Vol. 18 No. 4
2014

Journal of Higher Education Outreach & Engagement

a publication of the The University of Georgia

Published Through

A partnership of the University of Georgia's Office of the Vice President for Public Service and Outreach, Institute of Higher Education, College of Education, and Extension Service

Sponsored By

Campus Compact

Engagement Scholarship consortium

Journal of Higher Education Outreach & Engagement

Volume 18, Number 4, 2014

ISSN 1534-6102

Table of Contents

Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement

This study addressed the research question "How do regional accrediting standards apply to the central role of community engagement in U.S. institutions of higher education?" Using descriptive and qualitative methods, two sources were analyzed: published standards of the 6 regional accrediting commissions in the United States and the transcript of a panel discussion in which leaders from 4 of these 6 commissions shared their views on "engagement and regional accreditation." From these analyses, 4 themes emerged: (1) the institutional determination of community engagement mission and goals, (2) community engagement in educational programs and student learning, (3) institutional effectiveness and community engagement, and (4) faculty scholarship relating to community engagement. The article concludes with recommendations for institutional practices and supporting evidence to submit to regional accreditation commissions indicating the centrality of engagement in institutional missions. Recommendations are also made regarding peer evaluator training, faculty scholarship, and civic democracy.

This study explored the extent to which doctoral students are conducting community-engaged scholarship and investigated the characteristics of their degree-granting institutions. The research utilized the most immediate work of doctoral students by examining completed dissertations. Analysis showed which graduate students are pursuing community engagement through their scholarship, whether they are increasing in number, and the fields of study and institution types with which they are affiliated. By identifying who is producing engaged scholars, best practices can be identified in

the future. In addition, the findings revealed which disciplines and institution types have room to increase their output of community-engaged research.

97 ..... Exploring Intercollegiate Athletic Department–Community Partnerships Through the Lens of Community Service Organizations

Per G. Svensson, Matthew R. Huml, and Meg G. Hancock
University of Louisville

Institutions of higher education are increasingly engaging in partnerships with local communities. Within a sport context, the creation of the NCAA CHAMPS/Life Skills Program has emphasized partnerships between athletic departments and local community service organizations (CSOs). Prior studies, however, have used student-athletes rather than the partnership as the unit of analysis, so the attitudes and experiences of community partners remain overlooked. This study explored active relationships with a high-profile NCAA Division I athletic department in the Southeast through the lens of the CSOs. Four major themes emerged for the community partners' motives and perceived benefits in their relationship with the athletic department: (a) increased volunteer capacity, (b) opportunities to create long-term impact and lasting relationships with student-athletes, (c) ability to extend their mission through educational opportunities, and (d) monetary or in-kind donations. Overall, interviewees perceived their relationship with the athletic department to be characterized by ambiguity and ineffective communication.

129 ..... Outreach and Engagement Education for Graduate Students in Natural Resources: Developing a Course to Enrich a Graduate Outreach Requirement

Jo A. Latimore, Erin A. Dreelin, and Jordan Pusateri Burroughs
Michigan State University

Scientists need to engage stakeholders in natural resource management; however, few graduate programs prepare students to conduct outreach and engagement. Given this need, the authors' goals were to (1) create a one-credit course that introduced outreach and engagement practices and participatory approaches, (2) improve the quality of graduate students' Outreach Experiences (OEs) within the framework of a university departmental requirement, and (3) share lessons learned in addressing the training gap. Students in the course met learning objectives to improve OE plans, evaluate the effectiveness of outreach and engagement, and improve engagement with varied audiences. OE plans from students in the course scored significantly higher than precourse plans, indicating increased likelihood of effec-

tive engagement with their chosen audiences. Formal training in best practices and detailed guidance for students and faculty advisors are likely to improve student professional development and the outcomes of outreach and engagement activities.

Programs with Promise

157.....Moviéndose a Través de Languages and Literacies Through Code-Switching in a Community Literacies Event

Luciana C. de Oliveira
Teacher College, Columbia University
Zaira Arvelo Alicea and Ileana Cortés Santiago
Purdue University

This article describes a community literacies event from a larger project, one goal of which was to connect those affiliated to with university with the Latino/a community in the greater Lafayette area in Indiana. The notion of code-switching is used to describe how participants, including faculty, graduate students, preservice teachers, and volunteers, moved across languages and literacies to engage with community members—a central characteristic for the establishment of partnerships with culturally and linguistically diverse groups. The following questions are addressed: How can we move across community literacies and academic literacies to partner with Latino/a families? What models exist to promote understanding of community literacies? Based on exploration of these questions, it is clear that code-switching may play a key role in establishing partnerships with Latino/a communities. Suggestions for practitioners' and scholars' engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse communities are given.

177.....The Impact of Service-Learning on Preservice Professionals' Dispositions Toward Diversity

Jocelyn Glazier, Harriet Able, and Amy Charpentier
University of North Carolina

As service-learning becomes more widespread in schools and classrooms, it is similarly becoming more common in schools of education. A particular area of exploration is the use of service-learning to prepare preservice teachers to learn about diversity. This article provides a description of a project designed to positively influence preservice teachers' dispositions related to working with linguistically, socioeconomically, and culturally diverse families and initial analysis of that work. Further, this study examined what might make the service experience more transformational for participants. Specifically, the findings suggested that engaging in service work in the varied contexts of children and families allows preservice educa-

tors to see students' multiple lived identities, something not possible when service is performed solely in a school context.

Practice Stories

Marie G. Sandy
University of Wisconsin
Zeno E. Franco
Medical College of Wisconsin

A sense of place has been an integral part of service-learning since the field's inception; it describes one's attachment to a particular geographic place and is often a precursor to engaging in action to care for localities and their inhabitants. But practicing service-learning in online environments requires reconsidering this core value. Should the field celebrate the "liberation" of service-learning from geographical constraints, as some authors suggest, or reclaim a geographically bounded sense of place as an essential part of service-learning? The authors recommend finding ways to cultivate a virtual sense of geographic place in online learning environments to enhance a critical understanding of physical localities, better prepare service-learners to enter service sites, and deepen connections among participating students. By providing examples of online collaborative mapping and virtual community projects, this paper considers some implications for theorizing sense of place for online and face-to-face service-learning in the digital age.

Dissertation Overviews

Lina D. Dostilio
Duquesne University

A relatively new conception of engagement provides a framework by which institutions of higher education engage with communities in democratic ways, which include inclusive, reciprocal problem-oriented work that brings together university and community stakeholders as co-generators of knowledge. The resulting democratically engaged partnerships position diverse members to take on roles as collaborators and problem solvers. They are mutually transformed through the processes of reciprocation, power diffusion,

Book Reviews

© *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, Volume 18, Number 4, p. 1, (2014)
 ISSN 1534-6104

From the Editor…

Deepening and Evolving Community-Engaged Research Methodologies and Pedagogies

This last issue of volume 18 for the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* reflects a deepening in our understanding of community engagement through the use of more sophisticated research methodologies and more advanced, targeted practice strategies. Devorah Lieberman leads off in the featured Campus Compact presidential essay, asserting that for diverse college campuses, like the University of La Verne, which she heads, the "traditional approach to service-learning is inadequate because it is designed to separate those being served from those serving." Today, she points out, students cannot relate to that divide because their home communities are often those being served. To address "Who is Serving Whom," La Verne offers an enactment of the Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) asset-based community development model, where the university and its students add value to the assets the local communities already possess rather than "'fixing' something perceived as 'broken.'"

I am excited by the range of methodologies of inquiry employed in the articles in this issue. Using autoethnography, Darling, with Kerr, Thorp, and Chung, describes her learning as a Peace Corps Tanzanian village-based extension facilitator. In particular she reflects with keen candor on balancing community development effectiveness and cultural appropriateness. Her use of "crystallization" *(Richardson, 1997)* in discussing validity in her work is a useful way to consider getting at deeper, more complex understandings.

Utilizing content analysis of expert panelists and document analysis, Paton, Fitzgerald, Green, Raymond, and Borchardt present much-needed findings on how regional accrediting standards apply to the central role of community engagement in U.S. institutions of higher education. In a first-of-its kind examination, Jaeger, Tuchmayer, and Morin explore the extent to which community-engaged scholarship is conducted as dissertation research by doctoral students and the characteristics of their degree-granting institutions. To do so they developed inclusion and exclusion criteria through a literature search from which the three scholars performed coding and triangulation to arrive at the 129 dissertations from 90 separate institutions that served as their data set. What are

the perspectives and attitudes of community service organizations (CSOs) engaged with student-athletes from a high-profile, NCAA Division I athletic program? Using two rounds of carefully documented data coding and analysis from 15 local and national CSOs, Svensson, Huml, and Hancock found, interestingly, that in addition to the self-serving causes of increasing their volunteer capacity and benefiting from monetary or in-kind donations, partners took on the student-athletes to bring about a long-term impact on these volunteers by introducing them to a specific cause. In another study, the analytical lens of code-switching was used by de Oliveira, Arvelo Alicea, and Cortés Santiago to describe how faculty, graduate students, preservice teachers, and volunteers moved across languages and literacies in a community engagement event.

Latimore, Dreelin, and Pusateri Burroughs employed several strategies to assess a Michigan State University course preparing graduate students in natural resources not only to meet a graduate outreach and engagement program requirement, but, more importantly, to consider how they as scientists would engage and collaborate with stakeholders in tackling wicked environmental problems, work that entails balancing the often conflicting social and political values of stakeholders with the best available science. In their "program with promise," Glazier, Able, and Charpentier of University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill studied the impact of service-learning on preservice professionals' disposition toward diversity by reviewing student service-learning contact logs that were signed by community members or teachers at the school site and by sociolinguistic analysis of student focus group transcripts. How can service-learning be done virtually? In their mind-expanding article, Sandy and Franco assert "A sense of place has been an integral part of service-learning since the field's inception. . . . But practicing service-learning in online environments requires reconsidering the core value." To reconsider this core value, Sandy and Franco offer an excellent literature review (especially for those of us less familiar with the possible technologies) and introduce us to online collaborative mapping and virtual community projects, two examples from their teaching of cultivating a virtual sense of geographic place in online learning. They leave us with implications for "theorizing sense of place for both online and face-to-face service-learning in the digital age."

In deepening our understanding of reciprocity in community–university partnerships, Dostillio provides an overview of her International Association for Research on Service Learning and Community Engagement award-winning dissertation, an

explanatory case study that gathered evidence of the ways that three determinants (conditions, partnership learning interactions, and stakeholder attributes) reciprocally interacted to explain the adoption of democratic processes and roles within a community–university partnership. For anyone contemplating social economy research or community research partnerships, consider Tom Buchanan's review of one of three new e-books from the Canadian Social Economic Hub called *Community–University Research Partnerships: Reflections on the Canadian Social Economy Experience*, edited by Hall and MacPherson. Tami Moore offers a review of Hodges and Dubb's *The Road Half Traveled: University Engagement at a Crossroads*, a book that goes beyond the study of individual partnerships to report on a study of 10 anchor institutions' roles and practices across their many functions, including purchasing, hiring, investing, and real estate development, to improve the overall and long-term quality of the local community. Lastly, Susan Harden reviews *Deepening Community Engagement in Higher Education: Forging New Pathways*, edited by Hoy and Johnson, the rich story about research and lessons learned from 13 higher-education-based Bonner programs. Ultimately the book and its review raise the question of what "deep" relationships are and whether we have gone, as Hodges and Dubb might say, only a "road half traveled" if the depth and pervasiveness of our partnerships do not reach transformational status for the institution or the community.

The depth and pervasiveness of the content of this issue and the others in this volume year have only been possible with the input of many—including the authors themselves, the peer reviewers who are listed at the end of this issue and who are distinguished by providing extensive feedback, the committed JHEOE editorial board (who also serve as reviewers), the hard-working associate editors, and the good-humored, dedicated editorial management and production staff. For all the contributions, we are grateful, and we look forward to a volume year 19 of even greater depth in advancing community engagement's knowledge, theory, and practice.

With best regards,
Lorilee R. Sandmann
Editor

References

Kretzmann, J., & McKnight, J. (1993). *Building communities from the inside out: A path toward finding and mobilizing a community's assets.* Chicago, IL: ACTA.

Richardson, L. (1997). *Fields of play: Constructing an academic life.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Reflective Essays

© *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, Volume 18, Number 4, p. 7, (2014)
 ISSN 1534-6104

The ABCDs of Service-Learning: Who Is Serving Whom?

Devorah Lieberman

Abstract

The concept of and approach to service-learning across higher education has changed dramatically over the last two and a half decades. Historically, one of the primary goals of service-learning was to prepare undergraduate students to become engaged citizens and to introduce them to the challenges experienced by individuals from marginalized or disenfranchised communities *(Dunlap, 1998; Shadduck-Hernandez, 2005)*. Now, 25 years after the implementation of the National and Community Service Act of 1990, many universities are shifting this focus to include meeting community needs, accomplishing graduate and undergraduate student learning outcomes, and establishing reciprocity of respect.

Introduction

John Kretzmann and John McKnight *(1993)* developed the asset-based community development (ABCD) model and, in 1995, founded the Asset-Based Community Development Institute. The ABCD model altered the focus from highlighting only the needs and/or deficiencies of neighborhoods to, instead, bringing forth a community's assets—the key building blocks for achieving sustainable urban and rural community revitalization. Today, an increasing number of higher education service-learning programs have adopted this approach in ways that reflect the influence of swiftly changing demographics of college enrollment.

From 1990 to 2012, the percentage of Hispanic/Latino students attending college has increased by 58%. In the same period, African American student enrollment increased by 30%, and White student enrollment increased by 16% *(National Center for Education Statistics, 2013, Table 306.20)*. Though Hispanics/Latinos constituted less than one quarter of all 18-to-24-year-old students enrolled nationally, their percentages are growing steadily while the percentage of White students within the same age demographic is declining *(Krogstad & Fry, 2014)*. Additionally, approximately two fifths of first-generation students in colleges or universities are from underrepresented populations (*Strand, 2013*). Higher education student populations are predicted to continue becoming even more diverse, ethnically and socioeconomically. In light of these shifting demo-

graphics, a critical question then emerges when examining the traditional service-learning model: Who is serving whom?

As student population demographics indicate, current service-learning initiatives (e.g., community engagement, civic engagement, or community-based learning) occur within the very neighborhoods where our students were raised. These ever-changing communities may include multiple ethnicities, socioeconomic strata, cultures, nationalities, religions, and languages. These students attending college and participating in service-learning initiatives may not view their home communities as "broken" or as having deficits; instead, they see the richness, beauty, and assets related to their families, friends, schools, hospitals, and places of worship. For diverse college campuses, the traditional approach to service-learning is inadequate because it is designed to separate those being served from those serving. Today, we have students who cannot relate to that divide because more often than not, the communities being served are their own home towns. It is becoming apparent that in order to create healthy, realistic, and sustainable service-learning experiences, the traditional approach to service-learning must change.

Community Engagement Through Partnership With the University of La Verne: Asking and Answering the Question "Who is Serving Whom?"

The University of La Verne was founded in 1891 and is located in the city of La Verne, California, 35 miles east of Los Angeles. The university is classified as a Carnegie doctoral/comprehensive institution and enrolls approximately 8,700 students across four colleges (business, education, arts and sciences, and law) at its central campus in the city of La Verne and at 10 regional sites throughout Central and Southern California. These four colleges offer graduate and undergraduate degrees in the liberal arts, education, business, family therapy, and public administration as well as doctoral programs in psychology, law, and public administration.

Since the university's founding 123 years ago, the population of the neighboring inland Southern California region has become increasingly Hispanic. La Verne's enrollment has reflected this shift, and Latino students currently comprise more than 40% of the student population. As a result, the U.S. Department of Education designated the University of La Verne a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI).

Additionally, more than 50% of La Verne's traditional undergraduate students (i.e., those 18–22 years old) are the first in their families to attend college, which is a far greater percentage of first-generation undergraduate students than the national average. In many ways, the evolving demographics of La Verne's student body reflect the changes occurring not just in Southern California and the southwestern United States but at urban and metropolitan universities throughout the country.

The University of La Verne is committed to offering educational experiences that ensure students graduate and continue as contributing citizens. The university realizes that the traditional model of students serving the community is not necessarily the one most appropriate for its students or its community partners. It has been more productive for faculty, staff, and students to engage the community in a discussion about the positive elements of the community rather than what is missing from it.

For that reason, the university has moved from the traditional service-learning model to strategically implementing place-based partnerships between the institution and its communities. The university's work during the last few years with the nearby city of Pomona is a poignant example. If we were to focus only on deficits related to city data, we would see that Pomona's violent crime rate is about 45% higher than the state average, the high school dropout rate was 16.5% in 2012, and nearly one third of its residents live below the federal poverty level. Instead, both the university and Pomona city leaders are systematically identifying Pomona's assets. These include, but are not limited to, its committed school district superintendent and administration; its willing community leaders who organize and hold monthly meetings to focus on city issues and partnerships; and the support of significant local organizations such as The Fairplex, home of the world's largest county fair with an annual economic impact of $300 million.

These assets help create partnerships across government agencies, civic organizations, and other educational institutions, and generate opportunities for positive impact. Initiating community engagement used to be a siloed effort; La Verne now seeks long-term and mutually beneficial partnerships. An example of employing the ABCD model began when the university signed an agreement with the Pomona Unified School District (PUSD) to use federal work-study dollars to enhance the district's after-school tutoring program, the Learning Connection. The relationship is simple: Our students tutor theirs, and La Verne provides 75% of the funding for the tutors via work-study dollars.

La Verne's partnership with PUSD positions university students as partners in learning, while at the same time giving underserved elementary and middle school students the chance to have one-on-one tutoring with college students to whom they can relate more easily, perhaps, than to adults. Additionally, many of these tutors were raised in communities like Pomona and have pride in and an understanding of these communities. Through this process, not only will PUSD students improve their Common Core skills, they will also develop relationships with young role models with similar backgrounds. A sense of empowerment is generated on both ends, and aspirations for PUSD students to attend college are expected to increase dramatically.

The university and our students are adding value to assets PUSD already possessed rather than "fixing" something perceived as "broken." Such connections are powerful. The ABCD model does more than simply build bridges; it changes the lens of how we view service-learning. The communities become intellectual spaces and coeducators of La Verne students. This model allows the university to then proudly say, "You and your communities have something powerful to contribute; how can we be a part of that?"

Teresa's Story

The changing demographics of La Verne's enrollment suggest that a significant percentage of students will be returning to their neighborhoods to participate in community engagement activities. This creates an especially difficult set of psychological and sociological challenges for students if not handled in a culturally sensitive manner.

Teresa Marin, an alumna of the University of La Verne and a first-generation college student, remembers how just 15 years ago, her neighborhood in Compton, California, was negatively perceived in conversations with some of her peers. "I never thought about Compton as a bad place to live until someone in my class made a negative comment about Compton. I was surprised. I am proud of where I am from—my family lives there, my parents—it is our home." When asked how she would feel about her hometown being selected for a service-learning project, she added, "I would wonder what they were trying to fix . . . and probably feel as if there were other cities in more need."

These outmoded perceptions of "communities with only deficits" need to be countered with new narratives that celebrate the dignity and strengths of the communities with which our students

are engaged. As educators, we must encourage one another to see past our own preconceived notions or biases about the cities "on the other side of the tracks" and act as examples to our campus communities by demonstrating that we believe if we look for assets in any community, we will find them. If we only offer community engagement projects that "fix or mend broken neighborhoods," we are failing millions of students like Teresa. If, in the classroom or in conversation, we flinch at the name of a particular city or make a negative comment about it and disconnect the student from us in that moment, we are not just failing them, but also ourselves as leaders in higher education. By implementing the ABCD model in our community engagement work and strengthening the mutually beneficial relationships between institution and community partner, we instill a sense of pride and respect in both university students and neighborhoods.

Tangible Evidence of Commitment to Community Engagement

Although "service to the community" is explicitly stated in our university mission and our 2020 Strategic Vision, responsibility for implementation had been diffused throughout the university. In order to be more intentional, we created a full-time position: director of civic and community engagement. This position facilitates the effort to further an institution-wide understanding of and commitment to the community engagement model that embraces our diverse student body and our diverse surrounding communities. The overarching vision for the institution and the Office of Civic and Community Engagement (OCCE) is to embody reciprocity through transformative community-based academic and cocurricular experiences by grounding our work in the ABCD model. This means not only further developing our understanding of community engagement, our philosophy, and our practice, but also creating the infrastructure to support its sustainability and its intentionality.

For our university, this means finding the balance of highlighting the work that faculty, staff, and students have been doing for decades while also creating a structure for support, development, and promotion. With community partners, this means communicating our philosophy of engagement and creating both the direct and indirect means for community partners to be coeducators of our students. We are internally focused on stressing and emphasizing the "primacy of local definition, investment, cre-

ativity, hope, and control" (*Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, p. 6*), as exemplified in our partnership with the City of Pomona.

Mutually Beneficial ABCD Civic and Community Engagement

Each of the following examples employs the ABCD model and answers the question "Who is serving whom?"

The La Verne Experience. In fall 2012, the university initiated the La Verne Experience (LVE) to provide all students—undergraduate, graduate, and nontraditional alike—with shared experiences that are unique to this institution. The LVE, threaded through all academic disciplines and programs, is anchored by four pillars: learning communities connecting courses from different disciplines, integrated learning, community engagement and experiential learning, and reflective practice. The community engagement elements of the LVE increase in depth and breadth as students progress toward graduation. Throughout their academic journeys and civic engagement experiences, the ABCD model is woven into every aspect of the service-learning projects they do. This connection to a community partner is relationship building at its best: Each student begins to identify a community partner's assets as a freshman and builds upon those assets in their sophomore, junior, and senior years. Additionally, students reflect on their community engagement experiences in their ePortfolios and draw meaning from them as seniors when they write their capstone autobiographical essay, "My La Verne Experience."

Community and Civic Engagement Day. The introduction of the La Verne Experience begins for first-year students at their orientation. This day sees approximately 600 entering students partnered with their FLEX (First-year La Verne Experience) faculty members with whom they will participate in community-based service-learning projects at sites throughout Southern California. These projects include working at homeless shelters, assisting at women's shelters, volunteering at retirement communities, working with the San Gabriel Mountain Regional Conservancy, and participating in sustainability efforts across Southern California. Through the ABCD model, projects go beyond painting walls or picking up trash. Throughout the La Verne Experience, students apply theory from the course content to their ongoing, reciprocal work with their community partner.

Latino Education Access & Development (LEAD) Conference. Traditionally held during Hispanic Heritage Month,

the La Verne LEAD Conference has hosted nearly 2,000 middle and high school students and their families on the La Verne campus. In an effort to increase access to a college education for underserved populations and engage both prospective and current students, this day-long conference encourages current La Verne students to participate and/or volunteer during the event. These speaking opportunities let university students tell their personal stories, which position them as role models for all in attendance. Using the ABCD model, our campus created a parent workshop after learning that for Latino families, selection of a college is strongly family influenced. Making that connection and providing information to parents in this case made a difference in the assets that parents and families saw in themselves.

First-Generation Student Success Program (FGSSP). Established in 1995, this program addresses cultural conditions relevant to first-generation students attending college. For example, parents wanted personal assurances that college was a safe place for their children. FGSSP provides parents many touchstones at the university including an orientation, a forum to address parental issues, a picnic lunch, and an appreciation reception. In a similar vein, high school students who come from families with no tradition of higher education needed to feel that they could succeed. La Verne tutors these students on transitioning into college, applying for financial aid, and enhancing their learning skills. To ensure first-generation students have someone they trust on campus, a cadre of faculty, staff, and alumni serve as personal mentors. Since the program's inception, the completion rate for first-generation, full-time La Verne students has increased by nearly 15%. The first-generation students, through this process, came to understand that their life experiences, perspectives, and voices contributed to the university community. They learned that their success was in essence something they could share with their own families. This connection and sense of community among university, students, and student family, helps us retain these students through graduation.

Lessons Learned for Success

Successful community engagement must be driven by the mission of the university, clearly articulated as a priority in its strategic plan, and endorsed by its board of trustees. Creating and staffing our OCCE signaled its importance. As president of the University of La Verne, it is my responsibility to "walk the talk" for community engagement both on and off campus. In order for this to be effective, I need to be public and consistent in my efforts to demonstrate my

commitment. In many cases, this can be threaded easily throughout the work that I already do. Whenever I give a speech, I talk about my personal and professional commitment to civic engagement. I am visible at campus and community events as a supporter and/or participant. In addition, I work with campus stakeholders to connect our civic engagement curriculum to campuswide initiatives such as the La Verne Experience. I also continue to research and publish in the academic literature and public media, sharing my commitment to civic engagement and its lifelong impact on students. I find that the greatest impact, however, comes from the time I spend interacting with our students—for example, in the classroom, in the cafeteria, in the residence halls, and at their community partnership sites. Taking the time to know our students is critical. Without listening to them tell us their stories, how can we even begin to imagine their journeys or understand what it is that is needed for them to flourish?

It is also essential to empower the OCCE director, as well as faculty, students, and other administrators, to develop authentic, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial partnerships with community and civic leaders. It is they, after all, who will be creating and sustaining the community-engaged partnerships from conception to implementation.

As we enter into community-engaged partnerships, above all, it is essential that we listen to students, hearing and understanding their cares and concerns while respecting and reinforcing pride for their diversity, home communities, and life experiences. This is certain to make civic engagement an integral element of every student's college experience. The result of this work is measured in the number of engaged and successful citizens who graduate, the shift in attitudes and a commitment to lifelong community engagement, and in greater connection between the communities and the institutions of higher education. Alumni who continue to give back, who remain committed to improving educational access, and who have pride without judgment in their communities evolve through serving and being served through the ABCD model.

If someone were to ask the faculty or staff at the University of La Verne when "service-learning" first began at the university, I assume they would respond, "It has been a priority for us since our founding in 1891." Although it has always been a part of who we are as an institution, our conscious decision to reframe our understanding of civic engagement through a new lens and to adapt and continue building our community–student partnerships is what makes me proud.

It is this type of work that connects the university with its surrounding communities, resulting in sustainable partnerships and offering a model of community–university engagement that meets the needs of the increasingly diverse student populations in higher education today and for generations to come.

