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Dear Engaged Reader,

When I wrote the editor’s column in summer 2019, I talked about how calm and relaxed I felt. This year, I write from an entirely different place. The coronavirus pandemic and our country’s long-standing and ongoing issues with racial injustice have left me unsettled and struggling to focus. I’m reminded of the Ann Pancake quote, “In times like these, you have to grow big enough inside to hold both the loss and the hope.”

My experience in living through “grow big enough inside” situations has been to engage in a combination of internally driven contemplation (thinking, feeling, listening, and learning) and externally driven strategic action. For me, the “feeling” part of this process is the most difficult. I’ve been dismayed by the myriad structures of our society that are built on systemic, long-term inequity, even as I’ve been heartened by citizens who are chipping away at these structures. I’ve witnessed the power of people coming together around a common goal, and the devastation deliberately inflicted by others in an effort to tear us apart and crush our empathy. When I consider human nature at both ends of the civility spectrum, I sometimes feel left without words. There is definitely loss. And hope. And for me, resolve.

I’ve resolved to focus on what I can do rather than on what I can’t, and I see this principle in action throughout my community. For example, earlier this year, volunteers who could no longer visit a senior living community to read aloud to residents simply switched to reading over the phone. I’ve learned that connecting to new people in the context of service is just as inspiring, even when two masks and at least six feet separate you. And I’ve been reminded of how important it is to effect change on an individual basis, and on a societal one. As I think about the road toward justice and wellness, I am buoyed by the stories of so many who traverse it. Some of these stories are shared in this issue of JCES.

The authors of two of our articles, “Determining the Efficacy of the Community Research Fellows Training: An 18-Month Evaluation” and “The Challenge of Effective Family/School Partnerships: The Middle School Parent Leadership Academy Pilot Program” focus on efficacy within their work. Dictionary.com defines efficacy as “the ability to bring about a desired or intended result.” At this juncture, being intentional about our work is critically important—these two articles illustrate being intentional about research and partnership respectively.

Several articles in this issue are focused on the central role of community in engaged work. The article entitled “Nonprofit Partners’ Perceptions of Organizational and Community Impact Based on a Long-Term Academic Service-Learning Partnership” reports the results of community partner interviews to evaluate the quality and impact of capstone projects in communications. In “Keeping the Promise of Community-Based Participatory Research: Integrating Applied Critical Rhetorical Methods to Amplify the Community’s Voice for Trial Development,” the authors describe an Applied Critical Rhetorical research approach, which, when embedded within a Community-Based Participatory Research framework, can enhance community voice and power in clinical health research. The article “Training Patient Stakeholders Builds Community Capacity, Enhances Patient Engagement in Research” details the ways in which the role of community is central to the role of university and its efforts in enhancing healthcare in the context of a Quality Enhancement Plan. The latter two articles are especially important in the midst of the current coronavirus pandemic, as the role of community in controlling its spread is paramount.

Two references I’ve found particularly helpful during this time have been Alec Gallimore’s piece, “Now is the Moment. So what do we do?” (https://news.engin.umich.edu/2020/06/perspective-now-is-the-moment-so-what-do-we-do/?fbclid=IwAR2VY_BXy5ReVNC_SaDY_TPylcx2_cYhvaKg6A2kMNL4X-24oiHmlXsa4PglU) and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences report (specifically by the Commission on the Practice of Democratic Citizenship) entitled “Our Common Purpose: Reinventing American Democracy for the 21st Century (https://www.amacad.org/ourcommonpurpose/report).
Two articles in this issue focus on the importance of togetherness in engagement. In “Learning and Doing Together: Student Outcomes from an Interdisciplinary, Community-Based Research Course on Homelessness in a Local Community,” the authors highlight the togetherness inherent when integrating interdisciplinary collaboration and community-based participatory research. Also, the authors of “Telling Our Stories Together: Co-creating Written Scholarship in University and Community Partnerships,” share an approach in which community and university constituents can disseminate their written work equitably.

The art of reflection can help us make meaning of the world around us. In “Learning Anthropology by Teaching Anthropology: A Case Study of Five Service-Learning Classes at Rollins College,” Ashley Kistler discusses the ways in which her teaching practice evolved through the power of collaborative ethnography.

Collectively, the articles in this issue remind us that we can address the pandemics of coronavirus and racial inequality by proceeding thoughtfully with intentionality, community, and togetherness. In his “I Have A Dream” speech, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy; now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice…”

Engaged reader, the time is now. Make it real. Rise.
Learning is Not the Destination

From the Associate Editor

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

As I was beginning my doctoral work, one of my mentors told me that after she donated a printed copy of her dissertation to her program’s library, she placed a crisp dollar bill somewhere among the pages. Years later, she thumbed through the pages of her dissertation and found that same dollar bill exactly where she left it.

That story may be apocryphal, and actually, I don’t remember for sure if my mentor said that she hid the dollar bill, or if it was someone else in her program. Either way, the story makes me chuckle when I think about it, which I’ve done a few times lately as two doctoral students I am lucky enough to advise are approaching the finish lines of their respective dissertations. When I was at the same stage of my program, I was filled with a combination of self-doubt, panic, and exhaustion all stemming from imposter syndrome and the fear that I was finally going to be found out and unceremoniously asked to leave the program. Now I know I wasn’t alone with those feelings, as a great many people in graduate programs have similar feelings, but at the time it felt so isolating.

One piece of advice that I received during my program, and one that I have passed along to my students, is that the dissertation is really a first step. To be sure, the dissertation is absolutely the culmination of one’s education, and should be celebrated accordingly. But it shouldn’t be the end of one’s growth as a scholar. It really should be a starting point. I recently revisited some parts of my dissertation for the first time in a while, and it was almost jarring to realize how much I’ve grown since I graduated. Don’t get me wrong, I’m proud of the work I did, but it is encouraging and affirming to see that my dissertation, which in some ways was a final goal, also served as a big first step toward more growth.

As I wrote this column earlier this year, the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd were still in the headlines as the latest examples of a trend that places a bright spotlight on the systemic inequities in society. As a result, many people have been moved to take action and speak up, maybe for the first time.

For my part, as I work toward becoming a better and more effective ally, my natural tendency is to read and learn as much as possible so I can begin to better understand the issues and their context. And it looks like I’m not alone. According to a New York Times article published on June 5, 2020 (https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/05/books/antiracism-books-race-racism.html), a majority of the books on the bestseller lists of both Amazon and Barnes & Noble focused on topics of racism and police violence.

In the world of community engagement, we understand that the word “scholarship” refers to much more than our research, and that taking that first step of learning something new is really only the beginning. To paraphrase Ernest Boyer (1990), learning is a “dynamic endeavor” (p. 23), and it is our responsibility to take what we’re learning and determine how it can be “responsibly applied to consequential problems” (p. 21). The authors of the books I’m reading have done amazing, insightful work that has helped me start to see from a different perspective.

It’s my responsibility to those authors, and the communities for whom they speak, to make sure my journey doesn’t stop at learning. How do I change the way I teach and work with students such that they see justice and equity as values that should be central to their education? Through this lens, how do I then effectively challenge them to wrestle with the “big questions” and engage with their civic responsibilities? What are the steps that I need to take to authentically interrogate my own research and scholarship?

These questions don’t have easy answers, and I have no doubt that I’m going to make mistakes along the way. But it’s not acceptable for me to be complacent with learning new things and patting myself on the back. I need to recognize that even
if I think I’m moving in the right direction, I will always have more room to grow. And I need to use the position and privilege that I am fortunate enough to have to be an ally for antiracist work. I can’t let the things I’m learning sit on the proverbial shelf in the library.

Reference
Reddix Named JCES Associate Editor for Special Issues

Dr. Rhoda Reddix, associate professor and director of service-learning at Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University, a private Catholic school in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, has been named the associate editor for special issues of the *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship*. She previously served on the publication’s Editorial Board. In making the announcement of her duties, JCES Editor Dr. Marybeth Lima welcomed Reddix to the JCES team with these words: “Her professional experience at the LSU School of Medicine, as an assistant professor of pharmacology, brings a unique expertise to our editorial board.” Reddix’s research interests include gastrointestinal dysfunction and aging-related changes that may increase the susceptibility of the elderly to colonic carcinoma and oral diseases. She is a member of Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards’ Health Equities Task Force Subcommittee on Health Disparities and Research. Her PhD is in medical science-physiology from Indiana University Bloomington.
Abstract

Research supports the idea that positive family/school community partnerships during middle school can enhance student success. Thus schools are partnering with local universities to increase school and student outcomes. In order to support local middle schools, The University of Alabama created the Middle School Parent Teacher Leadership Academy, a training program that prepares middle school parent and teacher leaders with the skills to strengthen school and student outcomes. Using a mixed methods design, we analyzed pilot data from the first year of the Academy on parents’ and teachers’ leadership behaviors and self-efficacy. Pretest and posttest results showed that parent and teacher participants significantly increased their leadership behaviors. Qualitative thematic analysis revealed answers to the question: “What has the Academy meant to you?” as follows: 1) Facilitates parent-teacher collaboration, 2) Increases parent and teacher school leadership behaviors, 3) Enhances parent and teacher school leadership self-efficacy, 4) Increases opportunities for school change, and 5) Increases parental-school involvement. Implications and future directions are discussed.

Introduction

Family engagement and family/school partnerships are a strong predictor of child school success during middle school (Hill & Tyson, 2009). However, custodial parents and caregivers often become less involved in their middle school students’ school experiences (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Green, Wilkins, & Closson, 2005) than during the elementary grades, due to a variety of factors (Halsey, 2005; Lam & Ducreux, 2013). Caregivers become less involved at the middle school level because they believe that they are supporting their students’ independence and growth. As their child experiences the tensions of burgeoning independence and adolescence, many are faced with the challenge that occurs when their students do not want them to participate in school activities. Another factor that may impact parental involvement during middle school may be their own negative experiences as middle school students. Furthermore, parents may also become less involved because of their own lack of confidence in the content knowledge that accelerates during the middle grades (Lam & Ducreux, 2013).

The relationships between teachers and parents may further complicate parents’ involvement during middle school. Middle school teachers report providing less information and involving parents less than elementary school teachers (Sanders, 2001). Halsey (2005) noted the importance of addressing and overcoming misconceptions between teachers and parents about each other’s roles as well as their perceptions about each other’s desire for parent involvement. Another challenge to the relationship between teachers and parents may be the structure of the middle school itself. Specifically, middle school students may have a different teacher for each core academic class, elective class, and physical education, which makes it difficult to build relationships with their students’ teachers. This is a difficult transition from the elementary school in which there is often one teacher in a self-contained classroom. Moreover, Hornby and Witte's (2010) research on middle schools in New Zealand posited additional reasons for less parental involvement at the middle school level. They noted that several middle schools did not have written policies on parental involvement, failed to provide defined experiences for parents, lacked home visits, and were deficient in their attempts to engage diverse parents. They also concluded that there was a lack of training provided to preservice and in-service teachers on how to engage their students’ parents in their children’s school experiences.

Despite these obstacles, developmentally tailored parental involvement is associated with positive student outcomes (Hill & Tyson, 2009).
Addressing the developmental level of the students is essential since students undergo more rapid and profound personal changes between the ages of 10 and 15 than at any other time in their lives. During this time, students often encounter many changes both in- and out-of-school, including changes in personal relationships, developmental processes, and academic success during this stage of their lives (Hill & Tyson, 2009). To address these changes and support middle school students, the curriculum, pedagogy, and programs of middle grades schools must be based upon the developmental readiness, needs, and interests of young adolescents. This student support should include a “sustained, coordinated, collaborative relationship between parents, educators and the communities surrounding schools” (Elias, Patrikakou, & Weissberg, 2007, p. 541).

Hill and Tyson's (2009) meta-analysis discovered that academic socialization, or strategies that support normal developmental autonomy, independence, and cognitive abilities, had the strongest association with middle school student achievement. This type of involvement includes parents communicating their expectation for academic achievement and fostering educational goals, and discussing learning strategies. Academic socialization is adaptive for the context of middle schools because it is dependent on parents’ competencies to navigate the middle school environment. School-based involvement, or being involved in school activities, was also related to academic achievement (Hill & Tyson, 2009). In middle school, school-based involvement entails less direct involvement in the classroom than in elementary school and a greater emphasis on fundraising, administrative tasks, and committee work (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Results for home-based parental involvement were mixed. Specifically assisting with homework was not consistently associated with academic achievement. Involvement at home includes providing an overall educationally supportive environment that includes providing structure as well as monitoring and checking homework (Hill & Tyson, 2009).

While increasing parent involvement can be a challenge, family/school partnerships have been shown to increase student success, improve student behavior, and enhance overall school climate (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). As noted by Epstein (1995) “…the way schools care about children is reflected in the way schools care about the children’s families” (p. 701). This may be even more important during the middle school years (Elías, et al., 2007). Lam and Ducreux (2013) concluded that when communication between teacher and parents increased, student academic achievement also increased. This also included improvements in students’ attitudes, behavior, and attendance. Positive outcomes also occurred for the parents in their levels of confidence, satisfaction, and interest. Increased parent involvement has a positive impact on teachers as well. Specifically, successful parent involvement programs have a higher rate of success and facilitate higher job satisfaction among teachers (MetLife Survey of the American Teacher, 2012).

One method for improving family/school relationships is developing community partnerships. Indeed, such partnerships can promote academic achievement and increase student attendance and graduation rates (e.g., Epstein, 2011; Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007; Sanders, 2005; 2009). In order to enhance student and school outcomes, schools are developing partnerships with local universities. Universities as community partners allows for the potential influx of resources and capacity building. Utilizing the Dual Capacity-building Framework for family/school partnerships (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013), the purpose of this article is to provide pilot data on The University of Alabama's Middle School Parent Teacher Leadership Academy, a parent and teacher leadership professional development program that equips parents and teachers to form school partnership teams for improving school and student outcomes.

Dual Capacity Framework

Recently, there has been a strong emphasis for adopting a broader framework for parent/school partnerships. Mapp and Kuttner (2013) propose moving beyond traditional concepts of parental involvement to a more broadening view of parent engagement that contains multiple constructions of how parents can be involved. The Dual Capacity Framework provides the conceptual model underlying the Academy (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). The adapted framework is presented in Figure 1.

The Challenge

The Dual Capacity Framework describes the challenge as the lack of opportunities for school staff and families to build capacity for effective partnerships. The Academy meets the capacity-building challenge by providing a professional development program to enhance parent-teacher partnerships.
Opportunity Conditions

The Academy professional development program and partnership model institutes capacity-building opportunities for parent and teacher participants. Each school partnership team will tailor strategies and procedures to their idiosyncratic context, with each meeting a number of process and organizational conditions.

Process Conditions

Professional development. The Academy is an interactive professional development leadership program that develops school partnership teams comprised of parents, teachers, and administrators (see below for full description). The experiential-learning-based modules provide the content for improving family/school partnerships. This structure naturally fosters relationships between parents and teachers from participating schools while at the same time developing capacity for actively improving parent/teacher relationships within each respective school. Participants gain understanding of the research based on the association between family/school partnerships and student educational outcomes, as well as parental school involvement and student outcomes. Additionally, school participants become familiar with their state-approved school improvement plan and student learning outcomes. Finally, sessions occur in a group format to maximize partnership team cohesion and collaboration.

Partnership Team Model. The Academy’s training intentionally nurtures partnership team relationships through their training modules and emphasis on meeting between Academy sessions. The focus of each team is to develop positive relationships with other parents, teachers, and administration. Each partnership team creates a school project linked to at least one goal of their school’s Alabama continuous improvement plan, linking their project to learning outcomes. Each project involves other parents and teachers—in addition to administrators, school personnel, and community members—creating a collaborative, shared learning environment that develops parent and teacher ownership for transforming schools.

Organizational Conditions

Systemic. Statewide education agencies and school improvement plans prioritize the development of family/school partnerships to improve student achievement. Furthermore, each district monetarily contributes to the Academy, thereby making the program a district-wide systemic initiative.

Integrated. Districts, schools, and administrators recognize the Academy as a family/school partnership capacity-building program for improving family/school relationships and student outcomes. Thus, participating districts and schools continue to send new participants every year.

Sustained. School administration are committed to and have a systemic vision of family engagement and family/school partnerships. School district superintendents acknowledge family/school engagement as a crucial part of each school’s school improvement plan.

Policy and Program Goals

This component of the Capacity-Building Framework posits that fostering thriving family/school partnerships includes a dual focus on the capacity of school personnel and families to engage in partnerships. Programs and procedures enhance partnerships through the four components of partnership capacity: Capabilities, connections, cognitions, confidence.

Professional development. Academy session content builds capacity through increasing knowledge and enhancing skill-building for initiating and developing trusting family/school partnerships. Participants understand the context of their school and community in which they work, adapting their new knowledge to their respective school. Throughout the program, participants actively develop trusting and respectful connections with each other, as well as strategies for improving teacher/family connections, parents’ cognitions change to perceiving themselves as partners in their child’s education. Teachers’ cognitions are changed to perceiving themselves as a partner with parents in order to meet school goals. As a result, parents and teachers’ confidence for engaging in family/school partnerships increases.

Partnership Team Model. Participants are able to build their capabilities of initiating and developing effective family/school partnerships through implementation of their partnership team project. Through project development and implementation, each school’s partnership team establishes connection with administration, teachers, and parents. Throughout this process, parent and teacher participants will shift their cognitions about becoming shared partners for improving school and student outcomes. Furthermore, school-wide engagement events will
**Figure 1. Dual Capacity Framework: Middle School Parent Teacher Leadership Academy**

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Interactive** professional development focused on experiential learning:

- Fosters trusting relationships between parents and teachers from participating schools, which provides a model for enhancing family/school relationships.
- Gains understanding of research base for association between family/school partnerships and student learning outcomes and of school’s improvement plan.
- Develops skills for empowering participants with other stakeholders to becoming active members for transforming schools.

Sessions are conducted in group settings to maximize partnership team cohesion and collaboration.

**PARTNERSHIP TEAM MODEL**

**Interactive** in developing school partnership teams of administrators, teachers, and parents focused on experiential learning:

- Fosters positive relationships for each partnership team.
- Creates a school project linked to at least one goal of their school improvement plan.
- Involves other parents and teachers; projects create a collaborative shared learning environment that develops active members for transforming schools.

**OPPORTUNITY CONDITIONS**

**THE CHALLENGE**

Lack of opportunities for school staffs to build partnerships

Ineffective Family/School Partnerships

Lack of opportunities for families to build the capacity for partnerships

**Process Conditions**

- Systemic: Across the organization
- Integrated: Embedded in all programs
- Sustained: With resources and infrastructure

**Organizational Conditions**

- Linked to learning
- Relational
- Development vs. service orientation
- Collaborative
- Interactive

**POLICY AND PROGRAM GOALS**

To build and enhance the capacity of staff and families in “4-C” areas:

- Capabilities (skills and knowledge)
- Connections (networks)
- Cognition (beliefs, values)
- Confidence (self-efficacy)

**FAMILY AND STAFF CAPACITY OUTCOMES**

**School and program staff who can...**

- Honor and recognize families’ funds of knowledge
- Connect family engagement to student learning
- Create a welcoming, inviting culture

**Effective Family/School Partnerships**

Supporting Student Achievement and School Improvement

**Families who can negotiate multiple roles**

- Supporters
- Encouragers
- Monitors
- Advocates
- Decision Makers
- Collaborators

**DISTRICT INVESTMENT**

School improvement plans systematically prioritize family/school partnership development to improve student achievement.

- Integrate Middle School Parent Teacher Leadership Academy as a capacity-building program for improving family/school partnerships in respective schools.
- Sustain commitment with the Academy via monetary investment and yearly participation.

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- Build capabilities for effective family/school partnerships.
- Establish connections between and among parents, teachers, and community partners.
- Shift parent cognitions about becoming partners in their child’s education, and teacher cognitions for partnering with families to increase student outcomes.

Increase confidence for engaging family/school partnerships.

**PARTNERSHIP TEAM MODEL**

Build capabilities through implementation of partnership team project:

- Establish partnership team connections and connections with administration, teachers, and parents through project implementation.
- Shift parent/teacher cognitions about becoming shared partners for improving school and student outcomes.
- Increased confidence for being leaders in improving family/school partnerships.
build family/school connections, and thus, change parents and teachers’ cognitions for becoming partners in increasing student outcomes. As participants engage in each session and apply their knowledge to their school, caregivers shift their cognitions about becoming partners in their child’s education, and teachers shift their cognitions for partnering with families to increase student outcomes, thereby increasing their confidence for establishing such relationships. The Academy strives to build parents and teachers as leaders initially and then develop them as collaborative partners in order to impact their team and school as a whole. Thus, the intent for increasing confidence for being school leaders in improving family/school partnerships will hopefully have a ripple effect by which other parents and teachers will become partners for improving student and school outcomes.

According to the Dual Capacity Framework, enhancing these goals allows school personnel and families to engage in partnerships that will support student learning and achievement. Specifically, school personnel demonstrate the following capacity outcomes: 1) honor and recognize families’ existing knowledge, skill, and forms of engagement; 2) create and sustain school and district cultures that welcome, invite, and promote family engagement; and 3) develop family engagement initiatives and connect them to student learning and development. Families will be able to negotiate the following multiple roles: 1) supporters of their children’s learning and development; 2) encouragers of an achievement identity, a positive self-image, and a “can do” spirit in their children; 3) monitors of their children’s time, behavior, boundaries, and resources; 4) models of lifelong learning and enthusiasm for education; 5) advocates/activists for improved learning opportunities for their children and at their schools; 6) decision makers/choosers of educational options for their children, the school, and their community; and 7) collaborators with school staff and other members of the community on issues of school improvement and reform.

**Academy Partnership Team Model**

The mission of the Academy is to build community by supporting children and families. To accomplish this mission, the Academy leadership members believe that community is built and children and families are supported through a Partnership Team Model. Throughout the Academy, parent and teacher members attend leadership training sessions that equip them to serve as Partnership Team members. These training sessions provide parents and teachers with a framework for school, family, and community partnerships, but also provide specific leadership training in order to equip both parents and teachers as leaders of the Partnership Team. In the words of one parent participant, “The sessions taught me the importance of not only being a leader, but empowering others along the way.”

Throughout sessions, parents and teachers learn how to develop a partnership proposal based upon a goal from their school’s improvement plan. Parents and teachers come together to develop specific, planned, and sustainable programs that are directly related to their school’s curricular, behavioral, or cultural needs (Epstein, 2009; Henderson & Mapp, 2013; Sheldon, 2007; Sanders, 2005). Parents and teachers commit to continuing the work of the Partnership Team at their schools between each session in order to prepare for final presentations at the end of sessions. Academy members update progress each month, and facilitators provide feedback to Partnership Teams during the planning time allotted at each session.

**Parent Teacher Leadership Academy Structure**

The University of Alabama Middle School Parent Teacher Leadership Academy has a clearly defined structure that begins with the nomination process at the local school level. It is a unique leadership program in that it provides both research-based professional development to parents and teachers (e.g., modules), as well as a structure for application of that new knowledge (e.g., Partnership Team Model/school-based projects). In addition, since its inception, the Academy has offered its graduates the opportunity for celebration with a final graduation ceremony, in which Dr. Samory T. Pruitt, vice president of the Division of Community Affairs, honors each team’s graduates.

**Partnership Team Nomination**

Before each school year, principals from participating middle schools nominate team members to participate in the Academy. At least two parents and two teachers per school are selected to complete the school’s Partnership Team. Teams vary in size based upon the membership in various academies; there are four various elementary academies, while the pilot only consisted of a
parent and teacher component. However, teams must consist of a combination of both parents and teachers. Principals nominate those who have demonstrated leadership abilities and/or leadership potential and who are currently active in supporting the school's mission. Parents and teachers who agree to participate in the Academy attend leadership training modules throughout the academic year and create a partnership project proposal based upon a goal from the school's improvement plan. In addition, these Academy members agree to serve as the core Partnership Team for the school, promoting school, family, and community engagement based upon research-based methods (Epstein, 2009; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). (See Table 1.)

**Academy Training Sessions**

Academy parent and teacher participants attend multiple professional development training modules throughout the school year. Each module includes time for networking with other participants; leadership training presentations facilitated by faculty members, community experts, school leaders, and previous Academy graduates; and time to develop school projects. Each parent session occurs during the evening hours, while teacher sessions occur during the workday; substitute teachers are provided (see Table 1 for alignment between parent and teacher sessions).

**Session I: Parents as leaders; teachers as leaders.** The first session provides an overall introduction to Academy goals and objectives. Parents and teachers meet separately. This module affirms parents and teachers in their role as leaders who are capable of making a difference in their school communities. In addition to learning from Academy graduates, parents and teachers identify potential strengths and skills they can use to engage other parents, teachers, and school administrators in solution-building discussions to improve their respective school communities.

**Session II: Goal-oriented school, family, and community partnerships.** All parent and teacher participants attend this session in order to begin their collaborative work in their school teams. During this evening session, teams are provided opportunities to network over a meal prior to receiving their instruction. Not only do the teams discuss their respective school's improvement plan, they also receive specific training regarding Epstein's six types of involvement (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community) and the Academy framework for partnership project proposals.

**Session III: Helping your child achieve academic success (parents); collaboration and communication (teachers).** The third module provides differentiated learning to support the individual needs of Academy members. “Helping Your Child Achieve Academic Success,” supports participants’ understanding of academic issues and building a collaborative relationship with the school’s principal. Parents are allowed to network with individuals other than the principal within their child’s school community who can assist in various ways to achieve academic success (e.g., school counselor, school psychologist, school librarian, etc.).

In the session entitled “Collaboration and Communication,” teachers have the opportunity to reflect upon their own methods of communication and current collaborative practices. Effective practices for two-way communication are shared and discussed, and feedback on current Partnership Team implementation is provided (Brownstein, Maushard, Robinson, Greenfeld, & Hutchins, 2006; Epstein, 2009).

**Session IV: School and board of education relations.** The fourth session of the year is marked by a second joint session of both parents and teachers. This session was designed to assist school Partnership Teams comprehensively understand the roles and responsibilities of school boards and school district leaders. Panel presenters—a collection of administrators and board members from most of the participating school districts—discuss the basics of school finances, school board policies and operations, and strategies to work with school board members. Before the module, participants design questions to pose to the panel. For the second half of the evening, parents and teachers are given time to collaborate on their partnership project proposal. This dedicated planning time is integral at this mid-year point in order to receive feedback from facilitators and learn from other school Partnership Teams.

**Session V: Safe and healthy schools (parents only).** Guest lecturers present to parent academy members on child behavior management, physical and mental health, school safety, student wellness, and school disciplinary policies. Topics may also include bullying and discipline issues, and sharing best practices to create a safe and optimal school climate. Parents are encouraged to discuss learned
health and safety practices with their children at home and to seek opportunities to share with their school's administration, teachers, and staff the information acquired during this session.

**Session VI: Supporting connected school communities (parents); supporting safe, healthy, and connected schools (teachers)**

The topic of this final module, “Building Community,” continues to solidify the Academy’s mission. It is important to note that teachers have a combined curriculum of Modules V and VI because they attend a full-day session rather than an evening session. Parent and teacher participants learn about community resources to access in order to support families and schools. Additionally, all Academy participants are provided training in small grant writing and project sustainability during this session. Final partnership proposals are shared with peers, and Academy members have the opportunity to debrief with facilitators regarding their overall experience.
After proposals, partnership projects should be implemented during the final semester of the Academy or the semester following graduation.

Graduation

A graduation ceremony recognizing participants’ completion of the Academy is held at the end of each school year. To be eligible, participants must complete all requirements, including the partnership proposal presentation at the final session. Attended by participants, principals, superintendents, school board members, staff from the Center for Community-Based Partnerships and the Division of Community Affairs, members of the Academy Advisory Council, and University of Alabama faculty and administrators, the graduation ceremony acknowledges Academy members’ contribution to their schools. During the ceremony, graduates have opportunities to display summaries of their partnership proposals. In addition, each school receives a plaque for display that honors the graduating Academy members.

Research Questions

The specific aim of this study was to evaluate the Academy’s first-year pilot program to increase school leadership behaviors and self-efficacy and to understand participants’ experiences of involvement in the program. In order to assess these items, we addressed the following research questions:

1) Does the Academy program significantly increase parent and teacher school leadership self-efficacy and behaviors? 2) What were the benefits of participating in the program? 3) How can the Academy leadership support partnership teams in the design and implementation of their project?

Method

Participants

Twenty-eight parent and 30 teacher Academy participants completed the pretest and posttest surveys. Parents and teachers were from 17 middle schools in six school districts (67% rural; 20% urban; 13% suburban). There were 26 female and two male parent participants (64% Caucasian; 86% married; 92% completed some college), and 26 female and four male teacher participants (83% Caucasian; 72% achieved a master’s degree). Teachers have spent an average of six years teaching at their current schools and almost 12 years in the teaching profession.

Measures

Research Question #1

Parent surveys. Academy parents completed a survey to assess school leadership behaviors and self-efficacy. Participants completed the pretest before the first module and a posttest survey after the final module. The survey consisted of five leadership behaviors (1 = never, 2 = very rarely, 3 = rarely, 4 = occasionally, 5 = frequently, 6 = very frequently). Example items include: “I get other parents involved in projects I’d like to implement at my child’s school.” “I talk with other parents about being involved in my child’s school.” “I talk with my child’s teacher and other staff about school issues and/or projects that could be implemented in my child’s school.” Items were summed to create an aggregate score of school leadership behaviors. (See Table 2 and Table 3 for list of items.)

The survey also consisted of 11 school leadership self-efficacy items (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = moderately disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = slightly agree, 5 = moderately agree, 6 = strongly agree). Examples of self-efficacy items include:

Table 2. Middle School Parent Teacher Leadership Academy Pre-Post School Leadership Attitudes and Self-Efficacy Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean pre-test (SD)</th>
<th>Mean post-test (SD)</th>
<th>Median Change</th>
<th>Standardized Test Statistic</th>
<th>P value</th>
<th>Cohen’s d effect size</th>
<th>CL effect size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parents (n = 28)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Behaviors</td>
<td>21.10 (4.86)</td>
<td>24.54 (3.20)</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>56.52 (8.40)</td>
<td>58.85 (5.28)</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers (n = 30)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Behaviors</td>
<td>21.19 (4.62)</td>
<td>25.16 (3.65)</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>41.92 (6.98)</td>
<td>43.67 (6.50)</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3. Middle School Parent Teacher Leadership Academy Parent Pre-Post Individual Item Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Leadership Behaviors Individual Items (Range 1–6)</th>
<th>Post-Survey Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Pre-Survey Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Median Change</th>
<th>Standardized Test Statistic</th>
<th>Cohen's d</th>
<th>Effect Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable leading meetings with other parents about school-related issues.</td>
<td>4.64 (.90)</td>
<td>4.87 (.74)</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable accessing community resources that can support my child’s school.</td>
<td>5.20 (.72)</td>
<td>5.32 (.69)</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can make a difference in my child’s school.</td>
<td>5.08 (.61)</td>
<td>5.29 (.62)</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can make a difference in my child’s school.</td>
<td>5.14 (1.29)</td>
<td>5.10 (1.27)</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have the skills to be an effective parent leader in my child’s school.</td>
<td>4.83 (1.11)</td>
<td>4.83 (1.11)</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
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<td>I can make a difference in my child’s school.</td>
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<td>5.49 (.54)</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.05</td>
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<td>.32</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have the knowledge that it takes to be an effective parent leader.</td>
<td>5.32 (.69)</td>
<td>5.49 (.54)</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable participating in meetings with teachers.</td>
<td>5.32 (.69)</td>
<td>5.49 (.54)</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
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<td>5.29 (.62)</td>
<td>.32</td>
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<td>.04</td>
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<td>1.03</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.04</td>
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<td>2.23</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.05</td>
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<td>.32</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
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<td>.30</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.05</td>
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<td>.32</td>
<td>.04</td>
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<td>5.49 (.54)</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5.32 (.69)</td>
<td>5.49 (.54)</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table 4. Middle School Parent Teacher Leadership Academy Teacher Pre-Post Individual Item Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Leadership Behaviors Individual Items (Range 1–6)</th>
<th>Pre-Survey Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Post-Survey Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Pre/Post Median Change</th>
<th>Standardized Test Statistic</th>
<th>Cohen’s d Effect Size</th>
<th>CL Effect Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I collaborate with parent leaders on plans to facilitate support of my school’s Continuous Improvement Plan.</td>
<td>4.03 (.81)</td>
<td>4.28 (.72)</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I communicate with parent leaders in my school.</td>
<td>4.39 (.99)</td>
<td>4.52 (.84)</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I initiate communication with my school administration on plans to support my school’s Continuous Improvement Plan.</td>
<td>3.17 (1.05)</td>
<td>3.96 (.72)</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.96**</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I initiate communication with my school’s PTA/PTO committee members on plans to support my school’s Continuous Improvement Plan.</td>
<td>3.24 (1.10)</td>
<td>4.00 (.59)</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>2.88**</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I work together with parent leaders in my school to implement projects that support my school’s Continuous Improvement Plan.</td>
<td>3.07 (1.05)</td>
<td>4.24 (.84)</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.65***</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I work together with community members to implement projects that support my school’s Continuous Improvement Plan.</td>
<td>3.28 (1.11)</td>
<td>4.16 (.68)</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>3.30**</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Leadership Self-Efficacy Individual Items (Range 1–6)</th>
<th>Pre-Survey Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Post-Survey Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Pre/Post Median Change</th>
<th>Standardized Test Statistic</th>
<th>Cohen’s d Effect Size</th>
<th>CL Effect Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I view myself as a leader in my school.</td>
<td>4.97 (1.16)</td>
<td>5.22 (.88)</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am willing to take leadership roles in my school.</td>
<td>5.20 (.85)</td>
<td>5.11 (.92)</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have the skills to assume a leadership role in my school.</td>
<td>5.03 (.85)</td>
<td>5.11 (.92)</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable initiating meetings with parent leaders to facilitate support of my school’s Continuous Improvement Plan.</td>
<td>4.67 (.96)</td>
<td>4.74 (1.10)</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable initiating meetings with other teachers to facilitate support of my school’s Continuous Improvement Plan.</td>
<td>4.57 (1.07)</td>
<td>4.74 (1.07)</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable initiating meetings with administration to facilitate support of my school’s Continuous Improvement Plan.</td>
<td>4.80 (1.16)</td>
<td>4.96 (1.07)</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable initiating meetings with community members to facilitate support of my school’s Continuous Improvement Plan.</td>
<td>4.20 (1.03)</td>
<td>4.46 (.75)</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable initiating meetings with my school’s PTA\PTO committee members to facilitate support of my school’s Continuous Improvement Plan.</td>
<td>4.14 (1.14)</td>
<td>4.44 (.79)</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how to effectively collaborate with parent leaders to facilitate support of my school’s Continuous Improvement Plan.</td>
<td>4.34 (1.03)</td>
<td>4.88 (.76)</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.64**</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ***p < .001 **p < .01 *p < .05.
“I have the skills to be an effective parent leader in my child’s school.” “I feel comfortable leading meetings with other parents about school-related issues.” “I can make a difference in my child’s school.” Self-efficacy items were summed to create an aggregate score for school leadership self-efficacy.

**Teacher surveys.** Academy teachers completed a survey to assess school leadership behaviors and self-efficacy. Surveys were completed before the first module and following the final module. The survey consisted of six leadership behaviors (1 = never, 2 = very rarely, 3 = rarely, 4 = occasionally, 5 = frequently, 6 = very frequently). Example items include: “I collaborate with parent leaders on plans to facilitate support of my school’s Continuous Improvement Plan.” “I work together with parent leaders in my school to implement projects that support my school’s Continuous Improvement Plan.” Items were summed to create an aggregate score of school leadership behaviors.

The survey also consisted of nine school leadership self-efficacy items (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = moderately disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = slightly agree, 5 = moderately agree, 6 = strongly agree). Examples of self-efficacy items include: “I view myself as a leader in my school.” “I have the skills to assume a leadership role in my school.” “I feel comfortable initiating meetings with other teachers to facilitate support of my school’s Continuous Improvement Plan.” Items were summed to create an aggregate score of school leadership self-efficacy.

**Research questions #2 and #3.** In order to understand participants’ experience of program involvement, we gathered feedback on the ways in which the Academy was beneficial. Additionally, because each partnership team designed and implemented a project, we wanted to understand how Academy leadership can assist partnership teams in carrying out their school project. Academy parent and teacher participants responded to two questions: 1) What has the Academy meant to you? 2) How can Academy leadership support the design and implementation of your Academy Partnership Project?

**Analysis Plan**

**Research question #1.** Parent and teacher pretest and posttest mean differences on school leadership behaviors and self-efficacy were tested using the Wilcoxon Signed-Ranked Test.

Individual items were tested in addition to the aggregate scores. Cohen’s d effect size was also calculated. Cohen’s d represents the magnitude of the effect of the Academy’s intervention, with .2 indicating a small effect size, .5 a moderate effect size, and .8 a large effect size (Cohen, 1988). CL effect size, which estimates the probability that a randomly selected score from one population will be greater than a randomly selected score from the other population, was also estimated (McGraw & Wong, 1992). Wilcoxon Signed-Ranked Tests and descriptive statistics analyses were performed using SPSS.

