# *Journal of Higher Education Outreach & Engagement*

# Journal of Higher Education Outreach & Engagement

Campus Compact



**Engagement** Scholarship
c o n s o r t i u m

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*University of Georgia*

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The calls for academics to engage the public have grown, motivated by concerns for civic health and for maintaining public and political support for higher education and academic research. Whatever its value to the public sphere, there is still considerable uncertainty about whether and how public engagement counts—is it valued by colleagues and institutions in promotion and tenure decisions? We sought to provide evidence to assess the value of public engagement with experimental and observational methods set in a survey of faculty from seven liberal arts colleges. We find that public engagement is valued and engaged by these faculty, with variation observed by

institution, mode of public engagement, and college division (arts faculty the most supportive and science faculty the least). We recommend institutions communicate clearly how they value public engagement; until that point, academics should tread carefully as they seek public audiences and partnerships.

*Katherine Richardson Bruna*
*Iowa State University*

*Jennifer Farley*
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*Carla A. McNelly, Debra M. Sellers, and Roberta Johnson*
*Iowa State University*

This article describes the ISU 4U Promise, an innovative college access and affordability initiative. Through this early-commitment partnership program between Iowa State University and Des Moines Public Schools, youth from two urban elementary schools are eligible for tuition awards when they enroll as undergraduates at Iowa State University. Drawing on a review of promise programs in the educational scholarly literature, this article identifies what makes the ISU 4U Promise distinctive among promise efforts in terms of contextual antecedents, implementation processes, and potential institutional outcomes. Unique features include its early childhood focus; sole university sponsorship; "wide-net" reach; and collaborative, critical orientation to education and evaluation. With a bidirectional understanding of knowledge and a bivalent orientation to social justice, the ISU 4U Promise is a promising pathway for universities aspiring to update their approach to college access outreach.

*Angela Clark-Taylor*
*University of Redlands*

As community engagement continues to be institutionalized within colleges and universities, it is increasingly important that it retain its founding mission to prepare engaged citizens to address societal issues and contribute to the public good. Unfortunately, dominant models of community engagement remain charity focused and thereby reinforce social hierarchies that undermine higher education's mission of public good. Though many studies have focused on critiquing charity-focused models of community engagement, few studies offer alternative approaches. Utilizing an intrinsic single-case-study approach, this study investigates what can be learned from

the narratives of 12 students in a community engagement program that uses feminist pedagogy. The findings suggest that a feminist approach to community engagement can be a catalyst for students to develop critical consciousness and social justice self-efficacy by addressing issues of privilege and oppression in community-engaged work in ways that current community engagement models have yet to operationalize.

*Andrew J. Pearl*
University of North Georgia

*Robert K. Christensen*
Brigham Young University

As a high-impact educational practice *(Kuh, 2008)*, service-learning can have a transformational effect on students, communities, instructors, and higher education institutions. However, despite cautions *(Butin, 2006, p. 481)*, student enrollment in service-learning remains overwhelmingly White and female *(Jacoby, 2015)*, creating a potential enrollment gap in a pedagogy intended to be inclusive. In this article the authors explore what might cause minority students to pursue service-learning, building on research that suggests that student traits and values impact the awareness of and disposition to enroll in service-learning *(Christensen, Stritch, Kellough, & Brewer, 2015; Pearl & Christensen, 2017)*. Through qualitative methodology, the authors work to better understand students' traits in relation to their interest and enrollment in service-learning. The findings, relevant to both service-learning theory and practice, suggest the importance of purposeful consideration of how service-learning can truly promote social justice, democratic values, and equality.

*Ann M. Oberhauser*
Iowa State University

*Rita Daniels*
Western Washington University

AThis article examines intercultural aspects of global service-learning (GSL) focused on gender and sustainable development in rural Tanzania. The discussion draws from critical development and postcolonial feminist approaches to examine how GSL addresses globalization, social histories, and political economies of development. The empirical analysis is based on a program that is designed to develop global awareness, intercultural competence, and critical

thinking among students and communities. The relationships, discourses, and actions of the participants are examined through written assignments, a focus group discussion, and observations of activities and the community. The findings of this study contribute to broader debates concerning experiential learning that address students' and other participants' global awareness and intercultural competency. This program also encourages the formation of responsible and ethical partnerships among institutions and communities where GSL is taking place. In sum, we argue that critical approaches to global service-learning ultimately advance inclusive and transformational pedagogies and development.

## Projects with Promise

Research is clear: Employers want college graduates who can communicate clearly, think analytically, and interact respectfully. Targeted educational experiences have measurably improved these capacities. To better prepare undergraduates, the University of Massachusetts Amherst developed the Community-Engaged Research Program, a pilot program featuring a cornerstone course. The course seeks to realize the goal of making research-based learning a standard in U.S. undergraduate education. Data from process evaluations, student assessments, and end-of-semester surveys show meaningful gains in students' ability to think through the research process, communicate research findings, and respectfully address others' needs. Recommendations for building a sustainable undergraduate research model are provided. With further institutional support, such courses could improve college graduate preparedness for the workforce.

## Book Reviews

**From the Editor . . .**

## Thank you, Lorilee Sandmann

Each year, the *JHEOE* editorial team prepares an annual report for our editorial board and partners that provides an overview of the publication—a sort of "state of the *Journal*," if you will. There is much that goes on behind the scenes to produce four issues of *JHEOE* each year, and as the editorial team wraps up another year of publication, I am particularly reflective about the *Journal's* accomplishments due to some forthcoming changes in our operations and management. So, I must begin by thanking my co-editor Lorilee Sandmann, who will be stepping down from her editorship at the end of this calendar year. This entire issue is dedicated to Lorilee and her many contributions to the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*.

Looking through the *JHEOE* archives over the last 21 years is like looking through a time capsule that captures pivotal moments, ideas, and theories that have shaped the engagement field. Preserved in the pages are the voices of important scholars whose ideas have shaped our understanding of the role of engaged scholarship in higher education. Among those voices, you will frequently find the scholarly contributions of my co-editor and mentor Lorilee Sandmann. Lorilee's scholarly contributions are well known and oft-cited by engaged scholars, and her work has been published in *JHEOE* numerous times. As editor over the last three years, she has also been an advocate and champion for our authors, editorial board members, and the emerging scholars who have received significant time and attention from her as they work to develop their research. On behalf of the editorial team and editorial board, I congratulate Lorilee for her fine leadership of *JHEOE* and particularly thank her for her mentorship, scholarship, and the care she has taken with the *Journal* and its many constituents.

As we look at the state of *JHEOE*, it remains a strong, vibrant, and relevant publication that has attracted new audiences and scholarly voices under Lorilee's leadership, and we are indebted to her. This September, the *Journal's* annual report highlights that

over the last year, *JHEOE* received 191 submissions with an eventual acceptance rate of 17 percent. This represents a staggering 51 percent submission increase over last year. Articles from these four issues have been viewed a total of 8,700 times and downloaded 5,219 times from the *JHEOE* website.

Founded and published by the University of Georgia (UGA) continuously since 1996, the *Journal* still receives tremendous institutional support. However, under Lorilee's leadership, the UGA partnership has expanded to include Public Service and Outreach, UGA Extension, the College of Education, and the Institute of Higher Education, a remarkable example of collaboration and interdisciplinary support for this publication in a time when support for journals has become increasingly difficult. In addition, the *Journal* gained new sponsors with Campus Compact and the Engagement Scholarship Consortium (ESC). *JHEOE* along with the J*ournal of Community Engagement and Scholarship (JCES)* has become the official journal of ESC, and our journals take turns preparing the ESC Special Issue each year. *JHEOE's* volume 22, issue 3 is slated for release in September 2018 and will feature the ESC Special Issue focused on best practices in community engaged scholarship with guest editors Chippewa Thomas and Ralph Foster from Auburn University. These kinds of fruitful collaborations and partnerships are something that Lorilee has emphasized during her editorship.

Currently, *JHEOE* is supported by five Associate Editors, 34 members of the Editorial Review Board, two Managing Editors, and a large pool of guest reviewers and peer-reviewers. As we grapple with such a rapid increase in submissions, we thank our team of associate editors who so brilliantly curate the manuscripts that authors entrust to us, and also thank our reviewers who—any editor will tell you—are one of the most essential components of the publication process. Without quality peer reviews, every manuscript that is eventually published in *JHEOE*, and those that also go on to find homes in other journals, would be significantly diminished in terms of quality. Thanks to Lorilee's attention, *JHEOE* has increased support for reviewers, expanded our pool of reviewers to accommodate the similarly expanded diversity of our submissions, engaged our editorial board in the reviewing process, and in the coming year will roll out a webinar on the scholarship of reviewing authored and presented by Lorilee and other scholars.

Those who have had the privilege of working with Lorilee know that her entire academic career has been devoted to advancing outreach and engagement in higher education, and that she has made enduring contributions that have shaped support for engagement

on many campuses and helped articulate how critical it is for the future of higher education. Her contributions as a scholar, faculty member, consultant, mentor to emerging scholars, and thought leader continue to move our field forward, and she has been a tireless advocate for the important role engaged scholars play in higher education.

Her leadership of *JHEOE* has been equally impressive. During her editorship, she has worked tirelessly to raise the profile of *JHEOE*, expanded access and interest internationally, forged new partnerships, raised standards for reviewing, streamlined the publication process, and helmed the *Journal's* 20th anniversary issue and celebration. She is currently working on a forthcoming edited book based on that 20th anniversary issue.

Behind the scenes, Lorilee has led our editorial team with professionalism and creativity, and has set high standards for not only the scholarship that *JHEOE* publishes, but also the supportive, respectful, and conscientious manner in which we strive to interact with authors, reviewers, and editorial board members. As I have learned from Lorilee over the last year, the role of an editor is similar to a gardener who must tend her plots with care, consistency, and expertise to ensure a healthy harvest.

As a result, this closing issue of *JHEOE* for 2017—and Lorilee's final issue as co-editor—can only be described as a bountiful harvest of scholarship that explores community engagement and engaged scholarship across a diverse spectrum of practices, methods, and contexts. Such a fruitful harvest is a direct result of Lorilee's care and tending of the *Journal* as a place where engaged scholarship and engaged scholars are nurtured and subsequently flourish. We thank you, Lorilee—our master gardener—for your care and tending of our ideas, knowledge, and voices, and for planting so many seeds through your scholarship and leadership that will continue to bear fruit in year to come.

With best regards,
*Shannon O'Brien Wilder*
*Editor*

# REFLECTIVE ESSAYS

# Talking About Service-Learning: Product or Process? Reciprocity or Solidarity?

Joan Clifford

## Abstract

Through an exploration of values of the neoliberal university and critical service-learning, this article explores how associating service-learning with products and relationships based on reciprocity negatively impacts its connection to social justice. By emphasizing the constructs of process and solidarity, instead of products and reciprocity, the understanding of service-learning is more explicitly aligned with social justice outcomes.

*Keywords:* service-learning, reciprocity, solidarity, neoliberalism

## Introduction

Over the last decade in which I have taught service-learning (SL) courses I have seen a shift in perceptions about service that has pushed me to question how I talk about SL with my students. Many students now arrive at the university ready to critique SL for perpetuating a charity model that does not create structural change in society and is distanced from social justice. The formation of ideas and values associated with service-learning is not happening in a vacuum. Students are forming their understanding of service from information received from many sources in society and within academia. In this essay I examine the narratives circulating within the neoliberal university to show the negative impact of associating SL with products. In addition, I address the lack of development of social justice objectives in traditional SL (in comparison with the critical service-learning model) by questioning the practice of reciprocity. This article is an exploration of the need to disrupt the association of service-learning with products and reciprocity, and it proposes a shift to talking about service-learning through the concepts of process and solidarity.

## The Neoliberal Context: Emphasis on Product

There are many ways to define neoliberalism, but this discussion is based on Slaughter & Rhoades's *(2000)* definition of the neoliberal university as one that practices academic capitalism in which students are viewed as raw materials that are transformed into products for the corporate world, an environment in which we see the ascendancy of market values within higher education

and civic engagement. Market-based economy has expanded to market-based societies in which exist the "privatization of the public sphere, the imposition of market principles in all aspects of social life, and a general suspicion of social and political welfare-regulatory programs originating from the state" *(Kliewer, 2013, p. 72)*. Raddon and Harrison *(2015)* state that

> [t]o be a neoliberal citizen is to valorize individualism; to self-identify as a consumer; to naturalize and accept the discipline of competitive markets and their sorting of "winners" and "losers"; to shift away from an earlier generation's conception of the citizen as a rights bearer; and to take up responsibilities for socially determined eventualities such as unemployment or ill health, which are now attributed to the bad choices of individuals. Furthermore, neo-liberal subjects are driven to emulate business entities by becoming more personally innovative, entrepreneurial, and efficient even in areas of life where markets do not operate. *(p. 138)*

The neoliberal context has a devastating effect on students since it "legitimizes and reinforces the pursuit of economic self-interest . . . career skills and credentials" *(Benson, Harkavy, & Hartley, 2005, p. 198)*. We see that the university monetizes student volunteer hours and uses them as a measure of impact, rather than measuring actual impact in the community *(Mitchell, 2014; Stoecker & Beckman, 2009)*. As a result, many SL scholars are concerned that "service-learning experiences reinforce the values and perspectives of neoliberal culture by emphasizing personal over collective agency and treating public life and democracy as extensions of the marketplace" *(Morton & Bergbauer, 2015, p. 19)*. Benson, Harkavy, and Hartley *(2005)* underscore the dangers of the neoliberal university for SL by declaring that a "clear and present danger to the democratic mission of higher education and to American democracy in general also comes from the forces of commodification (education for profit, students as customers, syllabi as content, academics as superstars)" *(p. 196)*. These trends to prioritize skills, credentials, products, and personal agency call into question the motivations, expectations, and practices by students in SL that are tied to social justice.

Kliewer *(2013)* questions how students educated within the neoliberal university embrace justice aims. He proposes that:

> First, if neoliberalism is not recognized and accounted for, it will continue to maintain and reproduce the existing ideological structures that preclude achieving the democratic and justice goals of the civic engagement movement—unjust levels of inequality, disengagement, and disempowerment. Second, if the civic engagement community cannot adequately respond to neoliberal ideology, we risk producing a type of citizen completely defined in relation to a market society, thereby precluding a robust form of democratic engagement in which citizens organize, cooperate, and act outside the bounds of market and economic activity. *(p. 73)*

One effect of neoliberalism in the university is that academia tries to remain politically neutral and distanced from social justice. In the neoliberal paradigm, civic engagement "should be minimally political or even apolitical—for if politics is redefined in market terms as social positioning for private advantage, then service to others and politics do not mix" *(Meens, 2014, p. 47)*. Meens *(2014)* declares that "[r]ecognition of the neoliberal redefinition of citizenship and civic engagement is necessary if the problem is to be confronted and addressed and if the interrelated nature of democracy and justice goals is to be recovered" *(p. 48)*. By remaining apolitical, the student does not embrace one of the fundamental goals of service-learning—to enact social change *(Mitchell, 2008)*. Robinson *(2000)* states, "Practitioners are exceedingly nervous about service-learning curriculums that entail political challenge to the established order, or involve students in taking political sides and creating transformational movement" *(p. 144)*. He warns that SL

> must neglect calls to moderate and thereby accommodate the movement to a broader range of funders and university supporters. Rather, our charge is to grasp what power we can, claim the mantle of the university as the spark and engine of social progress, powerfully advance our political and moral principles, and use this opportunity to educate students on both the possibilities and the strategies of participatory politics. *(p. 155)*

Mitchell *(2008)* identifies "social change orientation, working to redistribute power, and developing authentic relationships" *(p. 62)* as common elements to distinguish critical service-learning

from traditional service-learning. Mitchell *(2008)* declares that critical service-learning is the "next direction of service-learning programs" *(p. 62)*. In contrast to critical service-learning that promotes community-oriented social justice practices, the traditional SL model can reinforce neoliberal values of "personal over collective agency and treating public life and democracy as extensions of the marketplace" *(Morton & Bergbauer, 2015, p. 19)*. Aligning service-learning with social justice takes conscious planning but can lead to students examining their political agency and their justice-oriented commitments *(Mitchell & Coll, 2017)*.

This disassociation with social justice outcomes is seen in the current dominant model of SL, the technical model *(Butin, 2007)*. Within the four models of SL defined by Butin *(2005)*—technical, cultural, political, and antifoundational—the technical one does not develop analysis of social problems, but emphasizes deepening of content knowledge for the course. Consequently, "the technical conceptualization is highly palatable to university administrators because it promotes a type of hyper-pragmatism that avoids power issues and can attract a range of sponsors" *(Cuban & Anderson, 2008, p. 45)*. The concentration in the technical design "shift[s] the focus from addressing the systemic problems of society to developing specific skill sets or volunteer proclivities in a service context" *(Dostilio et al., 2012, p. 28)*. We will look more closely at how Mitchell *(2008)* more broadly articulates the distancing of traditional SL from justice issues; for now, it is important to underscore that she agrees that traditional SL is skewed toward professional skill development. Mitchell states that

> [t]raditional interpretations of service-learning tend to emphasize students, focusing on "preprofessional" experiences (viewing service much like an internship or practicum), and the personal or social development of students (mostly attitudes toward leadership, altruism, and sometimes thoughts or feelings about the people served in the community). *(p. 52)*

Within the neoliberal university, the technical, skill-centered service-learning model positions the experience as a resume builder and a vehicle through which we train students for the professional world. Service-learning is perceived as a "product" that is a building block for career advancement and does not focus on social justice.

Another way that SL functions as a product in the neoliberal university is as a corporate brand, the "kinder face" of the univer-

sity that creates a positive public image by showing "the relevance of the university to community needs" *(Raddon & Harrison, 2015, p. 142)*. The application of SL as a public relations tool means that there is a "strategic use of service-learning for elevating institutional reputations and revenues, and for fundraising" *(Raddon & Harrison, 2015, p. 142)*. Moore *(2014)* proposes reframing engagement "not as a desired product, but as the necessary process through which the community and university interact to strengthen communities at the local and regional level" *(p. 4)*, reflecting a commitment to two-way knowledge flow *(p. 10)*. He states that "[u]niversity leaders must come to understand that the current approach to engagement as outcome has made firm boundaries between universities and communities unworkable, thereby threatening the university's ability to achieve its desired goals" *(p. 10)*. The call to prioritize the process rather than the product is fundamental to the future of SL. We need to engage with the community not for public relations, but for outcomes related to changemaking and relationship building. According to Moore *(2014)*, the university typically positions "community as a place to advance university objectives" rather than sharing how community developers see "the process of interacting equally as important as the outcome of the interactions" *(p. 11)*. How we engage with the community is a defining aspect of SL, and students need to see models of authentic relationships that support systemic change rather than prioritizing counting hours and producing deliverables as measures of their level of engagement.

The final way that we will discuss how community engagement is manifesting itself in higher education in this era of neoliberalism is the growing popularity of social entrepreneurship (SE). Within the neoliberal paradigm "[t]he responsibilities of the state for public services are transferred onto individuals, while the 'entrepreneurship of the self' broadens to encompass social entrepreneurship, the expectation that individuals and businesses will innovate to solve social problems" *(Raddon & Harrison, 2015, p. 139)*. The rise in popularity of SE within community engagement offerings on campuses emphasizes the need to reassess how SL is defined and perceived so that SL remains a robust arm of civic engagement in academia. Students talk about SL and SE in different ways. Scobey *(2015)* proposes that students associate different values with SL and SE. SL is associated with partnerships that identify needs, relationships, cocreation with community, ethics of collaboration, apprenticeship in institutional partnership, and humility, whereas SE is associated with a world with problems to be solved, projects, clients, hero for community, innovation, and hutzpah. The changing

values of each generation impact the interpretation of practices, but it is important to consider why SE is emerging as a more innovative framework for changemaking and work to align SL more explicitly with problem-solving and social transformation. Raddon and Harrison *(2015)* remind us that

> [a]ny given service-learning program could perform contradictory roles within an institution: a program could be co-opted as a form of community–university outreach, while at the same time introducing students to perspectives that challenge the market creed and simultaneously equipping them to be socially enterprising, self-commodifying neo-liberal citizens. *(p. 145)*

It is up to the practitioner to consider the representation of SL in the course design, the type of measurement used to identify engagement, and the narrative about SL to determine whether they are perpetuating or disrupting the neoliberal paradigm.

## Should We Talk About Reciprocity or Solidarity?

Reciprocity is a frequently articulated key component to SL, but has it become code for an exchange of goods and services that reinforces unequal practices? In conversation about a service-learning student's work, a local volunteer coordinator expressed concern about how the student organized her interactions with a refugee family based on the student's need to interview them for her course's final project. The nonprofit organization had invited the student to build a supportive relationship with the family as they transitioned into U.S. life, yet the student fixated on the desired product to be developed through her service, not the relationship. Have the student and the family engaged in a reciprocal relationship? Knowing that the neoliberal construct promotes commodification and the push to think about service as product, it is important to consider ways of talking about SL relationships other than reciprocity.

Stoecker and Beckman *(2009)* suggest shifting from a service model of individual serving individual to a more collective effort grounded in a community development approach that is "fundamentally about relationships" *(p. 4)*. They stress that "[q]uestions are always better than answers at relationship-building" *(p. 5)* and that academics need to build their listening skills in order to form long-term, community-driven partnerships. Finding a balance of being open to dialogue, participating in active listening,

and planning for a semester course is difficult. If faculty want to get more buy-in from students in SL, then they need to prioritize establishing, maintaining, and growing relationships in the community. Reciprocity based on a product-centered relationship creates a negative cycle of service. Instead of an environment in which deliverables and checklists of outcomes define success, how can reciprocity be connected to the process of building a relationship with the community?

In order to clearly define relationship building as the backbone of SL, is it possible to put more emphasis on solidarity instead of reciprocity? Solidarity has been defined as "unity (as of a group or class) that produces or is based on community of interests, objectives, and standards" *(Solidarity, n.d.)*. Although it is not a new concept to SL, solidarity is not regularly present within definitions or practices. Mitchell *(2008)* expounds on the importance of solidarity in critical service-learning:

> Expressions of solidarity represent a dimension of authenticity because they demonstrate that we will continue to work for social change and social justice once the service-learning experience has concluded. It is the recognition that the social problems and structural inequities that create and maintain those problems belong to all of us and require all of us for change to occur. *(pp. 61–62)*

Heldman *(2011)* discusses differences in service work oriented to charity versus solidarity that highlight issues of power and privilege, stating that "with charity work, volunteers conceive of themselves as being above the person or group they are assisting" *(p. 36)*. Students "see their assistance as one-sided instead of recognizing the benefits they receive in the exchange (e.g. feeling good about themselves, learning from the people they are assisting, living a more meaningful life)" *(p. 36)*. Heldman suggests a reorientation to solidarity work, in which

> volunteers (a) see themselves as equal to the people they are assisting, (b) are able to see how privilege shapes their place in the social/economic hierarchy, (c) see a part of themselves in the person they are working with, (d) recognize they are working for the betterment of both parties, and (e) understand they are working for their own liberation from systems of supremacy that

they unconsciously uphold through their everyday actions. *(p. 36)*

Another critic of SL, Renner *(2011)*, echoes the practice of orienting SL with solidarity. He calls for us

> to create a new world premised upon justice, democracy, and liberation. Service-learning can be an educational tool to further these ends provided we are prepared to transcend the disciplinary boundaries, move from a language and philosophy of projects to partnerships, and are ready to leverage our relative privilege in order to live lives of solidarity—that is, humbling our individual selves for a more communal experience and recognizing that intimacy of giving our lives, our work, to others. *(pp. 110–111)*

This type of deconstruction of hierarchies is mirrored in Tapia's *(2012)* exploration of the community as "co-protagonist" within *servicio solidario* (service in solidarity), the form of SL that Tapia identifies in Latin America. Tapia *(2012)* states that solidarity is defined by "actions [that] are developed *in conjunction with* the community and not *for* it" *(p. 193; italics in original)* and that solidarity is "social engagement linked in with transforming a situation and the quest for a fair and equitable society" *(p. 197)*. This integration into the community with the democratization of partnerships demands that we change our orientation from thinking of service as product to perceiving service through processes or relationships.

Looking at how reciprocity and solidarity have been discussed in SL previously provides us with insights about new directions for future conversations. Jacoby and Associates *(1996)* identified SL within a "philosophy of reciprocity, which implies a concerted effort to move from charity to justice, from service to the elimination of need" *(p. 9)*. Here we see generativity-oriented reciprocity supporting the goals for transformation of society. Dostilio et al. *(2012)* established a framework for categorizing the different ways *reciprocity* is referenced in civic engagement literature. They identified three different orientations toward reciprocity: exchange, influence, and generativity. Exchange-oriented reciprocity "does not invite knowledge of the others with whom one interacts and thus may allow anonymity when such is not desired" due to the emphasis on outcomes for stakeholders *(p. 27)*. The influence orientation requires that "one must take the personal and interpersonal

risks associated with trying to understand difference and allowing it to meaningfully influence the process, interactions, outcomes, and meaning-making of the collaboration" *(p. 27)*. This process can take considerable time and weaken the possible outcomes. Finally, the generativity-oriented conception of reciprocity prizes cocreation of knowledge and the ideal of mutual transformation. Davis, Kliewer, and Nicolaides *(2017)* state that "[m]utual sharing of power that produces generative reciprocity enables all stakeholders to join together synergistically to build capacities and produce outcomes that none could otherwise produce separately" *(p. 50)*. Similar to how generative reciprocity highlights the cocreation process of SL, transformative reciprocity *(Jameson, Clayton, & Jaeger, 2010; Stanlick & Sell, 2016)* is defined by cocreation. Only when reciprocity is defined beyond the exchange of product and identified as a transformative process can it affect the best practices of SL and produce an impact like that of solidarity.

## Talking the Talk and Walking the Walk

In general, students who have become habituated to the traditional or transactional SL model will resist changing from checklists of expectations and practicing reciprocity based on products. Within the neoliberal model students "make a difference" through concrete deliverables and predetermined quantities of service hours. Destabilizing the traditional SL model by making more room for relationship building will be challenging, but it will move us closer to the ideals set forth in critical SL to foment our connections to social justice—and to reaffirm our collaboration *with*, not *for*, the community.

Ensuring that this topic is included in the student orientations for service in the community, as well as in reflection activities, is essential to students' understanding of service-learning. In addition to creating opportunities for students to examine their practices and beliefs, it is imperative that faculty reassess how students and community partners are involved in the process of building relationships. Faculty should consider how the design of the SL experience may impact student perceptions. For example, if faculty preplan the logistics of a SL experience with the community partner, the students will have more difficulty seeing themselves as central to the service-learning relationship. If the students do not participate in any decision-making with the community partner and do not feel ownership of their work in the community, they may perceive the experience as simply completing service hours, rather than building a relationship. With more collaboration

between students and community partners in the development of the relationship, the students can identify more with the concept of solidarity since they will be more integrated into the process, rather than anticipating prenegotiated benchmarks of their work. It would be helpful for students and community partners to also participate in the design of assessments for the service-related components of the curriculum since the measurement of engagement should be as transparent, representative, and reflective as possible.

A blockade to transforming transactional SL models is the semester model. Because of the limit of time for interactions with the community, it may be difficult to sustain the relationship building that is intrinsic to solidarity. Creating long-term placements by sequencing courses or having students commit to service past the one enrolled semester could offer enhanced opportunities for students to understand their work in solidarity with the community. Engagement in the process of relationship building could also be enhanced if students who have been involved with a community explain their relationship to newly involved students. The student–community relationship might also be extended by enabling students who have completed the course to work in future course iterations as assistants or TAs. The bottom line is to encourage students to embrace solidarity as a way to reorient negative practices of reciprocity.

To be more deliberate with connections to social justice, and to better support transformative learning, faculty need to reconsider the role of politics in the classroom. The conflation of nonpartisan with nonpolitical is reinforcing the traditional SL model and contributing to the depoliticization of citizenship. How we embrace the fact that education is a political undertaking is key to the future of SL. Giroux *(2012)* provides a clear explanation of the differences between politicizing pedagogy and political pedagogy. The first "insists wrongly that students think as we do," whereas the second "teaches students by example and through dialogue about the importance of power, social responsibility and the importance of taking a stand (without standing still) while rigorously engaging the full range of ideas about an issue" *(Giroux, 2012, para. 19).* Teaching SL as a political pedagogy will support social change and structural transformation.

SL practitioners need to talk about reciprocity, solidarity, product, and process in order to close the distance between traditional SL and critical SL. This conversation must articulate the values that align with ethical and authentic relationships that build capacity for changemaking and open dialogue about social justice.

A new direction in the discussion about SL must be advanced since "the dilution and radicalization within both service-learning and social justice education, as contradictory pressures, have created an empty center that cannot be filled except by a reframing of how we talk about both" *(Butin, 2008, p. 78)*. Faculty have the chance to discuss these issues with students and thus to challenge students to be open to the process of building relationships in solidarity with the community and to work toward social justice. Talking about process rather than product, and solidarity instead of reciprocity, will change the narrative about service-learning and build better relationships that lead to personal and community transformation.

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## About the Author

**Joan Clifford** is an assistant professor of the practice in the Romance Studies Department at Duke University and director of the Community-Based Language Initiative in Duke Service-Learning. Her research includes the use of technology in language acquisition, intercultural communicative competence, and best practices in community engagement. She earned her Ph.D. in Spanish from the University of Virginia.

# RESEARCH ARTICLES

# *Whose Job Is It, Anyway? The Place of Public Engagement in the Liberal Arts College*

Luke D. Christie, Paul A. Djupe, Sean Patrick O'Rourke, and Elizabeth S. Smith

## Abstract

The calls for academics to engage the public have grown, motivated by concerns for civic health and for maintaining public and political support for higher education and academic research. Whatever its value to the public sphere, there is still considerable uncertainty about whether and how public engagement counts–is it valued by colleagues and institutions in promotion and tenure decisions? We sought to provide evidence to assess the value of public engagement with experimental and observational methods set in a survey of faculty from seven liberal arts colleges. We find that public engagement is valued and engaged by these faculty, with variation observed by institution, mode of public engagement, and college division (arts faculty the most supportive and science faculty the least). We recommend institutions communicate clearly how they value public engagement; until that point, academics should tread carefully as they seek public audiences and partnerships.

*Keywords*: public engagement, liberal arts, experiment, survey

> *A Crucible Moment calls on the higher education community...to embrace civic learning and democratic engagement as an undisputed educational priority for all of higher education, public and private, two-year and four-year....But...civic learning is still too often random rather than progressively mapped by the institution.... Academic professionals spearheading civic investments too frequently go unrewarded, and, in some cases, are even penalized." (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, pp. 2, 41)*

## Introduction

*A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future (2012)*, served as a clarion call to postsecondary institutions to reclaim what the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement unapologetically identified

as "[the institutions'] longstanding mission to educate students for informed, engaged citizenship" *(p. v)*. The call came amidst a flood of concern from educators, employers, and government agencies about the nation's declining civic health. Charles N. Quigley *(2010, p. 1)* wrote, "During the past decade or so, educational policy and practice appear to have focused more and more upon developing the 'worker' at the expense of developing the 'citizen'. " At the same time—and, arguably, as a result—the role of "citizen" in public life has changed from that of producer and "director" of public institutions to mere consumer of their goods and services *(Matthews, 2006, p. x)*.

In response to this "civic recession," higher education has faced increased pressure to intensify its efforts to prepare students for democratic citizenship by actively engaging the communities in which they are situated. From students, who, according to one national survey, "want their colleges to foster a stronger institutional emphasis on contributing to the larger community," to the U.S. Department of Education, which commissioned *A Crucible Moment*, stakeholders across the spectrum have been urging institutions of higher learning to reinvest in a more collaborative educational model—one in which public engagement is not only the norm but a central component of curricula and partnerships between town and gown *(National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. 5)*. A considerable number of institutions have heeded this call: 361 campuses were designated with the Carnegie Foundation's Community Engagement Classification in 2015, up from just 121 in 2010 *(NERCHE, 2015, Classified Campuses section)*. Nevertheless, 361 is a far cry from the goal set forth in *A Crucible Moment* that "all of higher education" make civic engagement an educational priority.

The sluggish response to the engagement call might be attributed to a number of factors, including an institution's size, financial standing, classification as public or private, religious affiliation, administrative leadership, and governance structure. We consider one factor here: whether or not institutions' tenure, promotion, and reward systems emphasize and reward faculty public engagement. As evidenced by the excerpt from *A Crucible Moment* quoted above, the traditional reward and promotion system at most institutions is largely seen as failing to reward scholarly engagement with the public and, therefore, rational academics have little incentive to engage the public. Although faculty at R1, research-intensive institutions may be particularly constrained by traditional expectations for scholars, we suspect that other institutions of higher

education may potentially provide more opportunities for scholarly public engagement. In this article, we investigate in particular how *liberal arts colleges* and their faculty evaluate engaging the public. We provide a brief historic overview of the purpose of institutions of higher education, discuss the specific aspects of teaching and learning in the liberal arts tradition through which such institutions lend themselves to engaging the public, and then provide the results of a survey with an embedded experiment conducted among liberal arts faculty members on the role and importance of public engagement in their professional life.

## The Purpose of the Academy, and the Liberal Arts Tradition of Public Engagement

In his book *Save the World on Your Own Time,* Stanley Fish *(2008)* touches on one of the American academy's greatest conundrums—that of identifying to whom, if to any particular group or interest, it is properly beholden. Fish warns against catering to "interests intent on deflecting the university from its search for truth and setting it on another path" *(p. 99)*. At the same time, Fish seeks to differentiate the values and standards of the academy from those shaping other occupational enterprises—notably claiming that intellectual work is an exception to the ethic that all labor should be aimed at improving democratic society and culture. Fish is particularly concerned about academics who feel compelled to create good citizens, especially engaged ones who respect the values of diversity and moral engagement with society, rather than to focus on teaching the material and relevant modes of inquiry. Public engagement as a way to model good citizenship and as an effort to shape thinking and values among students and the public, he argues, is not an academic's job and too often steps dangerously over the line between what he sees as legitimate "academic activity" and illegitimate "partisan political activity" *(p. 16)*.

Conversely, others, such as Andrew Delbanco *(2012)* and Derek Bok *(2003)*, point to the academy's rich historical commitment to public service as a means for enjoining the university with the collective societal goal of (American) democracy. Contemporary arguments in favor of public engagement often point as far back as ancient Greece, to the rhetorical learning tradition, which, along with the philosophical tradition, served as a progenitor of the liberal arts approach. The rhetorical tradition, engendered by Isocrates and refined by Cicero, emphasizes the development of wholesome character and the "primacy of inter-subjectivity over private thought"

*(Schwehn, 2012, p. 33; Kimball, 1986).* It "stressed knowledge for the sake of action in the world of public life" *(Schwehn, 2012, p. 33).*

The American college has long embraced the rhetorical imperative of education for the purpose of public action. The colonial college of the mid-17th century—to which all institutions, regardless of present-day Carnegie classifications, can trace their origins—grew out of an increased demand for trained individuals to serve as civic and religious leaders to, in other words, meet what were then the greatest public needs *(Boyer, 1997; Delbanco, 2012).* The colonial college mission of training young men to be informed public leaders evolved to support the experiment of American democracy, the success of which to this day depends upon a highly informed citizenry, a point agreed upon by Thomas Jefferson and John Adams both. In discussing what he calls education for "inclusive democratic citizenship," Delbanco *(2012, p. 29)* wrote: "It should be obvious that the best chance we have to maintain a functioning democracy is a citizenry that can tell the difference between demagoguery and responsible arguments." The ability to discern such a difference is greatly expanded by an understanding of the various historical, philosophical, and classical bodies of knowledge that inform the American conception of democracy. In other words, understanding democracy is assisted by crossing disciplinary boundaries, adopting a generalist rather than a specialist spirit, becoming the fox rather than the hedgehog *(Berlin, 1953).*

The liberal arts commitment to robust general education is aimed at the cultivation of this generalist spirit. Liberal arts faculty must foster it in their own classroom instruction, broadening their highly specialized graduate training for a nonspecially trained undergraduate audience. This task is not altogether easy, a point captured by the cochair of a Harvard committee that failed in its commission to reform the institution's core curriculum when he said: "We are just not accustomed to thinking about education in general terms. It's not our specialty" *(Delbanco, 2012, p. 91).* Liberal arts faculty who embrace the challenges of general education cast themselves not as specialists in their particular fields of study but as intellectuals, or those whom Jack Miles *(1999)* claims "must write from the full breadth of a general education that has not ended at graduation or been confined to a discipline" *(pp. 309–310).* Effective general educators, then, may be best suited for public engagement, which, like general education courses, requires a broadening of scope. Conversely, those struggling to "[think] about education in general terms" might consider using public engagement to help fine-tune their classroom generalization skills *(Delbanco, 2012, p. 91).*

Regardless of one's avenue into public engagement—whether approached as an extension of one's existing classroom skills or as a means for improving deficiencies—by assuming a public role, one should ultimately seek to enhance the general education experience of undergraduates, the primary beneficiaries of a liberal arts education. That higher education continues to undervalue and underserve the undergraduate is one of the greatest criticisms of the "commodified university," in which institutions are seen as giving themselves over to "market-driven managerial influence" *(Lears, 2003, p. 23)*.

How, then, does one reconcile the merits of public engagement—its capacity to extend education for democratic citizenship beyond the walls of the classroom, its usefulness as an exercise in generalization, and so on—with its potential ills, principally its tendency, according to Fish *(2008)*, to detract from proper undergraduate instruction or to veer inappropriately into the realm of partisan political activity? The key lies partly in how one approaches and reflects on public engagement, a question we revisit in the following discussion of tenure, promotion, and merit evaluation standards. It also lies in the existence and maintenance of accountability measures. The various forms of documentation and observation required by most institutional evaluation committees, including student teaching evaluations, peer-observed teaching, student rank and tenure committees, and the required submission of course materials such as syllabi, writing or project assignments, and reading lists, help to caution faculty whose public engagement is seen to be detracting from their academic scholarship or teaching *(B. Dobkin, personal communication, May 18, 2013)*. Too, additional accountability measures can be developed to gauge the effect of faculty public engagement, particularly forms integrated into students' coursework (e.g., service-learning and community-based participatory research), on student learning outcomes. Indeed, if institutions are to expect students to graduate with certain civic competencies, as *A Crucible Moment* recommends they should, then they will need tools for assessing student civic literacy, which necessarily means assessing service-learning and other teaching models of engagement.

When public engagement on the part of the professoriate is determined by accountability measures to be enhancing the general education experience of undergraduates, it aligns with the liberal arts tradition. The ideal of lateral learning—or learning that is multidirectional, rather than unilaterally transmitted from professor to student *(see Delbanco, 2012)*—and the community emphasis of

the rhetorical tradition both contribute to the ongoing mission of many liberal arts practitioners today to open up the liberal arts experience to a wider portion of the population, especially to socio-economic and minority groups that have been or to some extent still are excluded from many liberal arts institutions. At present, students from low-income families constitute the most underrepresented group at private, 4-year colleges, and efforts to counteract the myriad financial disadvantages—and achievement disadvantages that reflect financial deficiencies—abound. In the meantime, many are missing out on the richness of intellect and character development fostered by the liberal arts tradition. Engagement by those inside the academy with those currently outside helps to advance the mission of bringing education to more people, albeit in a small way.

In sum, we believe that the liberal arts tradition and those who are products and/or practitioners of it have much to offer the public by extending the bodies of knowledge that inform American democracy into present-day practice as well as by offering liberal arts scholars fresh methods for improving and enlightening their undergraduate instruction. We are not alone: a number of institutions, including Tulane University, Portland State University, Worcester Polytechnic University, University of Alabama–Birmingham, California State University–Chico, and University of California–Irvine, have embraced higher education's "essential civic mission," integrating curricular programs that teach civic responsibility by actively engaging students in community and project-based learning *(National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, pp. viii, 52–57)*. Senior administrators at still more institutions have sought to prioritize public engagement in their institutions' programming by promoting dialogue about its challenges and opportunities on their campuses, establishing public engagement centers, and evaluating institutional support for faculty who undertake public engagement scholarship *(Bailey, Muse, Todd, Wilson, & Francko, 2013)*. Finally, institutional efforts to elevate public engagement as a higher education priority have given rise to coalition efforts such as the task force that produced *A Crucible Moment*, the multiple journals dedicated to publishing scholarship about public engagement issues, and the multi-institution Imagining America Tenure Team Initiative. Thus, our reading of the literature confirms that public engagement can be an appropriate role for the liberal arts professoriate, but it can hardly be said that this is the universal view; it is perhaps telling that most of the

examples above are non-liberal-arts institutions. Clearly, then, Fish is but one prominent voice reminding us that not all agree.