References

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2013). Table 306.20: Total fall enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by level and control of institution and race/ethnicity of student: Selected years, 1976 through 2012. In U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (Ed.), *Digest of Education Statistics* (2013 ed.). Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_306.20.asp

Digest of Educational Statistics 2014 (table 306.02), National Center for Educational Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, US Department of Education, Washington, DC.

Dunlap, M. (1998, Fall). Voices of students in multicultural service-learning settings. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 6*, 97–105.

Kretzmann, J., & McKnight, J. (1993). *Building communities from the inside out: A path toward finding and mobilizing a community's assets.* Chicago, IL: ACTA.

Krogstad, J. M., & Fry, R. (2014). More Hispanics, Blacks enrolling in college, but lag in bachelor's degrees. Pew Research Center. Retrieved from http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/04/24/more-hispanics-blacks-enrolling-in-college-but-lag-in-bachelors-degrees/

Shadduck-Hernandez, J. (2005). *Here I am now! Community service-learning with immigrant and refugee undergraduate students and youth: The use of critical pedagogy, situated-learning and funds of knowledge* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst, MA.

Strand, K. (2013). *Making sure they make it! Best practices for ensuring the academic success of first-generation college students.* Washington, DC: Council of Independent Colleges.

About the Author

Devorah Lieberman is the 18th president of the University of La Verne. She has broadly published books and articles in higher education literature on the topics of intercultural communication, faculty development, diversity, community and civic engagement, and institutional transformation. She earned her Ph.D. from the University of Florida.

© *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, Volume 18, Number 4, p. 17, (2014)
 ISSN 1534-6104

Engaged Learning and Peace Corps Service in Tanzania: An Autoethnography

Brianna Darling with John M. Kerr, Laurie Thorp, and Kimberly Chung

Abstract

The Peace Corps Masters International program offers students the opportunity to combine their Peace Corps service with their master's education. This article demonstrates how classroom learning strengthened the author's Peace Corps service in Tanzania, which in turn strengthened her master's thesis. Peace Corps supports an approach to community development that situates Volunteers closely with people in power, but this makes it difficult for them to gain the participation of the poor and marginalized. How can one strike a balance between effectiveness and cultural appropriateness? As an outsider, how do one's relationships with community members affect project processes and outcomes? This autoethnography investigates the first author's learning experience in undertaking community development in Tanzania's southern highlands. Although the conclusions are specific to the case reported here, the learning process applies to others who are beginning to contemplate how they might enter a community, assess its needs, and do good work.

> *Journal Entry, August 8, 2009*
> I wanted to come here to have the world break my heart and I wanted to help make some kind of positive change. I don't know how and why but that's what I wanted and I didn't know I would find so much brokenness—I didn't expect so much corruption. I don't want to change the world; I don't think it's ever what I wanted. My favorite poet wrote, "Show me how you offer to your people the stories and songs you want our children's children to remember and I will show you how I struggle not to change the world, but to love it" . . . and now I'm stuck—because my original understanding of development is dead to me.

Background

In retrospect, I have no idea why I chose to study international development. I didn't know what development was. I enjoyed my

international experiences in high school and college and wanted to make the world a better place, so I suppose it made sense. Peace Corps had recently started to partner with graduate schools to develop a program where students work on their degree and carry out their 2 years of Peace Corps service simultaneously. The idea was that students first get some extra training in school and then apply it during their Peace Corps service. Then they return and complete their degree. This was part of a concerted effort by Peace Corps to engage more fully with institutions of higher education *(Quigley, 2013)* and to attract skilled Volunteers *(Peace Corps, 2012).* Being a graduate student would make me a better Volunteer and vice versa. Embedding my Peace Corps experience in my graduate school learning set the stage for me to conduct my Peace Corps service with the mindset of an action researcher. I chose Michigan State University (MSU) because at the time, the only interdisciplinary department that participated with Peace Corps Masters International was located there. I began my Master of Science degree in 2007 in the Department of Community, Agriculture, Recreation and Resource Studies.

Although I didn't appreciate it at the time, I learned that MSU is a good home for the Peace Corps Masters International (PCMI) program. It is one of the original land-grant colleges, which were established with the mission of engaging with the public to advance the common good *(Peters, 2005)*, and it still takes this mission seriously. At MSU, there is a strong culture of community engagement. A significant number of faculty collaborate with communities to pursue a shared learning agenda that will advance the goals of the academy and their partners *(Fear, Rosaen, Bawden, & Foster-Fishman, 2001)*. The university publishes a magazine called *The Engaged Scholar* focusing on its various collaborative partnerships with external constituents, and it offers a number of programs in which students can engage with communities not just in Michigan but worldwide *(*e.g., *Doberneck, 2009).* PCMI would be different; I would go off to a community and a country to be determined later, but my coursework would prepare me to work with that community in an engaged manner, and the community would teach me things that would not be possible to learn in the classroom. In this form of engaged learning, the university is not the source of knowledge but a resource for accessing knowledge, and even my teachers would learn from my experience *(Clancy & Adamek, 2005).*

There are many ways to think about international development. When I write, talk, and think about it, I'm mostly referring to capacity building, education, and income generation on the grass-

roots level. Once I started classes at MSU, I immediately began to see that international development had taken some wrong turns in the past and in many instances perpetuated imperialist tendencies *(Kovats-Bernat, 2002)*. It had been dominated by a top-down approach stemming from the ethnocentric assumption that what worked in economically advanced countries was "good" and should be replicated elsewhere *(Axinn & Axinn, 1997).*

Planning and Executing My Research

As I began to think about my research, I knew that it would be closely intertwined with my service as a Peace Corps Volunteer. I was naturally drawn to the idea of participatory development as a way to link the two. Authors such as Chambers *(1997)* and Brokensha, Warren, and Werner *(1980)* wrote about moving away from the top-down approach and embracing local capacities, knowledge, and ideas. It also appeared, however, that participatory development was riddled with shortcomings. Cooke and Kothari *(2001)* and Cleaver *(2001)* wrote that this methodology actually can end up reinforcing existing power structures that further disempower the marginalized populations. Cooke and Kothari even went so far as to title their book *Participation: The New Tyranny?* I also began learning about feminist epistemology around the same time. Martin's *(1991)* article "The Egg and the Sperm" completely changed the way I thought about knowledge and truth. This article discusses how culture shapes science and how science consequently validates culture-based norms as "truth." I began to question everything that had been handed to me through my formal education. This depressed me as a young, idealistic student and practitioner and made me worry about the possible damage I could do as a Peace Corps Volunteer. However, I was still confident that, with the language training I would receive and the length of time I would be able to spend in a rural community, I would be able to handle it.

In my classes I learned about qualitative and action research. These methodologies represent an alternative paradigm to the hypothesis-testing methodology that dominates much of the social sciences. I gravitated toward these approaches; they felt like an extension of my worldview. I was particularly influenced by scholars such as Lincoln and Guba *(1985)*, who stated that the social world is something interpreted, not something literal, and Haraway *(1988)*, who wrote that knowledge is situated in a time and place. At the same time, I was strongly influenced by strands of the action research literature. Reason and Bradbury *(2008)* maintained that action research responds to practical, significant issues that con-

cern the "flourishing of human persons and their communities" *(p. 10)*. I wanted my work to draw on many different ways of knowing and to focus on opening new spaces for dialogue and collective action. Consistent with contemporary views of action research, I also wanted my research to be a living, emergent process that could not be predetermined.

I met Dr. Laurie Thorp during my first year in graduate school. After she visited my survey of methods class to present her autoethnographic work, I knew I wanted to do the same kind of research for my master's thesis. Autoethnography is an interpretive form of narrative research. Bochner and Ellis *(2002)* wrote that autoethnography is a form of writing that "make[s] the researcher's own experience a topic of investigation in its own right" *(p. 733)*. A writer's vulnerability, personal feelings, and emotions are all ways to illustrate their experiences as well as construct and share knowledge. In this methodology, the researcher is an integral part of the story he or she seeks to tell through self-reflection on the experience. Planning and writing my master's thesis as an autoethnography fostered reflective learning throughout my entire Peace Corps service as well as after it. I benefited from a flexible academic environment that allowed me to avoid the tension between the needs of the action researcher and the norms of traditional academic writing.

Halfway through spring semester, I learned that I had been placed in Tanzania and would be part of the Environmental Education and Sustainable Agriculture in Rural Communities (EESARC) program. From the Peace Corps Volunteer description booklet, I learned that EESARC aims to improve the quality of life of project stakeholders (women, youth, farmers, and community leaders) by increasing their capacity to address priority land degradation problems, pursue sustainable agriculture practices like permaculture, and use renewable natural resources sustainably. As a village-based extension facilitator, my role was to partner with the village communities to help them understand their situation to explore potential solutions.

I left for Tanzania with 48 other Peace Corps Volunteers the summer after my first year of graduate school. After 3 months of language and technical training, I was delivered to the village that would become my home for the next 2 years. Once I had settled into my new home in Tanzania as a Peace Corps Volunteer, I began to study myself and the people I lived with and worked among. I used participant observation, semistructured interviews, and observations and reflections on my work and life during my service. I collected data in the form of retrospective field notes (*Thorp,*

2006), interview notes, and personal journal entries. Participant observation first helped me become familiar with the social and ecological landscape of my village. It later became a way to monitor and reflect on shared challenges and areas of strength in my work and to critically reflect on myself and my actions. It was a tool I used to do better work as a volunteer, and the data that I gathered became raw material for my master's thesis.

Although I had thought a lot about my research during my first year at MSU, the focus for my thesis emerged only after I arrived in Tanzania and heard the common reflection that Volunteers only start projects that fall apart. Returned Volunteers would say, "I hope you guys don't expect to actually really change anything. You'll learn a lot about yourself, though." I wanted to know if this was true or if we could anticipate some kind of positive change.

My thesis questions emerged over time: How can community development workers create a balance that allows them to be culturally appropriate and effective in their work with all members of the community? As an outsider, how do one's relationships with community members affect the processes and outcomes of projects? Quite simply, I wanted to know how we could make our endeavors succeed and how we could work with those who needed it the most.

About a year and a half into my service, I developed a set of questions related to my work in the EESARC program to guide conversations in the form of semistructured interviews. EESARC goals, as previously mentioned, involve developing capacity through sustainable agriculture education and training to improve quality of life and to enable communities to work through their most pressing issues.

After obtaining approval from the MSU Human Research Protection Program, I interviewed 32 of the villagers I lived with, a mixture of people who were and were not involved in projects I worked on including farmers, teachers, and village leaders. I asked them for their impressions of Peace Corps and what things they understood to characterize the success and failure of programs and projects. I asked for their perspectives on the ways that the relationships Volunteers build with different community members affect their ability to positively influence the lives of the poorest people.

I began the analysis of my data after returning to MSU following my Peace Corps service. I used a narrative methodology to analyze my data: the stories from my interviews, field notes, and memories. Analysis was an ongoing activity that developed and

crystallized over time. It involved the process of writing, reading, and rereading journals and interview notes, then learning from emergent themes and connecting them to the literature *(Richardson & Adams St. Pierre, 2005)*.

According to Bochner *(2000)*, the process of autoethnographic analysis involves the researcher emotionally recalling events of the past. This emotional recall allows the researcher to look back on specific, memorable episodes and to experience and express them through a type of writing that includes thoughts, events, dialogue, and the physical details of the particular event. This writing, according to Richardson *(2000)*, is a method of inquiry in and of itself. Through self-reflexive writing, the self can be examined within a scholarly framework. As we write, we construct ourselves and at the same time, the way we understand ourselves informs what we write, feel, and interpret and how we construct meaning *(Richardson, 1997, 2000)*. Through our personal, reflective writing we can share with the reader how our understanding emerged as we experienced and reflected upon events that unfolded (*Marshall & Mead, 2005*). Autoethnography facilitates portrayal of the learning process, complete with stumbling blocks, denial, Aha! moments, and minor victories.

Consistent with an action research approach, I had engaged villagers as well as other Peace Corps Volunteers in my inquiry into how to be effective in my community development work, particularly in my efforts to do useful work for the poor and marginalized. This engagement went beyond mere interviews; it was an important part of my work and my life in Tanzania. After returning to the university, I engaged my committee and some of my friends in efforts to turn my voluminous diary entries, field notes, and interview responses into a coherent story. Conversations throughout the year helped me interpret my life in the village. My friends and committee members read numerous drafts of my writing; their feedback helped me find my voice and understand my experience. In this way, I pursued the important process of gaining support from and being challenged by friends and colleagues to help me inquire deeply *(Bjørn & Boulus, 2011)*.

One of the things I had to consider in my research was validity. To say that the findings of narrative research are (or must be) valid is to argue that the findings are in fact (or must be) true and certain. Instead, as Richardson *(1997)* suggests, I prefer the term *crystallization*. Just as a crystal combines "symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes" *(p. 92)* and angles, an interpretive researcher combines field notes, observations, reflections,

and interviews to gain a deeper understanding of a culture and situation. Crystals grow and change over time, as does knowledge. Crystallization provides us with a deeper, more complex, and thoroughly partial understanding of the topic.

I utilized some of the alternative criteria appropriate for judging the merits of alternative paradigm research. In this approach, we are looking for the "goodness" of my entire body of work—my experience as a practitioner and the way I have written and analyzed it. How will you know if what I'm saying is trustworthy and useful? Lather *(1986)* writes of catalytic validity and asks if the research process reenergizes participants in knowing their reality to better transform it. Were participants of the work in which I was involved able to take charge? Did they learn something meaningful? And is the story I am relaying to you catalytic—that is, does it inspire new thoughts or ideas? Has it engaged your thoughts and feelings and thus in some way pulled you in?

Wolcott *(1994)* writes that as researchers, we do not try to convince; we try to understand. What about the people I worked with in my village? Did they gain an understanding about their abilities and knowledge to do, create, and change? With my text, have I demonstrated a grounded understanding and perspective so that you are able to get a sense of my lived experience? Is it so abundant in concrete detail that you can feel and understand the partial truth of the narrative?

Critical subjectivity is one of the criteria I have come to understand as possibly the most important characteristic of autoethnographic research. Autoethnographers use the term *critical subjectivity* as opposed to naive subjectivity (*Carr & Kemmis, 1986*). Critical subjectivity involves self-reflexive attention "to the ground on which one is standing" *(Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 10)*. It means that we accept our subjective experience and understand that it influences how we make meaning but that, if subjectivity is naively exercised and not taken into account, it is open to all sorts of distortions *(Heron & Reason, 1997)* and possibilities for misdoings. Through critical subjectivity, a young practitioner fearful of unknowingly incorporating imperialist tendencies in her work can obtain a more sophisticated awareness of the process she is involved in. To put it quite simply: Was I critical about myself and the work I was doing? Has action been coupled with reflection?

Before the other Volunteers and I had left Washington, D.C., for Tanzania, one of the Peace Corps employees we had worked with stressed to us, "Celebrate your minor victories." We didn't

realize the importance of this piece of advice until we were in the field. As I read and reread my journals, I found that I had written over and over again the words "minor victory." Here we ask: In the work we did in my village and the work I did with my narrative, were small steps of progress made toward impossible goals? There is a whole world of unconstructed knowledge out there; it is infinite. Have I made useful connections or contributions?

My Story

It was our villages' responsibility to get us to our new homes. My village sent the head teacher from the primary school to pick me up in town. We strapped my belongings to the top of the bus and, after about a 1-hour ride, we were dropped off in what appeared to be the middle of nowhere. Some students came to carry my belongings. They left me with nothing more to carry than my purse and my pineapple-sized puppy. We had a few kilometers to hike. It was on this walk that the head teacher presented me with my first major dilemma.

"Peace Corps puts on this seminar in a few months," he said.

"Yes, it's called In Service Training (IST)," I replied.

He went on, "Volunteers are supposed to take counterparts. Yes, and I always go with the Volunteer, we learn about OVCs (orphans and vulnerable children) and AIDS and how to start permaculture gardens and income generation projects."

"Oh, mmm—yeah," I replied, not knowing what else to say.

Over the next few weeks and months, this man and his family were extremely hospitable to me. In a way, I felt that I didn't know what I would do without them. However, I wanted to get to know other people, so I started getting out more. I began meeting interesting people every day: an elder who was a pretty amazing farmer, planters of trees, makers of remedies, herders of cows, raisers of chickens, keepers of bees, carriers of water. A group of small children paraded behind me everywhere I went, and I referred to them as my gaggle.

I continued to enjoy my friendship with the teacher and appreciated his help. He kept bringing up IST and saying that other villagers couldn't read or write and that they weren't smart enough to go. For several reasons, however, I wanted to bring someone else. Most important was that it would be easier to ignite the participation of the villagers if my counterpart was a villager. Teachers are not considered villagers because of their higher level of education

and the fact that they are usually from a different village, district, or region.

I remembered learning in the classroom about positionality *(Chambers, 1997; Eversole, 2003; White, 1996)*. It is a term most commonly used in anthropological and ethnographic research but is equally applicable in community development. Positionality is concerned with how the presence of the outsider affects the process being observed, or the process of community development. In this context, the head teacher held a great deal of power and by positioning myself so closely to him, I was making myself less available to those with less power in the community. I also had an inkling that he was more interested in the generous per diem that the Peace Corps gave our counterparts than the actual training. I was already beginning to see the seeds of conflict and that I wouldn't be able to avoid facing some of the challenges related to power that I had read about in classes.

As IST approached I decided to take a farmer named Paulo. I chose him because over my 3 months in the village, I had come to know him as a hard worker and a kind and honest spirit. Everyone seemed not only to know and respect him, but also to feel comfortable with him. He helped me with everything I did.

When we got back, one of the projects we wanted to focus on was the primary school garden. It wasn't easy working at the school and whenever I tried to do garden activities, the students were usually just handed over to me for their 20-minute tea break. This meant that during the one chance they would have all day to run to the river to get a drink of water, they had to work in the garden instead.

Some classes were easier to work with than others, and I particularly enjoyed working with the sixth graders. They worked quickly and competently. While we piled and mixed, they demanded, *tufundishe!*—teach us something! I taught them to put a stick in the middle of our compost pile to help monitor its well being. If it was warm, hot, or steamy it meant the compost was doing its job.

> *Journal Entry, January 23, 2009*
> Last week was an amazing week for one reason—the smiles on the faces of the sixth graders when we pulled our stick out of the compost pile. It was hot—minor victory!

Figure 1. The sixth graders pulling the stick out of the hot compost pile.

As Paulo and I worked with the more difficult classes, the teachers just sat apathetically in the office. I found it confusing that none of the teachers were helping me; I had good relationships with them and even visited their houses regularly. Twenty minutes wasn't long enough to do anything, but that was all they would give me. By the end of the week, we had one functioning compost pile and several piles that dried up and cooled down quickly.

Once we hit February, it was finally time to start tilling the soil. We started onion, green pepper, Chinese cabbage, and Swiss chard seedlings and double dug a few garden beds for corn and carrots. The sixth graders, Paulo, and I spent four of our morning hours under the hot sun. During the rainy season, the weather was nice when there was cloud cover, but when the sun came out we baked in its heat, and the boys had sweat dripping off their chins. I felt bad that they would all have to go home and wash their uniforms that night, which meant probably wearing them to school wet the next day. Paulo was a great help. Help isn't the right word; he did most of the work, and I tried not to mess anything up. He was a great teacher. I could tell that the students enjoyed being taught by him and that they respected him but were not afraid of him.

After we were done, the students explained to me that they would like to see the fruits of the labor when harvest time came. I asked what they thought usually happened to the veggies in the garden. "*Walimu wanachukua tu*," they replied—the teachers just take them.

When I went to ask the teachers if the students who did the garden work would be able to take some of the vegetables home at harvest time, they just laughed at me. Four months later a different class was ordered to the garden to dig up our carrots. Each teacher took home a healthy bundle that evening.

> *Journal Entry, July 9th, 2009*
> Mama Flavy told me today that when I was ready to do the demo garden at the school in February, the head teacher had said he didn't want me to because Paulo was my counterpart. He sat with all the teachers and explained that I was not to do work at the school.

I wanted to continue working with the students. I wanted more days of smiles and hot compost sticks, so I had to organize them outside school. We planned an all-student compost competition. The students were to build compost piles at their houses. Once complete, they would bring me to their house to show me. This was a useful tool for me as I had yet to find many of the houses in the countryside. As a result, I met parents, and parents asked about compost. I baked cakes as rewards for the students, and they tried something new.

When trying to work with primary school students, I faced a few obstacles because of the poor relationship I had developed with the head teacher. The garden is one example, but there were many others. For instance, a chicken project at the school was highly contested. The teachers involved in the project and I ultimately rebelled and planned meetings with the animal extension people in the head teacher's absence.

As a Peace Corps Volunteer I had been told not to do these things; in fact, in training we were given a manual called *Culture Matters (Peace Corps, 1997)* that said that within the Peace Corps framework, Volunteers are expected to work in collaboration with key stakeholders like figures of authority and people in power. In our training we were told that this is because it is culturally appropriate for guests to work in cooperation with higher-up members of the social hierarchy.

As a human being, however, I didn't want to see any more grant money lost from a project that was created for the orphans and vulnerable children of our village. I also didn't want to see the chickens in our chicken project continue to be neglected. I had gained a clear understanding of the criticisms by Cooke and Kothari *(2001)*

and Cleaver *(2001)* that incautious participatory development can reinforce power structures and further disempower the poor, and I wanted no part of it.

Eventually I cut ties with the head teacher's household completely. This was very difficult, but it resulted in more positive and personal relationships with the students outside school. On the weekends we would have lock-ins at my house during which the girls would sew menstrual pads and ask me questions about their health. Some even confided in me about the sexual relationships teachers forced on them. These lock-ins were a minor victory for two reasons. One, because the students opened up to me, the crazy White girl who slept with her dog and two, because although these 12-year-old girls acknowledged the prevalence of rape in their culture, they were critical of it and thought it was wrong. From my perspective, given the cultural context, they were thinking radical thoughts. So, minor victory. But what kind of victory leaves you helpless and heartbroken?

Breaking off the relationship with the head teacher also resulted in closer relationships with the more marginalized populations in my village. Based on the literature I had read in classes, I had guessed this would happen. Community members told me that many of the poor feel shame, embarrassment, and fear at the prospect of attending villagewide events. It's therefore easy to see why so many people I interviewed emphasized how important it was to break this relationship if I wanted to gain the trust of the poor.

When the next Peace Corps conference came, I took the woman who eventually became my best friend. Mama Anna was the mother of one of the children in my gaggle. The first day we opened up to each other, she showed me scars her husband had given her. This put my life into perspective, as I had told her how I missed my boyfriend. She was one of the strongest women I had ever met. After the workshop, the head teacher's wife began spreading rumors that Mama Anna was giving me drugs. We were annoyed but kept moving forward with our minor victories.

Through Mama Anna, I felt I'd become exposed to a whole other world. She wasn't the worst off in the village, but she faced the same daily hardships as everyone else. She was well intentioned and well connected, and she was a regular villager whom others trusted. If they didn't feel comfortable coming to me, they would go to her first. They came to know us as a package deal. I even started sleeping at her house since her husband was usually with one of his other wives. Eventually, by essentially living with her, I gained

a raw understanding of the mundane cruelty of the unprivileged life. Through this new lens, I questioned everything. "*Mipango wa mungu*" (It's God's plans) was the response to everything from Mama Anna's husband testing positive for HIV to her 13-year-old cousin getting pregnant, and it made me wonder what I was doing there and how I could help. My relationship with Mama Anna gave me so much insight. To deromanticize the beauty of my new friendship, I could say this was what participatory researchers and ethnographers call building rapport and gaining trust.

When I asked one interviewee how Volunteers could better work with the poor, her response was a description of how an NGO came in and did a garden project 10 years prior. Interested villagers were divided into groups depending on their socioeconomic status. The interviewee said this worked well for them because "*Tulijusikia huru*" (We felt free). I found this interesting because of the several groups I worked with, the two that showed the most perseverance and willingness to change and experiment were a women's group consisting of some of the wealthiest women I knew and a group of people living with HIV/AIDS.

I spent 3 days a week with the group of people living with HIV/AIDS dying fabrics to make batik. The group actually started as a mixture of people from different backgrounds. We thought it would be helpful to have people of different abilities as the art requires a basic understanding of multiplication for measuring the fabrics and mixing the chemicals, and it requires the physical strength to haul massive amounts of water. We also wanted to create a group of people from different backgrounds and realities to reduce stigma and promote inclusion.

This plan ended up not working so well. There were a few prominent figures in the group who seemed to make others feel insignificant. Many of the group members approached me to suggest we move the location, saying, "*Tupo chini ya mtu moja*" (We're all below one person). All the group's supplies were kept in a room at one person's house, and the other group members were not allowed in. There was also distrust, and some thought others were stealing.

> *Journal Entry, August 17, 2010*
> Had a very fruitful, tense, loud, uncomfortable and long batik meeting yesterday. We need to revamp things.

After that meeting, because of honest words that were said, the more educated and well-off members of the group began to fade

away. In a socioeconomic sense, the group became more homogeneous than it had been because only the poor remained. The literature discusses this (e.g., *Fernandez, 1999*), and practitioner manuals suggest it—split groups up, women with women, poor with poor, ill with ill—but nothing addresses how to identify these groups. For an outsider, I truly think it's impossible to know. Eventually I came to understand that groups must self-identify. Over time, this is what happened naturally, even accidentally. Formerly quiet group members began to bring their ideas forward, because "*Tulijisikia huru*"—They felt free. Suddenly they were doing work creatively and independently.

The batik group had been having problems with the budget. We were making a kind of batik that required wax, a lot of chemicals, and math skills. A few members had heard of another method. We didn't know exactly how to do it, but we tried it out. And then we tried it again and again in different ways. Eventually it ended up looking great. At that point, the project was being run and managed entirely on the ideas of the group members.

> *Journal Entry, March 27, 2010*
> Today two bibis (grandmothers) taught me how to make their new style of batiks. It was especially great since the bibis used to just man the fire and do sidelines work. Now they're making stuff, they are the experts!

Figure 2. Bibis admiring their batik work.

With their profit they opened a bank account. In December 2010, after I had completed my service and returned to Michigan, I received a letter from one of them saying the group had recently taken out a loan.

What of the other group—the well-off women? I remember asking one of the members why they didn't fight and steal from each other like other groups I worked with (groups I haven't been able to expand on in this essay). Her response was simple: "*Tuna UPENDO*" (We have love).