**Research questions #2 and #3.** Narrative responses for each question were analyzed through thematic analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The first author conducted an analysis of each narrative response and then provided conceptual labels of thematic contents that emerged from the data. The first and fourth authors independently coded the narrative responses using the labels. Following coding comparisons, they resolved any discrepancies by consulting the narrative responses for further clarification until a consensus was reached.

**Results**

**Research Question #1**

**Parents.** Paired samples t-test results revealed that Academy parent participants significantly increased in their self-assessment of school leadership behaviors from pretest to posttest. Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test indicated that leadership behaviors at posttest ranks were statically higher than pretest ranks (Z = 3.70, p < .001).

The effect size of the intervention was moderate-large (d = .70). The CL effect size was .79, indicating that after controlling for individual differences, the likelihood that a person scores higher on mean posttest is 79%. Parent leadership self-efficacy was approaching significance from pretest to posttest (Z = 1.89, p = .06). The effect size of the intervention was small-moderate (d = .36), and the CL effect size was .69. (See Table 2 aggregate results and Table 3 for individual item results.)

**Teachers.** Paired sample t-test findings found that Academy teachers significantly increased in their assessment of leadership behaviors from pretest to posttest. Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test indicated that leadership behaviors at posttest ranks were statistically higher than pretest ranks (Z = 3.43, p = .001). The effect size of the
intervention was moderate-large (d = .63), and the CL effect size was .73. Teacher school leadership self-efficacy also increased from pretest to posttest, approaching significance (Z = 1.81, p = .07). The effect size of the intervention was small-moderate (d = .33), and the CL effect size was .60 (see Table 4 for individual item t-test results).

Research Question #2
Thematic analysis revealed five categories for the question “What has the Academy meant to you?” 1) Facilitates parent–teacher collaboration. 2) Increases parent and teacher school leadership behaviors. 3) Enhances parent and teacher school leadership self-efficacy. 4) Increases opportunities for school change. 5) Increases parental-school involvement.

Facilitates parent–teacher collaboration.
The Academy provided intentional opportunities for parent and teacher leaders to collaborate. One teacher commented that the Academy “allowed us (parents and teachers) to work together as a team and gave us a forum for collaboration.” Another stated that the partnership model brought parents and teachers together to focus on school issues:

But just to see how excited parents are to get involved and have a voice and then how receptive the teachers were to make the partnership with the parents and how by being focused we were addressing the issues that were most important to the parents and to the teachers...kind of collaborating together.

One teacher noted how the Academy provided a greater understanding of the importance of the parent–teacher relationship:

It has been eye-opening to me as a teacher just realizing the importance of the relationship between the parent and the teacher. I mean I’ve always known that was important but this was just eye-opening when we had the parents come in and we were answering questions, just getting their feedback and realizing, oh wow, maybe I underestimated what they knew, maybe I just assumed they knew this information but now I actually know that they didn’t know this so I was able to fill in those gaps along. We were able to fill in those gaps and answer those questions and understand that parent involvement is essential in our students learning and it’s fundamental.

One teacher reported that involvement in the Academy shifted the teacher’s perception on parents being valuable contributors to the school:

We were talking a little bit today and one of the things that was helpful to us was it opened up to us some knowledge to some of the skills and gifts that our parents had to offer. Some of the parents that we worked with we knew a good bit about to start with and others we just realized some of the unique contributions they could make.

Increases parent and teacher school leadership behaviors. Participants said that their involvement in the Academy provided an avenue to increase leadership behaviors in their respective schools. One respondent reported, “To me the [Academy] has been a great opportunity just to really dig into those leadership skills and make a change in my school.” A teacher noted that the Academy provided avenues to initiate conversations with parents and become more involved in parent–teacher groups. “With the project we’ve been able to converse back and forth with the parents, be more involved with the Parent Teacher Association, and it’s just been amazing!”

Enhances parent and teacher school leadership self-efficacy. Parents and teachers describe the Academy as developing the skills to become a school leader. One participant stated, “The [Academy] has given us the ideas and resources and some training to help us realize what we can do and what we could do and should do to engage the community and parents at the school level.” One teacher detailed gaining confidence as a school leader:

As a second year teacher, I didn’t really know where my role is or where I stood on the map of making a change but this has really given me the opportunity to have some input and actually make a difference and add those things and see the changes in my school. Now that we have done this it’s like OK now I feel more comfortable with being able to go forward with more things that I want to see in my school.
Increases opportunities for school change. Most participants commented that the Academy provided the structure and avenue for school partnership teams to create school change. One teacher articulated:

I think these particular parents that we worked with have always been wonderful to deal with in the first place but I think it got us all on the same page so that we are sending a unified message to our school district and our community.

One respondent explained:

The training and programs have been excellent in helping us really think through creating a product and project that will be meaningful, sustainable, and have evidence and data to back up our purpose for doing it.

A parent reported that the Academy supplied the time, venue, and resources to develop and implement impactful projects:

[The Academy] provided us with the opportunity to explore other avenues that we hadn’t looked at before. With the activity that we did for our project, we increased our parental involvement in our school meetings almost 200 percent.

Increases parental-school involvement. Respondents detailed that the Academy provided the professional development and training for partnership teams to increase parent-school involvement. One teacher affirmed that the teacher now “understands that parent involvement is essential in our students learning and it's fundamental.” Another teacher said:

We talked about what opportunities can we do to get our parents into the building where they don’t have to pay anything and they get to come and learn something that will help them be a parent to our kids.

Another participant specified that the partnership team’s project focused on increasing parental-school involvement:

[We] hosted a meeting where parents had to come in, they volunteered, they painted. We had a panel of students and parents to actually speak and they were able to share information about the school with each other. Parents were allowed to ask questions. It’s a way for us to communicate better with our parents and for the school to be involved.

Research Question #3

Participants provided narrative responses to the question, “How can Academy leadership support the design and implementation of your Partnership Project?” Three main themes emerged: Project support, project promotion, and project funding.

Project support. Parents and teachers responded that Academy leadership can provide more support by being “available for questions and guidance” and “validating our efforts.” Additionally, partnership teams reported wanting more “communication” from Academy leadership. Respondents also stated their desire for Academy leadership to attend their project implementation: “Would love to have you guys come to our event.”

Project promotion. Participants requested Academy leadership to assist in promoting their project on difference platforms. Respondents expressed that Academy leadership can help “promote and advertise our project,” and “promote our project on social media.”

Project funding. Parents and teachers reported that Academy leadership can help partnership teams find funding to financially support their partnership team project. One participant stated that Academy leadership can “help with grants moving into the coming years.” Another commented, “Ideas on how we can raise money for our project. Our concept is strong and well thought out but money will be the problem to come to reality.”

Discussion

Robust evidence suggests that family engagement and family/school partnerships enhance student outcomes during the middle school years (e.g., Hill & Tyson, 2009). Family/school partnerships, where universities serve as partners, can potentially provide the resources for the development and sustainment of family/school partnerships. The current study analyzed the first year pilot data of The University of Alabama's
Middle School Parent Leadership Academy's program to build parent and teacher participant leadership behaviors and self-efficacy. Pretest and posttest survey responses reveal that parent participants significantly increased their leadership behaviors from the first session to graduation. Examination of individual leadership items suggest that parents significantly increased their communication with other parents, administrators, Parent Teacher Association members, and their child's teachers and other school staff.

Although mean scores improved over time on getting other parents involved in projects, it was not significant. One reason could be is that at the time of completion of the posttest survey, partnership teams have not fully implemented their projects. Another reason could be that the Academy emphasizes building effective parent-teacher partnership teams. Each team developed their projects as a partnership team and thus maybe did not invite other parents to execute project implementation.

Approaching significance, parent participants increased their overall leadership self-efficacy from pretest to posttest. Consultation of individual items show four significant items: 1) “I feel comfortable participating in meetings with teachers.” 2) “I feel comfortable participating in meetings with other parents about school-related issues.” 3) “I feel comfortable leading meetings with other parents about school-related issues.” 4) “I plan to be involved in a specific school initiative to improve school climate and/or student academic success.”

Two items had lower mean scores (and lower median scores) from pretest to posttest: 1) “I have the skills to be an effective parent leader in my child's school.” 2) “I feel comfortable contacting a member of the School Board regarding my child's school.” The high baseline scores on most items may provide rationale for the lack of significant change. Parents are nominated by administrators, so it may be likely that Academy parent participants are already in leadership positions at their respective schools. Another reason could be that some Academy parents participated in the elementary version of the program (e.g., Elementary Parent Teacher Leadership Academy), which would have provided training on leadership skills and building family/school partnerships in an elementary school context.

Teacher pretest and posttest results found that school leadership behaviors significantly increased over time. Further analysis of individual items shows that teachers reported relatively low initial mean scores on their leadership behaviors, specifically initiating contact and working together with school administration, parent leaders of Parent Teacher Association and Parent Teacher Organization members, parent leaders, and community members in order to support the school's Continuous Improvement Plan. The items that are not significant, which have higher pretest scores (and higher mean posttest scores), include collaborating and communicating with parent leaders. Teachers possess many time demands that inhibit their ability to communicate with other parents. While further research is needed to tease out the process by which teachers increase their leadership behaviors, results suggest that the Academy likely expanded teachers' leadership beyond school walls.

Teacher school leadership self-efficacy is approaching significance. As evidenced by the high pretest scores, one reason may be that the Academy teacher participants already perceive themselves as leaders. Similar to parents, teachers are nominated by their administrator based on their leadership potential. It is likely they have experience in leadership positions at their schools. Additionally, teachers receive a lot of training on the value of family/school partnerships and have more experience in talking with school administration. The item, “I am willing to take leadership roles in my school,” had a slightly lower mean at posttest. The lower value may be due to the high pretest score; this particular item had the highest pretest score of all the self-efficacy items. Another rationale may be the timing of the posttest, which was completed near the end of the academic year. At this point, teachers are typically emotionally and physically exhausted, and so they may be less willing to assume a leadership position.

One individual item possessed significantly higher posttest ranks: “I know how to effectively collaborate with parent leaders to facilitate support of my school’s Continuous Improvement Plan.” Although significant, it is interesting that the corresponding behavioral leadership item, “I collaborate with parent leaders on plans to facilitate support of my school’s Continuous Improvement Plan,” was not significant. Through participation in the Academy, teachers may gain better understanding of how to collaborate with parent leaders, but there seems to be a gap when practicing learned skills. One reason for this gap may be the combination of reduced parental-
school involvement and having different students for each class period. Unlike elementary school where students typically stay with the same teachers throughout the entire school day, middle school may have 20 to 30 different students for as many as seven periods throughout the day. Logistically, this makes it difficult for teachers to personally get to know the caregivers and potential parent leaders. Moreover, teachers have increasingly demanding schedules, so it is even more difficult to coordinate times to collaborate with parent leaders.

Qualitative results suggest that the Academy program enhanced parent-teacher collaboration by: 1) gaining greater understanding of the importance of parent-teacher collaboration and 2) shifting perceptions that both teachers and parents can be valuable contributors to school and student success. Session content, partnership team formation, and subsequent project implementation expanded participants’ belief in their ability to effect change at their school and provided insight into the importance of effective collaboration and the opportunity to develop relationships via partnership teams. Supporting quantitative results, parents and teachers noted that the Academy increased participant leadership behaviors and self-efficacy. In addition to specific skill-building strategies offered during sessions, parents and teachers reported that participating in the Academy provided action steps to get more involved in creating family/school relationships and increasing parental-school involvement. Because this is the inaugural year of the Academy, leadership inquired how to support partnership teams in their project design and implementation. Participant suggestions included being more available to each partnership team, providing more ideas on promoting and advertising their project to their school, and offering funding to help with associated project costs.

Several limitations exist in this study. First, not all Academy graduates completed the pretest and posttest surveys. Second, although the composite mean scores of parent-teacher leadership behaviors and teacher self-efficacy were significantly different, not all individual items were significant. This could be a product of self-report bias, as participants are likely to report higher scores. As stated before, it could also be a result of participants already having visible involvement with the school before participating in the Academy. Future cohorts should involve more parents and teachers who desire to be a school leader but are not heavily involved in other school leadership positions. Third, most parent participants were female, with the majority reporting Caucasian ethnicity; teacher participants were even more homogeneous, with most being Caucasian females. Homogeneous sampling limits the application of results to dissimilar populations. Fourth, the quantitative measures for leadership behaviors and self-efficacy are untested instruments for measuring these constructs. Furthermore, these self-reported questionnaires do not actually measure the effect the Academy had on actual leadership behaviors and self-efficacy. Future research should focus on utilizing validated measures with a more heterogeneous sample. Fifth, because this was not an experimental design with a no-treatment control group, it is difficult to ascertain the actual effectiveness of the Academy program. However, in community engagement effectiveness research, it is difficult to recruit a control group. Subsequent research should utilize an experimental design methodology with a control group. Sixth, it would be important to include a follow-up measure to assess whether leadership behaviors and self-efficacy sustain over time following completion of the Academy. Finally, it would also be beneficial to measure the effectiveness and impact of the partnership team school projects on school student outcomes.

Despite these limitations, results reveal that the Academy significantly increased parent and teacher leadership behaviors and teacher self-efficacy. With family engagement and family/school partnerships continuing to be a necessary component of student school success during the middle school years, more schools are partnering with universities for building parent and teacher capacity in these areas. The Academy provides resources and opportunities for parents and teachers to develop successful family/school partnerships through engaging in leadership professional development and the evolution of their partnership team. As parents and teachers develop their leadership behaviors and enhance their leadership self-efficacy, the Academy’s goal is that these trusting collaborations will foster parental school involvement, strengthen school climate, and enhance student outcomes.

References


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Keeping the Promise of Community-Based Participatory Research: Integrating Applied Critical Rhetorical Methods to Amplify the Community’s Voice for Trial Development


Abstract
Community-based participatory research (CBPR) represents an important improvement in the integration of marginalized voices into research programs by including community members in the designs, conduct, and dissemination of studies. CBPR often features a social justice component, generating studies designed to reduce societal disparities and improve outcomes for disenfranchised groups. However, the practical implementation of CBPR usually fails to capitalize on this promise, using the same traditional research methodologies, leadership structures, trial designs, and research questions that inculcate researcher bias. In response to the problem, we propose a new solution: Applied critical rhetorical research (ACRR) integrated into the CBPR approach to clinical health research. ACRR research combines critical/cultural studies and rhetorical methods to amplify the figurative voice of marginalized populations. ACRR can expose how majority power (i.e., hegemony) manifests in social institutions like healthcare and government, where its meanings and subjectivities are absorbed. ACRR analyses enhance CBPR by shaping research in directions that reduce stigma, unintended disenfranchisement, and culturally bound bias, increasing the yield from CBPR for researchers and the community.

Introduction
“…health education must start where the people are…” (SOPHE Annual Report, 2016, p. 2).

The shift from work on communities to work with communities is a critical move in modern research, and a deep integration of community members in the research enterprise has emerged as a central component of ethical research. At the core of health promotion is the ideal that communities guide what work is conducted on their behalf. This belief has long been a part of health promotion’s culture and assists in producing greater health equity by augmenting the voice of the disempowered (LeBonte, 1994; Syme, 2004; Ubbes, Black, & Ausherman, 1999). This ideal is also a core value of community-based participatory research (CBPR), which is popular in health promotion because it requires deep engagement with the community (Minkler, Vasquez, Warner, Steussey, & Facente, 2006; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006). CBPR has proliferated across academic disciplines and takes many forms across those domains. Specific to health fields, CBPR often leads to randomized controlled trials (RCTs), which can be more compelling than other studies by virtue of rigorous comparisons that manage random error. However, RCTs have limitations that can cause them to be incompatible with CBPR principles. We propose applied critical rhetoric as an additional level of analysis to make the process and results of RCTs more compatible with CBPR work and consistent with the ideals of health promotion, health equity, and education practice. ACRR combines critical/cultural studies and rhetorical methods to hear, record, and amplify the figurative voice of the marginalized (Riffin, Kenien, Ghesquiere, Dorime, Villaneuva, Gardner, Callihan, Capezuti, & Reid, 2016). For example, an ACRR analysis of a healthcare provider’s office accessibility for transgender persons would seek to understand physical barriers to care (e.g., gendered bathrooms), historical issues and their manifestations (e.g., intake forms requiring a binary sex choice and legal names), influence of hegemonic orderings of normalcy (e.g., attitudes of personnel that are stigmatizing that could manifest in deadnaming, misgendering, etc.), or performative rituals creating discord (e.g., check in, biometric data collection, etc.). Additionally, ACRR analysis links outward to cultural understandings of the constructs of study, which, as described below, are generated by the community and then analyzed to demonstrate the impact of how these cultural understandings shape social realities. As a result, ACRR offers a promising method for capitalizing better on the engagement
of the community and improving the results from health-based CBPR research programs due to the additional understandings of potential pitfalls that can then be accounted for in the trial results.

RCTs persist as the gold standard in health research, yet it is a culturally bound tool that is prone to vulnerabilities, particularly the subjectivities of researchers (Christ, 2014). Although changing, most research is conducted from a narrow perspective—that of the researchers—disproportionately representing coastal urban centers and economically advantaged white men. The negative impacts of this bias are seen in low minority representation in trial research that restricts the benefits of findings. Moreover, the U.S. research enterprise has been exported to the rest of the world and is now the predominant cross-cultural approach to conducting human research. Efforts to reduce the negative impacts of this homogenous viewpoint target systems (e.g., the compulsory inclusion of women, children, etc.), methodologies (e.g., a trend toward mixed methods designs), and both (e.g., the push for patient-centered outcomes research). CBPR approaches leading to RCTs have emerged as one of these efforts, integrating community members into the research process. However, nominal CBPR research often fails the test of CBPR, attaining only community engagement, which can reduce the community to half-partners in service to the investigators’ agenda. Consequently, most health research maintains the status quo, filtering the voices of the marginalized and maintaining their disempowerment and distance from the cultural products and benefits of research.

Bridging this communication divide necessitates the deliberate inclusion of the empowered voice of the community. Previously, we demonstrated how ACRR can lead to concrete public health communication recommendations. In Mocarski and Bissell (2016), the popular television program “The Biggest Loser” was analyzed through an ACRR method that utilized the lens of social cognitive theory. This analysis demonstrated the ways in which the program relied on hegemonic and stereotypical understandings of obesity and weight loss. The researchers demonstrated that ACRR analysis offered multiple pathways to incorporate the show into health education programs. This critical reading helped practitioners avoid reinforcing the stereotypes the show relies on, instead utilizing these understandings as opportunities for client education. By incorporating popular culture into health education work, we argued, practitioners risk perpetuating stigmatizing stereotypes. In contrast, we contended that rhetorical analysis allows the use of popular culture in programs while guiding the generation of pragmatic health messaging recommendations. As we will present here, a compelling application of ACRR arises with transgender and gender diverse (TGD) people, whose experiences vary tremendously from urban coastal centers like San Francisco, where they have free full-service care centers, to rural towns in Middle America, where the most basic care may be hours away. This cultural variation carries significant consequences for TGD people seeking healthcare, where patient-provider communication is critical to effective care (Beach, Sugarman, Johnson, Arbelaez, Duggan, & Cooper, 2005). To address this problem directly and to demonstrate how it might be extended to similar populations, we describe how CBPR may be elaborated through the integration of ACRR into clinical health research and how this positions RCTs to be community guided and responsive.

CBPR Foundations

Arising from an international movement for greater attentiveness to patients in health research, CBPR is a growing research approach in health disciplines, which increasingly value and emphasize patient centeredness in the design of RCTs (Locklear, Flynn, & Weinert, 2016; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006). When used as a framework, it often features patient-centered outcomes research (Las Nueces, Hacker, DiGirolamo, & Hicks, 2012). Together, these approaches provide a coherent, multifaceted methodology for refocusing traditional research by integrating community members into the design, conduct, and dissemination of studies (Las Nueces et al., 2012). CBPR grounds research in communities by including community members on the research team at every stage of the project and by employing qualitative or mixed methods approaches to integrate the community’s voice (Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 1998). Broadly, the core principles of CBPR cast community as a unique identity with distinct strengths and resources that can contribute meaningfully to collaborative partnerships across the research enterprise; view the process as cyclical and iterative, integrating knowledge and action to address health from both positive and ecological perspectives for the mutual benefit of partners at all phases, including dissemination; and describes partnering as a co-learning and empowering process that
attends to social inequalities (for a good example, see detroiturc.org.) Products of this partnership are shown in Table 1 and include greater research relevance and applicability to the community, higher quality results and interpretations, and better understanding of the community being studied (Viswanathan, Ammerman, Eng, Garlehner, Lohr, Griffith, Rhodes, Samuel-Hodge, Maty, Lux, Webb, Sutton, Swinson, Jackman, & Whitener, 2004).

However, most CBPR-aimed research falls substantively short of full community integration and utilizes many of the same traditional elements that infuse trials with the unconscious biases of researchers (Rucinski, Davis, Gomez, Flores, Perez, & Zanoni, 2011). Principal among these are its habitual reliance on enfranchised researchers to operate as de facto leaders of research teams who operate without real checks on their biases in the design and implementation of the study or interpretation of the results. Such failings are often side effects of the power given to academic leads by society and their lack of true connection to the communities, such as the limited engagement with community partners, the value of academic leads due to research expertise, and results reported primarily to satisfy academic expectations. Similarly, although CBPR often features a social justice component and may produce studies designed to reduce societal disparities and improve outcomes for disenfranchised groups, CBPR rarely integrates the methodologies of critical analysis beyond the reflexivity inherent to qualitative approaches. As a result, the implementation of CBPR usually fails to address social justice concerns directly, focusing instead on generalizable results of interest to external researchers and natural to controlled research designs. Thus, although CBPR presents a number of strengths, it also carries noteworthy limitations, and large deficits remain in the ability of CBPR to achieve its promise.

ACRR Foundations

The adoption ACRR as another level of analysis in project design is a response to some of the caution toward CBPR approaches expressed by health promotion researchers (Robertson & Minkler, 1994). ACRR directly responds to Minkler’s call for trust and reflection (Minkler, Vasquez, Tajik, & Peterson, 2008) and harkens to calls for greater interdisciplinary integration in health research. The cultural, critical, and rhetorical (CCR) tradition sits at the intersection of Rhetorical Studies and Cultural Studies (Rosteck, 1999a). ACRR represents a pragmatic CCR approach useful for integration into studies with human subjects to analyze how discourse influences and creates shared meaning. Discourse is defined as any communication available for analysis—from qualitative interviews, to institutional documents, to television shows, to performances (both formal, such as a play, and informal, such as the embodiment of gender), to social media.

Table 1. Areas of CBPR enhancement through the integration of ACRR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems in Clinical Trials</th>
<th>CBPR Solutions</th>
<th>ACR Solutions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of external and ecological validity (Persons &amp; Silberschatz, 1998)</td>
<td>Engages stakeholders like community providers and clinics to enrich pragmatic value of trials</td>
<td>Engages referent discourses linking data from participants to larger contextual and societal inputs</td>
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<td>Strict and narrow inclusion criteria (Silva et al., 2011)</td>
<td>Works alongside the community to establish who is in the most need and what characteristics are most important in setting selection criteria</td>
<td>Identifies who is silenced or left-out given the research questions and design</td>
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<td>Lack of trust (Swartz et al., 2004)</td>
<td>Creates a Community Advisory Board (CAB) to integrate the community into the research at all phases</td>
<td>Invokes reflexivity in analyses to identify, reveal, and address biases from the researchers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recruitment and retention (Magruder et al., 2009)</td>
<td>Integrates community gatekeepers into the research, facilitating recruitment, maximizing visibility, and integrating participants as equal collaborators</td>
<td>Records and amplifies the community’s voice, uncovering elements that distance participants from engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Masking of clinical decision-making (Persons &amp; Silberschatz, 1998)</td>
<td>Integrates providers on the team and collects provider data about clinical judgments and decision making</td>
<td>Engages in deep analysis of routines and processes to expose potential and actual biases</td>
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to cultural norms (Rosteck, 1999b). Discourses are dynamic, temporal, and grounded in context (Marks, Reed, Colby, & Ibrahim, 2004). The choice of discourses studied and methods of study are entwined with the analysis and argument (McKerrow, 1989). This core reflexivity makes ACRR a powerful tool for CBPR-based research, especially in studies of disenfranchised groups. The use of ACRR allows for an examination of the ways that cultural norms operate in relation to the disenfranchisement and to study the impacts of study construction.

A primary assumption of ACRR is that hegemony is an important force when it comes to the crafting and sustaining of meaning. Here, hegemony is understood to be the willing submission of society to dominant meanings and subjectivities (Zompetti, 1997). This is not done through coercion or overt force, but rather, power is enacted through inculcation into culture, which leaves the subjects of power not only under the control of power, but also desiring the codes and rules of power that keep them under its rules (Smart, 1986). That is, power manifests in social and cultural institutions (e.g., family, healthcare, capitalism, religion, gender relations) and their rules that perpetuate the dominant way of thinking as the standard (Cloud, 1996). We learn these rules as we grow, both implicitly through cultural norms and explicitly through educational institutions (Cloud, 1996). Thus, because we implicitly and explicitly desire the rewards of these systems, we abide by their rules and discipline those who break them (Cloud, 1996). As opposed to traditional health research, the means by which hegemonic forces are perpetuated, propagated, and wielded are central targets of ACRR. Thus, ACRR analysis offers a method to identify and reveal areas where hegemonic power acts in and on the community and clinical trial. The analysis seeks to answer questions such as why the stakeholders are who they are, what voices have been silenced, what the contextual factors are that present problems for the community, and what factors drove the choice of research questions (see Table 1).

Integration of ACRR and CBPR
As described above, engagement with the community is the central element of CBPR. Often, CBPR incorporates the use of mixed methods research, including both quantitative and qualitative components, in the development of RCTs. As opposed to quantitative research that employs closed-ended questions, qualitative research features open-ended questions to capitalize on the experience of participants. However, the products of most mixed methods qualitative processes are still instrumental by design, focused on arriving at answers to specific research questions derived from the particular viewpoint of the researcher (e.g., short-answer and structured interviews).

ACRR offers an innovative avenue for expanding the benefits from CBPR. Using techniques that render the implicit explicit, ACRR analyses can enhance the products of CBPR with in-depth data on cultural phenomenon acting on the research, the development of a trial, and wider culture. It can recast research in ways that reduce stigma, unintended disenfranchisement, and culturally bound bias, whatever the source. In addition, through the integration of ACRR in CBPR, researchers and health professionals will be empowered to check and reduce their own biases. This shift alone should improve the internal and external validity, participant retention, and community member engagement with a trial, among other benefits. To illustrate the value of combining ACRR methods into CBPR research with disenfranchised communities, we will briefly outline the role of ACRR in one of our current projects.

Trans Collaborations (TC). In partnership with the Central Great Plains TGD community and TGD-friendly mental health practitioner community, we are conducting a multi-site mixed methods study to develop principles of TGD-affirming mental health care. TC was founded in late 2014 by Debra Hope, professor of clinical psychology, Richard Mocarski, assistant professor of communication studies, and Nathan Woodruff, community TGD advocate. The overarching and generative goal of TC is to reduce the health and social disparities facing the TGD population. Societal stigma against TGD people exerts marginalization stress that may have significant physical and mental health consequences, especially if social support, coping, and other resiliency buffers are unavailable. Although many TGD people live healthy and productive lives, TGD communities nevertheless experience elevated rates of anxiety, depression, and suicidality; elevated rates of drug and alcohol abuse; and societal threats including homelessness, refusal of healthcare, and violence (Bockting, Minor, Swinburne Romine, Hamilton, & Coleman, 2013; Haas, Eliason, Mays, Mathy, Cochrane,
CBPR foundation and research trajectory. The founding members first established a working relationship over several meetings, where common goals and the structure for TC were agreed upon. Then the group recruited a local board made up of five TGD community members and a national board made up of six academic researchers who had experience working with the TGD community or had methodological expertise (both of which have increased their numbers to six and seven, respectively). The local board is run by the founding community partner and meets at least quarterly. This board sets the research agenda for TC and screens all materials generated by the academic side, including measures, manuscripts, grants, and potential collaborators. The national board meets annually in conjunction with one of the community board meetings and contributes expertise to all products and future research plans.

With the overarching goal in mind, the local board and core investigators met in early 2015 to set the research trajectory. This initial meeting set the course for the first prong of research: To create evidence-based guidelines for TGD-affirming behavioral healthcare professionals. The goal was to train providers “with good hearts but no brains,” as eloquently stated by our community co-founder. Our board echoed this sentiment with stories of their own healthcare where, in order to gain adequate care, they provided their healthcare professionals with books and other resources about TGD medical care. These experiences, where the patient trains the provider, were refreshing in juxtaposition to the many stories about being denied care from other providers. Two later prongs of this research feature strong community engagement, the backbone of TC. The second prong focuses on the community, developing workshops to increase patient self-efficacy through narrative medicine and leadership techniques. The third prong aims at promoting evidence-based policy, investigating current policies of the region and mechanisms whereby they impact training in healthcare, cultural acceptance in the region, and available services. The outreach agenda now includes an annual, grant-funded (participant costs covered) camp for TGD youth and their families, community talk-backs, involvement in community fundraisers, and more. In short, the CBPR program described here has led to multiple prongs of research ready for trials as the community and our community board continue to steering TC toward impactful, highly salient efforts to improve the lives of the TGD community in our region.

Evidence-based principles of care project design. To create evidence-based guidelines for TGD-affirming behavioral healthcare, TC designed an iterative multi-step mixed methods community-based project. First, 27 regional TGD community members and 10 TGD-affirming behavioral health providers (as identified by our community) were interviewed. These interviews were then transcribed and analyzed utilizing a parallel process that featured a traditional qualitative analysis from a grounded-theory perspective and the ACRR analysis. Two senior research team members analyzed the interview data following a grounded-theory methodology, but stopped short of select coding. In other words, first and axial-level coding were completed and reported to key constituents with the select coding process postponed due to the pragmatic nature of the study. Results from these analyses had significant overlap. Interviews and transcription were conducted by other members of the team, but the researcher who analyzed the data was instrumental in the design of the interviews. Thematic saturation was reached after the full coding of 16 interviews utilizing a constant comparison technique; however, all 27 were coded. The co-founding community partner reviewed and discussed all transcripts and analyses with the research team. An executive summary was then produced and presented to the community board for comment. The board helped to flesh out themes and situate the findings to the realities of the region. This process was conducted at both the first and axial coding levels.

Results from the qualitative analysis included findings that demonstrated TGD patients have unmet expectations in healthcare situations (Meyer, Mocarski, Holt, Hope, King, & Woodruff 2019), that cultural milieu creates both barriers to fair treatment and a shared language to create fair treatment in the community that provider training is lacking even in those providers who are allies of the community (Holt, Hope, Mocarski, Meyer, King, and Woodruff, 2018), and that the process of gender confirmation is varied and unique to the individual and can often include choices that reify societal expectations (Hope, Mocarski, Bautista, & Holt, 2016). Furthermore, the results led to a
number of products for the community, including a progress monitoring clinical scale for behavioral healthcare specific to gender comfort (Holt, Huit, Shulman, Meza, Smyth, Woodruff, Mocarski, Puckett, & Hope, 2019), the development of an advocacy workshop for the community, and the principles of TGD-affirming care we aim to test in RCTs.

**Applied critical rhetoric research.** The second level of analysis engaged ACRR to illuminate cultural influences on the project. Participants in the study referred to cultural artifacts for a number of reasons, including as examples of their own lives, as sources of frustration, and as sources of joy and connection. These referenced discourses were then subjected to a critical rhetorical analysis following McKerrow’s (1989) methodology. Critical rhetoric is generally conducted on static artifacts, such as television shows, presidential speeches, and memorials, within a static temporal frame. By incorporating this type of analysis into a qualitative inquiry, we applied critical rhetoric to a pragmatic use, branding the process as Applied Critical Rhetoric Research (ACRR). ACRR analysis was conducted by Mocarski, who also conducted the qualitative analysis. The ACRR analysis blended qualitative data with referent cultural artifacts, both those emerging from the interview and related to these initial discourses. Relevant referred to discourses for inclusion and analysis in this project included movies, television shows, articles, cultural norms, celebrities, and local policies. The ACRR analysis produced a context-based taxonomy of stigma. The taxonomy consisted of a rhetorical genealogy, or web of words, images, constructs, and descriptions that came from the data and linked outward to referenced cultural discourses. It catalogued stigmatizing and destigmatizing language as it existed around TGD healthcare, grounding the specific lived experience of study patients, providers, and advocates in a greater cultural context.

The results of the ACRR analysis highlight the unseen aspects of the lives of TGD people that contribute to barriers to treatment, such as the pervasive stereotypes crafted and reinforced through media and the array of microaggressions experienced in the behavioral healthcare environment (Galupo, Henise, & Davis, 2014). Furthermore, the ACRR analysis exposed the chasm between the cultural gender norms of rural TGD people in the Central Great Plains and the expected norms held by board members and collaborators from urban, coastal centers, where most of the nation’s transgender surgical services are provided. Thus, ACRR informed our practice guidelines by amplifying the voice of TGD people to shape the mental health services they receive and by pushing back against the hegemony of society in defining to them what is appropriate care. Results from this analysis are reported elsewhere (as noted previously), but following we demonstrate how these findings have informed the trial that we are currently conducting, making our trial more relevant and responsive to the community.

**Trial preparation and ACRR influence.** At the current stage, TC is finalizing the development of an RCTs to demonstrate the value of integrating our principles of TGD-affirming care into standard behavioral healthcare treatment. Specifically, we are applying our principles to transdiagnostic evidence-based treatment for anxiety and depression (Norton, 2012). The ACRR analysis has served as a critical guide to shape an affirming trial design in three areas: the use of audiovisual exemplars of affirming versus stigmatizing behavioral healthcare to reduce potential risk to participants, the protection against creative misappropriation of the TGD experience, and education to disentangle sex, gender, and sexual orientation.

In the preparation of this trial, we are first measuring the impact of the principles of care through the creation of three sets of staged videos representing segments of Norton’s treatment approach. Each set will include five key segments from the treatment with either adaptations based on our Principles of Care, treatment as usual with no adaptations, and treatment that includes common stigmatizing experiences arising from our qualitative interviews with the TGD communities. Given the difficulty in evaluating complex behaviors, this approach will facilitate an explicit test to demonstrate that there is a difference between “neutral” treatment and TGD-affirming care. The stigmatizing experimental condition is included to ensure that our “treatment as usual” condition is not explicitly stigmatizing. Members of the TGD community will view the videos and provide qualitative and quantitative feedback on the appropriateness of our adapted treatment approach. This is a key step to amplify community voices about whether the treatment is logical, acceptable, and affirming. After review, these videos will serve as potent training materials that model the complex task of maximizing positive and minimizing negative phenomena associated with behavioral healthcare with TGD people.
The ACRR analysis informed this process in critical ways. First, it described the problematic media pattern of appropriation of the marginalized TGD position in that it uses cisgender perspectives and persons to tell TGD stories instead of TGD actors playing the TGD characters in television and movie productions. In response to this issue, our hired actors for the client role are from the TGD community. Second, the decision to use videos rather than having participants engage with providers in an actual or mock session responds to both scientific and ethical concerns, the latter of which also has some roots in the ACRR analysis. Scientifically, the videos will allow greater experimental control by presenting a standard stimulus across participants. In addition, we determined that it is not justifiable to subject TGD participants to an intentionally stigmatizing experience, even in a mock session, given that it could remind participants of actual experiences and could reduce the likelihood they would seek needed services in the future. The ACRR analysis demonstrated that TGD persons are subjected to repeated exposures to microaggressions in mediated messages. These messages, coupled with the qualitative data that demonstrated the prevalence of this type of treatment in TGD persons’ everyday life, made a live experiment unnecessarily stressful for participants. Although we are aware that the videos with negative or neutral portrayals mirror such mediated content and present risks of negative reactions, the ability to stop the videos during the process should a participant’s distress become too high is a protection against this risk. Furthermore, our debriefing plan includes viewing the affirming video segments to help reinforce the need for the guidelines and, thus, the trial.

One other significant finding from the ACRR was that mediated messages reify the conflation of sex, gender, and sexual orientation. This reification is often also propagated and implemented by health providers. We have incorporated this finding into the principles by specifically addressing the distinctions between these constructs. Furthermore, our principles clarify sexuality dimensions and specifically correct false assumptions about sexuality and the TGD community. In our RCTs, we have measures that deal with culture and its impacts, as well as the impact of cultural understandings of sex, gender, and sexual orientation. While it is not possible to parse out every way that the ACRR influenced the RCTs design, these examples demonstrate the reflexive value of adding this type of analysis to any project through concrete implementations of its results.

Conclusion

Many social injustices within the current healthcare system are well-documented, from hospitals that refuse care to individuals with insufficient financial resources to emergency rooms that serve as primary care for large swaths of the population. These widely acknowledged problems produce an unequal burden of clear negative consequences for many marginalized groups based on gender, race, sexuality, and socioeconomic status. This is known in part because of community-engaged research approaches, such as community-based participatory research, that amplify the influence of marginalized population on research. However, current implementations of community-engaged research—particularly clinical trials—often fail to counteract this marginalization effectively due to pragmatic influences that reestablish traditional power structures. Furthermore, healthcare research has been largely isolated from the scrutiny of critical theory approaches that could highlight the cultural factors driving and expressing this systemic marginalization. This lack of scrutiny is largely responsible for the perpetuation and continued codification of systematic injustices in healthcare that persist despite intentional efforts to reduce them. Although many healthcare researchers actively engage in personal and study-focused self-reflection aimed to circumvent or even fight against these injustices in their research, such efforts are unable to fundamentally change the larger system. Until a time when reflexivity is codified as a fundamental value of all healthcare research, ACRR methods are uniquely poised to fill the gap in RCTs by capitalizing fully on the promise of CBPR to identify, highlight, and address the systemic biases that underlie the pervasive and deadly disparities (e.g., 40% suicidality rate vs. 2–4% for the general population—James, Herman, Rankin, Keisling, Mottet, & Anafi, 2016).