## Faculty Tenure, Promotion, and Merit Evaluation Standards

How does our provisional conclusion that public engagement may be a worthy and positive aim of the liberal arts professoriate compare to present-day academy perceptions of public engagement, as revealed by standards for tenure, promotion, and merit evaluation? Any discussion of tenure, promotion, and merit evaluation standards must necessarily be framed by two principal questions, the foremost of which concerns which activities are to be evaluated. A review of literature evaluating the present state of the faculty reward system suggests loose general agreement both within academic departments and across departments and institutions as to general criteria used to evaluate activities in three categories: teaching, scholarship, and service. The evident consensus is that basic research followed by publication in top-tier, refereed journals is viewed with the weightiest consideration and, in the majority of cases, as the most important criterion for both tenure and promotion *(e.g., Green, 2008, p. 122; Kasten, 1984, pp. 506–507; & Rothgeb, 2011, p. 574; Stanton et al., 2007, p. 10).*

Teaching is generally viewed as the second most important criterion, still receiving a significant weight in the tenure evaluation process. Kasten *(1984)* writes that "adequate teaching is a necessary but not sufficient condition for tenure" *(p. 507)*, adding that tenure candidates who were exemplary researchers and "inadequate teachers" would often lead to a departmental split at decision time. Similarly, to some degree demonstrated teaching excellence can offset a sufficient but not exceptional research record, particularly at liberal arts institutions, which "seek those who have the potential to become luminous teachers" *(Deardorff et al., 2001, pp. 856–857)*. Even at liberal arts colleges and universities, however, "no one should expect to receive tenure or be promoted without publishing and being professionally active" *(Deardorff et al., 2001, p. 856)*.

Finally, service, like teaching, is expected but not sufficient for achieving tenure status. Unlike teaching, a candidate's service record has very little counterbalancing power. In their study of factors influencing both departmental decisions to deny tenure and higher level decisions to reverse positive departmental tenure recommendations, Marshall and Rothgeb *(2011)* report that "com-

mittee service and community and professional service . . . have no apparent association with either denial or reversal" *(p. 574).*

Few reports on tenure, promotion, and merit evaluation standards break down general requirements into specific indicators. For instance, "service," when broken down at all, typically includes activities such as service on university committees; membership and leadership in regional, national, and international professional organizations; and consulting *(Park & Riggs, 1993, p. 75).* Only in rare instances is community or civic service included, and instances in which "community service" is further broken down into individual activities are rarer still.

The question of which activities are evaluated must be considered alongside the question of how those activities are categorized. In reports where public engagement activities (e.g., curating museum exhibits, giving a public lecture, or consultation for government or media officials) are mentioned, they are largely categorized as service activities of tertiary (or lesser) importance. Varying efforts to change evaluation standards for public engagement activities are shaped primarily by differing views as to whether or not public engagement activities *ought to be* categorized as service. Some scholars support the status quo, maintaining that any activity that engages a public beyond the classroom or profession should indeed be evaluated as service. Other scholars suggest a reciprocal relationship between teaching and public engagement. In an article reclaiming the radicalism of the liberal arts tradition, Lears *(2003)* wrote:

> Professors are constantly berating themselves and being berated for withdrawing into the insular world of scholarship, for not connecting with the real world. The real world is right in front of us, in the classroom; it is composed of students, 99 percent of whom have no intention of entering the academy themselves. They are a nonacademic audience, and they require us, however implicitly and imperfectly, to become public intellectuals. *(p. 27)*

In Lears's view, teaching itself is a form of public engagement; because undergraduate students are not a narrow academic audience, but rather an audience defined by a multitude of interests, goals, and futures, teaching undergraduates must be approached from the generalist ideal embodied by Miles's *(1999)* intellectual. Carroll Seron *(2002)* makes a similar comparison when she dis-

cusses the responsibility of teachers "to engage the public in [their] classrooms, especially in undergraduate classes" *(p. 22)*. It follows, then, that if teaching students is a form of public engagement, other forms of public engagement might also be considered part of a professor's teaching dossier.

A final, growing group of scholars proffers that public engagement should in fact be considered a form of scholarship. Ernest Boyer *(1997)* offered the most comprehensive definition of a so-called scholarship of engagement, or what he called the scholarship of application. The scholarship of application encompasses a continuum of scholarly service activities in which scholars engage their specialized knowledge and skills in addressing relevant social needs. As Boyer wrote, this service, when "tied directly to one's specialized field of knowledge and [related] to . . . professional activity . . . is serious, demanding work, requiring the rigor—and the accountability—traditionally associated with research activities" *(p. 22)*. The engagement of applicative scholarship fosters a two-way interaction between theory and practice, enabling theory to inform and renew practice and vice versa *(Boyer, 1997, p. 23)*. Boyer's multidimensional approach to scholarship has been adapted by scholars in and for a variety of disciplines. For instance, Grigsby and Thorndyke *(2011)* described the scholarship of application as it relates to academic medicine, citing as examples such activities as "community-based participatory research, the global health movement, patient safety practices, and quality improvement initiatives" *(p. 128)*. and Khanna *(2010)* comparably wrote of applied anthropology, or "community-based and engaged scholarly endeavors" *(p. 648)*. The idea, originating with Boyer, that scholarship should exist on a continuum has become especially popular among public engagement champions. As Ellison and Eatman *(2008)* put it in the Imagining America Tenure Team Initiative report, *Scholarship in Public: Knowledge Creation and Tenure Policy in the Engaged University*,

> The term continuum has become pervasive because it does useful meaning-making work: it is *inclusive* of many sorts and conditions of knowledge. It resists embedded hierarchies by assigning *equal value* to inquiry of different kinds. Inclusiveness implies choice: once a continuum is established, a faculty member may, without penalty, locate herself or himself at any point. *(p. ix; emphases in original)*

Ellison and Eatman make painfully clear that faculty, particularly untenured and minority faculty, depend on institutional support when taking on public engagement work but often find it lacking. The continuum approach they advocate seeks to address this problem by legitimizing as scholarship and rewarding the many ways in which faculty utilize their academic expertise.

Pervasive as it is, the scholarly continuum approach has yet to become the industry norm, and public engagement has suffered as a result. Echoing the quote from *A Crucible Moment* at the beginning of this article, anthropologist Jeremy Sabloff *(2011)* blamed a competitive job market and the imbalanced priorities of academia for the denigration of scholarly engagement with the public:

> The competition for university jobs and the institutional pressures to publish in enough quantity—particularly in peer-reviewed journals—has led to the academic devaluation of communication with the general public. Such activities do not count or, even worse, count against the candidate. *(p. 411)*

Ironically, while the "institutional pressures" identified by Sabloff *(2011)* put a strain on "communication with the general public," the publishing requirements conflict with other workload demands. In his study of the relative importance of teaching, scholarship, and service in tenure and promotion decisions within social work education, Robert Green *(2008)* wrote:

> Although scholarship is more important for purposes of evaluation than are teaching and service, it appears that a majority of faculty members are required to fulfill their primary responsibility only after completion of their secondary (teaching) and tertiary responsibilities. *(p. 126)*

The underrecognition of the scholarship of application and the incongruity between tenure and workload demands may discourage many faculty from taking part in cross-disciplinary synthesis and public engagement work to the point that they significantly shift their commitment back to work that is rewarded by the academy, namely traditional forms of scholarship and teaching (see, e.g., *Few, Piercy, and Stremmel, 2007*).

# Methodology

To better gauge the present landscape of faculty involvement with and institutional support for public engagement at liberal arts colleges, we administered a survey to faculty at seven liberal arts colleges throughout the United States (the survey can be found here: *https://paul-djupe.squarespace.com/s/Public_Engagement.docx*). In this survey, we were interested in discovering faculty perceptions of both how public engagement activities *are* currently evaluated in the tenure and promotion system at their liberal arts institution as well as how they felt such activities *should* be evaluated in the tenure and promotion process. Public engagement activities were defined broadly as activities that engaged the public and included work in *one's area of public expertise* (emphasis in the instructions), such as writing op-eds, giving public lectures, maintaining a professional blog, and advising government officials about public policy.

Moreover, we aimed to gain a behavioral measure (bestowing reward) of public engagement through the use of a survey experiment regarding a fictional candidate up for tenure. Our goal in composing this candidate's dossier was to pitch a marginal candidate so that any boost from public engagement would not be limited by ceiling or floor effects. The candidate in the control condition, either Mary or Martin Jones (we varied the candidate's gender),

> is an assistant professor of Sociology at your college who is up for tenure. Jones has been rated a competent teacher by students and peers, which is an improvement from when she was first hired. Since her appointment, she has presented several papers at regional sociology conferences, amounting to 1 every year and a half. She has published one of those papers—a solo authored article in a mid-tier, peer reviewed journal (impact factor = .73). Jones has served as advisor to several student groups and has served on one university-wide committee.

We then varied the type of public engagement activity that Professor Jones had performed and asked respondents to evaluate whether their particular institution's faculty status committee (or its equivalent) would view such activities favorably for tenure and in what category (scholarship, teaching, or service):

- Jones maintains a blog with regular posts about inequality that is well subscribed; a few of her posts have been repub-

lished at *Huffington Post* (a well-known news and com-
mentary website), and two op-eds have appeared in major
metropolitan newspapers, including one in the *New York
Times* [labeled "news" below].

- Jones is frequently invited to give public lectures on the
topic of inequality at the local Rotary club meetings and
has been invited twice to speak at a Smithsonian speaker
series on culture and community that aired on C-Span
["lectures"].

- Jones is very involved in working closely with the com-
munity on the issue of economic inequality, and her stu-
dents' work with impoverished communities as part of her
Introduction to Sociology course service-learning require-
ment has resulted in both local and national awards and
accolades ["service-learning"].

The random introduction of these conditions allows us to
assess whether each public engagement package adds value to the
tenure case above the "fundamentals" in the control condition, how
they are counted (do they count as research, teaching, or service?),
and whether they add value differently by candidate gender. The
experiment is a 2 x 4 factorial design, as we vary candidate gender
and offer four versions of the candidate's record. Participants were
randomly assigned to a condition, and randomization was suc-
cessful—there are no systematic differences across cells in respon-
dent partisanship, gender, rank, or institution.

## Results—Tenure Experiment

Our goal for pitching a marginal candidate was achieved, as
the results in Figure 1 show. When asked how likely it was that the
candidate would achieve tenure on a scale from 1 (very unlikely) to
7 (very likely), the control condition (without any public engage-
ment) average was a 3.15 (65% of the responses were 1–3). Figure
1 shows how the average likelihood of tenure changed when the
three other versions of public engagement were added (control-
ling for the institution). In the "news" condition, the mean tenure
score jumps up to 3.94—a statistically significant difference
($p < .01$) compared to the control. The other conditions caused the
average tenure likelihood to increase as well, though not as signifi-
cantly—to 3.53 in the "lectures" condition ($p = .06$) and 3.46 in the
"service-learning" condition ($p = .39$). At least given this candidate,
a program of engagement in the popular (and traditional) media
appears to provide a net benefit, as does providing public lectures,

whereas service-learning appears to add little benefit to the tenure case.

**Figure 1. Effects of Public Engagement Activities on the Perceived Likelihood of the Candidate's Gaining Tenure**
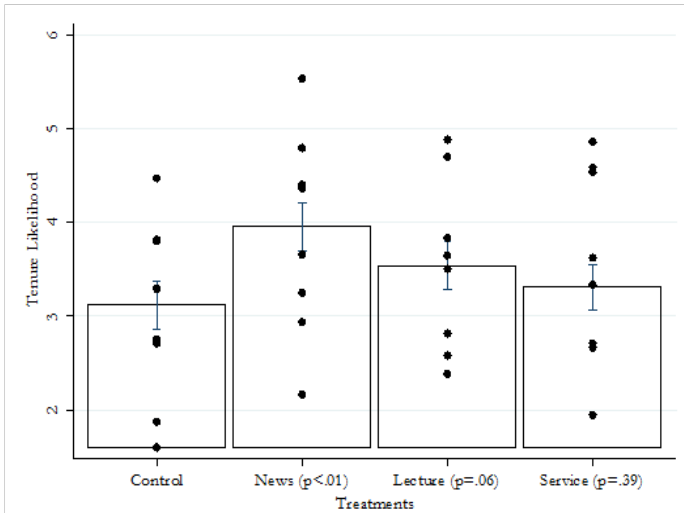


*Note: The bars show the sample average score evaluating the perceived likelihood of tenure for the four different candidates (there were no gender differences). The capped lines show 95% confidence intervals. The p values in the x axis labels describe whether the score was significantly different from the control (3.15); the news mean is 3.94, the lecture mean is 3.53, and the service mean is 3.46. The dots show the school average scores.*

The black dots in the figure show institutional variance in support for the candidate. It is clear that standards are quite different across these seven liberal arts colleges. At just one is the control candidate perceived likely to gain tenure. That shifts to several schools that perceive the candidate as at least modestly likely to achieve a positive tenure decision when public engagement activities are added. There is more movement when those activities are related to the national mass media.

This conclusion shifts if we consider a different question—whether the individual respondent would vote to tenure the candidate. Those results, shown in Figure 2, indicate more robust and significant ($p \leq .01$) effects of public engagement. Each form of public engagement increases the likelihood that the respondent would vote to tenure the candidate (compared to the control). The control candidate has the support of only 20% of sample faculty, whereas support doubles in each public engagement condition. The black dots in the figure show the institutional variance in support

for this candidate, and it is considerable. This candidate has no chance at some institutions and is likely to pass the bar at others. Each consistently shows some positive movement in response to the public engagement activities, however.

**Figure 2. Effects of Public Engagement Activities on the Respondent's Tenure Vote**
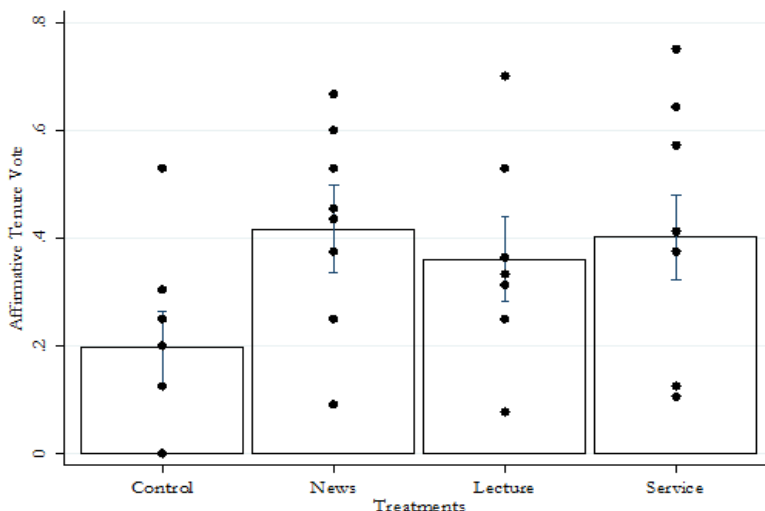


*Note: All treatment effects (the bars) are significantly different from the control (p ≤ .01). The capped lines show 95% confidence intervals. The dots show the school average scores.*

The lessons are likely several. There is a disjuncture between perceptions of institutional treatment and individual attitudes toward the fictional candidate. This disjuncture could be the result of an actual division or may reflect uncertainty about how the candidate would be treated (later analysis will show just how much uncertainty there is). However, this may also reflect efforts toward conflict avoidance among individual respondents. Considerable research indicates that people try to avoid providing controversial opinions or simply provide an opinion in line with society's leanings and what the respondent believes the researcher wants to hear. The truth is likely a mixture of uncertainty and avoidance. We suspect it is not a result of a disjuncture in individual versus institutional treatment, given the widespread agreement on how most activities should be treated (as we will see shortly).

The other treatment varied the gender of the candidate. The perceived likelihood of gaining tenure or receiving a given respondent's vote for tenure was not different for male and female candi-

dates across the treatments (results not shown). We then followed up to see how respondents counted the public engagement activities in the treatments. Those assessments are broken out in Figure 3, which also shows any differences in interpretation of public engagement by women and by men. Each bar shows a proportion of the sample that counted the public engagement activities mentioned in the treatment (news, lectures, or service-learning) as either research (panel 1), teaching (panel 2), or service (panel 3). Respondents could choose multiple categories, so the bars may not sum to 100 across the panels. Roughly three fifths of the sample counted the public engagement activities as service, and those amounts do not shift in statistically significant ways across the treatments. News is counted as service at the same rate as public lectures and service-learning. Not surprisingly, the service-learning treatment garners a higher proportion of ratings as teaching (panel 2) and is less likely to be counted as research (panel 1). Throughout, there are small, insignificant differences in how the public engagements of men and women are treated. The exceptions are in the service treatment—they are marginally more likely to be counted as research ($p = .16$) and service ($p = .08$) for women. But the lack of distinguishable results throughout corresponds to the tenure ratings—attitudes toward male faculty are the same as those toward female faculty in this sample.

**Figure 3. How Are the Public Engagement Treatments Counted? By Candidate Gender**
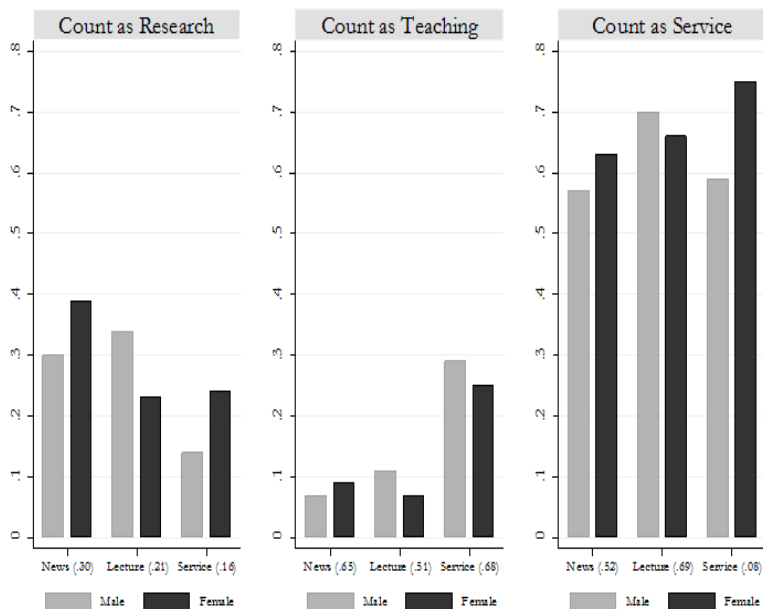


Note: The figure shows the proportions counting the news, lecture, and service treatments as research, teaching, or service, by gender of the candidate. For example, the first couplet of bars shows that when given the "news" treatment, nearly 40% of respondents counted it as "research" when conducted by the female candidate for tenure (black bar) compared to the 30% who rated it as research for the male candidate (gray bar). This difference was not significant ($p = .30$).

## Support for Public Engagement

Now we move from the experiment to traditional survey questions about respondent faculty members' degree of public engagement, as well as their support for it. We asked about 13 different activities that cover a wide range of ways faculty could (arguably) engage the public in line with their expertise. Figure 4 shows the proportion of respondents who said they engaged in each activity at least once in the past year (the survey actually captured the number of times they performed each activity in the past year, which we collapse to 0 or 1 for this analysis). The average faculty member engaged in 2.5 of these activities, though the distribution is heavily skewed toward 0. Just over 40% engaged in none of them, and only 9% in more than six of them.

Figure 4 shows the proportion engaging in each type of activity—the sample mean is shown as a black diamond, and the

institutional proportions are shown as gray dots. The most common were public lectures, consulting, and tutoring; the least common were museum/gallery exhibits, maintaining a blog, and running for office. Only public lecturing was engaged in by a majority of the sample, and most activities were engaged in by less than a third of the sample. Variation by institution tends to be small—about 10% in either direction from the sample mean.

**Figure 4. The Proportion Reporting Each Form of Public Engagement, by Institution**
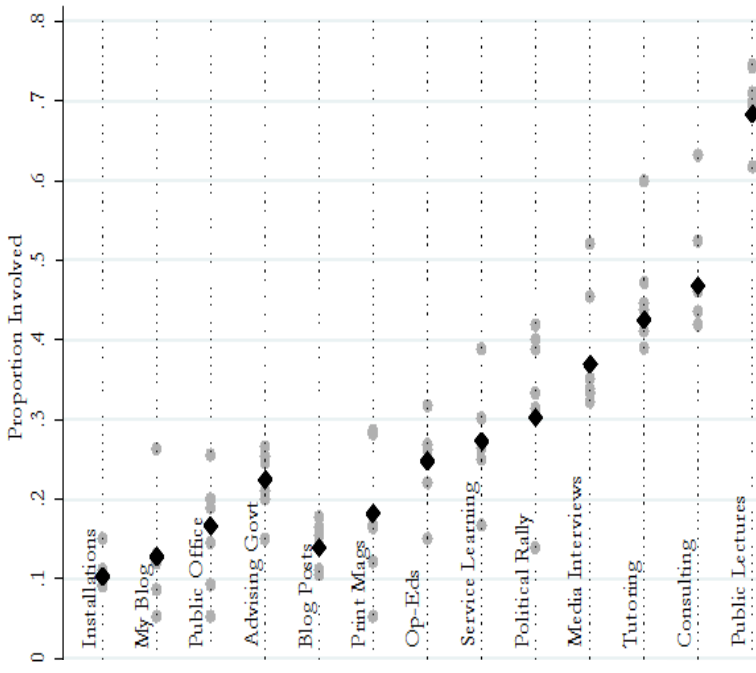


*Note: Black diamonds represent overall averages. Gray dots represent individual peer institutions. Respondents could indicate how many times in the past year they engaged in each activity. For this display, we collapsed all values above 0 to 1.*

As Figure 5 shows in comparison with Figure 4, support for counting those activities for tenure and promotion decisions does not appear to be correlated with the amount of activity in which faculty are generally engaging. Showing exhibits and giving public lectures occur at opposite ends of the activity scale in Figure 4, but both activities anchor the high end of support for counting toward tenure/promotion, as shown in Figure 5. It remains to be seen if one's own involvement in public engagement activity is systemati-

cally related to support. In the meantime, the results here show a lack of widespread opposition to factoring in public engagement for tenure and promotion, but also a lack of widespread acceptance. Only four activities that are perhaps the most traditional sustain an average of "yes." Most activities average something close to "not sure," and there is not a significant bifurcation on those items, either; faculty are, on average, not sure what to make of those activities. There is widespread agreement that the most explicitly political activities should not be counted toward tenure.

**Figure 5. Support for Counting Each Public Engagement Activity by Institution**
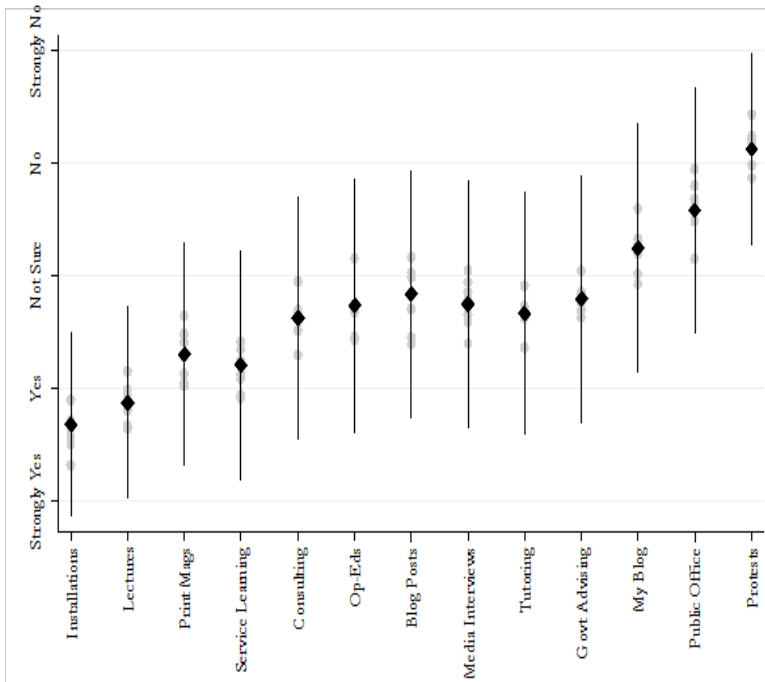


*Note: Black diamonds represent the sample mean; gray dots show institutional means. The line shows two (+/-1) standard deviations from the mean.*

It is remarkable to see the degree of agreement across campuses on how these activities should be treated—see the gray dots in Figure 5. They do not vary much around the sample mean. The general rank of items holds across campuses, certainly at the top and bottom. We could claim that there is a consensus about how these activities should be treated, except that most faculty are

simply not sure, and a consensus of uncertainty is perhaps not a useful conclusion.

Figure 6 uses the same questions, but instead presents the differences in support by division of the college. There are systematic differences in support for the activities—faculty in the arts are the most supportive of public engagement of all kinds, followed by the humanities and social sciences. Faculty in the sciences are, perhaps not surprisingly, the least supportive, reflecting their strong support for traditional research activities. The order shifts in a few places—social scientists are more supportive of advising government, and humanists the least. Overall, however, it is notable that the differences across the divisions are not larger. The essential ordering of the activities does not change from the institutional picture in Figure 5.

**Figure 6. Support for Counting Each Public Engagement Activity by College Division**
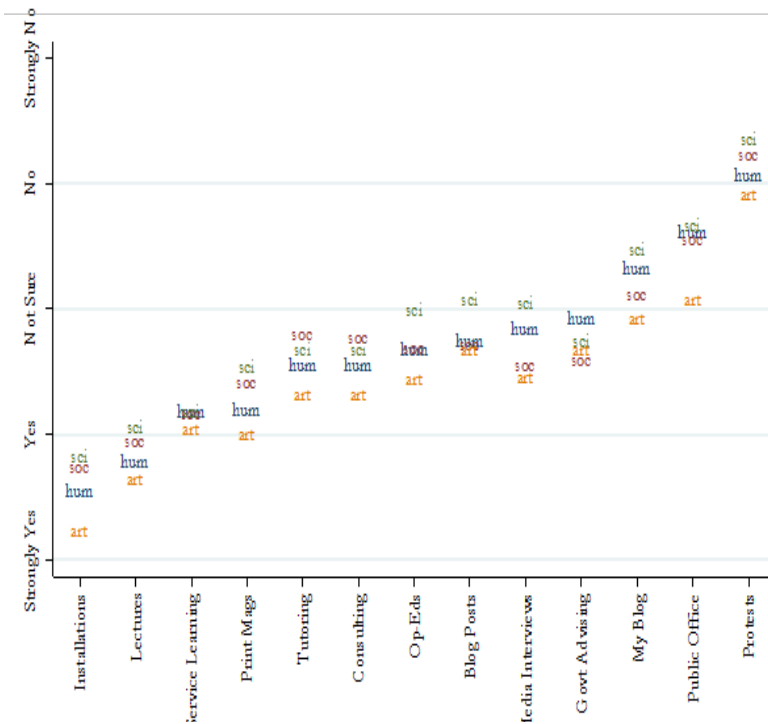
The decision of whether to count an activity or not is a complex one, likely governed by personal investment conditioned by the norms of the discipline, the values of the institution, and faculty rank that may shift risk and priorities. To assess the contribution of these various factors on support for public engagement, we estimated an OLS regression model of a composite index of support for the 13 activities ($\alpha$ = .88). The estimates, shown in Figure 7, highlight some interesting findings. Personal involvement in public engagement activity has no effect on support, which may reflect the tension that we discussed connected to Figure 4—some activities with low and some with high engagement engendered high support. Associate professors are less supportive than assistant or full professors, and female faculty are more supportive than male faculty. As we saw in Figure 5, faculty in all other fields are less supportive than faculty in the arts, though there is wide variance among the social scientists.

Given the sustained dialogue about public engagement on one school's campus, it is not surprising that faculty there are the most supportive—faculty at every other institution show equal or lesser support. All institutions with a first letter higher in the alphabet by happenstance show lower support for public engagement. It is also notable that, compared to Democrats, Republicans have considerably lower support for public engagement. The very distribution of this variable highlights the political dimension to campus politics—fully 5% of the sample identified as some kind of Republican, whereas 49% were strong Democrats (14% were pure independents).

There is a considerable amount of variation that is not explained by this simple model—it explains only 12% of the variance. This is not surprising since there is considerable movement across the types of activity that is not accounted for here (see Figures 5 and 6). The model does indicate, however, that there are some systematic differences on our campuses between individual faculty.

**Figure 7. OLS Regression Results of Support for Counting Public Engagement Activities in Tenure/Promotion Decisions**
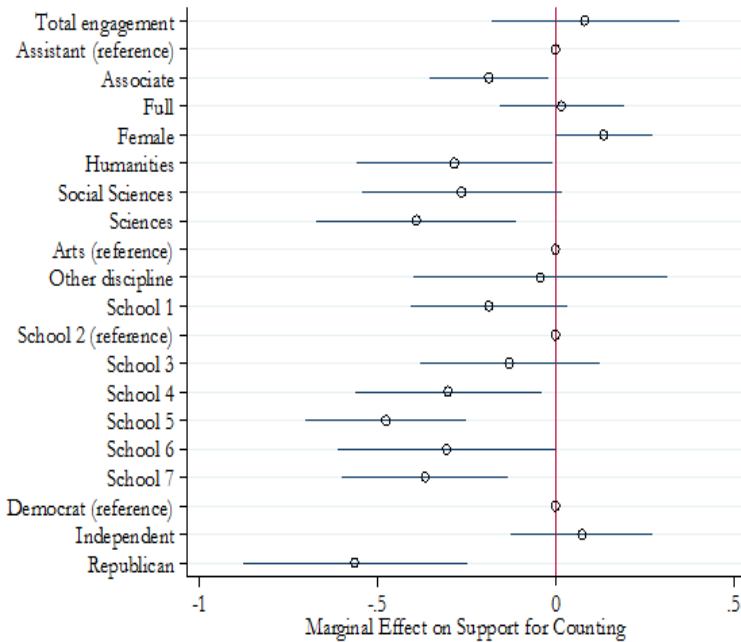


*Model Statistics: N = 348, Adj. R2 = .12, RMSE = .62*

*Note: The "reference" category means that the other effects in that group are shown in comparison to the values of this category. For instance, the effect of an associate professor is to be .19 points less supportive of including PEAs in tenure decisions than assistant professors. The excluded category is shown to have a zero effect. Any effect with a confidence interval (the line) that overlaps with the vertical line at zero has an insignificant effect (at 90% confidence).*

Perhaps more important than simply gauging support is gaining some measures of what faculty think their institution will support. It is worth exploring these by individual respondent and by institution, given the importance of institutional context, though we show results only for the entire sample here. Figure 8 shows the percentage perceiving that an activity would be counted, the percentage perceiving that it would not, and the percentage claiming not to know. For most activities with a lower "yes" percentage than the top three, there is considerable uncertainty in how the institution would evaluate the activity—roughly 30 percent claim not to know how each activity would be treated. For eight of the 13 activities included on the survey, less than half of respondents claim their institution would count the activity.

**Figure 8. Perceived Institutional Support for Counting Public Engagement Activities (Total Sample)**
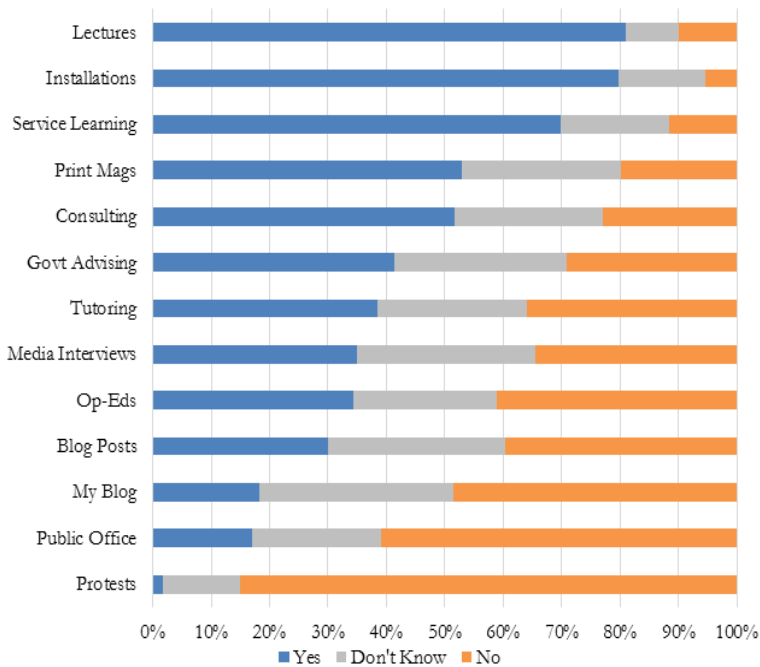


Where do these attitudes come from? Do they vary by rank and institution? By division? Or are they a function of the projection of personal views? Regression estimates (not shown) suggest that perceptions of institutional support (saying yes versus the other two options) are almost wholly a function of personal support. That relationship is shown in Figure 9, which shows that perceived institutional support climbs monotonically with personal support. The effect is statistically crisp, to which the tight confidence bands attest. Although this may show that individuals are projecting their attitudes onto the institution, it may also reflect a nascent democratic feedback loop as faculty talk to one another and offer feedback about the worth of their professional activities.

**Figure 9. The Tight Relationship Between Personal Support of Counting the Activity and Perceived Institutional Support (90% confidence intervals)**
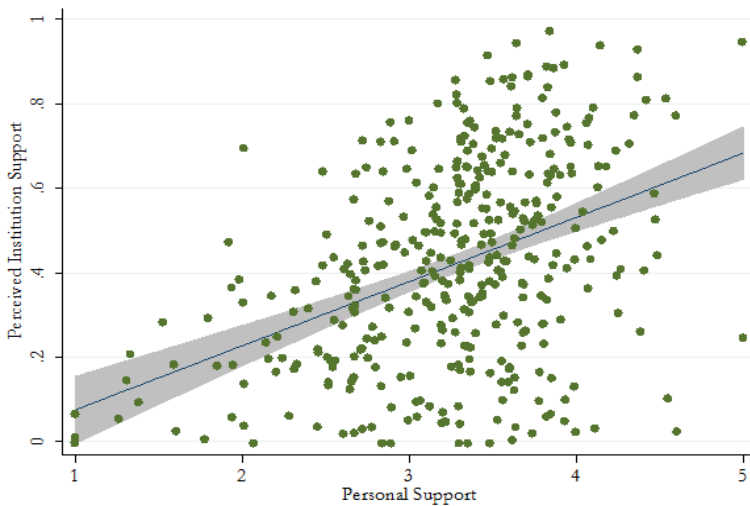


*Note: Institutional support is the percentage of activities that the respondent perceives the institution would count for PMT ("yes" in Figure 8). Personal support is shown also in Figures 6 and 7.*

One institution in the sample held a campus wide conversation about public engagement and there is statistical evidence that individual attitudes have a stronger effect among this institution's faculty than at the other schools ($p = .05$ on an interaction term between attitudes and a campus dummy variable). The gap is more apparent among those more in support of counting these activities. We suspect that their conversations clarified opinions such that those in support recognized that there was institutional support. That is, the effect works through reducing uncertainty.

## Conclusions and Questions for Further Consideration

Where do all of these results leave us? Through both our literature review and survey, we hoped to determine whether liberal arts faculty can, without professional penalty, engage publics outside their classrooms; we also sought to discern how liberal arts institutions evaluate and reward faculty who choose to do so. In regard to whether public engagement is perceived to be a legitimate role of liberal arts professors, our initial review of literature on the liberal arts tradition renders this question largely inconclusive. Although

many authors support public engagement on behalf of the liberal arts professoriate, others are wholly against it. The primary question that remained was whether there is support among liberal arts faculty for public engagement.

The preliminary findings presented above suggest that, as was seen in the literature, a great deal of uncertainty and some disagreement exist among faculty as to the value of public engagement activities in the liberal arts. We found that perceptions of value are affected by the particulars of one's situation, including one's rank, discipline, institution, and level of personal involvement in such activities. We also found a great deal of uncertainty among faculty members regarding whether their institution values public engagement activities, although perceptions were colored in part by people's personal involvement in such activities. The experimental evidence found no dramatic effect, either positive or negative, on tenure decisions when a candidate was involved in public engagement. These results generally held true whether the candidate was a man or woman.

Perhaps what we can safely conclude at this early stage in the research process is that, despite the national dialogue evidenced by reports such as *A Crucible Moment* and *Scholarship in Public*, still more discussion may be needed on local campuses as to the role and value of public engagement. Anecdotally, we know that institutions sometimes celebrate and often encourage engagement in public (for example, these authors' institutions regularly organize faculty lectures for the public, and our marketing/PR teams encourage interviews with the media). We also know that a majority of faculty members (60%) that we surveyed were spending at least some of their time (and, for some, a lot of their time) on public engagement activities. However, such activities may pose threats not only to the participating faculty member but to educational institutions themselves. Faculty members may encounter criticism such as that made by Fish *(2008)* opposing such activity as inappropriate; they may also face backlash from unsupportive colleagues. Similarly, universities may be considered culpable when the engagement is met with resistance by the public or alumni. At the same time, calls to use real-world engagement as a primary means for lifting the country out of its civic slump, failures by the media to convey scientific knowledge adequately (consider the climate change denial discussion), and the survival of higher education itself all suggest that faculty must find a way to share what they have learned through years of careful study with those outside the ivory tower. Indeed, if the hyperpolarizing tone and unstudied

content of much of today's political rhetoric are any indication, a wide-reaching democratic education is needed more desperately than ever. Whether the public engagement of liberal arts professors will be how this education reaches communities is a subject meriting further consideration.

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## About the Authors

**Luke D. Christie** is a doctoral student in the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Georgia. His research interests include 19th-century U.S. public address, rhetorics of and about the American South, rhetorical constructions of "the sublime," and contemporary issues in higher education pedagogy. He earned his B.A. from Furman University.

**Paul A. Djupe** teaches political science at Denison University. His research and teaching interests involve a wide range of civil society: social networks, public opinion, religion and politics, and gender and politics. He earned his Ph.D. from Washington University in St. Louis.

**Sean Patrick O'Rourke** is the director of the Center for Speaking & Listening and professor of rhetoric & American studies at Sewanee: The University of the South. He teaches and studies public argument, particularly the rhetorics of rights and liberties in legal controversies. He earned his JD and Ph.D. from the University of Oregon.

**Elizabeth S. Smith** is chair of the Department of Politics and International Affairs at Furman University. Her research and teaching interests include political socialization, public opinion and political behavior, and gender and politics. She earned her Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota.

# *If We Build It, Will They Come? Fielding Dreams of College Access*

## Katherine Richardson Bruna, Jennifer Farley, Carla A. McNelly, Debra M. Sellers, Roberta Johnson

## Abstract

This article describes the ISU 4U Promise, an innovative college access and affordability initiative. Through this early-commitment partnership program between Iowa State University and Des Moines Public Schools, youth from two urban elementary schools are eligible for tuition awards when they enroll as undergraduates at Iowa State University. Drawing on a review of promise programs in the educational scholarly literature, this article identifies what makes the ISU 4U Promise distinctive among promise efforts in terms of contextual antecedents, implementation processes, and potential institutional outcomes. Unique features include its early childhood focus; sole university sponsorship; "wide-net" reach; and collaborative, critical orientation to education and evaluation. With a bidirectional understanding of knowledge and a bivalent orientation to social justice, the ISU 4U Promise is a promising pathway for universities aspiring to update their approach to college access outreach.

