and evaluation criteria, students enrolled in the LALS internship are required to submit a proposal, weekly email progress reports, a time sheet, and a critical reflection paper to the LALS and the KRHSC directors. The weekly progress reports and the final reflection paper offer students an opportunity to evaluate the experience and examine their personal and academic growth throughout the semester. Critical reflection is widely cited as a key element in supporting students’ learning and deep integration of knowledge (Ash & Clayton, 2009). Students submit weekly progress reports to the LALS and the KRHSC directors as part of their coursework requirements for this internship. The information aids the staff of the KRHSC in identifying areas for program development, expansion of student learning activities, and improved communication with patients. The site supervisor completes a final evaluation form and submits it to the LALS director as part of the evaluation process.

For the purpose of this study, critical reflection papers received from 15 LALS students were reviewed by the KRHSC director to improve the quality of student experiences and build on past successes in health care delivery, Spanish language interpretation, and program structure. In order to use content from the students’ journals, approval from the University’s Institutional Review Board was sought and obtained.

Reflection provides the critical opportunity for students to comprehend more fully how they construct meanings and also deepens their capacity to transfer knowledge (Eyler, 2000). During the required internship evaluation process conducted by the LALS and the KRHSC directors, complex thinking patterns emerged. Improved Spanish linguistic skills and confidence in translation and interpretation were obvious and expected student reported outcomes. In their final critical papers, all students remarked that the KRHSC internship allowed them to increase their knowledge of medical terminology and to improve their confidence level when conversing with native Spanish speakers. Interestingly, many students recognized that vocabulary they had learned in the classroom was helpful, but their ability to use context clues was even more critical in their role at the KRHSC. These context clues include physical gestures and descriptive words to aid in communication. These remarks suggest students drew on multiple sources of knowledge to make decisions and communicate with their patients. The integration of their learning is evident in some
of the comments listed below. For example, one student remarked in the final critical paper:

When I began interning at the KRHSC, I did not fully understand what it meant to be a medical interpreter. As a nursing/Spanish double major, however, I realized that maintaining accuracy across languages would be crucial to ensure proper diagnoses. Right away, I began learning Spanish medical terminology. Beginning with characteristic words for common symptoms, I progressed to know the names of many internal organs, systems, and procedures. While interesting, it was a difficult process. Like other new interns, I felt confident enough in my conversational Spanish but when it came to more specialized medical jargon I felt at a disadvantage. However, the nurse practitioners were able to assist me greatly.

Beyond the improvement in language ability, particularly the expansion of vocabulary pertaining to the medical field, many students pointed to specific cultural experiences that were especially impactful. One student wrote in the reflection paper:

It was when I was left in the room after the [nurse practitioner] went to write a prescription that the patient would tell me where they came from. They would talk about the difficulty of learning English and express their gratitude and excitement that I could speak with them.

Another student wrote in a weekly progress report:

I enjoyed interpreting for an elderly Mexican gentleman who came in for a post-operation checkup. Before his examination I was able to converse with him and his Cuban friend. In addition, I interpreted for a man from Mexico, who was very friendly and talkative. As I reflect on my experience with these two individuals and their positive responses to my assistance, I realize that casually conversing with the patient before I have to interpret makes them feel more at ease, which facilitates the interpreting process. A broader understanding of the emotional toll of being away from family was also recognized. One student expressed empathy in this way: “Many patients had to leave family in their home countries. They lived apart from their children for years and sent money home. This was heartbreaking.”

Part of the role of the LALS intern at the KRHSC is to assist with client intake, such as collecting demographic data and helping to complete a basic medical history. Students are not always prepared for this experience. For example, one of the interns wrote:

I had some humbling experiences early on with checking in patients. Many patients from rural parts of Guatemala and Mexico displayed varying levels of literacy. Some could read but not write …; others needed all of their information taken orally and transcribed…. It never occurred to me that people who lived permanently in the U.S. might not be able to read or write their own name (in Spanish or English).

Many of the students who intern at the KRHSC have an interest in health-related professions, Students have pointed to their internship at the KRHSC as a clarifying and defining experience. Pre-med and nursing students conducting the LALS internship are given the opportunity not only to use their Spanish skills, but also to assist the staff with patient care. One student wrote in the final paper: “I learned to take patient histories, measure their blood pressure and present to the (nurse practitioner).” Others gained a deeper understanding of clinical decision-making. For example, one student remarked that before he came to the KRHSC, “I never knew why one medication was prescribed over another…. I also learned how important it is to distinguish between bacterial and viral infections.”

By far the most common theme that emerged from the final critical reflection papers was the students’ evaluation of the experience as “life-changing,” which is a difficult assessment to quantify. A nursing student and LALS intern stated, “Being an intern has helped me solidify what I would like to do in the future. I would like to live abroad, working in a clinic in a medically underserved part of Central or South America.” Another referred to the internship as “one of the most important experiences in my undergraduate education.” An intern who decided to return to
the university to complete a second degree in nursing stated:

I’ve also decided that for the rest of my life I will seek out opportunities like this one that will allow me to demonstrate the lessons I’ve learned here: How to give back without boasting, how to never stop asking, how to never stop looking for the good, and how to lend a hand without judging.

In the conclusion of the critical reflection paper, another student summed up the experience in the following way:

The clinic has helped me realize the importance of being a proactive person in life as well as in health care. If you want to see change, you must pursue actions that encourage that change. Proactive people challenge seemingly impossible goals and succeed. The clinic has done just this: provided a health care system for an impoverished community and has generated a reasonable level of health literacy in a minority population. Completing this internship at the clinic is just the beginning of my service to the Latin American community living in Louisville. I hope to continue learning and volunteering with Latinos living in the United States and abroad and eventually pursue public policy options that will serve to increase their assimilation and literacy so that they may live healthier and not as physically demanding lifestyles. Proactivity can accomplish the impossible.

Leasons Learned/Opportunities for Improvement

While lessons learned and possible improvements were numerous, they can be summarized as follows:

1. Greater consideration for requirements of internship. Although the student experience at the KRHSC has generally been a positive one, there is always room for improvement. The hours of operation (13 hours per week) make it difficult to accommodate the internship requirement of 80 hours for three credit hours. Supplementary activities are occasionally used to augment this requirement. For example, some students have volunteered at the Klein Family Learning Center on the backside of Churchill Downs, helping with English as a second language and computer classes.

2. Balancing competing priorities. At times, the KRHSC can see more than 20 clients in a five-hour time period, which can limit instructor-directed learning opportunities. Because the main objective of the KRHSC is to care for patients, it is possible that the students may not receive the level of attention they would prefer. Fortunately, this is not a common concern, and students very quickly embrace the clinic’s mission and become part of the team.

3. Remembering students as individuals with diverse learning needs. The biggest challenge for the KRHSC and LALS directors was identifying the student’s personal learning needs and developing an individualized opportunity that meets those needs. The development of a more formalized approach to this issue is a goal for the KRHSC and will further enhance the collaboration between the School of Nursing and the LALS Program. In addition, the new B.A. degree in LALS that began in 2012 provides even more opportunities for University of Louisville students to volunteer at the KRHSC.

Future Direction

The program has been successful and garnered local and national attention. In fact, the director of the KRHSC received the 2010 Outstanding Faculty Practice Award from the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties and the 2010 President’s Community Engagement Award at the University of Louisville. The LALS director also received recognition, as the 2012 University of Louisville Distinguished Service Award for Service to the Community.

Other universities have sought our advice regarding replication of this model. For example, Turfway Park in Florence, Kentucky has developed a similar academic collaboration with the Kentucky Racing Health and Welfare Fund and the Northern Kentucky School of Nursing. This partnership is designed to deliver care to the backside workers located in the northern part of the state.

The University of Louisville School of Nursing faculty plans to continue this initiative and its collaboration with the LALS Program and is investigating opportunities within the university and the surrounding community to expand services while maintaining high quality and convenient primary care delivered with compassion to the
culturally diverse population it serves.

References


About the Authors

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Revitalizing the First-Suburbs: The Importance of the Social Capital-Community Development Link in Suburban Neighborhood Revitalization—A Case Study

JoAnna Mitchell-Brown

Abstract
This article examines the link between social capital and community development. The purpose is to increase the understanding of social capital and its role and function in the neighborhood revitalization process within first-suburbs (also known as inner-ring suburbs). In doing so, it briefly outlines the challenges of the first-suburbs, in light of suburban decline. It also addresses the role and function of social capital as a community development tool within the first-suburbs. Finally, this piece provides case study examples describing the context in which first-suburban communities mobilize and use their social capital to implement community development initiatives, with the focus on the Greater Cincinnati region.

Introduction—The Challenges of First-Suburbs
Over the last several decades, inner-ring suburbs have encountered suburban decline. These first-suburbs, generally referred to as bedroom communities, developed just outside the central cities after World War II (Orfield, 2002; Hudnut, 2003; Lucy & Phillips, 2006; Puentes & Warren, 2006; Peiser & Schmitz, 2007; Puentes & Orfield, 2007; Hanlon & Vicino, 2008). Lucy and Phillips (2000, 2006) describe suburban decline as suburbs that experience shrinking business districts, declining residential neighborhoods, population loss, diminishing size and function of economic and political structures, and the emergence of crime and deterioration (see Table 1).

Problems of decline associated with the inner city are now visible in the first-suburbs. However, unlike their urban counterparts, which often receive federal, state, and county level support (both policy and financial assistance), first-suburbs often lack the support mechanisms necessary to alleviate decline and encourage community reinvestment (Puentes & Orfield, 2006). According to the Progressive Policy Institute (2004), the deterioration of housing and infrastructure and business districts creates a downward spiral for inner-ring suburban neighborhoods. Puentes and Orfield (2007) maintain that these challenges are urgent in nature and should be handled with seriousness. Many of the first-suburbs lack economic resources to respond to/handle these challenges. They are thus unable to combat the increasing distress and out-migration (of families and jobs) that create a downward spiral of instability and decline (Orfield, 2002; Puentes & Orfield, 2007). Further, the problems facing first-suburbs have been exacerbated by the recent foreclosure crisis and economic recession. In addition to budget woes resulting from the economic and housing crisis, many first-suburban communities face problems associated with high volumes of vacant and blighted properties (Schiller, 2007).

With elected officials and administrators of first-suburban communities facing budget constraints and increased threats to neighborhood stability, it is important to revisit the idea of social capital as a tool for community development. Social capital as a mechanism of community development has been explored over the past two decades. However, much of the research on this topic focused on its role and function in the revitalization of low-income communities across the United States and beyond, and to a lesser extent on lower- to middle-income first-suburban communities.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the social capital-community development link in relation to suburban decline. In doing so, I analyze the social capital and community development process. I then examine neighborhood revitalization and stability in light of this connection, pointing out criticisms of social capital. Next, the paper provides an overview of first-suburbs challenges, illustrated by examples of first-ring suburbs and the way in which their particular contexts affect how social capital is mobilized and implemented in community development initiatives, drawing from local case examples of the Greater Cincinnati region.

Research Methodology
This research was prompted by my experiences as a housing planner for Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME) and the Hamilton County...
Regional Planning Commission (HCRPC) beginning in January 2007. Both HOME and HCRPC saw a need for intervention in the suburbs to address issues of affordable workforce housing, particularly in first-suburb communities. In 2006, the agencies partnered and submitted a joint grant application to the United Way of Greater Cincinnati to hire a housing planner to work with first-ring suburbs in developing housing plans and programs that would promote affordable workforce housing. When they received funding in 2007, I was hired for this position.

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and neighborhood decline in three inner-ring suburbs in the Greater Cincinnati area. Focusing on nonprofit housing community development corporations working in the selected suburbs, the research 1) ethnographically characterizes or describes the social networks and community improvement efforts within each suburb and 2) compares and contrasts types of social capital across suburbs. Data came from three primary sources: 1) key informant and social network interviews with executive staff of nonprofit housing CDCs and local government officials in the first-suburbs of Elmwood Place and Mount Healthy; 2) participant observations of nonprofit housing CDCs in the selected suburbs, including my personal experiences and observations as a housing planner; and 3) archival data. Interview coding, descriptive statistics, and content analysis were the primary methods used. At the heart of this research is the concept of triangulation, where findings are drawn after discovering the same patterns playing out using multiple data sources and methods (Yin, 2004).

**The Social Capital and Community Development Process**

The community development process strives to stabilize economic conditions, increase quantity and quality of housing to support development and improve quality of life, improve commercial functions, physical aspects and attractiveness of the community, and provide a variety of public services to support quality development outcomes (Phillips, 2002). In order to accomplish these objectives, communities need social capital. Social capital comprises the social ties and networks in the community development process. Community development literature generally refers to social capital as the catalyst that leads or facilitates the community development process. It is the extent to which members of a community can work together effectively to develop and sustain strong relationships, solve problems, and collaborate to accomplish collective goals (Putnam, 1993; Woolcock, 2001; Phillips & Pittman, 2009). Dale and Onyx (2005) contend there is a general intuitive sense that social capital strengthens communities and is a necessary ingredient for community development.

Social capital alone cannot revitalize communities; other forms of community capital are also needed. The other forms of community capital that are also part of the community development process comprise human capital (e.g., labor and volunteer), physical capital (e.g., public infrastructure), financial capital (e.g., loans, grants, donations), and environmental capital (e.g., natural resources, green space). Yet, although these other forms of community capital are important, social capital is the glue for holding the other kinds of capital together. For instance, social capital building leads to social capital being created, which in turn leads to the outcome of community development. Consequently, when citizens see positive results (outcomes), they generally become more enthused and introduce more energy into the community development process because they see the payoff (Phillips & Pittman, 2009). By investing resources in communities, social entrepreneurs augment social capital and facilitate social action (Portes & Landolt, 2000; Dhesi, 2010). Therefore, it can be implied that collective social capital can lead to better governance and its existence to better community outcomes (See Figure 1).

**Neighborhood Revitalization and Stability—Social Capital and Community Development Link**

In recent decades, the concept of social capital has been broadly used to explain neighborhood dynamics, particularly its deep connection to neighborhood revitalization issues. This link between social capital and neighborhood-level social and economic conditions has not gone unnoticed by community development analysts and practitioners. The Committee for Economic Development (1995), for example, argues that social capital development should be one of the emphases of community development.

In addition, many studies have linked the presence of social capital to neighborhood revitalization and increased stability. For example, research conducted by Marwell (2000) examined the different types of social capital...
created by nonprofit organizations pursuing social and physical revitalization work in Williamsburg and Bushwick, two low-income urban neighborhoods in Brooklyn, New York. She concludes that social capital yields improvements within neighborhoods. For instance, she found Williamsburg has strong social capital for engaging in communitarian democratic practices that produced improvements to neighborhood social infrastructure, while Bushwick has strong social capital for accessing financial resources that bring enhancements to the neighborhood’s physical infrastructure. Additionally, an empirical study by Temkin and Rohe (1998) examined neighborhoods in Pittsburgh and found that social capital is more important to strong neighborhoods than other more traditional indicators such as physical capital and vacancy rates. They conclude that social capital “should be included in any neighborhood revitalization or stabilization effort” (p. 86).

There is also increasing evidence that social capital has a significant positive effect on quality of life and economic growth within neighborhoods (e.g., Putnam, 1993; Knack & Keefer, 1997; Beugelsdijk & Smulders, 2003; Ogorzalek, 2004). Putnam (1993) showed that the density and scope of local civic associations laid the foundations for the widespread dissemination of information and social trust, thereby creating the conditions underpinning effective governance and economic development. In Putnam’s view, social capital consists of resources within communities. These resources are created through the presence of high levels of trust, reciprocity and mutuality, shared norms of behavior, shared commitment and belonging, both formal and informal social networks, and effective information channels. Putnam asserts that social capital resources when used productively by individuals and groups to facilitate actions, benefit individuals, groups, and the community. He concludes that decreasing levels of social capital induces negative impacts for the overall quality of life within communities (e.g., ethnic tension, lower political efficacy, less collective action, lower confidence and trust in government, perception of lower quality of life of residents) (Putnam, 1993, 2000, 2003; New Economist Foundation, 2000). Putnam’s theory of social capital seems to validate the potential of community development for improving distressed neighborhoods and encouraging social networks and norms characterized by trust and mutual responsibility. The social capital that these relationships are supposed to create supports achievement of collective and individual goals and leads to both economic development and civic participation.

Bridging, Bonding, and Linking Social Capital

According to Saegert and Winkel (1998), those using social capital strategies to combat neighborhood distress need to consider all three levels of social capital: bridging, bonding, and linking. Bonding social capital is usually defined as association and trust among neighbors, or strong social bonds, and effective organizations within a community (Putnam, 1993, 2000; Saegert & Winkel, 1998; Larsen, Harlan, Bolin, Hackett, Hope, Kirby, Nelson, Rex, & Wolf, 2004). These ties are socially closer (involving few people, usually family, friends, and maybe the community) and not always geographically closer (involving people that live near each other). Putnam suggests that bonding social capital is good for “getting by.” Bonding (exclusive) social capital refers to relations amongst relatively homogenous groups such as family members and close friends and is similar to the notion of strong ties. Putnam (2000) lists examples of bonding social capital as being ethnic fraternal organizations and church-based women’s reading groups (see Table 2).

In comparison, bridging (inclusive) social capital refers to relations with distant friends, associates, and colleagues. It is described as a set of cross-cutting and cooperative ties, and occurs when members of a group connect with members of other groups to seek access or support or to gain information (Larsen et al., 2004). Saegart and Winkel (1998) contend that bridging social capital establishes horizontal ties between associative organizations and supports the formation of alliances and coalitions across communities (i.e., across local institutions, between different communities, between poor and affluent communities). Putnam (2000) differentiates between bridging and bonding by suggesting that “…bonding social capital constitutes a kind of sociological super glue, whereas bridging social capital provides a sociological WD 40…. ” (p. 19). Putnam lists examples of these as being civil rights movements and ecumenical religious organizations. These ties tend to be weaker and more diverse but more importance in “getting ahead” (Putnam, 1993, 2000).

On the other hand, linking social capital refers to relations between individuals and groups in
different social strata in a hierarchy whereby power, social status, and wealth are accessed by different groups (Cote & Healy, 2001). Woolcock (2001) extends this to include the capacity to leverage resources, ideas, and information from formal institutions beyond the community. This type of social capital facilitates cooperative relationships in which power and control by one side are higher than the other, creating synergy with financial and public institutions or constructive connections with mainstream economic and political institutions in order to access public and external resources (Saegart & Winkel, 1998).

**Criticisms of Social Capital**

Although theory and research suggest the positive effects of social capital for residents of distressed neighborhoods, scholars have also noted its possible negative effects (Briggs, 1998; DeFillipis, 2001). These criticisms have to do with the downside of social capital. Opponents of social capital identified four negative consequences: exclusion of outsiders, excessive claims on members, restrictions on individual freedom, and downward-leveling norms (Portes & Landolt, 2000; Portes, 1998, 2000). More recent works recognize that not all forms of social capital are necessarily productive and may be restrictive and exclude outsiders from enjoying the benefits of social capital (Putnam, 2000; Putnam & Feldstein, 2003). For example, social capital is inherent in urban gangs; yet, these types of social networks are counterproductive. In this context, the stronger types of social capital, such as bonding, benefit those within the group. There are also doubts if networks such as voluntary organizations can revive civic and political engagement (Boggs, 2001). Boggs argues that traditional voluntary

<table>
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| Bonding (Exclusive) | An association and trust among neighbors, or strong social bonds, and effective organizations within a community (Putnam, 1993, 2000).  
Strong Social Bonds and Trust  
These ties are socially closer (involving few people, usually family, friends, and maybe community) and not always geographically closer (involving people living close to each other) (Putnam, 1993, 2000; Saegart & Winkel, 1998; Larsen et al., 2004). |
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Cross-Organization Partnerships  
Establishes horizontal ties between associative organizations and supports the formation of alliances and coalitions across communities (i.e., across local institutions, between poor and affluent communities) (Putnam, 1993, 2000; Saegart & Winkel, 1998; Larsen et al., 2004). |
| Linking (Inclusive) | Refers to “relations between individuals and groups in different social strata in a hierarchy where power, social status, and wealth are accessed by different groups” (Cote & Healy, 2001, p. 42).  
Cross-Boundary Alliances with External Resource Networks  
Includes the capacity to leverage resources, ideas, and information from formal institutions beyond the community, which facilitates cooperative relationships in which power and control by one side are higher than on the other side (Saegart & Winkel, 1998). |

Compiled by Mitchell-Brown, 2011
organizations (e.g., social clubs, fraternities, and sports leagues) declined because they “lost their raison d’etre [reason for being] as their goals became outdated” (p. 284). Despite these criticisms, research evidence clearly indicates that social capital is a compelling tool for community development in distressed neighborhoods, including within first-ring suburbs.

**Social Capital Stock within the Context of First-Ring Suburbs**

There has been extensive documentation of the challenges experienced by first-suburbs. The problems that were initially common in inner-cities are now visible in the first-suburbs. These communities are often faced with a difficult confluence of problems: aging population to go with aging infrastructure, declining business districts along with the lack of space for new development, and declining homeownership, as well as a decreasing tax base. However, first-suburbs often lack the support mechanisms (from state and federal government) necessary to alleviate decline and encourage community reinvestment. Therefore, first-suburbs must find alternative means to promote neighborhood stability and revitalization.

Research specifically related to first-suburbs and neighborhood revitalization consists of case studies conducted by Orfield (2000), Hudnut (2003), Ogorzalek (2004), Puentes and Warren (2006), and Peiser and Schmitz (2007). Each study indicated that some form of social capital was necessary for neighborhood revitalization to occur within the first-suburbs. For instance, Ogorzalek (2004), conducted first-suburbs case studies of Richfield, Minnesota and Santa Ana, California that employed social capital building as a mechanism to mobilize human, physical, and financial capital to revitalize neighborhoods. Both communities utilized community organizing, including developing public-private partnerships (among community residents, local businesses, nonprofit and private developers, and government institutions) to leverage community capital. Their efforts resulted in new public infrastructure, rehabilitation of blighted housing, and decreased crime. Additionally, Orfield (2000) and Puentes and Warren (2006) identified regional collaboration and cohesion as a criterion for neighborhood revitalization in the suburbs, while Peiser and Schmitz (2007) argued that suburban stability and regeneration must entail components of good leadership, community participation, and civic and cultural engagement.

Based on evidence from the literature, it can be argued that social capital is a viable tool for community development within distressed communities, including first-suburbs. However, the extent to which social capital is able to address all the challenges of first-suburbs depends on the specific context in which first-suburban communities mobilize their social capital to implement community development initiatives. Intuitively, the basic idea of social capital is that one’s social networks (e.g., family, friends, and associates) constitute an important asset which can be called upon in a crisis and/or leveraged for material gain. Therefore, it can be implied that those communities endowed with a rich stock of social networks and civic associations will be in a stronger position to confront neighborhood decline and/or take advantage of new opportunities (Woolcock, 1998). Moreover, neighborhoods with high levels of social capital might be expected to respond effectively to the forces of change and, in doing so, maintain or even enhance stability. For instance, Onyx and Leonard’s (2010) study of social capital indicated high performing communities (high economic growth) demonstrate considerably higher levels of social capital, with strong internal and external networks, than poor performing communities do. In addition, Flora and Flora (1997) analyzed a national sample of non-metropolitan communities. They conclude that communities with a larger number of formal organizational ties to the outside were more likely to have developed successful economic development projects compared to communities with fewer such ties. Thus areas with relatively low levels of social capital may be expected to succumb to the forces of change and experience decline.

Conversely, the absence or disuse of social ties can have an equally important impact. Ostrom’s (1999) analysis of social capital found that if unused, social capital deteriorates rapidly. If there is an absence of social capital in the group, neighborhood, or community, it will not be possible for those people to work together for the common good. Causes of low social capital result from several factors. One factor is the absence of human capital required for social capital’s core building blocks (e.g., self-esteem, trust, communication skills). Second, there are inadequate levels of material well-being (i.e., people are struggling for survival) within the community. Third, there is inadequate physical infrastructure such as places to meet, public spaces, telephones, and newspapers. Last, the human, economic, and
physical infrastructure pre-requisites are present, but there have been no opportunities to develop networks and interconnections among people.

While several first-suburban communities may share a similar general context, each will be unique. Therefore, first-suburban communities characterized by the absence of social networks, lower-income residents, lower populations of educated residents, and the lack of governmental resources (e.g., funding, political support, and staff) may tend to have lower levels of social capital stock. In comparison, first-suburban communities with a high number of neighbor networks present, higher-income residents, higher populations of educated residents, and access to governmental resources (e.g., funding, political support, and staff) may tend to have higher levels of social capital stock. However, in either case, the ability to mobilize and use social capital can lead to positive community development outcomes. This is illustrated by evidence from community development activities initiated by social networks in two first-suburbs within the Greater Cincinnati region.

Illustrations of Low Social Capital Stock Within the First-Ring Suburbs: Elmwood Place, Ohio—Context

Elmwood Place is a village with a 79% white and 15% African American population. It is a lower-middle class community with a population of 2,188 (U.S. Census, 2010). With only a third of a square mile in area, it is the second smallest jurisdiction in the county but ranks the highest in population density (Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission, 1990). The village was established in the mid-1790s as the first white settlers moved into the area. After World War II, more families began to favor the newer suburbs in comparison to Elmwood Place, which was built out with no developable land for modern housing. Retail shops closed. The village tried to attract more industry to build up the tax base, but few new ones moved in. Urban renewal projects stalled, and public services were cut back severely. By the early 1980s, Elmwood Place faced a fiscal crisis that was resolved only upon implementation of a financial plan developed by state officials (Giglierno & Overmyer, 1988; Ellison, personal communication, January 2007).

Over time, the Elmwood Place continued its downward spiral. This is visible in the decline of its residential neighborhoods and business corridor. Today, its quiet, quaint residential neighborhoods are plagued with pockets of run-down and abandoned homes due to years of neglect or recent foreclosures. There are areas within its neighborhoods with aging, deteriorating, and/or obsolete housing stock. Most of the homes within Elmwood Place are over 90 years old and are in need of repairs. This is reflected in the village’s housing values. The median selling price in 2010 was $21,000. This is $74,450 less than the median selling price for Hamilton County ($95,453) overall (Cincinnati MLS, 2011).

To make the situation worse, the pressing issue of foreclosures has affected the community. In 2000, approximately 120 of 1,111 Elmwood Place’s homes were vacant or foreclosed, and this trend has continued. In 2010, the village ranked 25th out of 49 communities in completed foreclosures in Hamilton County (Working in Neighborhoods (WIN), 2010). Its business district also suffers from elements of decline. Once a thriving and bustling commercial area, its business district now resembles a ghost town. Empty storefronts and vacant, decaying buildings line its main street like empty caskets. At its peak in the 1950s, the village had over 100 thriving businesses along its main corridor (Ellison, personal communication, January 2007). Today it has fewer than 10.

Since 1980, the village has steadily declined 23% in both its population and household incomes. In addition, the Elmwood Place has a higher population of low to moderate income persons than other jurisdictions within Hamilton County. For example, the median household income in 2009 was $31,806, which is $20,223 less than the national median and $11,557 less than that of Hamilton County, while the per capita income for the village in 2000 was $13,466, one of the lowest in Hamilton County. Of Elmwood Place’s 774 households, approximately 20 percent of the population and 23 percent of families are below the poverty line. In Hamilton County’s 49 jurisdictions, Elmwood Place ranks second among percentages of families living below the poverty line (20%), and 47th in median family income (see Table 3). Since 1980, the poverty rate has increased by 10%.

Social Capital Stock: Mobilization and Use

Cross-Boundary Alliances with External Resource Networks (Linking) and Developing Partnerships with Outside Organizations

Given the Elmwood Place’s problems, the mayor of Elmwood Place decided to take steps to try to stop or slow the decline. In 2007, the mayor...
solicited the assistance of the Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission (HCRPC), a county agency that provides advisory planning services to county municipalities upon request. Toward the end of 2007, the HCRPC completed a community plan entitled The Village of Elmwood Place Project Impact Plan, at the village’s request. A recommendation of the plan called for the village to seek a nonprofit housing organization to assist with the redevelopment of its residential neighborhoods. The mayor and council were open to this recommendation and agreed to have the staff at HCRPC contact a nonprofit housing organization (Ellison, personal communication, January 2007). The HCRPC staff and mayor met with WIN’s executive director and were able to encourage her to assist Elmwood in reinvesting in its housing stock through acquisition, rehab, and resale, as well as in new infill housing.

WIN is a nonprofit housing CDC located in the urban community of South Cumminsville in Cincinnati and was created in 1978 to give low and moderate income residents a voice in issues that affected them. WIN committed to complete 10 housing units in Elmwood Place over a five-year time span, beginning in 2008 (B. Busch, personal communication, February 15, 2008). WIN has acquired two homes so far. To further assist with the implementation of this endeavor, WIN applied for and was awarded $960,000 by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) HOME Investment Partnerships Program grant funds to develop eight houses in Elmwood Place in 2008 (H. Wilson, personal communication, February, June 24, 2011). WIN has since acquired other additional funding, but has proceeded slowly. Included in these funds is money for soft second mortgages for first-time buyers of the properties. Beyond housing development, WIN agreed to provide homeownership training workshops in the village. The purpose is to encourage potential home buyers to consider the village as a place of residence, as well as to encourage existing renters to become homeowners (H. Wilson, personal communication, February, June 24, 2011).

During that same time the Elmwood Place also requested additional assistance from HCRPC to utilize a housing planner, under a new program established by a partnership between HOME and HCRPC. The housing planner was to develop a plan for improving housing conditions. As part of the planning process, two residential target areas were identified as areas in severe decline. Both of these areas had homes that were in substandard conditions needing repair (Mitchell-Brown, 2007). The housing planner assisted the village in applying for additional Community Development Block Grant funding to establish an exterior housing improvement program of which the village was awarded $25,000. Under the direction of the housing planner, the village collaborated with the Hamilton County Community Development Department to oversee the program and select eligible applicants. From this program, 10 grants were awarded averaging $3,000–$5,000 to property owners for exterior housing repairs.

Two years after the housing study was completed, the village was awarded a federal grant of $225,000 from HUD’s Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) Round 1 due to its high number of foreclosures. NSP was first funded in early 2009. These are limited programs specifically to address the problems of vacant, foreclosed, and abandoned properties. The funds are being used to acquire and rehab, or in some cases demolish, vacant, blighted, and abandoned homes,
to convert to active residential use (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2008; Hamilton County Community Development Department, 2011). The mayor knew that the village lacked the expertise, skill, and manpower to acquire and rehab homes. He sought a nonprofit housing developer, Homestead and Urban Redevelopment Corporation (HURC), which was recommended by the housing planner, to revitalize neighborhoods within the two target areas identified in the housing study.

HURC was initially organized and established in 1976 by the City of Cincinnati to take title to HUD inventory under the HUD 810 Urban Homestead Program, which is the City of Cincinnati’s Home $1 Lottery Program. As a result of 1999 city budget cuts, HURC became an independent organization. Today, HURC’s focus is acquiring, rehabbing, and selling its current housing inventory and HUD $1 houses (B. Kocher, personal communication, January 27, 2011; E. Rust, personal communication, January 27, 2011). By summer 2009, a formal partnership was developed between the village and HURC. Currently HURC is in the process of rehabbing two blighted foreclosed homes, which will be sold to homeowners.

Social capital stock within Elmwood Place is very low or almost non-existent. There are no formal or informal organizations that strive to promote community development. In regard to community development efforts, the mayor works mainly as a loner, without any true support from the Village Council. The village also lacks local financial resources to promote community development efforts. Although bonding and bridging social capital are virtually non-existent, the village does have characteristics of linking social capital. By collaborating with outside organizations, the Elmwood Place was able to improve its housing stock and homeownership within two of its targeted neighborhoods, using its network of resources (human, physical, financial) from outside institutions that the village itself lacked.

Illustration of High Social Capital Stock within the First-Ring Suburbs: City of Mount Healthy, Ohio—Context

Mount Healthy, first settled as a village in 1817, was originally named Mount Pleasant. The town prospered economically in the following decades, with the establishment of some light manufacturing, as well as a number of taverns, a furniture factory, several garment factories, wagon makers, and potteries. In the twentieth century, as automobile use became more widespread, Mount Healthy became a suburb of Cincinnati. Mount Healthy officially became a city in 1951. Located just 15 miles north of downtown Cincinnati, Mount Healthy consists of a collection of single-family residential neighborhoods (Mitchell-Brown, 2008).