Note from Community Lead

The CBPR framework of trans collaboration offers an opportunity to have meaningful input on the research projects and the outcomes, emphasizing tools and products that benefit the community. I value the participation
and genuine interest in how the community sees the projects. It is unlike any community advisory work I have participated in before because it is not just one-shot involvement. It is ongoing, which is a different model than I am used to. One important role is for us to hold the researchers accountable to the community. One challenge is that it can take more time for the researchers; they cannot just run off and collect data. The community board recognizes the need for research, especially the graduate students’ need for research for their own careers, and the graduate students and faculty appreciate the role of the community board. This makes for a good partnership.

References


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Learning and Doing Together: Student Outcomes from an Interdisciplinary, Community-Based Research Course on Homelessness in a Local Community

Mariah Kornbluh, Jennifer Wilking, Susan Roll, Lindsay Banks, Hayley Stone, and Jessica Candela

Abstract

Colleges and universities continue to work toward innovative high-impact learning experiences to promote informed citizenship. Pedagogical research highlights the value of both interdisciplinary teaching and community-based participatory research (CBPR) in undergraduate civic development. Yet, research is limited in examining undergraduate student learning outcomes employing both pedagogical approaches. Utilizing mixed methods (i.e. surveys, concept maps, and focus groups) this study investigates the student learning outcomes of an interdisciplinary course (political science and criminal justice, community psychology, and social work) consisting of a CBPR project to inform local policy surrounding homelessness. Findings highlight student growth in the domains of: 1) interdisciplinary collaboration (applying an interdisciplinary lens and resolving diverse perspectives), 2) transference of course knowledge to real-world application, 3) critical consciousness building (specifically, critical reflection), 4) civic development, and 5) increased self-awareness. Finally, this paper highlights implications regarding course development, lessons learned, and future assessment.

Introduction

Communities across the country face challenges stemming from a growing homeless population, especially on the West Coast (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2017). In fact in 2017, 49% (91,641 people) of all unsheltered people in the country lived in California. Local municipalities struggle to balance limited resources, varying political agendas, and a lack of concrete data to find solutions to this complex problem.

Universities have a chance to engage students in this pressing issue. Homelessness, a complex and multidimensional problem, provides students with an opportunity to research, analyze, and inform community solutions. Additionally, universities can leverage their resources to ensure that the community remains aware of local issues, offer students pedagogies situated in the real world, and provide opportunities for both skill development and civic engagement.

The current study takes place in Chico, a small, northern California city in which the university accounts for more than 20% of the population. With a homeless population of over 1,000, the city struggles to find solutions in an atmosphere of scarce resources. These circumstances inspired three professors to create an interdisciplinary, community-based participatory research (CBPR) course as an opportunity for students to address local policy. Students across three disciplines—political science/criminal justice, community psychology, and social work—used research to address homelessness policy solutions.

This manuscript explores how a course combining the components of interdisciplinarity and CBPR impacts student learning and attitudes. We argue that the combination of CBPR and interdisciplinary teaching may be particularly effective for student learning, especially with respect to civic skills, behaviors, and values. To assess this expectation, we use a mixed methods approach.

This study is especially important as post-secondary education is increasingly viewed as a key venue for enhancing students’ civic knowledge, competencies, values, and skills for social action (Einfeld & Collins, 2008; Holley, 2009). Thus, educators continue to work toward developing innovative and high-impact learning experiences to promote civic development and informed citizenship (Brownell & Swaner, 2010; Kilgo, Sheets, & Pascarella, 2015).

While the literature suggests that civic development is promoted by both interdisciplinary courses (Letterman & Dugan, 2004; Sternberg,
2008) and courses that incorporate CBPR (Bach & Weinzimmer, 2011; Lichtenstein, Thorne, Cutforth, & Tombari, 2011; Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, & Donohue, 2003), there is little information concerning the impact of courses that combine these pedagogical elements (Dunbar, Terlecki, Watterson, & Ratmansky, 2013; Lambert-Pennington, Reardon, & Robinson, 2011). Additionally, few of the evaluations of interdisciplinary teaching and CBPR, both independently and jointly, systematically evaluate student learning outcomes (Burgett, Hillyard, Krabill, Leadley, & Rosenberg, 2011; Lester & Evans, 2009; Ottinger, Worthington, Gold, Ewing, Fridelity, & Pond, 2012).

We begin by reviewing scholarship regarding how interdisciplinarity teaching and CBPR independently and jointly affect student learning outcomes. Next, we describe our assessment methods and present findings. Lastly, we discuss the implications for interdisciplinary teaching and community engagement within higher education.

**Community-Based Participatory Research**

Broadly, community-based research is a collaborative effort in which community members and academics engage in research around an identified community need (Stocking & Cutforth, 2003, Strand et al., 2003). Community and academic collaborations through CBPR are equal partnerships, valuing different types of knowledge (Strand et al., 2003). Additionally, in contrast to traditional scholarship focused primarily on publication, the end goal of CBPR is action oriented, focused on promoting social change (Bach & Weinzimmer, 2011; Strand et al., 2003).

Studies indicate that including students in CBPR research has several positive outcomes for student learning, including students gaining a sense of personal empowerment, a deeper understanding of the research process, enhanced understanding of community resources, and a greater investment in public issues (Bach & Weinzimmer, 2011; Lichtenstein et al., 2011; Stocking & Cutforth, 2006). Furthermore, students who participate in CBPR are better prepared to focus on community needs and have an increased awareness of community issues (Strand et al., 2003).

The model for CBPR in this course incorporated the central tenets of community-based research outlined by Strand and colleagues (2003), including relationship building, as well as the creation and dissemination of knowledge to and for the community with a goal of creating social change. While the topic of homelessness was chosen by the instructors, and was not the result of students conducting a needs assessment, the issue of homelessness was chosen because it had been prevalent in city council agendas, the local media, and other forums across the community. Students had the opportunity for service (e.g., volunteering at a shelter). This was done in the context of relationship building within the local community (e.g., shelter residents, service providers). Thus, we stress that this activity is a key component of community-based research (e.g., relationship building and reciprocity between research and community), as compared to a course solely focused on service-learning.

**Interdisciplinary Teaching**

Interdisciplinary teaching utilizes multiple perspectives and disciplines to examine and facilitate comprehensive understanding of complex, real-world issues (Newell, 2010). In contrast to collaborative or team teaching, in which instructors plan and deliver course material together (Lester & Evans, 2009; Letterman & Dugan, 2004), interdisciplinary teaching intentionally uses multiple disciplinary perspectives to provide students a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of an issue.

Research indicates interdisciplinary courses enhance students’ critical thinking, teamwork, comprehension, and civic development (Mahoney & Brown, 2013). First, interdisciplinary teaching positively affects students’ understanding of interdisciplinary work, specifically collaboration as well as their application of tools from various disciplines (Mahoney & Brown, 2013; Sternberg, 2008). Evidence illustrates that interdisciplinary teaching increases student comprehension of and engagement in course material (Mahoney & Brown, 2013), including developing critical thinking skills illustrated by evaluating evidence from varying perspectives (Borg & Borg, 2001). Finally, interdisciplinary teaching also promotes students’ dedication to civic engagement and community issues (Dunbar et al., 2013).

**Combining High-impact Practices: CBPR & Interdisciplinarity**

Few courses appear to combine CBPR with interdisciplinary teaching. This is surprising, given the complementarity between these pedagogies.
CBPR involves collaboration to address real-world problems that inherently involve more than one discipline (Sternberg, 2008). In this way, CBPR naturally encourages the breaking down of disciplinary boundaries and fosters collaboration with the local community (Dutton, Lopez, Brown, & Simmons, 2015; Jung, 2017).

While limited, scholarship exploring student outcomes from courses consisting of CBPR and interdisciplinary teaching highlights that this combination may be impactful for students (Dunbar et al., 2013; Dutton et al., 2016). The interdisciplinary and community-centered approach allows students to engage in community issues and take an active stance on a solution (Dunbar et al., 2013; Jung, 2017). The CBPR component provides a more complex, concrete real-world experience for students to engage with (Dunbar et al., 2013; Ottinger et al., 2012). In addition, the skills acquisition through CBPR has the potential to empower students to become more civically engaged (Dunbar et al., 2013; Dutton et al., 2015; Lambert-Pennington et al., 2011).

Given the complementarity of the pedagogies, as well as evidence from courses combining interdisciplinary teaching and CBPR, we argue that courses incorporating both of these high-impact practices may be especially beneficial for students in developing civics skills, behaviors, and values. In the next sections, we describe the course design and methods of assessment of student learning outcomes.

Design of an Interdisciplinary, Community-Based Research Course

As we (first three authors) became interested in the issue of local homelessness, we began to recognize the growing community need for high quality data, and the potential for students to be involved in conducting research. To achieve this end, instructors informally linked three upper division classes—Introduction to Research Methods in the Department of Political Science and Criminal Justice, Community Psychology in the Department of Psychology, and Social Welfare Policy, Programs & Services in the School of Social Work. All three classes were scheduled at the same time and met jointly (in a larger space) for approximately 40% of class meetings. Students received credit for the course in which they were officially enrolled. Each course maintained and assessed discipline-specific student learning outcomes. Notably, shared goals for the course consisted of an increased understanding of local homelessness, as well as an enhanced understanding of interdisciplinary and community-based research. These goals were assessed through focus groups, surveys, and mind mapping.

Unofficially joining the three classes helped to overcome some administrative barriers but created others. For example, administrators did not have to determine which department would be credited with enrolled students, as would be the case if the courses were officially linked. Additionally, joining the classes informally was less costly in terms of faculty time than hiring three professors to teach one course. However, one of the main administrative challenges of maintaining three independent classes was finding a campus space that could simultaneously accommodate students from all three classes. Joint class sessions were held in a large auditorium, and the fixed, forward-facing seats were not ideal for group work. In addition, course instructors effectively had to evaluate their teaching twice: once using the standard instruments required of every traditional class, and again through an instrument specific to an interdisciplinary CBPR course (which they developed).

The courses focused on the issue of homelessness and explored the central question: “How does research inform policy at the local level?” During joint class sessions, students across all three courses met in interdisciplinary project groups to discuss shared readings and engage in a community-based research project. Students were strategically introduced to methodologies and theories from across disciplines centered around homelessness, policy, and research.

Multidisciplinary student groups designed and implemented two surveys. To inform survey development, guest speakers from the community (e.g., service providers, an evaluator of the recent Point-in-Time (PIT) Survey) were invited to discuss core issues for homeless individuals and existing polices and services (e.g., Housing First, criminalizing homelessness). For example, social workers from a local homeless youth drop-in center discussed the special needs of young people who are without stable housing and those who are LGBTQ+. In line with community-based research, members of the community identified

\[1\text{The Point-in-Time Survey is a federally mandated survey providing an unduplicated count of the number of sheltered and unsheltered homeless individuals in a single day.}\]
the content, scope, and population surveyed. One theme that emerged both in class discussions and in presentations from community experts was the gulf between perceptions held among the housed population about homelessness, versus the actual experiences of people experiencing homelessness. Based on this feedback, students chose to conduct two surveys exploring parallel issues: 1) understanding beliefs and stereotypes about homelessness held among the housed community, and 2) collecting data regarding the actual experiences of people experiencing homelessness (e.g., willingness to work and use services, causes of homelessness).

Students also engaged in data collection and went through an extensive training in ethics. Training included piloting data survey entry, mock survey interviews, and a critical discussion around safety. This training was co-developed and led by an evaluator (a local community member) who led the 2017 PIT. Lastly, during the day of data collection, students were supervised by a team of faculty, graduate students, and the 2017 PIT evaluator.

Students surveyed more than 250 people, including 100 individuals who self-identified as homeless. In order to further promote a reciprocal partnership, students participated in the National Make a Difference Day, volunteering at a local homeless center (one of the sites for data collection). Students engaged in data cleaning, analysis, and generated policy recommendations. Students presented their research results and policy implications at a research forum on campus. Additionally, we partnered with a student to disseminate the findings through local community and media presentations.

Methods of Assessment

We selected to employ a mixed method approach with intent for triangulation (Greene, Carcelli, & Graham, 1989). Prior research stresses that utilizing mixed methods to identify convergent and divergent themes, potentially bolsters the credibility of findings and provides a more holistic assessment (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Greene et al., 1989). Data collection included: 1) mind maps regarding the issue of homelessness, 2) a retrospective survey of student learning outcomes, and 3) two focus groups (10 students each). Institutional review board approval was received for all research protocol prior to the start of data collection at the beginning of the semester. All data collection procedures were approved through the Institutional Review Board at California State University, Chico (#7610). Students could only participate if they provided consent, and consent was gathered for each stage of the research process.

Mind mapping is a graphic organizing tool in which key concepts emerge from a central theme (Budd, 2004). Mind maps have been applied in prior educational research as a tool to enhance critical learning, self-reflection, and formative assessment (Hay, 2007).

Students completed mind maps at the beginning and end of the semester. Students were given a basic overview of mind mapping using resources such as the website mindmapping.com. They were then provided a blank sheet of paper and markers, and were instructed to write the word “homelessness” in the center of the paper. Next, they were invited to think of any and all ideas, concepts, words, and images that, in their mind, connected to the word homelessness. Students made branches from the main idea to illustrate connections. A total of 12 students (four students from each of the three classes) were randomly sampled. Mind maps were recreated using Visone, a visual software tool that provides an opportunity for network analysis (Visone Team, 2011).

Mind maps were analyzed using social network analysis. Network density, one measure of social network analysis, was employed in this study along with thematic content coding. Social network analysis identifies patterns of relationships among a set of actors (e.g., concepts within the mind map) and quantifies the structure of these connections within a bounded system (Marin & Wellman, 2001). Network density reflects the number of connections each actor (i.e., idea/concept) had within the network out of all possible connections (Kornbluh & Neal, 2016). The network density of each mind map was calculated, thus operationalizing network density as a proxy for critical thinking and analysis. For instance, over time we anticipated student mind maps would illustrate greater network density, as students’ understanding of homelessness became more complex and nuanced.

Summative content analysis involving counting and contrasting key phrases, words, and content was also conducted on the mind maps (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Thematic content analysis was conducted by clustering similar

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2Sixty percent of housed residents identify as male, whereas 40% of respondents identify as female; 63% of housed respondents were between the ages of 18 and 34, while there was greater variation in the ages of homeless respondents.
Two notable themes emerged. First, students identified individualistic causes around being homeless (e.g., being homeless was due to individual choice). Second, students stressed systemic causes surrounding homelessness (e.g., being homeless was a result of a lack of affordable housing). These different rationales were counted, and descriptively compared. We anticipated that over time students would be more likely to identify systemic causes and solutions toward addressing homelessness.

Four months after completing the course, students were invited to attend a two-hour session to evaluate the course, including a retrospective survey and focus groups. Retrospective surveys consist of questions assessing participant knowledge, skills, or behaviors before and after an event (Pratt, McGuigan, & Katzev, 2000). Research indicates that retrospective surveys address issues of data incompletion, and response shift bias often prominent in traditional longitudinal surveys (Pratt et al., 2000; Raidl, Johnson, Gardner, Denham, Spain, Lanting, Jayo, Liddil, & Barron, 2004). First, students completed a six-question retrospective pretest in which they evaluated what they knew and felt about the issue of homelessness both before and after taking the course. For example, prior to and following the course, students evaluated how they would respond to the following statement: “I have an understanding of the complexity of addressing homelessness in our community.”

Next, students were randomly assigned to one of two semi-structured focus groups, taking care to ensure a distribution of majors across both groups. Focus groups consist of facilitated dialogue among five to eight participants, around a series of semi-structured questions exploring a key content area (Morgan & Krueger, 1998). Research indicates that focus groups can allow for a more in-depth exploration of key content, allowing participants to build off one another's experiences as reference points and recall experiences as well as alternative views (Morgan & Krueger, 1998). Notably, focus groups can also have challenges including variation in participation (e.g., quiet individuals, and individuals who dominate the discussion), as well as participants altering their answers in fear of being judged by others. To avoid the pitfalls of focus groups, two facilitators trained in focus group facilitation were present for each group. Intentional steps were taken to ensure group norming, encourage active participation, and provide opportunity to discuss differences (Morgan & Krueger, 1998). In the context of this study, five guiding questions were posed to each group including, “Overall, did you find the course to be an impactful learning experience?” Focus groups were audiotaped and transcribed. Content coding was employed in which three coders independently reviewed the transcript, identifying emerging themes from the data. To ensure credibility of findings, two of the coders served as external auditors. A codebook was then developed via consensus and applied to the focus group transcript to ensure inter-rater reliability. The two additional instructors reviewed the codebook for external validity.

Results

Across both focus groups, participants described opportunities within the course that facilitated professional skill development. These included interdisciplinary collaboration, application of content to the real world and critical reflection, as well as civic engagement. Retrospective student surveys and mind maps further corroborated these outcomes. By engaging in both an interdisciplinary and CBPR course, students developed a complex understanding of the issue of homelessness within their local community. Participants also articulated barriers and challenges to engaging in this work.

Student Learning Outcome 1: Interdisciplinary Collaboration

Students expressed appreciation in engaging in an interdisciplinary course across both focus groups. In particular, students discussed developing skills in engaging in collaborative work from diverse disciplines. By way of example, one student said, “I liked working with the other students... the different perspectives are amazing.” Students articulated that engaging in the interdisciplinary CBPR project facilitated an opportunity for them to develop new perspectives and gain exposure to new disciplines. As illustrated in the quote below, student interviewees stressed that engaging with peers from different disciplines provided insight into how local policy and legislation influenced housing instability within the community:

I remember when our group was working on the social aspect of it, they talked about policy and how they were brainstorming. I liked how they [political science and
criminal justice students] talked about legislation, even within Chico, then, the government funding. I just really liked learning from all perspectives.

Notably, these opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration differed between students based on their discipline. For instance, psychology and social work students noted that engaging with political science and criminal justice students allowed them the opportunity to see their respective fields address macro-level issues, as compared to individual treatment. As one social work student noted, her approach to promoting psychological wellness had primarily been focused on individual treatment:

I'm like, I'm here to work one-on-one with people but I did like a one-eighty and was like “Whoa! This does help people in a larger way.”

Through the course this student developed an awareness of how the discipline of social work could be utilized to address policy, impacting mental health at a larger scale (i.e. community-wide). Additionally, political science and criminal justice students received further exposure to the psychological health issues surrounding homelessness, thus humanizing and further personalizing the issue.

Engaging in CBPR and interdisciplinary collaboration was also challenging for students. For instance, students struggled to define clear roles across disciplines. In the following quote, a student grapples with how to handle diverging perspectives while fostering group cohesion. “I think there was just different expectations. Well, this is what we’re supposed to do…. Oh well, no, we’re supposed to do this.” While interdisciplinary collaboration was identified as a challenge amongst interviewees, some focus group participants also expressed value in having the opportunity to manage conflict, and conflicting expectations as this dynamic reflected engaging in real-world community work. For example, one interviewee articulated the importance of the course providing a safe environment for developing skills in managing different perspectives, which he identified as valuable for his own professional aspirations:

I think that some of the value of the class was…in managing those differing views and managing those roles. Especially... if you want to go out and do this kind of stuff. I think that’s going to happen and I think that’s...where a lot of the value in the class came from. I mean, making that a safe environment, to kind of, have those conflicts and work through them and... navigate that.

In sum, students noted that they developed skills in interdisciplinary collaboration. This encompassed learning new perspectives, applying multiple disciplines to a social issue, teaching others, and managing interpersonal conflict.

Student Learning Outcome 2: Application of Information to the Real World

Participants across both focus groups also highlighted the value of gaining real-world experience through community research and volunteering. For example, the interviewee below stresses the transference of course content and skills to real-world challenges:

It [the class] made me realize how we applied what we were learning in the class to the real world. Everything we were learning about homelessness from the psych aspect of it, was applied to the research questions, the actual [service day]. And it just like, made me realize, this is a local issue that is.... It's something that we have to deal with. It was very impactful for myself, and I learned a lot.

The experience of conducting research among community members impacted students in several ways. First, the experience provided an opportunity to practice research skills acquired throughout the class. For example, one student noted, “Going out and, like, talking with people and just getting a lot of information…it was really cool. I didn't know how to conduct research that way until I took this class.” In addition to practicing research skills, the information acquired through conducting surveys provided students with a better understanding of the issue. “…Seeing the end results and being able to look at the data was really cool for me. It was like, 'whoa—look what we did.'”

Interacting with community members challenged students by pushing them out of their comfort zones:
I just really liked being able to go out in the community and do the Make a Difference Day, and as a group go out and talk to the housed and unhoused people. I thought that was going to make a really big impact on the students. You know, people who usually don't interact with people who are houseless. So...I enjoyed that.

For some students, the practical experience was a way to contextualize and cap the experiences of an entire degree program:

And that was really just like every part of it was just like growth, and new, and you know? Finally, being able to put what we've learned all this time, I mean because we're seniors now.

Another student appreciated the opportunity to practice professional skills, “And so as a social work student it's really good we got to practice some of the things that we've been learning.”

Community-based work is not without challenges, and students noted both the difficulties and limitations of their real-world experience. Specifically, a student noted the inherent messiness experienced on the day of the research and volunteer opportunity. “I liked the volunteering with the survey. It was just kind of...unorganized. I don't know, maybe just a little bit more planning going into that.”

Overall, results from the retrospective survey corroborate focus group findings surrounding the transference of skill developed toward real-world application. For example, in reflecting on the statement, “I know how to conduct research to inform my community,” the mean response prior to taking the class was a 2.08 (SD = .86, 1–4). After taking the class, student confidence in this statement increased to 3.92 (SD = .49, 3–5).

Overall, students appreciated the opportunity to practice research and professional skills in the community. Through talking with community members about homelessness, students gained comfort in interacting with people different from themselves and acquired a richer understanding of homelessness while utilizing community-based research to address the issue.

Student Learning Outcome 3: Raised Critical Consciousness

Data reveal that the class not only increased participant awareness of the issue of homelessness, but also facilitated a more complex, systemic understanding regarding the root cause of homelessness. Education liberation theorist Paulo Friere (1993) refers to this cognitive transformation as critical consciousness. Critical consciousness consists of three key components: 1) understanding systemic inequality, 2) feeling motivated to act, and 3) engaging in collective action (Watts, Diemer, & Voight, 2011). For the focus of this paper, our analysis will explore critical reflection, the first phase of critical consciousness building.

Not surprisingly, the semester-long substantive focus on the class, and the opportunities for community involvement, increased student systemic awareness of homelessness. Importantly, the class also increased student awareness of how to engage in efforts to address the root cause of the issue. One student commented, “We just talked about it...what’s going on [in Chico]? Why are there so many people here that are living on the street? I didn’t know how to help them, or even where to go to maybe volunteer to make some sort of difference. So this class kind of gave me all of that. It was really cool. I really...I needed to take it.”

For another student, the class raised awareness of the scope of the issue and made clear the need for more consistent and strategic engagement:

I know before this course, I used to just volunteer, you know, around the holidays in L.A. So, I had somewhat of like, interaction with the homeless. But it wasn't like, seeing their whole situation. It was just that one day of year where they would get, like, a special meal. But then, once I did this, I just realized that they are humans also and that it's not just like, they need help one day of year, but all 365 days, you know?

For others, the class made the social issue much more approachable and less intimidating. Thus, students felt confident to further examine the stigma surrounding homelessness:

I'm definitely not afraid of the homelessness issue anymore. Like sometimes it was a little like, too much of
an issue...“It’s too big, I can’t do anything.” And now I don’t feel like that.

This also had an important impact on understanding how others can affect homelessness. Thus students developed their own theories of change regarding the importance of breaking down social stigma and encouraging larger community engagement. As one said:

I feel like anything is gonna help and people need to be [more aware]...the more people are going to get involved. I definitely try to. My ears do perk up when that comes up and I’ll try to talk about it.

Results from the retrospective survey suggest that the class increased the complexity of students’ understanding of the issue. Prior to the class, student participants had a mean response of 2.62 (SD = 1.50, 1–5) to the survey item, “I understand the complexity of addressing homelessness in Chico.” After taking the class, the mean response increased to 4.31 (SD = .85, 2–5).

Mind maps further corroborated this trend, illustrating student growth in their complexity of understanding homelessness. For instance, the average ego network density at the beginning of the course was .12 (SD = .08, .01-.33). On average, 12% out of all possible connections were identified within the mind maps. The average network density at the end of the course was .16 (SD = .13, .03–.52), increasing by 4% from the beginning of the semester (see Figure 1). Thus, students began to recognize connections and relationships between various factors (e.g., poverty, mental health) contributing to homelessness. Additionally, individualistic rationales and reasons surrounding the cause of homelessness within the mind map dropped from an average of 1.23 (SD = 1.09, 0–3) words per mind map during Time 1 to .62 during Time 2 (SD = .87, 0–2). In contrast, systemic rationales surrounding the issue of homelessness averaged 3.42 words per mind map during Time 1 (SD = 2.73, 0–8), and rose to 4.08 words during Time 2 (SD = 2.25, 0–7). The above suggests that as the course progressed, students began to shift their analysis surrounding the issue of homeless from individualistic causes toward a systemic understanding.

To summarize, critical reflection, as defined by awareness of the root causes of an issue, increased amongst student participants. This manifested primarily through students reporting an increased awareness of the issue related to broader, structural causes and solutions to homelessness, namely the need for affordable housing.

**Student Learning Outcome 4: Civic Engagement**

Students also demonstrated increased civic engagement. While this term can mean many things, students shared specific activities promoting social change in which they began or increased their involvement in, as a result of the course, including having difficult conversations about local social issues, reading the news, engaging in local politics, voting, and volunteering. Students shared that they know more about how to get involved and create positive change around a variety of issues, including homelessness, in the local community. Students articulated feeling more knowledgeable about local issues, which provided them increased confidence in their understanding and afforded them the courage to engage in dialogue and social action. One student articulated this theme in the following manner:

Civic participation [is] definitely really important. After taking this class I’ve definitely scrutinized our City Council candidates a lot more. Even when I talk to my friends about issues surrounding homelessness, I definitely don’t let them get off the hook when they just make blatant statements that doesn’t really have concrete fact to back it up. It has definitely changed my outlook on how I talk to my friends when we do talk about policy.

Since the class engaged local agencies via guest lectures and volunteer opportunities, students could see how their advocacy efforts might directly contribute to work around homelessness in the community. For example, one student noted:

I feel like since taking this class I’ve been really trying to follow what’s going on and really trying to advocate and seeing what I can do to help or volunteer or go to the City Council meetings. I feel like that kind of sparked a little.

Retrospective surveys corroborated focus group findings that student confidence level in taking action improved, with students reporting a mean score of 2.69 (SD = 1.25, 1–4) to the survey
item, “I know how to get involved to promote positive change surrounding homelessness” prior to taking the course. This mean increased to 4.31 (SD = .63, 3–5) according to students’ assessments after the course. Additionally, in response to the survey item “Felt inspired to get involved and address community problems,” students reported a mean score 3.62 (SD = .87, 2–5) prior to the course. At the end of the course students reported a mean score of 4.54 (SD = .66, 3–5).

**Student Learning Outcome 5: Identifying Preconceived Biases/Changed Mindsets**

The final theme illustrates that students reflected on their own preconceived biases around the issue of homelessness in many ways, including considering what homelessness looks like, and what needs and services exist or are needed. They also exhibited a heightened awareness of assumptions and biases regarding homelessness held by others.

The findings indicated that students felt that they had gained knowledge and information about the complexity of the issue of homelessness and the challenges of finding solutions such as: the provision of social services, affordable housing, access to public bathrooms, and basic needs. Students clearly expressed that the knowledge and information gained had made them more empathetic and understanding toward the homeless.

Students were honest and forthcoming about their personal biases regarding the homeless, as demonstrated in sentiments such as:

It was definitely a real learning experience, actually going out there and meeting these people that have been caricatured and stereotyped and discovering that it really isn’t a stereotype but it’s really this complex aggregation of issues.

Another student candidly admitted that he had been homeless at one time, and shared:

I had formed some opinions that I don’t think I realized I had. I had a support system and I got out of it, but I think I had formed some views, like ‘it’s not that hard, I did it.’ I don’t think I realized I had formed some of those views, so I think it was talking to people and hearing their stories…. It was easier for me because I had that support system…having it there for me to consider, I think, was kind of a big deal.

Additionally, hearing the personal stories of living without a home altered students’ understanding of the issue, as expressed in this reflection:

**Figure 1.** Network Density Over Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Ego Network Density</th>
<th>Individualistic Versus Systemic Causes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Time 1</td>
<td>Average Identified Systemic Causes</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Average Identified Individual Causes</td>
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<tr>
<th>Time 1</th>
<th>Time 2</th>
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I was talking to this guy, and he was saying, ‘I have to time when I go to the bathroom, because certain places are open.’ I knew that we had public restrooms, but I didn’t know that they had closed during certain hours, which is, like, really surprising to me. It gave me a lot of insight, just hearing some of the things that they have to deal with that I’ve never thought of before.

Students also gained an appreciation for the diversity of the homeless population. For instance, one student shared:

I didn’t really know much about homelessness and what it even looked like. Like someone living out of their car…. It was a really important class for me to take because I gained a lot of insight on that problem.

Connected to the theme of civic engagement, this deeper understanding of the issue was both informative and motivating, as expressed by one student who said:

I learned a lot about my beliefs and it strengthened how passionate I am about working with the homeless community. But it also gave me an idea of what the other side thinks. And, that what they think is valid too.

Focus group narratives and retrospective survey outcomes converged around changed mindsets. In terms of this final theme, mean scores in reflecting on the statement, “I am more informed on the issue of homelessness” increased from 3.08 (SD = 1.26, 1-4) to 4.78 (SD = .44, 4–5) demonstrating an increased understanding of the issue.

Through the course, students gained new knowledge and insights by virtue of both the opportunity to work in interdisciplinary groups and the application of course content to the real world. They critically reflected on their personal biases and those of others, as well as their own power to impact issues in their community and more broadly. This gave them confidence to engage in direct social change work within the local community (see Table 1).

Discussion of Findings

Based on the literature regarding how CBPR and interdisciplinarity positively affect multiple student learning outcomes, we expected the combination of these pedagogies to be especially impactful for student learning. Results from multiple student assessments described previously bear this out. Using focus groups, retrospective surveys and concept maps, we identified five student learning outcomes influenced by the combination of interdisciplinary teaching and CBPR. Not surprisingly, previous research on interdisciplinary teaching shows that this pedagogy develops students’ ability to work collaboratively in interdisciplinary groups (Mahoney & Brown, 2013). Our research corroborates this finding and suggests that pairing interdisciplinarity teaching with a problem-based project, like the CBPR project undertaken in the class discussed, likely raises the stakes of working collaboratively in interdisciplinary groups, boosting the development of this skill. Students in the focus groups mentioned the challenges of working on a major project in interdisciplinary groups, and explicitly identified this as one of the primary opportunities presented by the interdisciplinary and CBPR course.

Based on focus groups and retrospective surveys, we also found that combining interdisciplinarity and CBPR provides students with the ability to apply knowledge and skills learned in the classroom to real-world issues. This finding substantiates findings from previous research showing that interdisciplinary and CBPR classes support the development of research skills (Dunbar et al., 2013; Dutton et al., 2015), and increases understanding of local, social issues (Dunbar et al., 2013; Strand et al., 2003). Our findings suggest that the combined pedagogies allow students to apply knowledge from classes, beyond just research skills, to a real-world problem, thus giving students an increased sense of relevance in their educational experience.

The third student learning outcome identified in our results is critical consciousness (i.e., critical reflection), a concept not extensively studied in previous research on interdisciplinarity and CBPR at the undergraduate level. While critical reflection has been identified as a learning outcome for community members engaged in CBPR (Castelden & Garvin, 2008), graduate students (Kumagai & Lypson, 2008), as well as undergraduate students engaged in service learning programs (Rosenberger, 2014), it has not been explored in
the context of an undergraduate CBPR course, or one that combines CBPR with interdisciplinary teaching. The idea that critical consciousness could be fostered in an undergraduate, interdisciplinary, CBPR course is suggested by Rosenberger (2014) in recommending service-learning classes build course content around identified needs in the community. This manuscript uniquely and constructively contributes to this literature by providing systematic evidence of a practice that increased critical consciousness among students. The opportunity to develop the critical consciousness of undergraduates through a CBPR or CBPR in combination with an interdisciplinary course is important, as research suggests that college may be a time when students are most likely to encounter opportunities to gain knowledge concerning social injustices and inequities (Reason, Roosa, & Scales, 2005).

Research stresses that consciousness development differs based on students’ relationship to the content area in the domains of power and privilege (Kornbluh, Collins, & Kohfeldt, 2019; Mitchell & Donahue, 2009). This research has been explored in relationship to issues of racism. However, students who are housing secure may also differ in their consciousness development as compared to students who have experienced housing insecurity. Future research would benefit from exploring critical consciousness development in relation to housing status.

We also found that the interdisciplinary and CBPR course increased student ability, willingness, and interest in being civically engaged with the issue of homelessness. This finding upholds extensive research showing that interdisciplinary teaching increases civic engagement (Mueller, Juris, Willermet, Drake, Upadhay, & Chhetri, 2014), that CBPR increases civic engagement (Strand et al., 2003), and that the combination of these pedagogies increases civic engagement (Dutton et al., 2015; Dunbar et al., 2013; Lambert-Pennington et al., 2011).

Finally, our research highlights a second student learning outcome unique to interdisciplinary and CBPR courses—a student’s identification and awareness of their preconceptions and biases. In both focus groups, students reported an enhanced understanding of homelessness that led them to be aware of their preconceived notions and stereotypes projected onto individuals experiencing homelessness. This is especially notable, as developing the practice of critical reflexivity (i.e., identifying preconceived biases) by exposure to diverse disciplines and community knowledge, as well as employing strategies to address these biases (e.g., seeking data to inform decision-making) may be a beneficial

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<th>Table 1. Retrospective Survey Results</th>
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<tr>
<td>Student Learning Outcome 2: Real-World Application</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knew how to conduct research to inform my community</td>
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<td>Student Learning Outcome 3: Critical Consciousness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding the complexity of addressing homelessness in Chico</td>
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<td>Student Learning Outcome 4: Civic Engagement</td>
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<td>Knew how to get involved to promote positive change surrounding homelessness</td>
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<td>Felt inspired to get involved and address community problems</td>
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<td>Student Learning Outcome 5: Identify Preconceived Biases</td>
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<tr>
<td>Informed on the issue of homelessness</td>
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practice in bolstering informed citizenship as well as civic development (Eveland, 2004). Additionally, this finding complements trends in service learning away from traditional, more voluntary models, toward critical service-learning models (see Mitchell, 2008) that incorporate, among other practices, close collaboration with community partners to identify community issues and needs (e.g., Brown, 2001), a best practice of CBPR.

Conclusions

While findings show significant and positive impacts on student outcomes, the course also presented challenges. Students struggled with the uncertainty of disciplinary roles in the group project, as well as the messiness and lack of organization inherent in CBPR. Additionally, the time commitment in planning and implementing the interdisciplinary CBPR course was much more than that of a traditional course, an issue that has been well-documented (Jung, 2017; Letterman & Dugan, 2004).

Several lessons for future iterations of the course emerged from these challenges. First, roles in the group project should be clearly articulated, with each discipline having a specific role, and individual students fulfilling specific tasks. Providing activities to foster group norming, providing students with the opportunity to assess and identify their own strengths and weaknesses when engaging in group work, as well as providing low-stakes opportunities for collaboration and relationship building may be key processes to creating a strong foundation for conducting a CBPR project (Bourner, Hughes, & Bourner, 2001). Second, community collaborations could be strengthened by making the output more readily accessible and having students present their results to community members. Furthermore, community members could be involved earlier in the course to support topic identification, course design, and utilization of findings. Lastly, 10.9% of college students within the California university system in which the course was taught report being homeless within the last 12 months (Crutchfield & Maguire, 2018). We witnessed greater burden placed on students who had experienced homelessness, or who had had more experience with this population (primarily social work and community psychology students), in having to counter stereotyped narratives surrounding homelessness discussed by their peers. Instructors should be mindful that students occupy diverse backgrounds and experiences when facilitating CBPR projects around social issues and community inequities. Mitchell and Donahue (2009) stress the following instructional strategies to reduce the burden on students who have experienced housing insecurity that have to use their own lived experiences as learning experiences for their more privileged peers: 1) offer exploration around root causes to avoid victim blaming, 2) follow-up with critical questions to challenge assumptions, 3) provide opportunity to explore and engage in data collection within privileged communities (i.e., raising awareness around housing insecurity), and 4) scaffold critical conversations to involve opportunity for instructor discourse one-on-one with students or with groups of students. We also found relaying information surrounding the prevalence of housing insecurity among college students early and frequently in the course can promote a more reflective and thoughtful classroom environment.