*Keywords:* college access, affordability, promise programs, urban education, university engagement

## Introduction

*I*n the film *Field of Dreams (Gordon & Gordon, 1989)*, Ray Kinsella builds a baseball diamond among the cornfields. It is Kinsella's way of grappling with a troubled past relationship with his father that continues to haunt him. Urged on by a whispered promise—"If you build it, he will come"—Kinsella builds his field of dreams, confronts his ghosts, and transforms the landscape of his Iowa farm. "Is this heaven?" Kinsella's father asks as he emerges from the stalks and beholds the new playing grounds. "No," Kinsella replies. "It's Iowa."

The subject of this article is an innovative educational initiative at Iowa State University called the ISU 4U Promise; it is our own field of dreams. A partnership between Iowa State University and Des Moines Public Schools, the ISU 4U Promise seeks to increase university access and affordability for low-income youth from historically excluded backgrounds. We describe the ISU 4U Promise's institutional mission to transform educational and eco-

nomic opportunity in its partner schools. Built upon the hope these youth would come to Iowa State University, the ISU 4U Promise stands as our own "diamond in the cornfields."

We begin by providing details about the ISU 4U Promise initiative. We contextualize the initiative broadly within the changing history of the land-grant university and its positioning in terms of knowledge production and power dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. We provide this broad context to emphasize the bivalent change framework guiding the ISU 4U Promise work, one that acknowledges the need for both representational and redistributive efforts in effecting social transformation *(Fraser, 1997)*. We then contextualize it more narrowly with respect to similar promise program initiatives. We situate the ISU 4U Promise under the broad categories of contextual antecedents, implementation processes, and institutional outcomes. A literature review of existing promise programs allows us to highlight particular features of the ISU 4U Promise and discuss them as innovations for university-based engagement. We examine areas of relative strength and weakness in the existing promise program scholarship and call for new directions of study. These include addressing the research and evaluation challenges of what is essentially design-based research (DBR). DBR involves work taking place in a real-life setting affected by multiple variables. It is characterized by a flexibility to respond to the complex, dynamic, socially interactive, multidimensional, and collaborative elements of its site of implementation *(Barab & Squire, 2004)*. These elements require new approaches to measuring and communicating impact and findings. In this article, we describe the early stage of ISU 4U Promise research and evaluation activity, indicate challenges, and highlight lessons learned that are relevant to other DBR promise program efforts. We conclude by summarizing the ISU 4U Promise as an example to consider in pursuing the social imperative for public institutions of higher education to manifest the democratic ideals of diversity, equity, and justice through engagement efforts.

## Iowa State University's ISU 4U Promise: Redressing Historical Exclusion Through a Bidirectional and Bivalent Knowledge and Change Framework

As a land-grant institution, Iowa State University has a responsibility for the democratic ideal of the public good. Federally funded land-grant institutions were established through the Morrill Act of 1862 to provide "a broad segment of the population with a practical

education that had relevance to their daily lives" *(Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, 2012, p. 1)*. In 1914, the Smith-Lever Act charged land-grant universities with educating beyond the bounds of their campus and student body, utilizing cooperative extension services to "deliver useful knowledge and training to farmers and other state residents" *(Brown, Pendleton-Jullian, & Adler, 2010, p. 9)*. This paradigm was one of "technical rationality" *(Fear & Sandmann, 2001–2002, p. 29)* in which the well-reasoned "scientific" insights of the university were brought to bear upon the "naïve" practice-based conceptions of the public. It resulted in a one-way model of engagement "in which knowledge is created on campus, then 'transferred'" to those who use it *(Brown et al., 2010, p. 11)*. Operating from this paradigm, engagement units at land-grant universities developed several programs intended to serve the public. Over time, these programs came to promote health and nutrition, financial well-being, school engagement, and positive youth development, as well as best practices in the area that remains most iconic of the land-grant institution today—agriculture.

Approaches to university engagement through programs like these continue at Iowa State University. However, as is the case with institutions of higher education nationally, changes have been underway. These changes reflect the broader societal multicultural turn of the U.S. civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s and their ongoing legacies. With growing support for societal multiculturalism as a living value of the nation's professed pluralism, universities have been forced to respond, as Lubiano *(1996)* describes, "to the demands of traditionally marginalized cultures for the inclusion of individuals, for group power, and for some reorganization of these institutions" *(p. 68)*. Iowa State University reflects its legacy as a historically predominantly White institution with a student body in which almost 12% of enrolled individuals are from U.S. underrepresented groups *(Iowa State University Office of Admissions, 2017)*. Members of major underrepresented ethnicities within Iowa, Hispanic or Latino and Black or African American students constitute nearly 5% and 3% respectively of university and undergraduate enrollment *(Iowa State University, 2016)*. Although these figures mirror those of Iowa's population *(Iowa State Data Center, 2015)*, they are not reflective of the diversity of the state's largest school district located within an hour of Iowa State University's campus. Total preK-12 enrollment for the academic year 2016-2017 of the Des Moines Public School District includes 25.7% Hispanic students and 18.8% Black students *(Iowa Department of Education, 2017)*. There is a gap between the diversity of the student population at Iowa

State and that of the schools in its metropolitan neighbor. For the university to recruit more underrepresented students, inclusion, power, and reorganization challenges need to be addressed.

For engagement efforts, this means the one-way paradigm of "technical rationality" *(Fear & Sandmann, 2001–2002, p. 29)* is giving way. There are calls to dismantle traditional barriers that privilege some groups and their ways of knowing over others, posing instead the paradigm-shifting question of how land-grant institutions are to "serve the people who support them" *(Brown et al., 2010)* and acknowledge their "funds of knowledge" *(González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005)*.

In response to this question, new models of engagement seek to dismantle traditional power relationships between the university's knowledge and that of the people. These require confronting multiple barriers: "barriers between teaching, learning and research; between academic disciplines; and between traditional and non-traditional forms of learning" *(Brown et al., 2010, p. 11)*. Dismantling such barriers allows for recognition of resources that exist in diverse urban centers and redistribution of resources toward new programs that leverage existing social capital to strengthen communities in culturally relevant ways *(Nelson-Smith, 2011; Robinson & Meikle-Yaw, 2007; Ward & Webster, 2011)*. In higher education, this process challenges the "gate-keeping function of our 'research base'" *(Hassel, 2004)* because it is one of humility about what we at the university do *not* know.

Work on the ISU 4U Promise at Iowa State University proceeds through a collaborative leadership configuration and an innovative stance toward our land-grant mission. It strives to take a bidirectional view regarding the circulation of knowledge between the university and the community. In our building efforts, this has meant making space to learn about the concerns and constraints of our partners. Upon implementation of the ISU 4U Promise, we did not approach our partners with preconceived ideas or plans that had to be adopted to participate. We asked teacher teams at each school how they envisioned the ISU 4U Promise influencing activities with students and used these conversations to guide the university's efforts the following year. We formed a community alliance to organize and network the resources of community agencies to streamline interaction with the university and to inform the process of ongoing development. This bidirectional view and practice of knowledge is grounded in an understanding of societal multiculturalism that is bivalent (dual-pronged) in its orientation to the process of change *(Fraser, 1997)*. The ISU 4U Promise seeks

to pave a pathway to include students from historically excluded groups to enhance their representation at the university. To do so requires that we *redistribute* institutional resources. This bivalent approach differentiates substantive from superficial approaches to diversity and equity.

Pluralism demands not just the cultural recognition of the multiple (racial, ethnic, and other) identities associated with historically excluded populations but also their political parity *(Newfield & Gordon, 1996)*. For students from historically excluded populations to participate on par with their dominant-culture peers at the university, they must be accorded equal respect as knowers and learners, and they must be allocated equitable (not just equal) resources to expand their knowing and learning. Equity instead of equality considers a need that is on the whole greater—due to historically produced social and economic disparities—than the need among dominant-culture students. It requires greater (not just "the same") resources for amelioration. Universities that seek to actively concern themselves with the disproportionate underrepresentation of students on their campuses must attend to the structural imbalances in material conditions and the disconnected relationships that reproduce underrepresentation *(Giroux, 1994)*. We aim for bivalent representational *and* redistributive equity through the collaborative configuration of the ISU 4U Promise.

## The Social Justice Agenda in Higher Education, Promise Programs, and the Added Potential of the ISU 4U Promise

Much of the scholarship on higher education and social justice is insular; it is undertaken in institutions of higher education by scholars of higher education about higher education. The research is self-centered—focused on the institution and how organizational performance within recruitment, enrollment, and retention processes could be altered to respond to calls made by the social justice agenda *(Brennan & Naidoo, 2008)*. This research places confidence in the overall structure of the institution to be able re-form itself around diversity and equity principles and practices and effect change in student experiences and outcomes.

Other scholarship, however, points out the limitation of insularity. Since disparities in student performance have their root in societal conditions outside the institution, "new forms of relationship between institutions of higher education and the societies of which they form a part" are required *(Brennan & Naidoo, 2008, p. 298)*.

These new relationships stand to transform institutions of higher education as they connect their diversity and equity interests to preexisting disparities in K-12 schooling and society. Higher education can intervene in and interrupt disparities through a social justice agenda implemented beyond the institution's walls. This is the work of the ISU 4U Promise.

The ISU 4U Promise is an example of what are referred to nationally as "early commitment" or "promise" programs. Promise programs seek to establish a promise of postsecondary possibility via an early commitment of financial aid to support a student's aspirations. The promise is between the student and the program, which assures financial assistance contingent upon completion of specific actions associated with college preparation *(Blanco, 2009)*. Promise programs are a response to the long-standing interrelated patterns of class, educational, and racial/ethnic stratification in college access. These patterns indicate that individuals with low family incomes, whose parents have not received higher education, and from historically excluded racial/ethnic groups such as African Americans and Latinos are less likely to enroll in college *(Perna, 2006)*.

Promise programs have three overarching characteristics: (1) guaranteed financial aid (2) to students of low-income backgrounds (3) who are identified for program participation in elementary, middle, or early high school *(Blanco, 2009)*. Andrews *(2014)* defines a promise program as a "local place-based scholarship program that offers near-universal access to funding for post-secondary education" for which notification of access occurs "well in advance" of the decision to pursue postsecondary education *(p. 56)*. Implicit is that the place targeted by the promise is otherwise lacking financial resources to support college-going. In this way promise programs are interventions into the economic structure of college access that function by enhancing its affordability. Since the economic landscape of the United States is historically racialized, as a core corollary, promise programs also stand as interventions into the nation's racial landscape. All facets of the labor market include "Black–White" disparities: a growing pay gap, continued occupational segregation, and disproportionate unemployment rates of Blacks *(Reskin, 2012, p. 21)*. Insofar as promise programs extend to individuals from historically excluded groups opportunities that will enhance inclusive representation on college campuses and in corporate boardrooms, as well as redistribute investment in local and national economies and governance, they stand to contribute significantly toward dreams still embattled for an integrated society

*(Brown v. Board of Education, 1954; Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin, 2013).*

Promise programs are not new. The first known program (the Daly Education Fund) was established in 1922 in Lake County, Oregon *(Cities of Promise, n.d.b)*. The earliest mention of a program in the scholarly literature appeared in 1990 *(St. John, Musoba, & Simmons, 2003)*. It is not surprising that research specific to promise programs is limited. Our efforts to understand the ISU 4U Promise in relation to other such programs has revealed that information is largely concentrated on websites and in the news media. Notable media attention was given to President Obama's 2010 commencement address at Central High School in Kalamazoo, Michigan, in which he referred to the Kalamazoo Promise program as a "rare and valuable chance to pursue your own passions, chase your own dreams without incurring a mountain of debt" *(Remarks by the President at Kalamazoo Central High School, 2010).* In terms of scholarly attention, however, documentation of implementation and outcomes is lacking. We undertook a literature review and searched for articles on school, community, and university partnerships published within the last 10 years in six major education-related journals (*The American Educational Research Journal, Anthropology of Education Quarterly, Education and Urban Society, The Journal of Extension, Journal of Higher Education,* and *Urban Education*). We found none that spoke specifically to promise programs. When we expanded the review beyond these major journals and pushed back the time boundary to encompass all extant literature, we retrieved three peer-reviewed journal articles *(Harris, 2013; Mendoza & Mendez, 2012–2013; St. John et al., 2003).* Two were focused on the role of promise programs in supporting student enrollment, retention, and completion in higher education—the purpose of the ISU 4U Promise at Iowa State University.

There is a gap between the number of promise programs in existence—the Cities of Promise website highlights 81 programs *(Cities of Promise, n.d.a)*—and those documented in the research literature. This suggests that although promise programs continue to grow in number—eight programs have been established since 2014 *(Cities of Promise, n.d.b)*—we know little about their impact. By presenting the ISU 4U Promise we hope to contribute to the available literature and provide information in service of future promise efforts at higher education institutions.

We identify defining characteristics of promise programs and explain the features of the ISU 4U Promise that make it unique. We present our review of promise program characteristics using

the broad domains of contextual antecedents, implementation processes, and institutional outcomes. Further program dimensions are from those identified by Hagedorn and Tierney *(2002)* in their model of college preparation program effectiveness (i.e., contextual antecedents = location and target population; implementation processes = mission, funding, delivery, programs, and evaluation; and institutional outcomes = student persistence).

This two-tiered approach highlights the areas of relative strength and weakness in terms of information available about the characteristics of these programs. We have some knowledge about the contextual antecedents that spur promise program creation, more about the processes involved in promise program creation and implementation, and relatively little about these programs' achieved versus intended institutional outcomes. We note that evidence of promise programs' long-term economic impact on communities is not addressed in the literature. Since promise programs are undertaken and understood as economic development initiatives *(Blanco, 2009)*. We conclude by recommending interdisciplinary research approaches examining educational advancement and economic development as interrelated forces in community life. This is necessitated by a bivalent approach to societal multiculturalism, one that examines universities' efforts to increase representation of underrepresented students on their campuses through early commitment promise incentives in tandem with the effect of those promises on the redistribution of economic resources in families and communities.

## Contextual Antecedents: Who Do Promise Programs Serve?

In this section, we situate the ISU 4U Promise within what the literature reveals about preexisting contextual antecedents or realities of implementation. We review the locations that constitute their size and scope and the grade-level audiences they target. As a school-centered, community-based program with a focus on the early childhood years, the ISU 4U Promise is unique among its promise program peers.

## Location: State or Community?

The locations of promise programs reported in the literature are associated with either the state or the particular communities they serve. Historically, promise programs have operated at a state level. Most notable among state-based promise programs are Indiana's

21st Century Scholars program and Oklahoma's Promise program. Both serve students through scholarships awarded by the state to qualifying residents as part of a financial-aid package. Beginning in 2005, promise programs were replicated in local communities through support from individual donors, businesses, and foundations. In a report published by the Pathways to College Network, Blanco *(2009)* identifies community-based promise initiatives, such as those in Kalamazoo, Michigan; El Dorado, Arkansas; and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, as serving "limited geographic areas" in which partnerships are driven by "coalitions formed around economic and workforce development goals" *(p. 4)*. The identified geographic areas may be bound to a particular city, a school district, or "several schools that are in the same county" *(Andrews, 2014, p. 57)*. Although each community program is unique, "common elements include reliance on local funding sources rather than state funding and eligibility requirements that exclude students from outside their school districts" *(Blanco, 2009, p. 4)*.

The ISU 4U Promise is, by this definition, a community-based program. The local funding source it relies on is primarily that of the tuition awards provided by the university. Not only does it exclude students from outside its central partner, the Des Moines Public School District, the only eligible students are those who graduate fifth grade from two elementary schools within particular neighborhoods of the city of Des Moines. Therefore, the ISU 4U Promise is unique as a community-based program that is more narrowly school based.

Efforts to promote college-going among historically excluded populations typically focus on what are often framed as individual deficiencies: academics, affordability, and access. They are student-based "enhancement programs that supplement a school's regular activities and are aimed at low-income youth who otherwise might not be able to attend college" *(Hagedorn & Tierney, 2002, p. 2)*. In school-based college access programs, the focus is on "changing schools so that the schools are capable of being the primary vehicle of mobility for the students" *(Gándara, 2002, p. 84)*.

The ISU 4U Promise is not a typical college access program; its aim is not to enhance regular school activities but to provide a catalyst for the transformation of what is regular at school. Teacher leadership teams at each school have identified a set of artifacts that students contribute to a K-5 performance portfolio. These artifacts reflect grade-appropriate understandings of college readiness and provide a means for teachers to begin conversations about higher education futures at an early age. This is not meant to be an addi-

tion to existing school structures and activities, but a transformation from within of teachers' roles and routines and students' perceptions of themselves as college-goers. With the schools' active participation in the partnership, students throughout the schools are positioned to reap the benefits *(Gándara, 2002)*.

With this school-based theory of change, the ISU 4U Promise is unlike many other promise programs in which individual students are identified through a selective procedure. School-centered programs like the ISU 4U Promise are, according to Gándara *(2002)*, harder to implement. They require the sustained cooperation of many people in the school, people who may be overworked and underpaid *(pp. 85–86)*. An aspect of the ISU 4U Promise's theory of change is that the additional effort of a school-based program will bring additional effect. Like community-based promise programs that exist to support local economic development goals, the ISU 4U Promise has the potential to significantly impact the economic context of the two neighborhoods in which the partner schools are located. By providing tuition awards to assist with college affordability and then helping shape school cultures to further reinforce the possibility of college-going, the ISU 4U Promise stands to alter the economic trajectories of youth and families in these neighborhoods.

Located in Polk County, the ISU 4U Promise neighborhoods are the most densely populated area of Iowa. Reflective of the county at large, these neighborhoods have experienced significant growth in their Hispanic and African American populations. The Hispanic population has increased from just over 6,000 in 1990 to nearly 33,000 in 2010, and the African American population increased from 14,800 to almost 26,000 *(U.S. Census 2010, 2016a, 2016b)*. For example, nearly one third of residents in the River Bend neighborhood identify as Hispanic and one fourth identify as African American *(River Bend Neighborhood Plan, City of Des Moines, 2015, p. 8)*. The rapid ethnic diversification and densification of the ISU 4U Promise neighborhoods reflects broader demographic changes.

Although total student enrollment in Des Moines Public Schools barely increased from the 2011–2012 school year to the 2015–2016 school year, the African American student population increased from 5,454 to 6,128 (12%) and the Hispanic student population increased from 7,034 to 8,339 (18%) *(Iowa Department of Education, 2016)*. Accompanying these racial and ethnic differences in the ISU 4U Promise neighborhoods is economic disparity. The median household income in River Bend is $32,479 compared to $44,178 for the city of Des Moines. The River Bend neighborhood

also has 18.5% unemployment and 35.3% poverty, rates drastically different from the respective 8% and 18% cited for the city *(City of Des Moines, 2015, p. 9)*. At both schools approximately 95% of students are eligible for free lunch *(Des Moines Public Schools, 2017b)*.

This is the community context of the ISU 4U Promise. In providing a pathway to higher education for populations gaining in numbers but low in economic gain, the initiative is a means of injecting resources in a location where they can begin to springboard an individual child, family, and community out of poverty.

## Target Population: Secondary or Elementary?

In terms of students served by promise programs, the ISU 4U Promise is unique in its focus on the elementary years. Blanco *(2009)* states that "current early commitment programs target eligibility to middle and high school youth" *(p. 5)*. Indiana's 21st Century Scholar program and Oklahoma's Promise program enroll students in eighth grade *(Mendoza & Mendez, 2012–2013; St. John et al., 2003)*, and the Degree Project in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, enrolls in ninth grade. There is the explicit expectation that early awareness of aid will "reduce students' concern and uncertainty about college costs and therefore encourage them to better prepare during high school" *(Harris, 2013, p. 105)*. This is in line with the Pathways to College report that recommends promise programs provide students the "advantage of time to achieve essential programmatic goals" like academic preparation, family engagement, and "personal motivation and encouragement" *(Blanco, 2009, p. 11)*. The early outreach that the ISU 4U Promise provides to youth and families as early as the kindergarten years is noteworthy.

Our review of the literature identified no other program in which students officially enroll as early as fifth grade. Because of our early enrollment process, the promise to the students is not just a tuition award guarantee, but potential for long-term academic preparation with a focus on postsecondary opportunity. Signature features of the ISU 4U Promise are students' contribution of academic artifacts throughout their elementary experience to a work portfolio and the submission at fifth-, eighth-, and twelfth-grade graduations of a "letter of intent" to Iowa State University. These activities are designed to form an ongoing affiliation with the university and embed the ISU 4U Promise into the routines of teachers, students, and families so they may capitalize on the "advantage of time" in college preparation.

## Implementation Processes: What Do Promise Programs Do?

What we referred to as contextual antecedents in the section above constitute the broad outlines of purpose against which a promise program sets itself—to promote college access and affordability for youth and their families. Decisions made about mission, funding, delivery, programs, and evaluation fill in the picture of any promise program. Here we situate the ISU 4U Promise within what we learned from the literature about these institutional processes to highlight the uniqueness of its wide-net, university-sponsored, highly collaborative, research-informed, and feedback-responsive features.

### Mission: Narrow or Wide Net?

The ISU 4U Promise is a "wide-net" promise program: Minimal requirements are placed on students for them to qualify, maximizing the program's potential to promote college access among target youth and their families. The basic eligibility criteria are minimal: students must complete fifth grade at one of the two ISU 4U Promise elementary schools, remain in the Des Moines Public School district through high school graduation, and be admissible by regular standards to Iowa State University. There are no restrictions based on students' racial or ethnic identities nor their income. The fact of near-universal free lunch eligibility at the two schools establishes financial need. It also establishes the primary mission of the program to make college affordable and therefore accessible for youth and families experiencing a lack of economic resources that we understand to be historically construed. In this way, the ISU 4U Promise is positioned as a historical corrective to a legacy of racialized privilege and penalty.

The origins of promise programs are tied to attention to economic disparity. Many promise programs began when states were moving from needs-based financial aid programs to merit-based programs *(Doyle, 2006)*. Described by Doyle *(2006)* as "one of the most pronounced policy shifts in higher education in the last 20 years," state resource allocations to merit programs more than doubled—from 12% to 26%—between 1980 and 2002 *(p. 259)*. These merit-based programs promoted access to higher education through an emphasis on intentional academic preparation that often overlooked the reality of financial need *(St. John et al., 2003)*. Promise programs sought to emphasize "financial need *and* [emphasis added] aspects of merit that motivate preparation,"

thereby still promoting access via affordability for academically qualified students specifically *(St. John et al., 2003, p. 104)*. Indiana's 21st Century Scholars program and Oklahoma's Promise program are hybrid programs that combine needs-based financial aid and merit in this way *(Mendoza & Mendez, 2012–2013)*. In Indiana's 21st Century Scholars program, all students who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch are eligible for the program, but the greatest financial award is provided to students who complete honors programs *(St. John et al., 2003)*. Similarly, Oklahoma's Promise program requires students to "meet certain academic and disciplinary benchmarks . . . including a pre-college curriculum" and family income requirements *(Mendoza & Mendez, 2012–2013, p. 397)*. By not imposing similar additional academic qualifications, the ISU 4U Promise casts as wide a net as possible.

From our literature review of existing promise programs, only one approximates this "wide net." Like the ISU 4U Promise, the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champagne's I-Promise program has only one academic qualification: admission to the university. However, that program also requires that students meet multiple income criteria such as an expected family contribution per the Federal Application of Financial Student Aid of $0, family income below the poverty level, and less than $50,000 in family assets *(Vaade, Connery, & McCready, 2010)*. Given that the ISU 4U Promise does not requires families to submit evidence of financial need, effectively "adopting" the entire student population at the two partner schools, the net cast is distinctively wide. This emphasizes an approach to change driven more by structurally transformative philosophy than mere individually oriented philanthropy. The ISU 4U Promise's mission is one of community-wide socioeconomic enhancement through formal and informal education to support college-going, with university-sponsored tuition support as an integral though not independent agent of systemic change.

## Funding: Federal, Combined, or University Sponsored?

Most college preparation initiatives lack the funding to provide financial support *(Gándara, 2002)*. However, delivering an early commitment of financial support to students is an integral process characteristic of promise programs.

The ISU 4U Promise differs significantly from previous college access and affordability initiatives. Perhaps the most recognizable are Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Student Support Services—

three federally funded programs commonly referred to as "TRIO" programs *(Campbell, 2010)*. In 1998, Congress established funds for Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs ("GEAR UP"). These federal funds are available to state governments and to partnerships of at least one elementary and one secondary school, one institution of higher education, and at least two community organizations. GEAR UP included the 21st Century Scholars or High Hopes program that notifies low-income students in Grades 6–12 of their expected eligibility for federal Pell Grant assistance *(Swail & Perna, 2002)*. The movement away from federal ownership of college access and affordability initiatives has evolved in more recent years to increasing involvement of the private and nonprofit sectors. The most prominent foundation established for this purpose is the I Have a Dream Foundation. Established in 1982, the Foundation has supported over 200 projects in over 60 U.S. cities. It currently comprises 36 programs in 15 locations, including one in Des Moines *(Des Moines "I Have a Dream" Foundation, 2016; Swail & Perna, 2002)*.

The source and administration of funding for promise programs varies according to their nature. Statewide programs that serve all students are typically integrated into financial aid packages, administered by a state agency or an established nonprofit organization *(Blanco, 2009)*. The financial support promised to students is made available through state appropriations. An exception is Illinois's I-Promise program. The university coordinates funding provided through federal, state, and institutional funds, augmented by individual and corporate donations; funds are administered by the university as a collaboration between the offices of the Provost and Student Financial Aid *(Vaade et al., 2010, p. 8)*. The ISU 4U Promise is most like the I-Promise although with a community-based location for implementation. This is a unique feature, as most community-based programs are administered either by sole school districts or school districts operating in collaboration with local private or nonprofit organizations *(Blanco, 2009)*.

An example of a community-based collaborative model is that of the Pittsburgh Promise, which operates as a nonprofit community-based organization with state government, school district, higher education, and private foundation links. Similar to the ISU 4U Promise, it was established with a mission of economic development in which college-funding assistance played an important role *(Ghubril, 2013)*. Its particular partnership model has succeeded in accruing a $50 million endowment. Other examples of community-based promise programs operating in partnership

with private funding sources are the Wisconsin Covenant program, established as a nonprofit with an initial endowment of $40 million and challenged to raise matching funds from businesses and philanthropists, and the El Dorado Promise program in Arkansas, established and funded by Murphy Oil Company *(Blanco, 2009)*. The private foundations that partner with promise programs work across different state and community locations. The Eli Lily and Lumina Foundations have supported programming in multiple locales *(Blanco, 2009)*. With no such funding partners from the private sector, Iowa State University's sole responsibility for the ISU 4U Promise is a distinctive feature that underscores this institution's status as an outreach-intensive land-grant institution charged from its inception with making education accessible for local populations.

## Delivery: Restrictive or Inclusive?

The delivery of funding is another source of variation among promise programs. Regarding determination of a student's ISU 4U Promise tuition award, the Promise's practice is aligned with that of some other programs; the value of the award is accrued through a student's enrollment history. ISU 4U Promise students accrue a 20% tuition award for every full year of enrollment at the partner schools; a student enrolled from first through fifth grade will receive a 100% award on admission as an undergraduate. Since committed funds will expire within 6 years of high school graduation, students may spend 2 years at a community college or in the military before enrolling, with the expectation that the bachelor's degree is completed within a 4-year period. Although this 2-year sunset period for enrollment strikes a middle ground between the 15 and 36 months required by other promise programs *(Harris, 2013, p. 102)*, the ISU 4U Promise is again an outlier in terms of additional requirements students must meet to receive the tuition award deliverable.

Most promise programs have multiple student requirements. Beyond high school graduation, some require a specific grade point average *(Ghubril, 2013; Harris, 2013; Mendoza & Mendez, 2012–2013; St. John et al., 2003)*, a specific number of credits earned or courses completed *(Ghubril, 2013; St. John et al., 2003)*, and/or a specific record of school attendance *(Blanco, 2009; Ghubril, 2013; Harris, 2013)*. In Indiana, a failure to complete an honors curriculum may cause a reduced award from the 21st Century Scholars Program *(St. John et al., 2003)*.

Students participating in promise programs are also often required to meet pledge criteria. Many programs, such as Indiana's 21st Century Scholars Program and Oklahoma's Promise, require that students pledge to be crime-free during their high school career *(Mendoza & Mendez, 2012–2013; St. John et al., 2003)*. Some programs, such as Illinois's I-Promise, require that students maintain a specific GPA and/or course load during college *(Vaade et al., 2010)*. The ISU 4U Promise has no additional academic requirements beyond university admissibility for students to receive their promised tuition awards.

In its exclusive application to tuition costs, the ISU 4U Promise is more like other state programs, rather than community programs, that cover costs associated with books, room and board, and fees *(Blanco, 2009)*. These additional costs for an ISU 4U Promise student will likely be covered by additional forms of financial aid such as Pell Grants. When a student eligible for the ISU 4U Promise award is considering multiple ISU-funded scholarship offers, the one of most value will be applied by the university. The ISU 4U Promise award is not, in this way, combinable with other ISU scholarship offers and has no "in pocket" value once tuition needs are met. At 2017 tuition rates, the value of a 100% award for a resident undergraduate's 4 years of enrollment stands at approximately $28,392. Since 5th grade graduation from one of two specific elementary schools and completion of high school within the same district are required, enrollment data drives estimations of the program's total future award payout. This necessitates a close relationship with Des Moines Public Schools, one formalized through a memorandum of agreement between the two institutions.

The ISU 4U Promise is not a state-funded program. Such programs typically allow students to utilize promise-sourced financial aid to support enrollment at several within-state institutions; some may allow choice among that state's private and community colleges, whereas others may restrict enrollment to that state's public 4-year institutions *(Andrews, 2014; Blanco, 2009)*. ISU 4U Promise students must attend Iowa State University to utilize the tuition award. In some ways, this is similar to other programs such as Campus and Community: Together for Good in Hancock, Michigan, and the Peoria's Promise Program in Peoria, Illinois, which provide promise funding only the one institution of higher education designated in the program. However, these programs are not solely university funded. In its creation of tuition awards that are institution restricted and institution supplied, the ISU 4U Promise is taking active financial interest in the diversification of its future

student body. Other promise programs, such as Arkadelphia Promise, in Arkadelphia, Arkansas, and the El Dorado Promise, in El Dorado, Arkansas, allow students to attend any U.S. college or university, or in the former program, any U.S.-accredited postsecondary institution *(Blanco, 2009; Vaade et al., 2010)*. These privately funded programs spur college access broadly without being tied to a specific university's interest in its own diversity enrichment. Here we see most clearly the bivalent nature of the ISU 4U Promise as a mechanism for societal multiculturalism; to increase representation of diversity on campus, the university has undertaken, through the ISU 4U Promise, structural resource redistribution.

The way the ISU 4U Promise tuition awards act as a magnet pulling students to the university affords it the chance to develop a closer relationship to its target students than many other promise programs. Conversely, in large statewide programs, such as those in Oklahoma and Indiana, the multiple postsecondary options provided to students hinder university-specific affiliation *(Mendoza & Mendez, 2012–2013; St. John et al., 2003)*. The ISU 4U Promise challenges Ghubril's *(2013)* assertion that large universities, simply by virtue of their size, will be more removed from promise program activities than smaller colleges. Although Iowa State is a large university, its direct partnering with two elementary schools enables relationship formation that protects against operating as "a business opportunity" to ensure student recruitment *(Ghubril, 2013, p. 41)* and instead promotes its possibility to act as a partner for social and economic change.

Important to the relational capacity of the ISU 4U Promise with its external partners is the strong foundation built by the internal initiating partners. The Office of Financial Aid, the College of Human Sciences, and Iowa State University Extension and Outreach were the units originally designated to design the program and administer its implementation. Together these units deliver the financial and in- and out-of-school social and academic supports to assist youth and families in the ISU 4U Promise schools and communities. Although other university-administered promise programs, such as Illinois's I-Promise, appoint financial aid as the central program unit, the ISU 4U Promise designated the College of Human Sciences and Iowa State University Extension and Outreach as having complementary roles to assist with achieving the college access mission.

## Programs: Removed or Responsive?

Promise programs are defined by the early commitment of financial support for college. When serving audiences historically excluded from higher education because of social processes like racism, institutional discrimination, and poverty, this may not be enough to counter a legacy of educational disenfranchisement and erosion of trust in schooling. The educational opportunities that promise programs provide to build supportive family relationships and develop social and academic competencies that ensure college success are essential in making sure the promise is not an empty one.

The nature of programming provided through promise programs is unclear. Ghubril *(2013)* writes that the Pittsburgh Promise understands college readiness to have three components, "academic readiness, college knowledge, and the aspirations, dreams, behaviors, and habits of students" *(p. 40)*, and notes that the school district enables data sharing about student progress toward these goals. Although the Pittsburgh Promise's website explains programming provided, including outreach, school-based mentoring, internships, and career launch events *(Pittsburgh Promise, n.d.)*, it reveals little about the university's role. The nature of involvement of the promise sponsor and the role played by community-based organizations and families in providing programming is missing in the promise literature. Harris *(2013)*, writing about Milwaukee's Degree Project, notes it developed an extensive communication plan for outreach to families, but it did little to engage them in a two-way conversation.

The programming offered to support promise programs stands to reveal much about their orientation to societal multiculturalism. Programs should target youth and families of historically excluded groups in ways that relate to them with cultural integrity; that is, programming must take an additive and affirmative approach to the relationship between their cultural backgrounds and college, not one that expects their ultimate assimilation *(Knight & Oesterreich, 2002)*. "Without cultural integrity," Hagedorn and Tierney *(2002)* explain,

> students will not respond either because the programs do not meet their specific needs, or because they do not feel the programs are actually designed for them. Students approach school with multiple identities and if programs are to be successful they need to honor

those identities in culturally specific ways so that learning fits. *(p. 6)*

The challenge is one of finding the right fit between cultural integrity and the reality of the standardized processes related to teaching and testing that define U.S. public schools today and, by virtue of their status as achievement norms, sit at the center of successful precollege programs *(Swail & Perna, 2002)*. Promise-related programming should promote academic intensity as the number one variable in college preparation and predictor of degree completion *(Adelman, 2002)*.

Not only does the ISU 4U Promise seek to be bivalent in its approach to social change, proceeding from value placed on college access as a representational and redistributional issue, it also seeks to be bidirectional in terms of value placed on knowledge. The ISU 4U Promise promotes college readiness by responding to locally expressed resources and needs and by valuing the knowledge in homes and communities that is the basis for building youths' identities as learners. Reflecting its character as a university-sponsored promise program, the ISU 4U Promise is creating responsive programming through the grant activity of faculty working on education-related themes in the target schools and communities.

Programming provided under the auspices of the ISU 4U Promise includes projects targeting a family-connected approach to mathematics in kindergarten, ambitious science teaching with a connected summer program for upper elementary students, the application of STEM-based principles to understanding flight and glider design as well as youth participatory action research in the community for middle schoolers, and college readiness for families. These activities involve teachers, teacher education students, counseling staff at the schools, and interdisciplinary teams of Iowa State University faculty and staff and business and community partners. The reach of these programs is limited to a particular host context (e.g., school, neighborhood, or grade level). As the ISU 4U Promise grows, we aim to increase the number of programs and further the work to tailor content in response to what we learn from teachers, community-based educators, families, and youth. To this end, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach convenes meetings of the ISU 4U Promise Community Alliance, a network of community-based organizations in the partner neighborhoods, which was formed specifically to provide a means of articulation between grassroots community concerns and ongoing project development.

## Institutional Outcomes: What Effect Do Promise Programs Have?

The goal of promise programs is ambitious: to provide an underserved population identified at the state, community, or school level with resources to attend college. Although several promise programs have received national attention in both media and public policy, the "praise has somewhat outpaced the evidence" *(Harris, 2013, p. 101)*. The evidence that does exist does not speak to these programs' defining goal of promoting college access and affordability but addresses the impact on persistence themes such as college retention and completion rates *(Mendoza & Mendez, 2012–2013; St. John et al., 2003)*. How promise programs achieve their core goal of helping students come to college, and how they change an individual's demonstrated perception of self as a potential college student *(Harris, 2013)*, remains to be seen.

## Persistence: Funding or Failure?

Outcomes of the Oklahoma Promise indicate that students who receive promise program funding alone or in addition to other aid sources (Pell Grants and/or Stafford Loans) are more likely to persist from their freshman to sophomore year compared to students who do not receive promise funds *(Mendoza & Mendez, 2012–2013)*. Additionally, in the transition from sophomore to junior year, students with financial aid packages that included promise grants were the ones most likely to continue. Such impact was not evident in the transition from junior to senior year *(Mendoza & Mendez, 2012–2013)*, suggesting that the "pull" of a promise toward college-going does not outweigh the "push" effect of a challenging college experience.

This possibility is supported by the evaluation results of the 21st Century Scholars program in Indiana, which indicated that the program helped ensure that low-income students received financial aid and therefore promoted access through affordability of higher education. Further, debt was negatively associated with persistence by freshmen, supporting the important role that promise programs can play in student retention. However, results indicated that inadequate academic preparation trumped financial incentive. Failure to succeed, not lack of funding, was the ultimate cause of student dropouts *(St. John et al., 2003)*.

## Economic Revitalization: Direct or Indirect Evidence?

A corollary goal of promise programs is related to economic development. The possibility that they will increase the human capital of residents, increase their employability, and make the community business-friendly drives businesses to invest. Many programs, in partnership with businesses, see the role of the institution of higher education as one of keeping students—or potential future employees—local. According to our literature review, however, there is a lack of evidence for such impacts on economic revitalization.

Campus and Community Together for Good in Hancock, Michigan, provides an example. A vacant middle school building and athletic fields were transferred from Hancock Public School District to Finlandia University in return for tuition waivers for Hancock Central High School students for 12 years *(Vaade et al., 2010)*. Given Hancock's decreasing population and below-average household income, the tuition waivers supported students who might not otherwise have attended college. Although the collaboration sought to "revitalize Hancock's lagging economy and encourage families to move to town and stay" *(Vaade et al., 2010, p. 14)*, direct evidence of such revitalization in the local economy is lacking.

The evidence that exists to support the positive economic impacts of promise programs can be drawn indirectly from data such as housing markets and school enrollments. Residents of communities with promise programs have experienced a 7% to 12% increase in housing prices relative to the surrounding communities *(LeGower & Walsh, 2014)*. These increases, however, were not consistent for all home values; growth was most likely to be experienced for properties in the top 50% of the price distribution. The economic benefits of promise programs may not be reaped equitably across residents of target communities, which constitutes a substantive challenge to their redistribution potential.

Since most promise programs require attendance in a specific school or district, their economic potential can be indirectly assessed through changes in enrollment *(LeGower & Walsh, 2014)*. Prior to the start of the Pittsburgh Promise program, the city had lost 60% of its population, with a concomitant 60% decrease in district enrollment. Since the program's beginning, the population is experiencing growth for the first time in 50 years. This growth has persisted for 2 consecutive years, with increasing kindergarten

enrollments. When families enrolled their children in middle school, the Pittsburgh Promise was most often identified as the reason *(Ghubril, 2013)*.

## Building a Promising Literature Base

Promise programs are relatively new and ambitious attempts to interrupt a history of educational exclusion in the United States. There is need for a literature base on which to assess their success or failure in responding to the contexts they are set to serve, the processes they use to do so, and the effects they have. Our review of the current scholarly literature made it clear that there are opportunities to build a strong foundation for future efforts.