At first I thought this was just an easy answer, a way to brush me off and not think critically, but as I continued to reflect on my experience once I returned home, I began to understand more the importance of love in community development. Freire *(1984)*, for example, wrote:

> Because love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is commitment to others. And this commitment, because it is loving, is dialogical. As an act of bravery, love cannot be sentimental; as an act of freedom, it must not serve as a pretext for manipulation. It must generate other acts of freedom; otherwise, it is not love. *(p. 90)*

And I believe this to be true.

The centrality of love is also prevalent in strands of the action research literature, including human inquiry (*Reason, 1994*). Greenwood and Levin *(2007)* described the primary agenda of human inquiry as being to develop an

> approach to living based on experience and engagement, on love and respect for the integrity of persons; and on the willingness to rise above presuppositions, to look and to look again, to risk security in search for understanding and action that open possibilities for creative living. *(p. 211)*

Before I left Tanzania, I was asked to write up some pieces of advice for the incoming Volunteers. I wrote: "Love your village first and work will come more naturally later." Somewhere along the way, amid the corruption, the rape, the domestic violence, and the lies, I fell head over heels for some of the rich and most of the poor, and for the sixth graders, and for Mama Anna and Paulo—and for the gaggle of children that accompanied me through my every motion of every day. We were loving the world and changing it.

After the Fact

It is not history one is faced with, nor biography, but a confusion of histories, a swarm of biographies. There is order in it all of some sort, but it is the order of a squall or a street market: nothing metrical.

> It is necessary, then, to be satisfied with swirls, confluxions, and inconstant connections; clouds collecting, clouds dispersing. . . . What we can construct, if we keep notes and survive, are hindsight accounts of the connectedness of things that seem to have happened: pieced-together patternings, after the fact. *(Geertz, 1995, p. 2)*

After Geertz's years of experience as an anthropologist in the field, he informs us that although we cannot draw concrete conclusions, what we can do is offer our stories and understandings about the way things are.

I do not offer my story as an answer to the difficulties one faces in the field. I only claim that some of the work I did was good given the criteria I outlined for myself. Through journaling, reflecting, observing, and asking questions, I learned a lot of useful but not foolproof things. I hope it is apparent that there were plenty of failures. In fact, about six months after I left my village, I received a letter in the mail from one of the batik group members. They wrote that the group was going well, and they had even opened a bank account. Minor victory, right? I thought we had been able to actually make something work. A phone call from Mama Flavy a week before I finished my thesis, however, informed me that the group had begun to fight. One of the members owed the group quite a bit of money and was refusing to pay. Humans are imperfect, and there are always problems when they try to work together in groups. I can at least be comforted in the memories of my conversations and interviews with a few of the group members who had told me that even if the group were to split up, they now had the knowledge, skills, and abilities to continue on their own. As my experience deepened my understanding, it has made me more realistic—a realistic optimist.

I learned a lot about community development from the villagers I lived with. They taught me basic and straightforward things: Work with homogeneous community groups because people will be more free; have the group come first and then the project; don't develop a project for a newly formed group; and consider water

before you consider anything else. They taught me more complicated things about life and love, too.

The point is that in theory, what to do is clearly articulated and straightforward but in practice, it's complicated and messy. It requires making hard decisions and sacrifices that have the potential to breed conflict and then accepting the consequences of those decisions. As a Volunteer, I consider myself lucky to have had the mindfulness bred by my coursework to recognize the problems that could come from aligning myself with authority figures in the village and how it could only worsen power inequities. This is what helped me break away from what my Peace Corps material had advised.

If I were to be a Peace Corps Volunteer again, I would offer myself two suggestions. My partial knowledge finds them important and yours may, too.

Reflection

One of the biggest lessons I took away from my experience was the importance of reflection. Reflection played an important role throughout the time I spent in the field as well as the time I spent back at MSU making sense of my experience. Over time as we reflect, we understand more, creating room to grow and change *(Mezirow, 1981; Schön, 1991)*. We need to reflect to become more effective practitioners *(Reason & Bradbury, 2008)*. Reflection is as strategic as it is personal.

Power dynamics are important to consider for practitioners who seek to be effective and reach the marginalized populations. Although power dynamics may never be fully understood by the outsider, understanding one's own positionality can put one on the track to at least a better understanding of the power dynamics.

Constant reflection can foster this process. Reflection and self-awareness enabled me to work through obstacles. It's not possible to know what other things I would have realized with more time and reflection. I hope that I have demonstrated how writing an autoethnography can facilitate reflective learning. It's more than a form of research; it's a process that allowed me to do work more mindfully and meaningfully.

Love

I thought I was "done" with development when I wrote in my journal that I essentially didn't believe in it anymore, that all I believed in was love. I'm glad that I had the opportunity to

come back to school and devote more thought and research to my experience. It was satisfying to find well-known scholars who also thought love was important and an essential aspect of generating positive change. I think the doubt I see in my journals reflects the moments where I used critical subjectivity to work through emotional, intellectual, and practical dilemmas.

I also learned that Volunteers almost always have some sort of lasting impact on their communities. Of course they are not transformational, but they are not meant to be. Empowerment cannot be bestowed upon an individual or group; it is something that must grow from within. Positive change, change that is not oppressive, cannot come in the absence of love. The moral practitioner must be embedded in a politics of love and caring, hope and forgiveness *(Denzin, Lincoln, & Giardina, 2006)*. "Love is a political principle through which we struggle to create mutually life-enhancing opportunities for all people" *(Darder & Miron, 2006, p. 150)*.

The literature and classroom discussions prior to my service did not in themselves make me a good Volunteer. They planted the seeds of mindfulness and gave me the tools to be reflective and creative when challenges arose. Essential to my experience was building close relationships with community members from different populations, shifting agency in their direction regardless of the political implications, taking time to be a part of the community, loving those I worked among, and redefining my understanding of development before joining in and marching on.

Acknowledgments

This article would not have been possible without the help of my amazing teachers, family, and friends. I would like to thank my village friends and fellow Peace Corps Volunteers for their enduring spirits and my family for their never-ending support. The write-up was supported in part by the National Science Foundation under award number SES-0924210. The research reported here was approved by Human Research Protection Program at Michigan State University.

References

Axinn, G. H., & Axinn, N. W. (1997). *Collaboration in international rural development: A practitioner's handbook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Bjørn, P., & Boulus, N. (2011). Dissenting in reflective conversations: Critical components of doing action research. *Action Research, 9*(3), 282–302. doi:10.1177/1476750310396949

Bochner, A. P. (2000). Criteria against ourselves. *Qualitative Inquiry, 6*(2), 266–272. doi:10.1177/107780040000600209

Bochner, A. P., & Ellis, C. (Eds.). (2002). *Ethnographically speaking: Autoethnography, literature, and aesthetics* (Vol. 9). Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira.

Brokensha, D. W., Warren, D. M., & Werner, O. (1980). *Indigenous knowledge systems and development*. Boston, MA: University Press of America.

Carr, W., & Kemmis, S. (1986). *Becoming critical: Education, knowledge, and action research.* London, England: Falmer.

Chambers, R. (1997). *Whose reality counts? Putting the first last*. London, England: Intermediate Technology Publications.

Clancy, F., & Adamek, M. (2005). Teaching as public scholarship: Tribal perspectives and democracy in the classroom. In S. Peters, N. R. Jordan, M. Adamek, & T. R. Alter (Eds.), *Engaging campus and community: The practice of public scholarship in the state and land-grant university system* (pp. 227–266). Dayton, OH: Kettering Foundation Press.

Cleaver, F. (2001). Institutions, agency and the limitations of participatory approaches to development. In B. Cook & U. Kothari (Eds.), *Participation: The new tyranny?* (pp. 36–55). New York, NY: Zed Books.

Cooke, B., & Kothari, U. (Eds.). (2001). *Participation: The new tyranny?* New York, NY: Zed Books.

Darder, A., & Miron, L. F. (2006). Critical pedagogy in a time of uncertainty: A call to action. In N. K. Denzin & M. D. Giardina (Eds.), *Contesting empire/globalizing dissent: Cultural studies after 9/11* (pp. 136–151). Boulder, CO: Paradigm.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Denzin, N. K., Lincoln, Y. S., & Giardina, M. (2006). Disciplining qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 19*(6), 769–782. doi:10.1080/09518390600975990

Doberneck, D. (2009). Community engagement in rural Ireland: A lecturer's perspective. In L. McIlrath, A. Farrell, J. Hughes, S. Lillis, & A. Lyons (Eds.), *Mapping civic engagement within higher education in Ireland.* All Ireland Society for Higher Education and Campus Engage–Network for the Promotion of Civic Engagement in Irish Higher Education. Retrieved November 1, 2012, from http://www.campusengage.ie/resources/mapping_civic_engagement.pdf

Eversole, R. (2003). Managing the pitfalls of participatory development: Some insight from Australia. *World Development, 31*(5), 781–789. doi:10.1016/S0305-750X(03)00018-4

Fear, F., Rosaen, C., Bawden, R., & Foster-Fishman, P. (2005). *Coming to critical engagement: An auto-ethnographic exploration.* Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Fernandez, A. P. (1999). Equity, local groups and credit: Lessons from MYRADA's work in South India. In F. Hinchcliffe, J. Thompson, J. Pretty, I. Guijt, & P. Shah (Eds.), *Fertile ground: The impacts of participatory watershed management* (pp. 295–308). London, England: IT.

Freire, P. (1984). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: Continuum.

Geertz, C. (1995). *After the fact: Two countries, four decades, one anthropologist*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Greenwood, D. J., & Levin, M. (2007). *Introduction to action research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies, 14*(3), 575–599.

Heron, J., & Reason, P. (1997). A participatory inquiry paradigm. *Qualitative Inquiry, 3*(3), 274–294. doi:10.1177/107780049700300302

Kovats-Bernat, J. C. (2002). Negotiating dangerous fields: Pragmatic strategies for fieldwork amid violence and terror. *American Anthropologist, 104*(1), 208–222. doi:10.1525/aa.2002.104.1.208

Lather, P. (1986). Issues of validity in openly ideological research: Between a rock and a soft place. *Interchange, 17*(4), 63–84.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Marshall, J., & Mead, G. (2005). Editorial: Self-reflective practice and first-person action research. *Action Research, 3*(3), 235–244. doi:10.1177/1476750305055999

Martin, E. (1991). The egg and the sperm. *Signs, 16*(3), 485–501. Retrieved from http://www.visibleworld.net/cupajane/articles_people/martin.pdf

Mezirow, J. (1981). A critical theory of adult learning and education. *Adult Education Quarterly, 32*(1), 3–24.

Peace Corps. (1997). *Culture matters: The Peace Corps cross-cultural workbook*. Peace Corps Information Collection and Exchange.

Peace Corps. (2012). *What the Peace Corps is looking for in a volunteer applicant. Live, learn, and work with a community overseas: Be a volunteer* [Peace Corps catalog] (pp. 11–12). Retrieved November 3, 2013, from http//www.peacecorps.gov

Peters, S. (2005). Introduction and overview. In S. Peters, N. R. Jordan, M. Adamek, & T. R. Alter (Eds.), *Engaging campus and community: The practice of public scholarship in the state and land-grant university system* (pp. 1–35). Dayton, OH: Kettering Foundation Press.

Quigley, K. F. F. (2013). The Peace Corps and higher education: Finally the envisioned partnership? *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, 17*(2),137–150.

Reason, P. (1994). *Participation in human inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (2008). *The Sage handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Richardson, L. (1997). *Fields of play: Constructing an academic life*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Richardson, L. (2000). Evaluating ethnography. *Qualitative Inquiry, 6*(2), 253–255. doi:10.1177/107780040000600207

Richardson, L., & Adams St. Pierre, E. (2005). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.; pp. 959–978). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Schön, D. A. (1991). *The reflective practitioner.* Aldershot, Royaume-Uni: Arena.

Thorp, L. (2006). *The pull of the earth: Participatory ethnography in the school garden.* Lanham, MD: AltaMira.

White, S. (1996). Depoliticising development: The uses and abuses of participation. *Development in Practice, 6*(1), 6–15. doi:10.1080/0961452961000157564

Wolcott, H. F. (1994). *Transforming qualitative data: Description, analysis, and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

About the Authors

Brianna Darling is the outreach supervisor at the Animal Humane Society in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Brianna's professional interests include working with nonprofits to reach the most underengaged communities through reflection, creativity, and experimentation. She received her Master of Science degree from the Department of Community, Food, Recreation and Resource Studies at Michigan State University.

John M. Kerr is a professor in the Department of Community Sustainability (formerly Community, Agriculture, Recreation and Resource Studies) at Michigan State University. His research addresses individual and collective action around agriculture and natural resource management in developing countries. He earned his Ph.D. at the Food Research Institute, Stanford University.

Laurie Thorp is the director of the Residential Initiative on the Study of the Environment at Michigan State University. Her research interests are in sustainable food systems, experiential learning, and participatory research methodologies. She holds a Ph.D. in Agricultural Education from Texas A&M.

Kimberly Chung is an associate professor in the Department of Community Sustainability at Michigan State University. Her research addresses issues of food and nutrition security in marginalized populations and participatory research methodologies. She earned her Ph.D. at the Food Research Institute, Stanford University.

Research Articles

© *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, Volume 18, Number 3 p. 41, (2014)
 ISSN 1534-6104

U.S. Higher Education Regional Accreditation Commission Standards and the Centrality of Engagement

Valerie O. Paton, Hiram E. Fitzgerald, Birgit L. Green, Megan Raymond, and Melody P. Borchardt

Abstract

This study addressed the research question "How do regional accrediting standards apply to the central role of community engagement in U.S. institutions of higher education?" Using descriptive and qualitative methods, two sources were analyzed: published standards of the 6 regional accrediting commissions in the United States and the transcript of a panel discussion in which leaders from 4 of these 6 commissions shared their views on "engagement and regional accreditation." From these analyses, 4 themes emerged: (1) the institutional determination of community engagement mission and goals, (2) community engagement in educational programs and student learning, (3) institutional effectiveness and community engagement, and (4) faculty scholarship relating to community engagement. The article concludes with recommendations for institutional practices and supporting evidence to submit to regional accreditation commissions indicating the centrality of engagement in institutional missions. Recommendations are also made regarding peer evaluator training, faculty scholarship, and civic democracy.

Introduction

Recent concerns and provocative discussions about taxpayer investments in U.S. higher education challenge institutions to carefully consider how they adapt and implement their historic missions of teaching, research, and service. Legislators and public interest groups have issued clarion calls to ground institutional purposes and practices more closely in the needs of society. In addition, the federal government has tightened the nexus between regional accreditation, institutional performance, and public accountability. In this milieu, many colleges and universities are examining and strengthening their relationships with communities through partnerships that are driven by their teaching, research, service missions, and mutual interests. Concurrently, the role of regional accreditation related to the engagement of institutions and their communities requires examination.

Purpose of the Study

Regional accreditation in the United States is required for all institutions that receive federal financial support. In recent years, the regulatory influence of these accrediting bodies on institutional operations has escalated. Yet, despite increasing external pressures on higher education institutions to focus mission-centric functions toward pressing societal concerns, institutional leaders report that regional accrediting commissions standards speak to these issues in oblique and differential terms, in contrast to descriptors for the evaluation of teaching and research missions. Therefore, this analysis combined qualitative findings from four regional accreditor representatives who participated in a national panel discussion on this topic and an examination of the relevant sections of published regional accreditation standards. The purpose of this analysis was to provide institutional leaders with a context to interpret (and influence) regional accreditor standards as they apply to institutional missions related to community engagement. In light of this purpose, the following research question was addressed: "How do regional accrediting standards apply to the central role of community engagement in U.S. institutions of higher education?" Prior to addressing the question, it is important to clarify definitions used in our approach to the descriptive analyses performed.

Definitions

Definition: Community Engagement

Depending upon the mission and strategic plan of a given institution, the operational definition and ultimate expression of community engagement may vary. However, since the work of the Kellogg Commission *(2000, 2001)*, several organizations have developed definitions of "community engagement." For instance, the institutions represented in the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) convened a committee consisting of individuals from member universities (Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Michigan State, Minnesota, Ohio State, Penn State, Purdue, and Wisconsin) in partnership with representatives from NASULGC's Council on Extension, Continuing Education and Public Service Benchmarking Task Force (CECEPS) to study the definition of engagement. The joint CIC/CECEPS Committee on Engagement issued the following definition:

> The partnership of university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching, and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good. *(Fitzgerald, Smith, Book, Rodin, & CIC Committee on Engagement, 2005, p. 2)*

Once adopted, the CIC/CECEPS definition influenced the discussions within professional associations and across institutions, including national public and private universities, as well as regional institutions, community colleges, and for-profit institutions. Depending upon the mission of these respective institutions, their focus on different elements of engagement varied. In 2005, with the CIC/CECEPS definition as a touchstone, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching initiated an elective classification system for community engagement which has since shaped the national conversation. The Carnegie Community Engagement Elective Classification employs the following definition:

> Community engagement describes collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.
>
> The purpose of community engagement is the partnership of college and university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good. (*Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, n.d.*)

Since it first introduced the elective community engagement classification in 2005, Carnegie has designated 311 institutions as community-engaged *(Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2011)*. Because of the broad impact that this elective community engagement classification has had on higher education institutions across the country and the widespread adoption

of its definition, the Carnegie Community Engagement Elective Classification definition was used in this analysis.

Following the introduction of the Carnegie Community Engagement Elective Classification, in 2012 an important synthesis of the national conversations on community engagement to date was published in the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*. This article, "The Centrality of Engagement in Higher Education" (*Fitzgerald, Bruns, Sonka, Furco, & Swanson, 2012*), was the culmination of deliberations and consideration on the essential role of community engagement in higher education, primarily convened through the Council on Engagement and Outreach of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU). Arguing that "engagement is critical to the success of higher education in the future" (*p. 1*), the authors assert:

> Through engagement with local and broader communities, we seek a means to expand and shift from the established internally focused, discipline-based framework of higher education to a framework focused on a stronger level of societal relevance that improves both society and the overarching goals of higher education. *(p. 1)*

"The Centrality of Engagement in Higher Education" (*Fitzgerald et al., 2012*) provides further guidance on the definition of community engagement that is relevant to this examination. In light of the numerous definitions put forth since the Kellogg Commission reports *(2001, 2002)*, the "Centrality" authors *(Fitzgerald et al., 2012, p.13)* suggest the following approach to defining engagement:

> The collective impact of these definitions implies that if engagement is fully embedded within the core teaching, research, and service missions of the institution, it must be distinguished by at least four foundational characteristics.

1. It must be *scholarly*. A scholarship-based model of engagement embraces both *the act of engaging* (bringing universities and communities together) and the *product of engagement* (the spread of scholarship-focused, evidence-based practices in communities).
2. It must *cut across the mission* of teaching, research, and service; rather than being a separate activity, engaged

scholarship is a particular approach to campus-community collaboration.

3. It must be *reciprocal and mutually beneficial*; university and community partners engage in mutual planning, implementation, and assessment of programs and activities.

4. It must embrace the processes and values of a *civil democracy (Bringle and Hatcher, 2011)*.

As a final note related to the definition of community engagement, depending upon the institution's mission, a variety of terms and definitions may be used. This poses a challenge to regional accreditors as they consider the specific expression of community engagement within the context of the institutional mission.

Definition: Regional Accreditation

In the United States, there is a long history of voluntary, peer-led, regional higher education institution accreditation. Although not governmental entities, the U.S. regional accrediting agencies now are closely linked to the allocation of federal and state funding for higher education. The U.S. Department of Education (*2014*) recognizes six regional accreditors at the senior college or university level (see Table 1).

Table 1. U.S. Regional Accrediting Commissions and Regions

Regional Accrediting Association	Region
Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)	Delaware, DC, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, and "other geographic areas in which the Commission conducts accrediting activities" (*MSCHE, n.d.*).
New England Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (NEASC-CIHE)	Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, and "institutions in several other countries accredited by CIHE" (*NEASC-CIHE, 2013*).
North Central Association Higher Learning Commission (NCA HLC)	Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming (*NCA HLC, 2012*).
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU)	Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington (*NWCCU, n.d.*).

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS COC)	Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, "Latin America and other international sites" (*SACS COC, 2013 para. 1*).
Western Association of Schools and Colleges College and University Commission (WASC)	California, Hawaii, Guam, America Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (*WASC, 2013*).

The standards for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education provide this synopsis of the role of regional accreditation in the United States:

> Accreditation is the means of self-regulation and peer review adopted by the educational community. The accrediting process is intended to strengthen and sustain the quality and integrity of higher education, making it worthy of public confidence and minimizing the scope of external control. The extent to which each educational institution accepts and fulfills the responsibilities inherent in the process is a measure of its concern for freedom and quality in higher education and its commitment to striving for and achieving excellence in its endeavors. *(MSCHE, 2006, p. 5)*

Definition: Institutional and Educational Effectiveness

Each of the six regional accreditors incorporates the concepts of institutional and educational effectiveness in its standards. These standards have in common the following elements of ongoing and systematic processes: establishment of mission and goals, planning, expected academic and administrative outcomes, data collection, assessment of outcomes, evaluation of assessment findings, resource allocation in support of stated mission and goals, and continuous improvement in institutional performance. The following extracts from the NWCCU (on institutional effectiveness) and WASC (on educational effectiveness) provide representative samples.

> Standard Four—Effectiveness and Improvement: The institution regularly and systematically collects data related to clearly defined indicators of achievement, analyzes those data, and formulates evidence-based evalu-

> ations of the achievement of core theme objectives. It demonstrates clearly defined procedures for evaluating the integration and significance of institutional planning, the allocation of resources, and the application of capacity in its activities for achieving the intended outcomes of its programs and services and for achieving its core theme objectives. The institution disseminates assessment results to its constituencies and uses those results to effect improvement. *(NWCCU, 2010, p. 13)*

> Educational effectiveness (EE). These standards focus on producing the intended learning results in an educational endeavor. As used by WASC, educational effectiveness includes clear and appropriate educational outcomes and objectives; and alignment at the institutional and program level of resources and processes, including assessment, to ensure delivery of programs and learner accomplishments at a level of performance appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded. At the institutional level, findings about learning are integrated into planning, budgeting, and decision making. *(WASC, 2013, p. 48)*

Methodology

This descriptive analysis was conducted utilizing two sources: (1) a transcription of comments made at the 2011 APLU Council on Engagement workshop by Barbara Brittingham, president, New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC); Sandra Elman, president, Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU); Andrew Lootens-White, vice president, North Central Association Higher Learning Commission (NCA HLC); and Ralph Wolfe, president, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC); and (2) an examination of content from each of the six regional accrediting bodies in the United States and their current (2011–2013) standards for institutional accreditation made available online at their web addresses. Given the nature of the research, it was exempted from IRB review.

For the first step of the research, the presidents/commissioners of the six regional accrediting bodies were contacted via e-mail and asked to join a panel to be held at the annual APLU conference convened in San Francisco, California in November 2011. Presidents/

commissioners of three of the six regional accrediting bodies agreed to be present, and a fourth accreditor sent a vice presidential representative. In the months prior to the panel discussion, an abstract and questions were developed by the panel convener (author) and modified by the participants. During the panel presentation, notes were recorded by an institutional representative of APLU's Council on Engagement and Outreach who did not have other assignments during the presentation. The panelists' comments were transcribed to add breadth and context to the analysis of regional accreditor standards. The quoted material in this analysis was submitted to each participant for review and comment as a form of "member checking" utilized in naturalistic inquiry (*Lincoln & Guba, 1985*).

In the second step of the research, accrediting body standards were reviewed by two separate readers on two separate occasions. All content that included references to community engagement was excerpted in a table for further analysis. If such references were absent, proxies such as "community service" and "public service" were extracted. In addition, all references related to institutional mission and goals were extracted and confirmed by a second reading of the text.

It is important to note that this study is limited to six U.S. regional accrediting bodies and does not include the WASC Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges or any national, professional, or discipline-based accrediting agencies. In addition, the study was conducted utilizing the published standards for each regional accrediting commission that were in force from 2011 to 2013 (July) and published on the commissions' websites.

APLU Panel on Engagement and Regional Accreditation: Critical Issues and Strategic Dialogue

In order to gain greater understanding of how accrediting commission leaders view the applicability of standards to institutional commitment to community engagement, all six accreditors were invited to send representatives to the 2011 APLU annual meeting in San Francisco in order to participate in a panel discussion that was described as follows in the conference program:

> Issues related to higher education accreditation have received considerable attention recently. The re-accreditation process is time consuming but essential and is an opportunity for campuses to demonstrate their com-

> mitment to their missions—including outreach and engagement. Over the years, some accrediting bodies have added or strengthened criteria measuring engagement—others have not. This panel will facilitate a discussion on the current status of regional accrediting standards related to engagement and potential CEO recommendations related to the accreditation process. *("Engagement and Regional Accreditation," 2011, p. 29)*

The comments from the participants, which were recorded by a member of APLU's Council on Engagement and Outreach, provided a second source of information in addition to the review of the accrediting standards to address the research question posed in this study: "How do regional accrediting standards apply to the central role of community engagement in U.S. institutions of higher education?" Four major themes were identified from the recorded comments: (1) the institutional determination of community engagement mission and goals, (2) community engagement in educational programs and student learning, (3) institutional effectiveness and community engagement, and (4) faculty scholarship relating to community engagement.

The first theme and the one most frequently referred to by the panel members was the institution's role in determining how community engagement was expressed in its mission and goals. Sandra Elman of NWCCU said, "You are in the driver's seat; you define your mission; you state the goals." Barbara Brittingham of NEASC CIHE said, "Mission, mission, mission, it's mentioned 70 times. If engagement fits with your mission, you can make it work." Ralph Wolfe of WASC said, "Engagement is a critical role for a public university." Andrew Lootens-White of NCA HLC commented on the recent revisions of his organization's standards related to community engagement by saying that community engagement is now "integrated into the mission instead of segregating it as a separate criterion."

The second theme identified was community engagement in educational programs and student learning. Ralph Wolfe asserted:

> We need to talk about what is good learning. We need to be capacity building. We need to be a learning community. We're like bumble bees. We go to good institutions, pick up pollen, and bring [it] back to our home institutions. What is good learning? Can you get good

> learning just by sitting in the classroom and reading the textbook?