There were several limitations regarding data collection restricting the generalizability of the results. Students volunteered to participate in focus groups and retrospective surveys, thus yielding a potential sampling bias. Highly engaged and civically inclined students who enjoyed the course may have been more likely to participate in post data collection.

Future research would benefit from examining the long-term effects of these courses on students’ civic development. Additionally, further research ought to examine differences in student learning outcomes in relation to pedagogical instruction type. This could include an experimental design of four conditions—control, interdisciplinary teaching, a CBPR course, and an interdisciplinary CBPR course—to further tease out differences in outcomes. Lastly, investigation into the social issue selected and methodology utilized for the community-based research project could further the field’s understanding of the applicability of the practice across a variety of social issues.

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Telling Our Stories Together: How Universities and Community Partners Co-create Engaged Scholarship

Taylor Armer, Katelyn McCoy, Bethany Verrett, Alexandra Williams, Kristin Menson, and Marybeth Lima

Abstract

The inspiration for this paper came from an informal discussion among engaged faculty scholars about the ways in which we created written scholarship with community partners. We realized that while our methods had similarities and differences, none of us had ever read an article on this subject. A subsequent search of the scholarship of engagement literature yielded little information regarding scholarship co-authored by faculty and community partners. Based on practices shared by engaged scholars and informed by an analysis of publications co-authored by community partners and faculty members in three well-known engagement journals, we developed a framework to describe how such written scholarship can be co-created. The framework features steps of the publication process (initiation, drafting, finalizing the draft, and submission and publication), and specifies a corresponding degree of collaboration (co-attribution, co-authoring, and co-writing) for each step. This framework is intended to provide context for the dissemination endeavors of partnerships between universities and communities, and to ensure that products of these partnerships are well-planned and accurately documented. It can be used in conjunction with other tools for dissemination efforts detailed in community-based participatory research approaches, also discussed here.

Introduction

Service-learning and civic engagement in higher education have a rich history. More than 1,000 universities in the United States now have centers of service-learning or community engagement (Campus Compact, 2015), equipped with libraries of books, journals, and other publications on these topics for their respective constituencies. Through library resources and center personnel, we can learn “the canon” of the field (definitions, models, best practices, and recommendations); examine case studies of partnerships between universities and communities within and across disciplines; and delve into community-based research techniques, the nuances of these partnerships, and the position of civic engagement within higher education. As partnerships between peers in the university and community abound, scholars have introduced mutually beneficial and societally relevant community-based scholarship across many disciplines, partly in response to the “proliferation of service-learning and the campus infrastructure to support it” (Hartley & Saltmarsh, 2016, p. 42).

The current study was motivated by a conversation among faculty members participating in a community-engaged research program offered by the Center for Community Engagement Learning and Leadership (CCELL) at Louisiana State University (LSU), in which six faculty members met monthly with CCELL staff during a nine-month period to learn and discuss aspects of the scholarship of engagement, while each faculty member was creating scholarship from their community-engaged work. The scholars also had their work critiqued by the group before submission for publication.

During one meeting, as scholars were discussing how they collaborated with their community partners in the publication and dissemination process, we were struck by similarities and differences in approach. Upon reflection, we realized that none of us had ever read an article involving models to co-create scholarship for partnerships between universities and community constituents, and a subsequent search in engagement scholarship literature did not yield much information. Although we found numerous examples of scholarship co-authored by community partners and faculty, we found limited material regarding the process of co-creating written scholarship. Thus, we sought to develop a method for this process.

The objective of this paper is to provide a framework for partnerships between universities and communities to co-create individual pieces of
written scholarship in such a way as to counteract the African proverb, “Until the lion tells his side of the story, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.”

Background

Successful community-engaged research employs transparency, adaptation, respect, and constant communication as standard practice at all stages (Ross, Loup, Nelson, Botkin, Kost, Smith, & Gehlert, 2010; Buys & Burnsall, 2007; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Driscoll & Sandmann, 2016). These facets are especially needed in the dissemination stage, when scholars and community partners decide how the writing and editing process will work to achieve their balance of needs.

Ross et al. (2010) detailed the challenges of collaboration for academic and community partners in a research partnership and reported several points to consider when faculty members and community partners collaborate on research before, during, and after a project. The authors remind research teams to anticipate how the data should be published in order to offset confusion. If faculty plan to publish their findings in an academic journal, then the team should consider “negotiating rules of authorship…as some community partners may want, and have the expertise to take on, a significant role” (Ross et al., 2010, p. 27).

These investigators also pointed out that community partners may prefer distributing the project’s data through a medium “that emphasizes wider access to the reports for leverage in getting services, and may want the researchers to help them in these activities” (Ross et al., 2010, p. 27). The faculty member and community member are encouraged to engage one another openly and honestly about their intentions for the research well before the dissemination stage.

Nancy Franz (2011, 2016) provided a step-by-step guide for engaged scholars who wish to document and disseminate their scholarship with community partners. When planning engaged scholarship efforts, Franz encourages faculty members to determine, in conjunction with their community partners, the specific products of scholarship that the partnership will produce. Franz outlines several types of scholarly products, including academic (journal articles, abstracts, books and monographs, posters, presentations, etc.), community (workshops, newsletters, websites, designs, displays, brochures, grant proposals, etc.), and applied products (apps, curricula, guides, handbooks, policies, research briefs, social marketing, training and technical assistance tools, etc.). Once the team determines the research objectives of their project, as well as which scholarly products will be created when each objective is complete, a point person is assigned to ensure that each scholarly product is produced and disseminated. We find this approach useful because it places community members and faculty members on equal footing and expands the products and boundaries of scholarship beyond those typically considered by faculty.

Though there was not much information about co-created products of scholarship in the engagement literature, numerous researchers have written about the drafting and dissemination process in community-based participatory research (CBPR), which is defined as “[A] collaborative approach that equitably involves all partners in the research process and recognizes the unique strengths that each brings” (Minkler, 2005, p. ii3.) The encompassing term “partners” often refers to community members, organizational representatives, and researchers.

Bordeaux, Wiley, Tandon, Horowitz, Brown, and Bass (2007) offer detailed guidance for authors at every step of the peer-reviewed publication process from planning to execution. These researchers identify two challenges with publication of co-created scholarship: 1) reviewers and editors who may not have a background in CBPR and may not properly assess an article for publication, and 2) achieving a balance between CBPR approaches and conventions of typical scholarship.

The authors include a number of questions that partnerships should address before embarking on co-created scholarship. Following are some of the questions included (Bordeaux et al., 2007):

- What is the process for developing a potential article?
- What is the process for asking all partners whether they are interested in contributing to a manuscript?
- What are the criteria for authorship?
- How is authorship order determined?
- What will the writing process look like?
- How often will co-authors meet to review and discuss the manuscript?
Then, the authors provide advice for collaborative writing, section by section, of a typical peer-reviewed manuscript (abstract, introduction, methods, results, discussion, references, and tables and figures). They created and present the PRESS mnemonic for this type of publication (p. 286):

- Pay attention to the general principles for organizing each part of a paper.
- Reinforce text with strategically selected and clearly labeled tables and figures.
- Explain why a CBPR approach was used.
- Specify how a CBPR approach was used.
- Specify what the CBPR approach added to your project.

Finally, the article’s appendix includes a list of references that the authors believe are good examples of co-created CBPR in peer-reviewed journals based on a section-by-section approach. For instance, if readers want to peruse an excellent discussion section, they can consult the list of example articles accordingly. This comprehensive reference provides a detailed overview and sage advice for drafting peer-reviewed CBPR articles.

Castleden, Sloan Morgan, and Neimanis (2010) examined co-authorship of CBPR with indigenous communities and detailed four facets of authorship to consider: “1) current practices regarding methods of acknowledging community contributions, 2) requirements for shared authorship with individual versus collective/community partners, 3) benefits to sharing authorship and collective/community partners, and 4) risks to sharing authorship with collective/community partners” (p. 23).

These authors stated that even among community-engaged researchers, there were three distinct perspectives on the level of contribution necessary to earn authorship in peer-reviewed literature, with some researchers believing that each author should write a portion of the manuscript, others stating that some individuals could write on behalf of the entire community, and a third group thinking that as long as “the community member had in some way contributed intellectually to the project, co-authorship was warranted” (Castleden et al., 2010, p. 26). The authors do not recommend a standard co-authorship framework because of varying cultural traditions concerning ownership, and they urge collaborators to discuss and collectively address the complexities of publishing together, including authorship around individual versus collective contributions, confidentiality/anonymity considerations, and intellectual property issues. They suggest a best practice of creating formal research agreements at the start of a research partnership, including determining the criteria for authorship and acknowledgment.

Phillipi, Likis, and Tilden (2018) present several authorship grids, based on the type of peer-reviewed publication (quantitative, qualitative, literature review), to help teams, especially those involving multiple professions, to navigate common issues in academic publication. These grids, which are based on national and international guidelines, “can be used while planning and executing projects to define each author’s role, responsibilities, and contributions as well as to guide conversations among authors and help avoid misconduct and disputes” (p. 195). They list specific tasks in all aspects of the research process and match the level of involvement with each task to the order of authorship in a manuscript of up to six authors. While not specifically geared toward co-created scholarship, these grids could help university-community partnerships as they collectively determine the criteria for authorship and acknowledgment based on standard practice.

In summary, investigators in engagement and CBPR have identified the need for communication throughout the research process, including at the dissemination stage, to fulfill the highest ideals and values of co-created scholarship. Toward this end, they have offered advice for dissemination efforts at the overall research project level and for individual works of co-created scholarship. Within the latter efforts, investigators have encouraged co-authors to identify and agree upon “nuts and bolts” aspects of publication, including what constitutes authorship, authorship order, how the scholarship will be created and edited, what co-created sections of a manuscript might look like, and so on.

Our framework adds to the literature in this area by correlating the step in the publication process with the degree of collaboration. This approach is more specific than the outstanding general guidelines presented by Franz (2011, 2016) and less specific than the detailed grid approach of Phillipi et al. (2018). Our approach is based on a per publication basis similar to Bordeaux et al. (2007), but it focuses on the overall process (initiation, drafting, finalizing the draft, and submission...
and publication) instead of the manuscript sections (abstract, introduction, methods, results, discussion, references, and tables and figures). It is our hope that the framework we present here, when used in conjunction with the aforementioned general guidelines and more specific “nuts and bolts” details, can guide authors as they plan individual pieces of co-created scholarship.

Methods

Our approach began informally because of the aforementioned “aha” moment experienced by the faculty engaged scholars and CCELL staff while discussing co-created written scholarship. After this discussion, the CCELL’s director and program manager shared notes taken during the discussion, organized these notes into themes, and merged them together into an initial framework for co-creating scholarship. Because this framework was based on the collective experience of six scholars and two CCELL staff, we sought to collect more information to add to the legitimacy of the framework.

CCELL’s graduate student and undergraduate student workers searched for articles published in engagement journals (details follow) that were co-authored by a professor and at least one community partner. We used this information to compile data regarding the frequency of co-authored articles as a function of journal and date of publication. Because author information was not comprehensive in every journal, the students used LinkedIn and Google searches to locate information about the authors. However, since affiliations change over time and the students had access only to information shared on these sites, the data and analysis concerning these articles should be taken as a close approximation.

We targeted three well-known peer-reviewed journals in community engagement, civic engagement, and service-learning from the year each journal began publishing: the *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning (MJCSL)*, which began publishing in 1994; the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement (JHEOE)*, in 1996; and the *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship (JCES)*, in 2008. We selected these journals to find co-created scholarship because each met the following criteria: prioritizes interdisciplinary scholarship; emphasizes community and/or civic engagement in its mission or vision; and publishes co-authored pieces from non-academics. We felt that broadly situated engagement journals would provide the best overview of co-created scholarship.

More specifically, *MJCSL* (2020) describes itself as a resource for scholars, practitioners, and community partners who respond to challenges “in our communities by advancing innovative and interdisciplinary scholarship that informs and enhances the practice of community engagement.” *JHEOE* (2020) is best known to engaged scholars for its reputation for publishing “all forms of outreach and engagement research involving higher education institutions and communities.”

Although *JCES* (2020) is relatively new compared to the other two journals, we included it because it focuses on including perspectives on engaged scholarship from “faculty, staff, students, and community partners [integrating] teaching, research, and community engagement in all disciplines…”

We used the list of co-created articles from these journals to contact the co-authors for more information about the process they used to create and publish their articles. We obtained permission from LSU’s Institutional Review Board to contact each author via email. In this communication, we asked for some details, but were not overly prescriptive, to allow for freedom and flexibility in responses:

…Things you might talk about include the writing process—for example, who created an initial outline/plan or did you create it together; did you assign separate parts of the manuscript, write them individually, and send them to a point person who compiled them? Or did you do all or part of the work together face-to-face (i.e. creating, typing, and editing together)? Did you proceed via other methods (email or a combination of face-to-face and email/phone communication)? Did you have any discussions about logistics, for example, the order of authors on the manuscript or who was in charge of submitting the manuscript for publication and working through revisions and edits, etc.?

We received six responses to our emails. Five were from university faculty members, including one faculty member who had been a community partner at the time the individual co-authored the article (and who was so inspired by the process that
the co-author later became a faculty member); and one response was from a university staff member who facilitated community-engaged scholarship for faculty, community partners, and students. We added these responses to the information shared by the six LSU faculty research scholars and two CCELL staff members to inform the framework detailed in the results and discussion below.

In summary, this framework was created by considering all 14 scholars’ thoughts and ideas, and by using knowledge of the steps involved in creating a manuscript, along with ideas gleaned from literature (Franz, 2016; Sword, 2017).

Results
The results section is divided into two parts. The first involves an analysis of co-created written scholarship in the three aforementioned engagement journals, and the second includes the framework we developed for co-created scholarship.

Analysis of co-created written scholarship.
All three journals have published articles with university and community constituent co-authors. Of the 1,142 total articles published by these journals from 1994 to 2019, 84 (7.4%) featured university and community co-authors. Table 1 shows the overall percentage of co-created articles for each journal, including the rate of co-created articles published per year for each journal.

Table 1. Comparative Data on Each Journal on Total Articles and Co-Created Articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>Total number of articles published during evaluation period</th>
<th>Total number of co-created articles published</th>
<th>Percent-age of co-created articles published</th>
<th>Rate of co-authored publications per year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement</td>
<td>591</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 Per year calculations were based on the number of years each journal had been published through fall 2019 issues (JHEOE’s last published issue was summer 2019). Also, the Michigan Journal was not published in 2018 and thus did not count toward the per year calculation; likewise with JHEOE in 2006.

We carried out this survey in 2015 and reanalyzed co-created scholarship published by the journals in 2019 to ensure that the numbers reported are the most up to date possible.

Figure 1 summarizes the percentage of articles published with at least one professor and community partner as co-authors for each of the three journals on an annual basis. Although there is great variability from year-to-year on a percentage basis, it appears that the frequency of articles with university and community co-authors has increased over time. The first article of this type was published in JHEOE in 1996. Only two were published between 1996 and 1999. However, 46 (55%) were published after 2010, which suggests that collaboration in publication is becoming more common. Figure 2 shows the percentage of co-created articles published in each journal in five-year increments.

There is some variability in the percentage of co-created articles published by each journal. JCES has the highest percentage of articles of this type, which aligns with the journal’s emphasis on publishing scholarship from all constituents, with submissions from community partners and students actively encouraged.

We also examined the number of authors and author order for co-created articles to see if we could find any insights into the writing process for co-created articles. Articles with community partner and university co-authors had a mean (average) of 4.3 authors, while articles without community partner constituents had a mean of 2.1 authors. Thus, on average, co-created articles had a substantially higher number of co-authors. When there were many co-authors, they tended to be listed in alphabetical order.

In terms of author order for co-authored articles, approximately 85% had a faculty member listed as the first author. Several articles published in JCES and JHEOE listed the community partner as first author; community partner co-authors were not first authors in MJCSL. We tried to analyze corresponding author information, but it was not available from all journals. Our data, supplemented
Figure 1. Percent of Articles Published by Community and University Co-authors on an Annual, Per Journal Basis

Figure 2. Percent of Co-created Articles for Each Journal in Five-year Increments

Figure 3. Framework for Co-created Scholarship
by feedback from community-engaged scholars and survey respondents, indicated that the faculty member was typically the corresponding author. This finding is not surprising, given that journal articles are typically academic products of scholarship and for scholars of many disciplines are the “currency” of promotion and tenure and professional recognition (Ross et al., 2010; Buys & Bursnall, 2007; Moore & Ward, 2008; Driscoll & Sandmann, 2001).

In summary, we concluded from this analysis that because the number of co-authored articles is generally increasing, the need for establishing best practices for co-authored scholarship is important. We also concluded that groups that wish to publish co-created scholarship have ample opportunity to do so in the three engagement journals studied here, and beyond.

**Framework for co-created scholarship.**

Figure 3 illustrates the framework for co-created scholarship.

This framework consists of two major axes: the publication process and the degree of collaboration. The publication process is split into four steps that are typical in creating written products of scholarship: initiation, drafting, finalizing the draft, and submission and publication. The degree of collaboration is represented by three possibilities well-described in Sword (2017): Co-attribution includes multiple researchers’ names on a single publication regardless of whether they actively participated in the writing process. Co-authorship means that two or more authors contribute to the writing and editing of a single piece, whereas co-writing literally means that two or more authors compose sentences together in the same time and place.

We believe the two axes are important because they break down the basic process of publication in such a way that the degree of collaboration can be considered on a step-by-step basis. We noticed from our interview and faculty scholar data that the degree of collaboration varied across the publication process, in ways further described in the following. In the next subsections, we present each step of the publication process and the degree of collaboration within each step.

**Initiation.** The first step of the publication process involves initiating an idea or method to produce a piece of scholarship. Most of our cohort reported that the idea to publish was the faculty member’s and occurred after ongoing collaboration with the community partner(s). Thus, the impetus to start on co-created scholarship was almost entirely one of co-attrition, in which the faculty member initiated publication.

The decision to undertake the publication process was not done without contemplation of potential concerns regarding the partnership. A couple of respondents were concerned because they didn’t want to overburden their community partner with work that wasn’t going to “count” toward the mission of the organization or for the individual employee’s performance or career advancement. A third respondent stated that the initial response of the community partner was that collaboration on an article would be a waste of that person’s time. Despite these concerns, the majority of respondents stated that their collaborators were excited about the prospect of working together on a publication.

**Drafting.** Once the decision to co-create scholarship was made, collaborators then worked to draft their publication. Of the 12 total responses for this part of the process, 17% practiced co-attribution, with the faculty member drafting the manuscript, 75% practiced co-authorship, in which each co-author independently wrote part of the draft, and 8% practiced co-writing, in which the authors created the manuscript together in the same time and place.

The co-attribution cases were described as an effort not to overburden community partners. In the cases of co-authorship, each co-author was responsible for writing a piece of the manuscript and then submitting it back to the person in charge of the full manuscript, which was the faculty member in every case. The co-writing example involved the faculty member and community partners having conversations about the research topic. These conversations were taped and transcribed, and the transcript was used to create a written manuscript, with every participant being a co-author. This faculty member shared that her community partners didn’t feel comfortable writing longhand or with a word processor but they felt very comfortable with the spoken word, so she used the medium her co-authors felt most comfortable with.

One respondent, “Jenna,” described a process that was a mix of co-authorship and co-writing:

We came together after everyone agreed to work on an article together. We were determined to start the process together, so we first had a number of...
short meetings. We had conversations during these meetings to figure out the following: What questions did we want to ask and answer through the article? Which questions did we (faculty member, community partner, college student, K–12 student) have in common? Our plan was to create common questions and answer them from our individual perspectives. Once we figured out our common questions, we spent 30 minutes writing in the same room together. Then we split up and each co-author finished writing their answers to the common questions. Then they sent them to me to compile.

**Finalizing the draft.** Following the drafting process, the compilation of separate portions of the articles and subsequent editing to create a finalized draft was completed by co-attribution (15%, solely by the faculty member); by co-authorship (62%), in which individual authors submitted their comments to the faculty member, electronically or over the phone in an interactive process; or by co-writing (23%), in which the authors met together in the same room to complete this process. One respondent mentioned that depending on the collaboration, the finalization process was different, with a co-author process in one case and a co-attribution process in another. Several respondents mentioned that their community partners played a stronger role in the editing and compilation process than in the drafting process.

The writing process described by Jenna in the aforementioned section, handled the finalization process as follows:

We came together to finalize our draft, and this step of the process involves critiquing your own writing, and that of your co-authors. I modeled the process for my community partners because they didn’t feel comfortable critiquing me. I went through my own writing first and beat myself up in front of them, so that they could see it wasn't personal, it was about making the writing better. Then I asked them, “Can you help me make this clear?” This process freed them up to do the same thing. We got to the point that we could easily self-critique and critique the work of each other. This process is more work than doing it myself; it's constant coming together and face-to-face investment. But I know that it is worth it.

**Submission and publication.** In every case, the faculty member was in charge of submitting the manuscript to a journal or publisher. Respondents stated that manuscripts typically came back with revision requirements and/or suggestions (the article described by Jenna was accepted without revision, a rare occurrence in peer-reviewed publication). In every case reported by respondents, faculty members were also the point people for handling revisions and re-submitting the manuscript.

Every respondent who reported on this part of the process stated that all co-authors were consulted before final revisions were re-submitted for publication. Thus, there were no cases of co-attribution at this point in the process. Most respondents (71%) reported that they shared revision comments with all co-authors and that the co-authors submitted suggested changes to the faculty member via email or by phone. Twenty-nine percent of respondents reported completing the revision process face-to-face in real time and agreeing on the final manuscript that was ultimately published.

**Discussion**

Collectively, respondent data show varying degrees of collaboration across each step of the publication process, indicating that “one size does not fit all” (Ross et al., 2010; Castleden et al., 2010; Buys & Bursnall, 2007). We were encouraged that academic co-authors explicitly considered the needs of their non-academic peers, but the fact that the vast majority of publication initiation was done by the faculty member suggests to us the need for having crucial conversations at the start of collaboration. We hope that our framework can be useful in shaping the creation of each scholarly product in such a way that community partners can also initiate the process.

Other frameworks can also be useful to facilitate the co-creation and dissemination of the integrative research efforts of community and university constituents. For example, newly formed partnerships could use Franz’s model (2011, 2016) for determining eventual products of scholarship and responsibility distribution at the outset of a collaboration. For each individual product of scholarship, partners could discuss the answers to the seven questions asked by Bordeaux
et al. (2007; see introduction section for specific questions) as well as the grid approach presented by Phillippi et al. (2018) to determine specific tasks and author order within each product of scholarship. Members of the partnership could also determine the degree of collaboration across the process while it is ongoing, and could adjust if necessary to ensure balanced power and voice. Partnerships could also examine their previous processes to determine if changes need to occur in moving forward.

Respondents pointed to several potential issues involved in the dissemination process, including the amount of work necessary for all constituents; a possible lack of relevance for the community partner’s mission; and the unfamiliarity and potential vulnerability of constituents in the iterative, critique-driven processes involved in peer-reviewed publication. An examination of literature shows that some have grappled with these issues.

With respect to workload, some investigators have noted the balance between efficiency in time input on the one hand, and the necessity to take the time to create scholarship with high legitimacy and credibility on the other (Cashman, Adeky, Allen, Corburn, Israel, Montano, Rafelito, Rhodes, Swanston, Wallerston, & Eng, 2008; Flicker & Nixon, 2018).

This tension is summed up well by Jenna’s statement, “This process is more work than doing it myself; it’s constant coming together and face-to-face investment. But I know that it is worth it.” In their paper, Cashman et al. (2008) state that “Time required is lengthened considerably. There are no shortcuts to including both community and academic partners in data analysis, interpretation, or both” (p. 1415). These investigators conclude that “…including community partners in data analysis and interpretation, while lengthening project time, enriches insights and findings and consequently should be a focus on next generation CBPR initiatives.” (p. 1407). Although the article is focused on the data analysis and interpretation portions of the research process, we believe that the authors’ work is extendable to the dissemination process: there are no shortcuts to including community and academic partners in creating products of scholarship. While this approach lengthens the time to produce such scholarship, it also enriches insights and findings.

Concerns about the publication process having a lack of relevance for community partners indicates the importance of open communication at every step of the research and dissemination process, and the necessity to determine a collaborative structure that works for everyone. It is critical for faculty and community partners not to assume that they know “what’s best” for the other constituency. Partnerships that use the processes discussed earlier by Franz (2011, 2016), Bordeaux et al. (2007), and Phillippi et al. (2018) will maximize the chance that co-created scholarship is highly relevant for all constituents.

In terms of vulnerability during the critique process, Jenna mentions the importance of modeling the practice of critique and the ways in which it is used to enhance the ultimate quality of the work. Modeling is one important means of communication. Cashman et al. (2008) discuss a workshop format employed by some partnerships to address issues like this.

Investigators have detailed other issues involving vulnerability of participants in a broader sense. Flicker and Nixon (2018, p. 153) describe a case in which

...a community-based partner shared that she has experienced backlash from her past participation in publication efforts. She explained that she had lost considerable trust from fellow community members and that her (and her organization’s) reputation suffered because others publicly attacked her for “selling out” and participating in “the academic industrial complex.”

These investigators recommend “open and honest dialogue about the value and potential impacts of manuscript development…” (p. 153). Castleden et al. (2010) illustrates that some partnerships may require more nuanced questions and discussions to ensure that everyone is comfortable with the process for co-created scholarship with regard to confidentiality, intellectual property, authorship (individual versus collective contributions), and legitimacy of the work (as viewed by the community and the academy).

Collectively, respondent data and our resulting framework, other dissemination processes, and supporting literature seek to ensure that the scholarly products of university and community partnerships are also transformational.
Conclusion

Dissemination can be one important activity of integrative partnerships, and can provide an opportunity for community and university partners, including students, to share the stories, struggles, outcomes, and impacts of their work with others. Dissemination can be used to inspire and empower partnerships and “can advance the field of community engagement scholarship” (JCES). This study presents a framework for individual pieces of co-created scholarship in which constituents can plan or map their degree of collaboration across each step of the publication process. We believe that frameworks like ours can be useful to partnerships that seek to disseminate knowledge together. An analysis of three well-known engagement journals showed that such dissemination occurs, with 7.4% of published research articles from these journals featuring community and university authors, and with these types of co-created publications occurring with increasing frequency. We hope that our framework, which can be used alongside additional methods discussed in this paper, will assist authors as they plan, execute, and complete individual pieces of co-created scholarship in a rich, accurate manner.

This study has several limitations. The authors used 14 examples of co-created scholarship to create the framework presented here. We expended some effort to broaden our pool, but struggled to find contact information for all co-authors, especially in earlier volumes of the journals. Thus, it would be useful for journal co-authors to have permanent email addresses or LinkedIn accounts listed with their names. Hopefully, this practice becomes the norm as journals become more electronically sophisticated. Also, we did not locate dissemination models in CBPR literature until some were pointed out to us during peer review. Such information may have assisted with the compilation of our framework.

There are a number of possibilities for future work in this area. For example, formal survey development and validation techniques could be used to gather more in-depth data on a greater number of partnerships to test the framework we created (and others presented in this paper), build on it, or create another. Formal interviews with authors of co-created scholarship may yield more nuanced forms of collaboration and scholarship. Within the realm of peer-reviewed articles, additional research could be done on the publication of co-created scholarship in other journals focused on civic engagement, and could compare these journals to the publication of co-created scholarship in discipline-specific journals to understand, compare, and contrast the growth of co-created scholarship within and among disciplines. The editorial staff of research journals could be surveyed regarding the practices they use (if any) to encourage co-created scholarship, with an eye toward establishing best practices and recommendations for journals who wish to showcase this type of scholarship. Looking beyond peer-reviewed publication, models of co-created scholarship could be examined on other academic products of scholarship, and on community and applied products of scholarship. Finally, the role of students in co-creating engaged scholarship could also be investigated.

References


*JCES (Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship)* (2020). Retrieved from jces.ua.edu/.


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Determining the Efficacy of the Community Research Fellows Training: An 18-Month Evaluation

Traci Hayes, Victoria Walker, and Tanya Funchess

Abstract
Community members equipped with knowledge, training, resources, and opportunity acquired through structured research educational programs can strengthen the research relationship and improve the process for community-based participatory research. The purpose of this research is to explore the sustained efficacy of the Mississippi Community Research Fellows Training conducted by the 18-month post-completion of the first cohort. A mixed method approach that included fielding a brief survey and having a focus group discussion among fellows was applied to the study to determine impact, value, and utility of skills learned. Seventeen of the 25 Cohort 1 fellows completed an online survey. Six participated in a focus group. The participants recognized the relevancy of the skills acquired and had applied their training to forge new collaborations with researchers and community organizations and contributed to the acquisition of resources for their communities and disseminated culturally appropriate health information to the residents. Recommendations for the future training programs were identified. The findings could ensure the long-term utility of the lessons and skills learned.

Introduction
Researchers seeking to address clinical, behavioral, and environmental problems that affect disparate and diverse communities have found value in forging relationships with the community of interest (Israel, Coombe, Cheezum, Schulz, McGranaghan, Lichtenstein, Reyes, Clement, & Burris, 2010; Hsu, Peng, Chen, Lin, Chang, Chen, Hugh, Ho, Chen, Lee, & Huang, 2015; Komaie, Ekenga, Sanders, & Goodman, 2010; & Minkler, 2010). Community-based participatory research (CBPR) that fully engages members from the community of interest has reported an increase in clinical uptake and prolonged behavioral changes (Huang, Lipman, & Mullins, 2017; Lam, Sherbourne, Tang, Belin, Young-Brinn, Miranda, & Wells, 2016). Often the research methods, processes, and terminologies are not thoughtfully translated to the community members and the benefits of the partnerships are not realized (Huang et al., 2017; Wilkins, 2011).

Community members equipped with the knowledge and resources can strengthen the research relationship and provide insight about the area (Komaie et al., 2010; Israel et al., 2010). Training programs have been utilized to prepare health professionals, academicians, and students to conduct research that addresses community health. Research has shown that lay community members demonstrate high levels of satisfaction and increased self-efficacy upon completion of the training (de Vries & Pool, 2017; Lam et al., 2016; D’Agostino McGowan, Stafford, Thompson, Johnson-Javois, & Goodman, 2015; Goodman, Dias, & Stafford, 2010; King, Pardo, Norris, Diaz-Romero, Morris, Vassar, & Brown, 2015; Rafie, Ayers, Cadet, Quillin, & Hackney, 2015; Woldie, Feyissa, Admasu, Hassen, Mitchell, Mahew, McKee, & Balabanova, 2018).

A quantitative evaluation of the Community Research Fellows Training (CRFT) program implemented in the St. Louis area identified an increase in participants’ knowledge and overall participant and faculty satisfaction (D’Agostino McGowan et al., 2015). The findings were determined by analyzing the 44 participants’ baseline to post CRFT course test scores. Participants who had never taken a research course experienced a greater increase in knowledge than those who had previously been exposed to research content. The increase in knowledge scores and satisfaction rating demonstrated that the program met its goals. The evidence suggests CRFT was successful at “initiating fellow-inspired community-centric pilot projects” (D’Agostino McGowan et al., 2015, p. 180).

As part of a larger in-depth evaluation, Komaie et al. (2017) conducted a qualitative evaluation of the CRFT program to determine if it provided a favorable environment for increasing the participants’ research literacy and critical consumption of the research. Fellows of
two cohorts were recruited for semi-structured, in-person interviews. Thematic analysis was used on the interview data. Previously collected quantitative survey data helped to inform the interview guide and develop the codebook. The qualitative findings complemented the quantitative data and showed evidence of increasing the fellows’ capacity to partner with academic researchers to address health disparities in the area (Komaie et al., 2017). Findings revealed the importance of accommodating the various levels of education and learning styles for participants.

An evaluation of a 12-week intensive grant writing training for academic/community teams suggests the training series increased the participants’ self-efficacy. The grant training produced six of the seven participants’ applications being funded for a partnered community-engaged or health service project (King et al., 2015). The academic/community teams were comprised of at least two community lay persons. King and his colleagues acknowledged the importance of placing the right people together and reaffirmed that the community members and the academics must be committed to working together to achieve a common goal.

Although the literature exploring the knowledge and self-efficacy gained by participants attending community research trainings was extensive, there was insufficient information on whether knowledge was retained and applied long after the program had ended. Baseline and post assessments have been conducted to determine knowledge gain and are the standard evaluation approach for these trainings (D’Agostino McGowan et al., 2015; Goodman, Dias & Stafford, 2010; Goodman, Gbaje, Yassin, Johnson Dias, Gilbert, & Thompson, 2018; Goodman et al., 2012) and incorporated culturally appropriate content with a local focus. The case studies and examples were tailored using common vernacular and included references of familiar neighborhoods, landmarks, and healthcare facilities (Coats, Stafford, Thompson, Javois, & Goodman, 2015; D’Agostino McGowan et al., 2015; Davis, Aromaa, McGinnis, Ramsey, Rollins, Smith, Beamer, Buckley, Stange, & Fagnan, 2014; Stewart, Felix, Cottoms, Olson, Shelby, Houff, Colley, Sparks, & McKindra, 2013l Stewart, Felix, Olson, Cottoms, Bachereld, Smith, Ford, Dawson, & Green, 2015; Goodman et al., 2012; Watts, Christopher, Streitz, & McCormick, 2005). The group discussions covered the social determinants of health as well as data specific to racial disparities and other health issues with high prevalence and incident rates affecting the state. The CRFT fellows engaged in field activities including photovoice and a windshield tour where they documented factors that would impede health and well-being of the residents, devising a plan of action to inform community leaders and decision makers. The CRFT fellows completed learning exercises and weekly home assignments to increase knowledge of qualitative and quantitative research methods, health disparities, health literacy, cultural competency, research ethics, human subject protection, clinical trials implementation, program evaluation, and grant writing. Each course was taught by an expert in an area of public

Mississippi Community Research Fellows Training

In 2014, the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH), Office of Health Disparity Elimination (OHDE) implemented its first Community Research Fellows Training in the Jackson, Mississippi, area approved under MSDH IRB Protocol #102814. The Mississippi CRFT was based on the Community Research Fellows Training that was first implemented by Washington University School of Medicine (WUSM) and the Siteman Cancer Center in St. Louis. The WUSM CRFT was modeled after the Community Alliance for Research Empowering Social Change (CARES). WUSM expanded the CARES goals and added new topics to the curriculum (D’Agostino McGowan et al., 2015; Goodman, et al., 2010; Goodman, Si, Stafford, Obasohan, & McHunguzi, 2012). The CRFT program was designed: 1) to enhance the lay community’s knowledge and understanding of research and 2) to create a pool of trained community members who could participate more actively in research to address the health issues of their community. The CRFT program was created to promote collaborations between the community members and the researchers and to spur continued interest among the community members to actively navigate the research spectrum.

The Mississippi CRFT program leveraged the existing evidence-based curriculum (Goodman, Dias & Stafford, 2010; Goodman, Gbaje, Yassin, Johnson Dias, Gilbert, & Thompson, 2018; Goodman et al., 2012) and incorporated culturally appropriate content with a local focus. The case studies and examples were tailored using common vernacular and included references of familiar neighborhoods, landmarks, and healthcare facilities (Coats, Stafford, Thompson, Javois, & Goodman, 2015; D’Agostino McGowan et al., 2015; Davis, Aromaa, McGinnis, Ramsey, Rollins, Smith, Beamer, Buckley, Stange, & Fagnan, 2014; Stewart, Felix, Cottoms, Olson, Shelby, Houff, Colley, Sparks, & McKindra, 2013l Stewart, Felix, Olson, Cottoms, Bachereld, Smith, Ford, Dawson, & Green, 2015; Goodman et al., 2012; Watts, Christopher, Streitz, & McCormick, 2005). The group discussions covered the social determinants of health as well as data specific to racial disparities and other health issues with high prevalence and incident rates affecting the state. The CRFT fellows engaged in field activities including photovoice and a windshield tour where they documented factors that would impede health and well-being of the residents, devising a plan of action to inform community leaders and decision makers. The CRFT fellows completed learning exercises and weekly home assignments to increase knowledge of qualitative and quantitative research methods, health disparities, health literacy, cultural competency, research ethics, human subject protection, clinical trials implementation, program evaluation, and grant writing. Each course was taught by an expert in an area of public

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health, medicine, policy and research methods, and possessed an extensive background working with communities. The comprehensive program included: 1) weekly sessions and assignments, 2) field work, 3) assessments and evaluation projects, 4) grant proposal writing and submission, 5) Institutional Review Board application submission, 6) conducting literature review, and 7) composing problem statements and research questions (D’Agostino McGowan et al., 2015; de Vries & Pool, 2017; Komaie et al., 2017; Lam et al., 2016).

The purpose of this research was to explore the sustained efficacy of the CRFT and to determine any value added by the program for the first cohort of lay community members. Efficacy was defined as “the performance of the program to produce the intended outcome” 18 months post completion of the training program (Flay, Biglan, Boruch, Gonzalez Castro, Gottfredson, Kellam, Mo’scicci, Schinke, Valentine, & Ji., 2005, p.3; Pam, 2013).