This article contributes to the literature by documenting the characteristics of the ISU 4U Promise that make it unique among existing programs. In terms of contextual antecedents, these are a focus on serving elementary schools, not just individuals. Every student enrolled in our partner elementary schools, regardless of social identity or academic profile, is eligible for the program. This allows us to work in partnership with these schools toward a goal of coevolving a shared culture of college-going in the early childhood years. In terms of processes, this speaks to a wide-net approach and responsive, coparticipatory programming as other unique aspects. With respect to the latter, the ISU 4U Promise solicits involvement from its various school, community, and university stakeholders. To create a culture of college-going in the schools, we work with a teacher liaison team that provides essential input into the direction of the in-school work. This includes ideas for professional development; in-classroom resources, such as grade-level lesson plans matched to opportunities available in each of ISU's colleges; and role modeling whereby ISU undergraduates assist teachers in talking with elementary students about college life. The ISU 4U Promise Community Alliance is organized by leaders of community-based organizations elected by their peers to synergize available local resources to support out-of-school family and school programming. These resources may include activities made possible through funded projects undertaken by ISU faculty, staff, and students. A small, internally funded project consists of middle school youth mapping their neighborhoods' learning spaces and making suggestions for changes, suggestions that are then communicated back to school and community stakeholders. A larger project with funding from the National Institutes of Health involves preparing youth to perform citizen science in the urban ecosystem. In this way, the ISU 4U Promise benefits faculty, staff, and students at ISU

who want to practice engaged scholarship in support of youth and family populations traditionally not well served by the university. Because it is a university-wide initiative, it has helped facilitate outreach by individuals in such diverse fields as education, event management, journalism, mechanical engineering, and physics.

In terms of outcomes, it is too early to proclaim in what ways these ISU 4U Promise activities, collectively, have made an impact toward the goal of college-going. In line with a DBR model, we have been building the program as we implement it such that none of the cohorts have received the same "dose" of any in- or out-of-school programming. Since the first fifth-grade cohort of ISU 4U Promise students won't arrive at ISU until 2021, we will not know until then how well the "intervention" of the ISU 4U Promise has paved the way. At its most basic, the intervention of the ISU 4U Promise and other programs is the promise of tuition awards. To document the outcome of that intervention requires tracking eligible youth through the K-12 trajectory and conducting "within" or "across" comparisons by examining student data in partner schools before and after the identified year of promise implementation to determine any significant shifts; it will also involve examining significant differences in student data between partner and nonpartner schools with similar demographics. This would include ascertaining how many students come to the university through nonpromise pathways such as community college transition or direct enrollment, and how many stay through graduation.

The evaluation plan for the ISU 4U Promise includes both this summative approach and more formative components. The summative component of the ISU 4U Promise evaluation plan largely follows an objectives model in which measureable milestones consistent with ISU 4U Promise program goals, such as successful ISU enrollment, are identified and assessed. Within this approach, proximate outcomes, including school success and other factors indicative of academic progression, are monitored. In addition, distal student outcomes consistent with long-term Promise goals, including not only college admission but also advancement and graduation, also must be monitored and evaluated. Although much of the summative evaluation component follows a traditional outcomes evaluation approach, the contextual complexity of implementation does not fit easily into an objectives-oriented model, making a "simple" approach to evaluation anything but.

Given the complex interplay of the student, family, school, and community contexts in which the ISU 4U Promise is embedded, the formative aims of the evaluation plan take a developmental

approach. Gains regarding information delivery and program understanding are assessed routinely, but at different times, among students, their parents, and teachers within the ISU 4U Promise schools. Information from these assessments not only tracks gains in program process but also identifies areas for potential changes in program emphases that are shared collaboratively between evaluators and the ISU 4U Promise team. This interactive approach to monitoring process and adapting programming as needed in ongoing time, as opposed to a single grand assessment at year end, provides an opportunity to shape and develop process initiatives to best achieve the overall goals of the ISU 4U Promise.

Incorporating context into the ISU 4U Promise evaluation presents a current challenge toward which the evaluation team is presently working. We are now hearing anecdotal accounts from our community partners indicating that students are starting to see themselves as college-goers: One such incident involves a partner telling us that for the first time in 17 years students are asking about the diploma hanging on her office wall. Such accounts provide evidence of the need for evaluation that implements a participant-focused approach to identify relevant community indices and characteristics, such as frequency of college conversations. Per DBR, this type of evaluation will help us assess and develop the basis for an adaptive evaluation strategy that can potentially capture community-level impacts of the ISU 4U Promise.

This need for evolving methods of evaluation indicates the broader demand of promise programs. It is not just that changing the whole system requires changing its parts but also that we need theories and methods to help us see and learn from the interlocking phenomena of change. The "basic" approach of providing an accounting of the correlations produced between the tuition awards and student data would not answer the most important questions for our understanding of these programs as part of the educational landscape. An approach is needed that extends to an exploration of how the tuition award affects perceptions and behavior related to college-going, requiring more flexible theoretical and methodological educational research paradigms. Since the tuition awards are implemented as part of a context with simultaneous changes happening in formal and informal educational contexts, an approach to evaluation is needed that can embrace and examine the many variables at play. For this reason, DBR and "in-depth qualitative techniques and sophisticated quantitative methodologies are necessary to capture the link between process and outcomes" *(Nora, 2002, p. 68)*. The ability of the ISU 4U Promise

to engage in this type of evaluation will reflect the way it is able to live up to its bidirectional and bivalent change orientation. Acknowledging the contexts of implementation—homes, schools, communities—as possessing their own repositories of knowledge that interact with the promise as *a part of it*, not *apart from it*, is how the university can affirm an engagement orientation to the communities it serves. This evolving strategy has representational and redistributive dimensions as we create places around the table for new perspectives, initiating conversations about how we can know the world we study that don't rest upon a notion of singular positivist objectivity but one enriched by value placed on multiplicity and learning from the margins *(Harding, 1998)*. This approach is an example of how we can change the whole system by changing its parts. As Hagedorn and Tierney *(2002)* write, increasing access to college means grappling with "how to engage those institutions and groups that hold capital to become more responsive" to those who don't *(p. 5)*, especially when "[faculty] for the most part are neither ready nor rewarded for greater engagement with local communities" *(p. 5)*.

## Conclusion

Reilly *(2003)* writes,

> The distinctive mark of a great public institution in the 21st century, when campuses no longer hold the exclusive charter for the discovery and dissemination of knowledge, will lie in how the institution uses public service to inform its research and inspire its instruction. *(p. 30)*

The rise of promise programs provides an opportune time for universities to examine their public service missions and strengthen traditional outreach with models that recognize what is to be gained by taking in diversity of experiences, perspectives, beliefs, and behaviors of historically nondominant groups. For student recruitment this means conceptualizing multicultural and college-going identities as the same. "Efforts to mold low-income Latino and African American students into applicants who fit the university's current narrow constructions of eligibility are not likely to bring significant new diversity to the university" *(Oakes, Rogers, Lipton, and Morrell, 2002, p. 109)*. What the 21st-century university needs are students who have gained "confidence and skills to negotiate college without sacrificing one's own identity and connections

with one's home community" *(Oakes et al., 2002, p. 108)*. One goal of college access as a lever for social change—enhanced representation—works in tandem with the other—enhanced redistribution. The students who come to campus are not just diverse in cultural identity but also in intellect, substantively enriching the learning environment for others, especially those for whom they serve as role models, further opening doors that have for too long been closed.

We, like Kinsella in *Field of Dreams*, hope that if we build it, they will come. The ISU 4U Promise is our own diamond in the cornfields, an early-commitment college access and affordability program intended to spur educational and economic opportunity and achieve social equity for students underrepresented at the university because they have been underserved in schools and society. These are the ghosts that our own professional backyard project is trying to expel. Like Kinsella's, our effort requires razing some long-planted practices and undertaking something that is unique among our university neighbors. In this article we have situated those efforts within what the literature reveals about the state of similar endeavors. In doing so we seek to catalyze additional scholarship around promise programs and their intentions, impacts, and inquiries, in hopes that, with time, promising pathways for universities aspiring to update their approach to college access will be clear.

# Acknowledgments

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## About the Authors

**Katherine Richardson Bruna** is the director of ISU 4U Promise, and associate professor at Iowa State University. Her interests are multicultural and bilingual education. She earned her Ph.D. in sociocultural studies of education from the University of California, Davis.

**Jennifer Farley** is currently a postdoctoral fellow at the Academy for Child and Family Well Being at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. Her interests are school culture and climate and school bullying. She earned her Ph.D. in education from Iowa State University.

**Carla A. McNelly** is the postdoctoral research associate for the ISU 4U Promise. Her interests are bilingual and multilingual education. She earned her Ph.D. in education studies from the University of Oregon.

**Debra M. Sellers** is associate dean and director of Human Sciences Extension and Outreach at Iowa State University. Her interest is adaptive living for people with aging-related disability. She earned her Ph.D. in lifespan human development from Kansas State University.

**Roberta Johnson** is the director of Student Financial Aid at Iowa State University. She is particularly interested in access and affordability issues for low-income students. She earned her M.S. in counseling education from Iowa State University.

# Developing Critical Consciousness and Social Justice Self-Efficacy: Lessons From Feminist Community Engagement Student Narratives

Angela Clark-Taylor

## Abstract

As community engagement continues to be institutionalized within colleges and universities, it is increasingly important that it retain its founding mission to prepare engaged citizens to address societal issues and contribute to the public good. Unfortunately, dominant models of community engagement remain charity focused and thereby reinforce social hierarchies that undermine higher education's mission of public good. Though many studies have focused on critiquing charity-focused models of community engagement, few studies offer alternative approaches. Utilizing an intrinsic single-case-study approach, this study investigates what can be learned from the narratives of 12 students in a community engagement program that uses feminist pedagogy. The findings suggest that a feminist approach to community engagement can be a catalyst for students to develop critical consciousness and social justice self-efficacy by addressing issues of privilege and oppression in community-engaged work in ways that current community engagement models have yet to operationalize.

*Keywords:* community engagement, service-learning, critical consciousness, social justice, self-efficacy, feminism

## Introduction

*T*he Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching *(2015)* defines community engagement as "the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity" *(para. 14)*. Saltmarsh and Driscoll (as cited in *Iverson & James, 2014a*) note that a larger purpose of community engagement is to prepare educated and engaged citizens with strengthened democratic values and civic responsibility. As community engagement continues to grow in popularity and as more institutions engage their students within the community, it is important that engagement be seen not as charity, but as a way to promote education as a public good.

Currently dominant community engagement models are charity focused *(Butin, 2012)*. By helping those without—in ways that meet the institution's needs over those of the community—charity-based models of community engagement only further the structural oppression of communities by situating students and institutions of higher education as a privileged class. Though students through these models interact with the community, they also implicitly learn how to replicate hegemonic, racist, classist, heterosexist, cissexist, and ableist systems. Iverson and James *(2014a)* suggest that if feminism is foremost about action, then feminist theories and practices or, more importantly, their intersection in feminist praxis—that is, theory-informed action and reflection *(Stanley, 1990)*—can transform community engagement for all students and institutions by implementing a critical approach to engagement.

This study represents an effort to contribute to the evolving discussion on alternative and critical models of community engagement by providing an example of a feminist model of engagement. I utilized a qualitative, intrinsic, single-case-study methodology *(Stake, 1995)*, utilizing a feminist lens, to explore how a group of students came to understand community engagement and the ways that feminism informed and developed their critical consciousness *(Cipolle, 2010; Freire, 1974/2013)* and social justice self-efficacy *(Miller et al., 2009)*. Most research on feminist community engagement has been conducted within a single women's studies course. This approach to investigating feminist community engagement has left a substantial gap in the research. My experience constructing and facilitating a feminist community engagement program, open to students from all disciplines, over the course of 2 years provided an avenue to fill this gap in the research by looking at students over multiple years and outside the women's studies classroom.

## The Purpose of Community Engagement

Two major themes in the contemporary literature on community engagement include community engagement as an expression of higher education's work in furthering the public good *(Banks, 2008; Deans, 1999; DePrince, 2009; Giroux, 2009; Saltmarsh, 2008; Tierney, 2006)* and providing tools to institutionalize community engagement *(Bringle & Hatcher, 2000; Brukardt, Holland, Percy, & Zimpher, 2004; Butin, 2006, 2012; Furco, 2002)*. The purpose of community engagement is 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, 2015, para. 15).* Kezar *(2005)* notes that one of the most substantial ways the public good has been reinvigorated in higher education is through the community engagement movement. Chambers and Gopaul *(2008)* define the public good as "an aspiration, a vision and destination of a 'better state' that we can know in common that we cannot know alone" *(p. 61).*

For the purpose of this inquiry, this definition best fits the public good as envisioned by scholars and advocates for feminist community engagement and social justice. For this reason I use Cipolle's *(2010)* definition of social justice. Cipolle *(2010)* defines promoting social justice as "contributing to social change and public policies that will increase gender and racial equality, end discrimination of various kinds, and reduce the stark income inequalities" *(p. 157).*

Within a generation, community engagement has become commonplace in higher education *(Butin, 2012).* With the goal of assisting colleges and universities in "deepening their ability to improve community life and to educate students for civic and social responsibility," Campus Compact is the only national higher education association dedicated solely to campus-based civic engagement *(Campus Compact, n.d.).* In 2006, over 950 campuses were members of Campus Compact *(Butin, 2006).* Today, Campus Compact has increased to over 1,100 members; it involves more than 1,800,000 students in 6,600,000 hours of work in the community. In addition, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching moved its community engagement classification from a voluntary process to a 5-year accreditation process *(Butin, 2006).* The works of Campus Compact and of the Carnegie Foundation are prominent examples of the growth and accreditation of community engagement within higher education. These initiatives reflect a shift in higher education toward institutionalizing community engagement.

As community engagement is institutionalized throughout higher education and as more institutions engage their students within the community, it becomes important that higher education scholars and practitioners maintain the intent of community engagement to contribute to the public good. Marullo and Edwards *(2000)* note that "charity refers to the provision of help or relief to those in need" *(p. 899).* Through charity, institutions with resources provide some of their resources to those presumably without resources. Acts of charity give students the opportunity to work on small problems or give financial support; they can feel momentarily engaged without engaging deeply in communities different from their own. Marullo and Edwards *(2000)* provide the example of a soup kitchen service project. White and/or suburban middle-

class students in a soup kitchen are there only to serve meals; as they see inner city residents of color utilize the soup kitchen over and over again, they may explain these community members' need for the soup kitchen not as a result of structural issues of poverty, but as a function of their race or urban location. Marullo and Edwards *(2000)* note that if community members are the driving force for change in their own communities and students and institutions of higher education engage with those residents in service of the community's self-guided goals, then they are more likely to see residents' poverty as an issue of larger structural inequities. Rhoads *(1997)* and Mitchell *(2007)* call for models of community engagement that employ a critical lens. Critical service-learning insists that students consider not only how we can help people, but the underlying systemic issues that create oppression *(Bickford & Reynolds, 2002)*. Mitchell *(2007)* notes that attention to social change, questioning power structures, and developing authentic relationships are additional ways we can make service-learning more critical. This approach is not only more beneficial to the communities being served but also can make students civically and politically oriented, as opposed to charity focused.

## Feminist Community Engagement

Feminist community engagement is only a small piece of the larger body of work that exists on community engagement. Most of this work focuses on the use of critical pedagogy *(Bisignani, 2014; Mena & Vaccaro, 2014; Seher, 2014; Verjee & Butterwick, 2014)*, internship programs *(Bennett, 2002; Price, 2002; Tice, 2002)*, linking the use of a feminist label to identity or activism *(Downing & Roush,1985; Moradi, Subich, & Phillips, 2002; Yoder, Tobias, & Snell, 2011)*, and online education efforts *(Cunningham & Crandall, 2014)*. More importantly, little research exists on feminist community engagement outside the silo of gender and women's studies *(Bricker-Jenkins & Hooyman, 1986; Iverson & James, 2014b)*. Gender and women's studies scholars have focused primarily on theoretical and pedagogical considerations *(Bubriski & Semaan, 2009; Naples, 2002; Trigg & Balliet, 1997)*, including scholarly analysis of pedagogy *(Agha-Jaffar, 2000; Bricker-Jenkins & Hooyman, 1986; Washington, 2000)*, participant self-analysis *(Bennett, 2002; Price, 2002)*, and student learning outcomes in gender and women's studies courses *(Peet & Reed, 2002; Williams & Ferber, 2008)*.

# Feminism as a Tool to Transform Community Engagement

Building on the work of feminist community engagement scholars in gender and women's studies, I propose that a critical feminist lens may help mediate the dominant charity-focused models of engagement in higher education and provide an example of how to implement social justice focused programs that address critical societal issues and contribute to the public good. Border crossing between feminism and community engagement *(Shaaban-Magana & Miller, 2014)*, as well as between the community and campuses, takes a relational and reflexive approach, using consciousness raising and disruptive pedagogy to subvert the dominant charity-based model of community engagement *(Iverson & James, 2014b)*. Feminist scholars use border crossing as a framework for working across difference in both theory and practice. Critical race feminists and critical whiteness studies utilize this approach to illuminate the interconnectedness of racism, sexism, and classism that replicates the dominant model of community engagement *(Mena & Vaccaro, 2014; Verjee & Butterwick, 2014)*. By drawing attention to the implicit and embedded narratives in community engagement, critical race feminists expose how the depiction of the engaged student as the well-to-do white male providing acts of charity to save poor men and women of color upholds that status quo for those students who participate in this model.

Rather than converting students to a particular ideology, "feminist pedagogies have advocated for transformation of the traditional power dynamic of the classroom that positions the instructor as the sole expert and unquestioned authority in the room" *(Bisignani, 2014, p. 97)*. Influenced by Freire's *(1970/1999)* resistance to the banking method of education and Hooks's *(1994)* call for meaning-making among students and teachers in the classroom, feminist community engagement is able to work toward deconstructing these hierarchies. This method of co-mentoring and reciprocal teaching not only disrupts the hierarchy in the classroom but also works to "disrupt dichotomous notions of gender, race, class, sexuality, ability and other social factors and to illuminate the power dynamics inherent in the creation of meaning" *(Seher, 2014, p. 119)*. Through raising awareness and professional role modeling, feminist pedagogy can be a powerful tool in any arena *(Seher, 2014)*. Mentorship not only from instructors, but also from community partners and peers, can bring great value to student learning. Modeling of feminist identities can facilitate students'

experimentation with activism and social justice *(Clark-Taylor, Mitchell, & Rich, 2014)*.

These approaches are an important reminder that good community engagement is about helping our students see their potential to be agents of social change *(Cunningham & Crandall, 2014)*. Feminist community engagement is uniquely situated to push this dialogue forward. Though it is clear that the mission of gender and women's studies influences feminist community engagement, it is also clear that there are many benefits of utilizing feminism as a tool to transform community engagement throughout higher education. These benefits include critical consciousness *(Cipolle, 2010; Freire, 1974/1999)* or students' deeper awareness of their own privileges, relating to others, a critical understanding of social issues, and hands-on experience working for social change.

## Theoretical Framework

Though there are many types of feminism or feminisms *(Hart, 2006)*, they share the following beliefs: (a) that sex and gender inequities exist; (b) that these inequities are socially constructed (they are not natural or essential); (c) that these inequities should be eliminated through social change; and (d) that other similar power and inequity systems exist in other forms of difference, including race, class, citizenship, sexual orientation, sexuality, and ability *(Allan, 2010)*. I approach this work as a critical constructivist and use a bricolage of feminist thought as a theoretical frame in which to explore student experiences of feminist community engagement. Bricolage uses multiple and at times contradictory theoretical perspectives to create more complex understandings that are fitted to the particular study context *(Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014; Kincheloe & Berry, 2004)*. My emerging bricolage, introduced more commonly by contemporary feminist thinkers *(Baumgardner & Richards, 2005; Heywood & Drake, 1997; Moraga & Anzaldua, 1983; Walker, 1995)*, draws on woman of color feminisms *(Collins, 2010; Lorde, 1984; Tong, 2014)*; it employs critical feminist theories of intersectionality *(Crenshaw, 1991)*, standpoint theory *(Collins, 1990; Harding, 1987)*, and feminist concepts of power *(Allan, 2010; Foucault, 1982)* in an attempt to consciously work for the inclusion of diverse voices within feminist research.

Mann *(2013)* notes five areas of overlap within intersectionality, standpoint theory, and concepts of power, including (a) having a shared grounding in a social constructivist view of knowledge and therefore the relationship between knowledge and power; (b)

understanding the erasure of voices within feminist movements and seeking to give voice to nondominant groups; (c) agreeing that there are no universal experiences and that research is not value neutral; (d) recognizing that individuals construct knowledge and discourse and also are constructed by them; and (e) pointing to multiple and not always traditional sites of knowledge production.

This study employs a bricolage of feminist thought to draw on the commonalities in multiple feminist theoretical approaches to investigate individual meaning-making; however, it also draws on the uniqueness of each approach to make sense of experience across individuals, to investigate power relationships, and to seek transformation and social change. Few studies have employed this approach, and all draw on many different scholars *(Pitre, Kushner, Raine, & Hegadoren, 2013; Safarik, 2003; Sprague, 2005).* Pitre et al. *(2013)* note that "a critical perspective permits an examination of human action and interaction in dialectic relationship with social structural constraints" *(p. 121).* Change can therefore be obstructed by structures of power and domination. The critical researcher then investigates reflexive practices and personal meanings within individuals' symbolic worlds that seek to transform oppression *(Pitre et al., 2013).* Pitre et al.'s *(2013)* lens pays particular attention to how aspects of personal identity, such as sex, gender, race, class, sexual orientation, ability, and other axes of difference, are exploited to remove individual and collective agency. An important tension is worth noting. As feminism is historically rooted in gender *(Allan, 2010)* as its primary lens, it may be hard to reconcile feminism's emerging theories that focus on employing an intersectional lens *(Collins, 2010; Moraga & Anzaldua, 1983).* It is with this critical intersectional lens *(Crenshaw, 1991),* feminist concepts of power *(Allan, 2010; Foucault, 1982),* and lived queer *(Abes, 2009; Self, 2015)* and antiracist white feminist activism *(Linder, 2015)* that I approach this work, using a bricolage of feminist theories and lived experiences. Because sociopolitical contexts are rapidly changing and informing feminist theories, I found it unrealistic to apply only one theory, but instead found common ground in intersectionality *(Crenshaw, 1991),* standpoint theory *(Collins 1990; Harding, 1987),* and theories of power *(Allan, 2010; Tong, 2014).* As feminism seeks to raise collective consciousness and transform personal and political realities *(Naples, 2003),* I believe feminism has grown and can continue to grow in this direction.

My use of a feminist bricolage sought to reveal how personal, symbolic, structural, and ideological contexts affected the understanding and meaning-making of individuals, thus giving a voice

to traditionally silenced individuals *(Sprague, 2005)*. Case study as a methodological and analytical tool fits within this bricolage approach exceptionally well, with its clear focus on how participant storytellers view their agency in the world, how power and alienation limit knowers, and how individual resistance and emancipation can create social justice *(Safarik, 2003)*.

# Methodology

Case study as an analytical tool fits well within my feminist approach to this study, as both the program in this study and the study design are informed by their unique context. Flyvbjerg *(2011)* defines a case study as an "intensive analysis of an individual unit as a person or community stressing developmental factors in relation to environment" *(p. 301)*. Stake *(1995)* would refer to this as a "bounded system" *(p. 2)*. This study employed a single-case-study methodology *(Stake, 1995)* and focused on the phenomenon of the Summer Internship in Feminist Community Engagement (SIFCE) program. The study is unique in that it does not focus on more than one entity or common event occurring over different time periods. In that it focuses on a specific phenomenon rather than seeking generalizations, it is intrinsic *(Stake, 1995)*. My interest in this case is based on both its particular nature and its uniqueness in speaking to the concept of feminist community engagement. Finally, it is also a pragmatic case in that this study is guided by focused questions that influence the approach to data analysis *(Stake, 1995)*. Starting with intrinsic single-case studies, Stake *(1995)* notes that we must see the importance of one story and not compare but merely seek to know this particular case more deeply. He describes how sometimes that case chooses us; for instance, when a teacher decides to study a phenomenon or a student experience in their classroom *(Stake, 1995)*. As the creator and facilitator of the SIFCE program, I found that this approach resonated with the goal of this study. This study was guided by the following questions:

1. What can we learn from student experiences within a feminist community engagement program about feminism as a means to foster students' critical consciousness and social justice self-efficacy?

2. What can student experiences within a feminist community engagement program tell us about feminism as a theoretical and practical tool to move the dominant community engagement model of charity toward a social justice model?

# The Case: Summer Internship in Feminist Community Engagement

The SIFCE program was created and conducted at a private, research-intensive university in the northeast United States that is located in a postindustrial city with a long history of feminist activism. The program was created at the university at which I worked as a coordinator of the Gender and Women's Studies Center (GWC). The SIFCE program, open to all undergraduate students, combined a professional internship experience with guest speakers, field trips to historic sites, and readings and reflections on feminist community engagement. The program's combination of academic, experiential, and professional experiences was meant to inspire and equip participants to become stronger, more prepared leaders for social change. The community partners were selected based on their preexisting relationships with the GWC program. The only requirement of the community-based organizations was that they provide participants with a feminist-identified supervisor.

The participants worked 20 to 25 hours per week at their internship sites. In addition, participants met throughout the week for workshops, discussion of readings, and to hear from guest speakers. Participants also used this time to reflect on their internships. Field trips were arranged to local historic sites that helped participants to learn about the long history of feminist community engagement in the area. As the facilitator, I also kept in touch with the community-based organizations and site supervisors at least biweekly.

Each year participants completed internships at different sites across the city; however, they also shared time living and learning together within their cohort. Several of the community-based internship sites were the same for the 2014 and 2015 cohorts; the only two participants who shared a site were Mason and Denise. For a point of reference on shared classroom experiences, Abigail, Olivia, Ava, Lea, Stacey, Denise, and Mason were in the 2014 cohort, and Emma, Tanvi, Tom, Aiden, and Deanna were in the 2015 cohort. In addition, participants came from different majors across the university, but I believe it is important to note that four out of the five 2015 cohort participants were women's studies majors or minors, with the fifth participant completing a senior project in women's studies. I believe this difference in previous exposure to feminist thought shaped the way that participants talked about their experience. This is reflected in the participant table and discussed within the findings.

## Sample

The sample selected for this research was composed of pre-existing data, consisting of 12 undergraduate student applications, reflections, in-class assignments, and evaluations gathered from two SIFCE cohorts from 2014 and 2015. The 12 students in the summer program were selected through an application and interview process conducted by both university staff and community partners. In the application, students identified past volunteer, work, and academic experience in addition to providing an essay on what they hoped to gain from and bring to the program. Only one applicant was turned away due to lack of funding; one applicant chose not to accept a place in the program, and one student received a national social justice related internship and participated in only part of the program. Participants were recruited into the study in August 2015 after their completion of the summer program. Written consent from each student participant was required and collected as directed by Institutional Review Board protocol. The resulting 12 student participants came from majors across the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences and were interested in learning more about feminism and community engagement. Not all students identified as feminists. For a summary of participants, internship sites, cohort year, and self-reported demographics, see Table 1.

**Table 1. Study Participants at a Glance**

| Name | Cohort | Internship site | Major | Self-described identity |
|------|--------|-----------------|-------|-------------------------|
| Ava | 2014 | LGBT community center | Bioethics | Krio-American woman, straight, middle-class, grew up in the Western U.S., youngest of three sisters, raised by a single mom |
| Olivia | 2014 | Domestic violence shelter | International relations/ prelaw minor | Queer, white, gender-queer, feminist, sexual assault survivor, who comes from a middle-class Christian family in a rural community in the Northeastern U.S. |

| Name | Cohort | Internship site | Major | Self-described identity |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mason | 2014 | Justice and legal advocacy organization | Political science | Straight, white, cisgender woman, anarchist, feminist, working-class, raised locally by her father, transferred from local community college |
| Denise | 2014 | Justice and legal advocacy organization | English/ history | Lesbian, feminist, white woman, middle-class, grew up in a suburb of the local community |
| Abigail | 2014 | Homeless youth shelter | International relations/ history | White woman, straight, upper-middle-class, who grew up in the Western U.S. and is a member of an athletic team |
| Lea | 2014 | Girls' charter school | Psychology | Black disabled female with cerebral palsy and autism, Nigerian, grew up in the Southern U.S. |
| Stacey | 2014 | Reproductive health clinic | Public health | Undocumented immigrant, Mexican-American, cis woman, straight, working-class, feminist, who grew up in a suburban area outside a major urban area in the Midwestern U.S. |
| Aiden | 2015 | Reproductive health clinic | Public health/ women's studies | Cis-gender, demisexual, white, lower-middle-class man who grew up in the Northeast but went to high school in the Southeast, feminist, sexual assault survivor, struggles with an eating disorder |
| Tanvi | 2015 | LGBT community center | Evolutionary biology/ women's studies minor | Queer woman, third-culture kid, Indian American who grew up both abroad and in the Western U.S., middle-class, feminist |

| Name | Cohort | Internship site | Major | Self-described identity |
|------|--------|-----------------|-------|-------------------------|
| Tom | 2015 | Justice and legal advocacy organization | Music/ political science | Straight, cis, upper-class, able, White male, grew up in local community, parents are doctors, twin, feminist |
| Deanna | 2015 | Post-abortion talkline | Women's studies | Puerto Rican woman, straight, who grew up "poor" in Puerto Rico, the Southern U.S., and in a major urban area in the Northeastern U.S. |
| Emma | 2015 | Human trafficking court | Public health/ women's studies | White, Jewish, lesbian, upper-middle-class, grew up in Midwestern U.S. suburb, feminist |

*Note. All participant demographic information here is self-described and from participants' first program reflection. Some identifications, particularly as a feminist, shifted during the program.*

## Methods of Data Collection

Throughout the program students were required to submit reflections on their experiences in the community and in the cohort. These reflections served as the main source of data for this study. Reflections were used to focus on student learning and development throughout the program, as opposed to post program interviews where students may reflect on their continued growth after the program. Students in the 2014 and 2015 cohorts were provided the same seven prompts throughout the program. All 12 students completed all seven prompts. Prompts for these reflections asked students to explore their positionality, privilege, and views on feminism, activism, and social change. The prompts also asked them to learn the history, organizational structure, and funding sources of their internship sites. They were asked to explore how their organizations handle racial and other inequities on site and with the populations they serve. The final prompt asked students to reflect on their overall experience in the program. Additional documents were collected, including participants' applications submitted for the program and weekly evaluations on program content and facilitation collected throughout the program. Two workshops each year included student activities that yielded additional documents, which were collected at the end of the sessions.

## Methods of Data Analysis

The qualitative analysis in this study consisted of three essential steps: preparing and de-identifying the existing data used in this study; using thematic analysis to code the participants' reflections in order to analyze the data; and preparing a final report that included building a detailed description of the case, constructing student profiles and a participant table, and outlining the findings through themes. When coding data, Stake *(1995)* suggests a process of alternating between trusting coding and trusting initial observations; however, as Yazan *(2015)* notes, Stake provides little guidance on how to balance the two aspects of the process. Here I drew on Yin's *(2011)* work, making sure my theoretical framework, the theoretical underpinnings of the program, and the data gathered were aligned to answer the questions posed in the case. I then attempted to construct a chain of evidence *(Yin, 2011)*. To build this chain of evidence, I employed emergent coding. Saldaña *(2010)* notes that codes are an exploratory problem-solving technique. The coding strategy I used was a two-part comparative process. In the first part of the process I became familiar with the data through coding for recurring language, symbols, and other salient emergent details. Throughout second-cycle coding I focused on building categories and themes that arose from the data *(Saldaña, 2010)*.

## Trustworthiness Strategies

The highest level of trustworthiness was attempted in this research study, with particular attention paid to credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability *(Shenton, 2004)*. To increase credibility, I utilized a methodology that acknowledges the insider role of the researchers to put the data in a deeper context. This was important to my role as the creator and facilitator of the feminist community engagement summer program. The methodological process in this study was intended to understand student experiences and meaning making in the context of a feminist community engagement program. Case study and feminist approaches to research make space for the researcher to explore and express their positionality *(Nagar & Geiger, 2007)* and connections to the data and participants. As the preexisting data in this study came from a program that I facilitated, it was important to have a methodology that made use of this connection, which in another context would have been a limitation. It was also useful to have a smaller sample size and the in-depth data needed to study this kind of phenomenon *(Maxwell, 2005)*. Multiple data sources were used for comparison across data sources. Stake *(1995)* and Creswell *(2007)*

note that triangulating data by using multiple sources of evidence lends credibility to research findings. Looking at themes across two different groups of students increased dependability in the data and transferability of the findings *(Shenton, 2004)*. In addition, I presented the findings of the study to eight of the 12 participants. The purpose of this presentation, often called member checking, was to increase the credibility, reliability, and confirmability of the findings *(Creswell, 2007)*. During this presentation, participants were encouraged to give feedback. Findings were fleshed out in partnership with participants in this meeting. Participants who were unable to attend were provided the presentation and findings as a document and were able to give feedback via e-mail. An anonymous electronic survey was also provided to all 12 participants to solicit feedback.

## Findings

In presenting the two central themes from this study, I attempt to honor the authentic experiences that participants conveyed and the collective meaning we came to through our discussion of the findings. The first theme, the importance of feminist community in critical engagement, includes the subthemes of the value of multiple sites of support, building bridges across difference, and the connection between feminism and action. The second theme, examining feminist identities, includes subthemes of developing a feminist identity, struggling with feminism's contradictions, and choosing your own path.

## The Importance of Feminist Community in Critical Engagement

Participants defined the feminist community within the SIFCE program as being made up of the cohort of participants in the program, the community organizations in which the participants served, the historic sites they visited, their site supervisors, the program facilitator, and guest speakers. Feminist community activities were defined as reading and reflecting on feminist literature, discovering new language, hearing new ideas, writing to the facilitator, learning feminist history, connecting with community members, dialoging with the cohort, listening to others in the cohort, mentoring, taking action, and having real-world experiences.

**The value of multiple sites of support.** Being connected to and supported by two or three components of the SIFCE program enhanced the value of the feminist community for the participants.

This does not mean that participants did not find value in all the components of the SIFCE program, but instead that in addition to finding value overall they found support in particular areas of the program. The areas were slightly different for each participant. For instance, Aiden noted: "My supervisor was always extensively supportive and compassionate about my desire to learn." Yet he was also inspired by the historical field trips and how they humanized historic figures for social justice. He wrote:

> Being able to stand in the same room that Harriet Tubman once stood, look over the bed in which Susan B. Anthony slept, and walk through the house in which Matilda Joslyn Gage lived was life-changing to say the least. It helped me realize that these women were not supernatural figures detached from the everyday masses; they were regular people just like me, who did extraordinary things because of their unbreakable will and fierce determination to achieve social justice.

Though Ava worked well with her site supervisor and enjoyed the reflections, her two areas of greatest support came from the community at her internship site and the SIFCE cohort members. Ava noted: "Getting to hear the stories of people within the LGBTQ community (most notably the stories of those who are transgender) really stirred something in me. I've done so much reflecting this summer. . ." For Ava this experience, combined with the cohort discussion model, was particularly meaningful:

> I'm very thankful for this experience and being able to explore feminism and meet with such great minds in readings and in person. It's amazing to me how invigorating it can be to be in the company of like-minded people, but also be able to challenge one another. Confrontation can be healthy and argument and debate is what helps us to grow.

In the end these sites of support helped participants to balance expectations and challenges they may have faced from other areas of the program. For instance, Denise, Mason, and Lea at one time or another struggled with feeling that they did not fit in within the cohort. Their strong ties to their site and site supervisors helped them to still find value and meaning within the program. In addition, Denise found the readings and reflections to be an outlet, and Mason developed a mentoring relationship with the program

facilitator. In contrast, Abigail and Emma struggled with their site and site supervisor and leaned on the cohort, the reflections, the facilitator, and in Abigail's case the program readings for support.

**Building bridges across difference.** The feminist community and the differing areas of support provided participants with tools to navigate tensions that arose from differences in feminist beliefs, values, and experiences both at their sites and within the cohort. Participants investigated privilege and oppression deeply within the program and related their learning in part to feminist theories of intersectionality, but also to a larger extent to their experiences of reading, reflecting, and listening to the groups they interacted with in their self-described feminist community. These experiences included not only understanding the interlocking system of privilege and oppression, but recognizing how both sameness and acceptance of difference could build community. There was also a deep acknowledgment of how feminism failed or succeeded in providing inclusive representations of difference.

Many of the participants struggled to get this process started. Emma, a women's studies major, noted how difficult talking about privilege was outside the classroom, stating:

> I never anticipated struggling to write a short personal reflection on privilege. I practically studied privilege for four years, and it is one of the most popular topics of casual conversation among my peers, friends, and even family. I realized, though, that it is easy for me to talk about privilege when I'm thinking about policy and politics abstractly—[in] intellectual spaces where I'm not required to investigate or interrogate my own experiences.

Students' ability to confront their privilege began with an examination of their Whiteness. Mason noted:

> Many of my other privileges stem from this one since it opens doors and honestly gives me a completely different world to work within. I am often ashamed of my social whiteness, wanting so badly to know what it is like to not be white. I want to understand on a real and deeper level just how much skin color effects *[sic]* people and when you come from the upper side of things it becomes harder to understand and [you are] mostly

dependent on finding that understanding through the *[sic]* experiences of others.

Mason started from a place of guilt but through experiences at her site, in-class readings, and discussions with her site supervisor and the cohort, she began to think of ways to challenge her own beliefs and improve her actions. She wrote:

> To fix this it has to be everyone's responsibility to learn and be empowered to react to difference in a better way. I feel it in myself and hate the discomfort and uncertainty[;] I try to hide it, remember what I have seen others do in similar situations or quickly place myself in their shoes to judge my own reactions and I am sure more often than not I fail at getting it right but I try. I am not really sure how to handle these moments. These readings help tackle that.

Olivia sought to use her Whiteness to create space for the voices of communities of color, noting:

> Being white gives me the power to challenge racism and be heard by people who won't listen to non-white people. If they are willing, I can also direct people to listen to the experiences of non-white people themselves, rather than to me.

In contrast, Tom sought to position himself as an ally and a partner to those in communities different from himself. He wrote:

> My place as a white, straight, cis, upperclass, never systemically discriminated against being means I have much to learn from all others in the movement, at all times, and many more instances of privilege checking to undertake. I welcome this with open arms, and hope that I only get better at supporting the movement and morphing the system.

Participants who identified as queer or as persons of color looked toward feminism to be inclusive of their multiple identities. They questioned feminism's gender lens and challenged themselves, their peers, guest speakers, and their site supervisors to think beyond gender when discussing difference and inclusion. Stacey noted:

> I for one do not live my life as a genderless (although I recognize some people do), anonymous person in the same way that I don't take off my Latina hat[;] they are all a part of me that influence every aspect of my life and not necessarily in positive ways and there has to be that explicit recognition in feminism too, both individually and as intersecting parts of my identity.

Deanna struggled with similar feelings and shared how the feminist community within SIFCE helped her to process larger tensions in the campus community. She wrote:

> The SIFCE program has definitely showed me how much larger feminism can go and that feminism recognizes that EVERYONE is affected by these inequalities. Many of my papers and conversations with my close friends have always been about my concern with Latino/Hispanics never being recognized in the struggles that people go through. It always seemed to be about white and black people, there were [sic] no in between. Many of the topics, discussions and every argument on campus never have anything to do with Latinos/Hispanics. There never feels like there is a unity at the university with Hispanics/Latinos and Black People . . . "The Minorities." And it has clearly been stated, argued and been a constant mini war of hatred and misunderstanding between the Hispanic/Latino participants and Black participants. It has always upset me. I like that SIFCE program included us . . . used articles that showed that we go through things as well . . . these past years have been very frustrating with the lack of recognition of us as people as well.

A tension that became apparent as students worked to gain a deeper awareness of privilege and oppression was the persistence of gaps in knowledge. Ableism and how it operates in feminist communities became a trigger for many students to evaluate and explore these gaps in their knowledge. For example, Denise wrote:

> It was uncomfortable for me to be confronted/confront myself during these readings with what I have discovered/admitted to myself my thinking around disabilities has mostly been so far. I think I have always thought on some level that disabilities are in a different category

than gender, race, sexual orientation, and class (not that any of these categories are the same, but disabilities always seemed even more removed from these, at least in terms of my way of things *[sic]* about them). The reason for this divergence in perception on my part has been, I think, that I always assumed there was something *actually* "wrong" with people with disabilities in a way that is not the case for people of different genders, races, etc.