Mount Healthy has shown signs of decline in its residential neighborhoods and business district. Two of the most common problems are an aging housing stock and poor property maintenance. Most of the homes are over 60 years old with a median selling price in 2010 of $85,000 (U.S. Census 2000; Cincinnati MLS, 2011). Due their age, homes in Mount Healthy are in need of repairs. Foreclosures are also a pressing issue. In 2010, the village ranked 15th out of 49 communities in completed foreclosures in Hamilton County (WIN, 2010). Beyond residential housing issues, its business district faces problems of increased vacancy and declining property maintenance. For rent signs are becoming a common scene along its main street, and unkempt properties are progressively becoming a growing concern among business owners (Giglierno & Overmyer, 1988; B. Kocher, personal communication, January 27, 2011). Currently, Mount Healthy is a 74% white and 24% African American middle-income community (U.S. Census, 2010). Similar to Elmwood Place, Mount Healthy continues to experience decline in its population, business district, and residential neighborhoods. However, this decline is not as severe as in Elmwood Place. During the past three decades, Mount Healthy’s population has decreased by 19%, and its household incomes shrank by 21%. Mount Healthy’s median household income is $43,225, which is $8,804 less than the national median and $5,138 less than that of Hamilton County as a whole (U.S. Census, 2010). The per capita income for Mount Healthy in 2000 was $18,662. In addition, Mount Healthy has seen a huge increase in issues related to poverty. Of Mount Healthy’s 3,252 households, approximately 12% of the population and 12% of families are below the poverty line. Since 1980 its poverty rate has increased by over 100 percent (see Table 4).

Social Capital Stock: Mobilization and Use

Strong Social Bonds and Trust (Bonding) and Neighborhood Based Organizations

The City of Mount Healthy has two key community-based networks that organize and mobilize to
make improvements within the city’s residential areas and business corridor. The first network is the local community business association, the Mount Healthy Business Association (MHBA). The organization was initially formed over 50 years ago as a forum for business networking and marketing. During the past two decades it has transformed into not only a networking forum, but also a mechanism and resource for community improvement initiatives within the city. Members of the business association partnered with the city administration and council to improve relations between the businesses and the community through community events such as the Annual Celebrate Mount Healthy/Car Show, Mount Healthy Business Expo, and Annual Winter Social. This organization uses these events to raise funds to make infrastructure improvements within the business corridor, such as parking lot improvements (M. Fey, March 8, 2011, personal communication; B. Kocher, personal communication, January 27, 2011; T. Lombardo, personal communication, March 8, 2011).

Currently, the business association has collaborated with the city to improve property maintenance within the business district to implement a self-imposed property code maintenance program. Members of the business association began to see an increase in the number of poorly maintained properties and wanted to take a proactive stance to address this problem. The Business Property Maintenance Initiative allows the business owners to work collaboratively with the city property maintenance code enforcement officer to document and report issues of property maintenance and go after property owners to make the necessary improvements. In addition to the property maintenance program, the MHBA also joined forces with the city administration and council in developing the Economic Development Committee (EDC). This committee is charged with addressing issues of business vacancies. In order to do this, the EDC has developed an action plan for business recruitment and retention with the hope of filling the vacancy gaps in the business district. They also are sponsoring business education seminars for new and existing businesses within the city (C. Graham, personal communication, May 29, 2011; B. Kocher, personal communication, January 27, 2011).

A second network is the city’s Community Beautification Committee, a group of resident volunteers. This group was started in the early 2000s by a resident who wanted to make the city a more attractive, inviting, and walkable community. In her quest, she solicited several of her neighbors and established the Mount Healthy Beautification Committee. The group solicits donations from residents and businesses to implement community beautification projects throughout the city. Projects include planters in the downtown area, landscaping of the community center and pocket parks, and neighborhood clean-up of public green spaces (C. Graham, personal communication, May 29, 2011; B. Kocher, personal communication, January 27, 2011).

Table 4. City of Mount Healthy Community Context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Poverty %</th>
<th>Household Income</th>
<th>Social Capital Stock</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Change %</td>
<td>1980**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7,562</td>
<td>6,098</td>
<td>-19</td>
<td>$54,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>2009*</td>
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<tr>
<td>1980**</td>
<td>2009*</td>
<td>Change %</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>115</td>
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*This was the most recent data available for this variable.
**1980 median income dollars were converted to constant 2009 dollars by multiplying 1979 dollars by 3.34. This variable, constant within years, inflates or deflates dollar amounts to the amount they would have represented in 2009. 1980 income was converted to 2009 dollars by multiplying the annual 1980–2009 inflation rate by 3.34%.

Cross-organization Partnerships (Bridging)

Developing Partnerships with Inside Organizations

The Mount Healthy Alliance, Inc. is a volunteer driven organization of churches in the area to address issues of poverty and hunger within the city. Their belief is that they can serve more of their community by joining together than by acting individually (K. Lorenz, personal communication, March 8, 2011). The organization emerged in 2007 as a result of a community pastors meeting during which many pastors brought up
the issue that they were seeing more and more people asking for assistance. They thought the best way to manage the problem would be to form an organization of all churches to address that situation, which was eventually called the Mount Healthy Alliance (MHA). As part of the alliance, each member congregation provides food and other items needed for the pantry. The congregations also provide financial support and volunteers to operate the pantry. All staff members work on a volunteer basis. MHA also solicits volunteer assistance from local high schools and other community organizations. They also receive assistance in the form of food donations from agencies such as the Freestore Foodbank.

Over the past two years, the MHA's program has grown based on the community's need. The MHA's main operation is its food pantry, which operates much like a grocery store. Patrons come to the pantry and fill out paperwork confirming that they are eligible to receive food based on USDA income guidelines. In 2007, MHA served approximately 45 to 50 families a month. In 2010, they served an average of 245 households a month (K. Lorenz, personal communication, March 8, 2011).

**External Alliances Partnerships (Linking)**

*Developing Partnerships with Outside Organizations*

Comprised of residents, business owners, and council, Mount Healthy’s CIC is a nonprofit organization focused on economic development within the city. The Mount Healthy CIC began over 20 years ago. The need for the CIC at that time was for redevelopment. Established as a private 501(c)3 attached to the city, the CIC serves as its economic development arm. The key element is the capability to acquire property more effectively than a public entity, such as a city. The CIC is only activated as needed and has two major initiatives: (1) to land bank properties within the downtown area of the city, and (2) the Martin Street/CMHA Housing project (B. Kocher, personal communication, January 27, 2011; S. Wolf, personal communication, February 24, 2011).

In 2009, the city administration and the CIC collaborated with a local public housing agency, the Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA), to acquire vacant and abandoned multi-family properties in the city’s most distressed residential neighborhood along Martin Street. The goal of the partnership was to revitalize the neighborhood and to establish senior housing within this community. CMHA’s mission is to “provide quality, affordable housing solutions in Hamilton County communities by strengthening and expanding housing opportunities for families to choose self-sufficiency” (Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority, 2011, p. 4). The city’s former mayor and current attorney initially approached CMHA and began the discussion of opportunities for them to assist the city in neighborhood revitalization. He knew CMHA was potentially working in another first-suburban community and wondered if they would be interested in working in an area where there were similar circumstances. However, before an agreement was solidified, the city staff and council researched CMHA and visited some of their housing development projects. In addition, there were several meetings between the city staff, CIC members, and CMHA staff, which included discussions of the boundaries and expectations of all parties. Slowly, all groups were able to build and establish trust, which resulted in a development partnership.

In 2009, the city and CIC had been awarded $225,000 in NSP funds to purchase 15 properties along Martin Street. When the city and CIC ran out of those funds, the city committed additional bond dollars to continue the purchase of properties for the revitalization project. In the meantime, CMHA received additional funds from NSP2 to assist with the redevelopment of the site. In spring 2012 demolition was completed, and a groundbreaking ceremony was held that summer, with a projected 2013 completion date. The completed project will be a $1.5 million dollar investment (R. Ruberg, personal communication, February 24, 2011; B. Kocher, personal communication, January 27, 2011).

Compared to Elmwood Place, Mount Healthy has a relatively high level of social capital stock. There are at least two social capital networks that promote community development. There is evidence of bonding, bridging, and linking social capital, illustrating association and trust among members, strong social bond, and effective organizations within a community, as well as cross-cutting organizational ties and cooperative alliances with external resources. Mount Healthy’s mayor, council, and city administration are also actively engaged in community development efforts with their community-based organizations as well as other organizations outside the community.

**Conclusion**

The lower level of social capital stock in Elmwood Place is largely a result of its context.
For instance, Elmwood Place is characterized by the absence of neighbor networks, lower-income residents, less educated population, and lack of governmental resources. Because of its context, many residents within the community are struggling to get by and may not have the time to devote to community development efforts. Unlike Mount Healthy, Elmwood Place lacks the community social networks to help address most of the challenges it is experiencing. There are no neighborhood community improvement corporations or business associations to attend to its deteriorating business district. Despite the lack of bonding and bridging stocks of social capital, Elmwood Place has been able to improve its residential neighborhoods by using resources and skills from organizations outside the community. This use of linking social capital helped to foster positive community development initiatives for the village. For instance, the exterior housing improvement program administered by the county helped to improve over 10 homes in distressed neighborhoods. The implication is that although weak in some instances, social capital stock is a possible instrument for neighborhood revitalization.

The concept of social capital has been used broadly to explain neighborhood dynamics within the past several decades, being deeply connected to neighborhood revitalization issues. Social capital’s role and function in the community development-neighborhood revitalization process within first-suburbs is as a catalyst for action and mechanism for the obtaining and sharing of resources (e.g., human, financial, and physical capital) and knowledge (e.g., ideas, best practices, and opportunities). In the case studies of the first-suburbs in Cincinnati, the mobilization and use of social capital occurred to address a real or perceived need/concern identified by residents and business owners within the neighborhoods. For example, the businesses in Mount Healthy felt that their business area was declining and organized to take steps to deal with its problems.

Based on evidence from the literature and case examples, social capital is a viable and necessary community development tool for compellingly addressing challenges of the first-ring suburbs. The link between community development and social capital is a significant factor in improving neighborhood conditions within the first-suburbs, particularly those issues at the micro-scale (e.g., neighborhood blight and vacancies, crime, declining business district, older and sometimes obsolete housing stock, population loss). Social capital reflects the ability of community members to participate, cooperate, organize, and interact. Within this framework, the success of social capital depends on the specific context in which it occurs. Given certain conditions, social capital can be considered an enabling resource that improves the effectiveness of other community capital inputs in development. Simply put, those communities endowed with a rich stock of social networks and civic associations will be in a stronger position to confront suburban decline. In comparison, those first-suburban communities with low social capital stock will be in weaker positions to promote community development. However, it is not necessarily the level, but the presence, of social capital that is critical for neighborhood revitalization to occur.

The illustrations demonstrate the role and function of social capital in the first-suburbs as change agent and catalyst for action and sharing of resources among community members, local officials, and public and nonprofit agencies. In each case, social capital is mobilized to address neighborhood problems. As such, concerns such as community image, neighborhood crime, or poor property maintenance seemed to be addressed by community-based organizations and local government (e.g. beautification committee) either through individual programs or projects or via cross-organizational alliances. In comparison, problems of housing and foreclosures tend to be addressed through cross-boundary partnerships and collaborative arrangements between public entities and outside institutions (e.g., local government and public housing agency or nonprofit housing provider).

The cases demonstrate that local governments are key players in the development of community driven social capital and the success of neighborhood improvement initiatives. Though limited in financial support, local governments provide moral support to neighborhood-based organizations, as well as in-kind support through the use of materials, supplies, or staff. In return, neighborhood-based organizations assist local governments in building community character and image by neighborhood improvement projects and programs. In addition, each case also illustrated how outside institutions play influential roles in the social capital-community development process within first-suburban communities. Problems, such as residential foreclosures and blight, tended to require knowledge, skills, and resources beyond
those available within the local communities (e.g., linking social capital) in order for neighborhood revitalization to occur. To address these types of issues local government administrators should continue to act as initiators in the residential redevelopment of their communities, soliciting and engaging nonprofit housing developers in neighborhood improvement partnerships in the first-suburbs.

The CDC-local government partnerships have proven beneficial in several respects. First, the establishment of partnerships allows elected officials and local governments to understand CDC practices and encourages buy-in. Second, establishing a partnership in the earliest stages of planning allows for open dialogue and communication between the CDCs, the communities, elected officials, and local government. The CDCs thereby understood what the community expected, and the community was aware of the types of housing products and programs that the CDC could offer. Third, the partnerships encouraged the sharing of public and private resources to complete housing projects. For instance, in each of the cases, the first-suburbs were willing to utilize their NSP funding to assist the CDCs in acquiring or rehabbing properties, while the CDCs were willing to use their existing lines of credit, as well as their expertise and their other resources. Fourth, forming partnerships encouraged a targeted neighborhood improvement model instead of the CDCs’ customary silo method, bringing together complementary strengths. Finally, collaboration with nonprofit housing organizations enables multiple housing organizations, which individually lack capacity, to make a significant impact on the areas they target.

This study helps to set the stage for local government officials and community development practitioners to direct policies that encourage more partnerships with nonprofit housing CDCs in the first-suburbs. By developing public policies that inspire collaborative partnerships between nonprofit housing providers and local government and focusing on targeted neighborhood improvement, local governments can expand not only their capacity, but also the capacity of the CDC, as well as the overall impacts of redevelopment efforts. For instance, community revitalization efforts benefit from strengthened partnerships between the public and the nonprofit sector. If a CDC is actively addressing vacant properties in a neighborhood that has been identified as a target area for redevelopment by the local authorities, closer collaboration between the two sectors can increase overall project capacity. The transformation of foreclosed single-family housing into new homeownership units can complement community redevelopment goals by stabilizing and increasing local property values. Moreover, local governments should promote policies that encourage nonprofit housing and CDCs to aim for a geographic concentration in housing redevelopment. When identifying foreclosed properties for acquisition and rehabilitation, choosing properties that are in close proximity to housing that is already in CDC ownership is beneficial to both the community and CDCs because properties clustered in a tight geographic area increase the possibility of reaching economies of scale, both financially and physically. Additionally, greater collaboration between CDCs should be explored. Neighborhood stabilization efforts can potentially be improved by closer partnerships among CDCs and through financial arrangements and general sharing of experience and know-how.

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Making It Real Through Transformative Scholarship, Service-Learning, and a Community-Based Partnership for HIV Education in Alabama

Bronwen Lichtenstein

Abstract

HIV/AIDS is increasingly common in the U.S. South, especially among young people. This article describes a sociology course on HIV/AIDS for college students at the University of Alabama that sought to increase HIV knowledge through instruction, service-learning activities, and community-based research. In the first half of the course, the students partnered with an AIDS service organization (ASO) for HIV outreach. In the second half of the course, the students conducted surveys on HIV-related knowledge and attitudes in the community. Three main conclusions emerged from teaching the course: (1) service-learning with community-based research on HIV/AIDS is feasible, (2) service-learning modules require careful planning, and (3) student engagement for HIV prevention is beneficial for advancing the principles of public sociology.

The acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) is often represented as a disease of the “other” because of associations through HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) risk factors such as drug use, same-sex activity, and prostitution (Treichler, 1999). In the United States, public attitudes toward HIV are based on an ethos of personal responsibility, and failure to avoid being infected often leads to negative judgments about people who are living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA) (McDonnell, 1993). Educators are compelled to go beyond this conceptualization to demonstrate how and why differential patterns of HIV risk occur. This focus presents a classroom challenge for two reasons: This focus presents a classroom challenge because teaching about HIV requires an examination of commonly held prejudices and stereotypes, including those of students who are taking the class.

This article describes the challenges and valuable lessons learned from teaching an upper division undergraduate course on HIV/AIDS at the University of Alabama. The conceptual goals of the course were that students would (1) learn why HIV is called “the sociological epidemic” in terms of differential patterns of HIV risk and, in the C. Wright Mills (1959) tradition, (2) develop a sociological imagination by engaging in active learning projects for HIV education and prevention. This pedagogical approach helps to challenge risk group iconography that has dominated public and medical discourse on HIV since the 1980s, and allows for recognition of how social inequalities concerning race/ethnicity, gender, and social class lead to differential patterns of HIV risk around the globe.

Educators who have taught courses on HIV or who have integrated HIV with other courses provide insights into teaching HIV-related topics and also provide some insights and guidelines. Two decades ago, Weitz (1989) and Hunt (1990) wrote that students were interested in the topic of HIV because of media publicity, especially since HIV was associated with social deviance and the uncertain trajectory of a new epidemic. Kain (1987) wrote about how instruction on the social aspects of HIV/AIDS could alert students to their own HIV risk and to the historical, economic, and cultural forces that construct health and illness. In this body of literature, educators are advised to be aware of student concerns about the topic and to be skeptical of value-laden course materials that increase HIV-related stigma. For example, Weitz (1989, 1992) cautioned that educators could encounter students who were openly homophobic or hostile to the subject matter. She also noted how textbooks included misleading information about AIDS that could create or confirm prejudices against people with HIV. Finally, Klein (1993) advised that pedagogical technique was crucial to obtaining positive outcomes in HIV-related courses because:

Most students find it very difficult to discuss AIDS and the subjects that come up in class lectures…. This situation forces us, as teachers, not only to be sensitive to our students’ apprehensions, but also to discover ways to reduce their reluctance to ask questions. We must make them feel
comfortable in asking detailed questions about “sensitive subjects” from the first day (p. 2).

Up-to-date literature on teaching college-level courses on HIV/AIDS is sparse. Evans, Edmundson-Drane, and Harris (2000) described a computer assisted program for HIV prevention education among college students, which took place outside the classroom. This report has little relevance for college instructors seeking guidance for HIV-related syllabi. In the sociology of teaching literature, Moremen (2010) described a course that addressed HIV through the fundamentals of sociology; that is, in sociological explanations of why people become PLWHA beyond individualistic notions of risky behavior. In brief, Moreman taught the class how to “see” social inequality as a precursor of HIV/AIDS, and a course evaluation indicated improved attitudes toward PLWHA by the end of the semester. On a different note, Jones and Abes (2003) described a service-learning course on HIV/AIDS in which students had engaged in less stereotyping of PLWHA and reconsidered their own HIV risk by the end of the course. In demonstrating that a service-learning course on HIV/AIDS was both feasible and potentially beneficial to both students and the community partner, the authors also provided a model for teaching Sociology of HIV/AIDS.

Course Development

Course development for the course was preceded by substantial changes in the trajectory of HIV in the United States. First, antiretroviral drugs had transformed HIV into a manageable condition for many PLWHA. Second, overall HIV rates had leveled off in the United States (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2011a). Public urgency over HIV/AIDS in the United States had declined from a peak in the 1980s, leading to widespread complacency about HIV risk (The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, 2009). However, the U.S. epicenter of the HIV epidemic had shifted from bicoastal cities in the north to southeastern states in which African Americans were disproportionately affected at an alarming rate (Southern AIDS Coalition, 2008). Developing a sociology of HIV/AIDS course was therefore relevant to Southern students because: (1) 39% of all new HIV infections in the United States occur among young people (CDC, 2011b); (2) 52% of all new HIV infections occur in Southern states (Johnson, 2007), (3): disparities involving race/ethnicity, social class, and gender are at the heart of HIV risk in the South (Lichtenstein, 2005). Young adults in the South could benefit from increased awareness about HIV risk and the social impact of HIV/AIDS in the region.

Development of the course was also prompted by two local concerns. The first centered on research about local students’ attitudes toward seven sexually transmitted infections (STIs), ranging from the merely irritating (pubic lice) to life-threatening (HIV/AIDS) (Lichtenstein, Neal, & Brodsky, 2008; Neal, Lichtenstein, & Brodsky, 2010). High levels of stigma were identified for all STIs regardless of medical severity. The findings indicated that the term “STI” was shorthand for social deviance and thus for being stigmatized, and that many respondents (40.3%) were unwilling to seek treatment because they feared being embarrassed or stigmatized. In considering these data, the author felt that raising awareness about STIs and HIV among a high-risk group (i.e. young adults) in a high prevalence region could provide a counterpoint to stigmatizing frames of reference about “sexual” disease.

The second concern involved the survival of a local AIDS service organization (ASO) charged with providing social services to clients with HIV. Like other ASOs in the United States, the agency had struggled to provide services to growing numbers of clients in difficult economic times. In 2008, for example, the director was compelled to relinquish staff and to reduce HIV outreach after substantial funding cuts. In developing the course, the ASO liaison expressed a wish that students contribute to the agency’s mission of providing support services for PLWHA and HIV prevention in the community. The ASO director and author began planning for the service-learning module before the inaugural course began, with proposed activities including helping out in the office, shadowing HIV educators, and providing help with services to PLWHA who were clients. These activities were finalized after the course began so that students could participate in planning their activities with the ASO.

Course Goals and Timetable

The curriculum was designed with two broad goals in mind: To educate students about the sociology of HIV/AIDS and to bring “community” into focus as a source of expertise, service, and research. These goals were operationalized by engaging students in active learning (a university
prerogative) that involved service-learning, research, and civic engagement on HIV/AIDS (course prerogatives). The curriculum had three basic components: instruction, service-learning, and community-based research, which were organized as follows. Weeks 1 to 4 were spent on lecture material and theory. In weeks 5 to 7, the students undertook service-learning with the community partner. In weeks 12 to 15, the students prepared for and conducted community-based research on knowledge and attitudes toward HIV/AIDS. The partnership model was facilitated through a course plan in which agency employees provided mentoring for service-learning projects and research projects in community settings, while classroom instruction involved theory, social context, and research. The course thus involved three constituencies in terms of the partnership model: the university, the student-participants, and the agency as community partner.

**Student Profile**

The class is a writing course with a maximum enrollment of 25 students per semester. The course was fully enrolled for each of the five times it was taught, with a total of 125 students who completed the class over a four-year period from 2008 to 2011. Almost all students were middle-class men and women in their early twenties, with women accounting for about two-thirds (65%) of total course enrollment. In terms of ethnicity, white, African American, and Hispanic American students accounted for 70%, 27%, and 3% of enrollment respectively. Most African Americans were women (79%), with black men substantially underrepresented in all classes. This disparity is consistent with nationwide trends in college attendance for African American men (Mincy, 2006). Nevertheless, the percentage of African American students was higher than for residents in the state (26.2%) (University of Alabama, 2012) and the state as a whole (3.9%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). The percentage of Hispanic American students in the class was equal to their proportion of the university population (University of Alabama, 2012) and the state as a whole (3.9%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

**Theory, History, and an HIV Quiz**

**Theory.** Two sociological texts provided a theoretical foundation for the course. Goffman’s (1963) *Stigma: Notes on Spoiled Identity* explained how judging people according to moral conformity, physical traits, and race/ethnicity or nationality leads to stigmatizing ideas about “them” and “us.” Judgments about PLWHA have involved all three typologies, thus making HIV stigma particularly harsh. C. Wright Mills’ (1959) public action theory, linked to Goffman’s theory, proposed that people who developed a sociological imagination would be able to engage in reflexive thought, perhaps as a precursor to social activism. The two theories would help students to understand how HIV/AIDS was socially constructed within a matrix of power relations—a complex idea to be explored in coursework and direct learning exercises that we hoped would inspire the students to “see” the connections between social context, social structure, and HIV/AIDS (Auerbach, Parkhurst, Cáceres, & Keller, 2009; Parker & Aggleton, 2003). Students were introduced to social theory and the history of HIV in the first few weeks of the course, with course readings consisting of journal articles on HIV rather than a designated text. These articles were grouped into four categories for each component of the course (e.g., the history of HIV, social theory, global aspects of HIV, and HIV in the United States).

**History.** Movies such as “And the Band Played On” from Randy Shilts’ (1987) book of the same name, and video clips from the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) series titled “AIDS in Black America” provided a backdrop to HIV history in the United States. The Shilts movie illustrates how stereotypes emerged in the 1980s through HIV iconography about so-called sexual deviants that ultimately proved misleading or inaccurate. Video clips from the AIDS in Black America series were more pointed in terms of the local context and were managed by framing barriers to HIV prevention such as homophobia, gender inequality, and religiosity as salient factors for both blacks and whites in the South. Since the topic of race/ethnicity is a sensitive issue, students might be reluctant to voice opinions on the matter for fear of offending someone or raising the specter of racial tension. However, students who took Sociology of AIDS became accustomed to discussing HIV-related topics, including topics about race/ethnicity in roundtable fashion. In the rare event that no one spoke up after a video clip, judicious prompting would break the ice, even if the response consisted of a question or comment such as “That is so sad,” or “I didn’t know that it [AIDS in black America] was so bad.”

**HIV quiz.** The author assessed HIV knowledge at the beginning of each semester with an online quiz. The quiz, from Avert.org, consists of 7 true/
false questions to assess three levels of knowledge about HIV/AIDS (easy, medium, and hard) for a total of 21 items. Each answer is followed by correct information (e.g., Q: “What is the difference between HIV and AIDS?” A: There is no difference between HIV and AIDS. HIV is the virus that causes AIDS”). In each class, the author leads students through the quiz by asking the class at large for their answers. For the first level, someone always provides the correct answers. For the second level, there are some correct answers and also some guesses. For the third level, students offer many guesses and take wild stabs at the correct answers. The exercise has been very useful in indicating what the class knows about HIV and in providing correct information about transmission routes and the biology of HIV/AIDS.

**Guest Speakers**

Two guest speakers visit the class in about the third week of each semester. One speaker is an educator from the ASO who gives a primer on HIV/AIDS. The other speaker is an advocate for PLWHA who speaks about living with HIV. After each visit, students complete a brief evaluation in which they rate each speaker from 1–10 and write one or two sentences about what they learned about HIV. On the one hand, the primer is always well received and the information is considered useful. On the other hand, the advocates have received mixed reviews. For example during the third week of class, stigma became an issue when the advocate for the first two courses recounted his experience of living with HIV. He stated that his family and community had shunned him, that his employer had fired him after learning about his diagnosis, and that he had become suicidal and refused to take medications until becoming seriously ill with wasting syndrome and other conditions. His narrative presented a puzzling paradox to the class when he stated that he refused to associate with clients who “didn’t do the right thing” by missing appointments or refusing to take medicines. It was the first time that the students had been exposed to narratives in which a member of a stigmatized group sought to distance himself from others like him on moral grounds. The class acknowledged that HIV stigma could explain the need to present such narratives in conversations with outsiders and later came to understand how “transmission stories” (e.g., of someone claiming to being infected through blood transfusion rather than through same-sex activity) are constructed as protective shields against HIV stigma. The speaker’s visit was a beginning point in understanding the power of HIV stigma to shape knowledge, attitudes, and behavior in the community and how afflicted persons sought to avoid being labeled as socially deviant. For example, in each class, we explored the issue of men who had sex with men but self-defined as heterosexual, and how homophobia often creates the desire or need for secrecy (Stewart, 2010). The evaluations of this speaker were only fair—he did not seem to be comfortable in talking to students—and a different speaker was invited to speak in the subsequent course.

The issue of stigma was less apparent when the new speaker, an African American woman, addressed the class. This speaker had considerable experience in addressing non-specialist audiences about living with HIV/AIDS and had a coherent narrative without casting blame on other PLWHA. She was raising three children, including a child who was also living with HIV, and had overcome personal odds to become an HIV educator, author, and activist. The speaker was much in demand for speaking engagements about living (not dying) with HIV, including at the national level. Students found her narrative to be both inspiring and educational, and her personal journey became especially meaningful after the class learned she did not usually disclose her HIV status in public forums. The students rated the speaker very highly. If available she will be booked for future classes.

**Service-Learning**

Service-learning is a regular component of the course. This module begins with a field visit to the community agency in Week 4 of each class. Here, the director meets with students in a large conference room and asks: “How many of you here think I’m gay?” (He is not). If met with embarrassed responses, he speaks about how such assumptions define people with HIV (e.g., “Everyone is assumed to be gay, abusing drugs, or promiscuous in this epidemic.”) He then challenges these stereotypes by reviewing U.S. statistics from the CDC on the epidemiology of HIV, and by noting how many people in the South (especially women) have acquired HIV in regular heterosexual relationships. He ends his talk by describing clients’ needs for food, housing, transportation, social support, and drug assistance. He also discusses service-learning activities involving HIV outreach to schools, public housing, and drug treatment programs. Ideas for service projects are formulated before students leave the agency.
The service-learning unfolded as follows from 2008 to 2011.

**Course 1: Office Work at the ASO; HIV Outreach**

In the inaugural course, the goal for service-learning was to help with office tasks at the ASO, deliver HIV-related materials to people at workplaces, neighborhoods and campus organizations, or to organize venues (e.g. sororities or fraternities, sports teams, and churches) at which ASO educators would speak about HIV prevention. These sessions were held in men’s spaces, including a fire station, barber shop, and sports teams; other sessions were held in women’s spaces including a cosmetology class, a residential drug treatment group, sororities, and women-only groups in churches. Students were required to obtain the instructor’s approval for these projects to ensure their feasibility, to have potential threats to personal safety assessed, and to be advised about student conduct outside the classroom. No student was permitted to try to educate the wider community about HIV without health department-approved materials and direct input or supervision by the agency.

The author held a debriefing session after the service-learning module (debriefing was performed in all courses). The students reported being satisfied with organizing the ASO visits and delivering HIV prevention materials. They also reported both positive and negative reactions from the public, ranging from: “I got plenty of weird looks and refusals” to “Some people were really excited about getting free condoms.” On one occasion, a male student had been called a “fag.” Another student, who had visited her home town to distribute condoms and brochures in one of the poorest, most HIV-affected counties in the state was welcomed by the people she knew, but they assumed that she was a PLWHA because “they [peer educators] always have AIDS.” However, these experiences were deemed more fulfilling than office work at the ASO, which was the least popular activity for students who had filed papers, stocked shelves, or answered telephone calls at the agency.

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**Courses 2, 3, 4: Charity Drive for ASO; HIV Outreach**

The student feedback in Course 1 prompted the author and community partner to replace the office work with projects that were more beneficial for student engagement and the ASO’s mission of providing client services. These projects included helping ASO staff transport clients to appointments, shadowing HIV educators who worked in the field, and collecting donated goods for the agency’s food pantry. Of these projects, the transportation option was canceled because of the ASO’s concerns about client confidentiality. Speaking on behalf of the ASO’s Board of Directors, the director rescinded the project because: “The clients are scared of being identified as HIV-positive outside the protective circle of [the agency].”

The other activities, which did not include client contact, proceeded as planned. The most popular activity (as determined from sign-up sheets) was collecting donated goods from fraternities, sororities, sports teams, church groups, and other organizations. This popularity meant that the ASO’s food pantry was well stocked even in a recessionary economy. The students placed the collected items into gift baskets, which were brought to class to be collected by the community partner who then distributed the baskets to clients, often for birthdays and other special occasions. Students could earn extra points by engaging in two activities, and about one third of the class collected the donated goods while also engaging in HIV outreach, shadowing ASO staff in the field, or, more commonly, arranging for ASO employees to speak to community groups. Judging from student reports in which the service-learning experience was described and evaluated, this menu of options worked well because of the variety of options that were considered interesting, worthwhile, or that fit with student schedules. On the basis of this approval, the same menu of items was offered in Course 3 and 4.

**Course 5: Campus-wide HIV Education and Testing**

In Course 5, the service-learning component took a different turn when the ASO suggested a university-wide event for HIV education and testing. We discussed the idea in class and pondered the logistics of providing HIV testing on campus—something the university had never attempted even though young people, especially in the South, have the highest STI and HIV rates in the nation (CDC, 2011b; Southern AIDS Coalition, 2008). Students turned this idea into a reality by liaising with the community partner, contacting the university’s Student Government Association for permission to provide HIV testing at the student center, and planning an HIV educational booth, also at the student center. The
Students volunteered for various tasks—designing posters, hanging the posters in public spaces on and off campus, advertising the event on the local television station, writing an article for the student paper, creating a Facebook page, making cookies, and obtaining HIV educational materials and gifts (pens, stickers, and beverage insulators) for giveaways at the booth. The author received a small grant from a university source for these purchases.

The activity went as planned, with students staffing the booth for the event. ASO employees tested 113 students over the two day period—many more than anticipated. In the written reports that followed (which were graded), the event was rated very highly. Students commented that: “I found out how much I had learned about HIV/AIDS when I spoke to those who visited our booth” and “The [HIV event] meant that I made an important contribution to HIV prevention on campus.” Students particularly liked being able to select a specific activity for the project, staffing the booth with other class members, and imparting useful information to visitors. The ASO director sent a note of heartfelt thanks for the students’ efforts. We believe this is the right formula for the service-learning projects and plan on repeating the two-day HIV testing and educational event on campus in the future.