The research questions were: What CRFT skills/lessons are currently being used? How are skills/lessons being applied? What effect, if any, has there been on the fellows’ professional life or personal life? How has the training impacted the fellow’s role in the workplace and in the community?

Method

The Mississippi CRFT was implemented in Jackson, Mississippi. At 81%, the city has one of the highest concentrations of African Americans in the nation (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). African Americans in this area traditionally suffer disproportionately from chronic diseases and are faced with environmental factors that affect their overall health and well-being (Elsadek, Zhang, Vargas, Funchess, & Green, 2015). Engaging minorities and underserved groups that are often absent from the research process can improve the uptake and dissemination of study findings and improves the trust among the racial/ethnic communities (Fastring, Mayfield-Johnson, Funchess, Green, Walker, & Powell, 2018; Lam et al., 2016). The Cohort 1 fellows were older than 18 and able to make a three-hour, once a week commitment for 16 consecutive weeks.

The MSDH Office of Health Disparity Elimination program administrators captured pre- and post-training measures. The previous evaluation included baseline, midpoint, and final assessments (Bright, 2016; Fastring et al., 2018; Mayfield-Johnson & Fastring, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c). This project consisted of an 18-month post-training evaluation relying on input from the first CRFT cohort. The assessments were designed to understand long-term impact of CRFT by looking at utilization and value added.

Participants

For the purpose of determining program efficacy, the study recognized fellows as the Cohort 1 totaling 25 individuals; and participants denote the individuals who responded to the survey and attended the focus group for the purpose of determining program efficacy. Participant recruitment was purposeful in that all fellows (n=25) of CRFT Cohort 1 were encouraged to participate (Palinkas, Horowitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2015). Cohort 1 (n=25) was comprised of 23 African-American women, one Caucasian woman and one African-American male. The fellows had bachelor's degrees in various subjects and 60% (n=16) had master's degrees. Fewer than five (20%) of the fellows had a research course. More than 40% (n=11) of the Cohort 1 fellows were employed with community/grassroots organizations, 16% (n=4) in government, 20% (n=5) as community health workers, and 16% (n=4) as community volunteers. The fellows had limited to no health research experience prior to CRFT, which was one of the criteria for acceptance into the course. The application review included scoring: 1) prior research experience, 2) connection to the community, and 3) support from their organization or church. Those selected had the lowest score with 1 equating to “Best Fit.” A score of 3–5 were not selected. In the course, participants who knew less about research were given priority over those who exhibit more knowledge about research. The evaluation was conducted by the MSDH, 18 months post-completion with the participants of the first cohort for the Mississippi CRFT.

Materials and Procedure

A mixed method approach was applied to the study and included fielding a brief survey and having a focus group discussion among CRFT’s fellows. The research aimed to explore the fellows’ long-term utilization of skills learned in the CRFT program and its utility 18 months following completion. For this study, utility is defined as “the extent to which there is beneficial impact on their work” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2011, p. 102). Value added is defined as “the importance, worth, and
usefulness that has been accumulated as a result of a period of time” (Harvey, 2004; Shah, 2017). The survey and focus group helped to validate findings (Wisdom & Creswell, 2013). The explanatory model is used with the qualitative data from the focus groups to illuminate the quality of the numerical data (Almalki, 2016; Rominger, 2017; Wisdom & Creswell, 2013). The two data sources were complementary and enabled inter-method clarification (Almalki, 2016; Hansen, O’Brien, Meckler, Change & Guise, 2016).

All fellows (N=25) of Cohort 1 were encouraged to complete the brief survey and participate in the focus group(s). The fellows received electronic messages about the 18-month evaluation, including the link to the online survey and another email that included the focus group instructions. The study participants (n=17) completed a consent form acknowledging the awareness of their rights as a volunteer. The MSDH Institutional Review Board approved the project. The findings obtained will be used to improve CRFT’s strategies and methods for preparing knowledgeable and skilled lay persons to work in collaborative community research. Information may also be used to support the solicitation of funds for specific community projects.

Survey
The participants’ input and perceptions were captured using a 16-item cross-sectional survey. The survey was validated by a team of experienced state health department professionals. The instrument was created in Survey Monkey with nine closed-ended questions and seven open-ended questions. Dichotomous and multiple-choice questions were included and took 15 to 20 minutes to complete. The survey was used to capture basic numerical data for generalizing across the cohort (Almalki, 2013; Foley, 2018; Jansen, 2010). Program terminology was presented as selections for closed-ended questions. The open-ended questions allowed the participants to explain in their own words the effect the training had on personal, professional, and community relationships. The results from the survey were used to identify topics to further explore during the focus group. The cohort had already been defined in previous MSDH reports; therefore, demographic information was not captured on this survey. The survey was available online from April–May 2016. E-mail reminders were sent bi-weekly to encourage completion.

Focus group
The focus group was designed to stimulate discussion among the participants who had similar experience of the training but could share some differences about the utilization and value gained.

The participants who completed the survey were given an opportunity to opt-in to a focus group to further expand upon the survey comments. Those who contacted the office were enrolled in the focus group. The focus group was held on July 28, 2016, in the Underwood Auditorium of the Mississippi State Department of Health. The focus group was facilitated by a doctoral student in the School of Public Health at Jackson State University. The facilitator directed the focus group in accordance with the OHDE-approved focus group protocol guide. Open-ended questions were asked regarding the participants’ experiences using their CRFT lessons; plans for community-based participatory research or other research endeavors; and their ability to identify, initiate and evaluate an intervention to address a community health need. The focus group guide listed the open-ended questions that were guided by topics drawn from the survey (see Table 1 for focus group questions).

Initial review of the session notes occurred within 24 hours between the focus group moderator and the staff of the MSDH.

Data Analysis
Descriptive statistics were used to describe the survey responses. Numerical survey data were analyzed using the internal analytic resources of the online survey management application and were presented as frequencies and percentages.

| Community Research Fellows Training (CRFT) Program | • What are your thoughts about community-based participatory research since completing CRFT? • What has been the impact of CRFT on your job or career? • What skills or techniques acquired through the CRFT program have you most utilized? • What could be done to improve the post CRFT experience? |
| Role of CRFT in Your Community | • What pressing health issues are facing your community? • How has your CRFT training prepared you to address those issues? |

Table 1. Focus Group Discussion Guidelines
Survey topics that received the highest response were foci of probing during the focus group (Komaie et al., 2017).

According to Rennekamp and Nall (2016), focus group data analysis involves indexing, management, and interpretation. Therefore, thematic analysis was the best method to apply to the data (Boyatzis, 1998). A qualitative thematic analysis of the focus group discussion was used; allowing for the identification of reoccurring points of interest (Boyatzis, 1998; Creswell, 2009; Komaie et al., 2017). The audio recording from the focus group discussion was transcribed verbatim in English. The CRFT focus group data was reviewed for common topics, content was grouped together, summary statements established, and themes identified. Initial codes identified through line-by-line review were grouped as common categories based on association and similarities (Creswell, 2009). The themes were identified from the categories that pertained to the initial purpose and questions. Two coders reviewed the emerging themes. Discussions about the themes were conducted with the research team. The multiple reviews provided complementing perspectives of the data and helped to increase the validity of the data (Creswell, 2009; Hansen et al., 2016). Key themes were used to present findings resulting from the focus group (Boyatzis, 1998; Creswell, 2009; Rennekamp & Nall, 2016). Lastly, survey data and focus group data were compared to identify complementary points of interest (Almalki, 2016; Foley, 2018; Jansen, 2010).

Results

Survey

Seventeen Cohort 1 fellows completed and submitted the 18-month evaluation survey. All the participants rated their understanding of their role in community research as high to very high. As a result, relationships were maintained with the CRFT program administrators (yes, 81.25%), Cohort peers (n=14; 82%), and program instructors (n=7; 43.75%). More than 94% (n=16) of the participants expressed that the CRFT information and skills presented had been highly useful. Approximately 70% of the participants had applied their CRFT skills to: 1) participating in focus groups, community forums and health service initiatives, 2) writing or developing grants and responding to community Requests for Proposals, and 3) conducting evaluations for community organizations. Nearly 20% identified the most valuable skill acquired as cultural competency. Other skills such as qualitative and quantitative research methods (n=3), managing data (n=3), and community outreach (n=3) shared equal importance among the participants. There were high response rates for having applied the skills learned in CRFT. Results from the survey showed forming new collaborative relationships as a point to probe during the group discussion (Komaie et al., 2017).

Focus Group

A focus group should consist of a minimum of six individuals (Komaie et al., 2017; Krueger & Casey, 2000). The study focus group was comprised of six African-American women from the 17 survey respondents. Results from the focus group allowed for an expansion of the topics prioritized by the survey including which skills have been applied, recent changes in professional and personal development, and results of their efforts in the community, work, and home. Almalki (2016) and Wisdom and Creswell (2013) acknowledge the complementary effect using the qualitative approach to investigate the numerical findings. The six female participants shared similar positions on the benefits of the CRFT. The final themes were: 1) the impact of the CRFT program on professional and personal development, 2) skills acquisition and utilization, and 3) the role of community-based participatory research. The explanation by theme is presented in the following and includes respondents’ quotes pertaining to the identified topic.

Theme 1: Impact of the Community Research Fellows Training (CRFT) program. The driver for engaging in such a program is whether it will add value to one’s personal or professional endeavors (Hotze, 2011). One participant noted, “The training has opened up doors for me to get on more projects and bring new ideas to help the study and community come together.”

Several participants mentioned that their communities were often at a disadvantage when healthcare organizations entered the community to conduct research. This observation aligns with what Wilkins (2011) found in that due to the prior lack of understanding pertaining to community research, the relationship had been unbalanced and was not mutually beneficial. One participant shared, “Some of the organizations or service providers have often been reluctant or slow to assign resources to our community and at the time...
we didn’t know better.” Another participant said, “As a result of the program, I am able to advocate on behalf of the community. I have been able to take our issues to agency boards and see about getting needed resources.”

According to participants the training strengthened their ability to engage in reasonable conversations about research and helped them to express issues in their community they felt should be at the forefront of the public health and academia research agenda. Two participants noted the following: “I am more confident in my ability to step into leadership roles and work with the researchers coming into our churches and neighborhoods,” and “My ability to provide health education, build these relationships and partner with healthcare teams was learned in the cohort.”

The participants expressed the value of their training in their professional environment as well. Though no direct career advancement had occurred, they were leveraging the knowledge from the program to increase their participation in the workplace. One participant shared, “The knowledge that I acquired through the CRFT training set me on a path to take and pass the Certified Health Education specialist exam” (a competency-based test for the health education professional). Another participant said, “Since CRFT, I have served as a liaison between the community and the administration of a local health organization seeking to recruit study participants.”

Theme 2: Skills acquisition and utilization. The participants reported using concepts and lessons from two or more of the courses presented during the training to start programs at their church. One participant explained how she had utilized the cultural competency training to better service her diverse clientele. One participant said, “I admit I was not aware of the need for cultural sensitivity and now I recognize how it can improve interaction.”

The participants discussed the importance of being able to apply the lessons learned to achieve desired goals in their communities. The women reported having an opportunity to work on a mini-grant. Several of the Cohort 1 fellows had implemented an intervention in their community. A participant expressed, “The experience of grant writing taught us how to write for seed money to support projects that were beneficial to our community.”

Another stated, “I was on a team with others who were more experienced with grant writing. As a result, I had only a small role in the development of the grant. Now, I’m involved in the grant process as much as possible. I want to be involved from the beginning to the submission.”

The participants were encouraged to write for mini-grants and to initiate pilot studies (King et al., 2015). The CRFT program administrators created opportunities within the curriculum and announced other opportunities with the MSDH, OHDE, and the local school district.

There was consensus among the participants that the topics and lessons presented were valuable for achieving their primary goals. Four of the participants acknowledged their use of the needs assessment instruction. The participants reported that they were more frequently conducting formal and informal needs assessments within their neighborhoods.

One participant shared, “I have used photovoice for capturing problems in my neighborhood. I take the images of the problems on the street and then send the pictures to my city council so they can address the problems.”

Photovoice, a qualitative data collection method using images to document health and environmental issues in the community, was viewed as a user-friendly and accessible tool for the participants to capture community priorities (Wang & Burris, 1997). A participant expressed, “I have incorporated the photovoice technique. It was easy to learn.”

Theme 3: Value of community-based participatory research. Additional probing helped to identify the participants’ perceptions of community-based participatory research and if the research activities in their community addressed the health needs of the residents. One participant shared, “We have issues in our community with researchers. They must establish trust, and if so we need to also see some benefit from the research.”

Two of the respondents mentioned that CRFT had shown them the need for building trust and understanding within the community. One said, “I know the questions to ask; so, I aim to get my community to buy in to the importance of research and to get them comfortable with sharing their information.”

The group expressed that it was vital for the researchers to ensure the community understood the benefits of participating in research and to receive helpful information at
the close of any community project. Similar to D'Agostino McGowan and colleagues (2015), the participants felt that interaction in the community was necessary. They recognized community-based participatory research as an asset to the community, if the researchers are focused on providing information that the community could use. Additionally, participants expressed that being a CRFT fellow empowered them to ensure research projects fairly represented their residents.

The participants shared that issues such as lack of knowledge about healthcare services and programs and a lack of trust in the healthcare system were reasons for the lack of participation in community-based research. There was consensus that increasing health literacy would improve the uptake of research participation. One participant said, “Low literacy in the African-American community is a problem.”

The participants have attempted to share more health information with the members of their communities. Using their CRFT training, several of the participants have worked to develop and deliver appropriately targeted health education and information to the various groups in their churches, schools, and civic organizations. One participant shared, “We presented plays using church members and youth, as well as language and situations that would be familiar to the congregation.”

Overall, the participants acknowledged that the interaction between the researchers and an informed community was important to ensuring public health. Providing translated, audience-appropriate details of the findings for the community-based research projects would eliminate the perception of “researchers running in, getting what they want, and then leaving.”

**Discussion**

The purpose of the research was to examine the sustained efficacy of the Mississippi Community Research Fellows Training program. The study examined the utilization and value added for the participants. The topics that received the highest responses were further probed during the focus group. The qualitative statements and survey results confirmed an increase in their knowledge of public health research. The findings were similar to prior CRFT evaluations (D’Agostino McGowan et al., 2015; Goodman et al., 2012; Fastring et al., 2018). New knowledge areas for the participants were demonstrated by comments like:

My ability to provide health education, build these relationships and partner with healthcare teams was learned in the cohort. …I admit I was not aware of the need for cultural sensitivity and now I recognize how it can improve interaction. …The knowledge that I acquired through the CRFT training set me on a path to take and pass the Certified Health Education specialist exam, a competency-based test for the health education professional. … I have incorporated the photovoice technique. It was easy to learn.

More than 90% of the participants thought the CRFT information and skills presented have been highly useful and verbal confirmation of program satisfaction was received during the focus group. These findings align with prior evaluations to determine knowledge increase and program satisfaction (D’Agostino McGowan et al., 2015; Goodman et al., 2010, 2012; Komaie et al., 2017; Theurer, 2015). Nearly two years later, the CRFT participants’ attitude toward and perceptions of the program remained positive.

According to the USDHHS (2011), one can ask questions, consult stakeholders, and obtain feedback to make assessments to improve the program (Flay et al., 2005; Pam, 2013). Seeking to understand the utility and value added from the CRFT program, explanation was sought pertaining to the application of lessons and benefits to their professional and personal endeavors. The findings revealed that the participants were active in representing their community at the table with the organizations and university researchers who wanted to come to their church or work in their neighborhood. Collaborating with researchers and community organizations increased opportunities to contribute to the grant-writing process and participating in community forums. A small number had worked on a health initiative and assisted with a community assessment. According to Hotze (2011), since risks and benefits of research are shared by the community, community members should be empowered to contribute to the purpose and execution of the project.

The program’s effect on the participants’ self-efficacy is evident. The data sources suggest the participants are comfortable in their ability to apply what was learned. It is considerable that self-efficacy must preclude long-term utility and application. Evidence has shown that training
improves the participant's self-efficacy (Goodman et al., 2018; King et al., 2017). The increase in confidence removed the fear of collaborative engagement with intellectuals and slowed the need to accept an unequal research partnership (de Vries & Pool, 2017; Israel et al., 2010).

Collaborative relationships with organizations and researchers had increased among the participants, overcoming the lack of trust and unbalanced rewards as an issue (Fastring et al., 2018). This was denoted by several comments, “We have issues in our community with researchers” and “We will provide all the data and information that’s needed. However, we need to also see some benefit [from the research].” Other studies have affirmed the challenges that face many minority groups attempting to engage in the research process (Israel et al., 2010; Huang et al., 2017; Wilkins, 2011). The community is often wondering will it be a mutually beneficial relationship (Ramirez, Weaver, Raizner, Dorfman, Herrick, & Gotto, 1977; Jimenéz-Chávez, Rosario-Maldonado, Torres, Ramos-Lucca, Castro-Figuero, & Santiago, 2018). Aware of the racial and economic issues affecting local communities, the Mississippi CRFT program included instruction in cultural competency and sensitivity skills. Cultural competency was identified as the most valuable skill.

The desire for change in their professional endeavors was the primary reason for CRFT participation. Program involvement resulted in changes in career and community life for nearly all participants. Through the narrative, these changes were identified as assuming more responsibilities and taking on leadership roles (King et al., 2018).

More than 70% of the participants confirmed their application of the CRFT skills. During their training, the participants were put into teams to develop and submit a grant. Two of the teams were funded (Fastring et al., 2018). Eighteen months later, participants remained involved in the grant process. One participant had shared that she was “involved in the grant process as much as possible, from the beginning to the submission.” Key lessons learned and applied were knowing the questions to ask, preparing an application for seed money to help the community, and recognizing their communities should see benefit/value once the universities and organizations have gone. Jimenéz-Chávez and colleagues (2018) found that training lay community members was an asset for the community. The participants remained focused on applying the skills learned.

While community engagement was not a leading reason for CRFT participation; during the focus group, community-engaged research was a reoccurring topic. The participants recognized their new skills added value to their communities. This was revealed through shared comments such as:

I aim to get my community to buy into the importance of research and to get them comfortable with sharing their information. … Now, they are a bit more willing to participate in the studies or projects sponsored by the universities. … We have taken some of the research findings and created lay summaries that could be easily understood and utilized to improve the health of the people at my church.

Researchers have found that trained lay people add to the social capital of the community (Lantz, Viruell-Fuentes, Israel, Softlev, & Guzman, 2001). A survey and focus group helped to validate the findings (Wisdom & Creswell, 2013). The quantitative data helped to identify important points of interest and the qualitative data from the focus groups provided depth and examples to solidify the program impact (Almalki, 2016; Rominger, 2017; Wisdom & Creswell, 2013).

Comfort with one's ability to master the language and processes of a field will improve the likelihood of application and long-term use (Bandura, 1994). The design and delivery of CRFT course information reinforced the participants’ confidence in their ability and capacity to participate in community-based participatory research; moving into new roles of leadership, administration, and services in their community. In addition to the academic researchers, local churches and civic clubs were benefiting from a newly established pool of adept and capable lay persons. The CRFT participants were aware of their worth and value to the researcher. After CRFT, the participants had no reservations about refusing to participate in the research if the relationship was not balanced.

Study Limitations

The study has limitations. The mixed method approach did not give equal status to both quantitative and qualitative information (Almalki, 2016). The findings are not generalizable...
and may only apply to the specific fellows of the cohort. While research suggests women are vital to advancing the dissemination of the health education programs (Eftekhari, Falahat, Bejman, Forouzan, Afzali, Heydari, & Mirabzadeh, 2013), the male did not participate in the focus group. The research does not provide insight on the male’s ability to receive and translate learned CRFT strategies into community-based participatory research initiatives. Findings from this cohort will be utilized to improve delivery of the program to subsequent cohorts of Mississippi and other regions.

**Implications for Practice**

These recommendations are based on the input of CRFT Cohort 1 participants. Recommendations were emphasized for these salient areas: self-efficacy, community engagement, and continued learning. King and colleagues (2015) suggested providing opportunities to apply the skills learned. The participants wanted to connect with researchers whose projects could provide a comprehensive, hands-on experience (e.g., recruitment, data collection, data analysis, and presentation of the findings). Connecting the participants with local researchers and placing them on active research projects will help the long-term efficacy of the Mississippi CRFT.

Empowering the participants to serve as community research “champions” can improve self-efficacy and prioritize engaging in the community in new collaborative research opportunities (Israel et al., 2010; Theurer et al., 2015). Fellows’ profiles will highlight their training and capacity for assisting with community research.

Additional training is likely to maintain interest for research participation and prompt them to collaborate on future research endeavors (King et al., 2018; Fastring et al., 2018). The participants should be presented with a forum to facilitate ongoing peer-to-peer engagement, share the outcomes, challenges and successes of applying their CRFT techniques in real-world situations, in addition to opportunities for further application and development.

Future cohorts should be evaluated to determine the utility and value added of the Mississippi CRFT program and test whether the introduction of the cohort recommendations can ensure sustained application of the lessons learned. A future study should explore the academic and community partners’ satisfaction working with CRFT fellows and their perception of the utility of their skills.

**Conclusion**

Achieving program efficacy was ascertained by examining the long-term utility and value of the Mississippi CRFT program. Unanimously, the participants agreed that the training was beneficial and had added value to their professional and civic roles. Eighteen months after completing the program, the 17 participants had forged new collaborations with researchers and community organizations and had applied CRFT skills to negotiating the academic-community relationship, contributing to the acquisition of resources and disseminating health information to inform residents. CRFT skills had been applied in serving as a liaison between the community and the administration of a local health organization as well as participating as the community representative on the Institutional Review Boards.

Participants were able to diminish the traditional power hierarchy of the academic-community research relationship. Participant CRFT skills had a long-term impact, particularly as it related to their self-efficacy for addressing community health and implementing evidence-based interventions. There remained a high level of confidence in their ability to work with researchers and all other stakeholders involved in the research process. General knowledge of community research, the capacity to assess community health priorities, and an ability to access tools and resources, in addition to the implementation of strategies to achieve the health goals for the community are examples of the utilization and application of the CRFT skills.

The attitudes and perspectives of the participants were important for determining how prepared they were to act as agents of change in their communities and helped to direct the type of research initiatives that were introduced into these areas. Coats et al. (2015) and Komaie et al. (2017) had similar findings where a more favorable perception of the program improved the participants’ community action. The participants entered the training with different levels of knowledge and experience; but found the Mississippi CRFT program critical in their preparation for navigating the public health research spectrum.
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Nonprofit Partners’ Perceptions of Organizational and Community Impact Based on a Long-Term Academic Service-Learning Partnership

Jeannette Kindred

Abstract
This research summarizes organizational and community impacts reported by nonprofit community partners participating in an academic service-learning program with communication capstone students at Eastern Michigan University. Community partners discussed internal and external communication-focused capstone projects, perceived short-term and long-term impacts, as well as organizational versus community impact. Analysis of the data revealed that internally focused projects delivered more long-term impact at the organizational level, while several of the externally focused projects delivered short-term impact at both the organizational and community level. A small number of projects delivered little to no impact. In addition, three specific long-term organizational impacts were discovered: new organizational learning, enhanced personal and professional development, and increased student engagement. While student learning outcomes related to service-learning have been well documented, this research adds to the growing body of literature on the organizational and community outcomes associated with academic service-learning courses. This research also illustrates the need for communication-focused projects within the nonprofit sector. Advanced undergraduate students in communication and other allied disciplines are ready and able to fill such needs in meaningful ways through these partnerships.

Introduction
In 2008, the communication program at Eastern Michigan University (EMU) in Ypsilanti, Michigan developed “Communication Capstone,” an academic service-learning (AS-L) course required for all communication majors. Students partner with a nonprofit organization and utilize their communication knowledge and skills to complete a minimum 30-hour communication-focused service project that fills an important need for that nonprofit. Students are responsible for reaching out to nonprofit organizations in the community (where they live, work, or within the community surrounding EMU) and inquiring about any needs they could fill. The student then negotiates with the nonprofit to clarify the parameters of the project so that the project is balanced and reciprocal; in other words that the project fulfills an important need for the nonprofit and provides a meaningful learning opportunity for the student.

Communication-focused projects with nonprofit partners that our communication capstone students take on must be indirect service versus direct service. Direct service is service that has an immediate and direct impact on the organization or clients (such as office filing, tutoring, or serving food to the homeless), whereas indirect service involves identifying broader needs of the organization and community and is typically more project based (Types of Service-Learning, 2020). The types of indirect service projects our students complete are both internally and externally communication-focused and include, for example, creating marketing materials, creating and/or updating websites and social media accounts, planning and executing events, planning and promoting fundraisers, organizing donation drives, collecting data and presenting it to organizational stakeholders, creating and/or updating internal process documents (such as volunteer manuals), etc.

We sought to assess the impact of our program, though our initial efforts were informal. Capstone instructors anecdotally report that the AS-L assignment as part of the course has been largely successful, and that students are able to apply what they have learned in the communication program. Additionally, through informal end-of-semester letters and feedback surveys, nonprofit community partners consistently reported positive perceptions of the students’ work and positive perceptions of
the impact the work has had on their organizations. However, these reported positive impacts have not been systematically tracked and assessed, and we do not know if the impacts are reaching beyond the organization to the larger community level. Thus, we took a more formal approach to assessing our program.

The focus of this research is to gain insights on organizational and community impacts, as reported by the nonprofit partners with whom we have partnered in the past. This paper reports general findings from confidential interviews conducted with 19 nonprofit leaders representing 15 different nonprofit organizations with a variety of missions. Reported impacts as a direct result of the completed service projects, as well as the indirect and unexpected impacts of partnering with our program and our students, are discussed. While the findings of this research are largely positive, concerns with some of the project outcomes were noted and will also be addressed.

Literature Review

Academic service-learning “utilizes community service to help students gain a deeper understanding of course content, acquire new knowledge, and engage in civic activity” (Stacey, Rice, & Langer, 1997, p. 1). AS-L has as its primary goal reciprocal benefits to both students and nonprofit organizations and their communities (Furco, 1996).

The majority of research has established a clear connection between academic service-learning and student learning. For example, students who participate in AS-L courses often report increased feelings of responsibility toward their communities (Hébert & Hauf, 2015). In addition, research has shown that service-learning experience predicts an increase in students achieving specific learning outcomes versus students who have not participated (Prentice & Robinson, 2010). Finally, researchers have found a link between academic service-learning and student retention (Gallini & Moely, 2003; Bringle, Hatcher, & Muthiah, 2010).

While there is a large body of research linking AS-L with student benefits, there is much less published literature documenting community or organizational impacts (Vogel & Seifer, 2011; A. Tinkler, B. Tinkler, Hausman, & Tufo-Strouse, 2014). The literature review here will summarize briefly some of the research on impacts and the assessment of organizational and community impacts.

AS-L and Organizational/Community Impacts: What Do We Know?

“There is no doubt that there is far more evidence about the effects of service-learning on students than about its effects on the community” (Jacoby, 2014, p. 166). Academic service-learning and its impact on the nonprofit organization or agency partner specifically has been reported in the literature, more so than impacts on the community. Identifying community impacts can be challenging as they can take time to emerge. “One likely explanation for the limited empirical research exploring the broad impacts of service-learning is that these outcomes may require a number of years to achieve” (Vogel & Seifer, 2011, p. 188). Community impacts as a direct result of student engagement in AS-L are difficult to assess in general, beyond asking community partners their perceptions of this kind of impact.

Astin (2000) notes that research on service-learning needs to examine not only student outcomes, but outcomes at the organizational level as well. Several specific positive impressions and organizational impacts as reported by community partners have been documented in the literature, both short-term and long-term. In a basic sense, immediate positive outcomes, such as completion of and satisfaction with the service or project, is considered a short-term positive impact (Irie, Daniel, Cheplick, & Philips, 2010; Reynolds, 2014; Johnson, Goldberg, Willies-Jacobo, Wan, Guluma, & Smith, 2019; Olberding & Hacker, 2016). AS-L also can deliver immediate assistance with needed labor and resources, allowing organizations to complete tasks that otherwise might have never been completed (Blouin & Perry, 2009). These types of tasks and projects can lead to short-term economic and social benefits (Driscoll, Holland, Gelmon, & Kerrigan, 1996). Finally, community partners have generally found students to be helpful and dedicated (Ferrari & Worrall, 2000; Driscoll et al., 1996).

As for long-term organizational impact, nonprofit organizations have reported using suggestions and ideas from students (Erickson, 2010; Gerstenblatt, 2014). The literature also illustrates reported increased organizational capacity (Erickson, 2010; Driscoll, et al., 1996). Research by Olberding and Hacker (2016), for example, illustrated how nonprofit organizations working with public administration students benefited from multiple projects that helped the organizations build organizational capacity and
enhance their mission over the long-term. Finally, long-term impacts related to relationships with students have been noted, for example the benefits that come with students staying on after a project is completed, students recruiting other student volunteers, and students bringing new ideas to the organization (Blouin & Perry, 2009).

Ferria and Worrall (2000) argue that there is a continued need for research on the community impacts of academic service-learning. Both short-term and long-term community impacts have been reported. For example, Schmidt and Robby (2002) found that college students tutoring has an immediate positive effect on the community (benefiting children) and the service is valued by those receiving it. Irie et al. (2010) reported how an immersive Jewish service-learning (IJSL) project motivated increased participation from community members and enhanced cultural exchange opportunities. Beyond immediate benefits to the community, long-term impacts have been noted as well. Irie et al. (2010) note that community partners in the IJSL experience could discuss in detail the long-term community benefits, in particular “the expansion of the communities’ capacity to address ongoing needs. … Among the indicators of enhanced community capacity cited were new knowledge, strengthened intra-community communications and more effective leaders” (p. 7).

Long-term, all participants in service-learning can also be impacted by a change in beliefs, values, and attitudes as a result of the experience (Astin, 2000). In addition, community partners have reported a perceived enhanced legitimacy and value to the community as a result of participating in AS-L programs (Erickson, 2010).

Not all findings are positive, however. Steimel (2013) identified several frustrations and concerns as voiced by community partners, including student lack of interest, and focus on completing the required hours more than on the actual contribution they were making or the learning they were gaining through the experience. Blouin and Perry (2009) identify several obstacles to successful academic service-learning, including poorly prepared students, lack of professionalism among students, and “investments of resources that do not yield tangible returns for the organization” (p. 126).

Assessing Organizational and Community Impacts: How Do We Do It?

“Quality assessment legitimizes both service-learning and community engagement and is a fruitful strategy for improvement and future planning” (Waters & Anderson-Lain, 2014, p. 118).

Assessment of community impact should include a way to examine the benefits for the community partner as well as the relationship between the community partner and the institution (Waters & Anderson-Lain, 2014).

There are several benefits to assessing community impact of academic service-learning courses. Making community impact data visible can work to encourage continued institutional commitment to AS-L and potentially expands faculty involvement in creating service-learning courses (Erickson, 2010). However, one of the most challenging aspects in terms of researching and assessing the impacts of service-learning on nonprofit organizations and the community is simply the fact that it is difficult to articulate and categorize what is meant by impact. Bringle and Hatcher (2009) discuss the breadth of impact versus the depth of impact of service-learning. Tracking breadth includes counting and describing things like the number of classes, number of community partners, and the general range of issues addressed through the AS-L programs. “While numbers do not reflect the impact of service-learning on students, communities, and institutions, they are one measure of output” (Jacoby, 2014, p. 156).

Tracking the depth of impact includes examining specifically student learning outcomes and how they are met through the AS-L experience. Depth also refers to the “long-term reciprocal partnerships with community organizations that address community needs” (Bringle & Hatcher, 2009, p. 38). Community impact assessment should try to consider internal factors (such as beliefs and values) as well as external factors (organizational changes or policy, for example) (Srinivas, Meenan, Drogin, & DePrince, 2015).

Depth of impact can also be viewed and assessed as either direct or indirect (Erickson, 2010). Direct impact includes community development improvements, for example, and economic and social benefits to the nonprofit organization as a direct result of the project or service work. Indirect impact includes often unintended outcomes such as access to new relationships and networks, enhanced legitimacy, and appreciating the “fresh eyes” (from students) as part of the AS-L partnership.

The type of data to collect for community impact assessment is also an important consideration. Assessment should be systematic and include quantitative, qualitative, and case
study data (Bringle & Hatcher, 2009). For example, Driscoll et al. (1996) articulated an AS-L assessment model for the assessment of students, faculty, institutions, and the community and advanced several community assessment indicators. Community indicators include such items as the nature of the partnership, perceived capacity, economic and social benefits, new insights about operations and activities at the organizational level, and satisfaction with partnership/relationship with the university.

Qualitative data such as interviews and focus groups are ideal ways to assess impacts of service-learning, in particular talking to and gaining the perceptions of community partners (Cooks & Scharrer, 2006). Tinkler et al. (2014) note that within the academic literature, “there is insufficient attention paid to the efficacy of service-learning from the perspective of community partners” (p. 149), yet this method of obtaining feedback is considered ideal. D’Arlach, Sánchez, and Feuer (2009) argue that those receiving the service are best able to provide a thorough and honest assessment of the outcomes of AS-L. And despite legitimate concerns about interviewing community partners (Irie et al., 2010) “involving the community in evaluating the project and the partnership is imperative for comprehensive understanding of the tangible and intangible outcomes” (Reynolds, 2014, p. 87).

Summary

Service-learning as a pedagogy is important, valued, and receives tremendous support across many college campuses. Understanding the “service” side of service-learning and the impacts of that service will increasingly become more important, in particular because of the popularity and reach of this teaching methodology. Leigh and Kenworthy (2018) explain:

There is a vast global network of service-learning scholars and practitioners. Service-learning is a teaching tool used across multiple disciplines and at every level of education from primary through tertiary. Its application can be seen in teaching environments extending well beyond North American institutions. In fact, service-learning is a domain that has attracted attention and application from academics all over the world (p. 2).

Understanding perceptions of organizational and community impact as reported by nonprofit partners, then, is incredibly important. From a student learning perspective, the more we know about the overall outcomes of academic service-learning, for both communities and students, then the closer we get to moving our students towards reciprocal citizenship (Musil, 2003). Reciprocal citizenship envisions students negotiating with community partners to develop an appropriate project, and ultimately, through the experience, students “regard the community not as deprived but as a resource to empower and be empowered by” (Musil, 2003, p. 7).

The knowledge gained from this research will contribute to the academic service-learning literature on organizational and community impacts, can inform pedagogy and practice, and potentially enhance any service-learning partnership between universities and communities. Understanding how to measure this kind of impact can also support any university’s efforts regarding accreditation, in particular Criterion 3e, that “the institution demonstrates any claims it makes about contributions to its students’ educational experience by virtue of aspects of its mission, such as research, community engagement, service learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development” (Criteria for Accreditation, 2014).

The overall goal of this research, then, is to investigate how required university and community engagement, specifically an academic service-learning course “Communication Capstone,” impacts the community generally and a variety of nonprofit organizations specifically. The following exploratory question guided this study: What are the reported organizational and community impacts of a required communication academic service-learning program on nonprofit organizations and their communities?

Method

The methods and findings reported in this article are part of a larger project that investigated AS-L outcomes and the relationship between the communication capstone program and our community partners. The larger study included both a survey and interviews; however, this article focuses solely on AS-L outcomes as reported from in-depth interviews with community partners. The Human Subjects Review Committee of Eastern Michigan University reviewed and approved this study.

Participants. A convenience sample of 45 representatives from 40 different nonprofit
organizations that had partnered with communication capstone students from September 2016 through April 2018 were invited to participate in an interview. It was not possible to obtain names and contact information for all organizations who partnered with our students during this time frame, as several different faculty members teach the course and keep track of their own students’ partnership information. In addition, some organization contact information was incomplete or unavailable. After accounting for duplications (many of the organizations had experience working with different capstone courses), I was able to obtain contact information for 40 unique organizations. Email invitations were sent out soon after each semester was over, so participants’ insights and recollections would be fresh.

I had an established relationship with about half of the invited representatives, as I designed the course and have taught multiple sections since its inception in 2008. All interviewees were in leadership or coordinator positions (executive director, volunteer coordinator, etc.) at their respective nonprofits. Of those invitations, 19 representatives from 15 nonprofit organizations agreed to participate (I had an established relationship with eight of the organizations; the other seven had partnered with students from capstone courses other than mine).

A variety of organizational missions were represented. Seven organizations focused on Education and Research; four were focused on Human Services; and one each representing Arts and Culture, International/Health, Sports, and Animal Welfare. The organizations were located in either Washtenaw or Wayne County, Michigan. Participants talked about their perceptions of the impact of a total of 34 communication-based projects, 11 internally focused and 23 externally focused.

Procedures. Interviews took place in September/October 2017, January 2018, and July/August 2018. I interviewed one representative from each organization except for two organizations where multiple representatives asked to be interviewed together; this scheme resulted in a total of 15 completed interviews. Interviews ranged in length from 24 minutes to 51 minutes and were audio recorded. I transcribed all the interviews. Eleven interviews were held in person and four were conducted over the phone.

Agency representatives and interviewees were asked first to report the approximate number of capstone projects supervised since they began partnering with the capstone course. Of the 15 organizations, six reported one project experience with capstone; seven organizations had supervised between two and seven projects; and two organizations reported 10 or more projects supervised since the beginning of their relationship with the capstone course. Interviewees with multiple experiences talked about the most memorable projects they had supervised within the last few semesters. Most of the organizations discussed one or two projects; four of the organizations with more experience with the capstone program discussed three, four, or five projects. A total of 34 projects were discussed.