Overall, exploring these gaps in knowledge became very fruitful for students to expand both their understanding of others and their definition of feminism. For Denise this proved very helpful. She wrote, "I wonder if disability theory has something more unique to offer feminism and feminist thinking." In the end all the participants came to the conclusion that there was always more to learn and ways for feminism to expand through the differences within the group.

**The connection between feminism and action.** Participants noted the importance of action to feminism and the confidence feminist thought gave them to have what they called "real-world experiences." Denise shared, "I feel a little better equipped to face the professional/nonprofit world now, and like some areas of work are not as sealed off to me in terms of experience and knowledge as I did before this internship." In addition, participants credited feminism for not only providing them with real-world experiences, but experiences working for social change.

All participants noted the strong connection they felt between feminist theory, feminist community, and feminist action. All participants except for Lea noted that action is required to truly be a feminist. Lea expressed that though the connection between theory, community, and action were strong in feminism, it remained largely an ideology for her. Overall, participants felt compelled by the connection between these ideas to define what action fit them best, understanding that feminist action can take many forms depending on both the individual and their beliefs. For example, Aiden noted that feminist values of ending oppression were explicitly tied to action for him, writing, "Rejecting privilege in both racism and ableism requires constant awareness, action, and activism." For Abigail, engaging in action while learning about feminism helped her to reconceive the type of action she would work toward in the future. Abigail reflected:

> Seeing and articulating these things I feel about the Shelter would have been so much more difficult had I not learned everything I did from the SIFCE program. I was able to see these problems, and then connect them to readings about the nonprofit industrial complex. I was able to see how feminist ideals regarding representation and alternative models of leadership were relevant to a Shelter which doesn't have obvious connections to feminist issues. I was able to recognize deeper parts of patriarchal hierarchy than I was before. I was able to define exactly what set me on fire about youth advocacy, and I was able to see why my particular passion didn't fit in at the Homeless Youth Shelter. I was able to see what I wanted different, and I was able to see better where I want to go in my life to continue this work.

Ava expressed a similar sentiment, noting that participating in feminist action through nonprofits did not mean that was the only way to act. Ava noted that we can define this action for ourselves, writing:

> I've gone from being unsure of my feminist powers to being positive that I was born a feminist. It is funny though that I've never doubted that I was into human rights (all for them) and I've always known that I loved activists, but I wouldn't call myself one. I thought that to be an activist meant to have a career in activism. Well guess what? I think that's a pretty rigid and limiting way to think of activism. I am an activist. I think I always have been and I know I always will be. This is because I recognize injustice and I speak up about it and find how I can help to negate it.

Ava's experience also showcases how feminist action gave her the efficacy to believe she could make change. Tanvi seconded this thought and went on to describe feminist action as a tool to make change. Tanvi noted:

> I think I always knew that to be an activist required some understanding of what the current situation is, but I can now see it as an integral part of activism and active feminism. Being a feminist activist, to me at least, means applying not only feminist ideology, but feminist practices and methodology in your activism

work. I don't want to imply that activism is strictly the nitty-gritty, hitting the streets and directly organizing the community type of work, though it definitely can be. I think activism is broader than that[;] it's an effort to shift a societal way of thinking, that can be carried out on many levels and by many means. Feminist activism and leadership then becomes a particular way to approach carrying out this change.

Finally, experiencing and reflecting on feminist action inspired participants to gain a deeper understanding of the role that power plays in feminist action. Stacey began to see through her experiences that in feminist activism the community being served should have the power to guide decisions for how best to take action. She wrote,

It seems obvious that organizations should be started by the communities they . . . are supposed to benefit. They know the best what is needed, they have great insight and existing community relationships and in general it seems to be really helpful with messaging. I think feminism is very drawn to this idea that people know what they need better than others and they have the capacity to express those needs and the way to go about filling those needs and should have a great part (if not all) of the decision-making power, and that credit should be equitable.

## Examining Feminist Identities

Many participants entered the SIFCE program identifying as a feminist and wanting to gain experience in feminist community engagement. Other participants joined to explore community engagement through a feminist lens. At the end of the program not all participants changed how they identified, feminist or not, but all participants engaged in a deep examination of feminist identities and how this related to their own identity.

**Developing a feminist identity.** Four of the participants entered the program identifying as feminists. For example, Tom, Olivia, Stacey, and Emma came from backgrounds that included previous feminist work. Emma noted, "I considered myself a feminist activist before I began the SIFCE program. Participating in the program affirmed my feminist activist goals, but did not change my

thoughts about feminist activism." Aiden, Denise, Mason, Tanvi, and Abigail described the SIFCE program as affirming their feminist identities specifically in relation to moving past the label of feminism to believing that feminists must act for social change. For example, Abigail stated:

> I absolutely consider myself both a feminist and activist, and I did previous to my time at SIFCE program as well. Now I'd say I have a greater insight into the way in which I am a feminist and activist, since I have learned a handful of alternative ways to being both of those things. I now have an even greater emphasis on the value of listening and of a plurality of voices when leading or being an activist. I am much more aware of ways that feminist leadership has been limited or misinterpreted, and I am much more equipped to behave in a way that I believe will help the feminist movement to grow and become more inclusive and comprehensive.

Deanna and Ava described the experience in the program as a definitive moment in understanding that they were indeed feminists. Ava wrote:

> And as cliché as it sounds, I kind of even feel like a different person. My mind has been opened to a lot and I feel as though I am ready to begin to tackle issues of social change in a hands on way.

Not all participants at the end of the program identified as feminists. For example, Lea believed there was a line between activism and feminist, and saw feminism as only an ideology. This was not surprising, since Lea did not feel affirmed in a feminist identity, and she did not connect her activism to feminism. Through an exploration of feminism Lea was able to define what feminism did and did not mean for her. She wrote:

> I don't identify as a feminist because feminism isn't something one does, but an ideology/theory that one believes in. I can't act like a feminist or do something as a feminist whereas activism is something I can do and not really an ideology I believe in. I can consider myself an activist simply because I make it my duty to bring awareness to issues (mainly disability) that others don't consider or think about and try to do actions that would

help make the environment around me and others more accessible since society is built for the able-bodies [*sic*]. In the activist instance, I am actually doing something and not just believing strongly in a certain ideology.

**Struggling with feminism's contradictions.** Participants struggled with historic racism and ableism within feminism and how this intersected with feminism's cause to dismantle privilege and oppression. For example, Abigail described it as a struggle that led to a wake-up call not to accept feminism without critical examination. Abigail wrote:

> My autodidactic investigation of feminist issues online is essentially the only segue I had into understanding other systems of oppression and control. And the way that I initially found them is through criticisms of the feminism I so dearly loved. ("What do you mean feminists are racist?" "What do you mean feminists are transphobic?") I have had such little contact with people not from my same social positioning, that it's been a *lot [emphasis added]* of reading to understand the things I do about communities I'm not a part of. But at least I have that to wake me up periodically from the illusion that I have everything figured out.

Olivia shared a similar experience. In discussing how she worked through this tension, she wrote:

> Considering ableism is challenging for me largely because it's new. I had been aware of the need to provide accommodations for people who are differently-abled/disabled, but it wasn't until last semester that I began to see it as a mindset that needed to be changed. After the initial conscious-raising breakthrough, I had to begin taking apart my own negative attitudes, recognizing ableism in public, and working to not ignore the people who it affects. And because this is so new to me, it takes me much longer to break down the problem than it does for sexism, which I've been thinking about for a while.

All of the participants struggled in particular with ableism. In the end, the consensus was that feminism must expand to be more inclusive of other identities and conscious of all other oppressions as they overlap with gender. Stacey described this, saying,

"If feminism is in fact about equal opportunities, then we do need to acknowledge the intersection between gender and disability." Though this was the overall consensus, not all participants in the end could reconcile these tensions. Lea, for example, investigated feminism and used a feminist lens throughout the program, but in the end could not claim a feminist identity. She wrote,

> I can't seem to bring myself to like feminism. From my understanding, feminism doesn't seem to take an intersectional approach because it is mostly focused on gender issues and discrimination while forgetting about others who face other modes of oppression. Feminism always seems to assume that all identified-women face the same issues and doesn't really take into perspective that some of these issues are privileged and not faced by all. For example, some disabled females do not perceive (and the rest of society) themselves as sexual objects and thus it becomes hard for them to advocate for gender equality/sexual discrimination if they are rarely seen as victims of gender inequality.

Participants also struggled with the liberal feminism of some of the community organizations that were part of the SIFCE. These organizations were criticized for working within existing structures so deeply that they reinforced structural inequity and for taking positions that were less radical in their activist efforts than participants expected them to be. Emma shared:

> I'm struggling a lot with my site. It's not that I dislike my co-workers or that I don't have the skills to complete the tasks assigned to me, but that my values and positions are in opposition to the ideological mission of the organization. I expected my site placement to have a social justice mission, but I'm not convinced that advocating for a fundamentally racist, sexist, classist, and ableist criminal justice system is in line with social justice ethics.

Emma's internship site, the human trafficking court, worked to keep individuals accused of prostitution out of jail by connecting them to a court-ordered rehabilitation program. Emma struggled with this decriminalizing approach as opposed to an approach that legalized prostitution. Emma wrote, "The idea of making change institutionally constitutes activism, but policing sexuality and

choices, to me, does not align with what I perceive to be feminist values of bodily autonomy and sexual liberation."

**Choosing your own path.** At the end of the program all participants engaged in a deep examination of feminist identities and how these related to their own identity. There was an agreement among all the participants that, feminist or not, they could choose their own path. In the end all but one participant claimed a feminist identity, and all participants described community engagement and action as important aspects of their identity. Though there was agreement in the naming of these identities, there was difference in how participants envisioned carrying them out.

Aiden, Olivia, Mason, Abigail, Tanvi, Emma, Denise, and Deanna noted that they would continue to do feminist work in their careers in the future. Ava described that she was not sure she wanted to work in the nonprofit sector on graduation, but did believe she would continue to work for change and that her feminism would guide those choices. Tom noted a similar feeling. Although he did not rule out not-for-profit work, he was sure he could continue his feminist work, writing, "I am confident enough to know that I will contribute to feminist efforts wherever I end up." In contrast, Emma spoke very strongly about finding an institution or program whose radical approach matched her own. In addition, how feminism was put into practice in their lives was described slightly differently by each participant. These differences ranged from taking a grassroots activist approach to working in education, research, and health care. Deanna described this, writing:

> I do believe that I am a Feminist Activist. As mentioned earlier, I may never stand up to a huge crowd about a certain situation but I know how to use my resources of being more intimate with people that I know through one on one conversations and also the organizations that I am part of in order to get my voice and ideas heard.

Finally, Lea, who did not claim a feminist identity, was still able to envision a path of working for change in the future. Lea wrote:

> The activism I plan on doing once I graduate is to teach younger participants to question and fight for the social injustices they and the rest of the world face. I can do this through coaching debaters and also working with my patients to help be their advocate if they need one.

# Discussion

Participants' experiences demonstrated their development of a deeper awareness of self, a deeper and broader perspective of others, an awareness of social issues, and seeing one's potential to make change or social justice self-efficacy *(Cipolle, 2010; Freire, 1974/2013; Miller et al., 2009)*. Students began from a place of self-exploration and from speaking from their standpoint of difference or their particular lived experiences as they related to the larger sociocultural groups that they belonged to. Yet they mostly focused on power differentials and experiences that oppressed them and had little knowledge of the experiences of others.

As they began to share and listen to each other's experience and investigate how power operates in their lives and the organizations they were serving, they began to build a deeper awareness of themselves and others. Cipolle *(2010)* stressed the importance of understanding and examining whiteness in this process. Starting from the assumption that feminism brings only a gender lens, many participants were inspired by the notion of intersectionality *(Crenshaw, 1991)* and how all aspects of our identity contribute to our understanding of difference, oppression, and privilege. Intersectionality was especially important in helping white participants in the cohorts begin to understand privilege and oppression. For this to happen, it was important for students to take a deep reflective approach and to challenge themselves, their peers, and instructors not to oversimplify intersectionality or co-opt it as a theory of "everyone is different in some way." Intersectionality must stay rooted in a lens to look at systemic oppression's effect on individuals who embody multiple marginalized identities. This is particularly relevant for Black women, whose experiences in the justice system were the catalysts for the development of this theory *(Crenshaw, 1991)*. Participants who were confronted with organizations that served communities they were not a part of developed relationships with people who were different from themselves and learned to build bridges through the interconnectedness of working to end oppression. Being confronted with new information that overlapped with existing knowledge of self and others helped participants in that space to develop an understanding of why they had been resistant to social justice in the past. Thus, they developed a deeper understanding of themselves and how they create knowledge.

# Reconceptualizing Critical Consciousness and Social Justice Self-Efficacy

The process of developing critical consciousness *(Cipolle, 2010; Freire, 1974/2013)* appeared to work in tandem with the culminating stage of social justice self-efficacy *(Miller et al., 2009)*, or believing in your ability to create social change. However, social justice self-efficacy *(Miller et al., 2009)* became both a culminating stage (though often revisited) of critical consciousness development and a motivator to learn how to employ social justice. This does not mean that all participants decided to work in feminist community agencies or identified as feminists in the end, but by the end of the program, all had developed some level of social justice self-efficacy, or the confidence and belief that they could effect social change. In addition, like many theories in action, participants' experiences showed that critical consciousness *(Cipolle, 2010; Freire, 1974/2013)* does not appear to happen as a linear process. Instead, critical consciousness appeared to be a cyclical process. Once students had gone through one cycle of the process (developing a deeper awareness of self, others, social issues, and seeing their agency to make change), at their point of entry, they continued to cycle through at varying levels of complexity in their awareness of self, others, and social issues. In addition, it did not appear to be a one-time process, but a continuous process that was sparked by the knowledge they had gained through feminist pedagogy to employ a reflexive praxis in their social justice work.

## Feminism as a Catalyst

Overall, findings indicated that feminism was a catalyst in participants' development of critical consciousness *(Cipolle, 2010; Freire, 1974/2013)* and social justice self-efficacy *(Miller et al., 2009)* in three ways: (a) by inherently embracing constructivist ideas, feminism is not disrupted by many epistemological and ontological lenses, but instead allows participants to learn about themselves, others, and social issues through the sharing of those different perspectives; (b) the intersectional approach of feminist frameworks can expand our ability to address understandings of privilege and oppression within these growing understandings of difference; and (c) feminism can expand our ability to understand systemic issues and give us the confidence to understand that we have agency and can access power with and through collective community-based work to make societal and institutional change.

Participants were able to learn and discuss different ideas, beliefs, and experiences around feminist community engagement. All the participants noted this exploration of feminism as important to their growth. These experiences helped participants develop from a space where one way of coming to knowing or being was ideal toward a space where multiple ways of knowing and being were embraced. Theory, action, reflection, or the praxis *(Stanley, 1990)* aspect of feminism and feminist community engagement allowed them to construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct their ideas about feminism, social justice, and their role within it. You don't have to be a feminist to investigate feminism for deeper critical learning. Perhaps for some participants any critical lens can aid in the development of critical consciousness or social justice self-efficacy. It is unrealistic to think that all participants will have the same outcomes or embrace the same ideologies. Overall, an intersectional approach to feminism can expand our ability to listen to others' points of view as well as our ability to address issues of privilege and oppression.

## Implications for Practice

A critical lens, such as feminism, should be used in current community engagement practice to improve program pedagogy. Positionality *(Nagar & Geiger, 2007)* is extremely important here because, as the students noted, it began the reflective process. Faculty, staff, and community partners should not only think about positionality themselves but should share their experiences with participants as a form of role modeling. Participants in the program noted that role modeling of how to interact in antioppressive ways in community engagement was an important part of their experience. Community experiences should be immersive and meaningful as well as including multiple pedagogical tools. Praxis is most successful when it combines theory-informed action, hands-on work, and reflection. Institutions can make their public good mission explicit through community engagement initiatives that employ a critical social justice focused lens as opposed to a charity lens. Findings from this study point to feminist community engagement as one such critical approach to engagement.

Participants in this case study who weren't going to continue to work in nonprofits still wanted to incorporate social justice into their "traditional" career or life in general, and therefore they found the program useful. Perhaps women's center and feminist academic programs should be used differently, based on the realization that they can serve participants who do not necessarily

identify as feminists. These sites could offer a required course on diversity or community engagement in addition to gender or women's issues. Centers could provide feminist leadership development for the campus in addition to women's leadership development. Therefore, with the growing demand for campuses to be more culturally responsive, institutions could benefit from offices already implementing feminist community engagement on and off campus. Feminist offices on campus, women's centers, women's studies programs, and women's research institutes—if they are even available on campuses—tend to be underfunded and understaffed, having little collaboration with leadership and community engagement offices, even though women's studies was on the forefront of developing community engagement pedagogy. Institutions should consider better staff, budget, and collaborative support for these programs. Finally, on a systemic level, accreditation policies and funding bodies should change their language and funding streams to emphasize not altruistic service, but social justice based community engagement such as feminist community engagement.

## Limitations and Future Research

Deep exploration is important within case study research; consequently, one limitation of this study is the lack of data from the community-based organizations that played an essential role in this program and are major stakeholders in community engagement. In addition, the utilization of a secondary data source with 12 participants to represent the entire population sample can be seen as a limitation. At the same time, utilizing intrinsic single case study methodology for this project helped to show the importance of understanding this unique phenomenon. Previous research in this area was conducted with participants specifically in gender and women's studies courses. This study may be able to significantly expand the research in this area by representing participants across disciplines and across a 2-year period.

Many directions are available for future research in this area. Scholars should continue to explore the connections between critical consciousness, social justice efficacy, and feminist praxis within community engagement. Furthermore, we must begin to conceptualize these theories from a life course perspective as opposed to a one-time or linear perspective. Conducting longer term, more in-depth, or larger scale studies may aid in this work. It would be informative to interview participants and community partners or to conduct mixed-methods studies that employ the social justice self-efficacy scale *(Miller et al., 2009)*. Topics of interest that could

be explored include feminist community engagement facilitator experiences with feminist pedagogy; participant experiences and programs at multiple institutions; differences in outcomes for participants who identify as feminists and those who do not identify as feminists; exploration of programs that utilize feminism but not explicitly; and institutional and policy support for feminist community engagement programs.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, a feminist lens on community engagement within higher education can destabilize the dominant discourse within the field of community engagement. Feminist community engagement has the potential to create a stronger connection for social justice practice in community engagement in line with a public good mission of higher education. Reflecting on and making meaning of real-world experiences in feminist community engagement and examining feminism as an identity helped to foster not only participants' critical consciousness, but also their social justice self-efficacy. Feminism can transform community engagement for all students and institutions away from charity-based models and toward a social justice model. The intersectional approach of feminist frameworks can expand our ability to address issues of privilege and oppression in community-engaged work in ways that current community engagement models have yet to put into practice.

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## About the Author

**Angela Clark-Taylor** is the Rochford Leadership Initiative Faculty Fellow at the University of Redlands. Her research employs a feminist lens to examine the relationship between universities, communities, and students. She received her Ph.D. in education and a graduate certificate in gender, sexuality, and women's studies from the University of Rochester.

# First-Year Student Motivations for Service-Learning: An Exploratory Investigation of Minority Student Perceptions

Andrew J. Pearl and Robert K. Christensen

## Abstract

As a high-impact educational practice *(Kuh, 2008)*, service-learning can have a transformational effect on students, communities, instructors, and higher education institutions. However, despite cautions *(Butin, 2006, p. 481)*, student enrollment in service-learning remains overwhelmingly White and female *(Jacoby, 2015)*, creating a potential enrollment gap in a pedagogy intended to be inclusive. In this article the authors explore what might cause minority students to pursue service-learning, building on research that suggests that student traits and values impact the awareness of and disposition to enroll in service-learning *(Christensen, Stritch, Kellough, & Brewer, 2015; Pearl & Christensen, 2017)*. Through qualitative methodology, the authors work to better understand students' traits in relation to their interest and enrollment in service-learning. The findings, relevant to both service-learning theory and practice, suggest the importance of purposeful consideration of how service-learning can truly promote social justice, democratic values, and equality.

*Keywords*: service-learning, college student motivations

## Introduction

Service-learning is a high-impact pedagogical practice *(Kuh, 2008)* with the potential for a transformational impact on students, communities, instructors, and higher education institutions *(Clayton, Bringle, & Hatcher, 2013a, 2013b)*. Clayton et al. *(2013a, 2013b)* proposed conceptual frameworks for assessing service-learning, focusing primarily on potential outcomes. For students in particular, the literature is replete with examples of how students benefit from service-learning experiences, including their academic learning, personal development, and civic learning *(Clayton, Bringle, & Hatcher, 2013a)*. Concentrating research on various student outcomes is a logical starting point, given the emphasis in higher education on improving student learning and demonstrating that students are benefiting from their educational experiences. For service-learning in particular, it is important to justify the additional resources and time that often are required to implement service-learning best practices. In higher education, we are in a

time of increased accountability and need to demonstrate that we are preparing students for life after graduation. Service-learning pedagogy has the potential to benefit students, and the research literature makes strides to support this claim.

However, this body of research literature must continue to evolve in order to remain rigorous and to advance our knowledge. We must purposefully connect established theoretical frameworks to service-learning pedagogy, and then work to extend our knowledge and build on those theories in a service-learning context. This will help the field begin to recognize *how* positive outcomes can be attained. To this end, we see it as necessary to increase what we understand about our students, particularly the traits and motivations that may predicate their interest in service-learning experiences. This understanding will contribute to a future foundation upon which we might unpack the causal paths of service-learning's benefits.

In addition, we submit that we need to find ways to make sure that the many benefits of service-learning are available to all students. Student enrollment in service-learning remains overwhelmingly White and female *(Jacoby, 2015)*, despite Butin's *(2006)* work that cautioned against service-learning enrollment trending toward students who are "White, sheltered, middle-class, single, without children, un-indebted, and between ages 18 and 24" *(p. 481)*. If service-learning goals include advancing social justice and inclusion, the enrollment gap needs to be closed. We are encouraged by recent research that suggests both minority students and female students are more knowledgeable of and more interested in service-learning upon entering college *(Christensen, Stritch, Kellough, & Brewer, 2015)*.

This present study builds on Christensen et al.'s *(2015)* finding that student traits impact the awareness of service-learning and the disposition to enroll in service-learning courses. In particular, our research question is why freshmen minority students may be more aware of and interested in service-learning. Our motivation is to explain and close the gap between students' traits and their interest, enrollment, and outcomes achieved in service-learning.

## Astin's Input–Environment–Output Model

This study can largely be framed through Astin's *(2012)* Input–Environment–Outcome (I-E-O) model (see Figure 1). This model contains three distinct elements that are critical for comprehensive assessment, and to omit any of the factors would provide incom-

plete and invalid results, which eventually would lead to ineffectual policies. By only accounting for a desirable outcome, we ignore other factors that may make interventions successful. Therefore, it is important to also consider multiple student inputs in addition to their outcomes and the environmental context. By accounting for environmental factors, we begin to understand more about why particular outcomes occur.

**Figure 1. Astin's (2012) I-E-O Model**
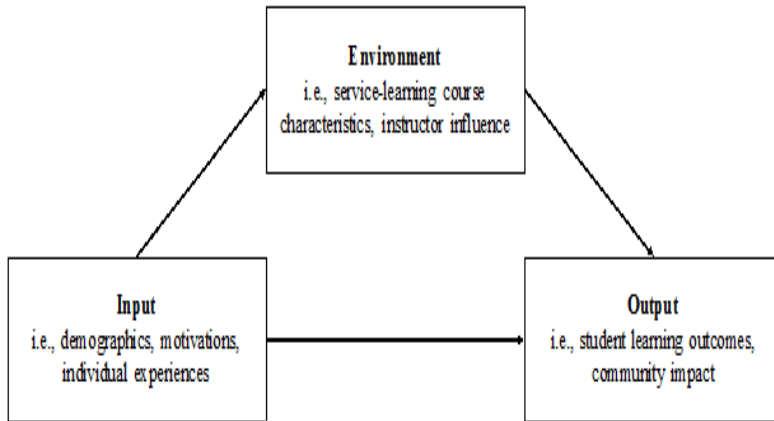


As discussed above, much of the research on service-learning has focused on student outcomes, and, to a lesser degree, environmental factors. There is a paucity of literature that explores what drives students to consider enrolling in service-learning courses. This information is important because it could help service-learning instructors and administrators better plan for and target groups of students for service-learning and community engagement, creating opportunities for a broader audience to take advantage of service-learning's many potential benefits. Rather than merely perceiving that student growth follows some process that occurs within a nebulous "black box," researchers and higher education administrators can better understand why and how students are benefiting through knowledge of the motivations underlying student enrollment. Causality is a high standard to meet, and some believe that it is impossible to attain in a service-learning context *(Butin, 2006)*, but an understanding of the inputs, including motivational factors, can lead to clear connections between processes and outcomes.

## An Integrated Theory of Volunteering

When developing an integrated and "supply side" theory of volunteer work, Wilson and Musick *(1997, p. 709)* proposed that volunteer work requires an integration of human capital, social capital, and cultural capital. According to these researchers (a) in terms of human capital, volunteering is essentially a productive activity; (b) In terms of social capital, the social networks and the relationships between individuals can be considered resources, particularly because these ties create reciprocal relationships and reinforce voluntary behavior through collective action; (c) finally, voluntary organizations can take advantage of existing cultural capital, essentially on the premise that people volunteer because they think volunteering is a good thing. In summary, Wilson and Musick contend that elements of human capital, social capital, and cultural capital come together in complicated ways that lead to individual voluntary activity.

Existing research indicates that individuals with higher levels of human and social capital exhibit a greater proclivity to volunteer *( & Lankford, 1992; , Jeon-Slaughter, Kang, & Tax, 2003; Mesch, Rooney, Steinberg, & Denton, 2006; Smith, 2002)*, and as might be expected, relatively lesser levels of human and social capital are cited as reasons for not volunteering *(Musick, Wilson, & Bynum, 2000)*. Mesch et al. *(2006)* suggested that human capital theory would likely predict significant differences in volunteering and charitable giving between racial and ethnic groups because of differing resources; however, researchers have suggested that persons of color exhibit a higher propensity to volunteer than others *(Van Slyke & Eschholz, 2002)* as well as engage deeply when volunteering with Black clients *(Morrow-Howell, Lott, & Ozawa, 1990)*. Wilson and Musick's *(1997)* work indicates that people fulfill different needs through their voluntary behavior, which is consistent with the findings of Clary et al. *(1998)* on functionalism and the Volunteer Functions Inventory *(VFI; see Pearl & Christensen, 2017)*.

## A Gap Between Interest and Enrollment

Christensen et al. *(2015)* found that among first-year students at a large public land-grant institution in the Southeast, minority students were (1) more knowledgeable of service-learning on entering college and (2) more interested in enrolling in service-learning. However, at the institution where Christensen et al.'s study took place, a significant gap remained in service-learning enrollment, with the majority of students taking service-learning courses being

White. Similarly, national trends suggest that enrollment in service-learning courses is overwhelmingly White students *(Jacoby, 2015)*.

What causes this lapse between knowledge of and interest in service-learning, and actual service-learning enrollment? Butin *(2006)* warned that service-learning could become a pedagogy designed to provide an experience primarily for the "Whitest of the White" students, and stressed the importance of critically examining service-learning and purposefully working toward finding a way to make service-learning accessible to all students. Through this study, we hope to advance theory by getting a more nuanced understanding of how first-year students, particularly underrepresented minority students, understand how service-learning might (or might not) contribute to their goals. This work will build on social identity theory, the related self-categorization theory, and the dominant status model.

## Social Identity Theory

In its most basic sense, social identity theory refers to an individual's self-conception that comes from being a member of a particular social group *(Hogg & Terry, 2000)*. Individuals gain internally driven conceptions of themselves, but also develop in light of their social connections. An increased understanding of one's social identity is often cited as an outcome of participation in service-learning *(Jones & Abes, 2004)*, but the research has given less consideration to individuals' social identities as an input or motivation for enrolling in service-learning. Two concepts related to social identity are relevant to this study: self-categorization theory and the dominant status model. In the following sections, we discuss how self-categorization leads individuals to develop their self-identity, and how the dominant status model explains how different social groups interact within the larger social structure (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Theoretical Frameworks**
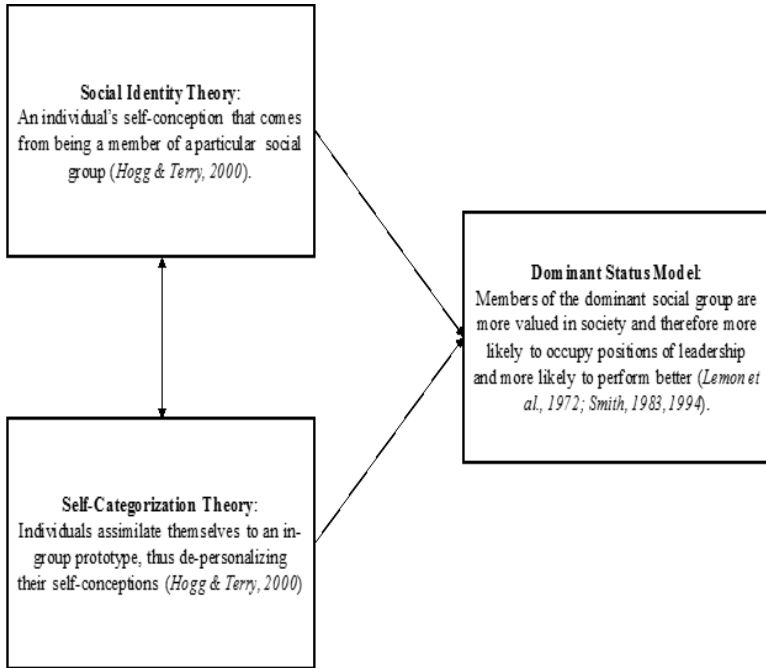


## Self-categorization Theory

According to self-categorization theory, individuals assimilate themselves to an in-group prototype, depersonalizing their self-conceptions *(Hogg & Terry, 2000)*. When individuals self-categorize, resulting behavior often includes adherence to normative behavioral expectations; stereotyping; ethnocentrism; positive in-group attitudes and cohesion, cooperation, and altruism; emotional contagion and empathy; collective behavior; shared norms; and moral influence *(Hogg & Terry, 2000, p. 123)*. Thus, individuals who self-categorize with a particular social group are more likely to want to provide aid to other members of the group, reflecting increased levels of concepts including cooperation, altruism, and empathy. In the context of this study, students may enroll in service-learning courses in order to help others who are also members in their social group.

## Dominant Status Model

The dominant status model was originally developed by Lemon, Palisi, and Bennett-Sandler *(1972)* and further developed by Smith *(1983, 1994)*. Basically, this theory assumes that those

who are members of the dominant social group are more valued in society and therefore more likely to occupy positions of leadership and more likely to perform better. By extension, this also means that these individuals are more likely to have characteristics that are valued for voluntary activities. Mesch et al. *(2006)* examined voluntary behavior through the prism of the dominant status model (among others) and originally hypothesized that the dominant status model would predict less participation in voluntary behavior among minorities because of their less prevalent social positions and roles within the larger social system. However, their findings suggested that there was no significant difference in voluntary and philanthropic behavior between minority and White individuals after controlling for human capital. Applied to service-learning enrollment, the dominant status model may similarly predict less minority enrollment in service-learning, and this supposition is largely borne out in the literature on service-learning enrollment trends *(Jacoby, 2015)*. However, as noted, both minority first-year students and female first-year students have expressed more knowledge of and interest in service-learning. This gap between interest and participation may be partially explained by the dominant status model.

The dominant status model may suggest that service-learning is not perceived as *for* students from underrepresented minority groups; that is, only White students are capable of "saving the day," a perspective consistent with what has been observed and criticized by scholars like Butin *(2006)* and Mitchell *(2008)*. Perhaps the intentional connection between voluntary behavior and academic material discourages minority students, leading them to believe that they are better able to meet their individual needs through pure volunteerism.

## Purpose of the Study

Guided by the preceding theoretical frameworks, this exploratory study seeks to learn more about first-year student motivations for enrolling in service-learning. As we consider the "supply side" of college students and their interests in enrolling in service-learning, we specifically consider the many ways that students develop their social identities in the context of how they socially categorize themselves and the dominant status model. We posed a two-pronged research question: What are the different motivations that influence students' interest in service-learning, and do these motivations vary by students' backgrounds and identities? Based on the theories discussed above, we believe that students

from different backgrounds or social groups are likely to engage in service-learning for different reasons. We hope that the findings from our qualitative analysis of open-ended student responses will lay the groundwork for future research delving more deeply into students' motivations.

## Survey Design and Sampling

This study, which is a part of a larger mixed-methods research project that examines student motivations and interest in enrolling in service-learning courses, utilizes qualitative research methods to examine open-ended student responses to a question that was included in a survey that was distributed to a sample of first-year students at a large public land-grant institution in the southeast. In the following sections, we describe the sampling strategy, the survey instrument, and the quantitative and qualitative procedures. This study was approved by the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

## Sampling Strategy

We utilized a purposive sampling strategy to intentionally include first-year students in order to align with the goals of the study. In addition, we purposefully sought to include respondents from the university's minority student population. To do this, we partnered with the university's Office of Institutional Diversity (OID) and Center for Student Organizations (CSO). Each of these organizations distributed the link to the online survey we created for this study. For balance, we also included a sample from two sections of American Government (POLS 1101), an introductory political science course that fulfills a general education require-ment, in which the enrollment is primarily freshman students. The instructors for these two course sections distributed the link for the survey to the students in each of their classes. Participation in a random drawing for a gift card was offered as an incentive to participate in the survey. The survey instrument was distributed via e-mail with a link to a Qualtrics survey.

## Survey Instrument

This study analyzes responses to one open-ended question in a larger survey that examines student motivations for, interest in, and knowledge of service-learning. The quantitative portion of the survey instrument was an adaptation of the Volunteer Functions Inventory *(Clary et al., 1998; Pearl & Christensen, 2017)*. For the cur-

rent study, we sought to solicit students' reactions to the overall conclusions of Christensen et al. *(2015)*, who found that students' traits impact the awareness of and disposition to enroll in service-learning. The open-ended question read:

- Some recent research suggests that the university's minority students may have more interest in and awareness of service-learning compared to other students at the university.
- Regardless of how you responded to the previous question do you think that research is accurate? Why/why not?
- Remember there are no right or wrong answers; we are interested in your honest opinions.

In order to provide guidance for students who may not have previously been familiar with the concept of service-learning, we provided a simple, introductory definition as a header on each page of the survey instrument: "Service-learning has been defined, in its most basic sense, as a method of teaching that combines classroom instruction with meaningful community service." We acknowledge that this definition may be oversimplified, but our intent was to introduce service-learning to the uninitiated and distinguish it as a pedagogical tool that is distinct from traditional volunteerism. We sought to balance this goal with being concise and avoiding information overload with an overly detailed definition.

## Data Analysis

The purpose of this study is to build upon and extend the theoretical frameworks described above in the context of first-year students and their motivations for service-learning; therefore, the qualitative analysis was conducted using grounded theory through the constant comparative method *(Glaser, 1965; Merriam, 2009)*. Students' responses were grouped based on their demographic information, and individual student quotes were read, analyzed, and assigned codes corresponding to the theoretical perspectives described above. All thematic coding was conducted by hand.

## Findings

In this study, we analyzed open-ended student responses to a single question as a part of a larger survey. We believe that these responses align well with each of the theoretical frameworks described above (see also Figure 2, which connects the specific theories on which this study is based, contributing the input part of the model described in Figure 1 outlining the overall conceptual I-E-O model). First, we present the descriptive information for the stu-

dent respondents, followed by the qualitative findings. The larger themes in the findings are supported directly with student quotes.

## Descriptive Findings

In total, 52 students provided qualitative responses. In terms of gender, 33 students identified themselves as male, 10 as female, and nine students chose not to respond. For race and ethnicity, nine students self-identified as White, 39 as minority (18 Black or African American, two Latino, 17 Asian, one Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, one American Indian/Alaskan Native and four students elected not to respond.

Overall, 32 of the 52 students in the sample agreed with the prompt, 14 disagreed, and six were unsure. Of the 33 male students, 18 agreed, 11 disagreed, and four were unsure. Of the 10 female students, eight agreed, one disagreed, and one was unsure. Of the nine students that elected to not respond to gender, six agreed, two disagreed, and one was unsure. Of the nine White students, five agreed, two disagreed, and two were unsure. When looking at the 39 minority students in the aggregate, 27 agreed, nine disagreed, and three were unsure. Finally, for the four students who chose not to respond to race/ethnicity, none agreed, three disagreed, and one was unsure. For a summary of the descriptive findings, please refer to Table 1.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics**

|  |  | Agree | Disagree | Unsure | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | Female | 8 | 1 | 1 | 10 |
|  | Male | 18 | 11 | 4 | 33 |
|  | Chose not to respond | 6 | 2 | 1 | 9 |
| **Race/ ethnicity** | Minority | 27 | 9 | 3 | 39 |
|  | *Black or African American* |  |  |  | 18 |
|  | *Latino* |  |  |  | 2 |
|  | *Asian* |  |  |  | 17 |
|  | *Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander* |  |  |  | 1 |
|  | *American Indian/Alaskan Native* |  |  |  | 1 |
|  | White | 5 | 2 | 2 | 9 |
|  | Chose not to respond | 0 | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| **Total** |  | 32 | 14 | 6 | 52 |

## Students' Responses and Perspectives

The student responses to the open-ended question were wide-ranging and demonstrated that individuals have varying thoughts on why students from different backgrounds may (or may not) be more interested in service-learning than their peers. In the following sections, we present a selection of representative student quotes and analyze them through the theoretical and conceptual lenses described above.

One clear and consistent theme that emerged from the student responses is that individuals attribute interest in and knowledge about service-learning to a complex variety of factors, and the balance of these factors is far from equally weighted among individuals. For example, one particular difference that emerged was the assumptions of respondents from different racial and/or ethnic backgrounds. To illustrate, one White male student responded, "I think it depends much more on your major than your cultural identification whether or not you are aware of/participate in these service-learning courses." This respondent seems to believe that minority students (and presumably all students) develop their identities as students from their majors, allowing that identification to be the primary driver of their decisions regarding course selection, rather than their cultural identification. A minority student's response to the question prompt seems to offer the opposite perspective:

> As a minority, I can say that from what I have seen minorities are usually more interesting [*sic*] in community service. I think it might be due to the fact that minority students know the difficulties first hand of what it is like to live in oppression and therefore, connect more with those in need. Also, they want to help those in need get out of their difficult situation.

This student does not mention academic major playing any role when it comes to making decisions related to service-learning courses. The perspective and implication is that, at least in this sample, White students and minority students approach their decision-making process from different perspectives. Although this finding is not particularly surprising, it is interesting to see these perspectives put in such sharp relief. Another response, this time from a White female student, is especially illustrative of the lack of ability to understand approaches other than one's own:

> I think students who get good grades (like top of the class grades) or who already have connections that will ensure them future jobs are less likely to be interested in getting involved with service learning because they don't see how it benefits them. Individuals from poorer socio-economic backgrounds are less likely to be in either category, so they are looking for extra things to put on their resume.

This quote is mildly troubling, due at least in part to the assumed privilege and apparent lack of effort to see past one's own experiences. There are implicit assumptions that seem to equate minority students with students who come from a lower socio-economic background. Further, this respondent seems to assume that, because of their backgrounds, minority students do not earn elite grade point averages, that they lack sufficient social capital for career advancement, and that service-learning is merely a way for minority students to compensate for built-in disadvantages.

In many ways, the troubling aspects of this quote largely come from a lack of nuanced understanding. We do not mean to imply any explicit prejudice in this student's comments; however, her perspective speaks to a larger systemic issue: that researchers have assumed for too long a homogeneity among students, in terms of their backgrounds, interests, and goals. Further, not all White students share a similarly narrow view, and it is encouraging to see that some of their quotes demonstrated a broader worldview. For example, another White respondent wrote,

> They [minority students] come from backgrounds with similar people like that and know how it feels to be in need. They feel like more of a difference should be made, while other students are content with how they think life is.