Barbara Brittingham noted that institutions should "ask departments 'what it is you want your students to learn.'" If the response is "building students' capacity to solve a problem," then learning is "not just in the classroom." Sandra Elman commented that civic and academic purposes should not be "bifurcated," suggesting that both need to be considered in learning, teaching, and scholarship. Finally, Ralph Wolfe suggested: "We need to become cross-institutional learning communities instead of compliance organizations."

The third theme related to the expectation that all elements of community engagement should be included in "institutional effectiveness" practices (mission and goal setting, establishment of student learning outcomes, faculty evaluation, planning, assessment, and use of findings for improvement). Sandra Elman provided the following structure:

> Your institution needs to identify outcomes to measure how that mission/core theme is being met. Your institution will be held accountable: mission fulfillment, adaptability and sustainability. You will need to provide evidence (qualitative and quantitative) that the institution is meeting the objectives of engagement and you are going to sustain or adapt.

Barbara Brittingham shared her experience:

> Institutions often list a variety of activities, but accreditation bodies want to see what the outcomes are and how they are evaluated. . . . it's not enough to see what the activities are, what is the real contribution? . . . it's not just about salaries and the economic impact of graduates. Look at research, impact of students.

The fourth theme that emerged from the participants' comments, faculty scholarship relating to community engagement, was introduced by a question from the audience. Hiram Fitzgerald, associate provost of university outreach and engagement at Michigan State and president of the Engagement Scholarship Consortium, asked, "How are accrediting bodies focusing on engaged scholarship? Faculty are hired to do research, basic science. People do work in communities that is not engaged, communities are viewed

as a subject pool to advance their research." Sandra Elman commented, "We don't have preconceived notions of what service is, is not; engagement is, is not. We would hold up your university to what [it] has defined . . . and how you are measuring it." Barbara Brittingham followed, stating, "Engagement is an umbrella over teaching, research and service in [NEASC] . . . . The focus is on teaching and how engagement is connected to teaching." Commenting on the general standards of accreditation and the specificity of the question related to the "scholarship of engagement," Ralph Wolfe said, "What the public expects of accreditation is the quality of the teaching and learning experience of students." Sandra Elman added, "Accreditation bodies keep bouncing it back to the institutions; they said, 'You can answer that for yourselves. Your institutions should define it.'"

Analysis of Regional Accrediting Standards

Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education provides accreditation in five states and the other geographical regions noted in Table 1. MSCHE's Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education was first published in 2006 and revised in 2009 and 2011. A review of the document found no specific references to community engagement. The sections pertinent to this analysis are contained in "Standard 1: Mission and Goals":

> The institution's mission clearly defines its purpose within the context of higher education and indicates whom the institution serves and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's stated goals, consistent with the aspirations and expectations of higher education, clearly specify how the institution will fulfill its mission. *(MSCHE, 2006, p. 1)*

According to Standard 1, institutional mission and goal statements are to be developed by a "broad representation from all sectors of the institution" *(p. 1)* and must include the institution's "basic purposes and characteristics," which may include "research or community service" *(p. 1)*. Further, according to this standard, institutional goals:

- stem from the institution's mission;
- are developed with the involvement of the institution's community;
- are based on a review of existing goals and an analysis of internal and external forces affecting the institution; and
- provide a framework for ongoing institutional development and self-evaluation. *(p. 1)*

"Standard 1: Mission and Goals" of the MSCHE's Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education reflects current best practices of "institutional effectiveness," a central component of all six regional accreditor requirements. In addition, under "Standard 11: Educational Offerings," the inclusion of an institution-wide "community service" requirement is cited as an example of "institutional-level learning outcomes" *(p. 41)*. Further, depending upon the institutional mission and student population, Standard 11 specifies:

> An institution may integrate community services with educational programs, enhancing the effectiveness with which it fulfills both its educational mission and its responsibility to society. *(p. 43)*

The analysis of MSCHE Characteristics found that it does not include specific references to "community engagement." For the purpose of this analysis, it is important to note that the standards specify that institutional missions and goals "are developed with the involvement of the institution's community" and include an "analysis of internal and external forces affecting the institution" *(MSCHE, 2006, p. 1)*. Further, the MSCHE Characteristics provides for the integration of "community services with educational programs" within institutional missions.

New England Association of Schools and Colleges: Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (NEASC-CIHE)

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (NEASC-CIHE) includes six states in the northeastern U.S. and institutions in several other countries (see Table 1).

The preamble of NEASC-CIHE's *Standards for Accreditation* (*2011*) provides a framework for accreditation:

> The Commission deals with institutional differences in ways designed to protect both educational quality and individual philosophy and practice. . . . They allow the Commission to appraise a wide variety of collegiate institutions, differing in purpose, size, organization, scope of program, clientele served, support, and control. (*Preamble, para. 4*)

From this perspective of institutional diversity, NEASC-CIHE *Standards* (*2011*) addresses all components of institutional mission in a broad fashion under its opening "Standard One: Mission and Purposes."

Within Standard One, Section 1.3 introduces the institutional purpose of "public service," along with a reference to communities:

> The institution's purposes are concrete and realistic and further define its educational and other dimensions, including scholarship, research, and public service. Consistent with its mission, the institution endeavors to enhance the communities it serves (*NEASC-CIHE, 2011, p. 3*).

In each standard, the role of institutional effectiveness is included. In "Standard Two: Planning and Evaluation," there is specific reference to the inclusion of "use of external perspectives" in the review of mission-based activities, including "academic programs and other programs." In "Standard Five: Faculty," the role of "community service" is specifically cited as a possible criterion for faculty evaluation:

> The evaluative criteria reflect the mission and purposes of the institution and the importance it attaches to the various responsibilities of faculty, e.g., teaching, advising, assessment, scholarship, creative activities, research, and professional and community service. (*NEASC-CIHE, 2011, section 5.11*)

The NEASC-CIHE *Standards* (*2011*) proposes a generative relationship between institutional mission and communities: "Consistent with its mission, the institution endeavors to enhance the communities it serves" (*section 1.3*). In addition, it documents

the idea of including external entities, potentially community partners, in institutional effectiveness processes. Finally, the Standards includes the idea of "community service" as distinguished from "professional service" in faculty evaluation criteria.

North Central Association Higher Learning Commission (NCA HLC)

The Higher Learning Commission serves as the regional accreditor for 19 states. The *Criteria for Accreditation and Core Components (NCA HLC, 2012)* is the publication utilized for this analysis and includes the standards currently in effect. The 2012 *Criteria* includes the following five components: "Criterion One—Mission"; "Criterion Two—Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct"; "Criterion Three—Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support"; "Criterion Four—Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement"; and "Criterion Five—Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness."

Under "Criterion One—Mission," Core Component 1.D (*NCA HLC, 2012*) establishes the following standard for all HLC-accredited institutions: "The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good." This component contains three elements:

1. Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

Thus, in the current NCA HLC *Criteria* (*2012*), the relationship of the institution and its community is viewed through the lens of the institutional mission, rather than being separated, at least for the purposes of the accrediting standards, as it was in Criterion Five in the NCA HLC standards prior to 2012. This criterion not

only clearly articulates the expectation for a "commitment to the public good" for all NCA HLC-accredited institutions but also indicates that community engagement must be grounded in the institutional mission.

"Criterion Three—Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support" (*NCA HLC, 2012)* includes a specific reference to community engagement in the context of public accountability:

> The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment:
>
> 1. Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.
> 2. 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. (*section 3.E*)

As previously stated, the NCA HLC *Criteria* (*2012*) indicates that all references to public service and community engagement are to be grounded in the institutional mission. Criterion One emphasizes the role of institutions of higher education in contributing to the "public good" and establishes standards for service to the public and engagement with external communities to the extent that institutional "mission and capacity allow" (*section 1.D.3*). Further, the Criteria establishes an expectation of accountability with respect to student learning related to "community engagement" and "service learning."

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU)

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities provides accreditation for 163 institutions in seven states (*NWCCU, n.d.*). For this analysis we utilized its *Complete Standards for Accreditation (2010)*, which includes five standards: "Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations"; "Resources and Capacity"; "Planning and Implementation"; "Effectiveness and Improvement"; and "Mission Fulfillment, Adaptation, and Sustainability."

Within "Standard One: Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations," institutional mission and core themes establish the insti-

tutional context that is then examined in the accreditation and reaffirmation processes. Thus, if the institutional mission includes community engagement, the institution must demonstrate how it carries out that mission through the establishment of its core themes, objectives, resource allocation, and institutional effectiveness processes. This interrelatedness is demonstrated in Standard One, Sections B.1 and B.2:

> 1.B.1 The institution identifies core themes that individually manifest essential elements of its mission and collectively encompass its mission.

> 1.B.2 The institution establishes objectives for each of its core themes and identifies meaningful, assessable, and verifiable indicators of achievement that form the basis for evaluating accomplishment of the objectives of its core themes.

"Standard Three: Planning and Implementation" (*NWCCU, 2010*) establishes the expectation for "ongoing, participatory planning." In light of the mission and core themes, "participatory planning" could include internal and external members of the institution. In the case of a core theme of community engagement, it would be reasonable to expect an institution to include community representation in the planning processes.

"Standard Four: Effectiveness and Improvement," Section 4.A.4 (*NWCCU, 2010*), requires the institution to "evaluate holistically the alignment, correlation, and integration of programs and services with respect to accomplishment of core theme objectives." Further, this standard establishes a methodical process for evaluation of the mission, implementation, planning, and resource allocation for core themes. Finally, Standard Four addresses the use of assessment findings to improve institutional operations and capacity and includes the expectation that the results of assessment be communicated to "appropriate constituencies in a timely manner." Thus, NWCCU's Standard Four accommodates institution-led initiatives to create feedback loops that include community constituencies in the assessment of community engagement activities.

Finally, "Standard Five: Mission Fulfillment, Adaptability, and Sustainability" (*NWCCU, 2010)* establishes the expectation that an NWCCU-accredited institution

> regularly monitors its internal and external environments to determine how and to what degree changing circumstances may impact its mission and its ability to fulfill that mission. It demonstrates that it is capable of adapting, when necessary, its mission, core themes, programs, and services to accommodate changing and emerging needs, trends, and influences to ensure enduring institutional relevancy, productivity, viability, and sustainability.

Depending upon the mission and core themes of an institution, evidence to support compliance with Standard Five may be highly internally directed. However, in institutions with missions that embrace community engagement, Standard Five invokes the need for institutional responsiveness to community needs as well as feedback.

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS COC)

The Commission on Colleges serves as the regional accrediting commission for 11 states (see Table 1), "Latin America and other international sites" (*SACS COC, 2013*). The Commission's standards are embodied in a document titled *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*. This document is divided into four major categories of standards: "The Principles of Integrity," "Core Requirements," "Comprehensive Standards," and "Federal Requirements" (*SACS COC, 2012*). Early in the *Principles*, within the core requirements that are essential for accreditation, there is a reference to institutional mission and public service:

> 2.4 The institution has a clearly defined, comprehensive, and published mission statement that is specific to the institution and appropriate for higher education. The mission addresses teaching and learning and, where applicable, research and public service. (Institutional Mission) (*SACS COC, 2012, p. 18*)

Comprehensive Standard 3.3: Institutional Effectiveness (*SACS COC, 2012)* extends the requirement for established outcomes, assessments, and use for improvement to "community/public service":

> 3.3.1 The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas: (Institutional Effectiveness) . . .
>
> > 3.3.1.5 community/public service within its educational mission, if appropriate. (*SACS COC, 2012, p. 27*)

Also in "Comprehensive Standards" under "Educational Programs," there is a requirement that specifically pertains to "outreach, and service programs," which are often closely related to or part of the institution's community engagement organization and activities:

> 3.4.2 The institution's continuing education, outreach, and service programs are consistent with the institution's mission. (Continuing education/service programs*; SACS COC, 2012, p. 28*)

Overall, the SACS COC *Principles* (*2012*) includes references to "public service," "community/public service," and "outreach and service programs" in three different sections. In two sections, the *Principles* employs qualifying language—"where applicable" and "if appropriate"—indicating that institutions may have limited or no public or community service role. However, for institutions with missions that include public/community service, institutional effectiveness standards apply, and institutions must demonstrate evidence of outcomes, achievement of outcomes, use of findings for improvement, and alignment with missions.

Western Association of Schools and Colleges Senior College and University Commission

WASC Senior College and University Commission is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education to accredit senior colleges and universities in two states, numerous territories, and Pacific Rim countries (see Table 1; *WASC, 2013*). The 2013 *Handbook of Accreditation*, published in July 2013, was the document reviewed in this study. This work contains the current standards for accreditation in the applicable states and regions. The prefatory section

of the Handbook includes the following statement regarding "The Changing Context for Accreditation":

> A hallmark of U.S. higher education in the 21st century is the enormous diversity of its institutions, their missions, and the students they serve. Common across this diversity, however, is a widespread understanding that higher education represents both a public good and a private benefit. According to this understanding, higher education fosters individual development and serves the broader needs of the society and nation. Higher education has created the conditions for improving quality of life, solving problems, and enabling hope, which are essential to supporting economic prosperity and sustaining democracy in the United States. Accreditation is committed to the application of standards of performance, while affirming that high-quality education, irrespective of the different purposes of individual institutions, is in itself a contribution to the public good. (*WASC, 2013, p. 3*)

The concept of the "public good" is found throughout the *Handbook (WASC, 2013)* within its standards and criteria. This expectation of accountability to the general public and specific external publics served by the institution permeates the requirements for all senior colleges and universities accredited under the 2013 handbook. The glossary provides extensive definitions relevant to accreditation, assessment, and accountability, as well as the following definitions of "public good" and "public service":

> *Public good*—in higher education, a phrase expressing the notion that in addition to being a private good for individual students, education is a public good contributing to shared prosperity, a successful democracy, and a well-functioning society. As a public good, higher education is worthy of public support. *(p. 54)*

> *Public service*—service provided by institutions to external (non-academic) communities—local, regional, national, international, or within a specific profession. Public service may include public lectures and performances, various forms of applied research, non-credit courses, and extension programs. Public service may

> also include making the physical plant available to the outside community. *(p. 54)*

These definitions are utilized throughout the *Handbook* (*WASC, 2013)* and specifically in the three core commitments, the four standards of accreditation, and the related guidelines. Beginning with "Standard 1—Defining Purposes and Establishing Institutional Objectives," Criterion 1.1 establishes that an accredited institution's purpose statements "clearly define its essential values and character and ways in which it contributes to the public good" *(p. 12)*. Under "Standard 2—Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions," Criterion 2.2a describes the expectations for an undergraduate education:

> Baccalaureate programs engage students in an integrated course of study of sufficient breadth and depth to prepare them for work, citizenship, and life-long learning. These programs ensure the development of core competencies including, but not limited to, written and oral communication, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, and critical thinking. In addition, baccalaureate programs actively foster creativity, innovation, an appreciation for diversity, ethical and civic responsibility, civic engagement, and the ability to work with others. Baccalaureate programs also ensure breadth for all students in cultural and aesthetic, social and political, and scientific and technical knowledge expected of educated persons. (*p. 14*)

Criterion 2.3 (*WASC, 2013)* includes a guideline directing that for-credit "out-of-class learning experiences," such as service-learning, be adequately resourced, developed, and supervised *(p. 15)*. Criterion 2.9 in "Scholarship and Creativity" establishes an expectation for the promotion of "appropriate linkages among scholarship, teaching, assessment, student learning, and service" *(p. 16)*.

The definitions of and references to "public good" and "public service" in the WASC 2013 *Handbook of Accreditation* are unique among the regional accreditation documentation. Further, the document includes references to the American Association of Colleges and Universities' high-impact educational practices, including service-learning, which reflects an emergent national dialogue on learning and engagement.

Results and Findings

The research question addressed in this study was "How do regional accrediting standards apply to the central role of community engagement in U.S. institutions of higher education?" Using the transcribed comments made by the accrediting bodies' representatives during the November 2011 APLU panel discussion and examination of current regional accrediting standards, four themes were identified: (1) the institutional determination of community engagement mission and goals, (2) community engagement in educational programs and student learning, (3) institutional effectiveness and community engagement, and (4) faculty scholarship relating to community engagement.

The analysis of the content from each of the six U.S. higher education regional accrediting bodies' current (2011–2013) standards for institutional accreditation revealed limited references to "community engagement" but found other related terms such as "public service" and "community service" relating to institutional mission, purpose, and goals. The study also found that the standards addressed institutional effectiveness in terms of outcomes, assessment, and use of findings for improvement (including the role of community partners in mission, planning, and assessment activities); educational programming/student learning; and faculty scholarship. Table 2 depicts the occurrence of these themes in the standards for each regional accrediting commission as published at the time of this analysis.

Table 2. Identified Themes Relating to Community Engagement in Regional Accrediting Commission Standards

Regional Accrediting Commission	Mission and Goals	Institutional Effectiveness	Educational Programs/ Student Learning	Faculty Scholarship
Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)	X	X	X	
New England Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (NEASC-CIHE)	X	X		X
North Central Association Higher Learning Commission (NCA HLC)	X	X	X	

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU)	X	X		
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS COC)	X	X	X	
Western Association of Schools and Colleges Senior College and University Commission (WASC)	X	X	X	X

Although the analyses of the panel transcription and regional accrediting standards were conducted separately, it is reasonable to assume that the four regional accrediting commission leaders would discuss similar themes given that they lead the implementation of the written standards.

Discussion

The research question "How do regional accrediting standards apply to the central role of community engagement in U.S. institutions of higher education?" was addressed by the findings from the analysis and the identification of the four themes. The four foundational characteristics of community engagement identified by Fitzgerald et al. in "The Centrality of Engagement in Higher Education" (*2012*) included (1) a scholarship-based model of engagement; (2) mission-centric engagement that permeates teaching, research, and service; (3) equal participation of community partners—"reciprocal and mutually beneficial . . . planning, implementation, and assessment of programs and activities" (*p. 13*); and (4) showing evidence of "the processes and values of a civil democracy" (*p. 13*, quoting *Bringle & Hatcher, 2011*). The first two foundational characteristics resonate in the four themes identified in the study: mission and goals, institutional effectiveness, educational program/student learning, and faculty. However, the four foundational characteristics enumerated in "The Centrality of Engagement in Higher Education" establish much more specific standards than those identified in this study from the six regional accrediting commission standards or the panel participants. Ralph Wolfe (WASC) said, "There's only so much oxygen in an accrediting process," indicating the limitations on the roles of regional accrediting bodies and standards.

In light of the study's findings, "The Centrality of Engagement in Higher Education" (*Fitzgerald et al., 2012*) and the Carnegie Foundation definition of "community engagement" are important resources to guide institutions as they define and operationalize

their engagement missions and provide evidence of compliance. For instance, when referencing a scholarship-based model of engagement as a central mission or goal, an institution might adopt a definition shaped by Fitzgerald et al. (*2012*) and/or the Carnegie Foundation and provide evidence (such as policies and practices) of how this definition is operationalized in student learning, faculty tenure and promotion, educational support services, and institutional planning and assessment activities. As a complement to this evidence, the institution might document that it is implementing best practices for participation of community partners in assessment processes and using assessment findings to improve the partnership and its activities. For example, it might indicate how instruments are designed together and implemented together, findings are evaluated through institutional and community lenses, and resulting steps for improvement are taken together.

The findings of this study clarify that institutions bear the responsibility for demonstrating how their engagement mission is defined and implemented using similar institutional and educational effectiveness processes to fulfill their teaching and research missions. Such mission-driven engagement activity might be demonstrated by documents providing evidence that:

- the institution's mission statement incorporates the concept of engagement in its teaching, research, and service roles and activities;
- the institution's mission statement guides its community engagement partnerships;
- the institution's planning and evaluation processes incorporate a review of its community engagement activities and partnerships within the context of the mission statement;
- the institution and community engagement partners have established measurable outcomes for their partnerships;
- community engagement partnerships are assessed on the extent to which they achieved their expected outcomes;
- the institution and its community partners use the results of the assessments to improve or enhance their capacity to achieve the expected outcomes; and

- representative community partners are included in institutional-level planning and assessment of community engagement as well as in processes that include feedback for more informal engagement relationships established by individual faculty members with community partners.

Conclusions and Recommendation for Further Consideration

This study addressed the research question "How do regional accrediting standards apply to the central role of community engagement in U.S. institutions of higher education?" The analyses of transcribed public comments from representatives of four regional accreditors and of current regional accrediting standards led to the identification of four common themes. Since accreditors require evidence of institutional compliance, normative recommendations have been offered for types of evidence or documentation that institutions may provide and accreditors may consider as demonstrating compliance.

An important question was introduced but not answered in the discussion of the 2011 APLU panel Engagement and Regional Accreditation: Critical Issues and Strategic Dialogue. If regional accrediting commissions include references to community engagement and related mission-based activities such as "community service," "public service," and "outreach" in their standards, then how should peer reviewers be trained regarding these subjects? Regional accreditors provide peer reviewer training on a wide variety of subjects including faculty credentials, institutional effectiveness, financial issues, federal requirements, and so on. However, training related to the role of public or community service, or community engagement, is limited at best. Although beyond the scope and limitations of this study, there is anecdotal evidence that the teaching and research missions of institutions are reviewed as dominant functions with community engagement or public service being subordinate rather than integrated. This perception may be further confounded by historical, as well as regulatory and collective bargaining, influence on the nature of faculty "service" roles. This segregation is addressed directly by the NEASC-CIHE standards that distinguish between "community service" and "professional service" in faculty evaluation criteria.

The concept of "community engagement" expressed across each of the traditional higher education functions—teaching, research,

and service—may present a beginning point for conversations with regional accreditors that may generate opportunities for evolving understanding and interpretation of standards, potentially yielding more comprehensive forms of institutional and peer reviewer training. "The Centrality of Engagement in Higher Education" *(Fitzgerald et al., 2012)* and the Carnegie Foundation community engagement classification system and resulting scholarship could provide a starting place for training on these mission-centric functions in public institutions of higher education and would help to communicate what evidence peer reviewers might expect to see in institutions that embrace community engagement in their missions. Furthermore, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching Community Engagement Elective Classification provides exceptional information on a robust internal and external assessment process that many institutions have utilized to advance their mission related to community engagement (*Carnegie, n.d.*) and offers rich resources for consideration by regional accreditors, their institutions, and peer reviewers. In addition, a number of resources provide internal and external assessment processes and instruments that would be useful in peer reviewer training (for example, *Furco, 2010; Holland, 2001; Sandmann, Williams, & Abrams, 2009; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008).*

In addition to the findings of this study and recommendations for discourse with regional accreditors about evolved understandings of community engagement, it is important to note that further research should be conducted on the role of regional accreditation pertaining to institutional missions and civic democracy. The fourth foundational component cited in "The Centrality of Engagement in Higher Education" calls for embracing the "processes and values of a civil democracy" (*Bringle & Hatcher, 2011*, as cited in *Fitzgerald et al., 2012, p. 23*). In a sweeping statement, Article 1.b of UNESCO's *(1998) World Conference on Higher Education: Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century Vision and Action* identifies the "mission and functions of higher education," including:

> provide opportunities . . . for higher learning and for learning throughout life, giving to learners an optimal range of choice and a flexibility of entry and exit points within the system, as well as an opportunity for individual development and social mobility in order to educate for citizenship and for active participation in society, with a worldwide vision, for endogenous capacity-building, and for the consolidation of human

> rights, sustainable development, democracy and peace, in a context of justice. *(p. 21)*

Prior to and after this World Declaration, the nexus between the mission of higher education and civil democracy is articulated in historic documentation and affirmed through the creation of instruments of institutions, national and regional public funding and regulations, and policy statements, in the U.S. and internationally *(Fitzgerald, 2014)*. As the UNESCO chief, Section for Higher Education, Paulina Gonzalez-Pose said in the recently published report from the Global Network for Innovation *(2014)*:

> Higher education must not only give solid skills for the present and future world but must also contribute to the education of ethical citizens committed to the construction of peace, the defense of human rights and the values of democracy. *(p. xxv)*

Institutions with mission-driven commitment to civil democracy embed these values into their teaching, research, and service in ways that require evidence and explication in the regional accrediting processes. Some questions that foster further dialogue about the intersections of civil democracy and regional accreditation standards include: "What would the student learning outcomes and assessment findings related to civil democracy look like?" "What are institutional best practices?" "Are there federal and state regulations related to civil democracy as an institutional mission tied to funding?" Addressing these questions will likely engender a significant dialogue between institutions and colleagues invested in regional accrediting processes.

In conclusion, the findings of this study established the need for institutions to lead the work with regional accrediting bodies and their colleagues who serve as peer reviewers to articulate the definitions and achieve institutionalization of the "service" mission, as defined through the lens of community engagement. The authors recommend further discussions between institutional leaders, regional accreditors, peer reviewers, and community partners to examine the relevant standards for community engagement and the best institutional effectiveness practices in support of institutional mission fulfillment and community partner reciprocity and mutuality.

References

Bringle, R. G., & Hatcher, J. A. (2011). Student engagement trends over time. In H. E. Fitzgerald, C. Burack, & S. D. Seifer (Eds.), *Handbook of engaged scholarship: Contemporary landscapes, future directions: Vol. 2. Community–campus partnerships* (pp. 411–430). East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press.

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. (n.d.). *Community engagement classification.* Retrieved from http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/descriptions/community_engagement.php

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. (2011, January). Carnegie selects colleges and universities for 2010 *Community Engagement Classification* [Press release]. Retrieved from http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/newsroom/press-releases/carnegie-selects-colleges-and-universities-2010-community-engagement-classification

Engagement and regional accreditation: *Critical issues and strategic dialogue* [Panel discussion description]. (2011). 124th annual meeting, Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities: Final program (p. 29). Washington, DC: Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities. Retriev

Fitzgerald, H. E. (2014). Knowledge, engagement and higher education in the United States and Canada. In C. Escrigas, J. G. Sanchez, B. L. Hall, & R. Tandon (Eds.), *Higher education in the world 5: Knowledge, engagement and higher education: Rethinking social responsibility* (pp. 227–244). London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fitzgerald, H. E., Bruns, K., Sonka, S. T., Furco, A., & Swanson, L. (2012). The centrality of engagement in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, 16*(3), 7-27.