Interview questions were developed based on important community impact factors as identified by Waters and Anderson-Lain (2014), and Driscoll, et al. (1996), including the perceived benefits of service-learning on the following: capacity to fulfill organizational mission; economic and social benefits to the organization; satisfaction with the partnership; perception of the university; and potential for sustainability and future partnerships. The interviews were comprehensive, and inquired about the process, expectations, and satisfaction with the program and relationship with the university, as well as overall project outcomes and perceived impacts of different types of projects. Clarification questions were asked and summary statements provided during each interview to establish trust and rapport with participants and to ensure as much accuracy as possible in responses. This article reports themes and examples from interviewees’ perceptions regarding direct and indirect organizational and community impacts as a result of partnering with the capstone program, and does not report on satisfaction with the program and university overall. See Appendix A for the complete interview protocol.

Interview transcripts were analyzed using the Constant Comparative (CC) method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The CC method is an inductive approach to data analysis that involves comparing and contrasting pieces of data in order to form themes or categories. Categories should emerge from the data analysis, and can then be used to discern theory (grounded theory approach). However, constant comparative itself can be utilized as a method on its own without the goal of theory development (Fram, 2013). For purposes of this study, the CC method was employed outside of the traditional grounded theory approach,
as articulated by Fram. The data analysis was modeled after Fram’s approach, where she used qualitative data and the CC method to confirm that something existed versus analyzing the data in order to “identify an emerging substantive theory” (p. 11). Upon reviewing research findings on academic service-learning and organizational and community impacts, it was clear to me that although the literature is limited, there is evidence that communities and nonprofit organizations do benefit in some ways from student engagement in academic service-learning. The goal then of interviewing nonprofit partners was to specifically identify and articulate these reported impacts, as related to communication-focused AS-L projects.

Seven of the interviews were conducted in the fall of 2017. Initial themes were identified at that time. Five additional interviews were conducted in the winter of 2018, and another three interviews conducted in summer 2018. Analysis of these additional interviews revealed the same previously identified themes, and no new themes/categories emerged as a result of this additional data collection.

Results

Overall, the results of the interviews reveal that communication-focused academic service-learning projects can lead to positive impacts on the community and the participating organizations, as perceived by nonprofit community leaders, both in the short and long-term. Interviewees were able to describe impacts that were directly a result of the students’ work, such as economic impacts and increased organizational capacity. The interviewees also articulated indirect impacts as a result of the partnership in general, and were not necessarily an outcome of the students’ efforts directly.

Twenty-eight of the 34 projects discussed (82%) were deemed successful, although six were perceived to deliver little if any impacts. Overall, these results are encouraging not only for our capstone program but for consideration by all kinds of academic service-learning experiences.

The results that follow will describe both direct (short-term and long-term) and indirect (long-term) organizational and community impacts of partnering with the communication capstone program. Direct impacts are the positive or negative outcomes of the project itself and the students’ effort on the project. Indirect impacts are the largely long-term, positive outcomes that come with partnering with the capstone program, but not outcomes directly related to a specific project.

Direct Impacts

This section will summarize the reported short- and long-term impacts from internal and external projects. See Tables 1 and 2 for a summary of impact.

Communication-focused projects (internal). Interviewees discussed a variety of internally focused communication-based projects that led to direct impact for the organization. Students created or edited office and volunteer manuals and internship training guidebooks. Students finalized a donor management system, tagged and organized photos for use on the web and social media, and developed educational programming for internal and external constituents. A total of 11 internal projects were specifically discussed in the interviews by seven of the organizations.

All but two of those projects were perceived to have delivered long-term impacts at the organizational level. Several of the interviewees talked about students creating important internal documentation and how they are still using those documents today. For example, one of the education-focused nonprofits stated the following:

I think there are a number of products that we wouldn’t have had, that would have stayed on our wish list…now we have them. In that way it has built our capacity. Probably the best example is the process documentation for doing our data entry. …We can now hand off data entry to committed volunteers and feel like we have a training document that they can take with them and we only need to then spend a limited time with them.

An animal-focused nonprofit also had a student create several internal manuals for them and the volunteer coordinator reported very positive impact as well:

The manuals for the youth volunteers and the interns are just really helpful. I can turn that manual over to one of our mentors for the youth program, or to an intern that is coming in and they can do something independently while I am busy. …It’s just been really helpful to have some really clear directions.

Another successful project involved a partnership with an international organization and
the creation of an internally shared social media marketing plan. The program manager there was extremely happy with the outcome and predicted that it would deliver long-term positive outcomes for the organization. The program manager said:

I think we will see more of the results now with our new executive director and the marketing plan; it’s all still in the works. We are starting to implement the plan. She has only been with us for two months but when she saw it she was like … ‘This is so great’ so it will help, we are going to see more of the results of this plan.

Two of the internal-focused projects completed by our students did not appear to provide any kind of impact, either short-term or long-term. One was a project involving foundations and grants research, and another was a project that required a student to research and develop a new educational program for youth volunteers. One of the nonprofit spokespersons stated:

The foundation research project was not so great. There were a lot of miscommunications. And I think ultimately it was because it was a dry project. For the program development project, the reasons for no impact were more related to the preparedness and professionalism of the student. The executive director reported that the student did not complete the necessary research needed for the project, was slow in responding to emails, and missed important deadlines.

Communication-focused projects (external). The majority of the projects discussed in the interviews (23, as reported by 13 of the nonprofit spokespersons interviewed) were externally focused. Students created awareness campaigns, launched social media sites and wrote social media content, wrote press releases and other promotional materials, created web content, assisted in a variety of event planning activities, and coordinated donation drives. Impact of these projects was varied.

By and large, externally focused projects were reported as generating mostly short-term organizational impact. There was some community impact reported with the externally focused projects versus none with the internally focused projects, and some of these projects were perceived as having a combination of both organizational and community impact. Four of the externally focused projects discussed were perceived as delivering little to no impact for either the organization or community.

Table 1. Internal Project Direct Impacts: 11 Total

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Organizational Impact</th>
<th>Community Impact</th>
<th>Organizational and Community Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short-Term Impact</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-Term Impact</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short- and Long-Term Impact</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Little to no impact internal projects: 2

Table 2. External Project Direct Impacts: 23 Total

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Organizational Impact</th>
<th>Community Impact</th>
<th>Organizational and Community Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short-Term Impact</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-Term Impact</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short- and Long-Term Impact</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Little to no impact internal projects: 4
Generating immediate awareness through planning events or creating marketing materials for the organization is the primary organizational impact for externally focused projects. Some agencies could even speak to more specific economic or social benefits to their organizations. For example, a social services agency spokesperson who has had students help with event planning commented that “an event has a moment. … Student involvement has kept it fresh for the people coming to this event year after year” and added that important specific benefits were “getting more young people and increased revenue.”

That some of the interviewees could discuss perceived community impact with the external projects was not surprising, as these projects were centered on events, newsletters, donation drives, or any kind of project that connected with the community directly. For example, an education-focused organization had capstone students write and distribute a newsletter that was designed for several different audiences. The executive director, who felt this project delivered important impact, said: “This touches so many constituents…so many different people, so it feels like the impact in that sense is far greater.”

The external projects that were reported to deliver both organization and community impact were varied, and involved event planning, communicating with clients, or producing informational or marketing materials, such as a newsletter. A youth education-focused nonprofit discussed how having students working on event planning not only helps them build organizational capacity, but also impacts the community as the students ultimately interact with and work with children and youth at the various events. The representative from the sports-focused organization indicated that the event planning and career fair workshop that our students planned and executed led to money being raised for the organization, the gaining of additional sponsors, and jobs and internship offers for at least three of the workshop participants.

One student completed a diaper donation drive for a social services agency serving families and children, and this project was also perceived to deliver both community and organizational impact. The project was perceived to have immediate impact for the clients they serve, with the volunteer coordinator noting that:

The collection items are not covered under government assistance and we don’t ever get grants for those…they barely exist. So, these are real needs for our families and when diapers are being brought in for one, it’s making people aware in the community that we are here and that these are the needs that we have.

The donation drive that she is describing not only positively impacted the community (families in need of diapers) but also had an organizational impact as it brought new awareness to their agency and mission.

A few of the externally focused projects can be described as “one shot” tasks that repeat every semester. These projects have been very successful in delivering immediate short-term impact and for some, long-term impact for organizations and communities. For example, projects involving students working on social media, marketing, and newsletters overall were reported as being successful. Nonprofits often do not have staff or capacity to keep up on communicating with their publics via social media and newsletters, and that is where our students can serve. One education-focused agency requests one of our students each semester to write and design a weekly email newsletter and update. The interviewee described how this regular and repeat project was recently successful:

…in terms of building capacity and building trust with our organization. We are really trying to be community facing…we are a community institution and want to engage with you. Having the emails regularly sent (the community) knows what is going on, what we are giving you, etc., those things are huge in terms of our reputation as an organization that engages and is not isolated.

Another example of a repeat project is one where students work on writing client and donor profiles for a social services agency. The profiles students write impact the organization in an immediate (short-term) sense as they are posted to the agency website and thus bring awareness to the organization. There is long-term impact as well, as students complete several profiles during the semester, so the organization has a “bank”
that they can continue to use and post long after the student is gone. This kind of project obviously positively impacts the organization but there is also a perception that it has a powerful effect on the community. The executive director reported that “The clients have been very friendly to the students...it's also good for the students, it really allows people to get to know each other. I think the community appreciates seeing younger people involved in helping us and them.”

Four of the externally focused projects were reported as delivering little to no impact, and for all of these, the primary reason given was lack of ability, effort, or professionalism on the part of students. A program coordinator from a youth social enterprise had experience supervising four projects and while he was able to tell me that “the majority of my projects have come off pretty good,” there was one in particular (promotion of summer youth camps) where “students completely dropped the ball and were constantly pointing fingers at each other.” A program coordinator for a youth-focused social service agency who worked with a student whose task was to design and write an annual report was disappointed because “it just wasn’t quality enough.”

**Indirect Impacts**

Agency representatives from 13 of the 15 organizations easily talked about things they did not necessarily expect and that were not directly tied to the project outcomes. These unintended, long-term, organizational impacts fell into three clear categories: new learning and insight into their organization; increased student engagement; and enhanced personal and professional development.

**New learning and insight into the organization.** Eight organization representatives reported that they or their organization had gained new insight or new learning as a result of partnering with the communication capstone program. The interviewees who discussed “new insight” were grateful for what they could take away from the experience as it relates to strengthening their organization going forward. So any new learning gained was always discussed in the sense that it would potentially have a long-term impact. An employee of a girl's youth agency said that taking on a capstone student and supervising the awareness campaign project “highlighted for us that there is so much more we should be talking about.” An animal welfare organization took on a student to create youth programming and training material, and while the volunteer coordinator interviewed reported that the results of the student’s work provided little to no impact on the organization, the mere fact that the project was initiated brought her significant new insight. She said, “I really think the project just showed us that this is the direction that we need to go.”

Also related to this theme were the agencies that discussed the new insight gained from working with students specifically, and what they could learn from them. For example, a director from an education-focused organization reported that he “learned how to create a Google Doc” from capstone students. The interviewee from an international health agency was enthusiastic when she concluded: “The students brought different ideas that I would not have ever thought of. Between youth and experience, it makes a nice outcome.” Along the same lines another nonprofit leader noted that “you get a lot more experiences with the nuances of communication when you're working with college students.”

**Increased student engagement.** Five organizations reported that they saw or expect increased student engagement with their nonprofit as a result of partnering with the communication capstone program.

The first way this theme emerged was with organizations discussing the positive aspects to enhanced student awareness. The project coordinator from a youth social enterprise said about working with students “some of the residual effect is just the fact that more students are being informed of an operation that is on campus…it just helps to build awareness among students.”

The second way this theme came through in the interviewees was nonprofit partners reporting that they had seen renewed student commitment; that is, the student either goes above and beyond in their commitment during the project and/or chooses to stay on and volunteer with the organization after the project is complete and the semester is over. An arts education agency representative was happy to report that the student she worked with “has continued to volunteer with us. I’m really excited that she wants to continue to work with us. This was a really great and unexpected benefit.”

**Enhanced personal and professional development.** Five organization representatives reported that their own personal and professional development had been enhanced through partnering with the capstone AS-L program. The two ways this was seen was through perceived enhanced leadership experience and perceived benefits that come with working with a different generation. The volunteer coordinator from
a literacy and education-focused agency had supervised numerous capstone students in the past and as a result of this experience said, “I am actually better at managing interns now because of having to manage the capstone students.” Similarly, one volunteer coordinator told me the following:

I think the unintended effect has been for me. I don't supervise anyone, as a department of one, and that's where I really want to grow in my career, have some supervisory experience. Managing people has been great for me and good for my career and my resumé too.

The other way this theme presented was in terms of perceiving the benefits of working with and learning from students. For example, the executive director of a youth program, who has multiple staff members who supervise capstone student projects, said, “My team gets good experience working with college students.”

**Discussion and Implications**

The projects discussed with the interviewees were categorized as internal or external, and nonprofit leaders could confidently talk about their perceptions of impact (short versus long-term; organizational versus community). Internal projects tended to be perceived as having the potential to provide a long-term impact for the organization, overall increasing organizational capacity, which supports previous findings (Erickson, 2010; Olberding & Hacker, 2016). External projects tended to be discussed in terms of their short-term impact for both the organization and community, with some of these projects delivering long-term impact as well.

Both short-term and long-term needs are important to address for nonprofit organizations, especially in a climate of shrinking budgets and limited staff. Some of the nonprofit leaders interviewed regularly request students from our capstone program every semester to take on repeat projects (social media, client profiles, event planning, etc.) that otherwise would never get done due to a shortage of human and financial resources. So, while “questions remain about the impact of students’ short-term involvement in community settings” (Nichols, Phipps, & Johnstone, 2014, p. 72), this research illustrates how specifically designed short-term projects can continually support the community while also providing engaging experiences for students, provided that the long-term infrastructure of the course exists. Our program has begun working with several community partners to identify their communication-based “regular” or “repeat” needs; these projects then are promoted to students in capstone each semester. Our program is also in the process of creating a website that will promote the capstone program and highlight “regular” projects that our students are able to complete each semester. Such efforts would be similar to other kinds of successful and repeat partnerships. For example, Villanova University has sent engineering students to Nicaragua since 2004 to help impoverished communities secure access to clean drinking water (Reynolds, 2014). Academic service-learning programs and projects, no matter the discipline, should consider whether and how often “repeat” projects work as these experiences can provide regular and substantial impact for community partners and significant learning opportunities for students.

There were very few projects that interviewees discussed that were perceived as having little or no impact. These unsuccessful projects were mostly the result of poor student motivation/inaction, or students taking on projects without the necessary skills needed. For example, an animal welfare nonprofit took on a student to help them research and design a volunteer training program (internal focused project), and while the student assured the volunteer coordinator that she was interested in and up to the task, it turned out her research skill set was lacking. A team of two students who were working together on an awareness campaign (external focused project) “completely dropped the ball” and never completed the work.

Some of the interviewees made specific comments about skills (or lack thereof) of the students, and offered specific suggestions on how to maximize the match among the capstone project, students’ skills, and organization’s needs. For example, one suggested that students complete “a skill or interest inventory…in order to help align the organization’s needs with the skill set/passion from the students.” The reasons for unsuccessful projects were not too surprising, and have been documented in the literature (Blouin & Perry, 2009; Steimel, 2013). These findings, however, are important to our overall program assessment, and we are beginning to explore ways to better align student interests, knowledge, and skills with community needs.

Nonprofit leaders interviewed also had realistic expectations about what students can reasonably
do and not do, so they design projects accordingly, with one interviewee telling me “my view of it is if we get a benefit, that’s great.” In general, internal projects that were perceived to have delivered little if any impacts (conducting grants research, writing annual reports, and program planning, for example) may be too challenging for some undergraduate students. External projects that focused on social media and marketing were largely perceived as delivering positive outcomes, but organizations were quick to note where and how students could improve on these kinds of projects (for example understanding how social media might benefit nonprofits versus for-profit organizations). Social media related projects generate excitement among our students. However, just because our students engage in social media does not necessarily mean they know how to manage it professionally and create content for a nonprofit organization.

Overall, it is important to not only accurately discern the needs of nonprofits, but work to find a good fit with the knowledge and abilities of the student. While faculty and instructors can negotiate with community agencies to determine appropriate AS-L projects for students, students can also learn the importance of identifying their own knowledge and skills strengths and weaknesses, and working with a nonprofit to determine a good fit. This type of self-reflection and personal identification, coupled with negotiation experience, can enhance the communication and soft skills of all students, no matter the discipline.

There were several unintended and indirect organizational impacts discussed in the interviews, and they were always perceived as positive. The themes here of “new learning and new insight” and “enhanced personal and professional benefit” were interesting discoveries and support research by Blouin & Perry (2009), who also found similar kinds of long-term outcomes. The nonprofit partners could see the benefits to themselves and their organizations from partnering with the capstone AS-L program. This finding deserves further investigation, as it may have a connection to research in the field of knowledge management (KM) and organizational learning. “The goals of KM are the leveraging and improvement of the organization’s knowledge assets to effectuate better knowledge practices, improved organizational behaviors, better decisions and improved organizational performance” (King, 2009, p. 4). It seems as if there is the potential for AS-L to offer substantial benefits to nonprofits in regard to enhancing overall their organizational effectiveness.

While indirect impacts that come out of university and community engagement generally are important to discover, assessing the direct impact of students’ efforts on organizations and communities is also critically necessary. This research not only summarizes different kinds of service-learning impact, but also provides a method to uncover such impact and identifies terms for how to define it. Understanding, from community partners’ perspectives, how students’ knowledge and skills transfer to a professional environment is valid data any discipline can consider to improve programs or for university or accrediting body mandated course or program assessment.

Conclusion

The overall findings are encouraging as they show the positive impact students can make in their communities through participating in academic service-learning. There are some limitations to this qualitative study, however. The sample was small, and additional interviews with a variety of nonprofits from similar and additional missions would help to confirm the themes found here, in particular interviewing nonprofit partners that support AS-L in other disciplines beyond communication. Broadening the interview pool would strengthen the ability to generalize the findings. In addition, while the interviews were comprehensive and member checking for accuracy of responses was done during each interview, systematic member checking after the fact (for example, having interviewees review transcripts for accuracy) may have validated the results even further.

Long-term impacts of AS-L are always challenging to assess, and it is certainly no different in this research. Asking nonprofit leaders whether or not they perceive impact (long-term or otherwise) is an accepted form of indirect assessment for academic service-learning. However, due to perceived or actual power dynamics between universities and communities, it is important to be aware of potential bias (Irie et al., 2010). More research employing direct assessment measures of organizational and community impact of AS-L is needed overall.

The AS-L course that served as the foundation for this study is a required course for communication majors. Mandating AS-L versus making it an option may have a connection to
organizational and community impacts, as there is some debate in the literature as to whether or not requiring AS-L is appropriate (Bullock & Hirsch, 1996; Anderson, 1999), although much of this research is focused on mandating AS-L for K–12 students, not college students. My colleagues and I have seen “less motivated” students muddle through a project, just so they can graduate. Understanding how mandatory service with college students helps or hurts organizations and communities would be an important addition to the literature on the impacts of academic service-learning.

Overall, the findings of this qualitative study support other published research showing how academic service-learning can positively impact organizations and communities. Findings here can be helpful to nonprofit agencies. Community organizations can work to identify both short-term and long-term needs and seek out partnerships with students that would deliver reciprocal benefits. Doing so would not only provide them with specific and measurable impacts, but also have the potential to build the professional knowledge and expertise of their membership.

Finally, these findings can be applied beyond programs in communication. Nonprofits have continued to face financial challenges as well as challenges related to marketing and communication (Horsley, 2017; Coffman, 2005). These are important needs—and ongoing needs—that communication students and perhaps students in other disciplines such as business, marketing, and management can successfully address. Doing so within a structured academic service-learning program provides an important service to organizations while also providing an excellent learning experience for students.

References


Appendix A: Interview Protocol
Community Partner
Semi-Structured Interview
EMU Communication Capstone Partnership

Date of interview: _____________________________
Time begin/end: ______________________________
Name of organization: __________________________
Name of Interviewee(s): ________________________

Part 1: Process
1. What project(s) have students worked on for your organization? Please quantify if possible, such as the nature of the work, number and types of any deliverables produced for your agency, etc.

2. What was your favorite thing about working with EMU Communication Capstone Students? What was problematic?

3. Describe the quality of the relationship with EMU Communication Capstone Program. Have you done any other projects with EMU before or since then? Why or why not? How do you feel you were treated by university representatives?

4. Do you feel the student(s)’ work was properly designed to serve the organization’s needs? Why or why not?

5. Was there adequate communication between your organization, faculty member teaching the course, and student(s)?

Part 2: Expectations
6. What were your expectations about the partnership and project?

7. How did your attitudes about EMU change as a result of this project (if at all)?

8. In your judgment, did EMU and the Capstone program have the desire, capacity, and institutional support to successfully engage in this program/project?

9. Did your organization and/or community have the desire, capacity, and institutional support to successfully engage in this program/project?

10. Do you feel that student(s) were prepared to take on the project for your organization? If not, what recommendations would you suggest to improve student preparedness?

Part 3: Results
11. What happened as a result of this project? What has worked well?

12. What did not work well/could have been changed to provide better outcomes for you and your organization?

13. What do you think were the most significant impacts for your organization and the community, if any, of partnering with Capstone students?

14. Overall, do you feel the project(s) allowed you to build your organizational capacity? Why or why not?

15. Do you think the student(s)’ work will have a long-lasting effect? Why or why not?

16. Were there any unintended effects (either positive or negative) caused by the student(s)’ work?

Part 4: Wrapping Up
17. Was it worth your investment of time, energy, and money, for the benefits you received?

18. What would you like to see done differently in the future?

19. Are there any other comments you would like to make about the organizational and community impacts of this project?

20. Is there anyone else I should talk to about this project?

21. Is your organization interested in hosting another Capstone student in the future? Why or why not?
Learning Anthropology by Teaching Anthropology: A Case Study of Five Service-Learning Classes at Rollins College

Ashley Kistler

Abstract
As an anthropologist, I strive to incorporate the principles of engaged ethnographic research into my teaching. This paper presents a case study of five service-learning projects conducted by anthropology students at Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida. I contrast the minimal impact of two unsuccessful projects focused on documenting participants' family lives with the great success of the later projects, in which my students taught anthropology-themed courses to older adult students. These projects were successful because they were mutually beneficial: They helped my students apply their knowledge outside of the classroom while providing opportunities for continuing education for older adults seeking to engage in academic debate. I argue that using the methods of collaborative ethnography can help scholars to design community engagement experiences that are more impactful for students and community partners alike.

Introduction
As an anthropologist, I strive to incorporate the principles of engaged ethnographic research into my teaching. After two service-learning projects I planned early in my academic career failed to have their intended impact, I evaluated how employing the methods of collaborative anthropology, which have guided my research in Guatemala for more than a decade, can prepare scholars and students to design community-based projects that are both meaningful and purposeful for all participants. By doing so, anthropologists can better assess and meet the needs of the communities they serve and enhance student learning outside of the classroom.

In this paper I examine how differences in the design, methods, and implementation of these projects changed their outcomes. I contrast the lack of community buy-in and minimal impact of two initial projects focused on documenting participants' family lives with the greater success of the later projects, in which my students taught free anthropology-themed courses to older adult students. In these projects, my students designed modified versions of the courses they took with me, one on Maya history and culture and two on anthropology and the family, to teach to older adult learners. These projects helped my anthropology students apply their knowledge outside of the traditional classroom environment and understand course material in a more profound way. This article contributes to the growing body of literature on anthropology and community engagement by arguing that employing the methods of collaborative ethnography can help scholars to design and implement community engagement projects that are mutually beneficial and that enhance student learning while satisfying a real and established community need. In addition, the comments from student evaluations that I examine here reveal that community engagement experiences enhance the teaching of anthropology today by helping students to learn and apply skills, such as public speaking, that they will use in their future careers. This article highlights that participation in community engagement projects underscores for students the value of ethnography and ethnographic skills in the real world beyond their college careers.
Community Engagement and Anthropology

Anthropology is a social science discipline that takes a holistic approach to studying the human culture and society and examines how cultural norms and practices shape the way that people perceive and interact with the world. Anthropology consists of four subdisciplines that take varied approaches to studying the human condition: ethnography, in which anthropologists work with contemporary communities to document and analyze cultural practice; archaeology, in which archaeologists examine the material remains of past human societies; biological anthropology, in which scholars study the human biological condition and its relation to culture and environment; and linguistic anthropology, which considers how language creates and reflects the cultural realities of its speakers. Participant observation, or the practice of learning about a community's way of life through total immersion and participation in it, is the hallmark of anthropological research.

Recent scholarly literature explores the relationship between community engagement and anthropology. Many works explore how integrating community engagement experiences into courses enhances the teaching of anthropology (Diamente & Wallace, 2004; Johnston, Harkavy, Barg, Gerber and Rulf, 2004; Keene & Colligan, 2004; Sanday & Janowitz, 2004; Hébert, 2008; Menzies & Butler, 2011) while others consider how ethnographic theory informs the practice of community engagement (Camacho, 2004; Keene & Colligan, 2004; McCabe, 2004; Simonelli, Earle & Story, 2004; Hathaway & Kuzin, 2007; Polin & Keene, 2010; Ruggiero, 2016). These works establish that incorporating community engagement work into anthropology courses helps students to apply the knowledge learned in the classroom to the communities in which they live and work. Hébert (2008) argues that service-learning projects transform the teaching of anthropology by helping students to explore the discipline's real-world applications. Diamente and Wallace (2004) conclude that by integrating service-learning projects focused on ecotourism into an ethnographic field school in Guatemala, they trained students not only in basic ethnographic skills, but also to be engaged anthropologists concerned with designing research projects that meet community needs. Johnston and others (2004) likewise show that the University of Pennsylvania's Urban Nutrition Initiative trained anthropology students in ethnographic practice and civic engagement while working to promote healthy life choices. Others document similar experiences integrating community engagement experiences into their courses (Stearns, 1986; Everett, 1998; Marullo, 1998; Sanday & Jannowitz, 2004; Sanders, 2005; Nuñez & Chin, 2006). In their discussion of a collaborative project with members of the Gitxaala nation in British Columbia, Menzies and Butler (2011, p. 169) state that, “...a service learning approach has the potential to facilitate the scholarly growth of more engaged and considerate students.”

Other recently published works explore how anthropological principles and ethnographic methods can be used to design service-learning projects that are culturally relevant and that meet established community needs (McCabe, 2004; Stewart & Webster, 2011). Keene and Colligan (2004) state that anthropology presents a model for the practice of community engagement from the extensive preparation anthropologists undertake before entering the field to anthropology's commitment to reflexivity and positionality. They state, “To think about our angle of observation, the voice we adopt when we speak—to be self-conscious about these things—is second nature to the practice of anthropology and something we build into the way we teach our students about how to do ethnography or field work” (Keene & Colligan 2004, p. 8). Camacho (2004) shows that ethnographic methods can enhance community engagement in several ways. First, anthropologists reflect on their own biases, limitations, and privilege prior to embarking on fieldwork to minimize power differentials of scholars and members of the communities in which they work. Next, anthropologists develop sustained and long-term collaborative relationships with communities and community organizations, something that practitioners of community engagement should also strive to do. Finally, ethnographic writing and storytelling provide an important avenue for students and others involved in community engagement to reflect on their experiences and community impact. Chapters included in Stewart and Webster's (2011) edited collection reveal that having a basic understanding of culture and cultural relativity helps participants in community engagement projects to assess the cultural dynamics in play in the communities with whom they work and accurately identify their needs. Hathaway and Kuzin (2007) likewise argue that training...
in ethnographic research prepares scholars to undertake community engagement projects, since they are qualified to analyze the social problems present in the communities in which they work. Simonelli and others (2004) show that participant observation and ethnographic interview techniques are among the ethnographic methods that best enable scholars to design projects that are of mutual benefit for students and scholars and community partners.

While ethnographically grounded service-learning projects can make a difference in local and international communities by addressing important social issues, a “colonial” mentality often shapes the practice of community engagement and the discipline of anthropology. An asymmetry exists in the relationship between community partners and the researchers in these projects, as the perspectives of researchers are often prioritized over those of the community partners due to researchers’ access to funding, knowledge, and other resources (Camacho, 2004; Himley, 2004; Keene & Colligan, 2004; Simonelli et al., 2004; Menzies & Butler, 2011; Kistler, 2011; Mobley, 2011; Vaccaro, 2011). In many cases, researchers who believe that they know how to solve community problems design and implement projects with little to no community feedback and without considering how culture informs communities’ own perceptions of need. Community members may feel threatened, suspicious, or insecure about community engagement projects and this power imbalance causes the relationships between participants and the community to become tense or unwelcome.

Simonelli and others (2004) consider how power asymmetry and privilege shape service-learning projects in Zapatista communities in Mexico. Students arrived in Mexico expecting to serve the community through active involvement in some facet of local life. The Zapatistas, however, defined service in a different way. As a former rebel army in the process of becoming an autonomous political group, they found benefit in groups listening to their story and expressing their support. Though students had difficulty understanding this different notion of service at first, they ultimately had a more meaningful experience by learning about and working within the community’s self-identified needs.

**Collaborative Anthropology**

The methods of collaborative anthropology prove useful in identifying community need and in designing culturally informed projects. Now well-established within the larger discipline of anthropology, collaborative ethnography strives to undertake projects that engage indigenous communities in the process of planning, implementing, analyzing, and disseminating the results of research. Together, anthropologists and members of the communities with whom they work identify areas of mutual interest and plan projects accordingly. While the specific trajectory and methods of collaborative ethnographic projects vary according to the norms of the communities involved, all collaborative ventures engage the voices of indigenous collaborators in their resulting cultural representations (Lassiter, 2005). Lassiter defines collaborative anthropology as:

> an approach to ethnography that deliberately and explicitly emphasizes collaboration at every point in the ethnographic process, without veiling it—from project conceptualization, to fieldwork, and, especially, through the writing process. Collaborative ethnography invites commentary from our consultants and seeks to make that commentary overtly part of the ethnographic text as it develops. In turn, this negotiation is reintegrated back into the fieldwork process itself (p. 16).

Since traditional ethnographic writing is not always accessible to the indigenous communities with whom ethnographers work, many collaborative projects find creative ways to disseminate knowledge including songs or raps, or non-academic forms of writing (Butler, 2013; Hale & Stephen, 2013).

Collaborative ethnography strives to minimize the power imbalance that exists between Western researchers and indigenous participants in traditional forms of ethnography, which subjugate local cultural perspectives to the authority of Western academics. By working as equals with indigenous colleagues, or with community partners in the case of community engagement projects, anthropologists involved in collaborative research work to overcome this imbalance and give agency to indigenous communities through ethnographic dialogue (Atalay, 2012). Addressing these power dynamics and the factors that shape them allows co-researchers to work together more cohesively.
Collaborative ethnographic projects can hold political significance for the communities that participate in them. For example, a collaborative project in Bolivia, the Taller de Historia Oral Andina, investigated a historical Aymara leader, Santos Marko T’ula, to help the local indigenous community contextualize their indigenous identity in the legacy of their past (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1997). In Guambía, Colombia, involvement in a collaborative ethnographic oral history project helped community members to legitimize their rights to ancestral land by documenting their community's historical claim to it (Vasco Uribe, 2002). In this project, anthropologist Vasco Uribe partnered with local activists from Guambía to examine local cultural and linguistic traditions and collaboratively develop a theoretical ethnographic research framework. While their initial goal was not to produce written ethnographic accounts of their project, they began to document their research in written form once they were asked to do so by local authorities, producing pamphlets and other documents in accordance with community interests. Similarly, Rappaport (2008) reflects on the internal dynamics of a collaborative project between anthropologists and members of local grassroots organizations on indigenous politics in Cauca, Colombia. In this instance, “indigenous team members participated in the project, not in the spirit of promoting ethnographic research for academic ends but with the express intention of harnessing the research experience to the goals of their organizations” (p. 10). Rappaport explains that the collaborators did not conduct their fieldwork together or write together; rather, they discussed and analyzed their research together during regular team meetings. Keeping the fieldwork and writing processes separate helped to overcome perceived power imbalances between the anthropologists and indigenous collaborators (Rappaport, 2008). Other essays document similar phenomena in other communities (Butler, 2013; Hale & Stephen, 2013; Perry & Rappaport, 2013).

An article by Menzies and Butler (2011) documents how the methods and principles of collaborative anthropology might inform and guide the community engagement in anthropology courses, exploring the University of British Columbia's commitment to community collaboration in its ethnographic field school. They write:

Our objective at the University of British Columbia has been to establish and maintain ties with indigenous communities or organizations wishing to conduct research that records, enhances, and preserves their own cultural systems and social relations. This has entailed a detailed protocol of engagement that lays the ground rules for creating opportunities for respectful community-focused student research (p. 170).

In their work with the Gitxaala community, Menzies and Butler tied their students' community engagement to established community-based research projects focused on poverty in Prince Rupert and Lach Klan, British Columbia. Their primary goal was to use the Gitxaala cultural framework to work on social problems identified by the community. Using collaborative ethnographic methods to guide their work in this way, this field school not only provided valued service to the community, but also trained students to be engaged and ethical community-based researchers.

I have participated in a collaborative ethnographic project in my own research in the Q'eqchi’-Maya community of San Juan Chamelco, Guatemala since 2006. I have worked with a group of local activists, historians, and folklorists to investigate the story of Chamelco's town founder and cultural hero, Aj Poop B'atz', the indigenous leader who defended his community during the Spanish invasion in the early sixteenth century and who is recognized in contemporary discourse for his strategic decision to welcome the Spaniards to Chamelco in peace (Kistler, 2010, 2013, 2018). Though preserved for generations through oral history, the details of Aj Poop B'atz's life and history have been forgotten over time, due to widespread efforts in Guatemala to alienate the Maya from their own history as a form of oppression and marginalization. After community residents shared with me the need to collect more details of his life story, we worked together to collect oral histories and written documentation about Aj Poop B'atz', analyze his significance, and share the knowledge acquired through this process with the community. We worked with Chamelco's city council to establish an annual holiday honoring Aj Pop B'atz', organized an ethnohistoric symposium to celebrate the inaugural holiday, and wrote a children's book about Aj Pop B'atz', bilingual in Q'eqchi' and Spanish, for use in local schools. We delivered community presentations about the book, trained teachers on how to use it, and spoke with school authorities and children. Thus, the
principles of engaged and collaborative research have guided my research in Chamelco for more than a decade.

After reflecting on the shortcomings of my attempts to integrate community engagement experiences into my courses at Rollins, I realized that to make these projects more meaningful, impactful, and mutually beneficial, I needed to use these same principles that guide my research to inform my teaching. This paper summarizes my journey with an eye toward best practices of using collaborative research to enhance service-learning and civic engagement.

**The Best of Intentions, Not-the-Best of Practice**

During my first year as a faculty member at a liberal arts institution in 2007, I became taken with the idea of integrating the practices of service-learning into my courses. I had been hired as a sabbatical replacement on a one-year contract to teach introductory cultural and linguistic anthropology classes and a few upper-level seminar courses. A presentation on community engagement included during the new faculty orientation week in early August ignited a spark for me, as my own undergraduate career was immeasurably shaped by my involvement in a transformative community engagement experience.

During my first semester in college, I had volunteered at a local Hispanic community center, teaching free English-as-a-Second-Language courses to adult Latino immigrants living in the area. I did so first as a part of my coursework in the Spanish department but continued my involvement at the center throughout my four years in college, working to improve the center’s curriculum and developing a lifelong commitment to community collaboration.

After hearing the new faculty orientation presentation on community engagement in the fall of 2007, I was inspired to find a way to integrate service-learning into my classes that year, since community engagement had been formative in my own life. I met with the directors of the Office of Community Engagement on our campus that fall and worked on designing a project for my spring semester course on the Anthropology of the Family. I met with their office a few times during the semester to follow up, as they identified community partners for my project and helped me think through the logistics of our project. Planning for the project was easy: We designed the project without me ever having to leave campus to meet with the partners myself. I never stopped to reflect on the process we used to identify community partners, a step I now know to be of fundamental importance. When the spring semester started, my class eagerly embarked on this project, in which they met with members of the local community to create family portfolios to give to them. For these portfolios, students would document their family histories, create family trees, and compile stories about their family lives. The portfolios would help local families to preserve their histories for their younger generations. Students met with their partners weekly, at local older adult residences, soup kitchens, and other community venues. We often reflected on the project in class, and while my students got a lot out of their ethnographic experiences, they wondered if their community partners did as well. They noted the discomfort of some of the participants with whom they met and the indifference of others. While they learned from being able to relate the issues we discussed in class to real-world family contexts, they questioned if their partners felt the same way.

The following year, I began a tenure-track job at my current institution and sought to continue to design community engagement experiences for students.