Table 1 describes the service-learning projects being offered from 2008–2011, and the transition to different types of activities as the course matured.

### Community-Based Research

Table 1. Service-Learning Activities 2008–2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>ASO Directed</th>
<th>Student Directed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2008</td>
<td>Filing, reception</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mail drops, door-to-door</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>← dual involvement → Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organize campus visits</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>← dual involvement → Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2008</td>
<td>Shadow ASO staff</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Also: Sp/Fa 09)</td>
<td>Collect goods for ASO</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mail drops, door-to-door</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>← dual involvement → Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organize campus visits</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>← dual involvement → Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HIV outreach, other counties</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>← dual involvement → Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2011</td>
<td>UA HIV awareness &amp; testing</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>← dual involvement → Yes</td>
</tr>
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**Student component:**
- Campus publicity
- TV & newspaper publicity
- Facebook
- Student booth (2 days)

**ASO component:**
- HIV testing on campus

Students conducted individual, community-based interviews in all five courses. These projects did not involve staff members at the ASO, whose participation ended with the service-learning module in the first half of the semester, but did require close supervision by the author. Each student was required to design an interview sheet, conduct face-to-face interviews, summarize results, and apply concepts from Goffman’s (1963) stigma theory for analysis. The main purpose of the project was to teach students how to study community-based knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs (KABs) about HIV/AIDS in real-world settings. A written report was required by the end of the semester. These reports began with a literature review and a research question (e.g., “What are commonly-held ideas and beliefs about HIV/AIDS in our community?”). Students then described their sample and method, summarized the results, and discussed the findings with reference to stigma theory and the scholarly literature on KABs in the United States. Students ended their reports with a concluding statement that reflected their final thoughts about the project.

One class period was set aside to design a template for the interview sheets, consisting of 10 open-ended items and four to six demographic items. Students could modify the template if they wished, but had to submit the final copy for the instructor’s approval. The template included the following items:

1. How do people acquire HIV/AIDS?
2. Who is most likely to be diagnosed and why?
3. What are some common attitudes toward people with HIV/AIDS in our state?
4. What are some common attitudes toward homosexuality in our state?
5. What are some common attitudes toward condom use in our state?
6. What should church leaders do to combat HIV/AIDS?
7. What should high school students be taught about HIV prevention?
8. How does HIV/AIDS affect people in your community?
9. If you were asked to donate to an AIDS charity or a diabetes event, what would you choose and why?
10. Why does the South have the highest HIV rates in the United States?

Table 2 provides the interview template and instructions for conducting ethical research. Student research at the university is exempt from Institutional Review Board approval if part of a course requirement and the results are not published or presented at conferences. Nevertheless, ethics instruction is part of the course and consists of information about seeking permission from participants to be interviewed for the project, the voluntary nature of participation, and protecting participant confidentiality.

Students interviewed family and church members, friends, neighbors, co-workers, teammates, sorority sisters and fraternity brothers, and acquaintances who lived locally or in other counties. The interviews had to be completed within three weeks. In their reports, students summarized interview data by frequency (e.g. “Nine out of 10 people were unaware that HIV rates are higher in the South than elsewhere in the United States.”) and included selected quotes for illustration (e.g., “Why is there more HIV/AIDS in the South? I don’t know. I’d never heard that before”). By and large, responses reflected stereotypical views about homosexuals, drug users, and prostitutes concerning “HIV risk groups,” reflecting stigmatizing ideas about HIV/AIDS from the 1980s (Trechler, 1999). Myths such as: “You can catch HIV/AIDS from mosquitoes” and forms of denial such as: “Bisexuality doesn’t exist in the black community” were reported as well. Statements such as, “Gay men are moral deviants and throwaways,” and “People who get HIV/AIDS deserve what they get” were disturbing to read because of the persistent social marginalization of PLWHA. In their reports, students sometimes confessed to having similar attitudes before taking the course, even if they framed these confessions as before-and-after statements in terms of their own transformations.

Stigma provided a conceptual segue to analyzing survey responses and to interrogating the student’s own attitudes or society’s role in reproducing HIV risk. For example, one student confessed, “I had no idea how my attitudes about HIV/AIDS could potentially impact other people.” Another student reflected, “I realize now how much my family influenced my thinking on AIDS.” Awareness of the links between theory, HIV risk, and stigma certainly emerged from interviewing people whom the students often knew well enough to call co-workers, friends, or family and who also represented the generalized other in terms of community attitudes toward people with HIV. For example, all respondents in one student’s project believed that HIV-infected people were sexually promiscuous (even predatory), while some respondents in another project often reported that they would avoid socializing with someone who was HIV-infected. As noted by the student researcher, “Sociologically, this can explain why many people fear being tested for HIV/AIDS and as a consequence pass on the virus to others.”

Finally, students noted how respondents generally viewed HIV/AIDS in terms of “bad choices,” an ethos of personal responsibility that is commonly used to explain the cause of social problems in U.S. society. At least one or two students per class wrote about being “shocked,” “saddened,” and “astounded” by the power of stigma to create social outcasts in 21st century America. The words “amazed” and “disappointed” also appeared in reports for each course and referred to the lack of awareness of how HIV/AIDS had affected communities in the Southeast. These students understood why the epidemic had taken hold in the region, particularly in view of moralizing attitudes toward sexuality. For each course, students who spoke up in class during a final debriefing session indicated being fully aware of the power of HIV stigma in damaging figures of speech and actions that could be addressed in what Lena (1995) described as “awareness of profound social problems of our times and… the importance of civic education and civic responsibility in a democratic society” (p. 108). One student summarized in her research report: “I would argue that this study and these results will influence my decision-making ever more because I have now become a passionate advocate for AIDS prevention education.” While the desire to please the author or appear compassionate might have led to students’ reports of transformational learning experiences, the student evaluations
that are discussed next indicate a high degree of satisfaction with the research project and the course.

Course Evaluations

Course objectives for developing students’ sociological understanding of HIV/AIDS through theoretical applications and experiential learning were assessed in written assignments (one essay, two reports), with most students, on average, earning A and B grades for the course. Only two students failed the class when they missed assignments, a very small number for a course being taught five times. Informal feedback in class discussions and in written reports over a four-year period from 2008–2011 suggested that course objectives had been met, both with respect to learning about HIV/AIDS as a social issue and in understanding the importance of civic engagement for HIV prevention and education.

Following Jenkins and Sheehey’s (2011) advice for assessing student satisfaction, the author reviewed all Student Opinions of Instruction (SOIs) for congruence with positive feedback from class discussions and written reports. A note of explanation: All instructors at the university are rated anonymously in online evaluations for the quality of their teaching and the instructional value of their courses. For each instructor, aggregate course ratings for all teaching
at disciplinary, departmental, and college levels, are also published in online reports and can be compared with individual ratings. For each course, there are 19 items to rank, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. A comment box provides narrative feedback about the instructor and course. For review purposes, the author selected four items directly relating to student learning and satisfaction; namely, “How would you rate this course?”, “How much did you learn in this course?”, “How would you rate this instructor?”, and “Was the course a valuable learning experience?”

In Course 1, the class did not achieve desirable ratings, particularly for the service-learning project. As noted under Service-Learning, students who had spent time filing papers, stocking shelves, and answering telephone calls at the agency did not regard these activities as fulfilling. Students rated the course consistently more highly in Courses 2–4, with narrative comments such as: “I liked being able to choose what I did for the projects” and “It was very worthwhile having a project that makes a contribution to HIV prevention.” Composite student ratings for Courses 2–4 were 4.43/5.00 for the course, 4.29/5.00 for how much was learned, 4.47/5.00 for instructor, and 4.57/5.00 for valuable learning experience. In Course 5—in which the entire class contributed to the HIV education and testing event on campus—student ratings were 4.58/5.00 for the course, 4.79/5.00 for how much was learned, 4.72/5.00 for instructor, and 4.84/5.00 for valuable learning experience—the highest score achieved since the inaugural course was held in 2008. The value of the service-learning event in Course 5 was summarized in a narrative comment:

This course opened my eyes about HIV/AIDS. If some members of the student population acquired HIV it would spread around campus like wildfire. Having students as a base to educate people about this problem would make our university stand out among all others in the Southeast. Just put some STI education in the mandatory freshmen classes and save someone’s life through the proper education.

This student’s comment reflects findings that student engagement is akin to being a “natural helper” (Israel, 1985) in local social networks or communities (Tessaro, Taylor, Belton, Campbell, Benedict, Kelsey, & DeVellis, 2000). The mostly positive evaluations in the SOIs—both numerical and narrative—support Astin and Sax’s (1998) claims about the striking ability of service participation and other types of student engagement to enhance student learning, life skills, and overall satisfaction with undergraduate education.

Discussion

This article described a course involving class instruction, guest speakers, service-learning, and community-based research on HIV/AIDS for upper-level undergraduate students. The course is a staple for the minor in sociology for Criminal Justice majors and is also one of two courses being taught about HIV/AIDS on campus (the other course is in the College of Nursing). Both courses involve a service-learning requirement and both seek to educate students and community members about HIV/AIDS. Such experiential courses have become popular on U.S. campuses in recent years to help students connect with local communities and potentially to ease social problems outside academe (Jacoby, 1996). The courses are generally viewed favorably in higher education, with tangible outcomes such as enhanced life skills and career prospects, a heightened awareness of social problems, and civic engagement over the life course (Astin & Sax, 1998; Jenkins & Sheehey, 2011; Morgan & Streb, 2002; Perry & Katula, 2001). Morgan and Streb found that courses in which class members could actively select their own projects—such as in the Sociology of HIV/AIDS—earn the highest ratings in course evaluations and are most satisfying for students.

There are two caveats to the positive outcomes reported here. First, service-learning for Sociology of HIV/AIDS consisted of a single module rather than an entire course. Based on Perry and Katula’s (2001) meta-analysis of 37 evaluations of service-learning courses, students could be better served if the curriculum had solely focused on service-learning. However, dedicated courses have their own set of challenges. For example, the instructor might have to rely on a community partner for most or all activities, or a student might be a poor fit for the agency and vice versa. Neither of these problems can easily be rectified while a course is in progress. Regardless of the type of course, instructors should be mindful of the time and effort it takes to plan, coordinate, and implement service-learning in a thoughtful way (Tryon, Stoecker, Martin, Seblonka, Hilgendorf, & Nellis, 2008). Other considerations include whether the
service-learning is mutually beneficial for both students and the participating agency. Blouin and Perry (2009) and Tryon et al. (2008) found that service-learning can be taxing for community partners, who might have to deal with unmotivated students or who report being taken for granted by instructors and students alike. And, of course, plans for service-learning can go awry, as when the ASO in this report decided not to allow students to interact with clients. These problems can be amplified when the service-learning is relatively brief and, as in the present case, the instructor is not wholly dependent on the community partner for creating or supervising service-learning activities.

The second caveat relates to the SOI ratings for online course evaluations. There is often a discrepancy between the actual size of the class and the number of completed ratings. SOIs do not reflect the opinions of all students unless the instructor can increase response rates, say by awarding bonus points or setting aside class time for evaluations (smartphones and laptops can be used for this purpose). The percentage of students who complete SOIs also varies, so it is difficult to compare SOI items from course to course. Other factors that affect course ratings include the instructor’s race/ethnicity, gender, or likability, as well as the class size and students’ grade performance (Dominowski, 2011). SOIs are thus an imperfect measurement of student satisfaction and instructional quality. The only certainty about the SOIs for Sociology of HIV/AIDS is that ratings for the four items reviewed here were consistently above average for the discipline, department, and college at the University of Alabama.

A final point of interest relates to racial diversity in student enrollment. Instructors who address the issue of diversity in course curricula typically do so from a teaching perspective: They wish to foster tolerance for the topic or for different viewpoints or people. Astin and Sax (1998), Baldwin, Buchanan, and Rudisill (2007), and Hones (1997) all reported that service-learning helps to increase the awareness and acceptance of social diversity and should be used for this purpose. In relation to Sociology of HIV/AIDS, diversity came from an unexpected source—the students themselves. From the time the course was offered in 2008 until 2011, students of color composed a sizable proportion of the class, perhaps reflecting the interest of people whose families or communities were affected by HIV/AIDS. It is important to note how HIV knowledge is being sought and owned by students whose communities sometimes have been profoundly affected by HIV/AIDS. The racial diversity in class composition has led to African American students in particular conducting outreach and community-based research in rural areas of the state that lack formal sources of HIV prevention. This outcome is consistent with the Tessaro et al. (2000) and Israel (1998) model of students becoming lay leaders in educating residents in culturally relevant ways and, in so doing, providing a meaningful service to underserved areas of the state. About one-fourth of the counties in the state received HIV outreach from students who were enrolled in the class.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Five conclusions emerged from the course: (1) Instructors who are passionate about the topic can be inspirational for students, especially if the course is both topical and relevant to their lived experience; (2) experiential learning is a non-didactic method of increasing HIV awareness and knowledge, particularly if assignments fit with student preferences for self-directed learning. In the present case, students indicated that promoting HIV awareness or delving into community attitudes about HIV/AIDS were more compelling than merely sitting in the classroom or engaging in library research; (3) service-learning requires time for planning, coordination, and implementation. However, as indicated in this report, the potential rewards are great, especially for students who are able to draw on their particular talents or passions for service projects; (4) the greater purpose—in this case, HIV education—can be doubly served by involving students in their own learning about HIV/AIDS and guiding them toward HIV outreach with the help of a community partner; (5) it is unlikely that one small class being taught by a single instructor can make a significant difference for HIV education. However, Sociology of HIV/AIDS has exceeded all expectations, not only in terms of educating students about HIV/AIDS, but by helping a vulnerable sector of the community and by providing HIV outreach to the broader community. Student efforts and enthusiasm for service-learning and community-based research and ASO support were integral to making this outcome possible.

As a final point, the model developed for Sociology of HIV/AIDS can be generalized to other classes and disciplines with curricula being tailored to specific student populations, universities, or relationships with community partners. Instructors will need to plan well ahead,
preferably in consultation with a community partner. Service-learning centers at many colleges are useful in providing guidelines, models, and contacts at local agencies that need or are willing to accept undergraduate students. Service-learning modules should fit into the general theme of the course and the curriculum as a whole, and instructors should be aware of the need to supervise student activities in the field.

There are some general rules of engagement as well: Community partners should not be viewed as a means to an end (i.e., the means by which students can earn a grade), a perception that can undermine relations with community partners, and perhaps university-community relations as well (Blouin & Perry, 2009). Conversely, students should not be assigned menial tasks that have little intrinsic and educational value. A written agreement between instructor and the community partner before the course begins could ensure that expectations for both students and the agency are clear to all parties and improve the chances of a positive experience that would work well in future course offerings. The model described in this research was modified over several years, indicating that such courses can take time to develop, but also that they can be enriching for students and can help to strengthen university-community partnerships for the public good.

References


**Acknowledgement**

Service activities for the HIV awareness and testing day in spring 2011 were supported in part by a grant from the Center for Community-Based Partnerships at the University of Alabama.

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A Network of Community Partners Representing Multiple Communities: Developing a Tool for Matching Community-Engaged Scholars with Community Partners

Rebecca L. Foco, Frank Fox, Cornelia Ramsey, and Elizabeth B.D. Ripley

Abstract

The Community Partnership for Ethical Research (CPER) was a multi-faceted research project designed to test a model of community engagement using a network of community partners called Community Advocates for Research (CARs). The goals of the project included developing systems to sustain and expand the CARs network. This article presents one facet of this project—a method of effectively and efficiently managing data about the CARs. User-friendly surveys and a database were designed for the management of these data. The web-based survey allows data capture in the community. Moreover, the web-based database tools facilitate centralized data collection and management that will contribute to the sustainability of the network of CARs beyond the initial grant that provided the funding for its development. This article describes the surveys and database and their utility for other institutions desiring to establish similar networks of community partners.

Introduction

Finding investigators with an interest in a particular research area of expertise in a particular type of research can easily be facilitated by databases maintained by research organizations and institutions. For investigators in institutions interested in engaging the community in research, identifying and defining relevant communities and community members can be difficult. Conducting community-engaged research also requires investigators to address an implicit question: How do we define the communities with which we engaged? Conventional practices, particularly in public health, often lead us to view community in geographic terms—the state, a county, or a neighborhood. However, to truly partner with communities we must think more creatively and in ways that are meaningful to the people of the communities with which we partner. This paper describes a multi-stage process of tracking potential community partners for research that allows university investigators to extend beyond geography into more targeted and functional definitions of community. This method of data collection allows for relational definitions of communities in addition to tradition geographic definitions.

Background—Exception from Informed Consent

The model of university-community partnerships in this research was tested in the context of pre-hospital emergency medicine research. Pre-hospital emergency medicine research poses unique ethical questions related to the protection of human subjects. The Belmont Report establishes three guiding principles of human subjects protection in research—respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Embedded within the principle of respect for persons is the right of individuals to autonomously make decisions regarding participation in research through the process of informed consent. A special type of research conducted without informed consent, Exception from Informed Consent (EFIC) is emergency medical research that meets the following criteria: the patient is in a life-threatening situation where existing treatments are unsatisfactory; further research is needed to establish an experimental treatment’s safety or efficacy; the patient is unable to consent due to the medical situation; the medical situation requires the patient to receive immediate treatment before a relative or legal representative can be reached; and protections such as community consultation have been conducted. Additionally, EFIC is only permitted in instances of equipoise, where there is uncertainty regarding whether alternative interventions will confer a more favorable outcome (Baren & Biros, 2007; Ernst & Fish, 2005; Merchant, Rubright, Pryor, & Karlawish, 2008; National Information Center on Health Services Research and Health Care Technology (2010); Pepe, Copass, & Sopko, 2009).

In order to facilitate this type of pre-hospital research, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued regulations commonly known as the Final Rule, governing emergency research conducted
in circumstances where informed consent is not possible (Office of the Secretary, DHHS, FDA, 1996). Approval of EFIC studies requires that investigators work with their local Institutional Review Boards to protect the research participants who are unable to provide informed consent to participate in research. These protections include consultation with the communities from which participants might be drawn, public disclosure of the study and its risks and benefits, and, upon completion of the study, public disclosure of the results. These protections are collectively referred to as community consultation and public disclosure. Although the Final Rule requires that principal investigators plan and conduct community consultation and public disclosure for all research conducted without obtaining informed consent from participants, there are no guidelines for defining the communities with which to conduct the consultation or ways in which the consultation should be conducted. The model that was tested in this project used community consultation as a platform for exploring university/community partnerships. The model suggests an alternative to the more common investigator-driven methods of developing community consultation/public disclosure strategies (Ramsey, Quearry, & Ripley, 2011). This begs the questions of how investigators define the communities from which potential participants may come and how best to conduct community consultation and public disclosure with those communities.

The Community Partnership for Ethical Research

This research was a multi-faceted research project exploring innovative methods for university-community partnerships for community consultation and public disclosure in EFIC research. This model employed community-based participatory research (CBPR) strategies in developing these partnerships (Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 1998). One long term CPER goal was to create sustainable partnerships through which research projects other than EFIC research could emerge.

One facet of the project is the development of a network of community partners, CARs, who serve as bi-directional conduits of information between the community and the university. The initial cohort of 10 CARs developed a working definition of a CAR:

A CAR is an individual who is involved in his/her community and serves as a catalyst as well as an effective conduit of information and experiences between CPER staff and the community in order to inform, educate, motivate, and engage the community in ethical research projects that will be used to best meet the needs and interests of the community.

The CAR model was designed to enhance the capacity of the community to influence the research agenda toward issues and needs within the community.

CARs had a dual role in the CPER study. One was as research participants. Their experiences and attitudes were examined to assess the effectiveness of the CAR model. They were given and signed informed consent documents. The university’s Institutional Review Board approved this study. The other role was as active partners in the research process. Their research roles included (a) consulting on data collection strategies; (b) collecting data; (c) advising the investigators of two EFIC trials on community consultation/public disclosure strategies; (d) presenting at three national and international conferences; (e) serving as co-authors on publications; and (f) arranging community consultation and public disclosure events. Each CAR was provided an annual stipend for these activities. These research activities and the CAR model are described in greater detail elsewhere (Ramsey et al., 2011).

One of the many activities in which the CARs engaged was to advocate for their communities and present their communities’ perspectives on ethics in research and on health research in general. A CAR, on behalf of his or her community, may initiate a dialogue with university investigators grounded in either community or university research interests. CARs may present the university with issues communities identify as important to research or, conversely, link university researchers with appropriate communities in which mutual interests can be addressed through research. The CAR model of collaboration between the campus and community has been designed and developed to promote sustainable relationships that build trust and respect between the various partners in accordance with the principles of community-based participatory research (Israel et al, 1998; Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008; Wallerstein & Duran, 2008).
Initial Definitions of Community for the EFIC Research

A recently conducted EFIC study at the university provided the opportunity to test the CAR model of community-university partnerships. One responsibility of the CARs was to assist with public disclosure for this particular EFIC study. The study to which CPER was attached involved research on pre-hospital emergency treatment protocol for seizures. The nature of seizures is one in which patients are not able to give informed consent to participate. The CPER management team recruited the first cohort of CARs as representatives of two types of communities representing potential participants in the EFIC trial, those at greater risk for seizures and the general population. Some of the potential participants have no previous history of seizures (Silbergleit, Lowenstein, & Durkalski, 2010). Therefore, four of the 10 CARs were recruited from the general community. The remaining potential participants have a history of seizures or a pre-disposing condition for seizures such as epilepsy or brain injury (Silbergleit et al., 2010). The remaining CARs serve as representatives of these communities.

The EFIC study had a catchment area defined by the service area of a metropolitan ambulance authority that serves a mid-sized city in the Mid-Atlantic region. Therefore, community was most broadly defined geographically to include the city limits. Approximately half of the study participants were anticipated to come from the general population in the geographic community including city residents, people who work in the city, visitors, and shoppers. From this perspective, geography served as a meaningful, although incomplete, definition of community.

The urban area in which the study was conducted is predominantly African American (51.8%), and 25.1% of the population lives below the poverty level (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The search for CARs to represent the general city population focused on the minority community. Minority and impoverished communities historically have been difficult to reach with effective community consultation (Holloway, 2006; Shah & Sugarman, 2003). Four CARs were recruited from the general geographic community—one from the faith community, two from voluntary social services agencies serving the minority communities of the city, and one from a local government agency serving the minority community.

Factors other than geography may be more salient to the definition of community. In this case, certain sub-populations (i.e., the homeless, epileptics, or those with brain injuries) are at higher risk for the seizures than the general population. Therefore, the CPER management team identified community groups that would have access to people disproportionately affected by seizures. The CPER management team included a community liaison who identified and approached specific individuals within the designated communities. The liaison had significant experience in community organizing within the metropolitan area, was acquainted with various community organizations, and was well known in the community. Her insights into the broader community proved invaluable for identifying appropriate individuals to serve as CARs. Three of the CARs had ties to the epilepsy community, two worked with the homeless population in the city, and one worked with people with acquired brain injury. The definitions of community utilized to select these CARs were only tangentially related to geography; factors beyond geography (connections to communities that have the predisposing conditions) defined community in their cases.

BUILDING A NETWORK OF CARs

The long-term goal of this project extends beyond community consultation for EFIC research. It includes developing a network of CARs who can (a) advocate for research and their communities across the spectrum of scholarly inquiry impacting health; (b) inform investigators of research questions, problems, or concerns and interests of their communities; and (c) be active participants in the research process. CARs representing communities interested in education, social work, urban planning, business, advocates for groups within the larger community (e.g., mental health advocates or senior citizen advocates), and others were recruited. Regardless of the type of research in which CARs participate, they must have in-depth knowledge of their communities. The goal is to have CARs from all walks of life and assorted communities available to partner in nurturing campus/community connections.

Communities as Defined by CARs

The CARs in the initial cohort were selected because of their connections to specific communities relevant to this EFIC trial. However, people have multidimensional lives. They have connections to multiple communities—e.g., neighborhoods, work,
faith communities, volunteer organizations, and family. The definition of CARs in the CPER model allows CARs to represent various communities in their relationships with the university. They have the freedom to choose if and when they will share their access to the communities in which they have influence. The communities for which they advocate may shift over time based on the perceived needs of the communities and the university, as well as the preferences of the CAR. A CAR from the initial cohort illustrates this point. She was recruited as a CAR because of an interest in and connection to the epilepsy community. However, as she began her advocacy activities, she chose to conduct them in her neighborhood rather than through her connections with the epilepsy community. She is an active member of her neighborhood community and has considerable influence within her neighborhood. Her research activities included coordinating educational meetings, writing articles for the local newspaper, and conducting surveys. Her example illustrates that the CPER model is designed with sufficient flexibility so that CARs may work with multiple or alternate communities, depending upon the topic and design of the research.

A second EFIC study began in 2010 that required the community consultation process. As part of the process of developing an effective community consultation process, the principal investigator for the second EFIC study met with the CARs and requested their participation in community consultation activities. The CARs discussed the opportunity and came to consensus that they would assist with community consultation activities for the second EFIC study. Their participation provided another example of the flexibility of the CAR model and the necessity of understanding the communities that the CARs represent.

Sustaining the Network of CARs

Sustaining a network of CARs requires infrastructure at the university. The Center for Clinical and Translational Research (CCTR) served as the university host for the CARs. It provided the necessary university resources for the CAR network to expand and function. Among those resources is a method of tracking and managing information about the CARs and their respective communities.

CAR and Community Tracking Tool

Development

A functioning network of CARs requires efficient and effective management of information that can facilitate matching university investigators with CARs and communities whose interests correspond with those of the investigators’ research interests. The CPER project was a multi-faceted project with both research and administrative components. Developing a tool for tracking CARs and their communities falls into the realm of developing vital administrative infrastructure for growing and sustaining the CAR model of community-campus collaboration.

The CARs began their research activities in December 2009. The original CAR and community tracking tool was developed through an iterative, collaborative process among the CPER staff and the CARs in early 2010. This process resulted in a tool with an entirely open-ended question format loosely based on the University of Kansas Community Toolbox (KU Work Group for Community Health and Development, 2010). The university team created an initial draft of the questions to be included in the CAR and community tracking tool. CARs reviewed and provided feedback through multiple drafts until the final tool was complete. While the open-ended tool provided the requisite information, the data collected through it lacked uniformity and could not be sorted or searched. The CARs expressed that the tool was time-consuming and difficult to complete. Moreover, it was not practical for an expanding network of CARs and communities.

These deficiencies in the functionality of the tool led to revisions driven by three goals: (a) make the survey easier for the CARs to complete; (b) enable the university to develop a searchable database of CARs for future research projects; and (c) construct a tool that is accessible and adaptable for other research institutions to use in adopting this innovative model for their own work.

A series of discussions resulted in a solution involving a five-step process of information-gathering that mirrored the initial tool process but was simpler to use. The process consists of a series of three computerized surveys, a biographical sketch, and an in-person interview of each new CAR by a member of the CPER management team. Table 1 presents each step and its purpose. Each segment of the process will be described in detail.

Web-Based Surveys as Instruments
The original open-ended survey incorporated information about the CARs as individuals, a section describing their communities, and questions about their interests in research. In the web-based version, three separate surveys replaced the original survey. The change was the result of input from one of the CARs, who felt it allowed for more clarity and made it easier to complete. The three surveys are the CAR Individual Survey, the CAR Community Survey, and the CAR Research Interests Survey.

In general, a web-based survey format offers several advantages. CARs can complete the surveys at a time and location that is convenient for them. Project staff can track completion of the surveys. Questions have been formatted with answers that are discrete variables (drop-down menu items and check boxes) or on analog rating scales. The data choice options allow for consistent data categories that can be aggregated and analyzed. Data can be maintained on a secure server owned by the university.

All surveys were constructed using Research Electronic Data Capture (REDCap), a centralized web-based electronic data capture platform (Harris, Taylor, Thielke, Payne, Gonzalez, & Conde, 2009). REDCap offers several advantages to investigators, including secure data storage and an intuitive interface for easy data entry.

The surveys were constructed so that they can be easily used by individuals from all walks of life. The survey questions were formatted with check boxes and drop-down menu selections as much as possible to enable the CARs to complete the survey quickly and easily. Comment boxes were also included to allow CARs to provide any additional information or explanations they deemed necessary. Additionally, for CARs who may not have the computer skills necessary to access the surveys, REDCap can create hardcopy versions of surveys. Project staff can manually enter handwritten information for any CARs who might prefer to complete the surveys on paper.

The REDCap surveys are linked with a REDCap database. This linkage allows the university to develop a searchable database of CARs for future research projects. CCTR staff will assume responsibility for the ongoing administration of the CAR network. This staff will be able to link community-engaged investigators throughout the university with CARs and communities who share similar research interests using the CAR database. The ability to inform investigators about potential community partners is among the recommended guidelines for community-university research partnerships (Yale CARE Ethical Principles of Engagement Committee, 2009). The database has been designed so that investigators can request access to de-identified data and search for CARs who may potentially be interested in their project. The center’s staff determines which of the CARs chosen by the investigator is most appropriate and facilitate contact between the CARs and the investigator.

The survey templates may be requested by other institutions and adapted to fit institutional needs, thus fulfilling the third goal of the project. REDCap is not required to use the surveys. They could be readily re-created on other platforms. However, REDCap provides a platform to construct a tool that is accessible and adaptable for research institutions with REDCap who wish to adopt this innovative model for their own work. The information gathered in the individual and community surveys and the biography are sufficiently broad to be applicable to any scholarly discipline. The areas of research interest can be adjusted to reflect the research priorities of any institution.

### Steps 1–3: Defining the CARs’ Communities of Influence

The community definition process begins with gathering information about the CAR as an individual, about his/her communities of influence, and their research interests. This information is collected through a series of surveys and interviews.

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<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>CAR Individual Survey</td>
<td>Gather contact and demographic information about the CAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>CAR Community Survey</td>
<td>Gather information about the community or communities in which the CAR may advocate for research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>CAR Research Interests Survey</td>
<td>Gather information about the ways in which the CAR may be interested in participating in research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4</td>
<td>Biographical Sketch</td>
<td>Facilitate interaction and collaboration between the CARs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 5</td>
<td>In-person Interviews</td>
<td>Clarify and expand information gathered in the initial surveys. Foster trust and rapport between the CAR and CCTR staff. Explore emerging interests.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
influence, and about his/her research interests through three REDCap surveys. Once an individual has agreed to serve as a CAR, the new CAR is emailed a link to the CAR Individual Survey, which provides information about the CAR as a person. The remaining surveys may be administered concurrently or later in the process. The survey consists of 24 questions covering general contact information, employment status, educational level, and any special needs the individual might have. Only name, address, and phone number are required fields. The information gathered through the CAR Individual Survey is linked in the database to information from the second and third surveys. In our initial testing of the survey, the average completion time for the CAR Individual Survey was less than five minutes.

CARs, like most people, have connections with multiple communities—e.g., workplaces, faith communities, family, neighborhoods, volunteer organizations. CARs will provide information about their communities through the CAR Community Survey. While CARs have connections with multiple communities and varying levels of influence in each of those communities, it is up to the individual CAR to determine in which communities he/she may be willing to function as an advocate for research. The communities may be formal, organized communities such as a social services agency or a church. However, CARs may also have connections to informal communities, e.g., parents of children with cancer or contacts within a given professional community like social workers in the metropolitan area. The survey allows the CAR to provide a description of up to three different communities.

The CAR Community Survey provides a general sense of the community and is the most extensive of the surveys, with up to 78 questions depending upon the number of communities described. The survey gathers information about the name, type, size, and purpose (if a formal organization) of the community. A series of drop-down menus, rating scales, and check box questions gather demographic information about the composition of the community by race, age, housing situation, educational level, languages spoken, and modes of transportation used. The final three questions are open-ended. They allow the CARs to reflect on the future of their communities and the potential impact of research on their communities. The first question asks for their thoughts about the changes they would like to see in their communities in the next five years and how they envision those changes coming about. The other two questions ask the CARs to consider what types of information, training, or research would be helpful for their communities. In the initial testing of this survey, the CARs took an average of 10 minutes to describe one community and 17 minutes to describe two communities. No CARs described three communities.