Fitzgerald, H. E., Smith, P., Book, P., Rodin, K., & CIC Committee on Engagement. (2005). *Draft CIC report: Resource guide and recommendations for defining and benchmarking engagement.* Champaign, IL: Committee on Institutional Cooperation. Retrieved from http://apir.wisc.edu/documents/CIC_EngagementReportREV2-22-05.pdf

Furco, A. (2010). The engaged campus: Toward a comprehensive approach to public engagement. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 58*(4), 375–390. doi:10.1080/00071005.2010.527656

Gonzalez-Pose, P. (2014). UNESCO's introduction. In C. Escrigas, J. G. Sanchez, B. L. Hall, & R. Tandon (Eds.), *Higher education in the world 5: Knowledge, engagement and higher education: Rethinking social responsibility* (pp. xxiv–xxv). London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Holland, B. A. (2001). Toward a definition and characterization of the engaged campus: Six cases. *Metropolitan Universities: An International Forum, 12*(3), 20–29.

Kellogg Commission. (2000). *Renewing the covenant: Learning, discovery, and engagement in a new age and different world*. Washington, DC: National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges.

Kellogg Commission. (2001). *Returning to our roots: Executive summaries of the reports of the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities.* Washington, DC: National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.msche.org/

Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). (2006). *Characteristics of excellence in higher education.* Retrieved from http://www.msche.org/publications/CHX-2011-WEB.pdf

New England Association of Schools and Colleges: Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (NEASC-CIHE). (2011). *Standards for accreditation.* Retrieved from http://cihe.neasc.org/standards_policies/standards/standards_html_version

New England Association of Schools and Colleges: Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (NEASC-CIHE). (2013). Retrieved from http://cihe.neasc.org/

North Central Association Higher Learning Commission (NCA HLC). (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.ncahlc.org/

North Central Association Higher Learning Commission (NCA HLC). (2012, February). *The criteria for accreditation and core components.* Retrieved from http://www.ncahlc.org/Information-for-Institutions/criteria-and-core-components.html

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.nwccu.org/

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). (2010). *Complete standards for accreditation*. Retrieved from http://www.nwccu.org/Pubs%20Forms%20and%20Updates/Publications/Standards%20for%20Accreditation.pdf

Sandmann, L. R., Williams, J. E., & Abrams, E. D. (2009). Higher education community engagement and accreditation: Activating engagement through innovative accreditation strategies. *Planning for Higher Education, 37*(3), 15–26.

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS COC). (2012). *The principles of accreditation: Foundations for quality enhancement*. Retrieved from http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2012PrinciplesOfAcreditation.pdf

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS COC). (2013). Retrieved from http://www.sacscoc.org/

UNESCO. (1998). *World conference on higher education: Higher Education in the twenty-first century vision and action.* Retrieved from http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001164/116428e.pdf

U.S. Department of Education. (2014). *Database of accredited postsecondary institutions and programs*. Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation_pg6.html#RegionalInstitutional

Weerts, D. J., & Sandmann, L. R. (2008). Building a two-way street: Challenges and opportunities for community engagement at research universities. *Review of Higher Education, 32*(1), 73–106.

Western Association of Schools and Colleges Senior College and University Commission (WASC). (2013, July 1). *2013 handbook of accreditation*. Retrieved from http://www.wascsenior.org/resources/handbook-accreditation-2013

About the Authors

Valerie Osland Paton is an associate professor in higher education in the College of Education at Texas Tech University. Paton's research focuses on engagement; online learning; and higher education policy, planning, assessment, and accreditation. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Southern California.

Hiram E. Fitzgerald is associate provost for university outreach and engagement and university distinguished professor at Michigan State University. Fitzgerald's research focuses on systemic engagement, fathers and child development, etiology of alcoholism, and factors influencing quality of education in Tribal Head Start programs. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of Denver.

Birgit L. Green is the director of engaged research and partnerships at Texas Tech University. Her research explores issues related to university-community engagement in research and teaching and the assessment of community engagement from both the institution's and community partners' perspective. She earned her Ph.D. in Higher Education from Texas Tech University.

Megan Raymond served as the director of academic community engagement in the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost at the University of Virginia from 2005 to 2013. She holds a Ph.D. in English Literature from the University of Virginia.

Melody Paton Borchardt represents the community partner voice in this article. She has served in communication roles for nonprofit organizations, produced in a variety of news markets, and teaches as an adjunct faculty member at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. Borchardt's research focuses on social media, news, and nonprofit communication. Borchardt earned an M.A. in Mass Communication from Texas Tech University.

© *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, Volume 18, Number 4, p. 71, (2014)
 ISSN 1534-6104

The Engaged Dissertation: Exploring Trends in Doctoral Student Research

Audrey J. Jaeger, Jeremy B. Tuchmayer, and Shauna M. Morin

Abstract

This study explored the extent to which doctoral students are conducting community-engaged scholarship and investigated the characteristics of their degree-granting institutions. The research utilized the most immediate work of doctoral students by examining completed dissertations. Analysis showed which graduate students are pursuing community engagement through their scholarship, whether they are increasing in number, and the fields of study and institution types with which they are affiliated. By identifying who is producing engaged scholars, best practices can be identified in the future. In addition, the findings revealed which disciplines and institution types have room to increase their output of community-engaged research.

Introduction

In recent decades, community engagement has been a growing force in academia and has been increasingly recognized as a realm of faculty responsibility within higher education *(Boyer, 1990)*. It has recently garnered greater attention in academia as the Carnegie Foundation solicits the first round of reapplications for its well-respected community engagement classification. Community-engaged scholarship has gained traction as a viable and valuable approach to faculty research, as evidenced by the emergence of academic journals that showcase engaged scholarly activities; formal and informal discussions about civic learning, civic engagement, democracy, and related topics taking place within academic communities; and development of community-engaged associations such as the Engagement Scholarship Consortium and others. In addition, academic discipline associations (e.g., those for public history, public anthropology, and social entrepreneurism) are expanding their efforts to engage communities and address critical societal issues, and are increasing efforts to prepare faculty for work in and with communities *(Seifer, Blanchard, Jordan, Gelmon, & McGinley, 2012)*.

In keeping with these trends, there appears to be a growing interest in community-engaged research and teaching among graduate students *(Garrison & Jaeger, in press; O'Meara & Jaeger, 2006)*. This interest is reflected in the development of initiatives such as

the Engagement Scholarship Consortium's Emerging Engagement Scholars Workshop and the International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement (IARSLCE) Graduate Student Network. More broadly, community engagement is being recognized as a valuable component of graduate education that warrants greater attention and scholarly inquiry *(Jaeger, Sandmann, & Kim, 2011)*.

Despite the movement toward community-engaged scholarship, faculty and graduate students who pursue this work often receive little support or guidance for their endeavors. Faculty must often determine for themselves how to build partnerships with community members, manage the logistical aspects of community engagement initiatives, and convey the significance of engaged work to colleagues. Doctoral students who choose to adopt a community-engaged approach to their dissertation research may find it difficult to identify a faculty advisor who understands and endorses this type of work. Moreover, professional development opportunities for faculty and graduate students interested in community engagement often prove to be inadequate *(O'Meara & Jaeger, 2006; Seifer et al., 2012)*.

As we consider the future of community engagement on our respective campuses, it is important to understand how our future faculty are (or are not) trained to be engaged scholars, and in particular what opportunities they are afforded to participate in community-engaged teaching and research. There appears to be a heightened interest in community engagement among today's graduate students, but limited empirical evidence exists to demonstrate actual growth in the number of students incorporating it into their research. Thus, it is important to identify who is currently producing community-engaged scholarship, whether their numbers are increasing, and what factors may be influencing their decision to do so.

The current study explored the extent to which doctoral students were conducting community-engaged scholarship (CES) and characteristics of their degree-granting institutions. We used completed dissertations to consider the most recent work of doctoral students. Through our analyses, we identified the students pursuing community-engaged scholarship. Additionally, we examined trends in doctoral work focused on community engagement, which allowed us to see if higher numbers of current doctoral students are pursuing this type of scholarship as compared to previous years. Finally, we identified the fields of study and institution types with which these students were affiliated. By identifying who is

producing engaged scholars, we hope to initiate future exploration of best practices. We also believe this study offers new information about which institution types are producing the most community-engaged research, and in turn which institution types have a comparatively lower output of community-engaged research.

Literature Review

A commitment to the public good has long been a defining characteristic of American higher education. However, in the context of the contemporary research university, community engagement often takes a back seat to other institutional and departmental priorities. The literature suggests that specialized research within disciplines is most highly valued because it leads to sought-after publications in peer-reviewed journals and grant funding that is critical in the face of shrinking university budgets *(Moore & Ward, 2010; O'Meara & Jaeger, 2006; O'Meara & Rice, 2005; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008)*. Such markers of success also carry significant weight in the recruitment, promotion, and tenure (RPT) process. Conversely, though CES is increasingly promoted at the institutional level, such work is often not rewarded within colleges and departments *(Jaeger, Jameson, & Clayton, 2012; Moore & Ward, 2010)*.

The lack of recognition and support for scholarly engagement trickles down to shape the academy's preparation of future faculty. Today's doctoral students wish to engage in meaningful work that impacts the larger society *(Austin, 2002; Bloomfield, 2005),* yet graduate assistantships often focus on traditional teaching and research and fail to provide students with engagement opportunities within or beyond the institution *(O'Meara & Jaeger, 2006)*. In a study of more than 4,000 doctoral students from a variety of institutions and disciplinary backgrounds, 61.2% expressed a strong interest in interdisciplinary research, a hallmark of community-engaged scholarship *(Golde & Dore, 2001, 2004)*. However, only 27.1% of students surveyed believed their doctoral programs prepared them for scholarly collaboration across disciplines. Further, 52% of students indicated a desire to serve their communities, yet "this aspect of preparation [was] nearly absent" from their graduate preparation *(Golde & Dore, 2004, p. 27)*.

The changing landscape of higher education as it relates to the faculty career poses another challenge for current doctoral students. Full-time tenured professorships are on the decline, while the number of part-time and non-tenure-track faculty appointments is increasing *(Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006)*. The "proliferation

of part-time faculty members" is demonstrated by a 376% increase in part-time faculty members from 1969 to 2001, and the majority of full-time faculty hires since 1993 having been for off-track positions *(Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006, p. 40).* These shifts have led a growing number of graduate students to pursue nonacademic careers in their fields, which often require a different and more diversified skill set *(Day, Becerra, Ruiz, & Powe, 2012)*.

Individuals at various levels of the educational system believe doctoral students must be prepared for a greater diversity of professional roles, and initiatives are under way to promote innovation in the realm of doctoral education *(Nyquist, 2002; Nyquist and Woodford, 2000; Walker, Golde, Jones, Bueschel, & Hutchings, 2008).* The Pew Charitable Trusts support an extensive repository of best practices in doctoral education, cataloguing approximately 350 strategies for change employed at nearly 100 institutions of higher education *(Nyquist, n.d.)*. These strategies are intended to better prepare doctoral students for the myriad responsibilities and trajectories of nonfaculty careers. However, many graduate programs continue to groom doctoral students for what are in fact increasingly elusive faculty roles *(Walker et al., 2008)*.

Community engagement offers an alternative approach to scholarship that better meets the demands facing today's graduate students and the institutions in which they operate. It does so by making meaningful connections between research and interests of the larger society, thereby engendering greater public support *(Bloomfield, 2005)*. In the face of diminishing budgets and policymakers' demands for increased accountability, engaged scholarship demonstrates its utility by promoting academic inquiry relevant to pressing community needs. Further, it prepares students for career opportunities outside the academy and broadens their scope of knowledge through interactions with leaders in business, government, education, nonprofit, and other sectors *(Blee et al., 2008; Day et al., 2012).*

Even those who ultimately secure positions in academe will likely find new and evolving expectations placed upon them *(Austin, 2003)*. The unique experiences and ways of thinking inherent in community-engaged scholarship will strengthen their ability to function more effectively in a dynamic higher education environment *(Blee et al., 2012)*. For all students, regardless of professional aspirations, engaged scholarship can lead to reciprocal relationships between advisors and advisees that move beyond the one-directional model of doctoral student preparation *(Jaeger et al., 2011).* Such relationships foster the development of "intellectual

community," which in turn enriches students' educational experiences and enhances the quality of their doctoral programs *(Walker et al., 2008, p. 122)*.

Efforts to capitalize on the many benefits of engaged scholarship are reflected in a movement toward community engagement as a component of graduate education. In recent years, forums and symposia sponsored by Tufts University, the University of Minnesota, and California Campus Compact have gathered leaders to identify challenges, opportunities, and best practices for civic and community engagement in graduate school *(O'Meara, 2007; Stanton, 2008)*. Professional associations are also targeting doctoral students with engagement-focused training and development opportunities *(Engagement Scholarship Consortium, n.d.; IARSLCE, n.d.; Imagining America, n.d.).* At some institutions, students are taking the lead to incorporate community engagement into their own graduate experiences *(Blee et al., 2008; O'Meara, 2007)*.

Perhaps most significantly, strides are being made to improve awareness and understanding of community engagement across disciplines *(O'Meara & Jaeger, 2006).* Increasingly, disciplines are acknowledging community engagement as a legitimate approach to scholarship in their fields *(O'Meara, 2007)*. Initiatives like Preparing Future Faculty train teachers and researchers to contribute not only to their disciplines and institutions, but also to the community at large *(Pruitt-Logan & Gaff, 2004)*. Finally, there have been many calls for doctoral programs to "focus less on improving disciplinary status and more on equipping faculty to improve the lives of citizens" *(Applegate, 2002, p. 2; O'Meara, 2007; Walker et al., 2008)*.

At the institutional level, a growing awareness of and commitment to scholarly engagement is evidenced by the Community Engagement Elective Classification designated by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. This classification is awarded following a rigorous application process that requires colleges and universities to demonstrate full participation in the "mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity" *(Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, n.d.)*. The classification is designed to recognize institutional achievements while also encouraging further growth and development in the area of community engagement *(Driscoll, 2009)*. Gary Rhoades *(2009),* former general secretary of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), captures well the significance of the community engagement classification:

> The first elective category to be developed was, significantly, community outreach and engagement. If the effect of Carnegie's efforts… in the first three quarters of the 20th century was to inscribe in academic structures and in the consciousness of faculty a national orientation, those organizations are increasingly emphasizing the value of the local. *(p. 12)*

In 2006, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) instituted the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll to realize its goal of engaging five million college students in service activities over a 5-year period *(CNCS, 2007)*. The honor roll recognizes exemplary service contributions made by higher education institutions and highlights model community service programs at colleges and universities across the nation. From its inception in 2006, approximately 100 institutions per year have been recognized with distinction for their commitment to "solving community problems and placing more students on a lifelong path of civic engagement" *(CNCS, 2013)*.

Sandmann, Saltmarsh, and O'Meara *(2008)* identified professional preparation for graduate students and institutionalization as two critical components of their model for advancing the scholarship of engagement. This approach is echoed throughout the literature, which suggests that instilling the value of engaged scholarship in today's doctoral students will facilitate its institutionalization by tomorrow's faculty *(O'Meara & Jaeger, 2006; Stanton, 2008)*. Implicit in this assertion is a need for deeper understanding of factors that engender a commitment to community engagement among emerging scholars. The current study lays a foundation for exploring those factors by identifying the fields and institution types within which doctoral students are conducting community-engaged research.

Methodology

For this exploratory study, we elected not to use a specific theoretical framework that might constrain our initial investigation; rather, we allowed the literature to guide our research. However, we did draw from Schein's *(1990)* work on organizational culture when making decisions about analyses of the dissertations in our dataset. Schein discusses three levels of culture: artifacts, values, and assumptions. We focused primarily on artifacts (i.e., observable, tangible, and verbally identifiable cultural symbols), such as Carnegie's Community Engagement Elective Classification and

the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll distinction. By identifying the disciplines from which the dissertations came, as well as the sponsoring institutional types and locations, we laid the groundwork for investigation of relevant values and assumptions within these contexts. Thus, in keeping with our exploratory approach, we paved the way for further examination of engaged scholarship, particularly through a cultural lens.

The methodological approach we employed is also worthy of note, as it cannot be easily classified as strictly quantitative or qualitative. Rather, it draws on elements of each paradigm, weaving them together into a cohesive analytical framework. To help organize the large volume of collected data, we incorporated some descriptive and correlational analyses within a content analysis framework. These descriptive statistics enhanced our ability to identify patterns and relationships across dissertations and institutions, thereby allowing us to make meaning of our qualitative findings.

Search Strategies

The genesis of this study was rooted in a seemingly simple question: To what extent is community-engaged scholarship (CES) conducted among doctoral students, and what are the characteristics of their degree-granting institutions? Since the focus of our study sought to identify commonalities within the dissertations themselves, as well as among the institutions where the CES originated, our research questions were twofold: (1a) What are the common characteristics of institutions at which community-engaged doctoral dissertations are produced? Furthermore, (1b) what is unique about the geographic location of the institutions at which community-engaged dissertations occur? (2) What are the common characteristics of dissertations focusing on community engagement, including field, year, methodology, and degree?

To answer these questions, we first sought to articulate a definition of CES that reflected its use in the literature and by the Carnegie Foundation. This proved somewhat difficult given the varied ways scholars have operationalized community engagement in their research. Ultimately, we chose to define community engagement as "the collaborative generation, refinement, conservation, and exchange of mutually beneficial and societally relevant knowledge that is communicated to and validated by peers in academe and the community" *(North Carolina State University, 2010, p. 3)*. However, we acknowledge that CES is more broadly symbolic of a

particular type of study, one that fosters a reciprocal relationship between an individual or institution and the greater community.

Next, we attempted to identify and analyze all doctoral dissertations fitting the above description. An electronic in-text search using ProQuest's Dissertations and Theses database of the abstracts of all English-language doctoral dissertations published between 2001 and 2011 was conducted using the search terms *community engaged, community engagement, scholarship of engagement, engaged scholarship, scholarship and engagement, and community-based participatory research*. This search strategy allowed us to capture dissertations whose abstracts contained the aforementioned words. These search terms were strategically selected to maximize the number of qualified dissertations identified while simultaneously limiting the volume of documents returned to a manageable size. In addition, prominent researchers who practice community-engaged scholarship in the field of higher education were asked to provide the names and dissertation titles of student advisees who completed a dissertation that satisfied the inclusion criteria. These additional dissertations served to triangulate our findings and confirmed we had captured as many applicable dissertations as possible in our search.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

For inclusion in this study, dissertations had to meet at least one of the following *a priori* criteria: The researcher intended to address a community need; implications for furthering community engaged research were articulated; or the practice of community engaged scholarship, including factors that prevent or encourage participation therein, were examined. Dissertations were excluded from our analysis if community engagement was not central to the purpose of the study or the research design, the researcher did not interact with members of the community in some capacity, or study implications were not explicitly connected to a relevant community issue.

Our literature search yielded 552 dissertations from among several hundred thousand produced within the timeframe. Of these, 418 were deemed inappropriate for inclusion because the dissertations did not satisfy the criteria set forth for our analysis. An additional 12 dissertations were identified as duplicates and were removed from analysis. Finally, seven dissertations were added to the study upon triangulation of the data. Ultimately, 129

dissertations from 90 institutions satisfied the criteria for inclusion in this study.

Coding and Triangulation

Consistent with good practice in qualitative research, we divided the 552 dissertations produced by the initial literature search among three independent researchers for sorting purposes. Dissertations were categorized into three groupings (*yes, no, maybe*) by reading the abstracts and analyzing them within the context of the inclusion criteria. This initial sorting yielded 124 affirmatives, 95 possibilities, and 333 rejections. Next, each researcher was assigned a sorted grouping for review, and the abstracts were read and analyzed a second time. This second sorting resulted in five affirmative dissertations recoded as possibilities and seven possibilities recoded as affirmatives, resulting in 126 dissertations designated for inclusion. Of the 95 initial possibilities, 81 were recoded as rejections, seven remained as possibilities, seven were recoded as affirmatives, and five were added from the affirmative grouping, resulting in 12 remaining possibilities. None of the dissertations initially sorted as rejections were recoded. Eighty-one dissertations from the possibility grouping were rejected upon completion of the second abstract review, resulting in 414 rejections from the study.

Finally, all three researchers came together to discuss changes made after the second sorting. The seven dissertations added to the affirmative grouping were retained. Of the 12 remaining possibilities, six were added to the affirmative grouping ($N = 132$) and six were added to the rejection grouping ($N = 420$). In the process of organizing the dissertations for analysis, as previously noted, 12 duplicates were identified and removed (10 from the affirmative and two from the rejection grouping), resulting in 122 doctoral dissertations identified for inclusion (and 418 excluded) through our search of the literature.

Given the exploratory nature of our study, we felt it was important to minimize possible gaps in our search by reviewing dissertations designated as engaged by experts in the field. Thus, our triangulation efforts included communication with 15 leading scholars in higher education whose research focuses on or reflects CES. These individuals identified doctoral students or advisees that they considered to be engaged scholars. In addition, we examined seven dissertations selected for the IARSLCE dissertation of the year (or honorable mention) award. In all, our triangulation efforts yielded 15 additional dissertations for consideration. Among them,

five had already been captured in our literature search, one had a publication date that fell outside our designated time frame, two did not meet the criteria for inclusion (i.e., solely service-learning, not community-engaged), and seven were added to the study. Our final analytic sample included 129 doctoral dissertations from 90 separate institutions that satisfied the inclusion criteria.

Data Extraction

A standard data collection template was created to extract the following data from all 129 dissertations satisfying the criteria for inclusion in this study: country, state, institution, department, program, topic, author, advisor, committee members, methodological approach, methodology, type of engagement, degree, and year of publication. United States Census regions and divisions were determined by the state where each dissertation was produced and were also added to the data template. Much of this information was collected from the citation index exported from ProQuest's Dissertations and Theses database, and any missing data was culled directly from the dissertation. For instance, three quarters of the dissertation abstracts described the methodology underpinning the study; however, for the remaining one quarter, the researchers read the methodology section of the dissertation in order to determine the methodology. Finally, in some instances it was difficult to determine the department or program of study simply by looking at the title page or the citation index. To collect this missing information, we relied on the classification of the major advisor at the time the dissertation was published in conjunction with the topic of the dissertation. In order to make sense of this data, department and program classifications were aggregated into larger typologies for analysis and interpretation (e.g., education, public health, public administration).

Next, we included the Carnegie Classification, the Community Engagement Elective Classification, and land-grant status of the institutions in our sample. These data were provided by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Finally, we reviewed the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll lists from 2006 to 2013 and noted how many times, if any, institutions in our sample had won the award or had been recognized on the honor roll *with distinction*. The application and selection process for the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll is rigorous. By restricting our classification to institutions that were recognized with distinction or better, the selectivity of this measure was greatly increased.

Analysis

To facilitate analysis, the data were imported into STATA 12, a statistical analysis software package commonly used among social science researchers. Frequencies, cross-tabulations, and correlations were run on a majority of the variables in the data using both the dissertations and their respective institutions as units of analysis. Examining the frequency distributions of the data allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the individual elements of the dissertations and the institutions in this study.

Results

Of the 129 dissertations from 90 institutions we examined, 92% (N = 118) were published from American institutions (N = 83), with the remaining 8% (N = 11) originating from Canadian institutions (N = 7). To address our first research question examining the common characteristics of institutions where community-engaged scholarship occurred at the doctoral level, we analyzed our sample using institutions as the unit of analysis; to address the second research question, our unit of analysis was the dissertation. Although 90 institutions qualified for inclusion in this study, the seven Canadian institutions lacked Carnegie Classification data and were therefore excluded from the institutional-level analysis.

Institutional-Level Analysis

Among the 83 American institutions, 82% were classified as doctoral/research universities (55 doctoral extensive; 13 doctoral intensive), 6% were master's-level institutions (N = 5), 2% were baccalaureate institutions (N = 2), and the remaining 10% were specialized institutions (N = 8; e.g., institutions that typically award a majority of their degrees in a single field such as separate medical or health profession schools). Twenty-eight percent of the universities (N = 23) were classified as land-grant institutions, 39% (N = 32) had received the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll with Distinction, and 45% (N = 37) were awarded the Community Engagement Elective Classification (CE) by the Carnegie Foundation.

Slightly more than half of the institutions examined (52%, N = 43) received at least one of the aforementioned designations (honor roll, elective classification, or both), and 60% (N = 26) of those institutions were recognized with both the Carnegie Community Engagement Elective Classification and the honor roll with distinction. A strong positive relationship was observed between institu-

tions that received the CE elective classification and the President's Honor Roll with Distinction designation, $r(81) = .58$, $p < .001$. A small, positive relationship was found between land-grant institutions and those with the CE classification, $r(81) = .26$, $p = .019$. Although no significant relationship was found between land-grant institutions and those receiving the honor roll designation, $r(81) = .12$, $p = .288$, a small, positive relationship was also found between land-grant institutions and those who received at least one of the aforementioned designations (i.e., honor roll, CE, or both), $r(81) = .22$, $p = .046$.

In examining the unique characteristics associated with the location of the institutions in our study, we used both institutions and dissertations as units of analysis (see Table 1). Of the 90 institutions in our study, 26 produced more than one qualifying dissertation between 2001 and 2011. When controlling for institutions that produced multiple dissertations (i.e., using institutions as the unit of analysis), we found that no particular region of the country had greater influence than any other region in the production of community-engaged scholarship at the doctoral level. With institutions as the unit of analysis, doctoral participation in community-engaged scholarship was roughly equal, with each of the four United States Census Regions representing between 20 and 27 percent of the country. However, as Table 1 illustrates, when dissertations served as the unit of analysis, thereby allowing institutions that produced more than one dissertation to be counted more than once, we found that West Coast institutions are more productive, publishing almost twice as many dissertations as those in the Northeast, and nearly 10 percentage points more than the those of next highest region (the Midwest).