I worked diligently with colleagues on my campus to plan a similar project to the one I’d done the year before at my previous institution in which students would work with older adults living in the area to create family portfolios, including family histories, family trees, and other stories. As the spring 2009 semester unfolded, I realized that while this project benefited my students by giving them a hands-on ethnographic experience, its benefit for the community was minimal. Students’ weekly reports in class suggested that their regular visits to the residences to meet with partners put a strain on the limited resources of the senior care facilities and that some of the participants found it difficult to find time to meet with them on a regular basis while others found conversation about family life painful (Kistler, 2011). Our project had not had its intended impact because we had privileged our perception of community need as fact without taking the time to assess the community’s own perception of need, just as the wide body of literature I cite previously suggests often happens with community engagement projects.

When I taught the same class a few years later during fall 2012, I made several changes to this project in hopes of improving its results. I met with the volunteer coordinator at a local older adult residence community to discuss how
we could ensure that this experience would be mutually beneficial and to plan opportunities for older adult participants to engage academically with our course material. In doing so, I hoped to overcome the asymmetry implicit in many community engagement projects (Camacho, 2004; Himley 2004; Keene & Colligan 2004; Simonelli et al. 2004; Kistler, 2011; Menzies & Butler, 2011; Mobley, 2011; Vaccaro, 2011) by working with the community to determine their actual and established needs rather than imposing my own vision on the project. While my students worked with residents to create family portfolios as they had before, we integrated a lifelong learning component into our work in which my students taught a mini-class on culture, politics, and family to our older adult partners. Instead of assigning students to a community partner, we held a mixer at the residence community in which students and community participants could form their own partnerships. In these ways we tried to build a reciprocal relationship that would be beneficial for all.

While the project went better than it had the first time, the portfolio component once again fell flat. As in past semesters, some students found it hard to connect with their older adult partners on a regular basis. Only a handful formed bonds with their partners. Students ended the semester concerned that their visits had put a strain on their partners’ busy lives. Having failed a second time to achieve positive results with this project, I reevaluated the way I design community engagement experiences for students and analyzed my goals for such projects critically. I looked to collaborative anthropology for help.

Learning Anthropology by Teaching Anthropology

Since joining the faculty at Rollins, I had been asked regularly by many older adult living communities in the area to deliver talks on my research on Maya culture. Event coordinators shared that their communities had a strong interest in offering academic programming for residents, who quickly tired of bingo, craft activities, and other games. I found each presentation I gave to be both rewarding and inspiring: I loved sharing my work with receptive audiences and was amazed by how engaged residents were in the content I delivered. I was taken in by the thoughtfulness and complexity of their questions after each presentation and learned a great deal from the personal experiences they shared with me.

Reflecting on the literature on anthropology and community engagement and on Menzies and Butler’s (2011) article about using collaborative ethnographic methods to design community engagement experiences, I realized the potential for my students to benefit in the same way I had while filling a true community need for lifelong learning. As I planned for my next community engagement course, I used the methods of collaborative anthropology by working with the volunteer coordinators at several older adult residences in the area to develop academic programming for their residents (See Table 1).

In spring 2013, students in my The Maya class prepared mini-courses on Maya culture to teach in the community. These courses were shorter versions of the class that students were taking with me, geared for a nontraditional student audience with no assignments, and were taught at four older adult residences and the public library. In each instance, classes were well-attended and all participants were engaged and learned from one another. In fall 2014 and spring 2016, the students in my Anthropology of the Family and Culture, Politics, and the Family courses embarked on similar community engagement experiences, designing mini-courses on the family for Rollins’ Lifelong Learning program. They selected and assigned readings and planned interactive activities for their students.

During both semesters, I received overwhelmingly positive feedback about these projects from students and older adult participants alike. In the weeks and semesters that followed, I got requests for my students to offer similar experiences in the future. During in-class conversation and in the course evaluations and community engagement project assessment surveys, students commented on what they viewed as the value of the project, for themselves and for the community.

First, several students reflected on how their experiences in these projects challenged their stereotypes of older adults. One student wrote, “This [project] makes me see that the older generation shouldn’t be stigmatized in such a detrimental manner in greater society.” Another stated, “Rollins classes really owe the alumni and the senior community more respect. I would love to collaborate with them more often.” Seeing older adults as lifelong learners changed students’ perceptions of older adults as closed-minded, inflexible, or incapable or unwilling to learn. One example that students cited in our in-class
discussions was the open-mindedness of the older adult students in our family course on issues of marriage equality. When planning readings and discussion topics for our course, students had elected to omit a discussion of how marriage equality has changed the way that we define family, a topic they thought might be uncomfortable for some of our lifelong learners. During the first session of our class, however, one of the students, a woman in her late eighties, asked what she should call her son's long-term girlfriend. Because they were not married, she wasn't sure if she could refer to her as her “daughter-in-law” even though she viewed her as such. Her question sparked a discussion among all of our older adult students about how to refer to their children's same-sex partners or other individuals they identified as family through “non-traditional” connections. While a few of the lifelong learning students expressed conservative viewpoints on these issues, most did not. When reflecting on this experience, my students expressed that this conversation, among others, revealed the open-mindedness of many older adults and changed my students' preconceived notions about what it would be like to teach older adult learners.

Other students were surprised to find the passion that older adults have for continued learning. One student wrote, “I really enjoyed seeing the reactions to the older people as we taught them. I loved that they wanted to continue to learn and this inspired me to remind myself to want to continue and always learn new things.” As another student said, “What I learned most about the community engagement was that it wasn't only the students teaching the elderly, they were teaching us so much more too!” Participating in these projects helped to dispel students’ biases about older adults and realize their important role in our community.

Table 1. Course Projects and Design Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Course Project</th>
<th>Project Design Methods</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2009</td>
<td>Family, Friends, and Folks</td>
<td>ethnographic interviews with older adults; produce family history portfolios</td>
<td>meetings with college community engagement office and older adult living community staff; consult with IRB</td>
<td>mixed: enhanced student learning, no community benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2012</td>
<td>Anthropology of the Family</td>
<td>ethnographic interviews with older adults; produce family history portfolios; host discussion on family with older adult learners</td>
<td>meetings with older adult living community staff and residents; consult with IRB</td>
<td>mixed: enhanced student learning, no community benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2013</td>
<td>The Maya</td>
<td>College students teach abbreviated version of college course to older adult learners.</td>
<td>participant observation at older adult residences; collaboration with older adult living community staff and residents to assess needs to design course</td>
<td>success: enhanced student learning and achieved community impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2014</td>
<td>Anthropology of the Family</td>
<td>College students teach abbreviated version of college course to older adult learners.</td>
<td>participant observation at older adult residences; collaboration with older adult living community staff and residents to assess needs to design course</td>
<td>success: enhanced student learning and achieved community impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2016</td>
<td>Culture, Politics and the Family</td>
<td>College students teach abbreviated version of college course to older adult learners.</td>
<td>participant observation at older adult residences; collaboration with older adult living community staff and residents to assess needs to design course</td>
<td>success: enhanced student learning and achieved community impact</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students also discussed what they believed to be the community impact of their work. One student shared, “The people we taught really enjoyed their time with us and really wanted to learn,” while another reflected, “I very much enjoyed this course and it was fantastic to go to senior citizen homes to help stimulate their minds. They do not have the opportunity to have many intellectual lectures…” During class conversation, this point was one that we explored in detail. Students speculated that the lack of opportunity for older adults to engage with academic content stemmed in part from our society’s tendency to discount their societal role and contributions.

Students also commented on the ways in which having participated in community engagement experiences had given them experiences and skills to draw on in their own lives and future careers. One student reflected:

The most challenging aspect but also the most beneficial [aspect of this course], was the community engagement project I did [giving a group lecture to multiple retirement communities]. Until this project, I have always been nervous about small-group presentations and they have not been enjoyable for me. Through this project though, I learned a lot about what my weaknesses are in such presentations and I was able to correct them. By the end of the project I felt comfortable and confident giving my presentation!

Other students expressed similar sentiments, stating while they were uncomfortable with teaching older adults at first, they grew in their public speaking abilities as a result of the project.

Another student wrote, “This [project] also really helped me with public speaking; Being in front of adults and not students is a big difference and will help me for the future,” while another shared, “I’ve learned to accommodate to learning styles and disabilities.” Students could easily identify the skills they developed through their participation in these projects.

One student shared a different take on the real-world value of their experiences. “We learned so much more about the information by teaching it to others with other opinions,” while another similarly stated, “The best way to list your own knowledge is by trying to teach it. This is why teaching course content really solidified our knowledge.” A number of students also shared that they felt that they built community with one another and with their older adult students through this collaborative experience. It reinforced for them the importance of working on projects that satisfy community needs, they said. It also underscored for them the real-world value of ethnography and of community engagement work, revealing, as Hébert (2008) and Diamente and Wallace (2004) suggest, that participation in community engagement projects enhances students’ experiences in and ability to relate information from anthropology courses to their lives beyond the classroom.

The older adult students we taught in each course echoed my students’ positive feedback on the value of these projects. They would often stay to talk with students about current events, their coursework at Rollins, their lives, or other issues. They enjoyed having a chance to learn new things, they said, and to share their own knowledge with others. During the final meeting of one section of our family class, an adult student stated that our discussion of certain factors, like assisted reproduction and transnational adoption, that shape the way that our society defines the family had helped her make up her own mind about what constitutes family. Others said that they enjoyed the opportunity to read academic articles and discuss and debate them in class.

A conversation that a group of students and I had with a participant following a meeting of our Maya class at one local residence facility best illustrated for me the success of our project in meeting a real and established community need. After one class, a woman approached a group of students and me and shared that while she had not attended our first class, she heard about it from her father, who was a resident at the facility. Her father had not stopped talking about the class since we had been there, approximately a month before. His enthusiasm was particularly remarkable, she said, because he had Alzheimer’s disease. While he could not remember what he did or ate most days, he remembered our visits and the information he learned. She attributed this phenomenon to the fact that her father had been a college professor and the academic content of students’ lessons resonated with him. For my students, her story reinforced the positive impact of their hard work and of service-learning experience. For me, it revealed that because these projects were designed collaboratively, taking into consideration both established community need and my students’
academic goals, they succeeded in having a meaningful and empowering impact while helping my students to relate the information learned in class to the world beyond the classroom.

Best Practices: Using Collaborative Anthropology in Community Engagement

The growing body of literature on community engagement and anthropology highlights the intersections between the two fields and their potential to enhance one another. Recent scholarship suggests that using anthropological methods in designing and implementing community engagement projects strengthens their outcomes and impact both in the community and on student learning. It also reveals that the integration of community engagement projects into anthropology courses enriches student learning. The projects that I present and examine here uniquely highlight the value of using specifically collaborative ethnography methods to design community engagement experiences that are impactful and that meet student and community need. The family history projects in which my students engaged during the first years of teaching failed to make a real impact on my community partners or my students because I did not work collaboratively with community partners to determine their interests and implement projects. In these cases, I prioritized my vision for the classes and my students’ academic goals over the community’s needs, a common pitfall of community engagement projects that is well-documented in the cited body of academic literature. Reflecting on the lack of success of these projects, I turned to collaborative anthropology to reevaluate how I could use service-learning to help meet existing community needs.

Collaborative anthropology strives to identify, assess, and satisfy community needs through research projects, the dissemination of knowledge, and community collaboration. Using collaborative methods, anthropologists include community members in the research and writing processes, ensuring that their voices are included in the resulting cultural representations. My decade-long collaborative ethnographic project in San Juan Chamelco, Guatemala provides one example of how community-based anthropology can help communities with projects of political and cultural importance. Despite my commitment to collaboration in the field, I had not integrated these same principles into my teaching. By employing the principles that guide collaborative ethnographic research to approach community engagement projects, I worked alongside my community partners to identify their established needs and design projects that satisfied them while enhancing my students’ academic experiences.

By presenting anthropology courses to older adult students, my students learned anthropology by teaching it. As their own comments suggest, they needed to process the material they learned in my class in a more profound way to share it with their older adult students. In addition to improving their public speaking skills and building community in the classroom and beyond, my students changed their preconceived notions about older adults by viewing them as flexible, open-minded lifelong learners. These community engagement projects did not just satisfy my students’ academic goals, but also made a positive community impact by offering greatly needed opportunities for academic engagement to older adults in our community, an established community need.

My students and I used the methods of collaborative anthropology to design our three successful projects in the following ways. I had observed the communities of older adult residences in which we worked for years as I was repeatedly invited to present my research to their residents. However, by working in tandem with the residences’ volunteer coordinators to design this project, I did not prioritize the perception of community need that I had after my participant observation (Simonelli et al., 2004), but rather worked to include the voices and experiences of the community members with whom we would be working in the design and implementation of the project. As students in the courses, the older adult learners with whom we worked shaped the direction of course discussion and activities and even students’ teaching styles. In these ways, they played an active role in the project itself. By incorporating the community’s self-identified needs and perspectives into the design of our service-learning experiences, we undertook projects that were beneficial for all participants.

To use the methods of collaborative anthropology in the design of community engagement projects, scholars should first ask to conduct participant observation of potential community partners to learn about the organization’s culture, norms, and practices. Then, once they are familiar with the organization, they should arrange a meeting with a representative group of potential participants in their project to get to know them more deeply and assess
their needs and interests. Having learned more about the organization they might serve, scholars should then work with possible participants and other members of the community organization to determine if collaboration will help meet an existing need and be in all parties’ best interests. If they decide to proceed with their project following this conversation, they should work in tandem to design a project that meets everyone’s desired goals. The integration of community voices in the design of community engagement projects is an essential step. Scholars should seek participant feedback regularly throughout the implementation of the project to ensure it continues to meet their needs and interests and to make any necessary adjustments. They should also meet with participants at the conclusion of the projects to share any outcomes of their collaborative work and conduct a final evaluation. By using the methods of collaborative anthropology in this way, scholars can enhance the impact of community engagement projects both for students and community partners.

This article, then, contributes to the wide body of literature on community engagement and the teaching and learning of anthropology by suggesting that using the principles of collaborative anthropology to guide the design and practice of community engagement is a key step in teaching students to become engaged scholars and learners who make a meaningful and lasting impact on the communities they serve. This article also outlines these best practices and reveals that participation in well-conceived community engagement projects designed using collaborative principles not only helps students to develop important skills that they can draw on in their future careers, but also underscores for students the value of ethnography, and ethnographic skills, in their lives beyond college.

References


**About the Author**

Ashley Kistler is a professor of anthropology and Latin American and Caribbean Studies and associate dean of Academics at Rollins College.
Training Patient Stakeholders Builds Community Capacity, Enhances Patient Engagement in Research

Hanna Cole McGrew, Lidia Regino, Molly Bleecker, Maria Tellez, Blanca Pedigo, Denisse Guerrero, Virginia Sandoval, Loida Varela, and Janet Page-Reeves

(All group writing and editing sessions used to create this manuscript were conducted in Spanish, the common language among our research team. Patient stakeholder data collector quotes in this manuscript are all translated from Spanish. — Hanna Cole McGrew)

Abstract

Our philosophical framework for research with low-income Latino patients with diabetes prioritizes hiring research staff who share the culture and language of the population of study. Inclusive research design requires an active role by patient stakeholders with training opportunities in a collaborative learning environment to allow patient stakeholder data collectors (PSDCs) to build on existing strengths and expertise. To develop this manuscript, our team reflected on our collective experiences in implementing research-specific trainings for PSDCs. Although our population of study is known to be difficult to recruit and retain, our PSDCs have successfully enrolled participants on schedule, and attrition is low. Although language, institutional requirements, and funding restrictions presented training challenges, we overcame these by using a flexible approach and by incorporating the data collectors’ expertise in refining our protocols. We propose that our success in recruiting and retaining participants is a reflection of our engaged research strategy and framework and demonstrates that engagement promotes better science. However, our experience also demonstrates research institutions need to make policy and infrastructural improvements to reduce barriers and make engaged approaches more feasible.

Introduction

A key strategy in patient engaged research is the inclusion of members of the community of study in the development and implementation of research protocols and to incorporate, “their expertise to enhance understanding of a given phenomenon and to integrate the knowledge gained with action to benefit the community involved” (Israel, Schulz, Parker & Becker 1998, p. 173). Supporting patient and community partners with trainings and education to be able to participate in research is not simply acknowledgment of, but a prioritization of community and patient voices, expertise, and authority regarding the topic of study (Hardy, Hughes, Hulen, Figueroa, Evans, & Begay, 2016). The philosophical and ethical framework of engaged research prioritizes hiring individuals from the patient population or the community of study over candidates who may possess more robust formal education or technical skills (Page-Reeves & Regino, 2018; Page-Reeves, Regio, Tellez, Pedigo, & Perez, 2018). However, within the academic paradigm of health sciences research, designing meaningful roles for nonacademic partners to be involved as members of the research team and developing institutional infrastructure to provide education and training are an ongoing challenge. Hiring and training protocols, educational curricula and approaches, and project materials and manuals that are appropriate for use by nonacademic partners are important antecedents for conducting engaged research (Page-Reeves & Regino, 2018; Cené, Haymore, Enga, Sallah, Ritchwood, Wynn, Ellis, & Corbie-Smith, 2015). Through the conduct of a large patient-engaged study, we have identified a bundle of barriers that have created roadblocks for us, but that we believe, given institutional will, could be easily overcome. Yet, these dimensions of research practice are often underappreciated and underreported in the literature.

Theoretical Background

Previously, among mainstream health investigators, funders, and journals, involving patients in the conduct of research was generally regarded as outside-the-box if not radical. Reviewers for health research funding or for...
well-known health research journals tended to see patient engagement as antithetical to scientific rigor or to dismiss the engagement component of a project as tangential to the real point of the research. Proposals for research funding and manuscript submissions were inevitably evaluated using a positivistic lens emphasizing quantitative, statistical analyses of outcomes and prioritizing researcher-driven perspectives and objectives. As a result, projects that proposed a patient-engaged research design were rarely funded, and publishing results of an engaged study in high-impact health research journals remained challenging. However, over the past decade, one could argue that patient engagement in research has now become in some senses mainstream1 (Wallerstein, Duran, Oetzel, & Minkler, 2017). An engaged project design has been demonstrated to benefit both patients and researchers, and contrary to earlier thinking, to increase the scientific rigor of findings (Balazs & Morello-Frosch, 2013; Haywood, Brett, Salek, Marlett, Penman, Shklarov, Norris, Santana, & Staniszewska, 2015). As patient engagement has become more accepted, funders and universities have jumped on the engagement bandwagon. Yet, despite assertions of institutional support for or even requirements by funders to include engagement in the design of research, there continues to be a lack of infrastructure to allow engagement in health research to actually happen, on the ground.

In this manuscript, we describe our experience training patient stakeholder data collectors (PSDCs) hired from the population of study for a project comparing the cultural competence of two models for diabetes self-management programming for Latinos from low-income households. To prepare this manuscript, we engaged in ex post facto reflection on our methods for hiring PSDCs, the training objectives outlined in our research protocol, and challenges to the practical implementation of appropriate and necessary trainings. All four of the PSDCs on this research project are co-authors on this manuscript. They participated in the preparation of this description of our experiences and revised the final draft, which was translated into Spanish and workshopped as a group.

Background and Partnerships

We received funding from the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) in 2016 to conduct a three-year mixed-method, patient-engaged, longitudinal study (Page-Reeves, Regino, Murray-Krezan, Bleeker, Erhardt, Burge, Bearer, & Mishra, 2017). Our internal shorthand for this project is “PDP”, which stands for PCORI Diabetes Project. The PDP was developed through a collaborative, iterative process with partners and stakeholders from the University of New Mexico (UNM) and One Hope Centro de Vida Health Center, a community clinic operated by East Central Ministries, a faith-based, non-profit that serves a primarily low-income Latino population.

PSDCs were hired and received training during the first three months of the project prior to the beginning of recruitment, which began in February 2017. Our research design anticipated the recruitment and retention of 452 participants (226 pairs of a patient and a corresponding social support). Over a 12-month period, each participant attends four individual appointments with a PSDC (baseline and 3, 6, and 12 months), totaling 1,808 total data collection appointments. During each appointment, the PSDC administers an oral survey. For appointments with the patient participants, the PSDC also gathers biological samples—blood for A1c (diabetes) analysis, height and weight for Body Mass Index (BMI), and a hair sample to test for levels of cortisol as a biomarker for chronic stress. This design requires a significant level of training.

Hiring PSDCs

The hiring process for the PDP was led by our community partners at One Hope who identified candidates from the community who they knew to be trustworthy and capable. Our research framework prioritized hiring people who spoke Spanish as their first language—either bilingual in Spanish and English, or monolingual Spanish speakers. They also needed to be “patient stakeholders” with personal or professional experience with diabetes—those who were diabetes patients themselves, had family members with diabetes, or who had worked with organizations that support individuals with diabetes from the

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1 For example, in the United States: National Institutes of Health (NIH) (PA-13-209) Innovative Measurements Tools for Community Engaged Research Efforts; National Institutes of Health/ National Institute of Nursing Research (PA-14-142) Community Partnerships to Advance Research; American Cancer Society Midwest Division (CDC-RFA-PS-14-1406) Pilot and Exploratory Studies Using Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) to Achieve Cancer Health Equity; and Center for Disease Control (CDC) (CDC-RFA-PS-14-1406) Community Approaches to Reducing Sexually Transmitted Disease. And in the United Kingdom: the Clinical Research & Innovation Office Lay Advisory Panels and PPI team; National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Research Design Service for Yorkshire & the Humber (RDS YH) funding awards; NHS Involve; and People in Research, Oxford Clinical Trials Research Unit.
low-income Latino community (Choi, Heo, Song & Han 2016; George, Duran, & Norris, 2014; Gillis, Lee, Gutierrez, Taylor, Beyene, Neuhaus, & Murrell, 2001; Hardy et al., 2016; McMurdo, Roberts, Parker, Wyatt, May, Goodman, Jackson, Gladman, O’Mahony, Ali, Dicksonson, Edison, & Dyer, 2011; Lloyd Michener, Cook, Ahmed, Yonas, Coyne-Beasley, & Aguilar-Gaxiola, 2012). Other considerations included an understanding of cultural nuances and influence of sociopolitical factors on the health and wellness in the population of study, a sense of commitment and social responsibility to the community, and proven ability to problem-solve and troubleshoot in a low-resource environment.

We knew that it would not be feasible to find candidates who met these requirements and possessed previous experience with research or technical skills outlined in our data collection protocols. In other words, we prioritized experiential wisdom over academic titles or research prowess (Page-Reeves, et al., 2018). We hired individuals who were already affiliated with One Hope in other capacities and therefore, were known to have the qualities we sought.

Objectives

We created our trainings to enhance the capabilities of PSDCs in the context of our research and promote a bi-directional flow of knowledge, with sessions structured to capture and incorporate expertise from both university- and community-based research team members and refine our patient- and community-centered research design. Our PSDCs already possessed the nuanced social and cultural competencies needed to recruit and develop rapport with research participants (Choi et al., 2016; George et al., 2014; Gillis et al., 2001; McMurdo et al., 2011), so we developed and implemented trainings intended to leverage those skills.

PSDCs needed to complete mandatory institutional human research protection and conflict of interest (COI) trainings. UNM utilizes the online Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Group 2 Social & Behavioral Research Investigators modules (citiprogram.org; see https://about.citiprogram.org/en/homepage/) and a university-sponsored online COI training required for all UNM investigators and team members. In addition, PSDCs needed competence for procedures laid out in our research protocol, including:

- Recruiting and consenting participants
- Administering oral surveys (validated surveys and questions developed by the research team) using an iPad and entering data into the Research Electronic Data Capture (REDCap) (Harris, Taylor, Thielke, Payne, Gonzalez, & Cond, 2009) web-based application via the mobile app
- Collecting blood and hair samples
- Accurately measuring height and weight
- Implementing and adhering to protocols for participant scheduling and follow-up

Training

We conducted 40 hours of PSDC training during the first six months of the project, plus more than 30 hours of ongoing training and support. It was necessary to hold certain trainings at UNM to allow access to specialized facilities, technology, or personnel with technical skills, such as phlebotomists from the UNM Clinical and Translational Science Center (CTSC). However, trainings that were less resource intensive in terms of technology or specialized facilities were conducted at One Hope. The training environment was collaborative and generally informal, with opportunities for team building and shared potluck-style meals. We conducted all trainings and meetings that included the PSDCs in Spanish, and we developed bilingual educational materials for their use. For trainings that required the use of online curricula available only in English or that involved expertise from individuals who did not speak Spanish, bilingual members of the Research Team provided interpretation.

Mandatory Trainings and Institutional Access

We encountered multiple challenges related to mandatory trainings and obtaining user credentials for affiliate access to UNM electronic systems that would be required for data collection. Trainings required by universities are time-consuming, use jargon and technical language, and often do not pertain to the activities of community-based research staff (Cené et al., 2015). The PSDCs indicated that they felt as if the overarching concepts that were presented in the CITI training were helpful, and that the reasoning behind human protections was valuable to know, but that it was too much information. They suggested that it would have been more useful to do the training in a group setting that
fostered discussion about research ethics and how they should be applied to our specific activities. Moreover, neither the CITI nor the COI training were available to us in Spanish. Although the CITI training does exist in a Spanish version, the Spanish training was not supported at UNM. As a result, both trainings had to be completed by our non-bilingual PSDCs with the assistance of interpretation. This made the already lengthy and demanding experience of taking the training even more tedious, averaging six hours for the bilingual PSDCs, and nine for non-bilingual PSDCs. This was a cumbersome process and we advocate for the availability of trainings in languages other than English. However, the trainings conducted with interpretation did provide an unanticipated opportunity for relationship building through the interaction that was required between university and community team members.

Similar bureaucratic barriers exist in relation to obtaining access to institutional systems for the secure transfer of participant data and protected health information. While UNM has channels for affiliates to complete mandatory trainings without credentialed access to UNM systems, credentials are needed for the virtual private network (VPN), the REDCap database, and the REDCap app that we planned to use for data collection. It is challenging for people who are not UNM employees to gain access to these systems because of a multi-step process that requires the creation of several password protected accounts and layers of internal approvals that are not uniform for all types of affiliates. Not only was the process convoluted and sometimes contradictory, portions of the training could not begin until all PSDCs had been approved for access, meaning that our entire research enterprise was held up for indeterminate periods of time. From the perspective of the PSDCs, this process and the management of these new accounts—each with different steps for access—was unnecessarily frustrating. It was clear to us from this experience that university infrastructure needs to be honed and streamlined to better support engaged research.

**Phlebotomy**

We draw blood at half of our data collection appointments, so PSDCs need to be skilled phlebotomists. Because we prioritized hiring patient stakeholders, we had to provide this training. We started the phlebotomy training concurrently with the mandatory trainings at the outset of the project. Phlebotomy was the most challenging training to coordinate since funder guidelines had disallowed inclusion of phlebotomy training costs in our budget. Initially, we were nearly stumped in our attempts to find a way to train non-academic, and non-university affiliated staff in phlebotomy. Elsewhere (Page-Reeves, Regino, McGrew, Tellez, Pedigo, Overby, Cunningham, Tiggert, & Burge, 2018), we chronicle the infrastructural challenges we faced and how through outside-the-box thinking and collaboration, we partnered with the UNM CTSC lab to use protocols they follow for training their own lab staff to develop and conduct the training for our PSDCs.

The phlebotomy training consisted of a half-day intensive orientation with follow-up sessions each week for five weeks to practice venipuncture technique under the supervision of a certified phlebotomist. Our team provided interpretation. Although we had planned to use headsets for simultaneous interpretation, the equipment malfunctioned and we had to rearrange the training space so that the interpreters could sit behind the non-bilingual PSDCs, providing a mix of simultaneous and consecutive interpretation. This created an unusual communication dynamic and was difficult for the interpreters, especially during periods of discussion or questions.

In addition to language, there were also challenges presented by having a mix of UNM CTSC staff, project research staff, and PSDC trainees who came from diverse backgrounds, both medical and non-medical. Clarification and discussion of terminology was often needed for clear communication. For example, the translation of venipuncture in English, to *venopunción* in Spanish was relatively meaningless to someone unfamiliar with medical terminology. The interpreters translated the word, but then also had to describe how venipuncture referred to the act of inserting a needle into a vein to draw blood. Although this process extended the length of the training, these were important detours that were necessary to ensure that the PSDCs developed phlebotomy competency and that they felt confident in their comprehension of the material, and so that UNM CTSC trainers could effectively address the questions and concerns of the trainees.

The PSDCs report that they were initially intimidated by the idea of having to draw blood. They worried about causing pain for the participant, or that they would be too nervous. However, because of the quality of the training
provided by the UNM CTSC and the capacity created through the group process of interpretation and discussion, they overcame their fears and developed confidence in their abilities. One PSDC said, “When I saw those needles I thought ‘Wow! I’m never going to feel comfortable doing this!’ but as it turns out, I’m really good. It’s valuable to me to know that I could overcome that.”

**Recruitment and Consenting**

Learning to recruit and consent participants was another core training component. PSDCs practiced using a generic script with language about research activities and participation incentives. In the trainings, we emphasized the most important aspects of the script while the PSDCs provided insight into how they felt potential participants would respond. The PSDCs developed strategies for ensuring that participants with no experience participating in research were fully informed about the study and what their participation would entail. We created detailed operational protocols for these processes, and the PSDCs practiced through role-play with members of the Research Team and with each other.

**Oral Survey**

Administering the oral survey in our project requires the PSDCs to be familiar with using an iPad and with the REDCap App. To give them these skills, we mixed hands-on practice with peer-learning. This approach accommodated differences in PSDC technological knowledge and capability while leveraging individual strengths. Elsewhere we have discussed the challenges we faced in developing a database appropriate for use by PSDCs (Bleecker, McGrew, Regino, Erhardt, Mishra, Bearer, Tellez, Wesley, & Page-Reeves, n.d.). We created our REDCap database to be dual language, with both English and Spanish translations for all questions and instructional text, and we utilized the REDCap App Spanish translation interface. However, certain warnings, alerts, and hyperlinks were “fixed” in English, so we developed detailed instructions in our manual of operations and added visual materials with instructions for what to do.

In the process of learning to administer the oral survey, the PSDCs actively participated in the design and revision of the survey format. The oral survey consists primarily of validated surveys and we were not able to modify the content in most cases. However, while it was important for the PSDCs to understand methods and protocols for accurate and rigorous data collection, we were not teaching them to deliver an oral survey by merely reading questions off their iPads. Rather, we worked with them to tap into the skills they possessed through role-playing, with the PSDCs practicing administration of the survey to each other. The PSDCs identified concerns about challenging or problematic language, and they educated the university Research Team members about portions of the survey they thought would solicit mixed or adverse responses from participants. Through this co-learning process, we have been able to anticipate problems and to collaboratively develop strategies to address those issues in a sensitive, patient- and community-centered way.

The PSDCs saw these role-plays and collaborative sessions as the most valuable part of the training. It was a safe environment to put their skills into practice and receive feedback or advice from other members of the team. One PSDC described this as, “We took all of the tools and information, and then we made them our own.”

**Additional Trainings**

Since we began data collection in February 2017, unanticipated issues have arisen and we have worked collaboratively with the PSDCs to develop solutions and make appropriate modifications to the protocols in our operations manual. We have addressed unforeseen technical challenges related to use of the iPads and REDCap, and participants unexpectedly revealing that they are experiencing behavioral health or domestic violence crises during data collection appointments. We developed follow-up trainings and invited community experts to share their wisdom on these topics. The PSDCs say that, while they felt the trainings empowered them to confidently perform the research activities, the ongoing support is the most valuable. One PSDC reported that “no matter how prepared you think you are, issues always come up. So, these follow-up sessions are important. We feel like we can call [on the team] any time and [they] hear us…. We meet to talk about ways to do it better, and then we practice.”

**Preliminary Outcomes**

Despite challenges that emerged in the process of hiring and training PSDCs, we hired four highly competent individuals who each completed all trainings and learned to operate effectively as data collectors for this project. Even though our
population of study is known to be difficult to recruit and retain, at this preliminary stage in the project, our PSDCs have successfully recruited and enrolled 452 participants (226 patient-social support pairs) on schedule, which was challenging given that it is a hard-to-reach population, and we are finding that attrition is incredibly low, which is also notable given that this population tends to have a high attrition rate. In the final nine months of the three-year study, our attrition for patients (upon which the study is based) is seven of 226 or 3.1%. Moreover, information that the data collectors are gathering has been consistent and accurate, with minimal missing data. In fact, the data collectors identified problems with branching logic in the design of the database that was resulting in missed data, and they have been flexible and accommodating of changes to the survey tools to address these.

Discussion

The meaningful inclusion of patient stakeholders is fundamental to developing equitable health research projects. They contribute expertise that makes the research rich and insightful. Hiring and training frameworks for engaged research should be built around capable members of the community, and not the other way around. The rapport the PSDCs have developed with participants extends beyond the scope of the research. Participants have reported that when they attend data collection appointments, they feel like the PSDCs are looking out for them. This is not surprising when you consider a comment by one PSDC:

People deserve to be listened to. Even if they aren’t talking about the survey—if they want to tell me about their mother, or their sister who’s sick, or their son that died, I am not going to shut them up and move on. I am going to get the work done, but I am going to hear them.

This attitude is central to the ethic of our research and demonstrates the PSDCs’ personal stake in and commitment to the community. The PSDCs agree that this experience has given them new skills that will help them in their careers.

Moreover, hiring PSDCs leads to good science. In the process of learning to administer the oral survey, the PSDCs actively participated in improving the design of the survey, the survey content, and methods for administration. Also, involving PSDCs in the way that we have done not only impacted the PSDCs themselves, but also the dynamics of the research team and the attitudes of team members not previously experienced in community-engaged research. This impact therefore will continue to reverberate.

Lessons Learned

On the one hand, we learned positive dimensions of the engagement process. PSDCs demonstrated that they are highly adaptable and that they have the capacity to be responsive to obstacles they confront on the job. On the other hand, we also became more fully cognizant of the barriers to engaged research through the hurdles that we faced in hiring and training PSDCs. These included language issues, inflexible institutional environments, and lack of infrastructure to support engaged research rather than a lack of ability on the part of the data collectors themselves. To surmount enormous challenges, we were confronted with the constant need for creative work-arounds that were not efficient or cost effective. There were institutional processes that were not streamlined and not clearly documented or defined. Not only does this not align with industry best practice, but it requires persistence beyond all reason. There were so many places where we easily could have thrown our arms in the air and given up. The result was a huge expense in terms of staff time that substantially took away from content-related research activities and caused frustration on the part of staff and affiliate partners.

Dialogue

In our process of working on solutions, we have discovered that you cannot take no for an answer. Engaging in dialogue with university leadership can result in policy change to remove infrastructural barriers to engaged research. Some of the issues we identified have been resolved; some we are continuing to work on, some we developed feasible work-arounds, and some we were told no, but we are still working on them, if indirectly.

Infrastructure and Policy Environment

It is projects like ours that are challenging universities to create infrastructure to support community- and patient-engaged research by adopting policies and providing clear and accessible processes. As health research that includes meaningful engagement and participation
of patients and community members moves toward the mainstream, academic institutions and funders will have to reconsider existing strategies, policies, and infrastructure to support bringing non-university, community affiliates into the fold (Cené et al., 2015; Lloyd Michener et al., 2012). Making these changes will require collaboration and innovation. While some investment in time and energy may be needed to bring patient stakeholders up to speed in terms of specific technical skills or institutionalized trainings, we are seeing that the benefit to the research and to the community is more than worth it. University responsiveness will be key in continuing to build and improve infrastructure for engaged research in the future.

Transformation

Our experience demonstrates the potential transformative effects of an engaged research design. PSDC experienced transformative personal growth. Participants experienced a new, more meaningful interface with a research study. Our research results reflect positive impacts related to recruitment, retention, and design. And other research team members who were not formerly inclined to engage in engaged research have begun to see its value. We clearly show that engagement and science can be integrated, successful, and powerful.

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**About the Authors**

Hanna Cole McGrew is a dual specialty nurse-midwife and family nurse practitioner student at the University of New Mexico. Lidia Regino is a program operations director in the Office for Community Health at the University of New Mexico and co-principal investigator for this project. Molly Bleecker is a senior research scientist 1 in the Office for Community Health at the University of New Mexico. She was data manager for this project. Maria Tellez is a patient engagement and research coordinator at One Hope Centro de Vida Health Center in Tulancingo Hidalgo, Mexico. Blanca Pedigo is project site director for One Hope Centro de Vida Health Center. Denisse Guerrero, Virginia Sandoval, and Loida Varela were data collectors for this project. Janet Page-Reeves is an associate professor in the Department of Family & Community Medicine at the University of New Mexico.
A graduate student at Iowa State University, Schneider is pursuing a master of science degree in education with an emphasis in social and cultural studies. While working toward her undergraduate degree—a BS in elementary education with endorsements in science, reading, and English language arts—she worked with students from six months to college age. Through the Urban Ecosystem Project, an NIH-SEPA-funded (National Institutes of Health-Science Education Partnership Award) program dedicated to encouraging historically excluded youth to see themselves as scientists, she began to learn about educational disparities. This sparked an interest in learning more about the education system and the role it plays in institutional racism. She continues to participate in the Urban Ecosystem Project, which has provided her with opportunities ranging from working at informal summer science camps to co-facilitating a college course for pre-service teachers, from implementing an after-school program to leading a year-long professional learning community group with 17 teachers in two urban schools in Des Moines, Iowa. Schneider’s current research focus is the effect of a culturally responsive science teaching framework in elementary classrooms, specifically on educators’ science teaching beliefs, identities, and practices. She believes her master’s degree experiences will add to her knowledge of social justice issues in and related to the education system, thereby supporting her goal of being part of the effort to eradicate systemic injustices.
I watched “Home Alone” hundreds of times during the spring semester of my junior year of college while working for a research study on how to improve the housing assistance intake process for survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV). It always struck me as odd that a movie about a sense of home played repeatedly in the lobby of the central intake office for residents seeking housing assistance. As a recruitment assistant, my job was to screen potential participants to see if they fit our study’s criteria and gain their contact information to schedule a future interview. Potential participants were given a pink sheet asking a basic screening question with their other paperwork.1 If they checked “yes,” a recruiter approached them while they waited to speak to a case manager and asked if they were interested in learning more about the study. If interested, we would take the potential participant to a private room to ask more questions about their IPV experience to determine eligibility.2

Over the course of the semester, I realized how vital planning of the recruitment phase is in studies, particularly for sensitive research involving vulnerable populations and community partners. As an RA, I witnessed the importance of creating a flexible and sensitive recruitment protocol and the types of obstacles common in recruitment. In this essay, I will outline how to improve recruitment strategies in sensitive community-based research by examining the ethical, logistical, and emotional challenges I encountered as a recruiter.