The third web-based survey, the CAR Research Interests Survey, has 10 questions related to potential participation in research. The first asks for the CARs to describe any previous experience with research and, if so, to describe the experiences. Next, the CARs are asked through a check box list about areas of research in which they may be interested. The list includes (a) health, (b) business/economics/employment, (c) domestic/intimate partner violence, (d) education, (e) elder issues, (f) family issues, (g) gender issues, (h) homelessness/affordable housing, (i) race/ethnicity issues, (j) social justice, (k) transportation, (l) urban planning, (m) youth/adolescent issues, and (n) other. A text box appears if the “other” box is checked to describe any other areas of interest.

The next question explores interest in specific research areas such as physical activity for older adults or violence prevention in middle schools. If the respondent indicates that he/she has a specific interest, an open-ended response box appears where the specific area can be entered. The final questions explore specific ways in which the CARs may wish to be involved in research including authorship of peer-reviewed or community publications, serving as a community member of an Institutional Review Board or serving on the Community Engaged Research Review Panel. The CARs will also be provided an open-ended response box to indicate any other ways in which they may care to be involved with research.

Responses to the web-based survey have been overwhelmingly positive. The CARs unanimously expressed that it was easier to use and quicker than the previous open-ended questionnaire. One CAR stated that,

As a CAR, I believe that the revised assessment tool is much more user-friendly and less time consuming. It has served as a valuable tool in gathering information about the different CARs and their areas of expertise in the community.

Time is a valuable resource that CARs dedicate to advocating for research and an efficient
mechanism for collecting data that recognizes and honors the importance of the CARs limited time.

**Step 4: Biographical Sketches**

Each CAR is asked to write a biographical sketch describing his/her work, volunteer activities, educational background, contact information, and/or any other information the CAR considers pertinent. This information is captured in REDCap and, therefore, searchable by the CCTR staff. The biographical sketches are compiled into a CAR directory and, with each CAR’s permission, distributed to the CARs and members of the center’s staff. The primary purpose of the CAR directory is to facilitate collaboration and networking among the CARs. The CAR directories will not be distributed to the public or other investigators. The biographical sketch section of the CAR tracking tool and CAR directory remain unchanged from their initial inception other than placing it in REDCap. All CARs indicate the directory has been helpful in developing relationships with other CARs. The directory is seen as a valuable tool to provide not only contact information but also personal information about the CAR such as background, interests, and skills as well as information about their communities. It helped collaboration and networking.

**Step 5: Individual Interviews**

Individual interviews are the final step of the process. Interviews were conducted with the initial cohort of CARs at times and locations chosen by the CARs after they completed the original survey. We intend to continue this practice. As was done with the initial cohort of CARs, a member of the CCTR staff interviews each new CAR. These interviews are not intended for research purposes but simply to clarify and enhance the information gathered in Steps 1-4. The individual interviews have been designed to serve three primary purposes: clarifying or expanding the information provided through the web-based surveys, building trust and rapport, and exploring emerging interests. These interviews are intended to be conversational and informal. Since they are not intended for research, they will not be based on a structured interview guide but will be unstructured with the information in the web-based survey serving as the starting point of the interviews. In accordance with the purpose of building trust and rapport, no recordings of the interviews are done. The university staff member conducting the interviews takes notes and retains those notes for the files.

**Next Steps**

Involving communities in research is now an important part of clinical and translational research. This involvement can span from outreach to collaboration and shared leadership. The working definition of community engagement presented by the Clinical and Translational Science Awards Consortium Community Engagement Key Function Committee Task Force on the Principles of Community Engagement speaks to the importance and impact of this partnership. It emphasizes,

the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interests, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people. It is a powerful vehicle for bringing about environmental and behavioral changes that will improve the health of the community and its members. It often involves partnerships and coalitions that help mobilize resources and influence systems, change relationships among partners, and serve as a catalyst for changing policies, programs, and practices (Clinical and Translational Science Awards Consortium, Community Engagement Key Function Committee, Task Force on the Principles of Community Engagement, 2011, p. 7).

The CAR model has the potential to enhance the ways in which campus-community partnerships can be formed, nurtured, and expanded. Past community engagement projects were often limited to a particular project and did not result in ongoing networking and partnership. The model provides a method of engaging community members on an ongoing basis. While the model is designed to facilitate bidirectional communication with the community regarding research, between and during research projects, CARs can also engage in education and public awareness initiatives as well as engage with students, faculty, and each other.

One potential use of the CAR tracking system is to connect faculty members who wish to have students engaged in service-learning with CARs. Faculty can use the same procedure to access the CAR database to search for community partners for community-engaged learning purposes. For
example, nine students from a community-based program planning and evaluation course within the public health master's program worked with four CARs and their community organizations. In this course the students partnered with the CARs to develop health promotion programs for the CARs' community organizations. This model of student-CAR engagement could be applied to any type of service-learning or civic engagement project for students in a wide variety of courses. This initial experience with student-CAR interaction suggests that such arrangements can be beneficial to both the CARs’ communities and the students.

The CAR model and its associated tracking tool provide a highly flexible mechanism for partnering with communities across a wide variety of disciplines. It has the potential to serve as a mechanism for fostering cross-disciplinary research in large research institutions as researchers from various disciplines work with the same CAR and his/her communities. To date the CPER project has spawned several additional research projects developed in partnership with the CARs. One such project emerged from the interests of a CAR in the history of race relations among the local African American community and the university health care system. The project is collecting oral histories of the experiences of older African Americans with the health care system. Another proposed CBPR project involves using personal health records and lay health educators to help African American men manage their blood pressure. These projects center on medicine but bring together researchers from medicine and public health with CARs. Future CARs are being recruited specifically based on interest in women’s health, substance abuse, and rehabilitation. However, CARs may be recruited from any community or based on any research interest.

While the initial cohort of CARs was selected based on an ongoing Exception From Informed Consent trial, these individuals helped to define and develop the initial CAR model. As stated above, the CAR model has been created in such a way that it allows for expansion of the CAR network. This expansion includes both a broader range of research projects and expanding CAR research participation. For example, after 18 months, at the end of the original grant, all CARs desired to continue in the CAR network. Individual CARs have subsequently engaged in other research projects, helped write a community newsletter, begun a community needs/health disparity survey, worked with students in service-learning courses, and participated in community outreach educational programs. They are also serving as mentors for new CARs. While the CAR network is relatively new, the results and outcomes have surpassed the expectations of the university and community partners. The demonstrated feasibility of a multi-stage process of tracking potential community partners for research and its associated database can serve as powerful tools for expanding community participation in research. This process allows for engaging community partners according to community partners’ relational definitions of their own communities however they envision their spheres of influence.

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**Acknowledgements**

This research was supported by Grant 5RC1NR011536-02 from the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) and also by UL1RR031990 and 1UL1RR024975 from the National Center for Research Resources (NCRR). Its contents are soley the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of NINR, NCRR, or the National Institute of Health.

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Service-Learning Program Institutionalization, Success, and Possible Alternative Futures: A Scholarly Perspective

Jacqueline C. Klentzin and April Wierzbowski-Kwiatkowski

Abstract

Service-learning continues to develop as an integral component of higher education curricula, with administrators embracing the positive impact that it can have on the communities involved. The higher education environment, however, has changed in recent years. The global economic downturn of 2007–2008 decreased university endowments and has made funding more difficult to obtain and education more financially prohibitive. Simultaneously, an increased scrutiny of the value of a college education by the federal government, accrediting agencies, and the general public has driven institutions to focus efforts on learning outcomes. This investigative study of five universities with established SL programs is a first attempt to update SL theory and practice in light of the current academic climate. The results indicate that while the literature appears to maintain a general relevance, specific “twist” themes also emerged that might better describe SL administration in the second decade of the 21st century. Based on the literature, current publications engaging higher education trends, and study results, the researchers put forth a scholarly perspective they hope will create a context for SL in the future, spark conversations about the success of SL programs in the current environment, provide evidence that SL administration is continually evolving, and encourage additional work in this area.

Introduction

Service-learning (SL) has been defined as:

A credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs [and] reflects on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996, p. 222).

SL continues to develop as an integral component of college and university curricula with higher education administrators embracing the positive impact that it can have on the student, the community, and the institution. The higher education environment, however, has changed in recent years. The global economic downturn of 2007–2008 decreased university endowments (de Vise, 2010), adversely impacted other sources of higher education revenue (Weisbrod & Asch, 2010), and made external funding more difficult to obtain in general. At the same time, an increased scrutiny of the value of higher education by the federal government, accrediting agencies, and the general public has driven institutions to prove their worth by focusing their efforts on learning outcomes assessment (Pomerantz, 2006; Holberg & Taylor, 2007). This begs the question, How do these external forces impact SL program administration?

While a wealth of literature regarding SL program operations in higher education is available, most of this research was conducted prior to the economic decline and at the very beginning of higher education’s call to accountability. As a result, continued research needs to be conducted in order to understand how the centralized administration of SL initiatives evolves as higher education moves into the second decade of the 21st century. This investigative study of five universities with established SL programs and corresponding interpretation by the researchers is a first attempt to contextualize SL, spark conversations about its success in the current environment, provide evidence that SL administration is continually evolving, and encourage additional work in this area.

SL in Higher Education Today

Support for SL has been traced to the early 20th century work of John Dewey (Giles & Eyler, 1994) and has continued throughout the late 20th century with the notable establishment of Campus Compact in 1985 (Morton & Troppe, 1996). Today, SL has entered into what is referred to in the literature as a “fourth wave” (National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, 2008), the distinguishing factor of which is the shift from individual faculty working with specific classes to formal, university-wide programs overseen by
administrative directors, a concept often referred to in the literature as “institutionalization.”

**Indicators of Institutionalization and Success**

Andrew Furco and Barbara Holland (2004) describe SL institutionalization as follows:

Like most educational initiatives, service-learning achieves institutionalization when it becomes an ongoing, expected, valued, and legitimate part of the institution’s intellectual core and organizational culture. However, in comparison to other educational initiatives, service-learning presents some unique features that challenge traditional conceptions of what “institutionalization” means. Specifically, service-learning’s multifaceted structure, multi-disciplinary philosophical framework, and broad organizational impacts require institutional leaders to think differently about why and how to institutionalize this educational initiative (p. 24).

Many scholars have attempted to address the administrative processes and resources needed to support SL in these terms and have generated research-based indicators/models that serve as de facto best practices that describe what are thought to be the most effective methods for successful SL programs. Prior to data gathering, the authors conducted a content analysis of relevant literature using a variety of research resources including, but not limited to, the following databases: EBSCO’s Academic Search Premier, EBSCO’s Professional Development Collection, ERIC, ProQuest Research Library, ProQuest Education Journals, Sage Journals Online, and Wilson’s Education Full Text as well as Google Scholar and various library catalogs. The resulting journal articles, books, and book chapters were analyzed and synthesized by the authors resulting in the following list of eight common administrative elements found in successful SL institutionalization:

1. Inclusion of SL language in the institutional mission statement (Honnet & Poulsen, 1989; Morton & Troppe, 1996; Bringle & Hatcher, 2000; Zlotkowski et al., 2004).
2. A centralized SL office (Honnet & Poulsen, 1989; Bringle & Hatcher, 2000; Zlotkowski et al., 2004).
3. A dedicated staff (Morton & Troppe, 1996; Bringle & Hatcher, 2000; Furco & Holland, 2004; Schaffer, 2004; Zlotkowski et al., 2004).
4. Internal hard funding and supplied physical resources, including space (Honnet & Poulsen, 1989; Morton & Troppe, 1996; Bringle & Hatcher, 2000; Furco & Holland, 2004; Schaffer, 2004; Zlotkowski et al., 2004).
5. Training/development opportunities, including active organizational membership (Morton & Troppe, 1996; Bringle & Hatcher, 2000; Prentice, 2002; Schaffer, 2004; Zlotkowski et al., 2004).
6. Faculty rewards, including release time (Honnet & Poulsen, 1989; Morton & Troppe, 1996; Bringle & Hatcher, 2000; Zlotkowski et al., 2004).
8. An SL advisory board comprised of multiple stakeholders (Morton & Troppe, 1996; Prentice, 2002; Furco & Holland, 2004).

These common elements, which will be referred to as best practices throughout this document, are limited to those items that can easily be documented by SL administrators and are similar to what Zlotkowski et al. (2004) refer to as “Mechanisms and Resources.” More abstract components of institutionalization like “culture” and “faculty buy-in” are important but not as easily quantified and, therefore, not included in this listing. However, the concepts of “culture” and “buy-in” and their impact on SL administration and institutionalization are discussed in context as part of the results section in this study.

Despite the existence of SL best practices exemplified by those cited above, the continued success of an SL program is not assured, especially in this new world of economic uncertainty and higher education reform. It should be noted here that recently SL scholars have begun to question whether SL can and should be institutionalized (Butin, 2006b; Egger, 2008). While experts have studied the institutionalization and sustainability of SL programs in the past, a continuing examination of active SL initiatives needs to be conducted to fully understand how SL programs function in the current higher education climate and whether past indicators of success are still relevant. This study
aims to assist in engaging this disconnect.

**Brave New World**

The past decade has proved to be an interesting one for postsecondary education. The 2001 passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act took the scrutiny off elementary and secondary teaching as an indicator of educational quality and put it squarely on the shoulders of student learning with schools now having to demonstrate that their students are academically achieving at acceptable levels in order to secure funding. While NCLB is thought of as a K–12 development, it represents a general paradigm shift in educational quality assurance that has also impacted college and universities through both the federal government’s call for reform, specifically with the publication of what is commonly referred to as The Spellings Report (United States Department of Education, 2006), and the various accrediting bodies placing more emphasis on educational accountability and the achievement of student learning outcomes during the accreditation review process (Lubin, Ratcliff, & Gaffney, 2001; Beno, 2004; Pomerantz, 2006; Holberg & Taylor, 2007).

Additionally, the U.S. economy is still immersed in what economists have referred to as the “worst economic downturn since the Great Depression” (Mishel & Shierholz, 2009; Romer, 2009). In a nutshell, unemployment was high (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011), housing prices were low, and consumer spending was weak (Chappell, 2011). Many feared a double-dip recession scenario as a distinct possibility, and job creation became the battle cry in the 2012 U.S. presidential race. This new economic reality had a direct and adverse impact on college students and their families (United States Department of Education, 2006) where college debt is sometimes viewed as an “anti-dowry” (Lewin, 2011) that delays the college student’s transition to adulthood, which includes marriage, children, and homeownership. The economic downturn also had negative effects on university endowments (de Vise, 2010) and other sources of higher education revenue (Weisbrod & Asch, 2010). Taken together, the movement towards educational accountability and the continuing aftershocks of a global recession led many to question the value of a college degree, especially after the notable publication of *Academically Adrift* (Arum, R, & Roska, J., 2011), in which the authors assessed higher education’s ability to positively impact certain student skill sets, including critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and writing and found it wanting. The authors cited the lack of traditional academic rigor as one of the main causes for this intellectual stagnation and described an everyday 2009 student’s academic college experience in the following manner:

The typical student meets with faculty outside of the classroom only once per month, with 9 percent of students never meeting with faculty outside the classroom during the previous semester. Although 85 percent of students have achieved a B-minus grade point average or higher and 55 percent have attained a B-plus grade point average or higher, the average student studies less than two hours per day. Moreover, half of the students have not taken a single course that required more than twenty pages of writing, and approximately one-third have not taken any courses that required more than forty pages of reading per week during the prior semester (p. 88).

The anonymous academic known as Professor X (2008) also writes candidly about his/her experiences as a part-time faculty member in “colleges of last resort,” where students are doomed to academic failure:

There seems, as is often the case in colleges, to be a huge gulf between academia and reality. No one is thinking about the larger implications, let alone the morality, of admitting so many students to classes they cannot possibly pass. The colleges and the students and I are bobbing up and down in a great wave of societal forces—social optimism on a large scale, the sense of college as both a universal right and a need, financial necessity on the part of the colleges and the students alike, the desire to maintain high academic standards while admitting marginal students—that have coalesced into a mini-tsunami of difficulty. No one has drawn up the flowchart and seen that, although more-widespread college admission is a bonanza for the colleges and nice for the students and makes the entire United States of America feel rather pleased with itself, there is one
point of irreconcilable conflict in the system, and that is the moment when the adjunct instructor, who by the nature of his job teaches the worst students, must ink the F on that first writing assignment (p. 70–71).

Three years later, Professor X was surprised to find that he/she was not a “lone crank,” but, rather, “a voice in a growing movement” whose experience so resonated with readers it was the most visited article on the magazine’s website in 2008 (Professor X, 2011).

These recent publications that speak to the less desirable aspects of higher education have resulted in a heated discourse among educators, sociologists, economists, and the general public. News articles that engage the topic offer up descriptive titles like “Is College Overrated?” (Kaufman, 2010), “Plan B: Skip College” (Steinberg, 2010), and “The University Has No Clothes” (Smith, 2011). Combine these findings, personal narratives, and reports with the growing ambiguity surrounding the university’s purpose (Pew Research Center, 2011), the push for education and training alternatives (Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2011), and the financial hardships incurred by students and their families because of increasing tuition costs in the current economy (United States Department of Education, 2006), What is left is an unstable stew of circumstances where the future of a post-secondary degree is decidedly uncertain. Within that uncertainty resides the current administration and future of SL programs.

Methodology
This investigative study of five institutions of higher education addresses the following research question: Are past indicators of service-learning program institutionalization and success still relevant, or have they changed so significantly that the existing literature is no longer an accurate representation of current service-learning program administrative practice?

In order to begin addressing the research question, the authors spoke with individuals charged with managing/ coordinating SL programs in order to gain a global perspective of SL program history and functionality. They found that while many different types of people participate in specific SL initiatives (faculty, students, community members), most of the general SL administrative duties fell upon small departments or individuals. Additionally, they found that the programs vary widely in scale depending on the institution.

In the interest of equality, five SL program administrators from five different higher institution types with established SL programs were interviewed in December 2009 and January 2010. The sample included representation by a Christian university, a Catholic University, a non-religious affiliated Private University, a Research University, and a State University. (The term “university” is used to describe all participating institutions of higher education, including colleges. This was done to enhance readability and further assure participant anonymity.) SL administrators at each site were self-identified. After providing informed consent, the participants were interviewed by the researchers using a semi-structured interview protocol consisting of open-ended questions based on the content analysis of the existing literature exhibited in the previous section and the results of a small pilot study, which consisted of an interview with an educational expert in order to pre-test the interview questions for clarity. The interview transcripts were then coded using the 6-step coding process as recommended by Creswell, Tesch, and Creswell (Creswell, 2005). This process advocates a “lean coding” method thereby allowing researchers to generate broad themes based upon fewer codes than a traditional line-by-line coding system.

Table 1. Shared Elements of Service-Learning Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Ch</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>Ca</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mission statement reflects commitment to service/engagement</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centralized service-learning office</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedicated staff</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported through internal funding</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership in Campus Compact or other support organization</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards for faculty (course release, grants, etc.)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program assessment</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service-learning advisory board</td>
<td>𝑑</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ch: Christian University; R: Research University; Ca: Catholic University; P: Private University; S: State University
Results

Data analysis of the interview text confirmed that the eight common SL indicators of institutionalization and success continue to be relevant. Table 1 illustrates which participants responded positively to incorporating each indicator in their administration of SL.

While the researchers confirmed that the past indicators of SL institutionalization appear to maintain relevance, new twists on the established best practices emerged. The researchers uncovered five such “twist” themes that differed significantly enough from the literature to warrant further examination.

Theme #1 – Emphasis on Student Learning: The participants indicated that student learning was a driving force of their SL programs.

Theme #2 – Mission Statement Lip Service: While SL language still appears in the institutional mission statements of all participants, those participants affiliated with the most institutionalized programs felt that this language had little or no impact.

Theme #3 – Funding in the Current Economic Environment: Economic conditions have made external funding sources scarce, which places an even greater emphasis on securing internal operating monies.

Theme #4 – The Barrier of the Individual: Institutionalized programs have de-emphasized the individual SL “champion” in favor of a more hands-off management approach.

Theme #5 – Future Assessment Practices: Participants are using or planning to use a variety of assessment methods in order to better capture program data.

For each of the above “twist” themes, the researchers interpreted the results and related them to previous findings in the literature in order to provide context and illustrate trending differences as part of the Discussion section that follows.

The interview analysis also uncovered two trends that speak to the future of SL program administration that, when examined together, point to two very different futures for the pedagogy.

Possible Future #1 – SL as an Academic Discipline: In this case, SL evolves into an academic department, which is administered as such.

Possible Future #2 – The Student Engagement Model: Here SL is absorbed into the growing student engagement movement and administered as one type of initiative among many.

Like the “twist” themes, further discussion surrounding these two possible futures is included in the Discussion section of this document.

Additionally, it was discovered during the interview process that the SL program at the State University, which had a rich SL culture in the past, was in rapid decline. Textual data from the State University interview are included in the results section when appropriate because, when combined with the information from other participants, they create a sharp contrast that bring the themes into a stark relief and better illustrate their meaning.

Discussion

The following is an interpretation of the five “twist” themes and two possible futures of SL that emerged from the study’s data set and their relation to the literature and current economic and academic climates. While the study described here is not extensive enough to generate theory, the authors present the following information with the intention of setting a contextual stage for scholarly discussion and future research.

Theme #1: Emphasis on Student-Learning

The emphasis on student learning that emerged as a result of the data analysis can be interpreted as a shift in preferred SL programming type. In 1994, Robert Sigmon developed the Service and Learning Typology in order to describe the four variations of service learning programs he encountered based upon his extensive experience in the field:

1. Service-LEARNING: Service goals are secondary and learning goals are primary.
2. SERVICE-learning: Service outcomes are primary and learning goals are secondary.
3. service-learning: Service outcomes and learning goals are separate.
4. SERVICE-LEARNING: Service outcomes and learning goals are given equal weight and enhance one another.

While the typology was intended to be solely descriptive in nature, Sigmon did admit that SERVICE-LEARNING was his “preferred choice” for designing future SL programs.

The results of the small study revealed that definitions of SL and its relation to the institutional mission varied among the participants in keeping with Sigmon’s typology. The participating Research University and Private University both espouse a Service-LEARNING model where the goal of learning comes first. While “mutual benefit” is also an objective of the Research University, this institution holds the view...
that “service should enhance and connect to our teaching—not necessarily be a part of it.” Here, service played a supporting role to the University’s primary missions of education and research. In addition to the educational benefits for students, service learning at this institution was also framed as a method to encourage faculty research and publication. The same description could be easily applied on a much smaller scale to the Private University where the “focus is on the learning and the service is very much an added bonus.”

The underlying philosophies of the religious institutions differ. SL at the Christian University was one of SERVICE-learning where Christian service within higher education is meant to benefit society first and foremost while learning is secondary. Here SL “has been very well-received and very much supported by the faculty and administration, which is a major strength. The students understand the importance [of SL] as a Christian institution.” However, the participant noted that the extreme emphasis on service only is a potential “downfall” of the program and that a shift to more learning-focused SL pedagogy (SERVICE-LEARNING) is on the horizon.

On the other hand, primary focus for the Catholic University was already equally targeted on learning and, in effect, a working SERVICE-LEARNING model:

Our definition is that service learning is a methodology that combines academic instruction, meaningful service, and critical reflective thinking to promote student learning and student responsibility. Very much the idea that discipline-specific content is acquired.

What is most striking about these descriptions is the emphasis on the “learning” aspect of SL. This might not appear extraordinary at first because, after all, these are universities where learning is their “business.” What is interesting, however, is that instead of the Research and Private universities working to transition from service-LEARNING to SERVICE-LEARNING, which could be perceived as the most actualized of the typologies, only the religious institutions are pursuing the SERVICE-LEARNING model where the level of “learning” is brought up to the level of “service.” The Research and Private universities were comfortable with their service-LEARNING model and showed no intention of varying from it. The focus was not on the “service” aspect of SL but, rather, the “learning” aspect, which is keeping with calls for higher education accountability and proof of student learning.

A different view of SL was held by the State University participant, who argued that:

SL is a vehicle that leads to social justice… educational needs have to be secondary. That’s why it’s service-learning and not the other way around.

This perspective is in keeping with Sigmon’s (1994) SERVICE-learning definition. One wonders if this conception of SL, which opposes the trend, played any role in the administration’s decision to shrink the SL program, especially in this era of higher education accountability.

In an environment where researchers and the general public are questioning the value of a college degree (Professor X, 2008, 2011), college presidents are split on the mission of post-secondary education (Pew, 2011), and the Harvard Graduate School of Education is advocating for alternative/career-focused educational pathways (Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2011), it’s no wonder that the LEARNING component of SL has been brought more clearly into focus and that, possibly, the concept of SL as a vehicle for social justice is now taking a backseat.

The question then becomes, Where is the concept of social justice, which had been a driving force of SL, in this new career-based, post-secondary reality? According to sociologist Steven Brint (2009), “non-scholarly” norms of practice that emphasize active learning and social service goals may be partially responsible for “low levels of student effort and limited student learning in college” (p. 1). Social justice, therefore, can be potentially positioned as an obstacle to student learning. If a social justice mission is no longer part of an institution’s goals for student development, especially in a secular institution, there are numerous potential community ramifications including interpreting the goodness of SL projects with only students’ future career prospects in mind. This mindset could prove detrimental to existing and future SL projects if those associated cannot directly link their SL missions to concrete student learning goals and then prove project value through an accepted outcomes assessment measure. Personal characteristics like empathy, fairness, leadership, and sense of community, admirable traits in a human being, are not easily computed and then mapped back to national
standards or accrediting agency criteria. In a world where the value of a college degree must be explicitly identifiable, character-building might not be enough of a reason to convince administrators focusing on the bottom line that a particular SL project is worthy of funding.

**Theme #2: Mission Statement Lip Service**

SL experts have argued that one physical, easily identifiable indicator of SL institutionalization is a reflection of a commitment to service in the language of the institutional mission statement. Weigert (1998) describes a “manifestation of uniqueness” where “each institution spells out the key elements of its identity, goals, and aspirations.” While mission statements are “important in themselves,” they “only become real in the students, faculty, staff, and administrators who comprise the institution” (p. 4).

All five participants in this study agreed that SL or service-related language is included in their respective mission statements, which is in keeping with SL best practices. However, mission statement content was viewed as less important by the religious-affiliated institutions where SL was the most institutionalized. The Catholic University participant related that service has always been part of the mission statement and asserted that while the institution has “never had to amend it, however, I think how we have operationalized it over the years has changed,” thereby indicating an inherent fluidity of intent that potentially devalues mission statement language as an indicator of successful SL institutionalization. Additionally, the participant of the Christian University placed the least amount of importance upon the inclusion of SL language in the mission statement by stating: “It might be in the mission statement but is anyone really doing it?” indicating that the inclusion of SL language in and of itself is meaningless because the mission statement does not necessarily accurately depict reality. This leads the researchers to posit that as the SL program becomes more institutionalized, the less impactful a role the mission statement language plays for SL stakeholders, which is a finding that contradicts past literature (Ottenritter & Lisman, 1998; Weigert, 1998).

**Theme #3: Funding in the Current Economic Environment**

SL programs often straddle the funding issue by collecting monies from various external sources like grants, donors, and foundations in addition to internal hard line funding from the institution. Undoubtedly, the safest and most sustainable source of income comes from the inside as indicated by the previous detailed best practices and optimistically expressed by the Christian University:

Everything (about 95%) is funded internally through the University’s budget as a full department within the University…. Since it is funded by hard funds from the institution and does not rely on grants, it will be sustainable for many decades to come.

Internal funding has taken on even greater importance in the current environment, where the effect of the economic downturn on external monies is already being felt. The State University SL program was in funding jeopardy because the vast majority of its funds came from the outside. As a result, the participant expressed great uncertainty about the sustainability of the SL program:

It will be interesting to see what this looks like in a year. We’re told [SL] is going to be drastically reduced because the funding is not there.

However, even internal funding has the potential of being adversely impacted by the recent economic downturn, a situation the participants are well aware of:

In the economic climate that we’re in, often times SL programs are the first things cut. They are nice programs to have when times are good but when times are tough, often they are the first to go. They are the easiest things to cut. They are the low-hanging fruit (Private University).

This new funding reality is then coupled with student demographic trends, which creates a more complicated financial picture for all involved:

Service learning is premised on full-time, single, non-indebted, and childless students pursuing a “liberal arts education.” Yet a large proportion of the post-secondary population today, and increasingly of the future, views higher education as a part-time, instrumental, and pre-professional endeavor that must be juggled with children, family time, and
earning a living wage. Service-learning may be a luxury that many students cannot afford, whether in terms of time, finances, or job future (Butin, 2006b).

For these programs to succeed in the current educational and economic climates, they must be funded primarily through internal, hard-line funding from the university’s administration. While this fits with SL best practices, the solidifying of these monies now is in no way a guarantee of program sustainability. SL program administrators must always be conscious of their tenuous position as “low-hanging fruit” and sympathetic to the economic lives of their students in order to safely navigate the treacherous funding waters.

Theme #4: The Barrier of the Individual

Three participants spoke about the role of the individual in their respective SL programs as being both a positive and a negative force depending upon the status of the SL program. The participants agree that SL champions are needed, especially at the implementation stage:

I think that if you are going to build a really effective SL program, you have to have a champion. Somebody who eats, breathes, and sleeps SL. Somebody that’s going to say, “Ok, I can’t get through the door so I’m going through the windows” (State University).

However, the SL champion can later be perceived as an individual pushing a personal agenda and act as a potential barrier to SL program institutionalization:

When I learned that after I left [a previous position] and SL stopped [there], I said, “The idea is more important than the person leading the idea. Somehow I have to make sure it’s not personal. It’s not about the person leading. It’s about the idea (State University).

Despite this intention, the State University participant still struggled with the role of the individual in the decline of the SL program. When asked “What do you think would have improved the program?” the participant responded:

I have searched my brain, my soul, my heart and I don’t know. I must have pissed someone off…. I was very careful about language. I used words like “we,” “our,” and “us”--not “me,” “mine” or “I.” I gave people credit for stuff they never did. So I tried to create that kind of culture. I made sure. I have a whole drawer of accolades from the President. I’m not sure where this came from.

It appears that if the initial SL champion, who is necessary for the implementation of the SL program, does not somehow de-personalize their involvement, they run the risk of adversely impacting the program, especially if they leave the position.

To counter the effect of the individual, the Catholic University, arguably one of the more institutionalized of the group, has strictly limited the individual program director’s job to one that “monitors mutuality and reciprocity” as well as student experience. In terms of specific SL course implementation, the SL program director and staff partner “exit the picture” at a certain stage allowing the faculty member to take complete control of a course, which is a “very intentional move.” Self-described as a “hands-off relationship builder,” the participant depicts his/her current role in the following manner: “My ethos about the work I do is that if I should leave tomorrow, this needs to continue. That means building faculty leadership.”

Additionally, SL course planning at the Catholic University is a topic addressed by a faculty committee representing different disciplines where members serve specified terms and are then replaced, which, again, limits the roles specific individuals play. Despite these enforced limitations, the participant acknowledges that “the community-university relationship is a very funny thing that’s often dependent on the personalities involved.”

While this positive and negative dynamic of the individual is mentioned in the literature (Furco & Holland, 2004, 2009), it has not been given enough attention by SL scholars to make the best practices list. However, based upon the information provided by the participants in this study and its centrality to SL program administration, this potential indicator should be given careful consideration by SL administrators.

Theme #5: Future Assessment Practices

Butin (2006b) asserts that most SL assessments are quantitative in nature and may not accurately capture the assessment data needed to
institutionalize programs and cites the annotated bibliography of Eyler, Giles, Stenson, and Gray (2001) as evidence for this claim. Butin posits that SL scholars’ inclination to use quantitative measures is based on the desire to “prove” SL program value and show legitimacy using the same methodological language favored by others measuring learning outcomes. However, this is misguided because quantifying the value-added of service-learning is methodologically impossible. There are simply too many variables commingling and interacting with each other to allow for valid and reliable conclusions. The number of variables, from type of sites to types of interactions to types of reflection to types of teaching styles becomes too unmanageable to accurately quantify and measure. In this way service-learning is analogous to teaching and other “wickedly” complex problems defying quantitative solutions (Butin, 2006b).

During the interviews, both the Catholic and Private University participants discussed a modification trend in regard to their program assessments. The Catholic University addressed the Butin disconnect by utilizing a variety of methodologies in order to provide insight into the program through a variety of perspectives, including a survey and periodic focus groups. The Private University is currently using traditional quantitative input/output indicators to assess program quality but explains that this methodology will change and that “over time we will evolve and the measure will be more qualitative and less quantitative.” While program assessment continues to be a relevant indicator of SL best practices, its form continues to change. As SL programs become more established, administrators are coming to realize the inadequacy of limiting assessment to only quantitative measures and are now opting to conduct qualitative assessments as well.