Table 1. Community-Engaged Dissertations and Institutions by Census Region and Division

	Institutions		Dissertations	
	N	%	*N*	%
Northeast	**18**	**20.0**	**21**	**16.3**
New England (1)	7	7.8	8	6.2
Mid-Atlantic (2)	11	12.2	13	10.1
Midwest	**21**	**23.3**	**30**	**23.2**
East North Central (3)	15	16.7	23	17.8
West North Central (4)	6	6.6	7	5.4

South	**20**	**22.2**	**25**	**19.4**
South Atlantic (5)	12	13.3	16	12.4
East South Central (6)	2	2.2	2	1.6
West South Central (7)	6	6.6	7	5.4
West	**24**	**26.7**	**42**	**32.6**
Mountain (8)	5	5.6	7	5.5
Pacific (9)	19	21.1	35	27.1
Canada	**7**	**7.8**	**11**	**8.5**
Total	**90**	**100.0**	**129**	**100.0**

Dissertation as Unit of Analysis

In order to address the common characteristics of the dissertations identified in this study, we examined the degree awarded, field of study, methodology, and year of publication. Of the dissertations examined, 80% ($N = 103$) fulfilled the requirements for the doctor of philosophy (Ph.D.) degree, with 19 percent ($N = 24$) earning the doctor of education (Ed.D.) degree. The remaining 1% of dissertations qualified for the doctor of psychology (Psy.D.) and the doctor of public health (Dr.P.H.) degrees (one each). As Table 2 demonstrates, a large plurality of community-engaged dissertations from 2001 to 2011 were in the field of education (39%, $N = 50$). The next largest field of study, public health, had less than half as many dissertations as did education (17%, $N = 22$).

Table 2. Field of Study

	N	%
Education	50	38.8
Public health	22	17.1
Anthropology, psychology, & sociology	14	10.8
Public administration, policy, & planning	11	8.5
English & communication	9	7.0
Other professional	14	10.8
Other social science	9	7.0
Total	129	100.0

The methodological approaches employed in the dissertations studied varied significantly. Roughly one quarter (N = 31) of all dissertations utilized either a strictly quantitative or mixed-methods approach. An equal number (N = 31) utilized case study as the methodological approach, with the remaining dissertations representing a somewhat balanced distribution across various approaches to qualitative inquiry (e.g., ethnography, participatory research, narrative, phenomenology, and grounded theory). For example, a sizable number of these dissertations employed ethnography (N = 21), participatory research (N = 16), or grounded theory (N = 13) as methodological approaches to qualitative inquiry (see Table 3).

Table 3. Methodology

	N	%
Case Study	31	24.0
Quantitative & mixed methods	31	24.0
Ethnography	21	16.3
Participatory research	16	12.4
Hermeneutics, narrative, & phenomenology	15	11.6
Grounded theory	13	10.1
Other	2	1.5
Total	**129**	**100.0**

With respect to year of publication, tremendous growth was observed in the number of engaged dissertations produced in the later years of our study. Over the 11-year period examined, nearly 72% (N = 93) of the dissertations we identified were published in the last 4 years (2008–2011), with roughly half of the total (46%, N= 59) produced in the last 2 years. In the first 5 years of the study, only 20 community engaged dissertations were produced. A steady increase in the number of engaged dissertations was observed beginning in 2006, with the largest growth occurring in the last 3 years (see Table 4).

Table 4. Year of Publication

	Dissertations	
	N	%
2001	4	3.1
2002	5	3.9
2003	4	3.1
2004	6	4.6
2005	1	0.8
2006	8	6.2
2007	8	6.2
2008	12	9.3
2009	22	17.1
2010	30	23.2
2011	29	22.5
Total	**129**	**100.0**

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the extent to which community-engaged scholarship is produced among doctoral students and institutions of higher education. Our analysis was therefore performed on two groups: institutions and dissertations. Our results highlight several important observations. Among institutions, community-engaged doctoral scholarship appears to occur more frequently at institutions recognized for a commitment to community engagement. Across dissertations, such work appears to occur more frequently in the fields of education and public health, employs one of several qualitative techniques, and is a relatively recent phenomenon.

Institutional Characteristics

Nearly 60 percent of dissertations analyzed were from institutions that received the Carnegie Community Engagement Elective Classification, the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll with Distinction recognition, or both (excluding the 11 dissertations from Canadian institutions that were ineligible for these distinctions). Further, upon examination of institutions in our study that received these designations, we found a strong positive relationship between the Carnegie engagement classification and the President's Honor Roll distinction. These findings suggest that not only are community-engaged institutions under-

going rigorous and time-consuming processes to be acknowledged for their efforts, they are often seeking recognition from multiple sources. The findings also raise several important questions: Will the Carnegie classification continue to be relevant as more individuals engage in this form of scholarship and more institutions are recognized *(Holland, 2005; Sandmann, Thornton, & Jaeger, 2009)*? If the same institutions are being recognized both by Carnegie and the Corporation for National and Community Service, will these honors ultimately become redundant? Conversely, might these forms of recognition give rise to new distinctions that encompass a greater diversity of approaches *(Sandmann et al., 2009)*, or will distinctions cease to be necessary?

Not surprisingly, we also identified a positive relationship between land-grant institutions and the Carnegie community engagement classification. As mentioned in the literature review, community engagement has the potential to better prepare doctoral students for the current job market and to help institutions better serve the larger society. Community engagement is a tool for land-grant institutions to more explicitly carry out their missions *(Holland, 2005)*. Activities that support such efforts often align closely with the mission of land-grant universities as they partner with for-profit, nonprofit, and government organizations to meet the real and practical needs within their states *(Zuiches, 2008)*. Furthermore, in recent years the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities have encouraged land-grant institutions to expand and seek formal recognition for their community-engaged practices *(Sandmann et al., 2009)*. Thus, it seems appropriate that many of these universities would seek—and receive—the Carnegie elective classification for their mission-driven community engagement activities.

Finally, we observed that West Coast institutions appear to be the standard bearers for the community engagement movement, attracting doctoral students interested in engaged scholarship and encouraging them to incorporate it into their dissertations. Among the institutions with more than two qualified dissertations, Portland State University stood out among all institutions with six. Other productive West Coast institutions included two in the University of California system: Berkeley (four) and Los Angeles (three), as well as the University of Washington (three). The only other American institutions with more than two qualified dissertations were the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee (four); The

Pennsylvania State University (three); and the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (three).

Although the influence of West Coast institutions might be an example of institutional isomorphism *(DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, 1991)*, it is important to note that some of these institutions, Portland State University (PSU) in particular, have been leaders in the community engagement conversation nationwide. The PSU mission clearly reflects its commitment to community and civic engagement:

> PSU values its identity as an engaged university that promotes a reciprocal relationship between the community and the University in which knowledge serves the city and the city contributes to the knowledge of the University. We value our partnerships with other institutions, professional groups, the business community, and community organizations, and the talents and expertise these partnerships bring to the University. We embrace our role as a responsible citizen of the city, the state, the region, and the global community and foster actions, programs, and scholarship that will lead to a sustainable future. *(PSU, "Community and Civic Engagement," 2013)*

Characteristics of Dissertations

A little more than half of all dissertations were in the fields of education and public health. Professional degree programs are strongly connected to the communities they serve and often offer experiential, community-based education programs. In fact,

> public health and medical programs are far ahead of many other disciplines in having established permanent long-term partnerships between graduate programs and medical clinics. Perhaps because of the necessity of engaging the public in studies of disease, clinical trials, and rehabilitation programs, these programs have developed many innovative ways of linking graduate study with individual and community needs. *(O'Meara & Jaeger, 2006, p. 18)*

In the last decade, many other disciplines have followed suit, with associations creating new focus areas or repurposing existing specialty projects to address the public aspects of their work. To

that end, fields such as public history, public anthropology, public sociology, and even engineering have seen growth in service-learning and community-engaged scholarship *(O'Meara & Jaeger, 2006)*. Our analysis confirms this trend, having identified dissertations from each of the aforementioned fields, including two in civil engineering, with only one notable exception: public history (see discussion in the Limitations section).

With respect to methodology, we found that approaches employed by doctoral students to explore engaged scholarship represented all five domains of qualitative inquiry *(Creswell, 2013)*. Collectively, these qualitative studies comprised nearly three quarters of the dissertations examined. Indeed, qualitative methodologies align well with the objectives of community-engaged research, as they allow scholars to "make sense of a situation without imposing preexisting expectations on the phenomena under study" *(Mertens, 2010, p. 225)*. In so doing, researchers create space for the emergence of collaborative and innovative approaches to societal problems. From a more pragmatic perspective, qualitative methods are appropriate when there is not a quantitative approach that adequately addresses the research questions *(Mertens, 2010)*. In the case of community-engaged research, quantitative analysis may illuminate the *who* and *what* aspects of community engagement, but it does not give voice to participants in a way that represents them fully in the research process.

Finally, we noted that over the 11-year time period identified in our study, nearly 75% of all dissertations that qualified for our study were published in the last 4 years (2008–2011), with slightly less than half produced in the last 2 years alone. It is perhaps no coincidence that both Carnegie's Community Engagement Elective Classification and the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll both began in 2006, the year our study identified as the beginning of the upward trend in community-engaged doctoral scholarship. As community engagement principles and practices become more widely adopted within the field of higher education, we expect to see them reflected not only in faculty research but also in a variety of academic and cocurricular programs at institutions. Scholars who adopt community-engaged practices as doctoral students will play a critical role in increasing the scope and impact of community engagement across the higher education landscape by modeling such practices throughout their careers as faculty members.

Limitations

Our study is limited in several important ways. First, no exhaustive catalogue exists for all doctoral dissertations, though ProQuest is the most comprehensive dissertation repository with more than 2.7 million entries. Nearly every accredited institution in North America that awards doctoral degrees submits their dissertations to ProQuest for publication or indexing. In 1998, the Library of Congress recognized UMI (later acquired by ProQuest) as the official offsite repository of the Digital Dissertations Library. ProQuest estimates that between 95 and 98 percent of all U.S. doctoral dissertations are included in its database.

Second, authors are solely responsible for indexing their dissertations, meaning that each individual author decides what terms to include (or exclude) for the purpose of keyword searches. Consequently, no central taxonomy or uniform guidelines exist for students to catalogue their work or classify it as community-engaged. We therefore relied on in-text searches to maximize the likelihood of capturing all available dissertations that met our criteria. Further, we utilized triangulation techniques to identify any prominent dissertations that the search terms may have missed. Nevertheless, it is possible some relevant works were inadvertently excluded as a result of our search strategy.

Third, because our initial full-text searches yielded almost 35,000 dissertations, we restricted our search to the text of dissertation abstracts. We reasoned that if the authors failed to mention our search terms in their abstracts, the concepts the terms represent were likely not central to their research. However, the length and depth of dissertation abstracts vary widely, both within and across disciplines, stymying attempts to fully and accurately capture CES through the examination of abstracts alone.

Finally, although intentionally selected, our search terms may have excluded otherwise qualified dissertations from certain fields of study. Using reciprocal relationships between communities and universities as a primary measure of CES eliminated dissertations that some researchers would identify as community-engaged (e.g., study of a service-learning class). However, in the interest of consistency, we felt it was important to use search terms that reflected the definition of community engagement most commonly recognized as we set forth at the beginning of the study.

Some may also argue that our search terms were too narrow, utilizing only the most common terms associated with engaged scholarship. We recognize that scholars in certain fields may use

terminology to describe CES that is distinct from our search terms, a limitation brought to light by the fact that we did not capture any public history dissertations in our search despite literature suggesting that CES is frequently utilized among public historians *(O'Meara & Jaeger, 2006)*. This finding suggests that efforts to identify engaged dissertations might have been enhanced by a broader triangulation effort, one that included scholars from a diverse array of academic fields. However, the time and resources necessary to identify and access engaged scholars across disciplines were beyond the scope of the current study.

Implications

In "Reclaiming the Democratic Purposes of American Higher Education," Matthew Hartley *(2009)* documents the recent evolution of an education reform movement toward reaffirming higher education's historic civic purposes. What began as an increased commitment to community service in the 1980s expanded to include academic service-learning in the 1990s. The emergence of the "engaged institution," endorsed in 1999 by the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities, represents the most recent phase of the movement and the one in which we currently find ourselves *(Hartley, 2009)*. Hartley argues that we are at a crossroads in our efforts to propagate civic participation within higher education and must determine "whether to seek broad-based legitimacy within the academy by aligning the efforts with disciplinary norms or to challenge the status quo and attempt to transform higher education and align its efforts with the pressing needs of America's democracy" *(p. 11)*.

In our review of the literature for this study, it is apparent that community-engaged scholarship in its current form reflects aspects of both trajectories outlined above. Attention to societal needs is at the heart of community-engaged research as we have defined it, yet efforts to promote this form of scholarship have been incrementally introduced, perhaps so as not to disrupt the long-standing structures and norms of academia. Given the recent surge in community-engaged doctoral research documented in this study, it seems likely that today's emerging scholars will be instrumental in determining future directions of the higher education reform movement. In particular, they will have the capacity to shape practice for doctoral education by redefining the advisor/advisee relationship, developing relevant professional development opportunities, and preparing future faculty for changing roles in academe.

Knowing what we do about the overall increase in community-engaged scholarship among doctoral students raises numerous questions to be addressed in future research. First, it would behoove us to explore whether the institution of Carnegie's Community Engagement Elective Classification and the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll have contributed to the recent increase in engaged doctoral research, or if the reverse is true. It would be valuable to understand how these initiatives influence (or are influenced by) scholarly engagement, particularly in comparison to other aspects of the current movement (e.g., efforts of disciplinary associations to promote and support community engaged practices).

Second, as we have identified several institutions leading the charge in terms of community-engaged scholarship among doctoral students, it may now be possible to examine what unique characteristics of these institutions promote engaged practices among emerging scholars. Does the institution type or context play a significant role, as our findings suggest in the case of land-grant universities? Alternately, have institutions such as PSU adopted approaches to advising and mentoring doctoral students that foster interest in scholarly engagement? What types of influence do advisors exercise with respect to the development of engaged dissertations? Are there implicit values and assumptions embedded in the culture of certain institutions that guide faculty and graduate student research? Answers to these questions could inform best practices for other institutions seeking to enhance their commitment to community-engaged research.

Finally, we propose that further investigation into the prevalence of engaged scholarship within various disciplines is warranted, especially given the unequal distribution of engaged dissertations we identified in our study. It seems that some fields have been instrumental in furthering the movement that Hartley *(2009)* described, while others may be virtually removed from it. In disciplines such as education and public health, it would be useful to ascertain what forces promote doctoral engaged scholarship, whether it be the curriculum, faculty predisposition, reward structures, efforts of disciplinary associations, or some combination of these factors. By gaining insight into best practices in particular fields, it may be possible to identify which strategies can "be modified to suit local contexts," thereby enabling them to "gain broader currency" in the field of higher education *(Hartley, 2009, p. 24)*.

Conclusions

Our exploratory study of engaged research among today's doctoral students yielded four key findings worthy of note. First, there is a positive relationship between external recognition for community-engaged practices and the propensity of recognized institutions to produce engaged dissertations, which suggests that the Carnegie Classification and the President's Honor Roll are successful in identifying universities that act upon, rather than simply espouse, a commitment to community engagement. Second, some of these institutions are contributing to the current reform movement by producing an impressive number of engaged scholars, several of whom will likely serve as the next generation of higher education faculty. Third, select disciplines are also taking the lead in advancing engaged scholarship as an aspect of doctoral education and may serve as models for encouraging community-engaged practices on a broader scale. Finally, important next steps in this area of research include deeper exploration of who is conducting community-engaged scholarship and what individuals, experiences, and environments are shaping their behavior. It is hoped that our initial investigation will stimulate further inquiry into this burgeoning dimension of higher education.

Acknowledgments

The authors express deep gratitude to Katie Lupica-Ewsuk and Jennie Ofstein for their contributions to this manuscript. Their help with the design, coding, and analyses were critical to the development of this article.

References

Applegate, J. L. (2002). *Engaged graduate education: Seeing with new eyes.* Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Austin, A. E. (2002). Preparing the next generation of faculty: Graduate school as socialization to the academic career. *The Journal of Higher Education, 73*(1), 94–122.

Austin, A. E. (2003). Creating a bridge to the future: Preparing new faculty to face changing expectations in a shifting context. *The Review of Higher Education, 26*(2), 119–144.

Blee, L., Horan, C., Manuel, J. T., Tochterman, B., Urban, A., & Weiskopf, J. M. (2008). Engaging with public engagement: Public history and graduate pedagogy. *Radical History Review, 102*, 73–89.

Bloomfield, V. (2005). Civic engagement and graduate education. *Council of Graduate Schools Communicator, 38*(3), 1–2.

Boyer, E. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered: The priorities of the professoriate.* Princeton, NJ: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. (n.d.). *Classification description.* Retrieved August 27, 2013, from http://classifications.carnegie foundation.org/ descriptions/community_engagement.php

Corporation for National and Community Service. (2013). *President's higher education community service honor roll.* Retrieved from http://myproject.nationalservice.gov/honorroll/

Corporation for National and Community Service. (2007). *President's higher education community service honor roll frequently asked questions* [Unpublished document]. Washington, DC: Author.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Washington, DC: Sage.

Day, K., Becerra, V., Ruiz, V. L., & Powe, M. (2012). New ways of learning, knowing, and working: Diversifying graduate student career options through community engagement. In A. Gilvin, G. M. Roberts, & C. Martin (Eds.), *Collaborative futures: Critical reflections on publicly active graduate education.* Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review, 48*(2), 147–160.

DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1991). The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. In W. W. Powell & P. J. DiMaggio (Eds.), *The new institutionalism in organizational analysis* (pp. 63–82). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Driscoll, A. (2009). Carnegie's new community engagement classification: Affirming higher education's role in community. *New Directions for Higher Education, 147*, 5–12.

Engagement Scholarship Consortium. (n.d.). *Professional development.* Retrieved September 28, 2013, from http://engagementscholarship.org/resources/professional-development

Garrison, J., & Jaeger, A. J. (in press). From serendipity to stated intentions: Graduate student motivations for using service-learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 20*(2).

Golde, C. M., & Dore, T. M. (2001). *At cross purposes: What the experiences of today's doctoral students reveal about doctoral education.* Philadelphia, PA: The Pew Charitable Trusts.

Golde, C. M., & Dore, T. M. (2004). The survey of doctoral education and career preparation: The importance of disciplinary contexts. In D. H. Wulff, A. E. Austin, & Associates (Eds.), *Paths to the professoriate: Strategies for enriching the preparation of future faculty* (pp. 19–45). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Hartley, M. (2009). Reclaiming the democratic purposes of American higher education: Tracing the trajectory of the civic engagement movement. *Learning and Teaching, 2*(3), 11–30.

Holland, B. A. (2005). Institutional differences in pursuing the public good. In A. J. Kezar, T. C. Chambers, & J. C. Burkhardt (Eds.), *Higher education for the public good* (pp. 235–259). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Imagining America. (n.d.). *Convenings.* Retrieved September 28, 2013, from http://imaginingamerica.org/convenings/

International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement. (n.d.). *Conferences.* Retrieved September 28, 2013, from http://www.researchslce.org/conferences/

Jaeger, A. J., Jameson, J. K., & Clayton, P. (2012). Institutionalization of community-engaged scholarship at institutions that are both land-grant and research universities. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, 16*(1), 149–168.

Jaeger, A. J., Sandmann, L. R., & Kim, J. (2011). Advising graduate students doing community-engaged dissertation research: The advisor–advisee relationship. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, 15*(4), 5–25.

Mertens, D. M. (2010). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods* (3rd ed.). Long Grove, IL: Waveland.

Moore, T. L., & Ward, K. (2010). Institutionalizing faculty engagement through research, teaching, and service at research universities. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 17*(1), 44–58.

North Carolina State University. (2010). *Integrating learning, discovery, and engagement through the scholarship of engagement: Report of the Scholarship of Engagement Task Force.* Retrieved from http://www.ncsu.edu/extension/documents/SET2010.pdf

Nyquist, J. D. (n.d.). *Promising practices.* Retrieved September 26, 2013, from http://depts.washington.edu/envision/practices/index.html

Nyquist, J. D. (2002). The Ph.D.: A tapestry of change for the 21st century. Change: *The Magazine of Higher Learning, 34*(6), 12–20.

Nyquist, J. D., & Woodford, B. J. (2000). *Re-envisioning the Ph.D.: What concerns do we have?* Seattle, WA: University of Washington.

O'Meara, K. (2007). *Graduate education and civic engagement.* Retrieved from New England Resource Center for Higher Education Publications website: http://scholarworks.umb.edu/nerche_pubs/44

O'Meara, K., & Jaeger, A. J. (2006). Preparing future faculty for community engagement: Barriers, facilitators, models, and recommendations. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, 11*(4), 3–26.

O'Meara, K., & Rice, R. E. (Eds.). (2005). *Faculty priorities reconsidered: Rewarding multiple forms of scholarship.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Portland State University. (2013). *Portland State University mission*. Retrieved from http://www.pdx.edu/portland-state-university-mission

Pruit-Logan, A. S., & Gaff, J. G. (2004). Preparing future faculty: Changing the culture of doctoral education. In D. H. Wulff & A. E. Austin (Eds.), *Paths to the professoriate: Strategies for enriching the preparation of future faculty* (pp. 177-193). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Rhoades, G. (2009). Carnegie, DuPont Circle and the AAUP: (Re)shaping a cosmopolitan, locally engaged professoriate. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, 41*(1), 8–13.

Sandmann, L. R., Saltmarsh, J., & O'Meara, K. (2008). An integrated model for advancing the scholarship of engagement: Creating academic homes for the engaged scholar. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, 12*(1), 47–64.

Sandmann, L. R., Thornton, C. H., & Jaeger, A. J. (2009). *Institutionalizing community engagement in higher education: The first wave of Carnegie classified institutions* (New Directions for Higher Education No. 147). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Schein, E. H. (1990). Organizational culture. *American Psychologist, 45*(2), 109–119.

Schuster, J. H., & Finkelstein, M. J. (2006). *The American faculty: The restructuring of academic work and careers.* Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Seifer, S. D., Blanchard, L. W., Jordan, C., Gelmon, S., & McGinley, P. (2012). Faculty for the engaged campus: Advancing community-engaged careers in the academy. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, 16*(1), 5–20.

Stanton, T. K. (2008). New times demand new scholarship: Opportunities and challenges for civic engagement at research universities. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice, 3*(1), 19–42.

Walker, G. E., Golde, C. M., Jones, L., Bueschel, A. C., & Hutchings, P. (2008). *The formation of scholars: Rethinking doctoral education for the twenty-first century*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Weerts, D. J., & Sandmann, L. R. (2008). Building a two-way street: Challenges and opportunities for community engagement at research universities. *The Review of Higher Education, 32*(1), 73–106.

Zuiches, J. J. (2008). Attaining Carnegie's community-engagement classification. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, 40*(1), 42–45.

About the Authors

Audrey J. Jaeger is the alumni distinguished graduate professor in the Department of Leadership, Policy and Adult and Higher Education at NC State University. Jaeger's research examines relationships and experiences among faculty and students that illuminate issues of transition, access, climate, agency, and civic and community engagement. Jaeger earned her Ph.D. from New York University.

Jeremy B. Tuchmayer is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Leadership, Policy and Adult and Higher Education at NC State University. His research examines the ways that state and institutional policies and structures facilitate student success, as well as labor market effects, graduate school aspirations, and commitment to civic and community engagement of recent college graduates. Tuchmayer earned his master's degree from Vanderbilt University.

Shauna M. Morin is a doctoral student in the Department of Leadership, Policy and Adult and Higher Education at NC State University. Her research explores religion, spirituality, and worldview diversity among college students, culture and institutional identity at sectarian colleges and universities, and community engagement practices in higher education. Morin earned her master's degree from Pennsylvania State University.

© *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, Volume 18, Number 4, p. 97, (2014)
 ISSN 1534-6104

Exploring Intercollegiate Athletic Department–Community Partnerships Through the Lens of Community Service Organizations

Per G. Svensson, Matthew R. Huml, and Meg G. Hancock

Abstract

Institutions of higher education are increasingly engaging in partnerships with local communities. Within a sport context, the creation of the NCAA CHAMPS/Life Skills Program has emphasized partnerships between athletic departments and local community service organizations (CSOs). Prior studies, however, have used student-athletes rather than the partnership as the unit of analysis, so the attitudes and experiences of community partners remain overlooked. This study explored active relationships with a high-profile NCAA Division I athletic department in the Southeast through the lens of the CSOs. Four major themes emerged for the community partners' motives and perceived benefits in their relationship with the athletic department: (a) increased volunteer capacity, (b) opportunities to create long-term impact and lasting relationships with student-athletes, (c) ability to extend their mission through educational opportunities, and (d) monetary or in-kind donations. Overall, interviewees perceived their relationship with the athletic department to be characterized by ambiguity and ineffective communication.

Introduction

Institutions of higher education are increasingly engaging in partnerships with local community agencies. Universities have cultivated relationships with local communities since the mid-20th century, but more formalized structures and research investigating these partnerships have emerged only during the past 15 to 20 years *(Barnes et al., 2009; Cherry & Shefner, 2005).* Although most of this research has focused more broadly on institutions of higher education, Andrassy and Bruening (*2011*) highlighted an increased emphasis on partnerships between intercollegiate athletic departments and local community service organizations (CSOs) with the establishment of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) CHAMPS (Challenging Athletes' Minds for Personal Success)/Life Skills Program. Within a sports context, research remains limited to studies using student-athletes as the unit of analysis rather than the partnership between the athletic

department and local community agencies *(Chalk, 2008; Gayles, Rockenbach, & Davis, 2012; Jarvie & Paule-Koba, 2013)*. A review of broader educational research suggests that the success of university–community partnerships largely depends on the planning and management of these relationships *(Baum, 2000; Blouin & Perry, 2009; Holland & Gelmon, 1998; Tryon & Stoecker, 2008)*. Barnes et al. (*2009*) noted, "Despite the development that has taken place in the collaborations between universities and communities, many challenges to creating meaningful and sustainable university–community partnerships remain" (*p.15*). Although scholars have devoted considerable attention to institutions of higher education, the attitudes and experiences of the local community partners remain underrepresented *(Blouin & Perry, 2009; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Tryon & Stoecker, 2008; Worrall, 2007)*. Research suggests that CSOs perceive a multitude of benefits from relationships with higher education institutions, including internal benefits of increased organizational capacity through volunteer engagement *(Blouin & Perry, 2009; Prentice & Garcia, 2000; Sandy & Holland, 2006)* and external benefits of increased visibility (*Gazley, Littlepage, & Bennett, 2012*). Although research has focused on broad university–community partnerships, it is also important to examine CSO relationships with a unique department within institutions of higher education, the athletic department.