This student's statement is interesting because he acknowledges his privilege and recognizes that minority students may feel more empathy because of how they personally identify. Along similar lines, another White student stated, "It's likely that they [minority students] identify with a group that they perceive as oppressed in some way, and so they are more proactive in correcting these perceived inequalities." These students, from the perspective of outsiders, observe similar feelings of empathy.

These comments, however, seem to carry an implicit assumption that all minority students know what it means to be in need, and that White students do not know what it means to be in need. These students also seem to hold the corollary assumption that White students likely do not have a reason to participate in service-learning; they are "content with how they think life is."

Another White student observed, "Statistically, minority students are more likely to be disadvantaged, and I imagine the one[s] who are more privileged still know what it feels like to be disadvantaged based on their race, so they want to help others more." This statement speaks to the idea that it is not necessarily the socioeconomic circumstances of an individual, but rather how they self-identify, that guides their behavior, leading them to empathize and sympathize with the social group with which they identify.

To further illustrate how minority students self-categorize and form their social identities, one male minority student explained,

> Minorities are more aware of their surroundings and know more people who may be in need of service. Thus, service is more important to minorities because it could be benefitting people of their own culture. Also, as a minority, I realize how lucky I am to be where I am so I take more advantage of my surroundings.

This respondent clearly indicates how his self-identification as a minority student leads to greater awareness, feelings of empathy, and a strong desire to give back. Another minority student gives insight into the reason for this, stating, "I feel that often minorities come from tighter and smaller communities," an observation supported by another minority student's response stating that this can lead to the idea that service-learning and "community service hits more at home to minority students." Another minority student wrote, "It is not necessarily that minorities have more of an interest but rather are more aware of its importance." One African American respondent echoed these sentiments: "Students belonging to minority groups typically can relate better to marginalized groups in need of service given their own experiences as a member of the minority." This statement implies that minority students have a predilection toward service-learning because they can empathize and can draw on shared, marginalized experiences. Because minority students develop their social identities through their self-categorization, one minority student states, "Possibly minority students know what it is like, generally, to be second to

things and not be thought of first. Therefore, they are more like the help others [like themselves]." This is a clear example of empathy that is developed through one's social identity.

## Discussion and Theory Building

One particularly compelling implication from these findings is that minority students may have different needs for service-learning than their White counterparts. The minority students are expressing interest in service-learning, but they may be more interested in its volunteering function than in the academic ties. This possibility is consistent with the empirical research discussed above suggesting that Black individuals may be more likely to volunteer in general than White individuals *(Van Slyke & Eschholz, 2002)*. Minority students may be more drawn to the service aspect of service-learning, which ties to the self-categorization theory of social identity, particularly the connection between self-categorization and empathy *(Hogg & Terry, 2000)*, and the survey responses are largely supportive of this difference. Therefore, minority students may feel that they can meet all of their needs through volunteering, and thus they have no motive for participation in service-learning. Moving forward, it will be important to understand whether or not minority students believe that the academic components of service-learning serve as a barrier to their primary objectives.

## Breaking Out of the Dominant Status Model

The original conceptualization of the dominant status model suggests that White students may be more likely to enroll in service-learning courses as a result of their dominant status in society. This assumption is largely reflected in the national service-learning enrollment trends *(Jacoby, 2015)*. However, as one minority student stated, "Minorities feel more oppression and service learning course[s] help fight and advocate for social justice." This statement runs directly counter to the assumptions of the dominant status model and supports previous research involving minority volunteering trends *(Mesch et al., 2006)*, which found that minorities may choose to engage in service-learning (or other voluntary activities) as a way to challenge the dominant structure rather than reinforce it.

## Service-Learning and Academic Enhancement

Among the findings that surfaced from the students' responses, we were surprised that one trend in particular did not emerge.

Previous research on faculty member motivations has found that among the many reasons for utilizing service-learning pedagogy, its perceived effectiveness as a teaching method for positive student outcomes is primary *(Abes, Jackson, & Jones, 2002; McKay & Rozee, 2004)*. However, none of the students in our sample made any reference to service-learning as an effective pedagogy or to any consideration of course content. There were a few allusions to the capacity of service-learning to increase human capital in terms of attractiveness to future employers, but no mention of academic knowledge gained. It was not necessarily the goal of this study to gauge student perceptions of their learning, but this omission does suggest potential implications for both practice and future research.

As a practical matter, the lack of explicit, or even implicit, mention of academic learning through service-learning in the survey responses indicates a need to explore a number of potential explanations. For their specific purposes, students may not be differentiating between service-learning and traditional student volunteerism, despite their distinctive characteristics *(Furco, 1996)*. For students utilizing service-learning as a means to an end (giving back to the community, for example), the differences between service-learning and volunteerism may not be important, particularly if they are able to achieve their goals through a more traditionally focused volunteer activity. Specifically, one student respondent said, "I'm extremely interested in service learning in order to better the community around me." This response indicates that this student is more concerned with the "service" aspect in particular, rather than the whole of "service-learning."

Research on faculty members suggests that some individuals engage in volunteerism but have no experience with service-learning pedagogy or other forms of community engagement *(Bloomgarden & O'Meara, 2007)*, which we believe is relevant to our student findings. We recognize that a partial explanation of this lack of distinction between service-learning and volunteerism may be the students' lack of experience with service-learning and the relative sparseness of the definition we provided to students.

Despite this limitation, we still believe that at some point in the process, there is a failure to connect the individual's desire to contribute to the public good with that individual's academic work, regardless of whether that person is a faculty member or a student. Therefore, we need to explore further whether or not students have any desire to make this connection. We need to learn more about student preferences. For example, are we successfully communicating the potential multifaceted benefits of service-learning,

and students are still choosing to separate coursework from volunteerism? Or do we need to continue to find better ways to communicate with our students and speak to their specific preferences and interests? It is not our place to tell students what is best for them; we simply need to be prepared to provide them with the tools to succeed.

Service-learning scholars and practitioners need to do a better job of conveying to students that the credit in a service-learning course should be for the learning, not for the service. The service is a critical element in any service-learning course, but it is intended to bring relevance and meaning to the academic material. As a high-impact practice *(Kuh, 2008)*, service-learning has the potential to positively impact student learning and development, and it is necessary to emphasize this aspect of service-learning in order to differentiate it from traditional student volunteerism. Other high-impact practices, such as different types of learning communities, have contributed to the culture of diversity on campuses *(Longerbeam, 2010; Thompson, Hardee, & Lane, 2011)*. Research has also suggested that emotional connections and reactions can be an important part of the process of connecting interracial reactions and college student growth *(Bowman & Denson, 2011)*; service-learning has the power to facilitate these interactions through critical approaches *(, 2008)*, and researchers have noted the potential benefits of offering students a variety of pedagogical approaches to engage them in intercultural experiences *(, Perez, & Shim, 2013)*. Finally, participation in voluntary activity offers a host of potential benefits to students *(Giles & Eyler, 1994; Markus, Howard, & King, 1993; , Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996)*, but the connection to academic material is what makes service-learning unique. It is incumbent upon practitioners to help students understand this difference in order to help them achieve their goals and fulfill their varied functions.

The importance of making a clear distinction between service-learning and traditional volunteerism cannot be overstated. It is not our intention to imply that service-learning is always preferable to volunteerism; rather, we believe that it is important to distinguish between the two in order to best allow students to achieve their goals.

## Future Research

As an exploratory study, we believe our research lays the groundwork for future investigations on student motivations related to service-learning. The current study is complemented by

the conclusions presented by Pearl and Christensen *(2017)*, who quantitatively analyzed responses to an adapted version of the Volunteer Functions Inventory *(Clary et al., 1998)* and found that students' motivations for service-learning are influenced by their identities related to race and gender. Taken together with the findings of the current study, we believe that a more in-depth exploration of students' identities is necessary. Specific attention should be paid to how students navigate their multiple forms of identity and how the development of these forms of identity can influence students' motivations and behaviors in various contexts. In addition, we believe that it will be important to understand the differences in students' views of service-learning and traditional student volunteerism to allow for better specification of what functions students are seeking to fulfill through their work. Finally, as we build on our understanding of students' motivations and other inputs, it will be necessary to integrate this information in a comprehensive data set with students' experiences in service-learning courses to develop a more complete picture of how a wide range of learning outcomes are achieved.

## Conclusion

Proponents of service-learning pedagogy applaud and extol its ability to promote social justice and democratic values, but if the trend continues toward enrollment of what Butin *(2006)* calls the "Whitest of the White," this lofty expectation can never be met, even though service-learning pedagogy tends to be offered by the "least powerful and most marginalized faculty (e.g., people of color, women, and the untenured)" *(Butin, 2006, p. 475)*. If anything, such participation serves chiefly to reinforce cultural expectations of a White savior providing charity to a minority service recipient. This predominance of White students in service-learning promotes feelings of "otherness," reinforcing cultural expectations that only the privileged few are capable of helping those less fortunate than themselves. A resulting corollary message is that only those in a dominant social group have the ability to provide service leadership. More than a decade ago, Butin *(2003)* responded to a "monochromatic perspective on what constitutes service learning" *(p. 1690)* by discussing a variety of frameworks through which service-learning can be conceptualized: technical, cultural, political, and poststructuralist. The findings from the current study suggest that we still have a long way to go in researching both service-learning theory and practice.

This message that tends to exclude minorities from service-learning may be an unconscious relic from previous prejudicial thinking, but it apparently still exists to some degree. Whether students act from conscious or unconscious thinking, it is critically important for administrators and instructors tasked with promoting service-learning to acknowledge continuing barriers. Failure to examine the deficiencies in the social structure, regardless of how uncomfortable the conversation may become, will only lead to a continued misconception about who is capable, "worthy," or predisposed to engage in service-learning. Through these conversations we can move forward and make progress, allowing service-learning pedagogy to fulfill its promise of truly promoting social justice, democratic values, and equality. We hope that this exploratory study has laid groundwork for initiating these conversations.

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## About the Authors

**Andrew J. Pearl** serves as the University of North Georgia's first director of academic engagement and assistant professor of education. His scholarship focuses on faculty member motivations related to the scholarship of engagement, student motivations

and outcomes related to service-learning experiences, and institutional and public policies that affect community engagement in higher education. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Georgia's Institute of Higher Education.

**Robert K. Christensen** is an associate professor in Brigham Young University's Romney Institute of Public Management. His research interests include public service career attraction and socialization in higher education. He is a research fellow at Arizona State University's Center for Organization Research & Design and a coresearcher at Seoul National University's Center for Government Competitiveness. He received his Ph.D. from Indiana University's School of Public and Environmental Affairs.

# Unpacking Global Service-Learning in Developing Contexts: A Case Study from Rural Tanzania

Ann M. Oberhauser and Rita Daniels

## Abstract

This article examines intercultural aspects of global service-learning (GSL) focused on gender and sustainable development in rural Tanzania. The discussion draws from critical development and postcolonial feminist approaches to examine how GSL addresses globalization, social histories, and political economies of development. The empirical analysis is based on a program that is designed to develop global awareness, intercultural competence, and critical thinking among students and communities. The relationships, discourses, and actions of the participants are examined through written assignments, a focus group discussion, and observations of activities and the community. The findings of this study contribute to broader debates concerning experiential learning that address students' and other participants' global awareness and intercultural competency. This program also encourages the formation of responsible and ethical partnerships among institutions and communities where GSL is taking place. In sum, we argue that critical approaches to global service-learning ultimately advance inclusive and transformational pedagogies and development.

*Keywords:* global service-learning, gender and development, rural Tanzania, intercultural competence

## Introduction

*I*n recent decades, experiential learning and volunteer-based study abroad programs have become increasingly popular in the field of global education. Programs based on transformational learning with hands-on experience for students are being developed in cooperation with community partners in areas such as sustainable agriculture, gender equality, primary education, and affordable housing. The outcomes and motives of these programs have been widely debated in the literature and among practitioners in this field *(Bringle, Hatcher, & Jones, 2011; Larsen, 2016)*. Critical perspectives are often employed in global service-learning (GSL) in order to confront social and economic inequality and power relations within and among educational institutions, students, and host communities *(Crabtree, 2008; Hartman & Kiely, 2014a)*. Although

discourses of power and privilege are acknowledged in analyses of global service-learning, full examination of the complex geographies, social histories, and development dynamics are often missing.

This article contributes to these debates by researching intercultural aspects of global education through a service-learning model that draws from critical development studies and postcolonial feminism. GSL programs that straddle and connect multiple voices from both academic institutions and local communities raise important questions that address our understanding of development, globalization, and social histories of communities. Likewise, feminist analyses of self-reflexivity and positionality examine how students, nonprofit organizations, universities, and communities are involved with and impacted by these programs. The empirical analysis in this article is based on a GSL organization that partners with communities in several developing countries in Africa, Europe, and the Americas. An important goal of this nonprofit organization is cultivating intercultural competence, global civic engagement, and critical thinking among students and communities who participate in these projects.

The organization highlighted here is part of a larger network, GlobalSL, dedicated to forming responsible and ethical partnerships among the institutions and communities where GSL is taking place. Specifically, this network includes researchers, practitioners, students, and community organizations who gather "evidence-based tools and peer-reviewed research to advance best practices in global learning, cooperative development, and community-university partnership" (Globalsl.org). Figure 1 outlines different components of GSL that include the nongovernmental organization (NGO), service provider, university, and community members. The critical development and feminist analyses in this article examine constructions and deconstructions of power and privilege in this service-learning project based on the themes of global awareness, intercultural competence, and critical thinking *(Bringle et al., 2011; Larsen, 2016).*

**Figure 1. An Overview of Global Service-Learning in Tanzania Program**
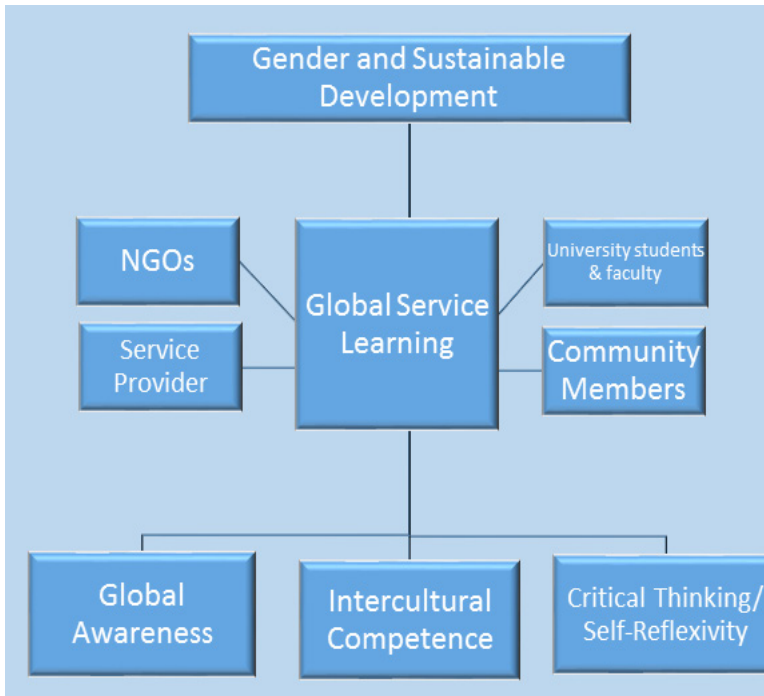


*Note. Adopted from Kiely (2005), Crabtree (2013), and Hartman & Kiely (2014b)*

First, global awareness among participants leads to a general understanding of global issues such as gender inequality and uneven development and how societies operate within the interconnectedness of local and global structures. Hartman and Kiely *(2014a)* highlight structural aspects of this type of learning that "open a special reflective space for discussing political, economic, social, cultural, and historical structures, and systematically illuminate the role of these structural components in everyday life" *(p. 57)*. This global understanding also incorporates an awareness of how Eurocentrism is central to complex historical processes and "ways in which colonialism affected people's lives and mindsets" *(Langdon, 2013, p. 388)*.

The second theme, intercultural competence, increases students' abilities to navigate cultural differences and characteristics of themselves and others. As stated by Crabtree *(2008)*, this theme involves "gradual adjustment and adaptation over time, questioning oneself and one's own culture, and resultant attitude and behavior changes" *(p. 21)*. Through a deliberate process of questioning, stu-

dents reflect on and learn to analyze their status and relationship with many forms of socioeconomic, political, and racial privilege. This process also involves an acute and sometimes uncomfortable awareness of social identity and self-reflexivity. Many scholars and practitioners emphasize the importance of cultural immersion through communication skills and living situations that bring them closer to the culture of the host community.

Finally, successful navigation of global awareness and intercultural competence requires critical thinking. Through the lenses of critical development and postcolonial feminism, students are expected to evaluate and analyze the approaches and context of this GSL program. Feminist thinking requires gathering information in a manner that questions standard assumptions and consequences surrounding gendered power dynamics and other social inequalities *(Mohanty, 2003; Williams & McKenna, 2002)*. Furthermore, critical thinking approaches globalization as it is situated in broader historical contexts that require efforts to decolonize the ways in which development is studied through multiple knowledges and viewpoints *(Langdon, 2013)*.

These themes are used to assess the overall effectiveness and impact of this GSL rural Tanzania program on gender and sustainable development. The empirical analysis of this article examines the relationships, discourses, and actions of the students and host communities through written assignments, a focus group discussion, and observations of activities and participants. Our research raises a number of questions. Does the program challenge or reinforce attitudes about inequality and social justice among the participants? What are the factors that work to challenge or confirm stereotypes about the Global South, White privilege, and social and economic divisions among participants? The curriculum and pedagogy that inform GSL are aligned with our research approach by developing reflexive spaces for dissonance and transformational learning before, during, and after the experience itself. (See *Hartman and Kiely, 2014b*, for a model of student involvement and activities in a related program.)

The GSL approach also encourages students to think about issues such as White privilege, inequality, and uneven development. The program in rural Tanzania embodied these practices by establishing partnerships with local community organizations and maintaining transparency in its logistical and financial operations. As stated in the mission of the organization, it aims to undertake "reciprocal relationships" with host communities as partners *(Hartman, 2016)*. This discussion examines student insights and

reactions to the program, as well as the experiences of the university, service provider, community members, and individual organizations that participate in this program.

The article is organized into six sections to address the conceptual, methodological, and analytical aspects of our approach to global service-learning. The following section gives an overview of the interdisciplinary nature and approaches to critical perspectives on global education, especially the rise of experiential and service-based learning. The third section examines background to the GSL program and the geographical context of Karagwe, Tanzania, introducing the participants and design of the program as they relate to the overall mission of transformational service and learning. The methodological approach to our research is highlighted in the fourth section. The analysis of our findings forms the basis for the fifth section, and the conclusion summarizes our findings and contributions to the field of global education and especially the rise of GSL. In sum, critical development and feminist analyses of privilege, power, and inequality are highly relevant to the growing field of experiential education and global service-learning. These frameworks are effective in creating informed and globally aware students who develop skills that are crucial in today's diverse and increasingly global society.

## Background and Approaches to Global Service-Learning

Global service-learning has been linked to unique forms of student learning and community development in areas that include student civic awareness, intercultural competence, discipline-related and global knowledge, critical thinking, and community engagement *(Green & Johnson, 2014)*. Experiential and service-based learning has gained from interdisciplinary and critical approaches to global service-learning. There is no doubt that GSL supports transformational learning and global development, but achieving these goals is challenging. Inasmuch as GSL participants and host communities benefit, it is important to acknowledge privilege and power relations among and within student groups and host communities.

Gonzalez *(2009)* describes GSL as "hands-on work which is academically rigorous, collaborative, challenging, valuable, and transformative" *(p. 4)* and as a way to support the work of NGOs in local communities through study abroad programs. Generally, the definition of service-learning is framed around outcomes

for participants that include social change and charity *(Cuban & Anderson, 2007)*. Critical thinking, self-rated leadership skills, and commitment to activism are reported to be positive outcomes of service-learning *(Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000)*. Crabtree *(2013)*, however, argues that this framework is complicated because although service-learning practices such as education abroad and domestic service-learning in different cultural settings may appear to be comparable, they do not all advance similar outcomes. For instance, participatory development theories that inform service-learning, student learning, and attitude changes, as well as the dynamics of international and domestic communities, create different conditions for collaboration and service-learning outcomes. Some of these outcomes include an emphasis on professional trajectories, questioning identities and loyalties, and potential conflict among community members.

As an alternative approach to international service-learning (ISL), GSL is "a community-driven service experience that employs structured critically reflective practice to better understand common human dignity, self, culture, positionality; socio-economic, political, and environmental issues; power relations; and social responsibility, all in global contexts" *(Hartman & Kiely, 2014a, p. 60)*. Despite the varied names this hands-on work may be given, the fundamental aim of this pedagogical strategy is to promote participants' skills and knowledge in local and global civic engagement *(Crabtree, 2008; Lewin, 2010)*. Larsen *(2016)* also differentiates between GSL and ISL in her claim that the former is an immersive pedagogy that focuses on concepts of power, privilege, and hegemony. Therefore, the responsibility of the GSL student is to engage the critical global civic and moral imagination. Furthermore, she notes the broader contexts within which GSL is played out, such as the global marketization of volunteerism. This differentiation and contextualization of GSL should promote the democratization of knowledge through collaboration between the community and student participants.

Previous research has documented the contributions of service-learning to community development, such as community-based partnerships for organizational visibility, legitimization, and access to resources, as well as community–university relations *(Crabtree, 2013; Miron & Moely, 2006; Sandy & Holland, 2006)*. Worrall *(2007)*, for example, found that community organizations engaged in service-learning projects to access new resources. More recently, scholars have drawn attention to a gap in the literature on the effects of study abroad on students who participate in such programs, as well as

the views and experiences of the host communities (e.g., *Erasmus, 2011; Kiely & Hartman, 2011; Schroeder, Wood, Galiardi, & Koehn, 2009; Tonkin, 2011*). The effect of global service-learning on attitudes toward inequality and social justice among both local communities and GSL participants, particularly factors that dispel or emphasize stereotypes about the Global South, have not been fully examined in the GSL literature *(Lewin, 2010)*.

Political approaches to service-learning often focus on societal problems, with an attempt to correct power imbalances by using universities as agents to advocate on behalf of marginalized groups. This approach accounts for only 1% of all service-learning activities *(Boyle-Blaise et al., 2006)* and engages participants to collectively analyze social issues and be accountable for the structuring of society *(Wade, 2007)*. However, service-learning has come under scrutiny among states in the Global South due to such concerns as overlooking indigenous knowledge, legacies of colonial states, and structural adjustments within the global economy *(McMichael, 2004)*. For activists and critical scholars of the Global South, development has broadly come to mean sustainability and democratization, which are implicit in service-learning programming *(Crabtree, 2008)*.

In addition, service-learning is framed to focus on aligning behaviors and attitudes of students to an academic goal. As Bringle and Hatcher *(1995)* argue,

> service learning is a credit-bearing, educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility. *(p. 112)*

Educational movements such as the philosophy of experiential learning, volunteerism, and activism have been associated with how students are positioned in service-learning.

Feminist analyses of this form of experiential learning highlight how this experience needs to be recognized as a social construction instead of an individual encounter *(Williams & McKenna, 2002)*. Without recognizing the position of the subject or engaging in a process of self-reflexivity, prejudices and stereotypes are bound to be reinforced *(Crabtree, 2008)*. Another feminist critique of experiential learning is related to its extensive focus on the volunteer as an

individual needing transformation rather than a concern for social transformation that is not necessarily ingrained in Western models of civility and democracy *(Williams & McKenna, 2002)*. This perspective also raises questions about service-learning as education for enterprise or society. For volunteers, their past volunteerism experience is the strongest determinant of their subsequent service involvement *(Tomkovick, Lester, Flunker, & Wells, 2008)*. In sum, there are dangers of volunteerism to all parties despite participants' good intentions.

From a postcolonial feminist perspective, Spivak *(1988)* argues that the Third World cannot be encountered without causing some sort of harm. This approach raises questions that relate to service-learning. Whose voice is silenced and/or represented during these acts of volunteerism? Which individuals become vulnerable to reimagining their identity and position in society amid preexisting and reinforced stereotypes and prejudices? Who is faced with socioeconomic barriers to participation? Furthermore, Devereux *(2008)* states that international volunteerism is synonymous with elitism because it is mainly the privileged White, highly qualified, middle-class Westerners who can afford to "sacrifice" their resources for poor people. Another danger of volunteerism and GSL reflects how the host community is represented as the *Other*. Representations of the *Other* have two related meanings. One meaning is political and focuses on the attempt made at speaking for the marginalized. The second meaning focuses on the attempt made at speaking *about* the marginalized *(Spivak, 1988)*. These representations are problematic in that the community is framed as something outside the university although, ironically, these institutions are integral parts of the broader global community *(Larsen, 2016)*.

Students participating in GSL programs have expectations for personal outcomes (e.g., skill development) that influence their subsequent involvement *(Tomkovick et al., 2008)*. Faculty and service-learning providers have an important role in ensuring that participants' expectations are met. For instance, the curriculum should provide opportunities for participants to think about service-learning in the context of their experiences. Many scholars and practitioners argue that the success of service-learning programs results in mutual benefits and strengthens community and organizational ties while improving the welfare of the community *(Crabtree, 2013; Green & Johnson, 2014)*.

The interdisciplinary literature and critical approaches to transformational learning outlined here provide a framework for experiential and service-based learning in international contexts.

Though we embrace GSL as a pedagogical approach, we note that assumptions about the intentions, impact, and relevance of participants' and community members' experiences can neither be overlooked nor examined without a critical lens. Drawing from the fields of critical development studies and feminism, we argue that global awareness, intercultural competence, and critical thinking are integral components of GSL. In order to tap the effectiveness of these components, however, GSL programs such as the one outlined below need to be critically evaluated.

## Navigating Global Service-Learning in Tanzania

This section focuses on a program that practices GSL as a way of engaging students in gender and development in a rural region of sub-Saharan Africa. The program is part of a nonprofit organization involved in international education and volunteer projects in locations around the world through what it calls Fair Trade Learning (FTL). Fair Trade Learning has developed out of a strategy for international education that focuses on reciprocity and ethical community engagement. Hartman *(2016, p. 225)* outlines FTL principles that reflect a commitment to community-driven development that protects and encourages environmental and economic sustainability. Finally, this approach emphasizes intercultural learning among participants and community partners. The organization highlighted in this article follows these principles through ethical and community-engaged programs with students and volunteers, largely from the Global North, that involve study or work in developing regions of the Americas, Africa, and Europe. Since its inception in the early 1990s, this organization has grown to include over 8,000 volunteers, staff, and board members in approximately 15 locations around the world *(Hartman, 2016)*.

Similar to a growing number of groups that focus on international service-learning, the organization offers programs that are based on the philosophy of collaboration among participants from communities and institutions in ways that are mutually beneficial. Indeed, its website boasts of a network that "empowers individuals and communities through worldwide service and learning" *(Amizade.org)*. Its projects include collaboration with professionals on a health care delivery boat in the Brazilian Amazon, marketing greeting cards made by people with disabilities in Bolivia, and a community-based garden project in central Appalachia. The transformational learning or Fair Trade Learning principles are strongly evident in the projects and the people who participate in this organization *(Hartman & Kiely, 2014a)*. Overall, the organization

is designed to fuse GSL with local partners to enhance community development. The implementation of these themes in the practice of GSL is explored in the following discussion.

## Practicing Global Service-Learning in Karagwe, Tanzania

For one month in 2015, 12 university students, one faculty member, and one graduate assistant traveled to Karagwe, Tanzania as part of a GSL program. Thirteen of the participants were from the United States, and one was Ghanaian. This discussion examines preparation for the on-site program as it relates to the themes of global civic engagement and intercultural competence within a critical development and postcolonial feminist framework. The program did not achieve all of its objectives for both structural and circumstantial reasons. Drawing from the conceptual approach outlined above, this analysis explores GSL objectives and provides a critical account of the challenges that frame the imbalance and inequities evident in the program.

Success of the program is largely linked to relationships developed among the participants (i.e., students, faculty, community members, NGOs, and leaders from the GSL organization) and the impact of the program on participants. As is often the case, the program is significantly shaped by the geographical and historical contexts where interaction takes place and the logistics necessary to fulfill the goals of the organization, the community, and the participants.

The GSL organization with which we worked has a history of engagement in Karagwe on several initiatives involving individual participants, community groups, and university partners (see *Hartman & Kiely, 2014b*, for a comprehensive analysis of previous programs in Tanzania with the same organization). For example, two of the organization's alumni founded an educational program on creative activities that fosters critical thinking skills through learning experiences for children during school breaks. This organization also works with several NGOs in the region and a local radio station to enhance community development. The organization's partner institution in this program is a Research I public university in the U.S. Mid-Atlantic region where both authors were based when this research was conducted. For nearly 10 years, this university has worked with the organization to help students and faculty participate in its programs. These programs are generally beneficial for the organization as a way of maintaining a presence

in the community and for the university in providing an international experience for students. Scholars critically analyze issues such as reciprocity and how communities benefit from or are exploited by these types of relationships *(Larsen, 2016)*. Jones and Steinberg *(2011)*, for example, provide a useful schema to assess the range of ISL programs as they relate to level of interaction, length of stay, expectations in terms of competency or skills, and location of the programs.

Students who participated in this GSL program had backgrounds in the social and physical sciences and humanities, as well as varied academic experiences. Twelve students (10 women and two men) enrolled in the program for reasons that included meeting major requirements, experiencing a different culture, fulfilling graduation credits, and following their desire to travel to a country in Africa. The gender ratio of participants was highly skewed toward women for a number of reasons that include more flexibility in their schedules and overlap with their major fields of study in the social sciences and humanities. This gender imbalance reflects a national pattern in service-learning and study abroad more broadly *(Bringle et al., 2011; Tonkin, 2011)*. In addition, two of the participants were African American; 10 were White. Many of these students had previous experience living and traveling abroad, although a few had never traveled outside the United States. The pretrip journal and essay discussed in the next section revealed important aspects of students' expectations and perceptions about their experiences.

The itinerary and activities for this 4-week Tanzania program consisted of Swahili language and other development classes, visits to local organizations, volunteer work, excursions, cultural events, and exploration of the community. The group flew to Kigale, Rwanda and took a bus to the site in the Karagwe District, Tanzania. Participants stayed at a local guesthouse where meals were served and students shared rooms in hostel-type accommodations located in a residential neighborhood and guarded by a night watchman. The living standards included basic services such as indoor plumbing, electricity, and security, as well as open space with tables and chairs for relaxing and informal gatherings. The group traveled almost daily to community groups where they assisted with certain tasks such as planting and cultivating crops, weaving, and cleaning hospital rooms (see Table 1 for a detailed description of community groups). Because students were also required to focus on one organization for individual and group

**Table 1. Selected Community Groups in Karagwe District, Tanzania**

| Name | Activity | Members | Location | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| FADECO | • Local radio station—broadcasts agricultural information and community events<br>• Acts as correspondent from the community<br>• Makes public health announcements | 18 people | Kayanga | • Established 2007<br>• Initial support from Amizade for radio equipment<br>• Coverage throughout the region<br>• Several women-operated programs |
| Women's Emancipation and Development Association (WOMEDA) | Advocacy group and legal experts work on women's issues | Unknown | Kayanga | • Established 2003 in collaboration with local NGO<br>• Focus on equitable access to land, family planning, and domestic violence |
| Coffee Growers | Grow seedlings for sale and harvest some coffee beans | Local farmers and community members | Karagwe District | Processing plant for local coffee no longer in operation due to Ugandan coffee competition |
| KVDPA–VIMAKA (Karagwe Vimaka Vocational Training Development & Poverty Alleviation) | • Microenterprise making textiles and crafts for local markets<br>• Microfinance group | 4 women, 2 men; 8 apprentices | Kayanga | • Small textile and sewing collective<br>• Impacted by fire in Kayanga in 2016 |

**Table 1. Selected Community Groups in Karagwe District, Tanzania**

| Name | Activity | Members | Location | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nyankangama Hospital | Regional hospital | Patients from Kagera region | Nyakahanga | • Originally a Lutheran Church hospital<br>• Heavily dependent on foreign aid<br>• Treatment of major and minor cases<br>• Minimal infrastructure<br>• Underfunded |
| OTA Initiative (Swahili for friendship) | Afterschool educational program to promote critical and creative thinking among students | • Students from Kayanga elementary school<br>• Instructors from school and in community | Kayanga elementary school | • Established by former Amizade American participant<br>• Outside funding for programs<br>• Teacher training |
| Pineapple Farm/ Co-op | Cooperative farm with primary crop pineapple | 28 men, 9 women | Rural area of Karagwe District | • Established in 2013<br>• Works closely with extension agent<br>• Challenges with lack of basic farm equipment |
| Weaving Cooperative | Women's microenterprise— makes baskets and other crafts for local markets | 11 women and 2 men | Rural area of Karagwe district | • Small group with fluctuating membership<br>• Local markets in stores and among individuals |
| Herbal Medicine Farm | Farm and production of herbal medicine | Under 20 community members | Near Kayanga | • Provides alternatives to Western medicine and treatment of ailments and diseases<br>• Focus on prevention and holistic medicine |

projects, most participants returned to these groups for follow-up conversations and volunteer work.

Participants engaged in critical reflection during informal conversations while riding on the bus or sharing stories over dinner after a day in the field and through more formal discussions in class. Additionally, students had writing assignments based on academic articles and development themes, as well as personal reflections. In these assignments, students were encouraged to examine their positionality and perceptions about the geographical context and these activities. Finally, each student chose a topic to research, write about, and present during the program. Topics ranged from holistic medicine in Tanzania and the impact of HIV/AIDS on children to politics and governance in Tanzania.

## A Brief Geography of Karagwe

The precolonial and colonial history, agricultural economy, and cultural diversity of Karagwe provide a dynamic setting for global service-learning. The Tanzania GSL program was based in the town of Kayanga, in the Karagwe District of Tanzania, along a main highway connecting the southern part of the Kagera Region to Bukoba City, the northern capital (see Figure 2). Kagera lies in the West Great Lakes region of East Africa along Lake Victoria. This part of the Great Lakes Kingdom once belonged to the Kitara Empire, engaging in trade with Arabs up to the mid-1800s and participating in the slave trade *(Cliffe & Saul, 1973)*. European colonial powers settled in this region in the 1800s, introducing coffee and other agricultural goods for local consumption, but mostly for export to the metropole. Germany was an early colonizer of this part of East Africa but lost control of the territory to the British following the First World War. This territory of Tanzania was originally governed as Tanganyika and Zanzibar until they merged in 1964 to form the United Republic of Tanzania.

**Figure 2. Global Service-Learning Sites in Karagwe, Tanzania**



Figure 2. Global Service-Learning Site in Karagwe, Tanzania
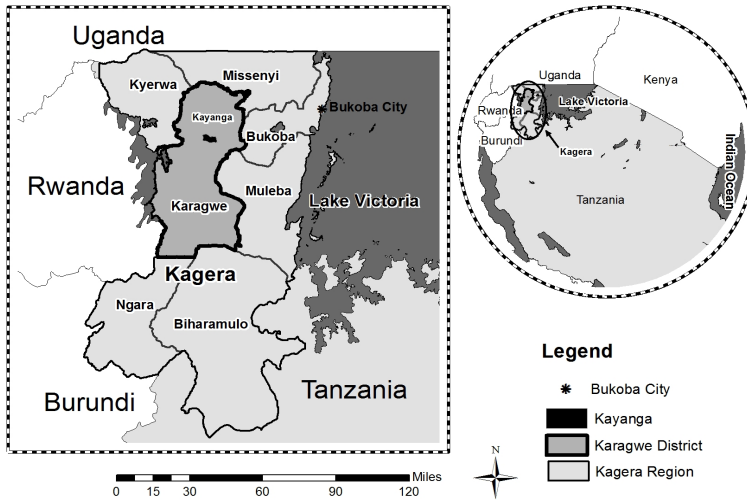
*Note. Reproduced courtesy of Maritza Pierre.*

The physical geography of Karagwe is a combination of tropical vegetation and grasslands. The area has fertile soil and sufficient rainfall to grow a variety of crops and raise livestock *(United Republic of Tanzania, 2016)*. Agriculture is a main economic activity for people in the Kagera Region. The indigenous crops of beans, maize, and other subsistence agriculture are matched by the main cash crops of banana and coffee. Pressure from too many people on the land and poor land use, however, have led to erosion and degradation of the soil. Another important social issue in the land tenure system of Tanzania as a whole, and Karagwe in particular, is the role of gender. Women are often marginalized from control of economic resources and have limited opportunities to own land in this area *(Newman, 2011)*. These issues became apparent in our visits to local agricultural sites and in working with women's advocacy groups in the region.

Finally, the population and demographics of this region have changed in the past decades with natural growth and an influx of people due to political unrest in neighboring countries. In general, Tanzania unites a diverse population with several ethnic groups, languages, and religions. Muslim Arabs are a majority population on the island of Zanzibar; the Sukuma and Nyamwezi are the largest groups on the Tanzania mainland. The population of Kagera Region was 2.5 million in 2012 with a majority from the Sukuma

ethnic group. In 2012, the District of Karagwe had a population of 332,000 *(United Republic of Tanzania, 2013)*. The region has an average annual growth rate of 3.2%, which is the third highest in the country. In the 1990s, the Kagera Region was affected by the genocide in Rwanda when over 165,000 refugees fled that country and settled in camps in Tanzania. Many have become permanent citizens of Tanzania and remain in this region.

This geographical and historical background of Karagwe situates the location of the GSL program within a broader cultural and political economy framework. As noted here, the country and region have been subject to colonial, patriarchal, and ethnic violence and oppression in multiple and diverse arenas. In turn, people within these communities experience these dynamic forces in ways that affect the role of gender in the development process and have implications for the practice of global service-learning.

## Researching Global Service-Learning: Methodology and Methods

Feminist and critical methodologies were employed in this project to examine multiple power relations embedded within and framed by the Tanzania GSL program. A feminist approach examines how these dynamics are evident at diverse and interconnected scales, from the body to the global arena *(Mohanty, 2003)*. For example, individual and everyday experiences concerning agricultural practices and household divisions of labor shape and are influenced by gender relations, and global forces such as neoliberal structural adjustment impact the social services and economies of these communities in Tanzania.

The methodology in this research also reflects our own positionality in the projects and with the neocolonial landscape of rural sub-Saharan Africa. Through these positionalities, we were aware of our involvement in what some describe as the development project of global education. In a similar theme, Spivak *(1988)* warns of the business of development whereby representations of the Third World/subaltern are institutionally constricted. As Kapoor *(2004)* explains, "Our representations of the Third World/subaltern cannot escape our institutional positioning and are always mediated by a confluence of diverse institutional interests and pressures" *(p. 635)*. Following these themes, this approach examines the legitimization and even reproduction of hegemonic discourses in educational and development projects such as this *(Crabtree, 2008; Hartman & Kiely, 2014b; Tonkin & Quiroga, 2004)*.

A multimethod research design was used to triangulate data in order to enhance the findings and scope of this project. Specifically, this study utilized photoanalysis of images from the fieldwork, document content analysis, participant observation, and site visits as research methods. Our human subjects application for this research was approved by the Institutional Review Board at our university prior to the program in Karagwe. Materials produced during the program consisted of reflective journals and assignments by the students that engaged gender and development literature with their experiences in the communities. These materials were obviously shaped by the students' positions as relatively privileged citizens of the United States and as students at a public university.

The assignments and activities, in combination with observations from field visits to various community projects, generated diverse responses that were the basis for our analysis of global civic engagement, intercultural competence, and critical thinking. Specifically, visits to local farms, travel experiences, and interactions with students, program leaders, and advocates yielded rich insights to our understanding of community and global engagement. These daily activities in the field were invaluable in examining the impact and process of service-learning in this cross-cultural postcolonial context. In addition, we conducted a focus group discussion with students as a means of reflecting on their experiences and sharing their perceptions of and reactions to privilege, community partners, and intercultural identities and competence.