The Future of SL

In addition to the confirmation of published SL indicators and the uncovering of five “twist” themes, data analysis of the interview transcripts also describes two possible futures for SL programs in higher education. The first elevates SL from a secondary program into an academic discipline while the second de-emphasizes the role of SL by incorporating it into a Student Engagement Model.

Possible Future #1: SL as an Academic Discipline

All five SL program directors represented originally reported to or were affiliated with an academic area, which was most commonly Academic Affairs. This positioning within university administration was considered a very important component of program success because it legitimized SL as an academic activity of equal value to other academic activities and not simply community service:

People were saying “How is it that you’re getting all this stuff? How is it that you’re rolling out all of these SL courses?” Well, it was because I was on the academic side, which was my peers (State University).

As previously mentioned, the State University SL program is facing a sharp decline in funds and its future is uncertain. Additionally, the program has recently been moved from an office on the “academic side,” with program officers, clerical staff, and graduate assistants, to a new office with one staff member in Student Life. This, in effect, removed “learning” from the program’s mission almost entirely and reduces what was once a vibrant program to, simply, community service.

For its part, the Christian University was administered in a very progressive fashion. The participant described the program as a “loose” academic department consisting of over 10 instructors (faculty and administrators) who use a common syllabus, which they have the flexibility to modify. This model speaks to Butin’s (2006a) concerns about the future of SL institutionalization and his position that SL would be best served by its evolution into an academic discipline called Community Studies. Butin contends that SL can only find true legitimacy in academe if it no longer operates as an add-on program from a single office somewhere on campus but becomes a fully fledged discipline akin to other academic departments. While the Christian University appeared to function in a way keeping with SL best practices, one can easily imagine a future transition from “loose” to full academic department.

Additionally, both the Catholic and Research University also commented on a future SL goal of faculty scholarship with an emphasis on publication, which is very similar to traditional academic departments:

We could do more in terms of inspiring our faculty members to do research on service-learning. The scholarship of teaching and learning is something that we do not tap into a lot. Surprisingly,
for a private, Catholic university, we are very research focused and I think this is an opportunity for us to impact the field. We are doing great service-learning. We obviously have a good program. But we should be putting more information out in terms of examining our own teaching—our own scholarship related to teaching. I think that’s one thing that could be done that would be a high impact activity. (Catholic University)

While an office under Academic Affairs might be an effective place in the institutional hierarchy for now, fully fledged departments under the name Community Studies might very well be the next step in SL evolution and usher in an SL “5th wave,” which would elevate SL from a pedagogical practice to an academic discipline. While this scenario provides academic validation for SL and ensures internal funding for projects, it could deprive SL of its inclusiveness and flexibility. Instructors who are not members of a Community Studies Department might feel less confident about or even discouraged from developing SL projects for their classes because this activity is the official purview of a specific set of academics. SL might then become the domain of a select group of students and faculty, which would deprive others of rich life experiences and community organizations of needed assistance.

Possible Future #2: The Student Engagement Model

During the interview transcript analysis, another possible future for SL emerged. The Private University was a recent entrant into the world of SL and approached its program administration very differently than the other universities with more established programs. While the four other universities have stand-alone SL departments/centers/offices, the Private University bundled SL into the overall campus initiative of student engagement.

Dating back to the 1980s (Zepke & Leach, 2010) the Student Engagement Model (Pomerantz, 2006) can be quickly defined as a movement to intellectually and emotionally connect students with the campus in order to increase student learning and student persistence/retention (Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonwea, 2008). The benefit to student engagement is, therefore, twofold as it enhances both the students’ experiences at the university as well as the university’s bottom line. Engagement on campus can take many forms including active learning projects, learning communities, community service initiatives, and social activities. The popularity of the Student Engagement Model has exploded in recent years as evidenced by the over 1,000 institutions that have participated in the National Survey of Student Engagement, a nationally normalized survey instrument, since its inception in 1999 (National Survey of Student Engagement, n.d.).

The Private University is one of these institutions that had embraced the Student Engagement Model. Undergraduate students are required to complete a certain amount of engagement-related activities in order to satisfy graduation requirements. These activities include holding a campus leadership position, participating in a study abroad program, attending cultural events, and taking part in an SL program. Because students are provided so many possible engagement options, they could easily satisfy the engagement requirements without taking part in an SL activity. In this model, SL is not the primary focus of the program director at the Private University. Rather, it is one of the director’s many responsibilities and plays a supporting role in the student engagement process. In essence, SL has been absorbed into the larger movement toward student engagement.

This difference in perspective is worth mentioning because of the possibility that the model utilized here will be adopted in the future by other institutions, especially those concerned with increasing student achievement and maintaining student enrollment. In this scenario, any social justice goals from SL administration disappear completely because the focus is solely on the student. Here SL administration is firmly cemented in either the Service-LEARNING or service-learning definitions and would be programmatically unable to reach Sigmon’s (1994) desired level of SERVICE-LEARNING. (Individual SL projects may be able to achieve social justice goals depending upon the faculty involved.) Additionally, if student engagement becomes required, there will likely be some pushback from participants if SL is perceived as simply one more logistical hoop to jump through. This is not to say that students would not benefit from their participation in an SL program administered in this manner, but categorizing SL as a diploma requirement sets a very specific tone and might undermine the authenticity of the work.

Suspicious Absence: Online SL
Interestingly, none of the participants discussed SL in the virtual learning environment. The rise of distance education is an educational trend that cannot be ignored (Parsad & Lewis, 2008); yet no participant mentioned the extension of the SL pedagogy to their distance learners despite examples of such programs existing in the literature (Bennett, 2001; Burton, 2003; Killian, 2004; Guthrie & McCracken, 2010; Waldner, McGorry, & Widener, 2010). The conclusion reached here is that while online SL “innovators” and “early adopters” are experimenting in the environment by reaching out to distance learners and involving them in SL activities, this phase of SL development is still in its infancy and has yet to be accepted by the general SL “majority” (Rogers, 1962).

Conclusion

The research question for this study examined whether previously published SL best practices continue to be relevant as we enter the second decade of the 21st century. Analysis of the small, purposive sample of interview transcripts from a cross-section of institution types provided evidence that this was the case. However, a number of “twist” themes emerged that help place these indicators of success in the context of the current economic and educational environments. The subsequent interpretation and grounding of themes by the authors included a conscious focus on the “learning” aspect of SL, the true meaning of the mission statement, funding concerns, the impact of the individual on SL institutionalization, and SL program assessment trends. Additionally, the analysis uncovered evidence pointing to two possible futures for SL programming. The first posits the evolution of SL from a supplemental pedagogy into a fully fledged academic department. The second imagines a de-emphasizing of SL in favor of the broader Student Engagement Model.

References


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Many helping professions that embrace community practice are grounded in the quest for social and economic justice by focusing on the interaction between people and their environment (Miller, Tice, & Hall, 2008). Helping professionals with this focus seek a thoughtful union between clients’ experiences and broader social problems. Training in macro-level practice (e.g., advocacy, community engagement, community development, community organizing, or community-driven interventions) prepares helping professionals to engage their communities and develop their practice skills. Macro practice requires specific skills and experience. Therefore, an important goal of higher education should be to present students with opportunities for transformative education that leads to a new perception of themselves as engaged citizens. These newly transformed global citizens are energized to connect with and impact their communities through developed and refined macro practice skills. We explored the extent to which potentially transformative experiential learning practices can be used to teach macro practice skills to undergraduate social work students. The purpose of this article is to present an innovative approach to education that empowers them to connect with their communities around issues of mutual interest. We describe a framework for teaching macro practice skills through community-based action projects (CBAP) that creates the opportunity for students to grapple with the challenges of partnership and community collaboration. CBAPs are student driven, semester long experiences of community organizing and social action. We include the guiding framework for the CBAP, a description of assignments with learning outcomes and assessments of learning, as well as a discussion of the class elements that both helped or hindered student learning of macro skills. Although the examples are derived from social work, other helping professions with similar educational practices and training approaches will find that the framework for integrating CBAPs is easily accomplished.

Current Macro Practice Education: Failures and Success

Experiential learning in helping and community-based professions is essential for helping students develop and refine practice skills. Although professions that recognize the interconnection of social problems from the individual to the broader community may find it challenging to prepare students at each level of practice (i.e., micro, mezzo, and macro), in social work, field placements are the primary vehicle for students to integrate their education with direct experience (Carey, 2007). Like many practice based professions, these placements or internships may occur in a variety of settings, including universities, community and government agencies, schools, and health and mental health facilities, as well as other organizations seeking to improve individual and community well-being (Boylan & Scott, 2009). However, experiential macro practice opportunities are rare (Koerin, Reeves, & Rosenbloom, 2000) limiting students’ experiences in confronting larger social problems often rooted in social and economic injustice and disparities. Professions that attempt to be inclusive of all forms of practice may find that student preferences limit their competencies across various forms of practice. For example, many social work students focused on learning clinical practice become apathetic toward learning about social policy and broad social action (Carey, 2007; Rompf & Royce, 1994). Hymans (2000) described social work students’ lack of interest in macro practice as a “general malaise.” In fact, Hymans found that graduating bachelor level social work students placed macro practice as the least interesting social work subject in their exit interviews. Another study of graduating social
work seniors showed they ranked policy and macro practice courses as the “least valuable” of their educational experience (Sather, Weitz, & Carlson, 2007). While negative views of policy, macro practice, and research by students may be because they perceive these courses as unimportant, poor integration and fragmented instruction may also be the cause. Other helping professions with a similar framework for engaging individuals and communities may also find that instruction does not always result in direct experiences that help students develop skills and confidence in executing various forms of practice.

The potential disconnect between instruction and direct macro experience may lessen a professional’s willingness and confidence when confronted with social problems requiring action. Students with direct experiences with macro level practice report a greater sense of competence and are more likely to employ macro level interventions as professionals (Anderson & Harris, 2005; Keller, Whittaker, & Burke, 2001). Rocha (2000) found that students who had experiential learning opportunities felt more competent to do policy-related work and were able to apply their new skills. Therefore, students across helping professions that embrace various levels of practice (e.g., families and communities) should be provided with opportunities through classroom instruction to utilize macro skills (e.g., community organizing and community engagement) to ensure greater exposure to various levels of practice.

Pedagogy: Service-Learning, Community-Based Learning, and Action Research

A community-based learning approach is particularly timely due to the current trend in strengthening the university’s public engagement (Ishisaka, Farwell, Sohng, & Euhara, 2004). For example, the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities (1999) issued a report entitled, Returning to Our Roots: The Engaged Institution. Some helping profession educators are utilizing the campus community to engage students in social action that is relevant to their everyday lived experience (Carey, 2007). Projects of this nature are grounded in the idea that the social problem addressed in the classroom experience must be one that “students believe to be a personal cause, which impacts on their community and lives” (Carey, 2007, p. 68). This notion may gain student support within the short time frame of an academic semester; however, it fails to expand the student’s perspective to embrace causes that impact the most vulnerable populations.

Several models for integrating classroom instruction with community action and engagement exist. For example, University of Washington School of Social Work utilizes a Partnership for Integrated Community-Based Learning approach that relocates aspects of teaching and learning from academic to community settings (Ishisaka, Farwell, Sohng, & Ushara, 2004). The partnership included 11 faculty, 3 auxiliary faculty, 3 doctoral students, 2 executive directors, 7 program coordinators from 9 agencies, and 5 local community program and fund development consultants. The University of Nebraska Omaha utilizes a similar method for teaching macro level skills by incorporating a service-learning approach in two junior level policy courses, a senior macro practice course, and a senior level research methods course (Sather, Weitz, & Carlson, 2007). Their method for engaging bachelor level social work students in community-based instruction via service-learning also relied heavily on the faculty organization and implementation. Faculty met with agencies to select an appropriate community partner, worked with the agency administration and staff to develop specific projects and task groups, and assigned students to specific projects based on student requests, strengths, and learning needs.

Although these models are well organized and may contribute meaningfully to students’ experiences, these approaches may hinder students’ commitment to addressing particular social problems facing that community because they were not involved in the development of the community partnership or problem formulation. Community organizing emphasizes the importance of direct relationship development as the crux for building social power and individual empowerment to evoke organizational and community change and sustain long-term community partnerships (Speer & Hughey, 1995; Zimmerman, 2000). The initial work of engagement, consensus building, and relationship development, though challenging and time consuming to navigate, is the key to creating a successful community-based macro intervention (Speer & Hughey, 1995). In the context of service-learning, Des Marais, Yang, abd Farzanehkia (2000) argue that mistakes and corrective action are an inherent part of incorporating decision-making into leadership development. This approach allows students to connect the responsibilities of decision-making with real world consequences, but occurs in an environment (e.g., classroom) where the ultimate consequences may be lower with balanced
supervision and appropriate intervention. Excluding students from the initial steps of partnership models may hinder them from developing skills related to macro practice decision-making, community engagement, establishing interorganizational networks, and additional precepts required for macro work. Moreover, excluding students from the early work of partnership development risks mystifying the steps required to initiate macro interventions, further discouraging students’ willingness to address existing social problems. The following describes an alternative model in macro social work practice courses that provides students with the opportunity to build macro skills in the initial stages of community engagement and action and how it aligns with the standards of a profession committed to community engagement and action.

The CBAP Model

The CBAP model was created when the two authors were each assigned to teach a section of undergraduate Generalist Social Work Practice II (Macro Social Work Practice) at the University of Louisville. Each class had approximately 20 students and met twice a week. The purpose of this project was to create a transformative learning experience for students to connect with the local community through applied action oriented work. Our goal was to guide students through the process of community engagement and change effort planning. Teaching a practice class within the required course sequence of a professional program creates a stronger impetus to provide applied learning experiences. We were committed to ensuring our students were building their community practice skills by practicing the work of engagement. It was important that students encountered the barriers and employ macro-problem solving skills through the often daunting phase of relationship building with community groups to develop trust and gain commitment. The focus on community connection through student initiated engagement efforts is a unique feature in the CBAP model. Allowing students to wrestle with the challenging and often cumbersome initial phases of community-engaged work opened them up for a richer, more intense learning experience. Practicing the actual tasks and activities they will engage in as professionals helps students begin to identify themselves as professionals and empowers them to make an impact in the broader community.

Our role as instructors was to provide structured facilitation of the process. We provided brief lectures and then worked individually with student groups to support their progression through the model. We followed a student-initiated or student-directed learning process and gave students the power to make decisions around the implementation of their CBAP. We realized that one school semester is too short a time frame to initiate sustained large scale community change; however, it is enough time to build a partnership based on mutual interest and implement a small scale project or initiative.

While planning the structure of the course and outlining the CBAP model, we consulted the university Center for Civic Education and Service-Learning and utilized their existing resources (e.g., current list of community agencies, reflection activities, and instructional sheets outlining professional behavior), but their strong focus on service-learning did not incorporate the action mechanisms (e.g., to problem identification and initiating community outreach) necessary for a more grassroots form of community engagement lacking in other models.

By requiring students to identify their own social problem and agencies to work with, we hoped to increase their personal connection to the macro project and empower them to address social problems in their communities. Although all projects were student generated, instructors provided final approval for all projects to ensure they were action-oriented and met the model specification outlined below.

Course Design

We were deliberate at each step to ensure the various components of the model came together cohesively and provided students with an opportunity to develop foundational skills related to community engagement and action. Therefore, each step of the model and the parameters to maximize group efficiency enhance group dynamics and solidify students’ commitment to the project were taken into account. Although the project is separated into stages, each stage may require additional development and exploration despite beginning the next stage in the CBAP process. Each step does build and enhance the completion of the others but should not be viewed as a static event or set of activities that require absolute resolution before the project can progress. Table 1 provides the framework indicating how an action-based project can be integrated into instruction to meet the specific macro skills. We will describe each element of the framework.
(column 1), the graded assignments connected to the elements of the framework (column 2), and the macro skills learned through each assignment (column 3).

The CBAP course design was implemented in an undergraduate generalist social work practice with groups and communities class. Students were all juniors and seniors in the semester before their block field placements. Prerequisites for the course include research, generalist practice with individuals, families, and groups.

### Table 1. Framework and Course Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CBAP Framework</th>
<th>CBAP Project-Graded Assignments</th>
<th>Macro Practice Skill</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>STAGE 1:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Group formation/social problem identification</td>
<td>Paragraph listing members of their group and the social problem of interest</td>
<td>Problem identification</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Group paper including a definition of and literature review about the systematic causes of their social problem</td>
<td>Group formation, Identification of systematic causes of social problems</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Utilize existing empirical evidence as the foundation for understanding the social problem</td>
<td>Social networking</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>STAGE 2:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify various agencies and community members who are knowledgeable about their social problem of interest</td>
<td>Submit a list of community contacts (i.e., those individuals known to have an interest in working with those affected by, or agencies directly involved in, the amelioration of the social problem)</td>
<td>Resources identification/development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Social networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face to face meetings with community contacts</td>
<td>Submit a list of community contacts and description of what they learned</td>
<td>Social networking, Partnership building</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Needs assessment regarding problem</td>
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<td><strong>STAGE 3:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Issues</td>
<td>Group paper identifies five systematic causes of social problem and a strategy for addressing each cause that emerges from face-to-face meetings.</td>
<td>Partnership building and project development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies/Interventions</td>
<td>Groups identified the strategy they planned to implement in collaboration with community partners. Paper also included a timeline for the intervention and a detailed plan for their project, including the tasks and responsibilities of each group member and the community partner(s).</td>
<td>Brainstorming and critical thinking skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Issue: Targets, Allies &amp; Constituents, Opponents Strategy</td>
<td>Reflection assignment</td>
<td>Group building/cohesion; resource identification; networking; planning; assessment of community; assessment of strategy efficacy in addressing social and economic justice; help establish sense of community by developing interagency and community collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tactics</td>
<td></td>
<td>Must identify sources that maintain oppressive conditions (e.g., agency policies); critical thinking to identify most effective tactics to initiate and sustain social change; delegate task to accomplish cohesive goals; develop collaborative relationships that build community power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Plan</td>
<td></td>
<td>Develop abilities to execute a multistage and collaborative strategy; develop and manage time sensitive tasks; Occupy leadership roles that delegate responsibility; Develop and employ organizing framework for accomplishing tasks at each stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Project evaluation; encourages students to tie strategies to measurable outcomes to evaluate change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STAGE 5:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Implementation</td>
<td>Students spend significant time working with community members to implement the change project they proposed (not graded—see p. 24 for more discussion)</td>
<td>Direct application of developed plan; continuous assessment of progress and change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STAGE 6:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Change</td>
<td>Final paper evaluating their completed project; professional presentation about social problem; project implementation</td>
<td>Project evaluation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
around a central social problem. This level of engagement is essential as students’ involvement inside and outside the classroom facilitates critical thinking and enhances potential information and skill retention (Bransford, 1979; Garside, 1996). Examples of broad social problems identified by our students were homelessness, early childhood literacy, adolescent substance abuse, school drop-outs, childhood obesity for at-risk youth, veterans’ reintegration into academic institutions, educational needs for migrant children, and social stigma related to aging populations.

Students submitted a brief paragraph listing members in their group and the identified social problem. The groups reviewed the assignments they would be responsible for over the course of the semester and were asked to consider how their group might function (e.g., leadership in the group and decision-making). Additionally, groups discussed procedures for facilitating assignment completion (e.g., editing, fact-checking), and how group members could utilize their individual skills as resources for the group. Such activities allowed students to thoughtfully consider how task groups and their functions and procedures are integral to initiating community engagement and action.

Defining the social problem. Students must understand the breadth of the social problem and the structural and contextual factors contributing to the conditions and experiences of vulnerable populations. In the initial brainstorming exercise, the small groups were asked to identify factors contributing to the social problem affecting a vulnerable population. Utilizing the ecological model of practice (Meyer, 1993; Hepworth & Larsen, 1993; Compton & Galaway, 1989) is helpful in conceptualizing the historical, cultural, environmental, structural, and individual level factors that influence a social problem and impede individuals and communities’ abilities to adapt. Utilizing this model allows students to think holistically about the social problem by recognizing the interconnection of social factors related to the problems affecting populations and communities.

Following initial brainstorming sessions, the small groups prepared a research paper about their social problem. Students referenced professional journals, community members, and social agency professionals to conceptualize the social problem. The paper included a broad discussion of the social problem at the national level and then narrowed in focus to present state and community information. The students operationally defined their social problem, its impact on the local community, and what the community is doing to remedy the problem. For instance, one group identified high school retention as the social problem, provided the local drop-out statistics, and highlighted four agencies working on the issue of high school retention. Conceptualizing the social problem in this fashion serves several purposes. First, it allows students to become familiar with existing research on the topic so that they understand the arguments and empirical evidence in the literature. Second, it allows students to develop a knowledge-base and compare descriptions and evidence from research in other geographic regions or at the national level to descriptions of the social problem in their own communities. Third, it prepares them to discuss the social problem knowledgeably with community members to engage them in a thoughtful discourse of the social problems emerging in the community.

Developing community partnerships. In the next element of the framework, students identify various agencies and community members knowledgeable about their selected social problem. The small groups identify local community agencies and other key stakeholders that work toward ameliorating the social problem, or those directly or indirectly affected by the social problem. The students contact these individuals and request face-to-face meetings. Students submitted a list of community contacts and what they learned from their face-to-face meetings.

These meetings have several intended purposes. The first is to determine the extent to which the information obtained through their research and conceptualization of the social problem directly relates to the experiences, concerns, and needs of those in the community. Second, it allows students to directly gather information from community members regarding the problems and allows them to build relationships with community members. Students are encouraged to ask their community contacts for additional contacts in the community to saturate their understanding of the social problem while recruiting additional support to enact the social change strategy. Lastly, it provides students an opportunity to utilize their existing contact to identify other key stakeholders in the community who can provide useful information, identify additional resources, and provide support for their projects. Many parts of this process mirror the Ross house-meeting model emphasizing the development of a social network, drawing communities into discourse about social problems, and organizing communities toward
action (Brueggemann, 2006).

The students were required to make at least three community contacts for their initial contact assignment and expand this list as their face-to-face meeting identified additional individuals of interest. Students were strongly encouraged to diversify their community contacts (e.g., those experiencing the problem directly, social service agencies, community leaders, educational institutions and other religious, cultural, social, and governmental organizations) to obtain a well-rounded view of the social problem. One group had tremendous success at this process and made over 30 contacts and received some form of support or assistance from most sources contacted. The groups were encouraged to develop a relationship with their contacts through continued phone, email, and face-to-face interactions throughout the semester. Maintaining contact and continuously receiving feedback from community members was instrumental in implementing a strategy toward change.

Choosing an issue and strategy. The next piece of the framework involves issue and strategy identification. The goals of the face-to-face meetings are to build community partnerships, learn the community level issues related to their social problem of interest, and the community member’s ideas regarding strategies or interventions to remedy the community level need. Then groups identify their primary issue and the strategy they will implement as a group. At this stage, students work in their groups to compile and assess the information they have obtained from community members. The goal is to identify an issue and strategy that cuts across all of the individuals interviewed to unite community members. As many of the stages discussed, this is an iterative process that requires continuous feedback and discussion with community members. It has been our experience that despite busy schedules, community members have been more than willing to contribute to the strategies and address social problems with students. However, it should be noted that we make great efforts to ensure that students are perceived as professionals by emphasizing skills (i.e., preparation, timeliness, appearance) that denote professionalism and preparing them for some of the resistance they may receive as students. For example, in some instances, key stakeholders could not be engaged in these discussions (e.g., youth) because of their vulnerability and requests by community organizations that could not be met given limited resources (e.g., criminal background checks).

Students identify their targets, allies, and constituents, as well as opponents as part of the implementation strategy. Targets are the people or groups they are hoping to change; allies and constituents are those who will help them bring about change; and the opponents are those who will hinder the change process (Pincus & Minahan, 1973). Groups develop an action plan, implementation timeline, and a plan for evaluating the outcome of their CBAP. A large group paper, including a list of five systemic causes and potential strategies for each one and the specific strategy they selected to implement, was submitted to fulfill the above aspects of the course framework. The group paper also included a timeline for the intervention and a detailed plan for their community project, including each group member’s and community contact’s tasks and responsibilities. The group’s timeline had many of the same structural elements as a program evaluation and review technique (PERT) chart (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2004). The paper concluded with a plan for evaluating their community action project.

The final element of the CBAP framework is the experience of social change. Students submitted a final paper evaluating their completed projects and gave 15-minute professional presentations about their social problem and their experience connecting with the community and implementing their intervention. Community members were invited to attend. Grades for the final paper were assessed on the thoroughness of the evaluation and not on the success of the intervention project given that social change often takes time to unfold. Because groups worked in concert with community members, often to address an existing deficiency between agencies, it was not unusual for agencies to continue working on or utilizing the solution developed with the students.

CBAP in Action

The following is a description of a CBAP from one of our small groups. The project did not perfectly align with the framework and we will identify how this may have hindered the project’s success and how these issues can be remedied in the future. We present this as a realistic example in its true form, which includes strengths such as great teamwork and organization and flaws, such as poor relationship sustainment with community contacts. The small group, Adolescent Empowerment Group (AEG), formed around wanting to help adolescents. Their community
contacts included a high school guidance counselor, a social worker from a program serving adolescent girls, the director of an after school program, a worker in a youth services program, a school teacher, and the director of a boys choir that focuses on youth mentorship. Creating a partnership with adolescents through the various community agencies the group identified was not an option due to the necessary safety precautions of background screening required by the agencies. After meeting with their community contacts, the students learned that a common concern was high school retention. Their community contacts voiced that adolescents need good mentorship starting in middle school. Their group paper included a variety of issues and strategies shared by the community members; however, not all the community members offered a strategy, and the group used research literature and personal creativity to develop two of their strategies. They identified a need for mentorship as their central issue and partnered with the boys choir to implement their project. The group described the choir’s success at helping adolescent boys. The choir is comprised of urban minority youth and currently has a 100% high school graduation and college entrance rate. AEG’s strategy was to increase the enrollment of adolescent boys in the choir.

Their action plan was to present information about the choir to the community members who work with at-risk adolescent boys, school principals, and school counselors. They determined the best tactic for presenting information about high school retention and the choir was to create a brochure for the targets listed above. Unfortunately, the group did not partner with their community groups to develop this strategy, but instead used information gathered from the community groups for strategy selection and development. The instructor encouraged the group to persist in nurturing their relationships with community partners throughout the strategy selection and development phase. Student groups were given guidelines, suggestions, and advice; however, they were also given autonomy in decision-making. We view this autonomy as a key strength of the process. Though autonomous student groups may make poor choices that negatively impact their final product, they learn valuable lessons about process that may not be learned if we structured the projects for them and removed them from the relationship development process.

Their timeline indicated when each task was to be completed; however, they did not assign specific tasks to individual group members. This lack of specificity was evident in the papers of other groups as well. This led to confusion over group member responsibilities and some group members feeling responsible for more than their share of the work. AEG worked together to collect the needed information for their brochures, design the layout of the brochure, and have them printed. They contacted all of their targets and planned the best brochure delivery method (i.e., email, in person, or postal system). AEG did an excellent job of learning about issues and strategies from their community partners; however, they did not maintain a continuous relationship with the boys choir director throughout the project implementation. This limited the experience of working with a community group to implement a social change strategy. This lack of relationship development may have caused the students to miss ideas presented by the director of the choir. Students were encouraged to continue cultivating relationships with community partners throughout the semester by speaking with other boys choir leaders, parents, and participants to learn effective strategies for meeting their immediate goal of increased enrollment. However, as stated earlier, the instructors valued promoting the autonomy of the groups to implement the projects.

Among the lessons learned from the project was that partnership building needed to be emphasized. Students should follow up their initial meetings with thank-you cards, phone calls, or emails and then develop a specific strategy for maintaining existing contact with the community partner throughout the semester to convey the progress of the project and incorporate their feedback when barriers are encountered. Students were urged to stay in touch with their community contacts. Those groups that developed and maintained these relationships appeared to have a higher rate of completion compared to other groups. One strategy that may be useful for building and maintaining relationships with community partners is having each group member take responsibility for initiating at least two contacts per week. This will help ensure the projects are implemented in concert with the community partner and not done for the partner.

**Successful Instructional Components**

The structure of the course included mini-lectures covering a new aspect of macro practice and community-based work followed by group work time. The instructors met with each small
group and facilitated a time of reflection regarding the project. Students were encouraged to use their cell phones and laptops to facilitate community connections during this time. The group class time also allowed the instructor to provide more individualized time to assist groups in deconstructing their social problem, brainstorming, thinking through specific situations related to their project, and debriefing other group members on the progress made through completed tasks.

We identified three key elements of our course that appeared to help the students connect with their community action project and master the course objectives. The first is modeling macro practice skills; the second is allowing class time for group work; and the third is using special speakers from community organizations.

We modeled macro practice skills through our work with the student groups. We viewed the class as a microcosm of the CBAP the students were implementing. This was operationalized through dividing the students into task groups, raising their consciousness of social problems, and teaching and practicing macro skills before engaging with the community. At the beginning of the semester, the consensus from the students was that this project is too big for them. They often said things like “we’re just students.” We had to model the macro practice skills of empowerment and community organizing. We needed to show our students that they can make a meaningful difference in the community. We also had the responsibility to “sell” macro practice to them. As mentioned earlier, social work students have a greater understanding of and appreciation for direct practice. When engaging in community organizing, one often has to convince the stakeholders of the importance of the situation and how they can be change agents within their communities. We had to model this skill for our students in order to convince them to connect with the community-based action projects. By the middle of the semester, the students seemed to buy-in to the class and believe in the importance of macro social work practice. Many of the groups expressed a desire to contribute something positive to the community and felt passionate about the topics they had selected.

Allowing class time to work on the projects was an integral part of the course design. One of the major hurdles for group projects is finding a time to meet outside of class. Students are increasingly working full- or part-time and taking full loads of classes in addition to family responsibilities. We also worked to maintain accessible office hours and be available by phone and email. The typical class involved 45 minutes of lecture and thirty minutes of group work time. Groups were allowed to schedule face-to-face community contact meetings during class time provided they gave the instructor prior notice and obtained the lecture materials from a classmate. Groups were encouraged to bring their laptops and cell phones to class and utilize that time for making community connections.

We brought in a variety of special speakers throughout the semester in an effort to show the students a variety of careers in macro social work. The speakers included the state National Association of Social Work lobbyist, a representative from the housing authority, and a policy analyst from the state office of program policy analysis and government accountability. Students appreciated the opportunity to meet professionals in macro social work careers and learn the specific requirements (i.e., bachelor of social work vs. master of social work or specific classes to extend one’s knowledge base) to do the job. These interactions with macro social work professionals also provided the opportunity to make professional connections during class, which assisted some groups that encountered problems implementing their projects.

**Barriers to Instruction**

We have identified three key elements of our course that have impaired the students’ connection with their community action project as well as their mastery of course objectives. The first is group dynamics and cohesion, the second was weak community connections, and the third element was our use of a traditional lecture format with textbook for dispensing information.

Small group cohesion directly impacted the group’s motivation to engage in the project and their ability to work together. The social work program within our university is large and many of the students did not know each other at the beginning of class. They were forced to form small groups within two weeks of starting the CBAP course. Some groups quickly formed a friendly working relationship; other groups could work well together; and other groups never developed a good working relationship. One of the instructors allowed two of his groups to be smaller than the other groups and this created tension from excessive workload for the group, particularly in instances where all members did not equally contribute to the project. The other instructor strongly encouraged one of the groups to define
their social problem more narrowly so they would all be working on the same problem. To remedy the lack of group cohesion, we recommend engaging the class in trust building activities early in the semester. The first, second, and third class meetings should have several group bonding exercises. These will also provide practical tools the students can use in their future social work practice with groups. These activities should then be sprinkled throughout the semester.