In a community-based research approach, the research includes and takes direction from the community. Therefore, recruitment protocols and research designs should be structured to suit the needs of the community. As recruitment is the potential participants’ first introduction to the study, care must be taken in the design and wording of any written materials (Kavanaugh, Moro, Savage, & Mehendale, 2006). Yet, there is a lack of research on how the intersection of multiple vulnerabilities can impact the recruitment process, and concrete strategies are needed for dealing with unexpected obstacles during recruitment.

Although all research requires an ethical foundation and careful planning, research on sensitive topics places extra burdens on the researcher. Our research was considered sensitive due to the participants experiencing insecure housing status and IPV. In recruiting participants for IPV research, it is crucial to consider participant safety. It may be difficult to establish a confidential and reliable method to keep in touch with a participant due to the potential lack of consistent access to a cell phone or email, as well as privacy concerns. In addition, voice messages or emails sent may need to be censored of any language about IPV to protect the safety of the participant.

Although recruiting seemed simple to me initially, I quickly found that recruitment is a difficult task, with ethical, logistical, and emotional challenges. Our recruitment protocol had a few built-in weaknesses that hindered the pool of people we could screen, potentially impacting the study’s validity. One issue was that we could only recruit English speakers. Although several recruitment assistants, myself included, spoke Spanish, there were no interviewers with the language skills required for an in-depth interview. This prevented us from approaching an entire subsection of the population, denying them their chance to share their experiences. Particularly in Washington, DC, which has a significant Spanish-speaking population, this was a frustrating obstacle that could have been avoided with a bilingual interviewer.

A second issue with the protocol design was the color of the initial screening paperwork. Our

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1 The sheet reads: “There are many reasons why people need help with housing. Are you here today because someone you were involved with or previously involved with (partner, boyfriend, girlfriend, child’s parent, sexual partner, husband, wife, spouse) made it difficult for you to stay where you were living?”

2 The screening form reads: “You checked ‘yes’ to the question (see footnote 1). Can you tell me more about that experience?”
forms were bright pink. Although our study was open to people of all gender identities and the wording of our questions reflected that openness, the color of the sheet may have counteracted that inclusivity. Historically, IPV is seen as a women’s issue—an issue of men committing violence against women. Yet, members of the LGBTQ community also experience abuse in romantic or sexual relationships and are less likely to have access to appropriate resources (Messinger, 2017). By using the color pink, one could make a subconscious assumption about the kind of situation for which we were screening. Choosing the correct aesthetics for recruitment materials is an important decision and I wish that I had expressed my concern over the color choice earlier in the recruitment phase.

The largest ethical consideration encountered during recruitment was the issue of mandated reporting. Halfway through the recruitment process, we were made aware of a law that required all research team members to be mandated reporters. While mandated reporting is designed to protect children from neglect and abuse, in cases of IPV it can have unintended consequences. If, for instance, a participant disclosed they slept outside with their child to get away from their abuser, then the researcher may be obligated to report child neglect. This dampens trust and creates a tension between the researcher and the participant, as there is a power imbalance that can have profound effects on the participant’s ability to access services or fully participate in the study. This protocol change caused several members of the research team to consider leaving, as they felt they could no longer ask the questions required of rigorous research without potentially having to make a report.

Related to this issue was the presence of children, as potential participants were frequently accompanied by children. During the initial approach in the waiting room, the participant was told only that the study focused on the intake process, and the words “IPV,” “domestic violence,” and “abuse” were not used. Once they agreed to additional screening questions and asked about an IPV situation, they might feel uncomfortable disclosing that information in front of their children. This concern may have caused several potential participants to either censor their situation or to decline to complete additional screening.

When approaching potential participants who were accompanied by children, we found that an effective method was to have an additional recruiter occupy the children with some paper and markers while the parent disclosed information. This strategy minimized distractions for the recruiter and parent. However, this did not entirely address the issue of a child’s ability to listen to the conversation. Study protocols should have a plan for child care while research staff are discussing the study with the potential participant. These logistical and ethical factors may have also affected the generalizability of the results, as the population recruited may not fully represent the population of IPV survivors requiring housing assistance.

On a more personal note, volunteering as a recruiter resulted in emotional challenges and compassion fatigue. Listening to the experiences of the people we screened, including those who were not eligible, was emotionally draining and I found it challenging to do multiple screenings in a row. These feelings of exhaustion and fatigue are common among those who research various forms of trauma, and can negatively impact a researcher’s personal life outside the study through feelings of distress, exhaustion, sleep disturbances, and anxiety (Coles, Astbury, Dartnall, & Limjerwala, 2014). As recruiters, we were unable to follow up with the participants or their families after our initial conversations. This lack of closure led me to feel like I was not helping the survivors or giving them the assistance they required. Months later, I still wonder what happened to the young boy who drew a picture of the house he had to leave, the mother who sang lullabies to her infant in the lobby, or the woman who could quote “Home Alone” by the end of the day.

Much of the literature on emotional exhaustion and compassion fatigue is geared to more experienced researchers, not student assistants, and there are fewer opportunities for debriefing and proper training for students. Supervisors can support students by discussing the emotional work involved before the study begins, setting a maximum number of interviews, creating opportunities for formal and informal debriefs, and, if possible, providing access to a counselor (Coles et al., 2014; Palmer, 2015). To prevent compassion fatigue among recruiters, there should be short recruitment shifts and a deep roster of recruiters to help lessen the burden, particularly for more inexperienced students. It is also essential that students are shown how to balance the duties of a researcher while showing compassion. One strategy that worked well for me was role-playing different scenarios with other recruiters to help develop compassionate language we could then use to respond as participants shared their
experiences with us. Other useful strategies were to intentionally engage in self-care activities after recruitment sessions and to write reflections. I was fortunate to have a background in sensitive research from prior projects, strong faculty support, and appropriate training. However, even with experience and a grounding in the dynamics of IPV, it was still emotionally draining for me to screen participants.

Overall, I am grateful for the opportunity to assist on this project. My few months as a recruiter have given me a newfound appreciation for the recruitment process, an awareness of the kinds of obstacles found in sensitive research, and some strategies for addressing hurdles. Careful, intersectional planning with the community as a guide, as well as a flexible attitude and research protocol, are necessary to ensure positive research outcomes reflective of the community’s needs. As I conclude my undergraduate years and embark on my postgraduate and professional career, I am reminded how vital it is to not only develop relationships with a research community but also to find a support system that works to address the emotional challenges of sensitive research. Community-based research cannot be successful unless the researchers themselves have access to a supportive and caring community of their own. My hope is that future research studies reliant on student recruiters pay close attention to their recruitment protocols and the impact that recruitment has on student assistants, and that they engage in the same level of care for students as they do participants.

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About the Author

At the time of writing, Katherine Kerekes was an undergraduate student at American University pursuing degrees in history and international studies and a certificate in community-based research.
A Dental Student Perspective on the Impacts of an Inter-professional Engagement Module

Introduction

Community engagement, defined as the process of getting communities involved in decisions that affect them (NICE, 2008), is paramount to the development and governance of services and activities that promote health and target inequalities (Buck, Baylis, Dougall, & Robertson, 2018; NICE, 2008). The inter-professional engagement module is an integral part of the curriculum of Peninsula Dental School, University of Plymouth, United Kingdom. It enables second-year undergraduate dental and dental therapy and hygiene students to develop and deliver an oral health intervention targeted at disadvantaged groups in the community. These groups commonly experience higher levels of dental disease (Public Health England, 2018; Office of the Director of Public Health, Plymouth City Council, 2018). As part of this module, we, a second-year group of undergraduate dental students, worked alongside the Family Intensive Intervention Project (FIIP) and its beneficiaries to improve vulnerable families’ awareness of oral and general health, and to break down barriers toward accessing dental care. FIIP provides holistic support to families with complex needs who may have difficulties with issues such as substance misuse, mental health and evidence of neglectful parenting (W. Kirby, personal communication, 2018).

Using a Community Engagement (Non-Clinical) Approach

Before designing the intervention, our group engaged with these families in order to explore their needs with regard to oral health. This is a key part of the engagement module, which encourages us to engage with our target community group as people rather than as patients in order to develop a deeper understanding of the social and environmental circumstances in which they live. We did so by taking the time to listen to their stories, which also helped develop a trusting relationship.

Through this process and taking into account the context and wishes of the FIIP families, we developed an entertaining and interactive Christmas themed (due to the time of year) workshop. Each of us was assigned a work station to engage directly with the families about different oral health topics. During activities we were supervised by a qualified clinician.

Our intervention included six stations, which focused on:

- Raising awareness about the dangers of hidden sugars and their impact on oral and general health,
- Illustrating the dangers of smoking on oral and general health,
- Providing information on oral hygiene,
- Familiarizing and signposting participants to the dental environment, and
- Introducing Peninsula Dental School, where the students provide clinical care, as an option for dental treatment.

Reflective Discussion

This was the first time many of us had worked in the community with a vulnerable population group. Thus, before the intervention, we were
particularly anxious about the challenges we would encounter. Building relationships and ultimately trust with the group, throughout the module, enabled us to become more confident in communicating with the families and in successfully engaging with them. As a result of the rapport we established with the families, our understanding of the difficulties that vulnerable groups may have in adopting healthy lifestyles also improved. At the same time, we developed a strong sense of social accountability and were highly motivated to deliver a successful intervention that met the expectations of the target group. Understanding and empathy for different groups in the community is an essential element of patient-focused care. The experience we gained through the module will undoubtedly positively influence our future clinical practice. This is because we will always consider our patients’ living circumstances when planning treatment options. A dental student provided this feedback:

Before the intervention I was feeling apprehensive…. I didn’t know what to expect…. I felt unsure about the best way of helping the families due to our lack of experience in community work. As part of our project, we asked the families what they would like to be educated about. This increased my confidence in the carrying out the intervention as it was tailored to their needs.

Furthermore, after building rapport with the families, there was mutual trust and this contributed to my confidence in building rapport with patients in clinic.

Throughout the module and during the intervention, we were encouraged to work effectively as a team alongside workers from the FIIP and a clinician. This enabled us to build upon each other’s skills and knowledge in order to achieve a successful outcome. Understanding and sharing roles and responsibilities within the team enhanced our experience of group working. The skills around team work and effective communication we acquired during this module, will evidently be beneficial to our future practice as qualified dentists, which requires us to work not only with colleagues but also individuals from diverse personal and professional backgrounds. A student said this about the experience:

I have learnt to work more efficiently and effectively in a group scenario by learning my colleague’s strengths and learning from them and allowing them to pursue tasks they are better suited for to achieve our mutual aim. This is great for the future, since as a clinician I am required to work with colleagues in patient’s best interest.

Student Engagement. Students worked with children on community intervention project activities.
The module also required us to produce a log to reflect on the planning, delivery, outcomes, and evaluation of the project. This allowed us to individually explore our own academic strengths and weaknesses and to identify skills gaps for further development. Reflection is a very critical and important skill that is transferable to clinical practice and that can notably improve patient outcomes.

Conclusions

The interprofessional engagement module provides learning opportunities for students to develop important skills in research, planning, organization and engagement with the community, alongside a strong focus on personal reflection. Community engagement can also help the next generation of dental clinicians foster active engagement with vulnerable populations. Such an approach encourages students to consider and reflect on the wider determinants of health and how patients’ needs are influenced by their socio-environmental circumstances.

Thus linking together education of dental undergraduate students to communities using this model of community engagement helps provide service to underserved communities and at the same time it brings an important element of pragmatism that cannot be easily taught in a traditional curriculum.

Acknowledgments

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About the Authors

All of the authors are associated with the Peninsula Dental School, University of Plymouth, United Kingdom. Ahmed Ahmed and Naa-Lamiley Bannerman are fourth-year undergraduate dental students. Martha Paisi is the research lead at Peninsula Dental Social Enterprise. Ruth Potterton is a lecturer in community-based dentistry and Robert Witton is the director of social engagement and community-based dentistry. They also support the delivery of community-based dental activities for the dental school.
Instructions to Book Reviewers

Book reviews published in *JCES* are intended to speak to a wide range of issues relevant to the scholarship of engagement. Reviews of books within the social sciences, natural sciences and math, medicine and health, the environment, law, business, philosophy, religion, and the arts and humanities are encouraged. All book reviews submitted to *JCES* should provide readers with a broad overview of the book, but should go beyond description to discuss central issues raised, strengths and limitations of the text, and current issues of theory and practice raised by the book that are germane to the subject matter and engaged scholarship. Book reviews should introduce readers to literature that advances knowledge, provides practical advice, disseminates best practices, and encourages conversation and dialogue. Faculty members, administrators, staff members, students, and community partners are invited to offer their interpretations of the literature. If you are interested in writing a book review for *JCES*, please contact Katherine Rose Adams (katherine.adams@ung.edu) for a current list of books available to review. Reviewers are also welcome to suggest titles.
Exploring International Service-Learning Boundaries

Reviewed by Annie Wendel
Sacred Heart University

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As a practitioner-scholar within the field of service-learning, I explored *Crossing Boundaries: Tension and Transformation in International Service-Learning* seeking guidance in developing international service-learning programs for students and faculty. Positioned in an office that straddles academic affairs and university mission, our priorities are often caught between student achievement and the institution’s social responsibility to develop local and global programs. While research points to significant student benefit (Bringle, Hatcher, & Jones, 2011), there are also challenges within international service-learning (ISL) including language and communication, power inequalities, conflicting institutional priorities, and general logistics. *Crossing Boundaries* addresses these concerns while highlighting the need to prioritize community voices in the development and assessment of ISL programs. Editors Patrick M. Green and Mathew Johnson have creatively assembled a collection of case studies in ISL programming to shift the conversation from student-centered program considerations, and instead focus on the impact of partnerships on host communities. Trust, reciprocity, and communication are common themes that run through each account, and *Crossing Boundaries* advances the integrity of the field by acknowledging these key commitments to international communities. Perhaps more importantly, *Crossing Boundaries* introduces new voices to the field of ISL—voices traditionally left out of the conversation. Green and Johnson recognize the dominance of Global North (U.S., Canada, and most European countries) narratives, and therefore include case studies co-authored by practitioners in Vietnam, Mexico, and Jamaica. Additionally, case studies from faith-based institutions, community colleges, and graduate student programs round out the collection, adding new perspectives. Reflecting on the institution vs. community tensions that led me to this book, I gained a deeper understanding of the complex and often controversial nature of ISL. This discomfort is explicitly stated in the editors’ overarching question, “does tension in international service-learning lead to transformation?”

*Crossing Boundaries* commences with one of the most pressing critiques of ISL: power imbalance between student volunteers and communities served. Paula J. Mellom and Socorro Herrera highlight the troubling potential of ISL to perpetuate historical imperialism rather than promoting a reciprocal and collaborative process. Their study describes the student experience of interacting with the cultural “other,” someone radically different from oneself, through the dynamic stages of honeymoon, hostility, humor, and home. However, students cannot effectively engage in critical reflection if the ISL programs are not intentionally designed to empower the community. Lori and Mark Halverson-Wente therefore showcase in Chapter 5 how to shift ISL relationships from patronage to more transparent and mutually beneficial partnerships. Their experiences in developing an ISL program with a Cambodian nonprofit partner were characterized by transitioning from a “do-good” charity model into building relationships based on empowerment and development of local leadership.

Moving beyond this traditional form of reciprocity, Chapter 2 advocates for a more enriched and culturally aware approach. Amanda L. Espenschied-Reilly and Susan V. Iverson begin by challenging American geocentrism within the ISL field. Through their study comparing service-learning in Ireland and the U.S., they examine the pitfalls of the cultural transfer of service-learning originating from U.S. practitioners. Cultural tensions are inevitable, they argue, but may be mediated when cultural relevancy is considered in the design and implementation of ISL programming in a new country. In the following chapter, practitioner partners at...
Portland State University and the University of Science in Vietnam support the claim that culture and context matter when developing community engagement efforts in countries new to the field of service-learning. Chapter 3 offers a descriptive timeline, evaluation of the institutional partnership, and recommends the need to adapt projects to fit local contexts, leverage community assets, and navigate the bureaucracy of higher education. These same considerations lead to the successes shared by Marisol Morales and Arturo Caballero Barrón, who call on their shared culture, language, and institutional mission. In Chapter 4, these practitioners describe the two theories framing their partnership, Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), which recognizes and honors the knowledge of the community, and Integral Human Development (IHD), which is based on the principles of human dignity, solidarity, self-actualization, and prosperity. This blended framework facilitates a common understanding of the goals of community engagement based on Catholic social justice foundations.

Green and Johnson acknowledge that culture is not the lone source of tension in ISL programming. They provide case studies highlighting challenges arising from changing university partnerships and institutional priorities. In Chapter 7, Stephanie Stokamer, Jennifer Hall, and Thomas Winston Morgan offer an account of when organizational and curricular changes led to the dissolution and revision of an ISL academic program. They shed light on the dynamic nature of partnerships, and the many changing influences requiring practitioners to assess the shared goals and priorities of ISL programs. Additionally, the authors of Chapter 8 examine the conflicting priorities between study abroad and service-learning programs as ISL grows in prominence on U.S. college campuses. Through two case studies, Amye Day Ong and Patrick M. Green elaborate on the challenges faced in balancing best practices of programmatic design, marketing and recruitment efforts, and risk-management of international experiences. The answer, they suggest, lies in intentionally including in-country partners in the planning, recruitment, and implementation stages to ensure that the reason for the partnership—solidarity with the community—is not overlooked.

Establishing institutional priority for ISL is accomplished by promoting its multidisciplinary nature. The overall collection of case studies demonstrates the flexibility of how ISL can be utilized across multiple academic fields. Chapter 9 illustrates a three-week interdisciplinary program in Jamaica that incorporates a variety of faculty perspectives and intentionally diverse texts. Additionally, required community-based and cultural experiences connect students with the community in a more authentic and comprehensive way, providing multiple avenues for cultural dialogue and exploration of social justice themes. Projects that can be implemented in a variety of international contexts are also shared, including a sample project-based service-learning assignment in Chapter 6. This project was applied in communities in Africa, Asia, and Central America and is designed to teach ISL program assessment and implementation skills while supporting nonprofit organizations. Lori Gardinier provides strategies to manage short-term student programs that can be modified to meet learning objectives in a variety of disciplines.

For readers seeking examples of ISL programming for specific fields and institutions, the editors offer case studies in healthcare education and faith-based institutions. For instance, Chapter 10 focuses on examples in the Dominican Republic and China, and how American students gained firsthand understanding of the cultural roles healthcare providers performed in underserved communities, thus promoting a more appropriate design. The authors advocate for a pedagogy of critical consciousness, a more critical self-reflection and action-based response from students. Chapter 11 summarizes a faith-based institutional perspective. Paul Kollman and Rachel Thomas Morgan discuss an ISL program offered through their faith-based institution and share assessment results measuring student learning outcomes, including recognizing root causes of social justice issues, understanding Catholic social teaching themes, and increased cultural competency. Tensions surrounding this faith-based model within higher education are brought to light. The authors conclude by calling upon faith-based institutions to use their mission of Catholic social teaching and ISL to elevate student awareness of their own global responsibility.

Despite (or perhaps because of) tensions surrounding ISL raised in the previous chapters, a transformative ISL approach emerges. The final case study by Eric Hartman and Richard Kiely starts with a detailed literature review comparing traditional study abroad goals to a
new “global service-learning” approach. Through a comparative case study of ISL programs, the authors demonstrate that students struggle to fully comprehend their role as global citizens. As a result, they propose a new model for critical global citizenship focusing on intellectual, political, moral, social, cultural, and personal learning outcomes. Their model goes further than assessing traditional cultural competency skills, measuring with greater detail how students combine their understanding, intentions, and actions, while considering how global partnerships are supported.

In the concluding chapter, Green condenses the lessons gathered from these various case studies and leaves readers with the 10 key principles of ISL. These takeaways respond to the obvious challenges within ISL that were raised throughout the book, while recognizing the need for tension within ISL, which is an inherently disruptive practice. When performed with a focus on community and culture, a genuine transformation takes place—of student cultural lens; of program development and modification in conjunction with community partners; and of the ISL field as a whole.

A challenge the editors faced was the lack of a universal vernacular in the field of ISL. In particular, the term international service-learning was used throughout the first 11 chapters until first Eric Hartman and Richard Kiely introduced “global” service-learning in the final case study. The use of global rather than international reflects different values and priorities. These differences call for more unified language across the field. Only after researchers and practitioners arrive at a more common understanding of terminology can conversations effectively occur across collegiate study abroad, service-learning, and international education programs.

The biggest strength of Crossing Boundaries: Tension and Transformation in International Service-Learning is it acknowledges the two complex themes of tension and transformation. The collection pushes for an ideal ISL practice that incorporates a social change orientation, redistributes power dynamics, and develops alternative relationships for a transformative pedagogy. Yet, the chapter authors also acknowledge the developmental nature of ISL work and are honest in addressing their mistakes, necessary program changes, and current challenges as they work to navigate complex internal and external forces. Crossing Boundaries provides reassurance to practitioners they are not alone in the struggle.

Overall, this book serves as a valuable guide for any practitioner seeking to design or improve an ISL program. While this collection offers strategies and examples of challenges and successes of international partnership work, readers are challenged to put these recommendations and lessons into practice—namely making community impact a priority in future practice and research.

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About the Reviewer

Annie Wendel is the assistant director of the Office of Volunteer Programs and Service Learning at Sacred Heart University.
Higher Education’s Important Role of Ensuring Multiple Perspectives

Reviewed by James Zoll
University of North Georgia


There is no doubt we are living in contentious times where people seem to be more partisan and less willing to hold meaningful dialogue. In his important book, *The Soul of America: The Battle for Our Better Angels*, Jon Meacham (2018) reminds the reader of many times throughout history where, as a nation, we have experienced difficult issues and emerged, not unscathed, but certainly resilient. While true, the presence of social media and the availability of multiple news platforms leave the consumer with the ability to choose to hear what supports their thought process, with little room for dialogue with those who have a different viewpoint.

In the book, *Creating Space for Democracy: A Primer on Dialogue and Deliberation in Higher Education*, editors Nicholas Longo and Timothy Shaffer visualize higher education involved in supplying and sustaining the work of dialogue where all participants are heard and multiple perspectives are considered. The book is divided into six distinct parts. Parts one and two discuss the theoretical background and various methods for dialogue and deliberation. Parts three through six focus on how dialogue and deliberation take place in the curriculum, on campus spaces, in communities, and through networks. Longo and Shaffer argue colleges and universities are to be a model of democracy and a place to demonstrate and practice the process of deliberative dialogue, stating that “rather than feeling powerless, we need to learn how to organize genuine dialogues that lead to productive action” (p. 13). While acknowledging the perception of the current role of higher education to be one of disseminating knowledge to a passive audience, the authors state higher education is the perfect place to help students deliberate “wicked problems,” (p. 23) issues not solved easily.

The book begins by discussing the theories, definitions, and the reasons for higher education to take on the role of creating spaces for dialogue and deliberation. Thomas discusses the readiness for dialogue given the extreme partisanship and distrust between the two major political parties. Scrutiny of higher education in the arena of public discourse is leading to policy changes involving free speech on campus. Prohibiting the cancellation of controversial speakers, changing free speech zones, and encouraging universities to remain neutral serve as examples. Thomas’ solution is for instructors to anticipate inevitable difficult discussion and to make small pedagogical changes encouraging clear questioning, listening, and the assumption of good will. Derek Barker defines deliberative democracy as one recognizing people have multiple differences but are capable of meaningful conversation and calls for deliberative civic engagement to include constructive discussions on difficult topics.

Part two of the book explores methods for dialogue and deliberation and offers examples of tools and institutions putting theoretical processes into practice. The following seven chapters demonstrate bringing diverse cultures together to discuss an issue. Marth L. McCoy and Sandy Heierbacher examine discussions between native and non-native participants within the Yankton Indian Reservation in South Dakota, exploring poverty enabling participants to hear viewpoints not considered before. *Reflective structured dialogue* is a structured format to bridge differences and long-held beliefs by helping participants move from judgmental to genuine conversation just by changing the way of asking questions. Purdue University, when addressing difficult race relations employed *sustained dialogue*, which distinguishes itself as a long-term commitment where groups agree to meet over an extended period of time to work on the issue. The University of Michigan uses *intergroup dialogue* as a pedagogy to discuss prominent issues. Employing small groups made up of various identity groups, students navigate through the process of listening, affirming, and
adding to the conversation. Lizzy Cooper Davis describes Story Circle Process placing participants in small circles with conversational guidelines teaching “us that it is through listening to our stories, rather than arguing our points, that we discover who we are” (p. 128). National Issues Forums are guides or videos requiring participants to produce several valid solutions to a problem and the impact on various sectors of the community. This section delivers multiple tools and structures for effective dialogue, which all require extensive training and preparation.

The third part of the book focuses on how dialogue and deliberation can be implemented into the curriculum and higher education programming. A major theme of the book is captured by Martin Carcasson in discussing the reason for developing the Colorado State University Center for Public Deliberation, where students are immersed in a year-long course to be able to facilitate dialogue in the community. “It is based on the idea that democratic living requires high-quality communication to function well. Unfortunately, our communities rarely experience such communication” (p. 161). For example, students at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia can engage in The Semester in Dialogue, defined as “a form of respectful conversation, where deep listening, mutual understanding, collaborative process, and empathy act as alternatives to more adversarial approaches” (p. 169). Spoma Jovanovic considers the emphasis on how social media is affecting the ability to have meaningful dialogue as the “rise of time spent on smartphones coupled with social media analytics often pushes users toward like-minded people” (p. 176). Students attending the University of North Carolina at Greensboro can take a course called Conversations That Matter, arising from James Baldwin’s (1963) saying education “is a moral endeavor to teach students how to change.” Students form small groups and facilitate a discussion on a major issue using many of the tools like those referenced throughout the book. Stating democracy is a way of life, Talking Democracy at the University of Maryland–Baltimore County, aims to help students build their knowledge base by reading multiple articles including topics such as social media, interpreting the news, and recognizing bias. Creating meaningful dialogue is the goal in each of the initiatives.

The role of campus spaces to promote dialogue and deliberation is the focus of Part Four. For example, Democracy Plaza at Indiana University-Purdue University evolved from a space developed by NBC news during the 2004 election, which utilized white board spaces to address issues and gather open public feedback and responses. The forum has provided a space for people to share their thoughts freely on a given topic. Nancy Kranich posits the academic library should be a place to engage and learn the tenets of dialogue and deliberation. Finally, Denison University completely changed residence hall structure so residential staff were trained in the importance of building community and helping residents to problem solve through dialogue.

Part Five of Creating Space for Democracy emphasizes the role for university engagement in the community with the goal of “greater mutual understanding and opportunities for collaboration” (p. 219). Providence College created the Smith Hall Annex, as a connection from the college to the neighborhood. Higher education and community groups alike exercise the space with the goal of learning to listen in respectful and reciprocal ways. As the history of segregation and integration at The University of Texas at Austin created a negative relationship between school and community, front-porch conversations were cultivated to provide safe spaces for dialogue. Practicing Community Engagement Dialogues, participants from the school and the community engaged in dialogue around topics such as healthcare and gentrification. Katie Kingery-Page considers how ecological democracy works within science-based fields, like landscape architecture, inviting groups to contribute in defining and designing of spatial community needs. Anthony C. Siracusa and Nan Elpers explore the use of Public Achievement at Colorado College using an international tool involving college students training middle school learners in community organization to prepare students to facilitate group-based decision-making by helping them understand the difference between individual and collective interest. This section demonstrates strategic and compassionate collaboration between community and university.

The concluding section describes dialogue and deliberation networks. New Hampshire Listens is a statewide initiative aimed at involving all voices in civic engagement around major community challenges such as the heroin epidemic. Libby Roderick defines the three parts of UAA Difficult Dialogues Initiative: “Start Talking, Stop Talking, and Toxic Talking” (p. 271). The goal of this
initiative is threefold: helping professors handle
difficult conversations in the classroom, improving
dialogue between university and community, and
alleviating toxic environments within academic
departments. Finally, Carrie B. Kisker, John J.
Theis, and Alberto Olivas discuss how community
colleges, what they call “Democracy’s Colleges”
(p.275), must be involved in helping students
with the principles of dialogue and debate in a
democratic society. Albert Dzur concludes the
book noting that the preceding chapters show
the possibility of active practice of democratic
teaching on campus. He is optimistic change can
happen but only when higher education becomes
“more aware of the undemocratic professionalism
they have routinely cultivated for many decades”
(p. 286). Noting that those who do democracy
learn by doing it or from others, but rarely from
the theory and research produced by academia.
Higher education should supply understanding
of the underpinnings of democracy and tools for
practicing necessary and productive dialogue.

Longo and Schaffer are correct in calling the
book a primer. Successes, failures, and areas for
improvement provide the reader with resources
to create meaningful spaces for democracy. One
criticism is that many examples only address
small populations within a university. Examples
of institution-wide success would be beneficial. A
central function of higher education is to produce
graduates able to practice democracy in meaningful
and productive ways. Creating Space for Democracy:
A Primer on Dialogue and Deliberation in Higher
Education is a collaborative effort successfully
promoting dialogue and deliberation on campus.

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About the Reviewer

James Zoll is an assistant professor in the
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Authors Make Case That Climate Change Is Not An Environmental But A Human Problem

Reviewed by Carly A. Phillips
Union of Concerned Scientists


Climate change is one of the greatest threats facing our world today. From rising sea levels to drought to extreme weather, we are already feeling the impacts of greenhouse gas pollution in our world. Humans are responsible for most of these emissions, and we are continuing to pollute at climate-altering rates. As a climate change ecologist, my research forces the devastating consequences of climate change to feel ever-present. I have seen permafrost failures, driven through massive wildfires, and watched as extreme weather inundates our cities and homes. Despite the clear risks associated with climate change, both scientists and organizers have failed to engage the public and communicate the severity and urgency of this issue. We have further failed to engage our communities around meaningful and transformative action that can temper the devastating consequences of climate change. Without improved engagement around the causes, risks, and possible solutions to climate change, we may miss the opportunity to take meaningful climate action and avoid disastrous climate impacts.

In *Talking Climate: From Research to Practice in Public Engagement*, Adam Corner and Jamie Clarke lay out five principles to enhance the efficacy of public engagement and climate change communication. These principles, although not meant to serve as a practitioner's guide, seek to rectify some of the most common pitfalls that scientists and organizers encounter when engaging the public around climate change. In their most distilled form, their guidelines are:

1. Learn lessons from previous campaign
2. Lead with values down not numbers up
3. Shift from a scientific to social reality
4. Change from nudge to thin
5. Promote new voices

Most importantly, each of these principles emphasizes that climate change is not an environmental problem, but a human one. By focusing on the human element of climate change and the role of interpersonal relationships in engagement, *Talking Climate* provides an evidence-based approach for engaging in meaningful climate communication and action.

The first of their guiding principles, “learn lessons from previous campaigns,” places climate change in the context of other large-scale social movements that required broad scale public engagement to inspire action. From the HIV/AIDS epidemic to smoking to vaccines, the authors draw parallels between climate issues and social issues that similarly exposed large groups of people to avoidable harm. They focused on the ineffective role of fearmongering in these campaigns and the often counterproductive outcomes. Specifically, they addressed how fear-based messaging can paralyze the intended audience and encourage apathy instead of action. In addition, the authors highlight that one of the main lessons from the pro-vaccination campaign was that facts don't change people's minds. The authors use this as motivation for the second of their guiding principles, “lead with values, not numbers.” This principle encourages those on the frontlines of climate engagement to lead, not with jargon, data, and facts, but rather by appealing to an individual's or communities' values. One prime example provided is the perhaps misguided emphasis on 2°C in the 2015 Paris Climate Summit, which lacked any connection to larger values. For many scientists, this number, which represents a global average temperature increase, serves as an important threshold, above which many of the most dire predictions about climate change will come to fruition. However, for many in the general public, 2°C seems insignificant and far below the temperature fluctuations that are experienced daily. As such, the messaging around this summit and accord failed to engage the general public or create sustained participation around climate issues.
Building on the first two principles, Corner and Clarke's third principle encourages a narrative framing of climate issues to help shift climate change “from a scientific to social reality.” The science specific framing of climate change overlooks the human element and importantly doesn't allow individuals and communities to see themselves as part of the climate conversation. Further, as the authors address in their fourth principle “from nudge to think,” narrative framing also allows for an important shift from passive to active participation when it comes to both climate impacts and solutions. One of the most challenging aspects of climate engagement is encouraging individuals to interrogate their own lives to determine how they can minimize their personal greenhouse gas emissions. The predominant approach to these behavior changes comes in the form of nudges, where passive changes take a choice out of the hands of the consumer, for example changing the default option for electricity to renewable energy, or most recently, making plastic straws available only upon request. While these are effective for small scale actions, they are somewhat prescriptive in their framing of what makes a “climate forward” or “green” lifestyle change. Narrative framing creates an opportunity for individuals to not just be nudged into climate action, but allows them to evaluate and reflect on their own lifestyle and work toward transformative (i.e., low carbon) and not merely performative climate action.

Beyond values, narrative framing, and personal reflection, Talking Climate also emphasizes the importance of diverse voices and coalitions for effective climate engagement. Green movements have a reputation for homogeneity and are specifically dominated by wealthy, white individuals. While these people and groups have reached important milestones in the broader fight against climate change, they are not representative of who has and will be most impacted by climate change. Importantly, new voices in the fight against climate change will help accelerate its acceptance as a social, not just scientific, reality, and reach groups who may not have been included in conversations about solutions previously.

While the principles put forth in Talking Climate are an important jumping off point for enhanced climate communication, the larger environment in which this engagement takes place has changed drastically since the book was published. Corner and Clarke lead one of Europe’s premiere climate change communication organizations and wrote Talking Climate as the Paris Climate Accord was beginning to be ratified by nations across the world. Since that time, populist attitudes have taken root across the world. The United States pulled out of the Paris Accord, and the United Nation’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released a special report emphasizing the short (less than two decades) timeline in which meaningful climate action must occur. As a U.S. citizen and resident, it’s also challenging to think about climate engagement without first considering how the current administration changed this conversation. Although climate change was already a polarizing issue in the United States, the rhetoric used and actions taken by the Trump administration exacerbated this divide. Such changes, both internationally and within the U.S., underscore the urgency of climate engagement and highlight the specific importance of narrative framing and broad-based coalitions.

Talking Climate: From Research to Practice in Public Engagement provides a timely synthesis from which researchers, teachers, organizers, and politicians alike can all benefit. Researchers may discover new ways to frame their own work around climate issues while teachers may find different strategies for engaging their students. As a whole, Corner and Clarke created a manual that can lead not only to improved engagement around climate issues but also toward meaningful climate action.

About the Reviewer
Carly Phillips is a Kendall Science Fellow at the Union of Concerned Scientists in Cambridge, Massachusetts.
Mission and Description

The mission of JCES is to provide a mechanism through which faculty, staff, and students of academic institutions and their community partners may disseminate scholarly works from all academic disciplines. JCES accepts all forms of writing, analysis, creative approaches, and methodologies. JCES is a peer-reviewed journal open to all disciplines. Its purpose is to integrate teaching, research, and community engagement in ways that address critical societal problems through a community-participatory process.
Traditional submissions are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods empirical studies. We also welcome submissions that utilize new and emerging methodological techniques. Traditional manuscript submissions should be based on a solid theoretical or conceptual framework and the discussion of the research findings should include practical, theoretical, and/or policy implications. These submissions should demonstrate central involvement of students and/or community partners and advance the field of community engagement scholarship, and should not exceed 8,000 words.

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

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

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

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

First Review
- Editorial staff sends manuscript to reviewers, with review form and return date
- Editor reassigns manuscript if reviewer unable to complete review
- Editorial staff sends reminder email one week in advance of due date
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- Editor receives reviewers’ evaluation and rating forms

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- Editor sends corresponding author the recommended revisions and requests resubmission
- Editor rejects manuscript (end of process)

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- Editorial staff requests resubmission within four weeks

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