Finally, the research utilized participant observation by the authors who led this program and were part of the everyday living and program activities. As a faculty member who does research on gender and microenterprise development in rural Africa, the first author was somewhat familiar with this rural context, as well as the social and economic opportunities and challenges faced by this community. Likewise, as a graduate student with research interests in intergroup communication with an emphasis on gender and culture, the second author understands the power dynamics, expectations, stereotypes, and prejudices often held by community members. In addition, the second author's background has exposed her to socioeconomic issues that are generalized to be characteristic of a sub-Saharan African country. In sum, the feminist methodological approaches and methods of research discussed here provide the basis for the following analysis of multiple and often contested outcomes of GSL in a postcolonial setting of rural Africa.

# Unpacking Global Service-Learning—A Tanzanian Case Study

As noted in the introduction to this article, university students are increasingly looking for programs and opportunities that will enable them to engage with the communities where they travel instead of learning about places and people in traditional study abroad programs *(Crabtree 2013; Kiely, 2005)*. Although these efforts are meant to benefit communities, the outcomes and impact are sometimes incommensurate with the intended experience of international service-learning. This section examines the effectiveness of GSL in terms of global awareness, intercultural competence, and critical thinking among participants in this process. The focus of this discussion is the students enrolled in the program; however, members of the communities where students traveled and worked form an important backdrop to our discussion. The analysis addresses the following questions as a way to unpack our approach to global service-learning. Does the program challenge or reinforce attitudes about inequality and social justice among the participants (visitors and host community)? How and why do these attitudes vary among participants? What are the factors that work to challenge or build on stereotypes about the Global South, White privilege, and social and economic divisions among participants? Through these and other topics, this research examines the attitudes and actions that shape the perceptions of communities and the intersection of global and local forces in GSL. In addition, the analysis demonstrates how students process community development and other dynamics introduced in the academic and service aspects of the program.

One of the assigned readings prior to leaving the United States is Pico Iyer's *(2000)* article "Why We Travel." This assignment encourages students to think about their own background and motives for participating in GSL. The article focuses on how travel changes people by exposing them to other ways of living and thinking. Students were asked to choose passages from the Pico Iyer reading and relate the benefits and challenges of travel to their own feelings and anticipations about the program. This assignment offered opportunities for interesting pretrip reflections that positioned and somewhat prepared students for the GSL program on a personal level.

Students processed and interpreted this article in different ways, depending on their backgrounds and experience. A few students who had not had the opportunity to travel internationally

mentioned their excitement and nervousness about participating in this new experience. For example, one student wrote,

> I have never been to another continent or experienced anything outside of this American "bubble". I expect it to be a dramatic culture shock. It takes me a little while to adjust to new situations. . . . I assume that everyone will have a learning curve in the beginning of the trip, some longer than others. Hopefully, by the end of it, we all find whatever we were looking for, and at the very least, gain a new perspective.

Another student shared her feelings about going to Tanzania. "This is the first time I will travel outside the country. I do think that at first this will be a little overwhelming. . . . Tanzania, I imagine will have a very different way of thinking from the United States." This quote reflects the tendency of some students to overgeneralize about the region of Africa as a homogeneous entity instead of acknowledging the diversity and heterogeneous nature of the continent. Furthermore, going to a foreign country led some students to fall back on stereotypes and a sense of being in a totally different place. One female student expressed an interest in traveling to Tanzania with an "open mind and willingness to embrace the unknown," and other students wrote about their excitement at embarking on this opportunity to grow through the experience. In her pretrip journal, this student wrote, "Anytime I travel I spend a lot of time on personal reflection. I learn more about myself than I could at home, and I fall in love with that feeling. . . every new thing is exciting, and you grow from the experience." Another female student draws from Iyer *(2000)* in her travel reflections and sees this as an opportunity to come into contact with more essential parts of herself: an explanation for why she feels most alive when she is far away from home. As evidenced by these students' comments, this pretrip assignment produced important reflections about their personalities and ability to adapt to new situations.

For one participant, going to a foreign country as a U.S. citizen was an opportunity to create a positive image for her country. This perception raised a critical concern for another student, who stated that the main expectations for her travel to rural Tanzania are that the group will (a) be received by the people of Karagwe with excitement or (b) be resented for exploiting the host community through expectations that reflect what she describes as "encouraging White savior complex." Thus, the anticipation of traveling and the prede-

parture exercises give insight to the expectations and assumptions of the participants. Their positionality and self-reflexivity produced thoughtful, yet sometimes very differing reactions depending on the students' social identities and backgrounds. The following subsections discuss how participants engage with global awareness and intercultural competence through critical thinking.

## Global Awareness

Through both academic and experiential activities during the program in Karagwe, students were exposed to structural and material forces that shape the economic and social fabric of this region. The focus of the coursework and the program was gender and sustainable development, so students tended to highlight issues relating to women and social power relations. Key readings in the course included excerpts from prominent scholars in the field, including Thomas-Slayter *(2003)*, Momsen *(2010)*, and Sen *(1999)*. Many students wrote about patriarchal forms of power in the District of Karagwe and how these were manifest among people with whom they interacted. As one female student wrote,

> Patriarchy is a structural phenomenon that voids gender minorities of their agency, the ability of individuals to influence and control their own lives and their freedom for decision making, either on a micro or macro scale. . . . (T)he ways in which patriarchy manifests is varied and distinctly cultural, thus necessitating that the ways by which feminists approach development must also be varied and distinctly cultural.

This quote depicts a general understanding of the role of patriarchy in this society with attention to the differential aspects of its manifestation in Karagwe. Other students observed and wrote about the structural elements of women's status in this society with attention to multiple axes of power relations. One male participant observed the disadvantages to women given societal norms and the overall oppression of women in this community.

> In many agricultural-based communities, women have little to no control over their family land or any other resources that may belong to the family. It is likely that the woman cannot travel or be paid for any type of work without her husband's written approval. . .  In cultures, such as many that we've observed in Karagwe, women

feel threatened and unable to speak up due to the domi-
nant role a man plays.

The combination of readings, direct observation, and interaction
with women's groups in the community gave this student a better
sense of some of the challenges women face concerning access to
basic resources and divisions of labor. These statements, however,
reflected generalizations about the lower status of women, reducing
women to a homogeneous category instead of recognizing the dif-
ferences among women in this community. Mohanty's *(2003)* work
on postcolonial feminism and the failure of some development and
feminist scholars to see beyond what has been termed the homoge-
neous Third World woman are illustrative of this tendency.

The data indicate that GSL exposure helped students increase
their global awareness through experiences and interaction with
certain activities that were part of the program. For example, the
visit to the genocide museum in Kigale, Rwanda was a powerful
experience for the group on several levels. Learning about the his-
tory behind this region's ethnic genocide during the 1990s height-
ened their understanding of colonialism. As one student noted,

> the divisions between the Hutus and Tutsis and [*sic*]
> eventually led to a bloody and violent eruption that
> decimated all sections of the country. . . The manip-
> ulation of indigenous politics and introduction of an
> elite and favored class of citizens, not to mention the
> external influences on economic systems, were all colo-
> nial actions that contributed to the genocide.

This student linked the regional conflict in Rwanda to broader
political, economic, and colonial forces, which in turn reinforced
topics the group had learned about in the development literature.

Additionally, students expounded on their understanding
of the impact of colonialism on Tanzanian society through dif-
ferent cultural institutions and practices in the region. Some stu-
dents focused on education and specifically the use of English as
a primary language in schools. Through their work in the local
elementary school, they were struck by this aspect of the legacy of
British colonization. According to one student, "the use of English
in secondary school and university, as well as in international
business among some African countries, is also a remnant of colo-
nialism, as well as globalization." Although the English language is
not systematically taught at the early stages of school, children are

expected to progress academically at the secondary level using the English language as a tool. Tanzania's language policy for education partly stems from the work of its first president, Julius Kambarage Nyerere, who attempted in the 1970s to empower Tanzanians with their own language while shielding them from the global world. These approaches to education led students to reflect on the impact of Western culture on life in Karagwe.

Finally, students were impacted by and commented on the physical infrastructure in Karagwe. For instance, Kayanga was experiencing road construction during our visit, which created many concerns among the community members (Figure 3). They were troubled by the dust and its health ramifications for the community, as well as the fact that many jobs were outsourced to people from other regions and countries. Locals told us that the majority of the construction companies were from China and hired Chinese people as managers instead of Tanzanians. One student noted,

> The roads are made for trade and transport of goods and resources, not for the needs of the locals such as being able to transport people to and from the hospitals or to schools. . . . there are not good conditions to be able to transport a sick or injured person to the hospital in an emergency situation, however, they are good enough for trading and importing goods from different areas of the world.

This student observed the importance of the road system to the local population and especially the perceived national priority of developing infrastructure to export and trade goods instead of providing proper access to health care and education.

**Figure 3. Local Road Construction in Kayanga, Tanzania**



The transformational learning that takes place in GSL through fieldwork, visits to cultural sites, and interactions with local people and institutions coincides with students' increased awareness and understanding of global issues and processes. Hartman and Kiely's *(2014b)* work on global citizenship resonates with the dilemma of students who engage in these experiences in ways that make universities "develop international structures that cater to U. S. students' wishes [and mimic] the earlier structures of colonialism" *(p. 216)*. Yet there are also accounts of students' obtaining a heightened sense of global social responsibility or global citizenship *(Hartman & Kiely, 2014a)*. These are invaluable lessons in tracking the effect of service-learning and experiential learning. By engaging with the communities and seeing gender relations and power dynamics firsthand, students are able to integrate the scholarly material and coursework with direct experiences in the community and region. They also understand the relationship between local and global issues, such as the impact of colonial rule on political, economic, and ethnic divisions in Rwanda, and investment by Chinese construction firms in rural Tanzanian infrastructure.

The focus on patriarchal power relations was also evident in student analyses of gender divisions of labor and access to resources such as land. Through visits to local farms, they understood gender inequality much more clearly in this international context. They also observed and were able to discern some of the disparities in this community that involve gender, age, economic status, and ethnic group. In this way, feminist perspectives were used to promote a nonessentializing approach that accounts for cross-cultural differences among various social identities.

## Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence was a complicated and important aspect of students' learning process and experiences during the Tanzania program. Many scholars in the field of global education identify the stages and progression of cultural attitudes and feelings that take place during such experiences. Crabtree *(2013)*, for example, discusses the complicated and wide-ranging outcomes and impact of international service-learning for participants. Some include changes such as "increasingly sophisticated understandings of poverty and historical global relations for the students" *(p. 49)*. Outcomes and impacts of global service-learning also include various stages of feeling uncomfortable and awkward, leading to accepting and embracing a new culture. This discussion examines several aspects of intercultural competence that were evident in our data, including privilege, positionality as an outsider, material conditions, and inequities. The observations and comparisons among cultural backgrounds became evident in the essays and observations of participants in this program.

Some students identified and discussed White privilege, as well as American privilege, as a means of explaining their feelings about cultural differences between themselves and those in the Karagwe community. The focus on technology and conveniences were especially apparent in this excerpt from one student's paper. Her reflections partly stem from Illich's *(1968)* reading on how the good intentions of U. S. volunteers and travelers overseas are often misguided and even hypocritical.

> We as travelers (predominantly white, middle class travelers) . . . ride in buses, we drink bottled water. We can afford to travel half way around the world . . . and take our iMacs and iPhones everywhere we go, and have the luxury to complain when we don't have service or the WiFi isn't fast enough, without stopping to consider that

perhaps the locals didn't even consider the connection slow.

Another male White student was self-conscious of and uncomfortable with his racial minority status in Karagwe. This situation also gave him insight into the feelings minorities might have in places with a White majority population.

> As the obvious minority in Tanzania, I found myself feeling very out of place at times and definitely felt the eye-balls of many local citizens. It made me ponder what it must be like to live in a society where this occurs daily.

Several other students expressed concern about being accepted into the community where they stayed. "I fear that I won't be accepted into the community as an American. I also worry that as an African-American they will be hesitant or unwilling to connect with me." This student had certain expectations about her acceptance in the community based on her own identity as an African American. The issue of African Americans in "Africa" with expectations of being accepted is sometimes seen as an illusion because the identity of an African American is not perceived the same way by Africans in Africa *(Wynder Quainoo, 2015)*. To most people in Africa, African Americans are from America and are American. The hyphenated identity thus implies that they are Black persons born in America and highly influenced by American culture.

Privilege in other forms was a theme that several students addressed in their pretrip journals and on-site assignments. In reflections on their own socioeconomic position and privileges as Americans, students wrote about this confrontation with difference and privilege in Tanzania and the hope of understanding these differences. In response to a theme from Iyer *(2000)* about how travel reveals different parts of ourselves that might otherwise be ignored, one student noted,

> I know that I have grown up very privileged. I haven't suffered undue hardships or had to learn to live without many accommodations. Not everyone has this lifestyle. I think it is important that I understand how to look at other cultures [*sic*] beliefs and ways of dealing with their daily lives.

The students in this program also interacted with local residents or were simply present on the streets in local neighborhoods. In these contexts, some of them expressed feelings of "unease," of "invading these areas," or of being "misplaced." One student wrote in her journal that she felt like an outsider in the market area where they spent an afternoon shopping and exploring. She expressed discomfort about the fact that they had "no idea where we were going" and they were "very different from them."

In addition, students noted stereotypes about things they read and media images of poverty and how people lived in "Africa." A related topic concerning intercultural themes are feelings about and observations of material amenities. Students commented on the squat toilets, untarred roads, and other aspects of life in Karagwe that they were not used to from their own experience. However, as one student noted, "the squat toilets are fairly easy to get used to, at least when they flush, and the dirt roads were not as ubiquitous as you originally thought." She also observed stark differences in the community among houses that were "small or run-down" alongside "houses that were large and gated or smaller but with beautiful, well-kept gardens." The sharply contrasting standards of living demonstrated to her how the media portrayal of a continent as diverse as Africa is often misrepresentative and biased. These conditions also depict the overarching inequalities observed both within these communities and among regions of Tanzania. Thus intercultural competency proved to be a powerful lens through which students gained insight into their positionality and biases in the context of a different culture. These lessons helped them to process the often misguided and unintentional consequences that results from efforts to embrace cross-cultural differences.

## Critical Thinking

Finally, critical thinking has a significant role throughout the learning process. Global service-learning teaches students and community members to carefully analyze and evaluate the material and situation at hand in order to improve their understanding of global engagement and experiential education. Critical feminist thinking adds to this approach by requiring us to gather information in a manner that questions standard assumptions about power dynamics and gender and social inequalities. The activities, readings, written assignments, and field experiences provided many opportunities to employ this approach within the GSL program.

Students were encouraged to question their own role and motives for participating in this program. One student wrote about her conflicted views of participating in the program. She wanted this experience to lead her forward in future opportunities to work for causes in social justice. Instead,

> It turned out to be less of a jumpstart to travel and exploration, and more of a jumpstart to analyzing my own place in the world of service. Halfway in the trip I began questioning my motives for even wanting to do the work I was in. Sure, I was interested in justice, but the fact that I had such an urge to "help" people in the developing world was something that I needed to analyze critically and deduce some type of conclusion from. . . . Here we were, bright-eyed American kids entering into their home community and asking that they help us help them.

This critique of service-learning is based on both the type of work involved and the premise of being *helpful* to the community. Many students did not feel they had the skills to assist with the building, farming, or education that was asked of them. Thus, the situation reinforced the imbalance and inequities they faced in the insider–outsider dichotomy.

The focus group discussion also reflected students' insights about the impact of this experience on their ability to make change. As a female student observed, "talking to people on this trip has also made us realize that maybe . . . as foreigners we can't do as much as we want or we shouldn't do as much as we want without causing more problems." Another student encouraged people in these situations to be aware of their actions and realize how they have consequences abroad. She also reflected on how her aspirations to join the Peace Corps have changed, stating, "I think I could have a bigger impact in my own community. Because I'm passionate about a lot of things so . . . on the local level I would make more of a difference."

These critical reflections resonate with broader debates concerning experiential learning and pedagogy that attempt to unsettle and critique student and participant perspectives on the project of GSL. Mohanty *(2003)* and Spivak *(1988)* have taken feminist perspectives in discussing the dangers of representing and silencing the *Other* in these and similar types of postcolonial encounters. Scholars, students, and practitioners need to challenge assumptions

about the intentions, impact, and relevance of GSL experiences in light of these critiques.

## Conclusion

Global service-learning presents an important model of experiential education that offers critical perspectives on community engagement within the context of efforts to internationalize higher education. Themes of global awareness and intercultural competence that are embedded in critical thinking often frame this experience for diverse constituents. This article uses these themes to construct an analysis of a GSL program focusing on gender and sustainable development in Tanzania. The approach in this program challenges students to rethink and question assumptions about complex geographies and social histories of East Africa in general.

The analysis exemplifies the contested and dynamic nature of global service-learning as it is applied in a postcolonial context. The specific focus on gender and sustainable development gives students the material and ideological context to address privilege and power dynamics at various scales within gendered and other power relations. Our analysis draws from feminist and critical development approaches to examine the partnerships and effect of this experiential learning process on students and communities in Kayanga, Tanzania. The contextual issues concerning globalization, social histories, and political economies of development are addressed in this discussion through analyses of student reflections, assignments, observations, and a focus group. These writings and field experiences express how students and other participants navigate foreign travel, cross-cultural themes such as gender, language, and religion, and the material realities of rural development.

The study has several limitations, however, that include the scope and length of the program in Tanzania. The analysis is based on one specific program and could be enriched with the addition of longitudinal studies from other similar programs. Also, input and feedback from community members would expand the analysis to include local voices and insights into the GSL program. Other studies have engaged more with community groups, thus providing different perspectives on global service-learning *(Larsen, 2016)*. Nonetheless, our in-depth and focused study contributes to broader literature that addresses the role of global awareness and cultural competency in these cross-cultural experiential learning programs. In particular, critical development and postcolonial

feminist frameworks can be applied in this context to better understand the complicated nature of GSL programs and transformational learning as a whole.

In conclusion, Nussbaum *(2002)*, as quoted in Hartman and Kiely *(2014b)*, describes a global citizen as "someone who recognizes common human dignity, develops his or her narrative imagination (or empathy) for other humans, and who cultivates critical distance from one's culture and traditions" *(p. 234)*. Furthermore, international service-learning challenges one's epistemology or deeply embedded beliefs and knowledge about the world around us *(Larkin et al., 2016)*. These themes draw from the interdisciplinary fields of critical development studies and postcolonial feminism in ways that expand our understanding of global service-learning as a means of advancing inclusive and transformational pedagogy.

## Acknowledgements

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## About the Authors

**Ann M. Oberhauser** is professor of sociology and director of Women's and Gender Studies at Iowa State University. Her research interests are in the areas of feminist geography, gender and development, qualitative methods, and feminist pedagogy. She earned her Ph.D. in geography from Clark University.

**Rita Daniels** is assistant professor of communication studies at Western Washington University. Her research areas are intergroup communication (specifically, issues related to gender and cultural identities) and organizational communication. She earned her Ph.D. in communication studies and a graduate certificate in women's and gender studies at West Virginia University.

# PROJECTS WITH PROMISE

# Are College Graduates Ready for the 21st Century? Community-Engaged Research Can Help

## Elena T. Carbone and Susan Ware

## Abstract

Research is clear: Employers want college graduates who can communicate clearly, think analytically, and interact respectfully. Targeted educational experiences have measurably improved these capacities. To better prepare undergraduates, the University of Massachusetts Amherst developed the Community-Engaged Research Program, a pilot program featuring a cornerstone course. The course seeks to realize the goal of making research-based learning a standard in U.S. undergraduate education. Data from process evaluations, student assessments, and end-of-semester surveys show meaningful gains in students' ability to think through the research process, communicate research findings, and respectfully address others' needs. Recommendations for building a sustainable undergraduate research model are provided. With further institutional support, such courses could improve college graduate preparedness for the workforce.

*Keywords*: community-engaged research, undergraduate, research, honors students

> *"Research should not be done for the sake of research, but for the sake of those whom it can benefit."—Student at UMass Amherst*

## Introduction

*A*lthough often considered among the best of their kind in the world, U.S. research universities have faced pointed bipartisan critiques of their graduates since the late 20th century. Faculty and employers alike bemoan graduating seniors who can't think clearly, figure out problems, communicate with people who are different from them, or respond compassionately to others' needs.

National standard-bearers of undergraduate excellence have been studying these failures of research universities for over 30 years. In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education published *A Nation at Risk: An Open Letter to the American People (NCEE, 1983)*. In this publication, contributors

from the private sector, academe, and government shared a concern that college graduates were not prepared for the 21st century workforce *(pp. 1–3)*. Similar concerns led the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching to create the Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in the Research University. The Boyer Commission's report *(1998)* was published to address the fact that "all too often [undergraduates in research universities] graduate without knowing how to think logically, write clearly, or speak coherently" and that "[t]he university has given them too little that will be of real value beyond a credential that will help them get their first jobs" *(p. 6)*.

Both reports prioritize undergraduate research among the top three postsecondary needs in the United States; both call for increases in undergraduate research opportunities. However, neither has been implemented consistently to the satisfaction of its proponents. Today's employers still find graduating seniors underprepared in fundamental skills.

Virtually echoing the introduction to the Boyer Commission report, over 75% of employers surveyed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and Hart Research Associates *(2013)* indicated their desire for colleges to place more emphasis on communication and analytical skills. In this study, fewer than 30% of respondents felt that recent graduates had grasped these skills sufficiently to apply them to real-world problems (whereas 66% of the students surveyed thought that their critical thinking was adequate).

Studies motivated by these concerns show that undergraduate research and active and collaborative learning top the list of high-impact practices producing these outcomes. The AAC&U has recommended 10 undergraduate experiences that have the highest impact on undergraduate learning *(Kuh, 2008)*. The desired outcomes have been described as "knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world, intellectual and practical skills, personal and social responsibility, and integrative learning" *(Kilgo, Sheets, & Pascarella, 2015, p. 509)*. A longitudinal study of 4,193 undergraduates from 17 institutions, including private liberal arts schools and public research universities, measured the actual effects of these recommended practices *(Wabash College Center of Inquiry in Liberal Arts, 2012)*. More than internships, study abroad, or other recommended experiences, undergraduate research and active and collaborative learning provided "unique, positive effects on critical thinking, need for cognition, and . . . intercultural effectiveness" *(Kilgo et al., 2015, p. 516)*. Furthermore, undergraduate research cor-

related uniquely with 4-year gains in "positive attitudes toward literacy," and active and collaborative learning significantly increased socially responsible leadership *(Kilgo et al., 2015, p. 519)*.

Participating in research opportunities at the undergraduate level is also associated with a number of benefits. These include cognitive and personal growth and skill development; higher satisfaction with students' undergraduate education; and clarification of career plans, including pursuit of a graduate degree. Students involved in research gain hands-on experience, which increases confidence and self-efficacy *(Bauer & Bennett, 2003; Eagan, Hurtado, Chang, & Garcia, 2013; Hunter, Laursen, & Seymour, 2007)*. Participation in undergraduate research is also linked to students' academic success and retention *(Wabash College, 2012)*, as well as persistence, particularly among traditionally underserved students, who are then more likely to pursue research careers *(Finley & McNair 2013; Schultz et al., 2011)*. The Boyer Commission report called attention to this linkage; today, the battle is on to quantify this striking phenomenon *(Taraban & Logue, 2012)*.

The promise of undergraduate research stands to reason. Rather than facing a list of facts to be memorized, students involved with a research project both generate a workable question and devise a strategy for answering it. They can also work as part of a team, cultivating interpersonal skills. By presenting their findings in posters and talks, as well as sometimes interviewing participants for the project, they develop ability and confidence as communicators for divergent audiences. In particular, inclusion in a research project can make underrepresented students feel more like "insiders" in academic culture as they "move away from the periphery to the center of practice as community members" *(Hunter et al., 2007, p. 66)*.

Spanning 30 years and a broad political spectrum, these studies and reports show a recurring demand for college graduates who can communicate clearly, think critically, and interact respectfully with others who may be different from them. Marking a shift from a primary emphasis on science, technology, education, and math (STEM) classes for workforce preparedness seen in the 1980s *(Kenny, 2003)*, studies show that undergraduate research builds these skills *(Nikolova & Williams, 1997)*, with academic–community engagement amplifying that effect. The purpose of this article is to add to the growing body of literature on the benefits of undergraduate research—and in particular community-engaged research (CER)—with data from an innovative pilot program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst (UMass). It also considers why use of this timely educational methodology has not increased

to meet the clear demand, with recommendations for bolstering such programs in the future.

## Community-Engaged Research (CER)

Including communities as part of the research experience adds to the benefits gained by undergraduates. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching *(2015)* describes community engagement as the "collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities . . . for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity" *(para. 1)*. It further asserts that its purpose is to "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" *(para. 2)*.

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) is a type of community-engaged research (CER) that is

> a collaborative approach to research [that] equitably involves all partners in the research process and recognizes the unique strengths that each brings. CBPR begins with a research topic of importance to the community with the aim of combining knowledge and action for social change to improve community health and eliminate health disparities. *(Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003, p. 4)*

Critical to this discussion is the research that develops a real partnership between communities and academic partners, with the expectation that cooperation and negotiation will contribute to a committed quest to address local issues. CER approaches thus differ substantively from those of traditional research (see Figure 1). Including nonacademic communities as part of the research experience adds to the benefits gained by undergraduates and enhances the relevance of state-funded land-grant institutions like UMass whose mission is to serve the Commonwealth.

## Figure 1. Comparison of CBPR and Traditional Research



*Community members assist researchers with interpretation, dissemination and translation of findings. Assures greater sensitivity to cultural and social norms and climate and potential group harm and enhances potential for translation of findings into practice.*

*Community members help guide intervention development. Assures greater cultural and social relevance to the population served, increasing the likelihood of producing positive change.*

*Measurement instruments developed with community input and tested in similar populations. Potentially sensitive issues handled better and increased reliability and validity of measures.*

*Community representative provide guidance regarding recruitment and retention strategies. Enhanced recruitment and retention.*

*Community representatives involved with study design and proposal submission. Increased acceptability of study approach, include funds for community.*

*Full participation of community in identifying issues of greatest importance. Increased motivation to participate in research process.*

**Health concerns identified** → **Study designed and funding sought** → **Participants recruited and retention systems implemented** → **Measurement instruments designed and data collected** → **Intervention designed and implemented** → **Data analyzed and interpreted, findings disseminated and translated**

Issues identified based on epidemiologic data and funding priorities.

Design based entirely on scientific rigor and feasibility; funding requested primarily for research expenses.

Approaches to recruitment and retention based on scientific issues and "best guesses" regarding reaching community members and keeping them involved in the study.

Measurement instruments adopted/adapted from other studies. Tested chiefly with psychometric and analytic methods.

Researchers design intervention based on literature and theory.

Researchers report findings from statistical analysis and publish in peer-reviewed journals.

*From "Community-Based Participatory Research: A Summary of the Evidence," by M. Viswanathan et al., 2004. "Methods," Figure 1.*

Community engagement lies on a continuum. The strength of the community–academic relationship can vary greatly. Factors such as type of research questions, type of project and participant groups, community history, and local politics all affect the relationship. Regardless of the individual factors, however, fundamental to all community-engaged research is an understanding that the community will be involved in a meaningful way *(MacQueen et al., 2001)*.

In this article, the term *community-engaged research*, or CER, will be used broadly to describe work between communities and academic researchers. In keeping with Sandmann's *(2008)* scholarship of engagement work, community-engaged research is viewed as distinct from outreach, and connotes bidirectional reciprocity of campus–community partnerships as they affect research and teaching.

## A Promising Model at UMass Amherst

In 2012, the Community-Engaged Research Program (CERP) was initiated as a pilot program in the Commonwealth Honors College at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. This program is complementary, yet distinctive, among the university's initiatives because it not only bolsters academic research but also strengthens ties between the campus and neighboring communities. Whereas other research opportunities at UMass offer students lab- or library-based experience, the CERP has focused on the surrounding populace through directed readings, case studies, and field-based work with communities that have asked for topical expertise to solve a problem. With an academic research focus, CERP students supplement community service-learning opportunities that enhance civic engagement but do not involve a specific research question to be answered.

Phase I (development) of the UMass program began in summer 2012 with a part-time director (Carbone) and administrative assistant; an associate director (Ware) was hired in fall 2012. During its implementation (Phase II), the operating budget increased from $2,000 to $10,000; since its inception, almost $85,000 in scholarships has been awarded to 27 students (Table 1). These awards, which matched students with a faculty mentor and community members, funded students' active participation on the research team. Research topics have included exercise programs for the homeless, citizen plant identification, worldwide views on biodi-

versity, literacy development through African heritage–informed education, and farm programs for preschoolers and seniors. Scholarship recipients were encouraged to use this research to inform their senior thesis projects.

**Table 1. Course Enrollment and Scholarships**

|  | AY 2012-13 | AY 2013-14 | AY 2014-15 | AY 2015-16 | AY 2016-17 | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Freshman [a] | 0 | 2 | 6 | 0 | 0 | |
| Sophomore | 0 | 9 | 13 | 13 | 6 | |
| Junior | 3 | 11 | 20 | 14 | 8 | |
| Senior | 16 | 32 | 19 | 6 | 6 | |
| Other [b] | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| **Totals** | 19 | 56 | 63 [c] | 33 [d] | 20 [e] | 191 |
| Male | 4 | 15 | 21 | 7 | 8 | |
| Female | 15 | 41 | 37 | 26 | 12 | |
| Discrete Student Majors | 8 | 21 | 24 | 20 | 20 | |
| **Scholarships** | | | | | | |
| Number: | 12 | 6 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 27 |
| **Amount:** | $56,000 | $11,000 | $12,000 | $3,400 | $2,000 | $84,400 |

[a] *Freshman enrollment was allowed spring 2014, fall 2014, and spring 2015.*

[b] *One community member and one non-UMass student participated.*

[c] *Five students registered for a 1-credit colloquium in addition to the class in spring 2015.*

[d] *In fall 2015, administrative changes were made to cap course enrollment at 25.*

[e] *The course was not offered in fall 2016.*

Networking contributed greatly to the success and diversity of the program during its implementation phase. The program has hosted annual gatherings for faculty whose research uses CER methods, as well as their community partners. Invitation and attendance records at these gatherings were used to populate a searchable database of local research opportunities for students. Attendees also publicized the program across campus. Speaking at new student orientations, inviting students to serve as "ambassadors" to talk about the program, and searching the undergraduate course catalog to market the program directly to students enrolled in classes with a "civic engagement" designation significantly increased program visibility.

Central to the program since its inception is a one-credit, module-based class titled "Research Gets Real: Principles and Practices of Community-Engaged Research." In each of its 10 modules, specific and measurable learner-centered objectives frame the assignments (see Table 2). These objectives follow Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives (specifically the cognitive domain), proceeding from remembering, understanding, and applying concepts to the increasingly higher level critical thinking skills of analysis, evaluation, and creating new knowledge *(Anderson et al., 2001; Bloom, 1956)*. Consequently, action-oriented objectives progress sequentially from foundational knowledge (Modules 1–3) to targeted skill-building activities (Modules 4–10).

**Table 2. Learner-Centered Course Objectives and Assignments**

| Modules and Topics | Learning Objectives<br>By the end of this module, you [learners] will have: | Assignments |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Welcome and Introduction | a. Completed a baseline needs assessment<br>b. Completed human subjects training<br>c. Read and compared definitions of community-engaged/community-based participatory research | • Baseline assessment<br>• Human subjects online training<br>• Watch clip of Erin Brokovich video and answer questions related to her role with and for the community |
| 2. Introduction to Community-Engaged Research (CER) | a. Compared the language and definitions of community-engaged research with traditional research<br>b. Examined differences/similarities between qualitative and quantitative research methods | In 1–2 pages, reflect on the following: (1) What in the readings confirmed or challenged a previously held belief you had? (2) What does qualitative research provide that quantitative does not? (3) What does quantitative research provide that qualitative does not? (4) What is gained by using CER? (5) What, if anything, is lost by using CER? |

| 3. | Principles for Conducting Research | a. | Critically reviewed a foundational paper in the field of CER | Briefly answer the following: (1) How would you describe to a friend the three main points in the foundational paper? (2) What are two challenges a researcher might face when implementing CER? (3) How could this approach to research affect your own major? |
| | | b. | Demonstrated comprehension of CER by applying information from readings to answer a series of questions about core concepts | |
| 4. | Writing a Research Question | a. | Applied information from readings to create an original research question | Using the readings as your guide, develop (and revise) an original research question. |
| 5. | From Research Question to Completed Project | a. | Applied guidelines for conducting CBPR to determine the extent to which a given study was carried out according to key principles and practices | For each step in the CBPR process, use the reading to address these questions: (1) Was this step applied in the article you read? (2) If yes, explain how authors applied this step in their research. |
| 6. | Researchers as Teachers and Learners | a. | Completed an online learning style assessment | • Identify your learning style. |
| | | b. | Identified teaching techniques appropriate to different learning styles | • Write a one-page paper describing how you would teach something to a student with a learning style other than your own. Be sure to (1) discuss how you would tailor your teaching to address the other person's style and (2) include at least one point from the chapter or YouTube video to enhance your teaching |
| | | c. | Read and reflected upon a chapter about teaching adults | |
| | | d. | Listened and reflected upon a YouTube presentation by Paulo Freire | |
| | | e. | Wrote a short reflective paper on this material | |

| 7. | Challenges of and Strategies for Conducting Research | a. | Identified challenges to conducting community research | Based on your review of the readings, briefly describe (1) two problems community-based researchers may encounter and (2) two ways to address each problem. |
| | | b. | Identified and analyzed strategies to conduct research in the face of these challenges | |
| 8. | How to Write an Abstract | a. | Reviewed information on how to write structured abstracts | • Read the materials and one of the selected studies |
| | | b. | Read a sample abstract | • Write and save your own abstract based on the study you chose |
| | | c. | Wrote a 250-word structured abstract | • Read the actual abstract written by the authors |
| | | d. | Compared your abstract in relation to one from a peer-reviewed journal | • Describe how your work compares to the original |
| 9. | How to Make a Professional Oral Presentation | a. | Viewed a presentation on how to give clear oral presentations | • Watch one public and one professional presentation from the list provided. |
| | | b. | Critically analyzed a professional oral presentation and a public presentation | • Compare/contrast the presentations in light of the readings and briefly address the following: (1) What makes a good presentation? (2) What features of a strong presentation come naturally to you/which do you need to work on? (3) How can a professional presentation be as dynamic as a public presentation? |

| 10. | How to Present Research Findings through Poster Presentations | a. | Reviewed guidelines on how to create an effective poster | In one page, discuss the following: (1) What poster drew your attention/what features made it compelling? (2) What design will you use in your own posters? (3) What distracted from the clarity of a poster? |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | b. | Viewed examples of posters from traditional research and CER projects | • Follow-up assessment |
| | | c. | Compared and contrasted different poster formats, designs, etc. | • Final course evaluation |
| | | d. | Completed a follow-up needs assessment and a final course evaluation | |

Beginning in spring 2015, five individual colloquia were available to supplement the course. These colloquia meet the higher credit-hour requirement of the research track certificate that was piloted within the Civic Engagement and Service-Learning (CESL) program. The colloquia had five foci: (1) research ethics, (2) research question development, (3) field-based work, (4) enhancement of an existing CER-related course, and (5) conducting an in-depth interview of a faculty member involved in CER.

As noted earlier, CER activities are complementary yet distinctive among existing research units and initiatives at UMass. Supporting units and initiatives include the Office of Undergraduate Research and Studies; Office of National Scholarship Advisement; Integrated Concentration in Science; and the Biology Undergraduate Research Apprenticeship database, as well as discipline-specific internships and cooperative student opportunities. The Office of Research and Engagement, whose mission includes providing leadership and services that support the growth of research and scholarship across campus, helped support the CERP in its first year by funding a National Science Foundation–style summer opportunity known as Research Experience for Undergraduates. Student–faculty mentor teams were invited to apply; eight were selected to work in local communities. The students also attended weekly in-person sessions focused on community-engaged research. The content of these sessions served as the basis for development of the "Research Gets Real" class.

# Course Design

In response to student feedback, after being offered both in-person and online-only, the course now utilizes a hybrid delivery approach. Students access, complete, and submit online weekly assignments using Moodle, a learning management system that delivers course content, hosts online learning activities, and tracks student participation. The class also meets in person monthly as a group.

Enlisting this hybrid format, the course combines active-learning pedagogy with targeted content. To determine course content, the authors initially defined the module topics in consultation with an advisory committee of faculty and community members; however, the content has remained responsive to student feedback each year. In this way, the instructor assumes the role of teacher, colearner, and facilitator to assist in the students' learning process.

## Key Outcomes

The course content deliberately addresses three key outcomes emerging from the literature and sought by employers: (1) communication capacity, (2) critical thinking skills, and (3) respectfulness.

**Communication capacity.** The "Research Gets Real" syllabus includes explicit instruction in written, visual, and verbal communication skills. The modules provide opportunities for students to learn by doing.

In Module 6, students identify their personal learning style and reflect on how to communicate research findings to others with different backgrounds and learning style preferences. Increasing awareness of their own and others' learning preferences helps students adapt to different situations and optimizes knowledge acquisition *(Smart, Berry, Kumar, Kumar, & Scott, 2015)*.

In Module 8, students write a 250-word structured abstract of a peer-reviewed journal article. After submitting their abstract, students see the original published version and reflect on how their work compares. Throughout the process, students have access to samples showing how abstracts evolve through the editing process.

In Module 9, students critique oral presentations ranging from TED talks to disciplinary conference talks recorded on YouTube. Students also attend on-campus research conferences to hear presentations by faculty and peers.

In Module 10, students examine faculty research posters to identify visual and conceptual features that enhance or impede the clarity and effectiveness of presenting research results. As new
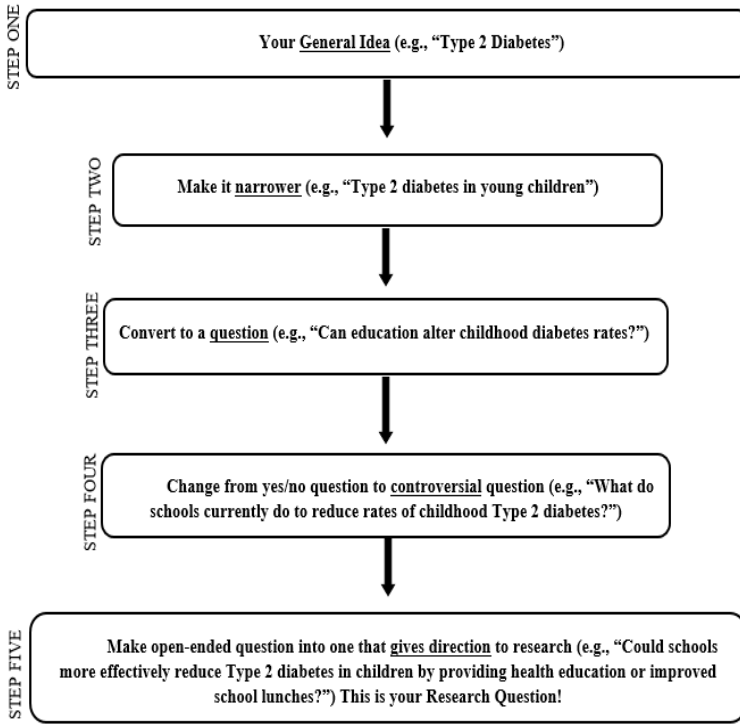
critics of clear communication, they "see" anew design elements, including use of color, font, and white space.

**Critical thinking skills.** We refer to critical thinking as the "intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action" *(Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2013, para. 3)*. Every module develops this skill in some way. Early on, new concepts are introduced following a traditional "read and respond" structure; later modules (4–10) require students to use critical thinking in more creative tasks. For example, after reading about the differences between traditional research and CER—and the methods used in each—students explicitly consider how quantitative and qualitative methods are used together (or separately) to gather data to answer a research question. They have to figure out how strong the data are and what kind of conclusion can be drawn from different types of data. Consequently, students emerge far less likely to use a single anecdote to support a general claim about "all" data.