The students did not develop strong and meaningful relationships with community agencies. Some of the groups took too long to make their initial contacts, while others were not assertive in their requests to meet with people working within agencies. For example, if an email went unanswered or a phone call unreturned they did not do a follow-up. Once the initial contact was made, students did not work to maintain the relationship with that community partner. An initial list of community contacts was required as a graded assignment; however, we did not grade the ongoing efforts of relationship sustaining through continued contact with community partners. Students tend to associate the level of importance of various activities with the number of points the activity is worth. As newcomers to the community, our own lack of community connections may have been a hindrance to our students’ ability to build relationships with community members for a class project; however, our intention was for students to have an authentic community engagement experience that was not pre-planned by the instructor. We wanted to provide students with an experience that paralleled an actual grassroots organizing effort that requires the implementation of critical thinking and macro problem-solving skills to address the unexpected difficulties associated with problem identification and conceptualization, community partnership development, and project implementation. Because relationship building is essential to individual empowerment and social power needed to produce change (Speer & Hughey, 1995; Zimmerman, 2000), iterative efforts at relationship development and community engagement with faculty guidance were essential to emulating an actual community action experience. Although a general framework was utilized to guide students, each group project required students to adapt the model to their identified problem as well as any conclusions drawn from the barriers they encountered. In addition, students were encouraged to utilize service-learning resources (e.g., a leadership and civic participation center) on campus, which had an established history with several social service agencies that participated in student-led projects. Additionally, we thought we had provided the students with adequate opportunity to create community partnerships by encouraging them to bring their laptops and cell phones to class. We wanted them to use class time to start building these connections. We found that students were not willing to contact agencies during class. Students are strongly discouraged from using technology in most classes, and it must have felt unusual to have a teacher encourage cell phone use during class. We also had a lecture that outlined how to make a professional phone call, email, and letter. We recommend creating class activities where groups compose a phone script, email, and letter to their community connection. The groups will then present their work to the class for critique. After appropriate edits have been made, the groups will make their initial community contact in class. We also needed to teach the students more strategies for connecting with people who do not return emails or phone calls. Students need to know to use phone calls if emails do not work and drop by the office if other efforts have not been successful. Persistence in obtaining resources is a vital skill for any social worker. The students’ status as undergraduates who are typically in their early 20s and lack professional work experience may have also contributed to their unwillingness to be more assertive in making community connections. Additionally, the short time-frame of a semester creates a challenge in developing a meaningful relationship with community partners and implementing broad community change. We shared with our students that their role was to work with their community partners to start the change process and/or carve out a small aspect of the change process that they could accomplish within a 16-week semester. The AEG group elected to contribute a small deliverable, the brochure, to their community partners as part of the broader project of increasing enrollment in the boys choir. Another group started the process of program evaluation for a collection of early childhood literacy programs in the community by connecting those programs with university’s center for educational evaluation. They were not able to see the final product of their work, but they were successful in bringing resources to the literacy programs.

Using traditional teaching methods such as a text book and daily lecture hindered the energy
level of the course and connection with the project. We recommend creating mini lectures and class activities that engage the students in practicing a specific skill they will use in the implementation of their project. We also suggest personalizing the concept of community organizing and macro work by following a local issue as a class. Have each small group take responsibility for presenting a topic related to community organizing or macro social work. This will help the students practice the skills involved in presenting, engaging a group, and disseminating information.

Lessons Learned from Implementing a CBAP Practice Course

We learned several lessons through this initial CBAP practice course. First, students’ motivation may be improved by having them present their progress to the class or utilizing role-plays to increase confidence. Second, macro practice models will help students connect class instruction with their direct experiences. Third, the scheduled class time affects the momentum of class instruction because students in later classes may be unable to contact community members after class. Fourth, groups with less than four members reported difficulties balancing the project workload. Fifth, allowing students to utilize phones and computers during class to contact community members helps create a flexible workspace that enhances participation, but may be difficult to implement for students. Sixth, each step of the CBAP model including relationship sustainment efforts, needs to be connected to a graded assignment or deliverable for students. Sixth, conventional pedagogical approaches (i.e., lecture) often conflicted with CBAP's experiential approach, which perhaps requires nonconventional methods of instruction.

Conclusion

The CBAP framework for teaching macro social work practice holds promise as a method for engaging students in community organizing and social action though an experiential based learning approach. Social work students are often focused on learning clinical skills at the expense of macro practice skills. We believe the CBAP framework can mitigate the apathy toward macro practice expressed by many social work students. By giving students the freedom to select their own social problem and community partner, we increase their engagement in social action. Through the CBAP students learn conceptualizing and understanding structural issues related to social problems, building and maintaining community partnerships, facilitating thoughtful discussions with community partners around social problems, and employing a decision making model to identify and develop their social action strategy, as well as skills for evaluating the strategy. Successful instructional components for enhancing the learning environment include emphasizing group solidarity, developing strategies for community partnership maintenance, providing class time for group meetings and community connections, and utilizing semi-structured lectures with opportunities for practicing skills.

References


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The Best of Times, The Worst of Times: Antecedents for and Effectiveness of Community Engagement in Two Small Rural Towns

Liza Pulsipher Wilson and Nick Sanyal

Abstract

Communities in transition face traumatic change and seek to diversify their economies while continuing to maintain their ties to landscapes that define their heritage. This qualitative case study provides an understanding of community engagement in two transitional towns. Both communities are equally positive about the role of community engagement, but clear differences in the nature and effectiveness of community engagement between the two emerged. The citizens of one town consider their community to have navigated the waters of change. They emulate a bridging community—a diverse group of people with divergent ideas who look outward and toward the future. The second town is still trying to become a place of which residents are proud. They are hindered by the absence of an inspiring leader, the lack of vision, and an inability to communicate between disparate groups. They exemplify a bonding community, where a majority of the citizens have similar mindsets and focus inward.

The Challenges Facing Rural Communities in Transition

Forces of nature and years of reliance on the extractive natural resource industries such as forestry, agriculture, and mining have shaped rural communities in the Pacific Northwest. With the waning of these extractive industries, small rural communities face a common set of challenges that complicates their ability to make sound decisions leading to a more sustainable future. They face a rapidly changing and declining economic base, the loss of their youth who leave to seek better employment elsewhere, and fluctuating markets for agriculture and natural resource products (Parker, Wulfhorst, & Kamm, 2002).

In September 2007, as part of a service-learning commitment, we invited ourselves into Dayton, Washington, to learn about and help facilitate community engagement. The community was welcoming and receptive to our ideas. Their ability to work together and their vision and strong sense of community and identity led to our multi-year presence. Hundreds turned out for our workshops. Many of the ideas we helped generate were adopted as recommendations for potential economic development opportunities for the community.

In the fall of 2009, we began a project in Priest River, Idaho. This time we were contracted to help with a variety of planning projects, including enhancing the ability of the community to engage in developing their own future. We facilitated workshops to determine the current level of community engagement and to stimulate community development ideas. While many residents were welcoming and somewhat receptive to our involvement, their lack of ability to work together and “confused identity” resulted in arrested development as most of the ideas generated by residents were viewed with suspicion by others in the community. Our four workshops had a cumulative attendance of fewer than 50 people.

This paper reports on what the residents of these two communities believe transpired and shares their understanding of why their towns reacted the way they did.

Theory and Practice of Community Engagement

While the many theoretical concepts inherent in community engagement and development derive from a very diverse range of disciplines including sociology, psychology, medicine, anthropology, and political science, the theoretical influences for our research draws from a framework of community participation and community empowerment literature that guided our selection of respondents, helped establish the substantive frame for our semi-structured interview questions, and helped structure our analysis by suggesting a coding structure. Our choice of the theories that informed our work was based on several considerations. First, they were largely developed by and for practitioners and because they were practice based, we felt they would be most applicable to the small rural towns we were working in. Second, they all explicitly suggested questions that we could use in our substantive frame.

Community engagement. Social ecology theories of community engagement recognize it as the
coordinated commitment of community at multiple levels:

(1) individuals; (2) social network and support systems; (3) organizations that serve and influence individuals and the rules and regulations that these organizations apply; (4) the community, including relationships among organizations, institutions, and informal networks; and (5) public policy, regulations, ordinances and laws at the state and national levels (Goodman, Wandersman, Chinman, Imm, & Morrissey, 1996, p. 35).

Community participation. When citizens participate in community development, they build social networks and social capital that strengthens ties among individuals and groups/organizations, leading to a higher level of concern for their place and a more positive perception of their environment.

High levels of community involvement and development increase awareness in a community by making knowledge accessible to citizens, and also, as Agyeman and Angus (2003) note, “move the focus from the ‘rights’ of a citizen to participate in policy making, to the ‘responsibilities’ that a citizen has within his or her community” (p. 361). By framing problems through a lens of civic engagement, community members are more likely to support and act on change.

Community empowerment. Central to community engagement is empowerment—mobilizing and organizing individuals, community organizations, and institutions and enabling them to influence the direction and nature of decisions. Empowerment occurs at three levels: individual, group or organizational, and the community (Rich, Edlestein, Hallman, & Wandersman, 1995). Empowerment at one level can influence empowerment at the other levels (Fawcett, Paine-Andrews, Francisco, Schultz, Richter, Lewis, Williams, Harris, Berkley, Fisher, & Lopez 1995).

Community empowerment (i.e., the capacity of a community to react effectively to shared issues) occurs when individuals and institutions have adequate authority to reach the outcomes they seek (Rich, et al., 1995). Individuals and organizations direct power and influence by being informed about issues through a civic “process of accumulating and evaluating evidence and information,” and empowerment involves “the ability to reach decisions that solve problems or produce desired outcomes,” requiring that citizens and institutions work together to reach and implement decisions (Rich et al., 1995, p. 669).

Study Objectives

This qualitative case study (Yin, 2009) is an attempt to understand community engagement in Dayton and Priest River through a constructivist lens, specifically:

1. What are the antecedent conditions that facilitate successful community engagement?
2. Why did one community succeed while the other was unwilling to create and act on their own visions for the future?

Limitations

This study examines two communities at a single point in time and is not intended to be representative of all similar communities. Our intent is not to imply right or wrong; rather it is to seek what has or has not worked for the communities and to draw connections from those commonalities or differences. The information reflects the residents’ and stakeholders’ views of themselves and the themes that emerged from our conversations with them.

Procedures

Interviews. Primary data were collected through a series of semi-structured in-depth interviews that consisted of a series of open-ended questions that formed the a priori substantive frame for our inquiry (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). We used follow-up questions and prepared probes throughout the interview to ensure that we understood the responses as intended by the interviewee. Because of the rapport that both of us had developed with the respondents, we conducted each interview as a team. This provided the additional advantage of adding to the diversity of probing questions and aided coding and thematic interpretation.

Selection of respondents. We used a criterion-based approach to select respondents (Creswell, 1998). Our primary criterion was that the respondents had to be long-term residents who had participated in multiple community efforts, either as an organizer or member of a group, or as a formal observer over their time in the community. We used three other logical strategies to help select respondents and restrict the number of interviews we would have to conduct while still attaining saturation: critical case, politically important case, and typical case. This diversity of selection strategies gave us a rich respondent pool that served as confirming and disconfirming cases, thus adding to the credibility and completeness of our data. We identified eight
people in Dayton and nine in Priest River who met our criteria and whose interviews allowed us to reach a saturation of ideas. These respondents represented five broad categories of people: elected officials (one in each town), journalist (one in each town), government employees (two in Dayton, one in Priest River), local commercial interests (one in each town), and community members at large (three in Dayton, five in Priest River).

Analysis. Interview transcripts were analyzed for content and meaning using open coding to organize participant comments for their overt content about the community and its engagement practices as presented in our substantive frame. A second coding further examined the data, identifying and applying sub codes to emergent themes and helped select exemplar quotes to illustrate the core nature of each theme. Exemplar quotes were independently selected by each of us to illustrate the key study findings. These quotes always represented the mid-point of the range of responses, with a conscious effort to avoid the extremes. A second consideration was to select quotes that could also help establish the context for the theme, thus adding to the authenticity of the findings. A final coding scheme organized the data into theoretically relevant categories to aid effective integration with the emergent explanations for the effectiveness of community engagement. This process cut across sub codes and respondents.

Our purpose is to describe and explain a complex civic and social process and provide practical advice and insight to the communities we worked with. Our work is not a test of a particular theoretical framework; nor are we working to strengthen any particular theory. Theory is used solely to create a systematic approach and to structure data capture, and analysis and interpretation to help remove bias and to maintain focus on the observations and experiences of our respondents.

Community Context

This section serves three purposes: to provide a basic introduction to the current socio-economic conditions in both towns, to provide a summary of important historical events that have influenced current issues there, and to briefly summarize our involvement in each town prior to our conducting formal interviews there.

Dayton, Washington, “The town that still believes,” is the county seat of Columbia County in southeast Washington. It is 868 square miles of a varied mix of landscapes and land uses including a wilderness area, national and state forest lands, dry land and irrigated agriculture, a commercial ski area, and two river corridors. The county had approximately 4,040 residents in 2009, 2,000 of whom live in Dayton. A large proportion of residents are under 18 or over 45. The median age is 42.4 years, 52% of the population is female, and 95.6% of the population is white. Almost 83% of the population over the age of 25 has a high school education, and 17.5% a college degree. The median value of owner-occupied housing in 2009 was $85,000 and the median household income was $41,194 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009).

Dayton has been fighting for survival following the reduction in federal timber harvesting and the 2005 loss of the Seneca canning plant, once the world’s largest asparagus processing facility. The plant employed more than 1,000 seasonal workers and 50 full-time employees, and provided regional growers with more than $15 million in annual revenues (Association of Washington Business, 2004). Residents created a downtown historic district funded by local taxes and formed three other historic districts encompassing the oldest functioning courthouse in Washington, the oldest school district, a historic train depot, and 146 other buildings on the National Registry of Historic Places. In 2009 the Port of Columbia County, the primary economic development organization for Dayton, instituted a 5-month long sustainability lectures series for the community through which residents could learn about and share ideas on community conservation, lifestyles, alternative agriculture, and other sustainability issues.

We held four community workshops that used a modified nominal group process (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1986) through which the residents could identify and share values they held about the community, threats to those values, and strategies to protect the values or prevent the threats from happening. Overall, residents identified a series of social and place-based values, and confirmed that they wanted to maintain their small-town rural atmosphere, maintain their agricultural lands and other working landscapes, continue building on their historic preservation, create a way to retain their youth through economic incentives, and grow their economy. They agreed they wanted to do this without allowing non-invested in-migration and over development or big box stores, and without losing their small-town feel or succumbing to outside pressures, all of which they saw as threats to long-held community values. The community was able to come up with a win-win situation when the concept of Blue Mountain Station was born,
an eco-industrial organic artisan foods processing industrial park, allowing them to utilize their agricultural heritage to produce locally grown food products, marketed as a “Dayton” brand.

Priest River, Idaho, “A progressive timber community,” is located in northern Idaho’s Bonner County and boasts a wide variety of landscapes and mixed land ownership, including state, national, and private forests. It sits at the confluence of two river corridors, the Pend Oreille and the Priest, and growth is restricted to US Highway 2 and State Highway 57 that intersect in town. In 2009 the population in Priest River was 1,754, many of whom live outside city limits because of the undeveloped rural landscape. The majority of the population is 45 years or older and the median age is 35.2 years. Over half of the population, 51%, is female, and 94.7% is white. Almost 78% of the population over 25 years of age has a high school education, and 6.1% has a college degree. The 2009 median household income was $26,765 and the median value of owner-occupied housing was $80,900. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009).

Priest River has its roots in the logging industry, with a minor emphasis on agriculture, mining, and tourism. The community has attempted to maintain its identity and create development. Since the closing of one of its biggest employers, JD Lumber, in 2008, the community has experienced high unemployment and a challenging outlook for the future.

During the early stages of our involvement, we used face-to-face and web-based surveys to collect resident’s values about Priest River. We also facilitated a series of four community workshops that revealed that residents valued the aesthetics of the town, their freedom, limited government, the small-town rural feel. They felt that the possibility of excessive and irresponsible logging, overregulation, potential lack of access to recreation, and the prospect of replacing local businesses with chain restaurants and big box stores threatened their values, and that various strategies to mitigate those threats were needed, including more of the population participating in voting, preserving the heritage, and supporting local businesses. They also crafted a list of community engagement ideas that they would be willing to commit to participating in, including a town clean-up, a community garden, music and art events, community and senior center activities, trail maintenance, and grants and fundraising.

**FINDINGS**

Our purpose in doing this study was to look at these two communities that share many key characteristics, yet differ in critical ways in how they engage citizens, to help us better understand the characteristics common to engaging citizens that other communities in transition could learn from. As Table 1 shows, both communities are equally positive about the need for community engagement, but clear differences in the nature and effectiveness of community engagement between the two emerge.

Dayton sees themselves as a community of empowered citizens who cooperate in very purposive ways. Priest River sees itself as a fragmented community whose citizens are only consulted for providing input and direction. This has resulted in the emergence of leaders and stakeholders in Dayton, who help design and implement desired actions. In contrast, Priest River has many strong stakeholder groups but lacks any strong unifying leaders to advance the cause.

This pattern is also discernible in how the two communities view politics; while both self-identified as being predominantly conservative, Dayton has been able to put aside politics to be more inclusive and work with a diversity of partners toward the common good. Priest River exhibits an adversarial style that is also manifest in how it views outsiders and newcomers.

Dayton has had many highly visible and successful community development projects and is aware that success is a powerful motivator for the community to invest other resources to other projects. This is different in Priest River, where the view is fragmented and divisive, with no clear leader to advance the cause.

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<tr>
<th>Table 1. Summary of Meaning (Themes) Emerging from Initial Coding of Overt Responses about Community and Engagement Practices</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DAYTON</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Emergent Themes</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Role of history and heritage</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Source and style of leaders and stakeholders</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Asimilated with reservation</strong></td>
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<td><strong>NEEDED: Well-planned and well-executed communication</strong></td>
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sustaining engagement. Much of the lack of progress in community development in Priest River is attributed by residents to the lack of communication between the many stakeholder groups and between city government and the community. A consequence of this is the observation by many in Dayton that they are an interdependent community, while Priest River prides itself in being independent. Dayton rallies around issues and events; Priest River commonly rallies around crises and traumatic events.

Finally, while Dayton is a town that is proud of its heritage (it has embarked on historic preservation and heritage tourism), it is a town that lives for the present and the future. It is “The town that still believes.” Priest River on the other hand is a town that is living in the present and the past. It is dogmatically holding on to its lumbering/logging heritage (“A progressive timber community”) although there is very little logging and lumbering activity remaining.

Explanations for Effectiveness of Community Engagement

Our second coding identified and applied sub codes to these emergent themes to help explain them. A final coding scheme grouped the themes into theoretically defensible categories to aid effective integration with our guiding theories. This cut across sub codes and respondents to explain the antecedents and effectiveness of community engagement.

Appreciative inquiry. Both communities agreed that community engagement is crucial to the success of their community. However, differences were very apparent. In Dayton interviewees generally spoke about their town in a positive way. They recognized their weaknesses, but their successes over the years gave them confidence in their ability to accomplish tasks and keep Dayton a place they were proud to call home. Priest River tended to respond from a more negative perspective, focusing on what they do not want, or do not want more of, rather than what they want more of.

Collaborative engagement: Cohesion and creating a critical mass. Community engagement is the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of affiliated people to address issues affecting the well being of their community (Fawcett et al., 1995). As one Dayton respondent pointed out, it’s a very engaged community; we have an extremely high voter turn-out every election. When we’ve had town meetings and visioning sessions, and other things we always have a really good turnout, so I think people here really care about the community and I think they’ve seen where their involvement made a difference, so they are more willing to be involved.

Another had this to offer, “The good stuff you see here is because a lot of people have put a lot of hours into it.”

Dayton interviewees were readily able to identify many specific instances where their community had worked together, identified issues that the community either rallied around or were fragmented by, and were enthusiastic in citing details of these events. In Priest River such positive events were rarely mentioned, and there was little agreement on what these events and issues were.

The differences in how each community worked as collaborative, cohesive units were stark: The consensus from Dayton was that they work really well together. Each person and community group understood their roles within the community, and worked toward a common vision—making Dayton a better place to live. As one resident stated:

In this town…it’s a nucleus of very successful people in the community…. Those people have the community’s best interest at heart… and unless someone comes in with the influence to make change, that’s the direction the community goes. They are well-minded people for the betterment and not to line their own pockets, or to inflate their own business success, or any of that. It’s understanding that success of one, means the success of many…. These are people that are well connected within the community in terms of contacts, but also money, that they can facilitate change in a way this group kind of feels that’s where they want to go.

Another added: “These people have a purpose, and the purpose is to make Dayton better, so once something is implemented, it’s done and time to move on to the next thing.”

Priest River saw themselves as very much the opposite. They reported the existence of many different groups that work well by and for
themselves, but the community as a whole does not work very well together. They lack strong and accepted leaders and a strong collective vision for the future:

What you see there is small niches separately collaborating in groups. I mean small groups that are going in sometimes opposite directions and they’re not collaborating, they’re not working together because nobody has painted a larger picture of why you should, and that you can all get what you want.

Another shared this observation:

Priest River has a split and division in their vision, they are like gas particles at random, they’re not coagulating very well. Segments of the community work together very well, but not together as a whole.

[There’s] not a lot of communication.

Communication, community participation, and creating a shared vision. When Dayton first started actively pursuing community engagement they realized that establishing and maintaining effective and purposive communication would be the key to their success. They developed a task force made up of a diverse cross-section of community leaders—business people, city officials, developers, civic leaders, institutional heads, and so forth. This group was tasked with prioritizing community needs and coordinating the activities of the various civic, volunteer and government groups operating in town. This helped ensure that groups were not competing or overlapping in their efforts. As one of these early leaders noted:

Engaged citizens share something in common; they share a vision, and when you have engaged citizens really there’s nothing that can stop them. This community knows well, is a real example of engaged citizens coming together for whatever purpose. Our town it’s been economic development primarily, they’ll focus on something but it all kinda gears around this idea of making life better for the people who live there. Whether that’s economy or recreation, or whatever.

Another noted:

I think we have good success with the local governments, right down to the Department of Transportation. I think it’s because we have good community leaders that keep in contact; we have good projects that get completed and done well. The town, they always want to see that buy-in; they don’t want me coming in and saying, ‘Hey, this is what Dayton wants, let’s do it’—the sense of community that’s there.

Priest River also recognized that communication was perhaps their biggest barrier to success. They pointed out that they have many organizations in their community working towards the same goals, but not communicating with each other. They attributed this to the presence of strong personalities that often got in the way, “... trying to get that kind of coordination together because I see a lot of, we’re not necessarily fighting each other, but we aren’t working together and by doing that we are holding each other back.”

Issue driven versus personality driven planning. The role of personality was especially noticeable in how each community initiated community development and planning. Dayton frequently mentioned that they are a very issue driven community and interpersonal relationships either move the community forward, or hinder its success, “...the thing about a small town is that if someone says something about you, it gets back to you, not just about your business, but about you personally.”

Dayton is not without disagreement, however they tried to make it clear that they come together around issues, “...we work on one issue until it is solved, and then move on to the next set of projects.” A key leader was more direct:

We don’t whine, we don’t get our feelings hurt, and when we get in disagreements, which we do, we don’t whine. We just go on. In the beginning I noticed this, it took some growing up.

Priest River has a varied perspective on the nature and purpose of community engagement. On one hand they suffer from a lack of focus and vision,

I believe that our town needs a mission, and then with that comes goals, and a focus instead of this group doing this
and this group doing that and this group doing this, we have, you know where are we going, what’s our future, where do we see ourselves? And until we have that vision and mission, you know we’re just, you know, just doing things to do things, I guess.

Another reflected on the personalities of those who do involve themselves in the community: “There are a lot of second guessers in the community, and a lot a people with a piece of expertise but not the whole context or the responsibility for the decision.” This desire to be involved, but without the requisite skills and direction has often led to “…participants trying to wear two or three hats and they don’t know what hat really fits.

A second equally insidious consequence of the lack of vision in Priest River is a dominance on reactive thinking. For instance:

Like I said I think we are looking for excuses, even, and I know, I mean it’s high unemployment and but I’m the type if you focus on the negative you will get negative. Puts the community people on a defensive posture, hard to get things accomplished.

One of the consequences of strong personalities thwarting process and success is the reluctance many in the community have to sharing their values,

They’re probably the key to getting people to change. I guess they’re probably one of the focal points of establishing a vision, is those values, and they started to come out a little bit with the SWOT [strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats] analysis that was done.... But it’s one that people have a hard time sharing, because it’s the person, and you have to have, I guess you might say, the leadership or people that are conducting your community visioning sessions and your groups and that type to be able to really pull that out of people and sometimes that takes inviting them to have a cup of coffee, to where they build the trust relationship and a feeling of really truly sharing their values.

 Dayton, because of their reliance on vision-driven processes, recognized the need for having all the requisite elements coalesce to ensure successful engagement and development, “That supercharged citizenry, that has some basic skills in fundraising, grant writing, management—and then the vision, you gotta have those four pieces to make it come together.”

Leaders versus stakeholders. Another big difference was the presence and nature of community leadership. This convergence of empowering leadership and an empowered populous was most true in Dayton: “It takes leaders, and those persons with passion.... The whole community is what supports Dayton.”

Dayton interviewees were quick to identify leaders and showed excitement in naming names. They realized that these people didn’t necessarily have “power”; yet they were able to mobilize people and get things done. “If you have the right leader you will have success.” The list of leaders identified in Dayton included a dozen or so people and there was almost complete agreement across the interviews on who these people were, and why they were leaders:

We bring leaders of groups together.... A leader from the task force, and a leader from the county, and one from the city, and the hospital…. We all meet together and then we can say what we are doing, and we don’t cross purposes, and we support one another.

In Priest River we received a very different response—near unanimous consent that while leaders could be found in the many different volunteer and civic groups, the community itself lacked an identifiable effective cadre of community leaders; “…(t)here’s a lot of leaders within their own little organizations but there’s really not leaders within the community.”

People also had difficulty naming leaders or even deciding if they were leaders. Each person interviewed could name only about four or five people, and there was limited overlap between lists.

Community engagement in Priest River is not only impaired by a lack of effective community leaders, but by the presence of strong, unyielding “stakeholders” who could identify issues important to them, but who could not agree to work with those who had different (and not necessarily opposing) ideas. These stakeholders tended to
control the dialogue and stymie progress:

Negative [people] would tend to engage them more earnestly, and probably quicker, because they would be ready to fight anything that comes in, in most cases, especially if they are disgruntled about their community, which Priest River has a lot of that.

**Challenges—dilution, help, and history.** Residents of both communities have noted an increase of the relocation of people from urban areas to their communities; however, their presence does not necessarily bolster the economy. As residents of both Dayton and Priest River have identified, they often lack an appreciation for the historic and social values the established residents have, but yet they have a stake in decisions that affect the community. Their higher incomes allow them to purchase land and build bigger homes, often leading to increased property values in the area. And often because they continue to commute to neighboring cities, their money is not always spent in the local community.

Both communities are self-identified bedroom communities, and believe an increasing percentage of residents are retirees and/or newcomers. However, in Dayton these are likely to be people who grew up there but who had moved away, returning to retire or start second careers. Priest River on the other hand is seeing an influx of people from out of state building large houses widely dispersed on the rural fringe that increasingly tax rural services.

The perception of newcomers in Dayton was predominantly positive: “A lot of the work that gets done here is done by non-natives; roughly half.” They realized the fresh perspectives, experience, and knowledge they bring to the community. As one person noted:

> It’s welcome in my book, my goodness, we need fresh ideas and people; sometimes I want, we need a little broader vision, a little different perspective. Not better, just different.... We need newcomers, they serve on our boards, commissions.... A lot of them that come are young, retired, so they still have energy and want to do stuff, but they are not working so they have time to serve on the boards.

In Priest River the discourse was more varied. It acknowledged the fresh perspective and new ideas that newcomers bring, while also recognizing that newcomers may have no effect on the community itself, and that they can be distrusted and have a hard time influencing change in the face of the entrenched inertia. As one resident said:

> There’s a real chasm there, between newcomers and the people who are entrenched here.... People who come here from other places get frustrated with the entrenchment of the old guard and not being able to move anything along.

This also ties into the role and perception of outsiders. Outsiders are different from newcomers in that they do not stay in the community. They are planners, consultants, or university students brought in to work with the community. Dayton has worked with the University of Idaho and has hired several planners and consultants to assist with economic development in the past. Priest River has worked with universities and various community enhancement groups in recent years. In both communities, there was a strong positive perception of outsiders. Both realized that outsiders bring new and different experiences and ideas to the table, may instigate movement towards change, and may create beneficial partnerships. As one Dayton resident said, “It’s great, the more divergent ideas we get into the community the better. Different perspectives so you can see different opportunities that you might not see otherwise.”

Priest River was equally receptive to outside advisors:

> Actually I think to me that it’s that outside influence that helps shift the thinking process. It’s particularly in the smaller communities where people don’t have the opportunity to really see the outside world. I mean when you spend all your life in the woods or at home you really don’t see that there are some other sides to things.

However, both communities also discussed potential limitations to the role of outsiders. Sometimes outsiders may not fully understand the situations that the communities face; they may bring in ideas that the community has tried to implement before, or their values may contradict the values of the community and therefore their ideas for change may not align with that of the
community. Because outside involvement is usually short-term they may not be trusted by the locals and even be perceived as threatening. When these conditions exist, outsider involvement may have a negative effect and breed apathy instead of improvement.

Dayton realized early on that they knew who they were and what they wanted to be, and therefore when an outsider comes in with new ideas the community decides if the ideas stick, “Like things to come, but we make the decision about what sticks.” Another Dayton resident added, “…someone from the inside needs to step up, with a passion; people from the outside can help get things done.”

Priest River often failed to benefit from these outside influences:

Everybody pays attention, gets it, and then we have a hard time moving forward…. I don’t know if it’s a lack of leadership, or too many cooks, the enthusiasm wanes, and you go back to your same, apathetic pattern.

One reason for this complacency may be that many small, rural communities are very tied to their history. Histories are a window to their identity, and also to a heritage that is dying out and taking that identity with them (McGranahan, 1994). Because the histories of these two communities were very different from each other in key ways (one being predominantly an agricultural town and the other a timber-dependent community), yet sharing other characteristics (loss of the major employer), we suspect that history and identity may influence their ability to embrace change and engage citizens. When we examined this topic we got mixed results.

In Dayton it was something that they had never really thought of, but they did realize that they were an agriculture town and that agriculture has provided a stable economic base over the years. Some speculated that farmers always have to plan ahead each season to ensure the best yields, and in this sense they may be more connected to a sense-of-place and willing to work to preserve that:

Between those…groups there might be [a difference]…. Farmers have to deal with more of an annual production…. [planning] so far ahead of harvest to make sure they have a set income that’s gonna help them pay those other bills and get them started on the next crop.

Other views were equally illuminating:

That’s our stable base and we have good farmers, I mean they are smart farmers. Our farmers are college educated; they’re not just plowing fields, they are planning, they are using the best technology, they are making trial runs and testing. Some of them are leaders.

They identified agriculture as a part of Dayton’s history and is still a part of their make-up; yet, they didn’t necessarily identify with being an agricultural town now. They realized that their town has evolved over time:

Ag history has changed so much…. Farmers are usually pretty independent…. [They] are not on committees…. It’s not a logging community, it’s not even a farming community anymore ’cause there’s no machinery sales here, truck sales, equipment sales…. It’s an antique and art…kind of a cyclical movement.

Conversely, Priest River’s identity and personality have been strongly influenced by the fact that they were a timber town, and they desperately want to be identified as one today. This is not a new discovery; past work described Priest River as having an extraction-based economy and identity and a “…community awareness as well as intent to keep that force alive as a part of who they are and plan to be” (Parker, Wulforst, & Kamm, 2002, p. 17). As one current resident confirmed:

It has been a very successful timber community over the course of time and it’s ridden the highs and lows of the economy, and there’s really been no need to change or to seek out change. I mean, every time it comes down to a low there’s a little bit of an economic down push and as soon as the timber industry comes back up it fades away again and everything blows along very nicely.

Others saw value in the deep ties to a logging past, but worried about the entrenched thinking that may have come from that heritage,

Difficult for some to realize, at one time
5–6 mills employing people, now only a couple left so it’s hard for some to understand/realize it will never be the same…. Yes, this is our history and it always will be. No one wants to step up and say where do we go next.

They offered no answer as to how being a timber town affects their success or ability in community engagement, except that it is a factor in their independent culture, which could be a hindrance to their success: “When you’ve had this lifestyle for thirty–forty years, you are patterned. To change that pattern creates anxiety.”

This is not necessarily a bad thing; yet, it may limit the attainment of cohesive community engagement by “Hanging on to the notion of being a logging town, and that is hindering their progress.” It also limited the vision that people had for their own growth, that “No matter how good kids did in school, they could always get a job at the saw mill.”