Given the need for exploring relationships between CSOs and specific departments within institutions of higher education, the purpose of the present study was to understand the perspectives and attitudes of community service organizations engaged in a partnership with a high-profile athletic department. We explored community partners' "perspectives on effective partnership characteristics as well as their own voices regarding the benefit, challenges, and motivations" *(Sandy & Holland, 2006, p. 31)* of their relationship with an NCAA Division I football subdivision athletic department in the Southeast. By listening to the experiences of community partners, we can develop a better understanding of why nonprofit organizations engage in relationships with an athletic department by identifying perceived motives and benefits of these partnerships. Interviewing decision makers of CSOs also helps identify the perceived effectiveness of existing athletic department–community relationships. By understanding these partnerships through the lens of the community partners, we can begin to consider whether partnerships with a high-profile athletic department offer real benefits to CSOs. Before analyzing the findings of our qualitative inves-

tigation, however, it is appropriate to examine previous literature on university–community partnerships.

Literature Review

Two aspects of literature on university–community partnerships were adopted as the theoretical foundation for the present study. The first aspect concerned reasons for engagement in university–community partnerships through the lens of community partners. The second aspect of the theoretical framework for the present study was focused on characteristics of successful university–community partnerships. The present study considered athletic department–community partnerships using the partnership as the unit of analysis *(Cruz & Giles, 2000; Sandy & Holland, 2006)*.

Motives and Benefits of University–Community Partnerships

CSOs engage in university–community partnerships when the benefits of involving student volunteers outweigh the opportunity costs associated with the partnerships *(Alcantara, 2012; Budhai, 2013; Bushouse, 2005; Edwards, Mooney, & Heald, 2001; Gray, Ondaatje, Fricker, & Geschwind, 2000; Worrall, 2007)*. As noted by Gazley et al. *(2012)*, these benefits may be internal (e.g., improved program delivery) or external (e.g., increased organizational visibility) aspects of an organization. Overall, three major benefits perceived by community organizations emerge from existing literature: (a) increased organizational capacity, (b) enrichment, and (c) educational opportunities.

First, partnerships can increase the ability of a community organization to fulfill its goals and objectives *(Birdsall, 2005; Blouin & Perry, 2009; Gray et al., 2000; Prentice & Garcia, 2000; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Shaffett, 2002)*. Student volunteers can increase organizational capacity by providing additional human resources, which helps free up time for paid staff to devote to new projects *(Gazley et al., 2012; Nduna, 2007)*. In their national survey of community partners of universities involved in Learn and Serve America, Higher Education, Gray et al. *(2000)* found that more than 75% of participating agencies reported their partnerships had helped increase their ability to achieve organizational goals. Students' participation can also have a direct impact on the community partners' constituents through involvement with grassroots programs *(Edwards et al., 2001; Ferrari & Worrall, 2000; Gazley et al., 2012; Gelmon, Holland, Seifer, Shinnamon, & Connors, 1998; Gray et al., 2000; Jorge, 2003; Schmidt*

& Robby, 2002). In a study of the experiences of 30 community partners in a large urban setting in the United States, Ferrari and Worrall *(2000)* discovered that CSO staff members found students helpful through constructive relationships with their program constituents. At the same time, it is important to note that Tryon et al. *(2008)* found concerns among community partners regarding the potential negative impact of short-term service commitments on their constituents.

Second, university–community partnerships can enrich the local community organization through staff and organizational development. Previous research on the perspectives of community partners indicates that CSOs have increased their organizational capacity through partnerships with universities by learning new perspectives and information from student volunteers and gaining access to academic research *(Nduna, 2007; Sandy & Holland, 2006)*. As noted by Sandy and Holland, some CSOs also value the prestige of the institution of higher education. Relationships with universities also appear to build social capital among CSOs in local communities, resulting in increased collaboration *(Boyle-Baise et al., 2001; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Vernon & Foster, 2002)*. As noted by Birdsall *(2005)*, partnering with an institution of higher education can serve CSOs as a tool for networking and building relationships with other community stakeholders.

Lastly, community organizations may engage in partnerships with higher education institutions for altruistic reasons *(Basinger & Bartholomew, 2006; Tryon et al., 2008).* For example, some community organizations have reported engaging in university–community partnerships due to a desire or sense of responsibility to educate the public *(Dorado & Giles, 2004; Shaffett, 2002; Tryon & Stoecker, 2008)*. In their exploratory study of the perspectives of 99 community partners in California, Sandy and Holland *(2006)* found that educating students was a strong motive for their partnership with an institution of higher education. Tryon and Stoecker *(2008)* also found that some CSOs viewed their experience with student volunteers as an opportunity to generate interest in future careers in the nonprofit sector.

It is important to note, however, that organizational motives can change over the course of a partnership. A study by Worrall *(2007)* suggested that many organizations initially engaged in university–community partnerships to increase their volunteer capacity. Over time, however, their reasons for involvement changed as they often began to see themselves as educational partners of the university. The potential change of reasons for continued involvement raises

questions about what structural aspects of the partnership community organizations consider essential for long-term sustainability.

Characteristics of Effective University–Community Partnerships

Successful university–community partnerships have common characteristics that allow both parties to receive benefits from their relationship. Based on involvement with national initiatives, Holland and Gelmon *(1998)* suggested that sustainable partnerships share several common characteristics, including mutually agreed-upon goals and a shared vision of how to evaluate the partnership. Scholarship on university–community partnerships, however, highlights the challenges in developing sustainable university–community partnerships due to the complex nature of these relationships *(Dorado & Giles, 2004; Maurrasse, 2002; Strier, 2011)*. Strier *(in press)* argued that stakeholders involved in these university–community relationships need to accept the complexity and develop strong skills in managing tensions and conflict for advancing the collaboration. A mutually beneficial university–community partnership includes a strong fit between the community organization and the university and a clear understanding of the partnership's goals and objectives *(Baum, 2000; Blouin & Perry, 2009; Boyle-Baise et al., 2001; Enos & Morton, 2003; Gazley, Bennett, & Littlepage, 2013; Shea, 2011; Tryon & Stoecker, 2008)*. In their interviews of 67 staff members from CSOs engaged in relationships with a local university, Tryon and Stoecker *(2008)* found that staff members perceived compatibility of goals between the organization and the institution as an integral aspect of a successful partnership. Shared programs and initiatives should also align with the mission of the organizations *(Alcantara, 2012; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Gazley et al., 2013; Tryon & Stoecker, 2008)*. In addition, community partners need to be actively involved in the planning and development of community service programs *(Blouin & Perry, 2009; Boyle-Baise et al., 2001; Enos & Morton, 2003; Nduna, 2007)*. Greater involvement of community partners will increase the likelihood of a sustainable service program. Planning for university–community partnerships requires a balance of a clear understanding of expected outcomes and available resources with strategies and mechanisms for adaptability to changes in all parties' environments *(Baum, 2000)*. For example, the establishment of a shared vision and high levels of trust enabled stakeholders to resolve conflicts within a university–community partnership in California *(Shea, 2011)*. In their qualitative inquiry of 40 community partners of a university service-learning program, Miron and

Moely *(2006)* found that those CSOs who indicated greater involvement in the planning of the partnership also reported greater perceived benefits.

Listening to the needs of the CSOs can also help universities develop meaningful opportunities for student volunteers. Active involvement of both parties requires transparent and continuous communication. In their quantitative study of 290 university service-learning partners in Indiana, Gazley et al. *(2013)* found that 76.8% of CSOs rated clear and continuous communication as essential or very important to the success of their partnership. Unfortunately, many university–community partnerships are characterized by ineffective communication *(Birdsall, 2005; Blouin & Perry, 2009; Stoecker, Tryon, & Hilgendorf, 2009; Tryon & Stoecker, 2008)*. Evidently the perceived success of these interorganizational partnerships largely depends on the relationship between stakeholders involved *(Sandy & Holland, 2006; Worrall, 2007)*. Developing shared power is an integral aspect of successful university–community partnerships *(Shea, 2011)* and is closely related to whether the relationship was initiated by the community, the university, or collaboratively by both parties *(Glover & Silka, 2013)*. A mutual recognition of the value of a partnership and a high level of commitment toward its long-term sustainability will help produce reciprocity—an essential part of successful partnerships *(d'Arlach, Sánchez, & Feuer, 2009; Basinger & Bartholomew, 2006; Boyle-Baise et al., 2001; Dorado & Giles, 2004; Gazley et al., 2013)*.

In summary, the present study was guided by a framework derived from literature focused on perceived benefits of university–community partnerships and common characteristics of successful partnerships. A CSO considering involvement in a partnership with an athletic department is assumed to conduct a cost-benefit analysis to determine whether the perceived benefits outweigh the opportunity costs. These benefits include increased organizational capacity, improved organizational image from association with a higher education institution, and an opportunity to extend the organization's mission by educating students and university stakeholders. The perceived success of the partnership will depend on the mission alignment, fully shared decision-making processes, effective communication, clear understanding of evaluation practices and processes, and a shared belief in the value of the partnership.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to understand the perspectives and attitudes of community service organizations engaged in a partnership with a high-profile athletic department. Thus, this study utilized a qualitative design to explore the perceptions and attitudes of community service organizations concerning their partnerships with an intercollegiate athletic program. Our research was thus guided by the following research questions:

1. Why do community service organizations engage in community service partnerships with intercollegiate athletic departments?
2. What are community service organization program managers' attitudes toward the effectiveness of student-athlete community service programs?

Participants

The population for this study included community service agencies in a Top 50 Metropolitan Statistical Area in the southeastern part of the United States. The university associated with the agencies in this study is a large urban NCAA Division I Football Bowl Subdivision institution. The average household income in the local community was approximately $10,000 less than the national average during 2008–2012. The population in the local community was predominantly Caucasian, but approximately one in five people identified their ethnicity as African American. The sampling frame included CSOs that were identified by and affiliated with the university's athletic program. An athletic administrator in the athletic department provided the list of agencies and contact information for each agency. The list included 43 organizations. Following approval from the researchers' Institutional Review Board and Human Subjects Protection Program, individual agencies were selected using purposeful random sampling. Purposeful random sampling is appropriate when the potential purposeful sample is large *(Marshall & Rossman, 2011)*. Twenty-eight agencies were selected. Three agencies were not interested in participating, two agencies requested that we follow up at a later time, and 11 agencies did not reply to our request for an interview. Twelve agencies responded to our request for participation, which resulted in 15 participant interviews (see Table 1). Three organizations had two staff members present during the interviews; only one staff member participated for each of the other 10 organizations. Because a number of agencies did not respond, were not inter-

ested in participating, or requested participation at a later time, the resulting sample was self-selected. The limitations presented by a self-selected sample will be discussed later in this article.

Table 1. Study Participants

Organization	Organizational Focus	National Affiliation	Pseudonym	Title	Experience with Student-Athlete Volunteers	Perceived S-A Volunteers to Be Unique Assets
1	Health	Yes	Jessica	President	Yes	Yes
1	Health	Yes	Anna	Development director	Yes	Yes
2	Community	No	Leslie	Program coordinator	Yes	Yes
3	Sport	Yes	Maria	Program coordinator	Yes (Limited)	No
4	Sport	No	Kathryn	Program director	Yes	Yes
5	Health	No	Becky	Program therapist	No	Yes
6	Youth	Yes	Cindy	Director of marketing & development	Yes (Limited)	No
7	Environmental	No	Danielle	Volunteer coordinator	No	Yes
8	Health	Yes	Stephanie	Executive director	No	Yes
9	Health	Yes	Natalie	Branch director	No, but had previously met with athletic department to discuss potential collaboration	Yes
10	Youth	Yes	Jeff	Program coordinator	Yes	Yes
11	Community	No	Adam	Recreation manager	Yes	Yes
12	Youth	No	William	Director of marketing & development	Yes	Yes

The 15 participants in this study represented local and national community service organizations. For the purposes of this study, a local organization was defined as one that served the city community, and a national organization was defined as one affiliated with a larger brand (e.g., United Way, Big Brothers/Big Sisters). Six of the

12 participating organizations were affiliated with a national organization (Table 1). Participants' titles included president, executive director, development director, program coordinator, program director, program therapist, director of marketing & development, volunteer coordinator, branch director, volunteer manager, and recreation manager. For consistency across the sample, the main contact person(s) of each CSO were selected as participants based on their presumed firsthand knowledge of their organization's partnership with the university's athletic department. The athletic department reported these individuals as their primary contact within each organization. Participants from the majority of the CSOs participating in the current study were also involved in some capacity with the student-athlete volunteer programs (Table 1). The possibility that this overlap could result in socially biased results was accepted as a limitation of the current study since most CSOs had only one or two individuals involved in the management of their partnership with the athletic department.

Procedure

Fifteen people participated in semistructured interviews. Each interview addressed a number of areas: initial engagement with the athletic department, experience and perceptions of student-athlete volunteers, perceived effectiveness of partnership, and future intentions for partnership with the athletic department. Guiding open-ended interview questions included "How did you become connected with the athletic department?", "Please discuss your thoughts on student-athletes volunteering with your organization," "What do you believe is important for student-athlete community service partnerships to be successful?", and "How do you intend to utilize student-athlete volunteers in the next six months?" Prior to data collection, a pilot study was conducted with the executive director from one CSO. The pilot interview helped the researchers refine the wording and sequence of some of the interview questions. The research team assigned pseudonyms to participants to maintain confidentiality.

Data Analysis

The research team followed a two-cycle independent coding process to reduce and analyze the data *(Saldaña, 2009)*. The researchers also transcribed participant interviews verbatim. This gave researchers the opportunity to understand the context and key areas discussed in the interviews *(Patton, 2002).* Next, the

team engaged in initial coding for each question on the interview guide. During initial coding, the researchers engaged in inductive coding methods including attribute, holistic, descriptive, and in vivo *(Saldaña, 2009)*. Inductive coding allowed themes and patterns to emerge that reflected participants' perspectives on community engagement with athletic departments. The codes derived from the first cycle of coding were added to a "start list" *(Miles & Huberman, 1994)*. Following initial coding, the team reviewed codes and eliminated those that were not useful *(Lofland & Lofland, 1995)*. This gave the researchers an opportunity to compare their initial code lists and discuss any discrepancies regarding emerging themes until full agreement was reached. From there, the research team combined several codes into larger categories in a process known as focused coding *(Lofland & Lofland, 1995).*

During the second cycle of coding, the researchers reorganized related codes into broader themes through pattern coding (*Saldaña, 2009).* Pattern coding was particularly appropriate for the second cycle of coding because it is designed to examine patterns of causes and explanations of human behavior *(Miles & Huberman, 1994)*. Following each coding cycle, the researchers convened to debrief on the data analysis, compare codes or themes, and clarify findings and meanings of coded data. A constant comparative analysis was used to limit researcher bias and establish confirmability *(Guba & Lincoln, 1985)*. The researchers also made a conscious effort to remain neutral in their verbal and nonverbal responses during the interviews. Debriefing augmented the trustworthiness of the data as it allowed researchers to reflect on personal assumptions and biases as well as reactions to participant experiences *(Patton, 2002)*. The following results and discussion illustrate the common themes derived from the interviews.

Findings

Research Question 1: Why Do Community Agencies Engage in Community Service Partnerships With Intercollegiate Athletic Departments?

Our first research question was designed to explore community partners' motives and perceived benefits for engaging in a relationship with an athletic department. Four major themes emerged from our interviews. Community agencies typically engaged in these partnerships to (a) increase their volunteer capacity, (b) have

a long-term impact on student-athletes by introducing them to a specific cause, (c) educate the athletic department and student-athletes about their mission, or (d) benefit from monetary or in-kind donations.

Increase volunteer capacity. Interviewees indicated that their local or national organizations were generally volunteer-driven with limited paid staff. As for many nonprofit organizations, volunteer recruitment and retention were proclaimed imperative organizational tasks due to their limited organizational structure and resources. Several CSOs acknowledged that their programs would not function without the dedication and engagement of volunteers. For example, Anna highlighted the importance of volunteers within her health organization by simply stating, "We could not do what we do without volunteers." Many interviewees expressed their gratitude for these individuals and shared stories with specific examples illustrating the integral role of volunteers within their organizations. For example, Jessica, an executive director for a health organization, conveyed how volunteers have enabled the agency to scale its programming:

> Our volunteer pool has grown tremendously… our program has expanded a lot… our staff has not grown a lot. We were offering two support groups at first and then we made that four, and then six, and now we're at 54 [support groups] a month.

Another aspect of volunteer capacity that emerged from our interviews was the perceived valuable skills of student-athlete volunteers. Overall, having the discipline to follow instructions emerged as one of the more important traits of student-athletes, along with the value of their ability to work as part of a team. Stephanie, the executive director of a well-recognized health organization, expressed why she strongly believes there are noticeable differences between student-athletes and other community volunteers within her organization:

> You have the self-discipline, the time, you've got the physical, you've got the mental, you've got the being a part of a team, you got all these things. I think it is an amazing group of kids who the student athletes are. They're amazing. The set of values and skills and just a lot that they can bring to any organization.… I am a big fan of that so yes, you don't have to convince us

> of the value of [student-athletes] because I vote A++ on them.… A lot of people don't have that [teamwork] skill. [Usually] it's a one person show or all about me.… [Student-athletes] roll [self-discipline and teamwork] together and they're both very necessary for the success of what you're trying to do. That to me defines probably an ideal volunteer if you think about it.

Thirteen of the 15 people we interviewed perceived noticeable differences between student-athletes and their community volunteers (see Table 1). According to some of the interviewees, their typical volunteers seldom have the ability to work both on their own and as part of a larger team depending on the situation. Therefore, student-athletes were often perceived to provide exceptional values and skills to increase an organization's volunteer capacity. William iterated why his youth organization recognized student-athletes as unique volunteer assets:

> First of all I think student-athletes have a Type-A DNA that they are outgoing, they are doers, and they are motivated.… They obviously know how to balance their time. They are not slackers if they are playing their sport and going to school… so just by their very make-up they are the kind of people we want on our team so to speak… they have that visibility and credibility that elevates whatever you're doing to another level.

Student-athletes' physical strength and athletic ability were also recognized as important assets. Many of the organizations in the current study organized physically active events (e.g., 5K run/walk) that required a lot of heavy lifting during set-up and cleanup. Student-athletes were viewed as important assets for these activities, as many of the organizations typically relied on older volunteers, which left the few paid staff members with responsibility for most of the work. Several interviewees also expressed awareness of the direct impact student-athletes had on their program participants. Leslie explained how student-athletes were better able to connect with a lot of their youth participants in sports activities compared to their community volunteers:

> It's really hard for regular volunteers to find a common interest [with our program participants]. It's much easier for student athletes to come in and the kids can tell just by the way they walk or what they're coming

> for, that they're athletes. They can immediately connect in sports.

Long-term impact on student-athletes. Having a long-term impact on student-athletes in regard to volunteering and philanthropy emerged as the second theme from these interviews. Several interviewees indicated that their organizations not only seek to increase their volunteer capacity but also aim to develop relationships with student-athlete volunteers for positive long-term impact. The type of impact was often described as future involvement with the organization. For example, Anna endorsed the importance for her health organization of having an opportunity to introduce student-athletes not only to the organization, but also to a specific cause for long-term involvement:

> Again, their real purpose for us, not only do we need volunteers to do the meals, but it is to connect them.… when they leave [the university] they're going to just take their thoughts about [our organization] out into the community wherever they end up. Wherever they may live, if there's a program [like ours] they may choose to be involved with it.

In other words, organizations aim to develop strong relationships with student-athletes with the hope that they will continue to volunteer for their programs or provide monetary support for an organization when they are in a position to do so. It is important to note that some organizations suggested that the long-term impact on student-athletes does not necessarily have to be the same organization. They considered future involvement with other organizations supporting similar causes to be a positive long-term impact.

Educational opportunities. A third theme focused on educational opportunities also emerged as a reason for CSOs to engage in partnerships with athletic departments. Some organizations explicitly seek out new opportunities to raise awareness of not only their organizational mission, but also the greater social issue. For example, Kathryn, the program director of a sports organization, discussed educational opportunities for raising awareness of the importance of social inclusion of people with disabilities:

> We look for people that might not have that background or that experience that haven't worked a lot with people

> with disabilities that it's a place for us to go and find people so that we can educate. Education is so important to us.

Other interviewees relayed similar altruistic motives of increasing awareness of a social issue and educating student-athletes, parents, coaches, and/or athletic administrators. Whereas the second theme was explicitly targeted at student-athletes, organizations motivated by educational opportunities were interested in extending their mission by educating as many people as possible associated with the athletic department. Several interviewees expressed an interest in having more opportunities to conduct informational sessions with athletic administrators and student-athletes. At the same time, it is important to note that the interviewees had not explicitly asked the athletic department for the opportunity to meet with the athletic administrators or student-athletes to educate them about their mission and programs in the local community.

Improved organizational image and fund raising. Although none of the staff members we interviewed indicated improved organizational image as a reason for engaging in the partnership, this appeared to be an underlying outcome of these partnerships. It is important to note that many organizations admitted they had not necessarily considered the influence on their organizational image prior to our interview but quickly provided us reasons for why or how the partnership had a positive impact on the organization. William noted that the association with a high-profile athletic department might be a viable motive among smaller CSOs for improved organizational image and increased fundraising ability:

> It's for a lesser known or small [nonprofit] organization it's almost a credibility thing… like a seal of approval. If you see [university] football players working with an [organization], it is probably a [legitimate] group… and you know… that kind of thing. Whether you perceive it that way or not, the public may see it that way and obviously it can increase the dollars you raise because of that visibility.

Interviewees from two of the 12 organizations also noted that they had benefited monetarily from their association with the intercollegiate athletic department. Jessica and Anna described

benefiting from a performance-based charity donation program organized by one of the university athletic teams whereby spectators pledged donations of more than $65,000 to their organization based on on-field performance. Another organization's interviewee mentioned benefiting from fund-raising efforts directly organized by student-athletes. Cindy was grateful for fundraising efforts by the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee for her youth organization:

> We were [the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee] the organization of choice so we received actually some monetary funding from them as well. They did a lot of… they did like three or four fundraisers through the year for us. Obviously, any time that we can receive funding and especially new funding… it's very beneficial to us.

Financial motives did not emerge as the primary reasons for engaging in partnerships with the intercollegiate athletic department, but local CSOs expressed their appreciation and described the benefits of receiving donations through their association with the athletic department. In-kind donations of sports equipment emerged as another benefit when monetary donations were not available. Leslie stressed the importance of in-kind donations from one of the university athletic teams for her organization's sustained program delivery:

> [The coaches and student-athletes] also have been extremely, extremely helpful in donating equipment that we are constantly in need of.… Now that we have in the last two years now participated in organized leagues… they have provided huge donations in regards to [player equipment and apparel] and really kind of anything they can. When there is a shortage of players that they can offer us, and time, they offer us resources in another way.

In summary, four predominant themes emerged for why CSOs engaged in partnerships with the intercollegiate athletic department. First, the partnership was perceived to have the potential to increase the organizations' volunteer capacity. Second, several CSOs also aimed to develop long-term relationships with student-athletes for sustainable impact. Third, other CSOs expressed more altruistic motives of wanting to educate more people about their mission or a broader social cause. Lastly, some interviewees recog-

nized the benefit of monetary and in-kind donations from association with a high-profile athletic department.

Research Question 2: What Are Community Service Organization Program Managers' Attitudes Toward the Effectiveness of Student-Athlete Community Service Programs?

A discrepancy was found in the perceived effectiveness of the student-athlete community service program based on the contact person that community agencies worked with in the athletic department. The athletic department recently transitioned from having a centralized CHAMPS/Life Skills Program coordinator to dividing the duties among a number of staff members within the marketing department, which now oversees community partnerships. This transition has been a difficult experience for many of the community agencies. Brittany expressed her frustration and perceived a lack of attention for her health organization among the new contact persons within the athletic department:

> In the marketing department.… I find that they're really unorganized. And not necessarily unorganized, just not giving enough time for us to prepare. Sending an e-mail out or calling us even as a day before an event. It's a scramble.

Still, most interviewees described positive experiences with the former program coordinator, who was perceived to be both responsive and easy to work with. The former program coordinator had developed personal relationships within many of the community agencies whose representatives we interviewed by engaging as a community volunteer or by serving on their board of directors. Unfortunately, the transition from one designated contact person to several staff members within the marketing department was perceived to be a cause of frustration for several people we interviewed. Stephanie described how she received a phone call the day before an event where her organization was asked to set up a booth. Other agencies described similar experiences and were disappointed in the poor communication by the new contact persons in the athletic department.

A few community CSOs, however, relied solely on team-specific contacts without any interaction with athletic administrators. These organizations' interviewees described positive experiences as the organizations had cultivated organic relationships with stu-

dent-athletes for fostering lasting partnerships. For example, a student-athlete would volunteer with a CSO for academic or personal reasons. This student-athlete who had enjoyed their initial experience would then bring some of their teammates on subsequent visits. Kathryn described how her organization built and nurtured relationships with student-athletes without any interaction with the administrative staff:

> I think the first team that we worked [with] the most was with field hockey. [One student-athlete] was like, "Oh my gosh, I love this. Will you [teammates] want to come out and do it with wheelchair basketball?" They actually unofficially adopted our basketball team. Every Monday night they would have anywhere from five to six girls that came out from field hockey and would play basketball with our guys every week and they became great friends with them. Then it turned into much bigger where wheelchair basketball that we did, the national tournament this past weekend, [the] women's soccer team was out. Almost all of their players came out and volunteered. Now it turned into more and more teams coming out, more and more groups coming out.

Interviewees from all 12 CSOs collectively acknowledged the importance of clear communication for successful partnerships. Effective partnerships were characterized by timely, authentic, and responsive two-way communication. Unfortunately, several interviewees expressed concerns with the lack of communication in their current relationship. For example, as Jessica noted, "communication could be improved quite a bit" in the relationship between her health organization and the athletic department. A mutual understanding of the expectations of the partnership by both parties was also highlighted as a crucial aspect of effective partnerships. However, several CSOs suggested a perceived lack of understanding of their community organization and their expectations of the partnership. Although most organizations had some experience with student-athlete volunteers (see Table 1), most considered inquiries by the athletic department about volunteer opportunities for student-athletes to be infrequent. Many of the interviewees related that assistance from the athletic department was mostly confined to complimentary tickets to athletic events and memorabilia donated for silent auctions. This was perceived as problematic by the staff members interviewed since many CSOs

are volunteer-driven; these interviewees expressed a strong interest in having student-athletes engage with their programs.

For example, Maria recognized that student-athletes may not be able to commit to weekly volunteer positions but described how a team of student-athletes could help them set up their fields for the season in an hour or two. She reported periodic communication from the athletic department via e-mail but stated it was primarily one-way communication of available complimentary tickets rather than a dialogue on how the organizations could create a mutually beneficial partnership:

> The [woman] that contacts me from the athletic department, I get e-mails every once and a while from the athletic department now, but it's like "Do you guys want to buy football tickets?" or for your staff or something like that. It's not anything engaging except for that basketball thing was and we were in good communication when that was happening, but there's no other… we would like to do stuff for our [sports] coaches, maybe with [a university] team, stuff like that, anything that we could do to help benefit both [organizations].

The lack of inquiries by the athletic department about community service opportunities for student-athletes with the local CSO programs and the perceived lack of understanding may be an indication of the mixed motivation of the athletic department. Interviewees' reports of receiving complimentary tickets to athletic events and items for silent auctions more often than groups of student-athlete volunteers for community service with local programs suggests the athletic department may be engaged in the partnership for positive publicity instead of supporting the local community. It is important to note, however, that the people we interviewed had not explicitly asked the athletic department for more student-athlete volunteers and did not appear to be proactive in their own communication with the athletic department.

The interviewees in this study, however, expressed a genuine interest in developing meaningful opportunities for all parties involved (e.g., student-athlete, athletic department, and the CSO). Despite scarce resources of many of these nonprofit organizations, interviewees expressed a strong interest in meeting student-athletes on an individual basis to learn about their interest and determine their role with the organizations. As Adam, a recreation manager of a local youth organization, stated, "It's best for us to meet indi-

vidually with a volunteer and to sit down and figure out what their strengths are and how we can utilize those."

An important characteristic of effective student-athlete community service programs was that the CSOs had existing programs and projects that student-athletes were found to match well. Thus, these programs had not been designed for the purpose of attracting student-athletes and obtaining publicity for the organization. Danielle, the volunteer coordinator for an environmental CSO, suggested, "You never create a project just to get volunteers in. You have the projects and you employ the volunteers [student-athletes] to do them."

In summary, the findings of our study indicated that CSOs engaged in partnerships with intercollegiate athletic departments for several reasons. The four predominant themes that emerged from our interviews were (a) increasing their volunteer capacity, (b) having a positive long-term impact on student-athletes, (c) altruistic motives of educating student-athletes through service projects, and (d) receiving monetary or in-kind donations from association with the athletic department. Although several interviewees expressed frustration with the transition to new contact persons in the athletic department, they also shared a genuine interest in developing meaningful service opportunities for student-athletes and thus offering the potential to create mutually beneficial partnerships between the CSO and the athletic department. These findings revealed some commonalities and differences with prior literature. Consequently, there are several implications for advancing partnerships between CSOs and the athletic department.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand the perspectives and attitudes of community service organizations engaged in a partnership with a high-profile athletic department. Although scholars have considered the voices of community partners of institutions of higher education *(Blouin & Perry, 2009; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Tryon & Stoecker, 2008; Worrall, 2007)*, this research contributes to the literature by considering the experiences of community partners of a unique aspect of the university: the athletic department. It is important to expand our understanding through the lens of athletics since extant knowledge on university–community partnerships may not generalize to partnerships involving student-athletes, considering the unique nature of the student-athlete expe-

rience in campus communities *(Jolly, 2008; Kamusoko & Pemberton, 2011, 2013)*.

Findings indicated that CSOs engaged in partnerships with the athletic department to increase their volunteer capacity *(Blouin & Perry, 2009; Prentice & Garcia, 2000; Sandy & Holland, 2006)*, which helped the organizations increase their ability to fulfill their goals and objectives. This is in contrast to Tryon and Stoecker's *(2008)* findings indicating that most community partners did not engage in a university service-learning program to increase their organizational capacity.

The findings of the current study contributed to the literature on university–community partnerships in several ways. Findings of the present study revealed that student-athlete volunteers were perceived to provide valuable human resources for the CSOs. The majority of interviewees perceived student-athlete volunteers as unique assets compared to their general community volunteers (see Table 1). Student-athletes were portrayed as attractive volunteers due to their ability to work as a team, greater discipline, self-motivation, and ability to serve as positive role models for program participants. Although prior research findings indicated that CSOs generally perceive student volunteers to be noticeably different from community volunteers *(Edwards et al., 2001)*, student-athletes are often perceived negatively by other university stakeholders (e.g., faculty and general student body) regarding their academic competence and contributions *(Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991; Engstrom, Sedlacek, & McEwen, 1995; Simons, Bosworth, Fujita, & Jensen, 2007)*. This raises an interesting dilemma, as previous research suggests that student-athletes are cognizant of their public status and are more aware of the importance of being involved in community service than the general student body *(Gayles et al., 2012)*.

It is important to note that intercollegiate athletic departments are encouraged by the NCAA to invest in student-athlete development opportunities, including service engagement *(NCAA, 2007)*. Athletic departments have emerged as one of the largest departmental budgets within institutions of higher education *(Polite, Waller, Trendafilova, & Spearman, 2011)*. Thus, athletics has the potential to perform an integral role in institutional efforts to advance university–community partnerships. The current study serves as a first step in advancing our understanding of university–community partnerships involving athletic departments and whether these relationships are distinctly different from general university–community partnerships. In the current study, student-athletes were also perceived to have a positive and direct impact on program

participants, which supports findings of previous research on the benefits of university–community partnerships *(Edwards et al., 2001; Gazley et al., 2012; Sandy & Holland, 2006)*.

In contrast to prior studies, we did not find CSOs engaging in partnerships for the enrichment of their organization through staff and organizational development *(Edwards et al., 2001; Gazley et al., 2012; Sandy & Holland, 2006)*. Although none of the staff members interviewed expressed this motive as a reason for engaging in the partnership, most CSOs suggested that their relationship with a high-profile athletic department had a strong positive impact on their organizational image. It must be noted that interviewees in the present study may have provided altruistic (and thus more socially acceptable) reasons for engaging in partnerships with the athletic department when the real motive was increased visibility. Future research should attempt to develop a deeper understanding of such underlying motives, as previous research indicates that CSOs primarily motivated by external benefits such as increased visibility are less likely to be interested in long-term relationships *(Littlepage, Gazley, & Bennett, 2012)*.

Although there may be some degree of social desirability bias in the present study, engaging in partnerships for altruistic reasons emerged as another theme in our findings *(Alcantara, 2012; Sandy & Holland, 2006)*. Interviewees described how their organization's partnership with the athletic department provided important educational opportunities. These organizations expressed a desire to increase awareness of a particular social issue and educate student-athletes about how they may help address some of these issues. Some of the interviewees considered their organization an extension of the educational institution for student-athlete volunteers *(Tryon & Stoecker, 2008)*. A noteworthy contribution of the present study was the finding that some CSOs appear to value the partnership with the athletic department for providing them opportunities for a long-term impact on student-athletes. Future research should attempt to develop a deeper understanding of the underlying motives for valuing these opportunities.

Another important contribution of this study to the literature on university–community partnerships is that some interviewees indicated the importance of tangible benefits from their relationship with the athletic department. These benefits included both monetary fundraising and in-kind donations. These types of benefits for CSOs have not been reported in previous scholarship on university–community partnerships. A possible explanation is that previous research has not focused on CSOs partnering with entities

that have the large financial budgets of NCAA Division I athletic departments *(Polite et al., 2011)* and similarly, such a department's ability to involve CSOs in large-scale sporting events. Although none of the people we interviewed described these collateral benefits as their primary motive for working with the athletic department, it is important to note that organizational motives for involvement can change over the course of a university–community partnership *(Worrall, 2007)*. Thus, some of the CSOs may be inclined to continue their relationship with the athletic department in view of the resource scarcity that most interviewees described as a considerable challenge in their program delivery. Our findings also revealed valuable information about CSOs' perceptions of the effectiveness of student-athlete community service programs.

Communication was unanimously identified as the most important element of effective partnerships. This supports previous literature, which indicates that sustainable partnerships require a clear understanding of the goals of the partnership and a strong alignment between the partners *(Holland & Gelmon, 1998)*. Unfortunately, many of the interviewees perceived their organizations' relationship with the athletic department as characterized by ineffective communication *(Birdsall, 2005; Blouin & Perry, 2009; Gazley et al., 2013; Tryon & Stoecker, 2008)*. This problem was apparently exacerbated by the athletic department's transition from using a centralized CHAMPS/Life Skills Program coordinator as a liaison to communicating with CSOs via multiple staff members within the marketing department. The CSOs' communications may also be a factor, however, as none of the decision makers we interviewed had explicitly asked the athletic department for more student-athlete volunteers or opportunities to inform athletic administrators and the student-athletes about their organization and programming in the local community.

Baum *(2000)* stated that many university–community partnerships are characterized by discrepancies between rhetoric and reality in which stakeholders "imagine that simply creating a partnership magically produces resources that will solve problems, without realistically analyzing the problems, strategizing to address them, and organizing necessary resources" *(p. 234)*. Findings of the present study indicated ambiguous roles and misunderstanding in the goals and objectives of the athletic department–community partnership. Interviewees expressed concern that the athletic department allocated complimentary tickets and auction items to their organizations more often than it directed student-athletes to them as volunteers. This finding also epitomizes

the focus on charity rather than mutually beneficial relationships in many partnerships between institutions of higher education and community partners *(Morton, 1995; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000)*. The disappointment among the local CSOs might also be an indication of the unrealistic expectations and limited resources that characterize many university–community partnerships *(Baum, 2000)*. Moreover, many partnerships are characterized by a power imbalance between institutions of higher education and CSOs, which is why the university may often "drive the agenda" of the partnership *(Maurrasse, 2002, p. 134)*.

Despite these issues, many interviewees expressed a strong interest in developing sustainable long-term relationships between their CSO and the athletic department. These findings are similar to what Tryon et al. *(2008)* discovered in their qualitative inquiry of 64 community partners: Despite several obstacles, many CSOs maintained a desire to continue their service-learning partnerships. The apparent misunderstanding between the stakeholders might be interpreted as an indication that caution is needed. At the same time, it is imperative to recognize that the conflicts arising in university–community partnerships can also result in opportunities for stakeholders to improve the partnership by clarifying goals and objectives and addressing prior shortcomings *(Prins, 2005)*. These findings indicate the opportunity to develop more sophisticated partnerships.

Practical Implications

People we interviewed expressed a strong interest in having more student-athlete volunteers engage in their programs, which could provide a "win-win" situation for athletic departments and CSOs. Therefore, creating improved partnerships would not only provide increased positive publicity for athletic departments, but also increased service opportunities for student-athletes and staff members. In light of the economic constraints found in many intercollegiate athletic departments *(Fulks, 2013)*, partnering with local CSOs also gives these departments an opportunity to support their student-athletes while expending minimal resources. It is important to recognize that we collected data only from CSOs and cannot speak for the athletic department's actual motivation for engaging in community partnerships or the department's perceived benefits of collaborating with CSOs in their area. The strong interest expressed by the CSOs in this study, however, suggests that more sophisticated partnerships may be beneficial for the athletic

department, whether motivated by positive publicity, goodwill, or altruism.

The athletic department could assist with this process by providing opportunities for their student-athletes to identify their personal community service interest, which would provide their student-athletes more autonomy and help athletic administrators better engage their community partners. Athletic administrators should also engage in genuine two-way communication with their partners for long-term sustainability *(Jarvie & Paule-Koba, 2013)*. This entails listening to the needs of CSOs for cultivating mutually beneficial partnerships *(Blouin & Perry, 2009)*.

At the same time, CSOs need to develop more realistic expectations of their partnership with the athletic department *(Baum, 2000)*. Thus, community partners need to be flexible with student-athlete volunteer engagement and should identify potential opportunities suited for volunteers on short notice. Leaders of CSOs also need to discuss their expectations from the onset of the partnership to ensure that all stakeholders have a clear understanding of the goals and objectives of the partnership. Although community partners may have a particular program in mind for student-athletes, it is important that they remain open to identifying meaningful opportunities for the athletic department while considering the time constraints of student-athletes *(Jolly, 2008; Kamusoko & Pemberton, 2011, 2013)*. This supports Strier's *(in press)* argument for the importance of recognizing yet balancing the complex paradoxical differences of stakeholders involved in university–community partnerships. Although the diverse constraints and needs of stakeholders can make reciprocal partnerships challenging to create, this can still be achieved by embracing the differences among stakeholders and facilitating open-minded organizational cultures for creating mutually beneficial relationships *(Nichols, Anucha, Houwer, & Wood, 2013; Strier, in press)*. CSOs are also encouraged to reach out to an athletic department and initiate the partnership, as this can help mitigate the effects of unequal power structures associated with many university–community partnerships *(Glover & Silka, 2013)*.

Findings from this exploratory study may also have policy implications related to university–community partnerships. Universities are increasingly engaging with local communities through partnerships with various community stakeholders *(Barnes et al., 2009; Cherry & Shefner, 2005)*. The perceived unique value of student-athlete volunteers among local and national CSOs, and the expressed interest in developing more sophisticated partnerships with the athletic department, indicate the potential role of

athletics in broader community engagement efforts of institutions of higher education. Unfortunately, student-athletes continue to be associated with negative stereotypes across campus communities *(Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991; Engstrom et al., 1995; Simons et al., 2007)*. The primary policy recommendation from the current study is that university policies better integrate athletics in more holistic institutional approaches toward community engagement. Overcoming the competing logics of athletic and academic departments requires strategies similar to those recommended for overcoming the paradoxical differences inherent in university–community partnerships *(Strier, in press)*. The university and athletic department need to accept their inherently conflicting identities and emphasize how their unique characteristics can be channeled toward common goals *(Buer, 2009)*.

Limitations and Future Research

The present study has several limitations that may limit the generalizability of the findings. First, the intentional lack of response or refusal of CSOs to participate in the study resulted in a self-selected participant sample. Self-selection has the potential to bias results. However, we feel that the diversity of the sample yielded multiple perspectives that could be transferable to the experiences of other CSOs with university athletic departments. Second, only community partnerships of one athletic department in the Southeast were examined. Nonetheless, the findings of this exploratory study provide valuable insight into community agencies' perceptions of their partnership with an NCAA Division I athletic department, which future studies can build upon. Future research is needed to develop a deeper understanding of partnerships between athletic departments and CSOs. For example, are there any differences in these types of partnerships among public versus private institutions? A third limitation of the current study was the unexpected limited experience with student-athlete volunteers among some of the CSOs. Future studies may examine whether the length of the partnership or amount of student-athlete volunteers per organization influences community partners' perceptions of the partnership. A fourth limitation was that the mission or objectives of the athletic department for the community partnerships was not examined in the present study. Future research should include interviews with athletic department staff and content analyses of organizational documents to gain multiple perspectives. Finally, the study focused solely on community service partnerships with local CSOs or local chapters of national CSOs. Future research should examine the

relationship between university athletic departments and national-level CSOs rather than local CSOs or local chapters of larger CSOs.

Conclusion

Although a growing amount of research has examined university–community partnerships, few studies have considered relationships between CSOs and intercollegiate athletic departments. This study's findings revealed that community partners cultivated a relationship with a high-profile athletic department primarily for (a) increasing their volunteer capacity; (b) opportunities to have a long-term impact on student-athletes; (c) educational opportunities for extending their mission; and (d) for a few CEOs, monetary and in-kind donations. Many partnerships were characterized by ambiguity and ineffective interorganizational communication. Despite these issues, most interviewees expressed a strong interest in developing sustainable long-term relationships, which suggests that athletic departments may attain a "win-win" situation from more advanced partnerships, whether the partners are motivated by public relations or goodwill. These findings provide important implications for both athletic administrators and community partners. Future studies are needed to build on these findings by exploring multiple perspectives of athletic department–community partnerships.

Acknowledgments

This research project was supported by the University of Louisville Graduate Student Council Research Grant.

References

Alcantara, L. (2012). *Advancing social change goals through partnership: Community partner perspectives* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.

Andrassy, E., & Bruening, J. (2011). From rhetoric to reality: NCAA Division I athletic department mission statements and student-athlete community service efforts. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics, 4,* 271–288.

Barnes, J. V., Altimare, E. L., Farrell, P. A., Brown, R. E., Burnett, C. R., III, Gamble, L., & Davis, J. (2009). Creating and sustaining authentic partnerships with community in a systemic model. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, 13*(4), 15–29.

Basinger, N., & Bartholomew, K. (2006). Service-learning in nonprofit organizations: Motivations, expectations, and outcomes. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 12*(2), 15–26.

Baum, H. S. (2000). Fantasies and realities in university-community partnerships. *Journal of Planning Education and Research, 20*(2), 234–246.

Birdsall, J. T. (2005). Community voice: Community partners reflect on service learning. *Journal for Civic Commitment, 5*, 1–13.

Blouin, D. D., & Perry, E. M. (2009). Whom does service learning really serve? Community-based organizations' perspectives on service learning. *Teaching Sociology, 37*(2), 120–135.

Boyle-Baise, M., Epler, B., McCoy, W., Paulk, G., Clark, J., Slough, N., & Truelock, C. (2001). Shared control: Community voices in multicultural service learning. *The Educational Forum, 65*(4), 344–353.

Bringle, R. G., & Hatcher, J. A. (2002). Campus–community partnerships: The terms of engagement. *Journal of Social Issues, 58*(3), 503–516.

Budhai, S. S. (2013). Two sides to every story: Exploring community partners' perspective of their service learning experiences. *Journal for Civic Commitment, 20*, 1–13.

Buer, T. (2009). Organizational complexity: The athletics department and the university. *New Directions for Higher Education, 148*, 109–116.

Bushouse, B. K. (2005). Community nonprofit organizations and service-learning: Resource constraints to building partnerships with universities. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 12*(1), 32–40.

Chalk, P. (2008). *Motives and values associated with participation in intercollegiate student-athlete community service: Implications for athletics department leadership* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona.

Cherry, D. J., & Shefner, J. (2005). Addressing barriers to university–community collaboration: Organizing by experts or organizing the experts? *Journal of Community Practice, 12*(3–4), 219–233.

Cruz, N. I., & Giles, D. E. (2000). Where's the community in service-learning research? *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 7*(1), 28–34.

d'Arlach, L., Sánchez, B., & Feuer, R. (2009). Voices from the community: A case for reciprocity in service-learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 16*(1), 5–16.

Dorado, S., & Giles, D. E., Jr. (2004). Service-learning partnerships: Paths of engagement. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 11*(1), 25–37.

Edwards, B., Mooney, L., & Heald, C. (2001). Who is being served? The impact of student volunteering on local community organizations. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 30*(3), 444–461.

Engstrom, C. M., & Sedlacek, W. E. (1991). A study of prejudice toward university student-athletes. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 70*(1), 189–193.

Engstrom, C. M., Sedlacek, W. E., & McEwen, M. K. (1995). Faculty attitudes toward male revenue and nonrevenue student-athletes. *Journal of College Student Development, 36*(3), 217–227.

Enos, S., & Morton, K. (2003). Developing a theory and practice of campus-community partnerships. In B. Jacoby and Associates (Eds.), *Building partnerships for service-learning* (pp. 20–41). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Ferrari, J. R., & Worrall, L. (2000). Assessments by community agencies: How "the other side" sees service-learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 7*(1), 35–40.

Fulks, D. (2013). *Revenues & expenses: 2004–2012 NCAA Division I intercollegiate athletics programs report*. Indianapolis, IN: National Collegiate Athletic Association.

Gayles, J. G., Rockenbach, A. B., & Davis, H. A. (2012). Civic responsibility and the student athlete: Validating a new conceptual model. *The Journal of Higher Education, 83*(4), 535–557.

Gazley, B., Bennett, T. A., & Littlepage, L. (2013). Achieving the partnership principle in experiential learning: The nonprofit perspective. *Journal of Public Affairs Education, 19*(3), 559–579.

Gazley, B., Littlepage, L., & Bennett, T. A. (2012). What about the host agency? Nonprofit perspectives on community-based student learning and volunteering. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 41*(6), 1029–1050.

Gelmon, S. B., Holland, B. A., Seifer, S. D., Shinnamon, A., & Connors, K. (1998). Community–university partnerships for mutual learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 5*(1), 97–107.

Glover, R. W., & Silka, L. (2013). Choice, power, and perspective: The neglected question of who initiates engaged campus-community partnerships. *Gateways: International Journal of Community Research and Engagement, 6*, 38–56.

Gray, M. J., Ondaatje, E. H., Fricker, R. D., Jr., & Geschwind, S. A. (2000). Assessing service-learning: Results from a survey of "Learn and Serve America, Higher Education." *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, 32*(2), 30–39.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105–117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Holland, B. A., & Gelmon, S. B. (1998). The state of the "engaged campus": What have we learned about building and sustaining university–community partnerships? *AAHE Bulletin, 51*(2), 3–6.

Jarvie, B. D., & Paule-Koba, A. L. (2013). The perceptions and effects of community service participation among intercollegiate men's basketball players. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics, 5*, 283–300.

Jolly, C. (2008). Raising the question #9: Is the student-athlete population unique? And why should we care? *Communication Education, 57*(1), 145–151.

Jorge, E. (2003). Outcomes for community partners in an unmediated service-learning program. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 10*(1), 28–38.

Kamusoko, S. D., & Pemberton, C. L. A. (2011). Student-athlete wellbeing and higher education persistence. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics, 4*, 207–235.

Kamusoko, S. D., & Pemberton, C. L. A. (2013). Student-athlete wellbeing and persistence: An in-depth look at student-athlete perceptions. *Journal for the Study of Sports & Athletes in Education, 7*(1), 41–61.

Littlepage, L., Gazley, B., & Bennett, T. A. (2012). Service learning from the supply side: Community capacity to engage students. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership, 22*(3), 305–320.

Lofland, J., & Lofland, L. H. (1995). *Analyzing social settings: A guide to qualitative observation and analysis*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2011). *Designing qualitative research* (5th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Maurrasse, D. J. (2002). Higher education–community partnerships: Assessing progress in the field. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 31*(1), 131–139.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded resource book* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Miron, D., & Moely, B. E. (2006). Community agency voice and benefit in service-learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 12*(2), 27–37.

Morton, K. (1995). The irony of service: Charity, project, and social change in service-learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 2*(1), 19–32.

NCAA. (2007). *NCAA CHAMPS/Life Skills Program*. Retrieved from http://www.ncaapublications.com/productdownloads/LS07.pdf

Nduna, N. J. (2007). The community voice on service-learning: A good practice guide for higher education. *Education as Change, 11*(3), 69–78.

Nichols, N., Anucha, U., Houwer, R., & Wood, M. (2013). Building equitable community–academic research collaborations: Learning together through tensions and contradictions. *Gateways: International Journal of Research and Engagement, 6*, 57–76.

Patton, M. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Polite, F., Waller, S., Trendafilova, S., & Spearman, L. (2011). Social accountability and responsibility in sport: An examination of the national collegiate athletic association. *Sport Science Review, 20*(1–2), 111–135.

Prentice, M., & Garcia, R. M. (2000). Service learning: The next generation in education. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice, 24*(1), 19–26.

Prins, E. (2005). Framing a conflict in a community–university partnership. *Journal of Planning Education and Research, 25*(1), 57–74.

Saldaña, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Sandy, M., & Holland, B. A. (2006). Different worlds and common ground: Community partner perspectives on campus–community partnerships. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 13*(1), 30–43.

Schmidt, A., & Robby, M. A. (2002). What's the value of service-learning to the community? *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 9*(1), 27–33.

Shaffett, B. R. D. (2002). *Community organization staff perceptions about the importance of selected practices in building effective community–university service and learning partnerships* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA.

Shea, J. (2011). Sustainable engagement? Reflections on the development of a creative community-university partnership. *Gateways: International Journal of Community Research and Engagement, 4,* 136–153.

Simons, H. D., Bosworth, C., Fujita, S., & Jensen, M. (2007). The athlete stigma in higher education. *College Student Journal, 41*(2), 251–273.

Stoecker, R., Tryon, E. A., & Hilgendorf, A. (Eds.). (2009). *The unheard voices: Community organizations and service learning.* Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Strier, R. (2011). The construction of university–community partnerships: Entangled perspectives. *Higher Education, 62*(1), 81–97.

Strier, R. (in press). Fields of paradox: University–community partnerships. *Higher Education.*

Tryon, E., & Stoecker, R. (2008). The unheard voices: Community organizations and service-learning. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, 12*(3), 47–60.

Tryon, E., Stoecker, R., Martin, A., Seblonka, K., Hilgendorf, A., & Nellis, M. (2008). The challenge of short-term service-learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 14*(2), 16–26.

Vernon, A., & Foster, L. (2002). Nonprofit agency perspectives of higher education service learning and volunteerism. *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing, 10*(2), 207–230.

Ward, K., & Wolf-Wendel, L. (2000). Community-centered service learning: Moving from doing for to doing with. *American Behavioral Scientist, 43*(5), 767–780.

Worrall, L. (2007). Asking the community: A case study of community partner perspectives. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 14*(1), 5–17.

About the Authors

Per G. Svensson is a doctoral candidate at the University of Louisville in the Department of Health and Sport Sciences. His research interests include organizational behavior in sport for development and peace and the role of sport as a tool for promoting social change. He earned his M.S. in Sport Administration at the University of Louisville.

Matthew R. Huml is an assistant director of undergraduate advising in the College of Education and Human Development and a doctoral student in the Department of Health and Sport Sciences at the University of Louisville. His research interests focus on the academic experience of student-athletes. He earned his M.Ed. in College Student Affairs & Leadership at Grand Valley State University.

Meg G. Hancock is an assistant professor at the University of Louisville in the Department of Health and Sport Sciences. Her research interests include organizational behavior and career development in the sport industry. She earned her Ph.D. in

Educational Leadership and organizational development from the University of Louisville.