What can your community do to create more community engagement? Most people in Dayton felt like they are doing everything they can to engage citizens, but acknowledged the importance of getting younger people involved and continuing to ensure they maintain good coordination between groups. They also stressed the need to continue making personal contacts:

When new people come in they find the part of the community involvement that suits them best…go for that part of a void where I felt that I could make a contribution and not have to be butting heads with somebody for silly things.

Another cautioned:

Communities tend to become complacent; the downtown was fixed up and pretty and just about every store front was full and things were going really well, and suddenly things have taken a turn for the worst, and I think sometimes people get complacent and don’t realize they have to keep fighting, especially in a small community, you just have to keep fighting to survive.

More than one person indicated that citizens in Priest River only become engaged if there is a crisis. “If someone gets hurt, or sick, or a disaster happens, the community steps up to provide for that person or family. Fundraisers become a way that Priest River engages citizens to help during a crisis.”

Priest River was largely unable to point to new strategies for community engagement, preferring in large part to continue to dwell on the negative: “It’s interesting to see who’s at the meetings, but even more interesting to see who’s not there.”

Contributions to the Practice of Community Engagement

Throughout this project it became apparent that there are fundamental attributes that a community must have in order to survive the threats of the modern West. The first is the presence of a common vision that sets the tone for the direction a community will take and creates a filter through which ideas and alternatives can be examined and refined. Implementation of a vision will take long and short-term tasks; a community must then prioritize and assign immediate tasks to initiate momentum toward this vision.

Effective and purposive communication is another key characteristic. Communities consist of different sub-communities or groups composed of conflicting personalities, interests, likes, dislikes, and passions. It is imperative to have established avenues of communication in order to minimize competition and overlap and allow a common vision to emerge.

Leadership is a force that attracts people to be involved and motivates people to action. Communities must seek, recognize, and embrace their leaders. Leaders are often found in unexpected places and are not necessarily people with power; they must inspire trust, command respect, and have an innate sense of charisma to inspire and motivate the masses (Block, 2008).

Communities must have a forum for collaboration, such as town hall meetings, workshops, or seminars. In deciding how to facilitate collaboration, communities must discover what works best for them and also realize the context in which they should be working. Does the majority of the community turn out for town hall meetings, or is this form of engagement met with opposition? Is the community still in the visioning stages, or do they need to get together to solve an issue, discuss a plan for economic development, or just build community cohesion? For each of these tasks the setting for engagement may be different.

Finally, community leadership must consist of

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a diverse group of individuals with different skill sets, training, and abilities. If the group is lacking in an area, for example if they are struggling with effectively facilitating community meetings, they should seek help from outside the community that can bring expertise, knowledge, and experience.

To most, Dayton is seen as a successful community; more importantly, citizens of Dayton see themselves as successful. They possess these fundamental characteristics and are able to maintain forward momentum in creating a place where they all want to live. They emulate what Putnam and Feldstein (2003) describe as a bridging community. They are a diverse group of people who have divergent ideas that look outward towards the future, but are able to converge around those ideas—based on their common vision—into purposeful actions for the present.

Priest River is still in the process of becoming a place current residents can be proud of; a lack of vision, the absence of an inspiring leader, and an inability of disparate groups to communicate between themselves hinder them. They exemplify what Putnam and Feldstein (2003) call a bonding community, meaning that a majority of the citizens have similar mindsets and focus inward rather than outward when approaching problems or addressing issues.

Putnam (2000) writes about these two distinct types of social capital: bonding and bridging. Bonding social capital is characterized by close ties among similar individuals or groups that afford support within the bonded group leading to strong within-group solidarity, which typically serves as barriers to relationships with groups outside the close-knit group. He describes bonding social capital as “inward looking and tends to reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups” (p. 22). Bonding social capital tends to unite people who have similar resources.

Bridging social capital, representing the links between individuals or groups who differ from each other, is typical of communities, and is essential in communities that seek to do so. While these types of community links are usually not as strong as bonding social capital, they are more likely to be inclusive. Putnam (2000) also suggests that bridging social capital is essential to mobilizing community resources and acquiring and sharing a diversity of resource information. Bridging social capital is essential for acquiring social capital, but communities must have strategies for sustaining these heterogeneous relationships.

Small groups are better at forging and sustaining bonding connections (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003), while larger groups offer critical mass, power, and diversity. Bridging makes communities larger by increasing the links between groups, not only inside a community but also with neighboring communities and institutions. Smaller groups are more parochial and protective. The key to success is to “…combine the advantages of small scale with the offsetting advantages of large scope” (Putnam & Feldstein 2003, p. 278). Granovetter (1973) supports this, noting that the strong ties between close and similar people and institutions are less valuable for advancement and growth than the weaker ties with distant but more powerful people and institutions. Finally, de Souza Briggs (1998) characterizes bonding social capital as being good for “getting by” and bridging capital for “getting ahead” (p. 11).

One proven solution to establishing bridging capital in a small community, and clearly seen in several of the community organizations in Dayton, is nesting several small groups within larger organizations. This results in people “weaving personal ties among the small groups and reinforcing their sense of identity with the larger group” (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003, p. 278).

The failure of many community engagement initiatives is often rooted in resistance to change. The equation below, created to illustrate the process for implementing change, can also be a formula for predicting successful community engagement:

\[
\text{Change} = (D\times V\times F\times S) > \text{RA}
\]

\((D\text{issatisfaction}\times V\text{ision}\times F\text{irst Steps}\times S\text{upport}) > \text{Resistance to Action})^1\)

The impetus for engaging communities begins with dissatisfaction (Table 2). Dayton and Priest River both experienced dissatisfaction in the form of catastrophic loss of industry and were propelled to change. Their differences, however, are found in the other elements of the equation. Priest River seems to foster a high resistance to action. This may be due to their strong identity with their history and their commitment to preserving that identity, or it could also be because of shared memories of past failures, as Bessaw, Gerke, Hamilton, & Pulsipher (2011) who also worked in the community, note: “…community members remembered previous failures and assumed failure. In the face of the obstacles, it was hard for us to garner support or have productive dialogue. Those who invited us

\(^1\text{Mike Mercer, personal communication, April 5, 2010.}\)
didn’t always show up to the meetings” (p. 70). Because of this high resistance to action, the other pieces of the equation become much more difficult to calculate. They do not have or cannot agree on a strong vision for the future. They are reluctant to commit to first steps; and their independent nature hinders them from garnering support. Dayton has a lower resistance to action, as long as it falls in line with what they have been able to identify through a visioning process as compatible with community values. Consequently, this low resistance to action is fostered because they have a common vision and use it to filter future actions through. This also makes recognizing and accomplishing first steps and garnering support uncomplicated tasks.

Conclusions

Because of the complexity and ever-changing nature of rural towns there is not, nor could there ever be, a single unifying theory that underlies all of rural community engagement. As Cohen (2006) wryly notes, “All rural towns share one thing in common—they are all different” (p. 70). Three overlapping lines of theoretical and empirical thinking guided our study, and while theory generation was not a goal of ours, we feel we can offer some insights into what can help improve future theorizing about rural communities in change.

We believe that local context is a key construct in successful engagement. Because rural communities must actively seek new opportunities and mechanisms for economic growth if they are to survive, economic development must be designed to be compatible with local values and visions. Local self-sufficiency must be emphasized over fast and convenient gains.

More important than community pride is the passion for an inclusive culture that can provide the foundation for a strong positive local attitude that can fuel a needed culture of innovation. Diversity should be celebrated and all people and all ideas should be welcomed. The history and heritage of a town can be the catalyst for change and success only if bridges are built among any isolated internal groups and to critical external partners. Sustaining a vision of the future requires believing in something as worth doing for the community and requires investing in infrastructure and people. By embracing context-based participatory approaches to community decision through collaboration and sharing of local resources, even opinionated leaders can appear to be working toward building consensus for the common vision.

While seeking outside help for community needs and when working with new people to help build community, leaders must always ensure that local values are protected. By finding ways to strategically inculcate new leaders, local bridging social capital can be invigorated. Supporting a presence of traditional community institutions connects community development with social activities. A rural community should be a self-reliant network and be constantly working toward creating a thriving community that believes that their destiny is in their own hands. Our work shows the debilitating consequences of the lack of a community vision. In effect, a vision is what helps define context in terms of local values, experiences, and needs. Such a context-based view

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dissatisfaction</th>
<th>Vision</th>
<th>First Steps</th>
<th>Support</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dayton is a Community in Transition</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Historical preservation</td>
<td>Leaders and stakeholders</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
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<td>Identifying leaders</td>
<td>Created a task force</td>
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<td>Projects with local unity</td>
<td>Bridging between groups and agencies</td>
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<td>Established communication networks</td>
<td>Projects of local utility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Priest River is a Community in Transition</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Unity based on a crisis orientation</td>
<td>Adversarial</td>
<td>Strong, possessive stakeholders</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Independent</td>
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<td>Holding on to history</td>
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of community engagement sees the process as empowerment through an understanding of local inspiration and values rather than management by external indicators and measures, and our evidence suggests that it may be better at finding sustainable solutions that surmount the barriers of past history, personality, and territoriality and go beyond simply filling needs.

References


About the Authors

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AcademIK Connections: Bringing Indigenous Knowledge and Perspectives into the Classroom

Khanjan Mehta, Theodore R. Alter, Ladislaus M. Semali, and Audrey Maretzki

Abstract

Indigenous knowledge is local knowledge aggregated by communities over generations, reflecting many years of experimentation and innovation in all aspects of life. Unfortunately, positivist thinking has become the dominant epistemic culture within the academic and professional arenas and leads to the systematic marginalization of alternate ways of knowing, learning, and doing. Educating global-minded social problem-solvers necessitates bringing knowledge and perspectives of indigenous people with different epistemologies and philosophies of life into the classroom. Penn State has produced AcademIK Connections, a series of video clips that provide engaging stories about the importance of indigenous knowledge systems in developing entrepreneurial solutions to address community challenges. The video clips feature stories by individuals that, collectively, represent decades of experience in engaging with indigenous communities. These individuals come from diverse disciplines and scholarly research traditions and are known to consciously and respectfully employ indigenous knowledge in their academic activities. This paper discusses the importance of integrating indigenous knowledge into the classroom and suggests that the video series can help transform the classroom into an engaging and intriguing smorgasbord of philosophies and epistemologies.

The way we view and understand the world around us is uniquely shaped by attitudes, values, and beliefs acquired over the course of our lives. Every situation we encounter, every experience we have, directly contributes to our epistemology: the manner in which we come to know what we know. In modern Western society, the rise of positivist thinking has become the dominant epistemic culture, especially within the academic and professional arenas (Fischer, 2000). Positivist epistemology utilizes the scientific method to produce empirical data, the analysis and interpretation of which becomes the foundation of our knowledge base. The current academic system privileges graduates with disciplinary expertise rooted in scientifically generated knowledge, a cyclical pattern that suggests a privileging of positivist epistemology over other, equally plausible ways of understanding the world.

As citizens, teachers, students, and professional experts, a focus on positivist science too often precludes a more reflexive discussion about the ways in which we acquire our knowledge and thus engage with the world around us.

We currently emphasize the use of science to solve local problems in many disciplines including medicine, engineering, food science, and agriculture. Collaboration and cooperation between universities and communities may quickly become strained, especially if the academic knowledge produced seems unrelated to, or out of touch with, the realities of peoples’ local life. If people feel that their opinions and beliefs are not respected, their interest in engaging with outside experts may diminish—or worse—foment and perpetuate a distrust of external “experts.” While expert knowledge from competent scientists is certainly valuable in many ways, it is often devoid of contextual considerations that may change how the data are interpreted and utilized. In approaching community development and engagement projects, it is imperative that we consider the cultural context of our work, as well as the knowledge that is produced within that context. This “insider’s perspective” can be termed indigenous, traditional, or local knowledge. Indigenous knowledge is uniquely valuable, as it provides insight and information that directly reflect the opinions, values, and attitudes of the local people engaged in a community development initiative. Breaking sole reliance on expert-driven knowledge, and elevating a perspective that seamlessly integrates the techniques of modern science with the realities and expertise of local people, is a paramount challenge facing the publicly minded academic or expert practitioner. It is essential that we ask of ourselves: Are there alternative ways of approaching research, teaching, and outreach in my discipline that incorporate knowledge generated in the local context?

The process of integrating new perspectives and epistemologies into academia does not seek to unseat or compete with existing pedagogies and methods. To do so would only strengthen the socially constructed, hierarchical divide between expert and local knowledge. Rather, we must look
to move beyond this binary view and embrace indigenous knowledge as a means of enhancing our discussion concerning the challenges that face local and global communities. In a world of diverse interests and knowledge, our conversations should seek to represent these multiple perspectives, with the hope of developing new and innovative solutions to the problems we face. However, education about how to incorporate indigenous perspectives in the study of science at all academic levels is lagging in some disciplines, and virtually absent in others.

This article highlights AcademIK Connections, a video series developed by Penn State that seeks to introduce indigenous perspectives into the classroom.

The purpose of AcademIK Connections is to incorporate into the university setting alternative ways of knowing, learning, and understanding the world that complement and contrast with positivist-oriented epistemologies. By providing an expansive range of perspectives, AcademIK Connections can enhance and diversify classroom discussion and encourage students and faculty to reflexively examine their own perspectives. The series is comprised of 12 video clips, each 5–8 minutes in length. AcademIK Connections features compelling stories from the field of how indigenous knowledge, grounded in concrete examples from disciplines including engineering, agriculture, wildlife science, tourism, and health and human development, can be leveraged to develop feasible, problem-oriented, culturally sensitive, entrepreneurially focused, solutions to real-life community problems that have a reasonable probability of successful implementation. Following a discussion about the importance of indigenous knowledge to social and development sciences, it will be shown how AcademIK Connections can be used to make learning about local and indigenous perspectives exciting and intriguing, and how it can help to foster a more robust, citizen-driven epistemology for scholarship in an age of global challenges. It is difficult to imagine implementing the United Nations Millennium Development Goals that aim to significantly reduce world poverty without valuing the contributions of the keepers of indigenous knowledge. Some examples of situations amenable to the application of indigenous knowledge include finding remedies for infectious diseases; resolving issues related to child and maternal health; promoting collaboration between professional researchers and indigenous practitioners; supporting intergenerational transfer of indigenous knowledge and cultural heritage; and designing appropriate educational materials to encourage practices that enhance individual and community well-being, while empowering women, youth, and other marginalized groups.

Indigenous Knowledge: Definitions, Barriers, and Opportunities

Indigenous people have an implicit belief that the accumulated and constantly refined wisdom of their ancestors and the elders in their communities has enabled their cultures to survive for millennia in the unique locations they identify as their homelands. They also know that parents, grandparents, and their extended network of relatives have the responsibility of passing on to each new generation the essential knowledge that will allow them to continue to exist as a culture. However, for many of today’s students, as well as for their professors, it seems important to provide a definition for indigenous knowledge, since the way students are encouraged to learn and professors are encouraged to teach is not the way learning takes place in indigenous cultures.

There are many definitions for indigenous knowledge. Settee (2008) notes that the definitions depend upon “whether one is a scholar or one is community-based,” but that “as a body of knowledge, IK, albeit with different names, has gained currency among researchers and governmental agencies, as well as with civil society organizations” (p. 45). Although a distinction is often drawn between indigenous and scientific knowledge in terms of the way in which the knowledge is generated/produced, indigenous and scientific knowledge in terms of the various attributes ascribed to indigenous knowledge by a score of authors, Ellen and Harris (2000) conclude that indigenous knowledge is local, particular to a place, and generated by people living in those places. It is transmitted orally or through imitation and demonstration and is the consequence of practical engagement in everyday life where it is reinforced by experience, trial and error, and deliberate experiment. Indigenous knowledge is holistic, integrative, and situated within broader cultural traditions and is empirical rather than hypothetical. Its repetition contributes to its retention, even when new knowledge is added. Indigenous knowledge of the environment, though often viewed as static, is constantly changing and its definition as “people’s science” reflects that it is...
generated in everyday activities and widely shared, though generally distributed asymmetrically by gender and age and preserved in the memories of different individuals. While not comprising a singular “definition” of indigenous knowledge, these attributes, individually and collectively, suggest why indigenous knowledge is relevant in the context of development while creating difficult intellectual challenges for Western-trained academics and their students as well as the residents of communities in which they work.

The attributes of indigenous knowledge are useful in establishing the context in which AcademIK Connections can be employed to bring new insights into the classroom. Let us take, for example, the video featuring Dr. Carolyn Sachs a professor of rural sociology at Penn State, who has worked extensively in Africa, Latin America, and Asia as a valued member of agricultural specialist teams seeking to address issues of food security by applying research-based management practices to increase crop yields. In the video, Sachs describes a situation that arose in Swaziland, when her team was advising women farmers on how to obtain a higher maize yield by employing a specific type of fertilizer. One of the team’s observations was that the women were not regularly weeding the maize, thus reducing its yield. The team assumed that the women were not weeding because they were too busy with household chores and child care to spend sufficient time in their fields. Several years later, a student was studying the diets of these households and discovered two plants that the families were consuming daily. The student discovered that those two crops were what the scientists had identified as “weeds” in the maize fields. Women were letting the plants flourish, not because they were lazy or didn’t have enough time to weed their maize, but because those “weeds” were known to be “good for their health.” Indeed the weeds were subsequently identified as an important source of pro-vitamin A in the family diets. Inviting Sachs in person to describe her acquired insight about women farmers’ traditional knowledge of edible plants in Swaziland would be difficult and prohibitively expensive. But showing her short video clip in a class or using it as an assignment could elicit discussions ranging from ethnobotany to the impact of HIV/AIDS and from the validity of field observations to the impact of exotic crops on indigenous plant species in environments subject to frequent droughts. It is to promote such non-linear thinking in a specific environmental context without regard to the intellectual constraints of a particular academic discipline that teaching tools such as AcademIK Connections are urgently needed.

### Barriers to Inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge in Academia

Faculty and cooperative extension agents participated in a web-based study conducted in 2004 to understand the barriers and supports that affect their likelihood of incorporating indigenous knowledge into their teaching, research, and outreach activities. The study’s results concluded that discipline, academic rank, place of employment, and peer support influenced the faculty member’s reported use of non-academic knowledge (Semali, Grim, & Maretzki, 2006). Appreciation and application of indigenous knowledge in teaching, research, and outreach activities was significantly less on the main campus and increased on commonwealth campuses where faculty involvement with communities was greater.

Faculty in the sciences and engineering were significantly less likely to employ indigenous knowledge concepts than their peers in the social sciences and humanities. Engineers, chemists, physicists, and others who rely upon empirical data that can be quantified and subjected to rigid hypothesis-testing did not place a high value on scientific knowledge generated through “trial and success” and observation and experimentation, the standard methods used by indigenous communities over long periods of time. The study also revealed that junior faculty members were more likely than senior professors to use locally generated knowledge. However, they were unlikely to receive support for doing so from senior faculty who evaluate them or within the larger academic system. Peer support was instrumental in enhancing faculty use of indigenous knowledge in teaching, research, and outreach. Peer support is one of the important reasons for documenting “compelling stories” of individuals who have overcome intellectual barriers and epistemological prejudices that have historically devalued and deemphasized knowledge generated outside the academy. The faculty featured in this video series serve as role models for peers who might some day want to bring back to students their own personal stories of encounters with indigenous cultures. However, for the time being, they can be encouraged to test the academic and personal waters by relying on respected colleagues who have worked successfully with local residents in unfamiliar cultural settings.

### Why Indigenous Knowledge Matters

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Indigenous knowledge matters in community engagement and scholarship because indigenous ways of knowing and other heritage knowledges are disappearing as a result of the devaluing of indigenous reality and a loss of the acquired wisdom of elders. Institutions based on traditional knowledge are also disappearing because of industrialization and Western notions of progress. Davis (2009) reminds us that the indigenous practices of traditional healers, farmers, or shamans that have been around for millennia are not “failed attempts at modernity” (p. 7). They have a lot to teach us about their world and about ours. Some post-colonialists, feminists, multiculturalists, sociologists of scientific knowledge, and those who refer to themselves as indigenous researchers argue that there is a wide global diversity in the conceptions of knowledge—of what it means to know, of what counts as official knowledge, and how that knowledge is produced (Ferguson, 2008; Pickering, 1992). De Sousa Santos, Nunes, and Meneses (2007), for example, argue that the production of knowledge is in itself a social practice, and as such all knowledges are situated (historically, politically, socially) and partial. These scholars argue against the monoculture of knowledge, an approach based on positivist notions of science, legacies of colonial and postcolonial relation, and global capitalism. They contend that indigenous peoples everywhere know a great deal about the environments in which they have lived for generations, and that this knowledge must be valued and taken into account in the planning and implementation of educational as well as development policies.

There is now a new awakening in the academy in which some social scientists support a perspective that argues against the monoculture of knowledge in favor of an ecology of knowledges, a perspective that embraces epistemological diversity and acknowledges the diverse world we live in (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 1999). Renewed interest in indigenous knowledge systems and practices is widespread and global (Nakata, 2002). According to Brokensha, Warren, and Werner (1980), the emergence of indigenous knowledge in the academy was triggered by ethnographic studies conducted in countries that were colonized by Europeans in the eighteenth century during their expansionist period. Through such studies, it was noted that prior to colonization some local people sustained themselves better when they utilized locally developed knowledge than was the case after political independence in the postcolonial era. In the aftermath of colonialism, the lingering vestiges of post-colonialism are perceived as having negatively transformed some of the colonized nations to the extent that they have lost the vitality of their agricultural and other survival systems (Semali & Kincheloe, 1999; Katz, 2004).

These perspectives are not new revelations by any means. Social historians have for decades engaged in reconstruction of the pre-colonial past as an orientation to the problems of society and social change. Social history emphasizes social structures and the interaction of different groups in society. This theoretical approach examines the lives of everyday people—their experiences and beliefs—and can help us gain insight into historical events. Social history uses many historic narratives and oral histories to give a descriptive overview of how a population was affected by history. Narratives are the building blocks of social history, but all historic narratives, oral histories, and social history are enriched by context or knowledge of the events that shaped individual experiences. When social historians look at indigenous knowledge (Cohen, 1985), they see it as part of the lives of everyday people, their experiences and beliefs—which can help us gain insight into historic events such as the pre-colonial past, enduring institutions, customs, household organization, inheritance, marriage, livestock keeping, social formations, modes of production, customs, ecological systems, and the consequences of demographic effects of migration as they challenged the authority of rulers and their extended family (Tilly, 1967). This broad understanding of indigenous knowledge is important as we position the AcademIK Connections videos as an affront to the monoculture of knowledge in the academy.

Since 1995, Penn State’s Interinstitutional Consortium for Indigenous Knowledge, or the IK center, has pioneered efforts to challenge the monoculture of knowledge, moving toward integrating indigenous knowledge across the curriculum and attempting to create a forum where faculty, staff, and students can network with others who share a vision of the academy as a place where multiple ways of knowing are valued and respected (Semali & Maretzki, 2004). For the IK center, engaging the academy is about addressing both academic and societal challenges and extending the university’s knowledge and expertise to solve problems affecting communities by utilizing the indigenous knowledge that resides within those communities. A land-grant institution that prides itself on being an engaged university, with a full agenda of research, teaching, and community outreach programs, needs to take seriously the question of how local, traditional, and indigenous
Globalization has increased the pressure on educational institutions to prepare students for life in an increasingly connected and borderless world. Universities have responded to this “flattening” of the world by diversifying and internationalizing their curricula. Merryfield (1997) summarizes the definitions of major scholars to provide an eight-element framework for global education. These elements are human beliefs and values, global systems, global issues and problems, cross-cultural understanding, awareness of human choices, global history, acquisition of indigenous knowledge, and development of analytical, evaluative, and participatory skills. There is a growing recognition of the importance of integrating into the curriculum the socially and globally relevant themes of indigenous knowledge if we are to effectively educate students for the globalized world (Battiste, M., & Henderson, J., 2000; Kirkwood, T.F., 2001). For example, sustainability is one topic where we can draw from the wisdom of indigenous people and meld it with scientific know-how to develop effective solutions to this shared global challenge.

Sustainability is considered to be the keystone to our survival and future development. Increasing pressures on global resources and deteriorating environmental conditions make it imperative for universities to embrace sustainability and systematically incorporate it into academic research, outreach, and operational functions. Indigenous knowledge is gradually being re-evaluated and considered as an inspiring source of strategies for sustainable development (Fernando, 2003). Duarte Morais, a colleague in the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Management, reminds us that over the course of human history, many indigenous communities have thrived without damaging or compromising the natural environment. They have respectfully utilized resources without impairing nature’s capacity to regenerate them (Mehta, Semali, Fleishman, & Maretzki, 2011). Their knowledge shaped their values and relationship with the environment and guided their actions. The focus on sustainability is an opportunity for exploring the relationships and attitudes of indigenous communities toward the environment and the lessons they can teach us about sustainability.

One of the video clips in the AcademIK Connections series features Bruce Martin, an IK educator. He discusses the Ojibwe language and worldview in his video clip. He explains that the Ojibwe language is a language of verbs and a language that’s animated and reflects a philosophy and worldview. For the Ojibwe people, the world is alive in ways that most Westerners can’t imagine. Rocks, for example, are alive and have “spirit,” and in the Ojibwe worldview, you can have a relationship with anything that has a spirit. This

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1Sangers are Appalachians who collect wild ginseng roots for extra income. They are very knowledgeable about where the ginseng grows and at what stage it should be harvested. It is valued for its medicinal properties.
animated worldview changes the sense of belonging and the place of humans in the world. For most people living in Western countries, that kind of relationship with the world around them does not exist. The implications of this different worldview are very significant, one example being respect for nature and all its constituents because they are as alive and as real and significant as we are. Indigenous knowledge can help students develop sensitive and caring values and attitudes to maintain a judicious balance between their personal needs and nature’s needs, and build a sustainable future.

**Student Engagement with Indigenous Communities**

The engineering profession is one of the most global professions with international design teams developing technologies for international markets. The university’s strategic focus on experiential, cross-disciplinary, international education with an entrepreneurial orientation is being harnessed by academic programs to develop technology products designed to help disadvantaged people in developing countries. Several universities have developed academic programs that engage students in the design and implementation of appropriate technologies for indigenous communities in resource-constrained environments. Besides academic programs, many universities also have local chapters of student organizations like Engineers without Borders that engage in service-learning and development projects around the world. Indigenous knowledge has immense value for entrepreneurs and problem-solvers seeking solutions to community problems. In order for community solutions to be successful and sustainable, they must be designed with the intimate engagement of all stakeholders.

There is no data available on the importance placed on indigenous perspectives and knowledge by the many students who travel to remote communities bringing with them their pre-conceived projects and technological solutions to help local residents solve what the students have determined to be pressing local problems. How can universities prepare students to be socially and globally conscious leaders and entrepreneurs that respect and appreciate indigenous knowledge? How do we bring the perspectives of indigenous people with different epistemologies and philosophies of life into the classroom? For whose benefit are we engaging in outreach projects? If it is for the community’s benefit, how can students ignore the vast store of knowledge that its residents have accumulated over time? If we want students to have an appreciation for indigenous knowledge, it is important to make the information in sociology and anthropology textbooks “come alive” for them. Also, how do we expand international educational experiences to include the vast majority of students rather than just a select few? We need to develop innovative ways to provide both travel- and non-travel-based experiences that expose students to indigenous knowledge.

The HESE Program brings together students and faculty from various disciplines to develop innovative and practical technology-based solutions to address challenges facing marginalized communities. The quest is for solutions with the four hallmarks of sustainability—technologically appropriate, environmentally benign, socially acceptable, and economically sustainable. Students develop their solutions in collaboration with in-country partners. They travel to these communities to field-test and implement the technologies and work shoulder-to-shoulder with community partners. Students have been astonished by the wealth of knowledge possessed by local people, whom they had naively believed to be uneducated and illiterate. These transformational educational experiences have encouraged students to ask why it is that certain types of knowledge are more highly regarded than others. Students question the hierarchy of knowledges and the processes through which Western science and epistemologies position themselves as neutral, universal, and non-hegemonic, while seeking to invalidate and devalue other ways of knowing.

While some students are able to appreciate the importance of indigenous knowledge, others find it too complicated for them to understand because they lack the appropriate background and cultural sensitivity. Under these circumstances, very little actual indigenous information is accessible to them. AcademIK Connections hopes to build this cultural capital among students and help them connect and collaborate with indigenous people in symbiotic and meaningful ways. This orientation will enable the student teams to work closely and harmoniously with indigenous communities, leveraging local indigenous knowledge and resources to create sustainable value that upholds the fundamental philosophy of self-determination.

**AcademIK CONNECTIONS VIDEO SERIES**

Stories are the universal way of teaching and learning. It is common among indigenous cultures to use stories to convey events in words,
images, and sounds. Stories or narratives are used in every culture to entertain, educate, and preserve cultural traditions as well as instill community-specific moral values. Stories are a tool that is both coherent enough to reach out to individuals across cultures and at the same time pliable enough to let people draw their own inferences about the origin of knowledge that fits their unique context. The AcademIK Connections video stories show how faculty members stumbled upon, discovered, or leveraged indigenous knowledge while working with a community to address its challenges. We believe that such stories can help overcome the resistance of students and some faculty members to critically examine dominant ideological assumptions that owe their genesis to the privilege enjoyed by Western models of thought.

The video series showcases stories told by individuals who, regardless of their discipline, research interests, or experience, are known as persons who consciously and respectfully employ indigenous knowledge in their academic activities. The themes of the 12 videos are provided in Table 1 while the stories themselves are summarized in a previous conference publication (Mehta, Semali, Fleishman, and Maretzki, 2011). The generally accepted assumption communicated through these stories is that new approaches should not replace indigenous knowledge, but rather should systematically build upon the knowledge base that has been produced by generations of indigenous communities to address local concerns.

### AcademIK Connections in the Classroom

AcademIK Connections is an innovative way to introduce indigenous knowledge concepts into classroom settings. The video clips will enable students and faculty to objectively consider the source of their own knowledge, compare and contrast indigenous ways of knowing with Western, academic ways of knowing, and discuss the value of each epistemology. Our team has developed the video series into learning modules, where each video forms the nucleus of a rich discussion for a typical 50–75 minute class. The learning modules employ a format adapted from other media materials designed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name and Affiliation</th>
<th>Content of the Video</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ted Alter, Agricultural, Environmental and Regional Economics</td>
<td>Defining indigenous knowledge and discussing alternative epistemology. Also, other speakers discuss the Indigenous Knowledge Center at Penn State and the objectives of the video series.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhu Suri Prakash College of Education</td>
<td>Slow Food Movement, Happy Planet Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carolyn Sachs, Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology</td>
<td>Stories of women as keepers of agricultural knowledge in many developing countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fran Ose-Osaare, Entrepreneur, Betumi.com (Indigenous Foods of Africa)</td>
<td>The myth of African cuisine and how urbanization is hurting the image of agriculture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clement Abrokwa, African Studies and Conflict Resolution</td>
<td>How music represents life and how it is used to resolve conflict in African villages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce Martin, College of Education</td>
<td>How the Ojibwe people connect language and culture, and other ways of knowing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khanjan Mehta, Humanitarian Engineering and Social Entrepreneurship Program</td>
<td>Telemedicine and the importance of traditional healers. Role of social capital and trust in developing appropriate business models for developing communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audrey Maretzki, Food Science and Nutrition</td>
<td>The story of nutribusiness: A modern food product made from traditional Kenyan food crops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Jacobson, Forest Resources</td>
<td>Successful businesses based on traditional African flora: Baobab tree, Fordoun Spa, and Amarula.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Marete, Graduate Student, Agricultural Economics</td>
<td>Stories related to agriculture from her childhood in Kenya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Ader, Graduate Student, Rural Sociology and Demography</td>
<td>Perspective on poverty gleaned from an elderly Mapuche man in Chile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Chandy Vayaliparampil, Graduate Student, Educational Theory and Policy and Comparative International Education</td>
<td>Traditional education system (Guru-shishya Parampara) and its relevance to modern education</td>
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</table>
for teachers. The modules have the following sections:

1. About the Video Clip: A brief summary describing the speaker and the theme of the video clip.

2. Key Concepts: Definitions of key terms and an explanation of basic concepts related to the theme of the video.

3. Before Watching: This section provides 2–5 points for students to consider before watching the video clip. Students can be expected to develop their responses to these points and be prepared to discuss them in class.

4. After Watching: There are three sub-sections: a) discussion topics related to the video, b) related indigenous knowledge topics for further exploration, and c) resources and interesting intersections. The discussion topics can be used or adapted by instructors for in-class participation. Encouraging students to connect indigenous knowledge with Western knowledge is an explicit educational outcome of this video series. The learning module connects the topics discussed in the video to the students’ past experiences as well as to other topics and disciplines.

5. References: A bibliography of the sources used to develop the learning module.

The video series and the learning modules can serve as a self-study resource for a broad array of learners with different educational interests and needs. The video series can also be used by students and faculty working on international research and outreach endeavors and might result in expanding research and outreach methods beyond positivistic approaches toward the development of truly sustainable solutions to community challenges that lead to self-determined development.

Conclusion

In this paper we have introduced AcademIK Connections, a set of 12 short videos that were developed to address an imbalance that exists in the academic environment between knowledge generated within the academy based upon positivistic epistemologies and knowledge generated through observation, experience, and experimentation that occurs in the cultural context of communities. We identify this locally generated knowledge as indigenous knowledge. Positivistic, research-based knowledge, has for a variety of social, political, economic, historical, and cultural reasons that are discussed in this paper, come to be viewed in academic circles as the gold standard, while indigenous knowledge is often viewed with skepticism, if not contempt. The inherent dichotomy between the dominant perspective of academic researchers and those involved in community development is often overlooked in the classroom. As a consequence, students, armed with their laboratory-generated knowledge, find themselves in the field where the development perspective of “what will work in this village” is more immediately critical than a theory-based understanding of the biological or physical mechanisms that are “causing” the problem. AcademIK Connections attempts to bring a sense of humility into the classroom by creating a brief point in time and space where the value of the indigenous knowledge residing in local communities can be acknowledged jointly by professors and students in a safe, intellectually challenging environment. Students whose minds have been opened to other ways of knowing and engaging will, we believe, be better prepared than their peers to engage with local communities and meld indigenous and Western knowledges to address developmental challenges.

Our team is currently engaged in the development of a complementary video series that features indigenous voices and worldviews. In 2011, videos were shot in Tanzania that related to health and healing, leadership, motherhood, grassroots innovation, and food preservation practices. Additional community interviews in India, Kenya, and Nicaragua occurred in summer 2012. We welcome comments on AcademIK Connections and suggestions for making it a better tool to prepare today’s students for making a difference in a complex world beset by many challenges. But most of all we welcome stories that illustrate the way in which indigenous knowledge has enriched and complemented the activities taking place in your classrooms, laboratories, and community settings.

References


**Editor’s Note**

The learning modules can be accessed at www.sedtapp.psu.edu/humanitarian/academIK.php. The video clips described in the text may also be viewed at: http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL61AF3E1F80F626C.

**Acknowledgements**

The authors would like to thank Aaron Fleishman for technical work on the video clips and the M.G. Whiting Endowment for Indigenous Knowledge at Penn State for financial support.

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Al’s Pals is a school-based mentoring program with the purpose of developing and fostering positive relationships between mentors (college volunteers) and mentees (elementary students). Al’s Pals was developed in 2010 to meet two goals: 1) provide academic assistance and social development for at-risk elementary students and 2) encourage leadership development for college students through the potential for a) college mentors becoming student leaders, b) developing lesson plans, and c) leading enrichment activities (e.g., teaching Spanish, dance, music, and nutrition education to elementary students). The University of Alabama’s Division of Student Affairs and Ferguson Center Student Union embraced these goals, and in fall 2010, decided to house the Al’s Pals Program as a way to increase positive college student development while reaching out to the Tuscaloosa community.

Supported by national research (Laursen, 2002), Al’s Pals provides meaningful relationships that are a powerful factor in promoting resilience, specifically for at-risk students. Of particular importance for young students, kindergarten through fifth grade, relationships with adults regulate development, specifically competence (Pianta & Walsh, 1998). Students who have developed meaningful relationships with a caring, positive non-parental adult through mentoring have demonstrated improvements in social, emotional, and behavioral domains (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Additionally, mentees in school-based mentoring programs can experience improved perceptions of school through positive experiences in the after-school mentoring programs (Herrera, Sipe, McClanahan, Arbreton, & Pepper, 2000).

Al’s Pals is a one-on-one mentoring program that pairs college volunteers with Tuscaloosa elementary students. When the program started in January 2011, Al’s Pals had 65 mentors and 30 elementary students in the program. In less than three years, the program has expanded to over 550 volunteers per academic year and 180 elementary students enrolled in the program. Each college mentor volunteers approximately 30 hours each semester, resulting in a one-semester total of 10,500 hours. Student leaders who average 5 volunteer hours a week add another 3,400 hours.

The program is now offered at three sites in Tuscaloosa. Every volunteer goes to one of these sites each week and meets with his or her mentee. During their time together, they work on homework, lesson plans designed to complement the work they are doing in school, and one of the enrichment activities. One of the strengths of the partnership for university students is that students from a wide array of disciplines interact together. In a campus that can be divided into silos based on one’s major or student organization membership, Al’s Pals draws a diverse body of students, ranging from freshmen to graduate students, all coming together each week for a common purpose. They all want to serve and help elementary students learn. Through this common goal, many new friendships are formed that broaden students’ cultural insight.

As a graduate student helping to coordinate the program, I am interested in how students become involved in community activities. A major question in my research is “How are universities involving community partners and how can college students better engage with community partners?” I have been specifically interested in Al’s Pals mentors’ interaction with children and community partners at the elementary schools and community center where the program takes place.

Nationally, many community-based organizations (and K–12 schools) are dissatisfied with the university-community partnership due to untrained college volunteers and a lack of commitment from them (Blouin & Perry, 2009).
Knowing this information, I have focused on improving Al’s Pals training and working on issues of volunteer commitment. We have made the following changes to address these national concerns mentioned in previous research on the topic:

**Enhanced the development opportunities for student leaders.** Student leaders are mentors that have been with the program for at least a year and are nominated, interviewed, and committed to taking a larger role in the organization. They have taken part and will continue to take a part in a more intensive training that covers not only the logistics of efficient and effective programming, but also discussions on privilege, goal setting, and the emotional and psychological benefits of having a mentor, or positive adult role model, in one’s life.

**Revamped the training for all mentors.** Training has been revised to be more interactive and to include more relevant information to help volunteers succeed. For instance, mentors role-play common behavior scenarios in order to be prepared for situations in interacting with their mentees.

**Required training of all volunteers, regardless of their start date.** Although this solution seems obvious, with over 360 volunteers each semester, many starting after the original orientation date, program staff has had to be creative in making sure that every volunteer has the knowledge they need to be successful.

**Requested a written commitment from all volunteers.** Mentors are asked to sign a pledge, noting their commitment to the program and why that commitment is important to Al’s Pals and to the community organization, but most importantly to the mentee.

Although these changes are a positive step towards strengthening our collaboration, I would argue that what we are doing is not enough. I want to deepen and enrich our community partnership so that college students can engage more effectively with community members. I have started by asking our community partners “What can we do better?” We have begun the process of gaining answers to this, and other questions by conducting focus groups with parents, teachers, current mentors, and more informally, youth in the program. If universities are trying to be helpful to communities, we need the on-going feedback of the people in those communities! We need to ask questions such as: What can we, as an organization, do better? What are we not doing well? What do you wish we knew about your community? What training can we offer college volunteers to better understand your community?

Even though it is exciting to see Al’s Pals growth by volunteer power, we see the need to offer classes for course credit that provide students an opportunity to reflect on their experience. These classes can provide students with a richer experience by understanding privilege and thinking about differences without reinforcing common stereotypes. These classes can help build leadership skills and provide an opportunity for a better understanding of the community being served by having students interview community members and dialogue with them about community needs.

Moving forward, I have learned and continue to learn that community engagement is a dynamic process. The feedback provided affects how we move forward with Al’s Pals. Community knowledge and expertise is essential in making Al’s Pals successful for the elementary students, the schools we partner with, and college mentors who volunteer their time.

**References**


**About the Author**

Anna-Margaret Yarbrough is a graduate assistant with the Al’s Pals program. She has her master’s in higher education and is pursuing her Ph.D. in social and cultural studies in the College of Education at the University of Alabama.
JCES invites submission of book reviews that speak to a wide range of issues relevant to the scholarship of engagement. Reviews of books within the social sciences, natural sciences and math, medicine and health, the environment, law, business, philosophy, religion, and the arts and humanities are encouraged. Although reviews of individual books are the most common, JCES also invites submission of several reviews that speak to a particular topic area, to be published as a group. All book reviews submitted to JCES should provide readers with a broad overview of the book, but should go beyond this description to discuss central issues raised, strengths and limitations of the text, and current issues of theory and practice raised by the book that are germane to the subject matter and engaged scholarship.

Heather Pleasants, Ph.D.
Book Review Editor
Social reform movements in the United States have enjoyed a glorious past and a promising future of engaging people in attempts to solve social problems that they find most pressing. Community engagement scholars can look to the history of great American social reformers such as Jane Addams and Mary Richmond in addressing issues like poverty, immigration, children in need, and other social environmental issues (Morris, 2000; Wenocur & Reisch, 2001). More recently, social reformers in the Occupy Wall Street movements, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) equality movements, immigration reform movements, and other human rights movements have caused a disruption of the status quo by calling into question inequities that are still very much apart of the American landscape. Americans have a great deal to learn about social change, and can look to models outside of the United States to learn about global social change movements that are making a real impact throughout the world.

Aziz Choudry and Dip Kapoor, educational and community engagement scholars at major universities in Canada, highlight promising global movements for social reform in their edited volume, Learning from the Ground Up: Global Perspectives on Social Movements and Knowledge Production. In the volume, Choudry and Kapoor assemble an impressive number of community engagement scholars that aim to explore the “political context of knowledge production, representation, and relationships between ‘civil society,’ academe, and social activism” (p. 7). Authors in the Choudry and Kapoor collection call into question the privileging of social movement “knowledge” within the academy and offer compelling alternative sites of knowledge within a wide range of global organizations engaged in social movements. Given the knowledge being created and perfected within global organizations, social reform scholars have a great deal to learn from “real world” examples of community engagement work that is highlighted within the book.

Choudry and Kapoor organize the volume into three major sections, which include a major section on knowledge production and presentation between “civil society,” academe, and social activism; knowledge production from unions and other worker alliances; and finally knowledge production within the context of poverty and indigenous people. In the first section, Choudry ("Global justice? Contesting NGOization: Knowledge politics and containment in anti-globalization networks") calls into question the compartmentalization of global concerns into “issues” yet an unwillingness to challenge capitalism as part of the culprit in perpetuating social inequality. Several chapters in section one deal with lessons learned from anti-apartheid movements, including Desai and Walsh’s “Knowledge and power in South Africa: Xenophobia and survival in the post-apartheid state” and Zidah and Hanieh’s “Collective approaches to activist knowledge: Experiences of the new anti-apartheid movement in Toronto.” Tensions in workplace rights movements, both in North America and throughout the world, are addressed in section two. For example, Bleakney and Morrill ("Worker education and social movement knowledge: Practical tensions and lessons") critically interrogate how labor union education programs tend to be reactive in nature and use the language of their oppressors rather than honoring the voices of workers. Section three does an excellent job of highlighting how social reform movements and community engagement scholars can learn from the struggles of indigenous people and people living in poverty. Martha Stiegman and Sherry Pictou’s chapter (“How do you say Netuklimk in English? Using documentary video to capture Bear River First Nation’s learning through action”) does a superb job of examining how collaborative learning circles with First Nations, non-indigenous people, researchers, and others were used to address sociopolitical issues faced by First Nations communities in Canada.

There is a great deal to like about Choudry and Kapoor’s Learning from the Ground Up: Global Perspectives on Social Movements and Knowledge Production. Aziz Choudry and Dip Kapoor (Eds.). New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 256 pages. ISBN: 0230621031

Valuing Every Voice in Community Engagement and Other Social Movements

Reviewed by Trevor G. Gates
Production. In the volume, the editors and chapter authors go beyond the typical impassioned view that either discount the role of researchers or discount the perspectives of non-academics. Instead, using a diverse range of case studies, the volume illustrates how the best community engagement scholarship is a collaborative effort that recognizes the importance of various “experts.” Effective knowledge production rarely occurs in a vacuum—instead, real knowledge production is a shared venture that develops in the community, a collaborative effort that recognizes the important contribution of multiple “expert” stakeholders.

Criticisms of the volume will be few, as Choudry and Kapoor clearly took care to avoid privileging certain perspectives over others, and to include a wide range of academic and community experts. However, one particular opportunity was missed. Virtually no content was included that highlighted LGBTQ social reform movements throughout the world. During the last decade, social reformers throughout the world have organized to support LGBTQ marriage equality throughout the globe, including much of Europe, Canada, some of the other Americas, and a growing list of other parts of the world (Nash, 2013; Tremblay, Paternotte, & Johnson, 2011). Scholars and other social reformers have been fighting in the United States and throughout the world to combat workplace discrimination, hate crimes, and other social injustice against LGBTQ communities (Gates & Rodgers, 2013; Georgian Association of Social Workers, 2012; Hines, 2012). While extensive discussion of LGBTQ social movements may have been beyond the scope of Choudry and Kapoor’s goals for the volume, LGBTQ social reformers and engagement scholars may find this exclusion disappointing.

As a whole, however, Choudry and Kapoor’s Learning from the Ground Up: Global Perspectives on Social Movements and Knowledge Production represents an important contribution to the literature on social reform and community engagement scholarship. Both practitioners and scholars alike will find the volume to be accessible, engaging, and highly readable. Those interested in global social reform will be excited to read about the impressive changes that are occurring throughout the world. Additionally, educators teaching about social reform and community engagement will find the collection to be helpful in their classrooms, particularly as a supplemental course textbook.

References


About the Reviewer
Trevor G. Gates is an assistant professor of social work at the College at Brockport, State University of New York.
In this book, edited by Paula Jones, David Selby, and Stephen Sterling, scholars explore the pedagogical opportunities for teaching about sustainability education (SE) in different college-level disciplines. An SE framework advances the idea that teaching about resource preservation should also emphasize the needs of “all humans.” SE does not abandon the goal of preserving scenic areas like Yellowstone National Park (Solow, 1992); it merely introduces a focus of learning on how the present generation can meet its needs while not jeopardizing future generations’ ability to meet their needs (Anand & Sen, 2000). Nolet (2009), for example, writes that:

An underlying (as yet untested) assumption is that sustainability education will result in citizens who are more likely to engage in personal behaviors or contribute to public policy decisions in the best interest of the environmental commons and future generations (p. 418).

This definition posits that an SE framework aims to empower students to act on behalf of their needs and others’ needs. It also seeks to mitigate young people’s declining interest in addressing environmental degradation, as reported by Twenge (2006). Jones, Selby, and Sterling seek to demonstrate how SE could address these issues in a broad range of higher education disciplines.

Thus, this book provides an “eclectic demonstration of the art of the possible” (p. 12) in higher education that one familiar with SE might not automatically think of. For example, some disciplinary examinations include dance, drama and music, social work, theology, and nursing. It also includes chapters devoted to disciplines with more familiar SE possibilities like engineering and economics.

The editors organize the book into 17 chapters. The first four chapters address the possibilities of teaching SE through an interdisciplinarity framework. They define interdisciplinarity as a teaching strategy where a topic receives attention across multiple contiguous or proximate disciplines (instead of unrelated ones). Across the initial chapters of the book, they present the case that since humans live in an interconnected world, SE teaching should be decompartmentalized and should reveal pedagogical possibilities that bridge the theory-practice gap.

In the subsequent 13 chapters, scholars from a diverse range of disciplines address four research questions examining the teaching possibilities of SE in their area of expertise. Through these research questions, authors are asked to 1) report on the current status of SE instruction in their field, 2) address opportunities for teaching and learning, 3) identify possible obstacles, and 4) highlight innovative pedagogies. The majority of the book focuses on how each of the authors address these questions in light of their respective disciplines.

Regarding the state of SE curriculum, responses were diverse. This outcome seemed predictable, as the book included subjects with well-established practices for including SE (like engineering), while some scholars (for example, those in dance, drama, and music) admitted their discipline had “the hardest fit” accommodating SE into their curriculum (p. 156). However, the rich and varied responses across the chapters revealed some common cross-field themes.

Many authors reported a need to close the gap between theory and practice. For example, in discussing teacher education, Robert Cook, Roger Cutting, and Denise Summers (Chapter 17) pointed out that faculty were spending too much time on “diversions” like developing “bold statements” or definitional modules within SE instead of formulating classroom applications (p. 314). In their chapter on international trends, Arjen Wals and John Blewitt made similar observations; they described the gap between rhetoric and practice as “striking”. In fact, the editors noted that most of the discourse about SE exists within research instead of teaching. Such a situation is not uncommon, as sustainability researchers have previously identified the problematic nature of focusing too much on theory (e.g., Orr, 2004;
From these state of the field observations emerged opportunities for embedding an issues-based framework within SE curricula. For example, several chapter authors identified a dialogical approach as a promising practice for SE. The authors defined such a strategy as teaching through “interactive, discursive methods” instead of by “one-way transmission” of information through lecturing (p. 41). Citing a need for discussion, other authors identified the potential of discussing the social issues associated with SE in their academic fields. For example, in writing about business pedagogy (Chapter 5), Delyse Springett highlighted opportunities for students to engage in learning opportunities guided by questions like, “Who holds the power to maintain the status quo? [and] How do they attain and maintain that power?” (p. 80). Through questions like these, Springett suggests that student learning might benefit from basing whole-class dialogue around questions with multiple, potentially complex responses.

Chapter authors also reported obstacles for implementing SE in their discipline’s curriculum. For example, Robert Cook, Roger Cutting, and Denise Summers observed that many campus administrators succeeded in making buildings more efficient or updating policies to embrace green attitudes. Yet, curricular updates moved at far slower paces, if at all, according to Kleiman. Other challenges mentioned across the chapters included questions related to 1) how to teach SE in a truly transformative way (and not in and additive or “bolt-on” strategy [p. 319]) and 2) how to educate faculty who were interested in implementing SE but knew little about its theoretical basis.

Despite these (and other) challenges, many chapter authors disclosed potential and classroom-tested innovations that draw on a social issues-based approach. For example, Paul Kleiman, in writing about music education, (Chapter 9) proposed students could minimize their use of ear buds to consider “shifts in attitude and behaviour” that engage “the emotions and senses as well as the intellect….” (p. 156). The learning objectives within such a strategy encouraged students to develop their listening skills; in this way, students might be able to develop “a sustainable aural understanding and thus a greater relationship with the changing sonic planet” (p. 156). Other recommended inquiries centered around questions like, “How might music have contributed to this [environmental] problem? (Example: the glorification of the automobile in popular music?)” (p. 166). Similar to the preceding question, Kleiman framed part of his learning objectives in the analysis of how human choices, via musical influences, might have contributed to unsustainable habits.

Other disciplines have reported similar innovations involving a dialogical approach. In drama, Kleiman noted the innovative strategy of using SE through the use of issues-based theater and identified a particularly successful content example as Henrik Ibsen’s “Enemy of the People.” In theology curriculum, authors Katja Stuerzenhofecker, Rebecca O’Loughlin, and Simon Smith (Chapter 12) recommended a dialogical approach to “the study of the last things or ‘what may be hoped for’” (i.e., eschatology). For example, the authors offered students valuable opportunities to search for solutions to pressing issues within the discipline like the destination of humankind and human responsibility.

Other innovative pedagogies with potential for cross-disciplinary implementation included a concept authors Wals and Blewitt (Chapter 4) referred to as “Gestaltswitching.” They defined this term as a strategy aimed at helping students learn how to switch “between different mindsets… [and] in the context of SE, switching back and forth between disciplinary perspectives” (p. 66). Such a skill is at the center of “Gestaltungskimpetenz”—“the ability to look at the world as it unfolds from multiple vantage points” (p. 66).

The strengths of this book unfold in two areas. First, the book could assist the aspiring sustainability educator seeking to learn how a variety of disciplines conceptualize its implementation. Second, the book provides opportunities for more complex considerations for how to teach SE in different and innovative ways. Overall, the book is thorough in its scope, and its scaffolded appeal to both beginning and more experienced SE educators is laudable. The book’s weakness rests in its limited coverage of what students did in the context of the learning opportunities presented to them. For example, the chapters on law, theology, social work, and teacher education discuss compelling possibilities for SE. Yet, the reader might be curious how these ideas worked (or did not work) in context of classroom instruction.

Overall, the book’s findings may prove significant for education researchers and practitioners interested in how SE can be implemented in higher education settings. In general, the book builds upon visions of other editors (e.g., Corcoran & Wals, 2004; Bartlett...
who set forth a rich array of perspectives about SE in campus policies and curricula. However, this effort may distinguish itself from these and other earlier works by focusing on a) curricular possibilities and b) an ambitiously wide net of disciplinary applications.

References


About the Reviewer

Jay Shuttleworth is a lecturer with the Center for Core Curriculum at Columbia University.
In *Becoming an Engaged Campus* the authors contribute to an increasingly expansive literature that seeks to articulate what it means for higher education to be engaged with communities beyond campus in ways that transcend traditional paradigms of providing expertise to solve problems to provide services (for example, see Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011). The authors note this reality at the onset: “Many books and articles have been written about public engagement: defining it, framing it, and extolling its benefits” (p. 1). The literature is replete with nuanced arguments as to why higher education can and should become more engaged, both for institutional and community-oriented purposes. To varying degrees on campuses across the United States, individuals, departments, colleges, and universities have embraced notions of being engaged. Yet this has often been more episodic than coherent. Engagement has emerged from pockets within institutions, but often it has not been at the center of institutional mission and practice.

Some faculty members have integrated service-learning fully into their teaching and embraced community-based research as an approach to do rigorous and meaningful scholarship with tangible benefits to real people and communities. Similarly, scores of deans, provosts, and presidents have championed this work—frequently in rhetoric but less so through action by committing resources, monetary and otherwise, to establishing centers and other infrastructure to support such efforts. And while such efforts have been made, “little has been written on how to effect the necessary changes on the campus” (p. x). It is this void that the authors seek to fill with what they refer to as “essentially a ‘how-to’ book, showing the reader, step by step, how to institutionalize public engagement by aligning each of its organizational dimensions to promote and support public engagement” (p. 1). They offer specific strategies on “what one can do, how one should act, and what will make a difference” (p. 2) applicable to all types of postsecondary institutions: community colleges, liberal arts colleges, comprehensive universities, and research universities.

Acknowledging that their intended audience is administrators and others responsible for or interested in cultivating a campus culture that takes seriously public engagement, the authors use an “alignment process” borrowed from the popular business book *Building to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*, where authors Jerry I. Poras and James C. Collins (1994) contend that “companies successful over a prolonged period of time were fully aligned to support their vision” (p. 2)—that is, all of the elements within the company were functioning in a way that promoted the company’s goals. For a college or university to become an engaged campus requires alignment of every aspect of the institution.

Chapter 1 offers a brief background to issues related to American higher education, namely familiar signposts for those who know some of higher education’s more important moments: colonial colleges and liberal arts, the establishment of land-grant colleges through the Morrill Acts of 1862 an 1890 and the associated Hatch Act of 1887 and Smith-Lever Act of 1914, the explosion of higher education because of the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944 (better known as the GI Bill), and the federal government’s investment in research following World War II, particularly after the Soviet Union launched Sputnik in 1957. And while research had dominated much of the discussion about higher education, others called attention to the role colleges and universities could and should play in their local communities. Specifically, Ernest Boyer’s (1990) *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, helped to initiate conversations on campuses about different forms of scholarship and how scholarship was much more than traditional research that kept a certain distance from involving or engaging individuals or communities. It is within this first chapter that the authors spend some time defining terms related to public engagement and explain why they chose certain terms at their home institution of Northern Kentucky University. They also, briefly, define the ways that institutions, faculty, professional
staff, and students engage communities and what some of the forces have been behind increased interest in “engagement,” led by associations such as Campus Compact and organizations like the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. A section that could have been expanded on in this chapter concerns contemporary forms of knowledge and scholarship. While a “how-to book,” greater treatment of these two topics could have provided a more helpful background when thinking about the public engagement movement and its place within higher education, especially when thinking about engaged scholarship as more than volunteering or even service-learning in the curriculum.

Chapter 2 moves squarely in the direction of providing help to those interested in embedding engagement within their institutions. The alignment process begins by considering 16 organizational dimensions across four organizational levels and by determining the extent to which each is already aligned with or supportive of public engagement, and identifies where each of these dimensions can be improved upon to become fully aligned. (For the alignment grid, see page 34). The chapter offers guidance about creating an alignment committee to conduct this work, analyze findings, and report such findings to a campus (and broader) community in an accessible and useful way. While each institution will adapt the alignment process differently, a fundamental question must be asked: Is the campus ready to accept public engagement as an important property? The authors argue that presidents and chief academic officers must have a good read of their campus culture, understanding whether the entire institution is ready to make public engagement a campus-wide goal, or if it is to remain primarily the efforts of select faculty and administrators, in other words, to make it a “siloed” effort.

Chapter 3 focuses on the foundational elements of higher education institutions and the importance of having mission, vision, and values align with a supportive infrastructure for public engagement. But more than visionary statements, this chapter explores two central issues involved in making public engagement a recognized priority on campuses: funding and infrastructure. The authors go through the various options for thinking about funding—ranging from internal funding to the various external options that can help support specific projects rather than the general infrastructure for engagement. Demonstrating their commitment to physical spaces for public engagement work, the authors stress that, “Although funding is most critical for public engagement, other resources are important to the success of the work. Space must be allocated for offices directly related to public engagement” (p. 65, emphasis added). They make the point that space is not only important, but that it must be prominently located on campus and not in an annex building removed from the central life of a campus. In addition to traditional office space, there should be “comfortable space” for those involved in public engagement to “interact and learn from each other” (p. 65; Walshok, 1999). Such investments require a commitment to making engagement more than a glossy photo in advertising materials.

Chapters 4–12 continue the theme of alignment in areas such as leadership, organizational structure, faculty, tenure and promotion, student engagement, accountability, communication, and then, finally, with the broader community and through public policy. A comment from the chapter of aligning faculty and staff highlights some of the challenges administrators and directors face with respect to public engagement: “Some individuals and even some entire departments view public engagement negatively” (p. 99). The challenge, regardless of whether one is talking about tenured faculty or staff members who help communicate the work of the institution, is that people need to understand what public engagement is and how it can shape and impact their role within an engaged institution before they can see themselves as contributors to such efforts.

While higher education is known for its commitment to academic freedom, the authors argue that there are opportunities for chief academic officers and others to fill positions with individuals who are committed to public engagement, and that their responsibilities should reflect explicit commitments to public engagement. Specifically for faculty, institutions must make efforts to align public engagement with professional expectations. This includes expectations for how faculty teach, conduct research, and how their engaged scholarship is recognized through tenure and promotion (a helpful resource is Ellison & Eatman, 2008).

In the final chapter, the authors offer both helpful advice and words of caution for colleges and universities as they move forward with an alignment process that takes seriously the opportunities for public engagement to positively shape institutions during a time of...
transformation in higher education. Rather than simply being reactionary or victims of change, public engagement is a proactive approach to defining what higher education means for both those on and off campus. However, with a “how-to” book there are limitations because of an oversimplification of complex issues for the sake of generalization. Administrators and scholars would do well to use this as a resource for thinking about public engagement at their institutions with the acknowledgement that it can help start campus conversations about creating and/or cultivating a more explicitly engaged institution.

References


About the Reviewer

Timothy J. Shaffer is director of the Center for Leadership and Engagement at Wagner College in Staton Island, NY.
MANUSCRIPT PREPARATION

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


A separate cover sheet with the name(s), affiliation(s), and other identifying information and contact information (address, phone numbers, and email addresses) for each contributing author should be supplied. Additionally, authors should include four to six keywords at the bottom of the cover sheet.

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

Authors are required to submit written permission from the original publisher for any quoted material of 300 words or more from a single source; any quoted material from a newspaper, a poem, or a song (even a phrase); and any table, figure, or image reproduced from another work.

Images must also be submitted electronically, in JPEG format, with no less than 200 pixels per inch resolution for black and white images and 300 for color. Manuscripts will undergo masked peer review. It is the intention of this journal to assign manuscripts to reviewers within two to four weeks of compliant and correct submission. Authors will be notified of a decision in a timely manner consistent with thorough scholarly review.

If you wish the editor to consider using video related to your research, first upload it to YouTube, then send the relevant link or links to jces.ua.edu.

STUDENT VOICES

Students from all disciplines are invited to submit original work to the Student Voices section of JCES. All forms of writing, analysis, creative approaches, and methodologies are acceptable for the journal. Commentaries, critical reflections, opinion pieces, and scholarly contributions of any kind related to engaged scholarship are welcome.

Student submissions are accepted on an ongoing basis. Manuscripts should be 750–2,000 words in length and must adhere to the requirements in the instructions for authors above. Inquiries and submissions (as a Microsoft Word attachment) should be emailed to Vicky Carter, Assistant to the Editor, at jces@ua.edu. Commentaries, critical reflections, opinion pieces, and scholarly contributions of any kind related to engaged scholarship are welcome.
Community members working with academic partners from all disciplines are invited to submit original work to the Community Perspectives section of *JCES*. All forms of writing, analysis, creative approaches, and methodologies are acceptable for the journal. Commentaries, critical reflections, opinion pieces, and scholarly contributions of any kind related to engaged scholarship are welcome.

Community partner submissions are accepted on an ongoing basis. Manuscripts should be 750–2,000 words in length and must adhere to the requirements in the instructions for authors above. Inquiries and submissions (as a Microsoft Word attachment) should be emailed to Vicky Carter, Assistant to the Editor, at jces@ua.edu. Commentaries, critical reflections, opinion pieces, and scholarly contributions of any kind related to engaged scholarship are welcome.

Faculty, students, and community members working with academic partners are invited to submit original work to the From the Field section of *JCES*. This section is reserved for reports that are more likely to be practice-based or case study-oriented than is the typical theory-driven section. This section provides a venue for research projects involving partnerships between academic institutions, community, and students. Manuscripts that share best practices, practice wisdom, and applied knowledge are especially appropriate for From the Field. Context is also essential as it is for all engaged scholarly activities and reporting From the Field should be situated philosophically, historically, and theoretically if it is to systematically extend our knowledge and understanding. All submissions need to be described and examined through these lenses or some combination of them. Unique partnerships have the potential to make highly interesting pieces for From the Field.

Lessons learned or practice principles should be a part of the manuscript. Research methodologies of all types are accepted, and research projects with strong application and practice implications will be given favorable consideration. From the Field manuscripts should follow *JCES* submission guidelines (see above), but should not exceed 15 pages. If a lead author is uncertain whether to submit a manuscript under any one of the above classifications, send an email to jces.ua.edu for clarification and guidance. Manuscripts should be 750–2,000 words in length and must adhere to the requirements in the instructions for authors above.
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- Assign manuscript number
- Send acknowledgment email to corresponding author (usually, but not always, the first author)
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Resubmitted Manuscript and Second Review
- Scan for compliance with reviewer evaluation; if necessary, author is sent request for further revision
- Send reviewers the revised manuscript, a copy of the original manuscript with editor’s and reviewers’ comments and tracked changes, the review form, along with a copy of the letter to the corresponding author
- Request return of second review within 2 weeks

Editor Options Following Second Review
- Manuscript accepted (proceed to Edit for Publication)
- Manuscript accepted with minor revisions

Accepted with Minor Revisions
- Corresponding author notified of decision to accept with minor revisions with final revision requested within two weeks
- Final revisions confirmed (proceed to Edit for Publication)

Edit for Publication
- Final revision edited and proofread
- Edited proof sent to corresponding author
- Editorial changes negotiated with corresponding author
- Copyright forms sent to corresponding author for signature

Publication
*Authors’ names on all documents viewed by reviewers, including manuscripts, letters, and emails, and other identifying information, are masked throughout the process.
JOURNAL of COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT and SCHOLARSHIP

www.jces.ua.edu
www.uapress.ua.edu

Published by the Office of Community Affairs at The University of Alabama
Distributed by The University of Alabama Press

ISSN 1944-1207
Published twice a year
Also in e-edition. ISBN: 978-0-8173-8514-9

JCES is a peer-reviewed international journal through which faculty, staff, students, and community partners disseminate scholarly works. JCES integrates teaching, research, and community engagement in all disciplines, addressing critical problems identified through a community-participatory service.

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uapress.ua.edu
The Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship is published at The University of Alabama by the Division of Community Affairs for the advancement of engaged scholarship worldwide.