In Module 4, students formulate a research question, which they revise multiple times with instructor feedback. Questions typically develop from a broad, vague area of interest to a question for which the student can ascertain a valid finding. The assignment required for this module is shown as Figure 2.

**Figure 2. Class Assignment.**

Fill in each box to move from an idea to a research question.

STEP ONE

Your <u>General Idea</u> (e.g., "Type 2 Diabetes")

STEP TWO

Make it <u>narrower</u> (e.g., "Type 2 diabetes in young children")

STEP THREE

Convert to a <u>question</u> (e.g., "Can education alter childhood diabetes rates?")

STEP FOUR

Change from yes/no question to <u>controversial</u> question (e.g., "What do schools currently do to reduce rates of childhood Type 2 diabetes?")

STEP FIVE

Make open-ended question into one that <u>gives direction</u> to research (e.g., "Could schools more effectively reduce Type 2 diabetes in children by providing health education or improved school lunches?") This is your Research Question!

*Note. Adapted from Empire State College (n.d.) and the George Mason University Writing Center (2017).*

Students first read concrete, action-oriented works discussing how to write a research question. We chose samples from the George Mason University Writing Center *(2017)* and from an online tutorial by Empire State College *(n.d.)*. From these, students could see what is meant by a question that is too open-ended or broad (e.g., "What forces affect race relations in the United States?"), as well as more directive alternatives (e.g., "What corporate hiring practices affect race relations in Nashville?")

Students then develop a research question of their own, working it through steps of increasing specificity. This product-based assignment is a response to the need for experiential skill development—that is, we know that students have a skill because they demonstrate it. The same student who waxes lyrical about the need for a direct, answerable question may turn around and propose a project to "study Type II diabetes." Vital to learning is the

next step, in which the student is told that "studying Type II diabetes" is itself a vague mission that is not quite a question. When the student recognizes that fact and refines the question to ask, "Do seniors with Type II diabetes living at home neglect their diet more than seniors living in assisted care?" the theory and practice combine to create lasting learning.

For Module 5, students apply guidelines for conducting research to determine the extent to which a given study was carried out according to key principles and practices of CER. In this way, they interpret and analyze the guidelines and evaluate their use. In the second in-person meeting, students share their rationale and thought processes with the group and provide feedback to others about their research questions.

**Respectfulness.** As a field, CER naturally fosters respectfulness. At times, it makes students recognize their unconscious prejudices. The course design bolsters this attitude.

For instance, as a first assignment, students complete an online human subjects training course. Through this training, they learn not only the history and purpose of research ethics, but also particular research behaviors that convey respect for others.

As part of Module 5, students review guidelines for conducting CBPR specifically in the social sciences. They then apply the guidelines to determine whether a given study is conducted according to CBPR principles. The extent to which researchers show respect for participants is one of the yardsticks by which they make these assessments.

Module 7 explores the challenges that historically have faced those who conduct community research. Students read several articles and view a video, after which they write a one-page paper that (1) identifies two problems community-based researchers may encounter in the field and (2) describes two ways they could address each problem. In writing their response, students are asked to consider challenges from both the researchers' and community members' perspectives. A future addition to the course could include readings about unconscious bias, with each student reflecting on resources that both promote and inhibit respectfulness.

## Evaluation

The three data collection methods employed to assess the course reflect all levels of Bloom's cognitive domain: (1) process evaluation, documenting progression of the program's development; (2) author-developed course assessments; and (3) standard-

ized end-of-semester evaluations *(Bloom, 1956)*. These data are collected on an ongoing basis.

During the development of "Research Gets Real" (Phase 1), process evaluation data were collected at the end of each module (see Table 3). Through open-ended questions and group discussions, students were asked to describe what they liked most and least about the content and delivery of each module. Students were also encouraged to provide specific suggestions for change.

**Table 3. Sample Process Evaluation Questions**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. | What research skills have you gained and/or improved upon as a result of this unit? |
| 2. | In what ways do you feel you will use these skills for your personal and/or professional growth? Please indicate if you are thinking about/plan to use these skills for your honors thesis. |
| 3. | What did you like most about this unit? Why? |
| 4. | What did you like least about this unit? Why? |
| 5. | For each of the following terms, please provide a brief definition and why you think it is important:<br>• Community<br>• Community-placed research<br>• Community-based participatory research (CBPR)<br>• Qualitative methods<br>• Quantitative methods<br>• Stakeholders<br>• Generalizability |
| 6. | What additional comments, suggestions, or input would you like to share? |

At the beginning of each semester, author-developed course assessments ask students to identify their expectations about the class, as well as any concerns. During the last week of class, students answer follow-up questions, such as, "What research skills have you gained and/or improved as a result of this course?" "In what ways do you think you will use these skills for your personal and/or professional growth?" and "What advice would you give to future students taking this course?" (see Table 4).

**Table 4. Author-Developed Student Assessments**

| |
|---|
| **Baseline Questions** |
| 1. Name one research skill you hope to gain and/or improve as a result of this course. |
| 2. What do you feel you need to know about community-engaged research for your personal and/or professional growth? |
| 3. In what ways do you see yourself using information from this class now or in the future? |
| 4. Name three terms that the word "community research" call to your mind at this point. |
| 5. We will be using a variety of teaching strategies in this class. What would you like us to know about how you learn best? |
| 6. What questions or concerns do you have about this class? |
| **Follow-Up Questions** |
| 1. What research skills have you gained and/or improved upon as a result of this course? |
| 2. In what ways do you feel you will use these skills for your personal and/or professional growth? Please indicate if you are thinking about/plan to use this research for your honors thesis. |
| 3. Name one part or component (it can be a reading, an assignment, or a discussion) of this course that surprised you. Explain briefly, in what ways did it surprise you? |
| 4. What needs to be changed or added to this course (or any specific module)? What suggestions do you have to make this change or addition? |
| 5. If any portion/s of this course will affect a future college project or long-term career plans, please describe how. |
| 6. What advice do you have for a student who takes this course in the future? |
| 7. Use the space below to provide any other comments you would like to share. |

At the end of each semester, we administer standardized, university-based evaluations ("Student Response to Instruction" or SRTI). SRTI questions ask students to rate the course in a series of open-ended questions. Quantitative data regarding opportunities for student participation, effectiveness of instructors' teaching, amount learned, and overall course ratings are also collected and measured on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest). These data are compiled by the university and compared to departmental, school/college, and campus mean scores. Comparison means are calculated using combined fall/spring annual year data. A comparison group mean is the grand mean of a set of section means or standard deviations—not the mean or standard deviation of student responses pooled across sections *(University of Massachusetts Amherst Office of Academic Planning & Assessment, 2017)*.

## Results and Discussion

Qualitative data from student course assessments and open-ended SRTI evaluations (Table 5) show that students acquired new research-related skills, a finding that mirrors results at peer institutions across the country. At UMass, as elsewhere, undergraduate research experience has been shown to cultivate and sharpen the key skills sought by employers and identified in the reports and studies mentioned earlier: communication capacity and critical thinking *(Eddins, Williams, Bushek, Porter, & Kineke, 1997)*. Furthermore, because it addresses work with communities, the UMass program has increased evidence of student respectfulness.

**Table 5. Qualitative Student Course Assessment and SRTI Data**

| Questions | Themes | Subthemes | COM[a] | CRIT[b] | RESP[c] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| What research skills have you gained and/or improved as a result of this course? | Skills and Insight | Research-related skills (writing abstracts/RQs, making posters, oral presentations) | X | X | |
| | | Community-engagement perspective | | X | X |
| | | Expanded view of research | | X | X |
| In what ways do you think you will use these skills for your personal and/or professional growth? | | Use of skills—academic (for thesis work, other class assignments) | X | X | |
| | Use of Skills | Use of skills—"real world" application (job interviews, graduate school applications) | X | X | |
| | | Perspective (about research process, oneself, others) | | X | X |
| | | Relevance (practical, applicable) | X | X | |
| What did you like most about the course? | | Interesting topics | | X | |
| | | Novel approach to research | | X | |
| | Content | New way to view interaction with other individuals and communities | | | X |
| | Format | Flexibility with online units, monthly in-person meetings, rapid feedback | X | | |
| What did you like least about the course? | Content | Volume of required readings | X | | |
| | Format | Feeling disconnected from peers, need for self-motivation | X | | |

*Note. [a]COM: Communication skills. [b]CRIT: Critical thinking skills. [c]RESP: Respectfulness.*

Table 6 shows mean SRTI data for global items (Questions 10–12), which are the items best suited for informing summative evaluations of teaching performance *(University of Massachusetts*

*Amherst Academic Planning & Assessment, 2017)*. Results of Question 9 regarding the instructor's ability to stimulate student participation are also included because of the importance of modeling learners' active engagement.

**Table 6. Standardized End-of-Semester Student Response to Instruction (SRTI) Evaluations: Mean Scores**

| Semester Year | Comparison Group | Q 9[a] Mean (SD)[e] | Q 10[b] Mean (SD) | Q 11[c] Mean (SD) | Q 12[d] Mean (SD) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fall 2013 | Course | 4.6 (0.68) | 3.7 (1.02) | 4.5 (0.51) | 4.0 (0.83) |
| | Department[f] | 4.6 (0.46) | 3.9 (0.57) | 4.5 (0.46) | 4.1 (0.56) |
| | Campus[g] | 4.5 (0.46) | 4.1 (0.54) | 4.4 (0.49) | 4.2 (0.57) |
| Spring 2014 | Course | 4.7 (0.70) | 3.7 (0.85) | 4.4 (0.73) | 4.0 (0.74) |
| | Department | NA[h] | NA | NA | NA |
| | Campus | 4.2 (0.55) | 3.9 (0.51) | 4.3 (0.52) | 3.9 (0.56) |
| Fall 2015 | Course | 4.6 (0.67) | 3.4 (1.09) | 4.4 (0.58) | 3.6 (0.87) |
| | Department | 4.7 (0.46) | 3.9 (0.85) | 4.5 (0.57) | 4.1 (0.76) |
| | Campus | 4.6 (0.57) | 4.1 (0.78) | 4.5 (0.61) | 4.2 (0.73) |
| Spring 2016 | Course | 4.8 (0.42) | 3.4 (1.07) | 4.6 (0.50) | 3.9 (0.99) |
| | Department | 4.7 (0.46) | 3.9 (0.85) | 4.5 (0.57) | 4.1 (0.76) |
| | Campus | 4.6 (0.57) | 4.1 (0.78) | 4.5 (0.61) | 4.2 (0.73) |
| Spring 2017 | Course | 4.6 (0.73) | 3.6 (0.62) | 4.2 (0.70) | 3.6 (0.61) |
| | Department | 4.7 (0.48) | 3.8 (0.88) | 4.5 (0.62) | 4.1 (0.80) |
| | Campus | 4.6 (0.57) | 4.1 (0.79) | 4.4 (0.61) | 4.2 (0.74) |
| | Course Average | 4.7 | 3.6 | 4.4 | 3.8 |
| | Dept. Average | 4.7 | 3.9 | 4.5 | 4.1 |
| | Campus Average | 4.5 | 4.1 | 4.4 | 4.1 |

[a]*Question 9. The instructor stimulated student participation (5 = Almost always, 1 = Almost never).*

[b]*Question 10. Overall, how much do you feel you learned in this course? (5 = Much more than most, 1 = Much less than most).*

[c]*Question 11. Overall rating of this instructor's teaching (5 = Almost always effective, 1 = Almost never effective).*

[d]*Question 12. Overall rating of this course (5 = One of the best, 1 = One of the worst).*

[e]*SD = Standard Deviation; average SD shown for Department and Campus data.*

[f]*Department = University courses from the same department within enrollment category.*

[g]*Campus = University courses within enrollment category.*

[h]*NA = Data not available.*

These data indicate that the course stimulated student participation more often than departmental honors or campus averages (Question 9) and was on par with effectiveness of instructor's teaching (Question 11). The course was rated slightly lower than departmental honors and campus averages for amount learned (Question 10) and overall rating (Question 12), which may be

expected because comparison group means are derived from all courses, most of which are intensive three- or four-credit offerings.

Insofar as these metrics demonstrate success for the course, a few practices are undoubtedly responsible. Foremost, we have maintained a high degree of responsiveness to student suggestions. Each semester, we improved the course to address areas of confusion, and innovative student ideas often made their way onto the syllabus. For example, student suggestions informed modifications to assignments and readings for each module, facilitated clarification of homework instructions, and even increased diversity of enrollment (by following students' suggestions to directly market the course in targeted classrooms). The eventual hybrid format met student needs not satisfied by early experiments with fully in-person and online-only formats. Aggressive marketing also increased class size considerably. In addition to targeting classes with a high minority student enrollment to receive an in-class pitch, we appealed to classes in both social sciences and natural sciences, stressing the use of CER in students' overall career development. To that end, we scoured the entire university course catalog each term to find classes in departments outside our networks that contained relevant content or methodology.

## Achievement of Key Outcomes

These instruments measured how the class achieved our "local" pedagogical goals of student recruitment and retention from a broad array of fields, efficacy of teaching methods, and student satisfaction. The class further illustrates precisely how undergraduate CER fosters the skills that are paramount in the national conversation. Can a course in CER promote communication capacity, critical thinking, and respectfulness? The results suggest it can.

**Communication capacity.** When asked in final assessments what components of the class they liked most, students commonly cited enhancement of communication skills. Students reported that these types of skills were expected, but not explicitly taught, in their other coursework. One student talked about communicating ideas through a visual medium in this way: "No other class . . . has given me a lesson on [how to create] research posters. I have previously learned about public speaking and PowerPoint presentations, but I have never been taught how to even approach creating a poster."

Another student described newfound awareness of diverse cognitive patterns in audiences:

> Understanding that people learn things in different ways will help me shape how I present information. I facilitate a class this semester and this really helped me change my teaching technique in order to help everyone understand the information better.

In addition to learning about how to communicate with others, students discovered new things about themselves, as this student noted:

> Not only did I learn about challenges, solutions to those challenges, and what makes a visual and oral presentation effective, I also learned about myself. I was able to reflect on myself such as finding out how I best learn. I also learned about positive and negative parts about me for when I am researching and presenting.

A future goal is for students to create their own conference posters and presentations. Meeting this objective would follow naturally from the desired expansion of the course to include student work on a CER project with a faculty supervisor.

Results from the UMass program meet a goal identified in the Boyer Commission report regarding the importance of undergraduate research to train students to communicate clearly:

> Every university graduate should understand that no idea is fully formed until it can be communicated, and that the organization required for writing and speaking [about these ideas] is part of the thought process that enables one to understand material fully. *(Boyer Commission, 1998, p. 24)*

The success of this class in bolstering communication skills is consistent with data indicating that significant participation in undergraduate research enhances communication skills, regardless of field, region, or school size. For instance, in a study by Lopatto *(2003)*, 41 research mentors were surveyed at Harvey Mudd (12 faculty), Wellesley (14 faculty), and Grinnell (15 faculty). Findings revealed that communication skills were among the top three outcomes of interest in undergraduate research experiences in the STEM fields. Similar results were found by the same author in a survey of 1,100 students from various institutions *(Lopatto, 2005)*. In another study by Salsman, Dulaney, Chinta, Zascavage, and Joshi

*(2013)*, 44 undergraduates assessed the benefits of participating in a research project on a scale of 0 (not at all helpful) to 4 (extremely helpful). Overall, students assigned an average rating of 2.94 to their increase in communication skills (oral, visual, and written), collaborative skills, and leadership skills.

Research strengthens communication skills, whether carried out at large state universities or small liberal arts colleges. In a National Science Foundation funded study of engineering students conducted by Ing, Fung, and Kisailus *(2013)*, public communication skills were reported to have improved "demonstrably" over a 10-week period when students working on faculty research projects got two things: (1) mentoring related to the experiment's purpose and interpretation of results and (2) repeated chances to share their own thoughts. Although the study was small ($n = 8$), it offers an important message: Opportunities to actively engage in the research process and interpret findings correlate positively with the ability to communicate with diverse audiences.

More studies are needed to conclusively attribute improved communication skills to undergraduate research experiences. However, these preliminary findings are encouraging. If expanded, the UMass course could go even further to cultivate communication skills. Ideally, the course would routinely include involvement with an actual field-based project, with students talking to community members to formulate questions and collect data, then conveying findings and their significance to faculty mentors and peers.

**Critical thinking skills.** Can CER sharpen critical thinking skills? The UMass class suggests that it can. In course assessments, students reported particular benefit from being asked to write a research question. For many, this was a novel and challenging experience. A graduate of the course described how the process pushed her to think in a new way:

> I had to figure out what the questions even were. Through that process I was forced to dig deeper and figure things out I would never have touched in a lecture-based class. It certainly led to some of the best work and the best learning I've done, so I'm incredibly grateful.

Having students generate research questions is but one instance of the inquiry-based pedagogy used throughout the class. For instance, in the module on applying CER guidelines, students pose solutions to a problem rather than reciting information. Multiple units in the course (on research questions, application of

CER guidelines, and research challenges) promote inquiry-based learning as a prod to critical thinking.

Literature on the benefits of inquiry-based learning is extensive. As Lee *(2011)* notes, inquiry-based learning "develops abilities and attitudes valued by proponents of both liberal and professional education and by those who feel that higher education should equip students for the varied demands of modern life including the requirements of the work place" *(p. 152)*. More than four decades earlier, Perry *(1970)* reported that inquiry-based learning empowers students to make good decisions and exercise good judgment even when uncertain, which is a foundation of intellectual growth and maturity *(pp. 79–88)*. By including students in a real-world problem-solving process, the promise is great: Increasing undergraduate CER work can sharpen the critical thinking ability that employers seek.

**Respectfulness.** Although CER is not the only type of approach that promotes students' critical thinking, it holds unique benefits for cultivating interpersonal respectfulness. Students who participate in CER emerge with a sense of their shared humanity with groups who were once their "other." Qualitative course assessment data and end-of-semester evaluations are clear: Over the term, students expressed an unmistakable desire to help others meet their needs with dignity and respect. Representative student testimonies reflect the group's experience:

> I feel that I have . . . become more critical of how knowledge is produced, who controls the research process, and who has power over research findings. These are important considerations to take when doing research with people so as not to continue the often colonizing effect of research.

> [By taking this class] I have learned about the process of working with the community in order to complete scientific research that will be accepted and effective in the community. This course has taught me about the process of research.

> I have gained a lot more knowledge of what [community-engaged research] is. I learned that the participant has a partnership approach in the research. I didn't know [community-engaged research] had a goal to

integrate the knowledge learned to improve the health
and benefit of the community members.

Considering how CER differs from traditional research, this
outcome is not surprising. Treating communities as equal part-
ners, with vital insights and skills to contribute, calls for an atti-
tudinal shift. No longer "the outside expert," community-engaged
researchers sense the shared humanity that makes them as
capable—and as vulnerable—as populations they work with.

The shift in attitude between student researchers and commu-
nity partners mirrors the shift between teachers and students in the
CER classroom. In her discussion of learner-centered pedagogy,
Vella *(2002)* describes sound learning relationships that involve
"respect, safety, open communication, listening and humility." She
goes on to say, "The power that often exists between learner and
'professor' can be a function of a mechanistic system where power
is frequently used to dominate" *(p. 11)*. Similarly, when community-
engaged researchers employ learner-centered approaches, people
are no longer "objects"; instead, they are respected "subjects" with
valuable knowledge to share. This point of view inspired the title of
the course: "Research Gets Real."

Although the partnerships with communities make CER
unique in cultivating respectfulness, its other educational ben-
efits mirror those found nationwide in undergraduate research
programs. These include enhanced communication skills and
stronger critical thinking, as well as inquiry-based thought pro-
cesses and measurable minority success. By practicing this type
of research, undergraduates at once meet the educational goals
demanded by faculty, policy makers, and employers who hire uni-
versity graduates.

For this reason, employers in a recent study reported satisfac-
tion with students who had had seven specific experiences, three
are provided by CER but not typically by other types of research:
(1) research project carried out collaboratively with peers, (2) work
with community organizations, and (3) field projects with people
from different backgrounds or cultures *(Hart Research Associates,
2015)*.

**Minority student achievement.** Respectfulness increases when
students from majority groups gain, and students from under-
represented minority groups experience, one another as cole-
arners. Data on course enrollment since 2012 revealed that 27%
of attendees self-identified as minority students; 22% were first-

generation students; and 10% self-identified as underrepresented minorities. (*First-generation students* are defined by the standard federal stipulation that neither parent holds a bachelor's degree. *Underrepresented minority* categories are American Indian/Alaska Native, Black/African American, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino, and those who declared multiple race/ethnicities [except Asian and White]. All data are self-reported, based on student admission materials.) Race and ethnicity data of UMass undergraduate students (U.S. citizens) from fall 2012 to fall 2016 *(University of Massachusetts Amherst Office of Institutional Research, 2016)* show that 20% were self-reported minority students and 10.5% were underrepresented minorities. Based on these numbers, the balance of populations represented by enrollment in "Research Gets Real" compares favorably to that of university undergraduates as a whole.

UMass has shown that CER specifically appeals to underrepresented minorities and first-generation students, and nationwide data suggest that underrepresented students (defined as ethnic minorities—Hispanic/Latino, African American, or American Indian—and first-generation college students, as well as less academically gifted students) benefit more from research experiences than students from ethnic majorities or college-educated families *(Finley & McNair, 2013)*. Undergraduate research increases retention and persistence rates for all students *(Finley & McNair, 2013; Kinzie, Gonyea, Shoup, & Kuh, 2008; O'Donnell, Botelho, Brown, González, & Head, 2015)*, but these effects are especially pronounced for students whose groups have been historically underserved *(Finley & McNair, 2013; O'Donnell et al., 2015)*. Undergraduate research also makes minority students more likely to follow their ambition of pursuing a research career *(Lopatto, 2007)*. In the California State University system, which serves 437,000 individuals, students were found to graduate at higher rates when exposed to "high impact" practices, including undergraduate research, service-learning, and peer mentoring. This benefit was especially pronounced among Latino students *(O'Donnell et al., 2015)*. At UMass, as elsewhere, involvement in research helps minority students succeed.

**Lessons Learned.** In keeping with these characteristics, two key lessons learned from this program's development and implementation phases have been the importance of (1) garnering support and (2) fostering awareness from a broad-based perspective. Therefore, plans for Phase III (sustaining the course and the program as a whole) are purposeful and ongoing. Specifically, the program has representation (Carbone) on two university-based

committees: the Provost's Committee on Service Learning and the Faculty Senate Council on Public Engagement and Outreach, which provide reports to the faculty senate and other academic boards.

Also under discussion are strategies for expansion (to a two- or three-credit course that includes a community-based field component) and plans for a more rigorous long-term assessment. Proposed strategies include developing a database to follow students to determine how they're using the knowledge and skills from the course; interviewing employers to determine how to more purposefully link their needs to program outcomes; and exploring development of evaluation questions to assess growth in affective skills, using Bloom's updated taxonomy by Anderson et al. *(2001)* to assess sensitivity to individual values, cultural diversity, and social improvement, as well as ethical judgment and valuing others.

Again, undergraduate research satisfies constituents both internal and external to the university. University mission statements commonly allege a commitment to diversity, and employers of recent graduates are asking for a more diverse talent pool. CER can help provide this benefit: When minority students partner with minority populations similar to their own home communities, student buy-in predictably increases.

With community-engaged undergraduate research solving problems cited by educators and employers alike for decades, why are such programs not standard offerings around the country? The answer lies in the philosophical commitments, cultural habits, and financing mechanism of academe generally, and of large research universities specifically.

## Next Steps for this Course

The benefits of this course could be amplified with expansion and continuing modification. The following steps would strengthen the course in the future:

1. Expansion from one credit to three.
2. Inclusion of a field component in which students conduct community-engaged research with a faculty mentor.
3. Addition of new material on implicit bias.
4. Rather than just evaluating others' work, students would create their own posters and oral presentations to deliver the results of their work.
5. Addition of evaluation of affective skills development.

6.  Measurement of long-term influence on student trajectories and effects on communication skills.

## Next Steps for the Field: The Necessity of Institutional Support

It is not enough to continue documenting the benefits of community-engaged research. The educational successes of this and other trials in the field have created a national climate in which "[u]ndergraduate research has become a byword. Every research university at least claims to have it" *(Kenny, 2003, p. 103)*. Indeed, many campus tours illustrate the pride that universities take in their undergraduate research opportunities. The question is, Are we delivering on our admission promises? Often the answer is, "Not enough."

Performance rarely matches rhetoric, due to competing priorities that especially plague major research universities. Our data add to the literature showing that undergraduate research generally, and CER specifically, develops precisely the skills that various constituencies have requested for decades. Further data on the efficacy of research assignments is not needed; however, alignment of incentives within research universities is still required if the future is to see a decisive curricular shift that no amount of evidence has generated thus far.

The institutional support most urgently needed is a revision of promotion and tenure policies. A critical study of large, decentralized research institutions by Demb and Wade *(2012)* found tenure policies to be the jewel in the crown of needed shifts in department-level culture, policies, and procedures. Furthermore, a 10-year review of engagement efforts published by Sandmann *(2008)* concurred with earlier findings of Bartel, Krasny, and Harrison *(2003)* that "universities can systematically address the demands for more social engagement only by exploring new reward and administrative structures" *(p. 89)*.

The need to revise promotion and tenure policies as part of an overhaul of the core culture of research universities is not a new and surprising finding. The Boyer Commission report *(1998)* traces the failings of universities to the segregation of research and teaching in campus culture, university vision, course design, and faculty compensation. The Boyer Commission strongly urged faculty and graduate students to include undergraduates in framing research questions, seeking answers, and presenting findings—that is, to treat them as insiders on research projects *(p. 17)*. The years since its

publication have proven it downright prescient. The report asked research universities of the future to offer undergraduates "greater expectations of writing and speaking, more active problem-solving, and more collaboration among . . . graduate students, and faculty" *(p. 21)*. The report further envisioned how "scholar-teachers would treat the sites of their research as seminar rooms in which not only graduate students but undergraduates observe and participate in the process of both discovery and communication of knowledge" *(p. 18)*.

The most radical—and arguably the most urgent—recommendation of the Boyer report remains a dream deferred: to "replace . . . . [t]he old definitions of workload" *(Boyer Commission, 1998, p. 15)*. If undergraduate education becomes a priority of research universities, tenure and promotion committees will face the difficult task of assessing a skill—undergraduate teaching that incorporates research—that is nearly impossible to measure *(Boyer Commission, 1998, p. 3)*.

Redefining faculty contributions is all the more challenging in the case of CER. Even if it leads to publication, this type of research is not necessarily recognized as an indication of faculty productivity. Based on its work with over 450 institutions since 1996, the Council on Undergraduate Research found that the single most persistent obstacle to implementing undergraduate research is changing the academic culture to reflect the value of this practice *(Malachowski et al., 2015)*.

Promotion policies that punish or ignore CER persist even when universities cite engagement as a top priority. Such institutional inconsistencies have led many to describe a gap between the rhetoric and the reality in universities that claim to prioritize undergraduate research generally and community-engaged research specifically. At North Carolina State University, for example, a public commitment to community engagement coincided with a reduction in funds for initiatives that support engagement *(Jaeger, Jameson, & Clayton, 2012, p. 150)*. Such findings are especially common among research universities *(Jaeger et al., 2012, p. 159)*. Even universities earning the "community engagement" designation from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching may "fail to make modifications to core policies that support engagement (such as promotion and tenure)" *(Demb & Wade, 2012, p. 338)*. These incongruities persist, despite widespread initiatives to recruit university presidents who stress service *(Bringle & Hatcher, 2000, pp. 274–275)*.

Such issues are also nothing new. In its most biting criticism, nearly 20 years ago the Boyer report claimed,

> Again and again, universities are guilty of an adver-
> tising practice they would condemn in the commer-
> cial world. Recruitment materials display proudly the
> world-famous professors, the splendid facilities and the
> ground-breaking research that goes on within them, but
> thousands of students graduate without ever seeing the
> world-famous professors or tasting genuine research.
> *(Boyer Commission, 1998, pp. 5–6)*

The persistence of outdated promotion and tenure policies points to the need to reconcile competing priorities in the core mission of research universities. Research and teaching often dominate promotion and tenure policies of institutions that mention service in their mission statements *(Bringle & Hatcher, 2000)*. Land-grant universities face further conflict, as they were founded largely to bring faculty research to bear on issues in local and regional development. They, too, do not provide adequate funding support for community-engaged projects, nor do they consistently offer reappointment, promotion, or tenure to faculty whose productivity issues from these spheres *(Jaeger et al., 2012)*.

Once clear in their commitment, universities should implement numerous practical steps that have already shown promise of success. The UMass experience corroborates Sandmann's *(2008)* suggestion that an undergraduate course in community-engaged research be institutionalized. Our experience also supports the common suggestion that nongrant funding of designated administrative time solidifies the founding of such a course, at least in its crucial development phase.

These recommendations from UMass complement best practices that arise in the literature. Increasing community buy-in has helped some campuses strengthen their programs *(Demb & Wade, 2012, p. 342)*. Establishing internal funding sources independent of grant awards promotes much-needed continuity. Campus efforts should also include faculty from different departments and different career stages *(Jaeger et al., 2012)*.

Less tangible changes would also promote CER. Enos and Morton *(2003)* captured a vital component of CER when they called for "transformational" partnerships that might shift identities and values over "transactional partnerships that promise no mutual growth or change" *(p. 20)*. Saltmarsh, Hartley, and Clayton *(2009)*

rightly encourage a transition from technocratic campus culture to democratic culture. Future CER programs should also adopt the four practices that have made service-learning work at other institutions: (1) garnering support from the board of trustees and academic senate, (2) fostering awareness of presidents and chancellors regarding such support, (3) establishing a systemwide research center with dedicated resources, and (4) allowing campuses the autonomy to tailor interventions to fit their structure and needs *(O'Donnell et al., 2015)*.

Academic departments will build on the gains made in CER only with strong, steady institutional support not subject to the whims of external funding sources and administrative turnover. Anecdotes of programs starting, stopping, and starting over under new leadership are not uncommon and reflect another shortcoming of the current approach.

Other institutional factors further impede long-term continuation of CER programs. Commonly cited obstacles include insufficient buy-in from faculty, lack of sustained program budget for undergraduate research, no system for incorporating research into all undergraduate classes, and no adjustments to faculty workload. Malachowski et al. *(2015)* concluded that the challenge of positioning research as a key component in undergraduate education will require both institutional and systematic support to compensate faculty.

By contrast, one campus with strong institutional support for undergraduate research has enjoyed program longevity and success. The University of Michigan's University Research Opportunity Program has grown from 14 student–faculty research partnerships in 1988 to over 1,300 undergraduates and 800 faculty *(University of Michigan College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, 2016)*. Prospective mentors are offered $500–$800 per project, and participating students get one to four course credits per semester. Students and faculty are supported by campus workshops on specific skills to use in research projects, such as GIS and data analysis. Students are assigned peer advisors who are alumni of the program, and they present their research findings in an annual poster session.

Michigan's program shows that even small faculty incentives can greatly expand undergraduate opportunities. Its highly structured program, integrated with campuswide supports, is exemplary, but not representative. At most schools, educational gains to the undergraduate population are not part of the formula when

resources are allocated, despite the popularity of "research opportunities" in admissions literature.

This disconnect will likely continue if reformers do nothing more than demonstrate the educational enhancement or workforce demand that support expansion of CER courses and programs. The more urgent task of confronting cultural and political obstacles to change shows a few promising developments. If, as Weerts *(2015)* contended, research with a public engagement component might actually increase state funding for large universities, this prospect might offer a compelling motive for administrators to invest in community-engaged research *(pp. 20–25)*. Although Weerts *(2015)* defines engagement to the exclusion of research, any relevant research with clear benefit to local communities would satisfy his criterion that people in the state receive tangible benefits from university activity.

Schools that make incremental changes stand to benefit society and meet the pressing needs of the day. "By the senior year," the Boyer Commission report *(1998)* envisioned, "the able undergraduate should be ready for research of the same character and approximately the same complexity as the first-year graduate student" *(p. 17)*.

## Conclusion

National deficits in academic preparation for citizenship, graduate work, and employment call for a sustainable model to systematically support undergraduate community-engaged research as a course included in curricula and as a practice receiving programmatic support from universities. Findings from our program corroborate nationwide findings that undergraduate research promotes the skills that today's graduates lack; our findings also demonstrate that CER specifically fosters even stronger character and more skills needed in the 21st century workforce. Expanding such programs to meet the national crisis of underprepared college graduates requires institutional support that would reverse deep cultural traditions and financial priorities of major research universities. Bringing about urgently needed changes requires challenges to these traditions and priorities that will result in their reversal.

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## About the Authors

**Elena T. Carbone** is associate professor and founding director of the Community-Engaged Research Program in the Commonwealth Honors College at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Her research focuses on health and nutrition communications among underserved multicultural populations. She received a DrPH in Health Behavior/Health Education from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

**Susan Ware** is a lecturer in the Commonwealth Honors College at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Her research examines secular and religious understandings of "emptiness." She received her Ph.D. in religion from the University of Chicago.

# BOOK REVIEWS

Stannard-Friel, D. (2017). *Street teaching in the Tenderloin: Jumpin' down the rabbit hole.* New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan. 403 pp.

## Review by Patrick M. Green

*T*he idea of bringing the classroom to the community—literally walking the streets and talking to its residents—moves the concept of service-learning to a different level in higher education. Have you ever wondered what the classroom would be like when it is completely flipped into the community? How would service-learning look when it is conducted in the community space rather than the four walls of the classroom? What would the classroom environment be when students engage with community members by walking the streets of the community, meeting with "street teachers," and listening to the sounds of reality delivered by stark poverty and complex community issues? In Don Stannard-Friel's compelling book *Street Teaching in the Tenderloin*, you enroll in his class and take such a journey.

This book is not simply a walk through the Tenderloin District, a high-crime, low-income neighborhood in San Francisco "where children who live here normalize sex work, street crime, homelessness, poverty, and the deaths of young friends by suicide or murder" *(pp. xix–xx)*, but rather an expedition into the complexity of a society through community-based learning. As Stannard-Friel, a professor of sociology, explains, this text "tells the story of my encounters, usually accompanied by students, with a wide variety of people who became our teachers in the Tenderloin" as well as the story of "my students learning inner-city life by becoming a part of it" *(p. xix)*. Over the course of 16 chapters, he explores this place-based approach to engagement through discussion of complex community issues; explicit profiles of community members, street teachers, and students; the articulation of community tensions; and introductions to a variety of community programs and nonprofit organizations. From the stark photograph on the cover, Stannard-Friel invites the reader to "jump down the rabbit hole," a metaphor for deep investigation and immersion into the reality of a community hanging out on the streets—with all of its complexity.

He begins each chapter with a poignant photograph that encourages reflection related to the community topic. Stannard-Friel delves into personal stories, including the narratives of street teachers, organizations, communities, and students. Interrogating social issues through narratives, alongside relevant data and statistics, is a modus operandi employed widely throughout this volume.

To be clear, the author offers no resolution to the challenges he surfaces. Rather, exploration of the complex issues of racism, abuse, the drug culture, and refugee resettlement are explicated through personal stories of immigrants and refugees, gang members, sex workers, students, and inmates, all in the context of a college class. Walking through the streets and listening to street teachers is the methodology of his community-based learning courses. In the process, fundamental questions are asked explicitly from a community-based perspective.

For example, in a variety of chapters, he discusses the population of Cambodian refugees who live in the neighborhood. A brief historical overview of how the refugees fled the Khmer Rouge and traveled to the United States leads to significant questions, such as, "What was our government *thinking* when it relocated poor, war-weary refugees from a largely rural, agricultural, village-based Cambodian community . . . to poverty-stricken urban slums?" *(p. 25)*. Interspersing narratives of individuals (both community street teachers and students) with an overview of historical context and community data allows the author to pose such significant questions from a community-based perspective.

This volume is structured with distinct chapters, and individual chapters are framed in varying ways: around a street teacher or student narrative, or community issues such as sex workers, mental health, drugs, or homelessness and poverty. The interplay between excerpts in the chapter featuring data, historical context, and individual profiles provides an environment for the reader that effectively simulates what it must be like to be in the class with Stannard-Friel. The author also frames some excerpts with names of the courses that provided them: "Streetwise Sociology," "Inner World of the Inner City," "Deviant Behavior," or "Promise of the Inner City." He uses these to share stories about the students' journey walking the streets. Yet Stannard-Friel avoids creating a binary us–them framework by connecting the lives of his students with the lives of people in the neighborhood. Many of his students have come to college having experienced trauma from suicide, drugs, abuse, poverty, prostitution, or gangs, like the street teachers. Unafraid of big questions, he explores such community–student observations throughout his text and digs into social analysis, thoughtfully proposing that root causes demand social responses to struggles that individuals face. Like a student walking with him during class, through Stannard-Friel's analytical narrative the reader experiences the connections between people, historical context, and social structures. The intended outcome of

social analysis and a justice orientation that is often attributed to community-based learning courses and their learning outcomes is clearly modeled through this text.

As the author explores complex community issues and problems in his courses, he also shares stories of site visits to community organizations or prisons, and of the myriad reactions from his students. His approach to community-based learning is not articulated, but rather demonstrated through narratives. Stories of specific service-learning programs, such as Halloween in the Tenderloin and College Night in the Tenderloin, are shared, along with various narratives of street teachers and students. Stannard-Friel shares examples of community immersions as well, in which students stay at the single-room occupancy (SRO) hotel managed by a nonprofit organization. He considers each point of interaction the students have to be an "encounter," whether it be walking through a group drinking and smoking pot or offhand comments made at the students. Yet he artfully connects experiences to community context throughout the volume, articulating statistics and data to color and shape the narrative.

The big questions Stannard-Friel sprinkles throughout the stories challenge the reader, as they do his students:

> Who are the street people? Where do they come from? Why are they here? What are their lives like? Are they lazy? Are they dangerous? Are they drug addicts? Are they all homeless? Are they crazy? Are they no-good people who "choose" to "live off the rest of us"? *(p. 228)*

He spends much of the book challenging assumptions inherent within these questions through his stories of students and street teachers. For example, when a student interacts with a street teacher who is transgender and presenting in the classroom, and the student has many questions after class, Stannard-Friel points out, "My student left the lecture, pondering a new idea. Real-life lessons can happen anywhere, even in the classroom" *(p. 231)*. The walls of the classroom are not just blurred, but removed, as street teachers are invited into the classroom and the class walks the neighborhood. By approaching community-based learning from this perspective, Stannard-Friel demonstrates that listening to the community is the point of entry for framing big assertions, such as: "We put trafficked tweens in juvenile detention, then, after living the life from 12 to 18, we declare them to be criminal adults. We create our own problems. Then we blame the victims" *(p. 276)*. There is an oppor-

tunity here for Stannard-Friel to use such observations to raise the larger epistemological question of who holds and creates knowledge. Although there are inherent suggestions in the modality of privileging street teachers and listening by walking through the Tenderloin, that methodology is not interrogated in this volume—a missed opportunity.

Stannard-Friel frames his pedagogical approach as community-based learning explicitly. His definition of this "transformative experience" is the difference. He bridges the intense learning experience with relationships in the community, connecting reflection on the experience with learning from the street teachers. His approach is one of integrative learning, linking community-based learning experiences with scholarship on social problems to disorient and reorient students' frame of reference. He models this throughout his book with his stories of students and street teachers, but he pushes the pedagogical approach further. A more direct explanation of this pedagogy would enhance the value of this book in the education field. For example, this book could contribute to the canon on teaching and learning with a clear articulation of methodological approaches in the classroom, logistical approaches for successful implementation, implications for access and inclusivity with diverse identities or marginalized student populations, and an expression of integrative learning as an important goal for student learning.

In his concluding chapter, Stannard-Friel proposes a new way of teaching in community-based learning. Specifically, he proposes a "pedagogy of compassion":

> This definition of "pedagogy" is not a traditional one, nor is it one that I have articulated to others, or even to myself, over the many years that I have been teaching, but it is one that, in reflection, I have been *using* in the Tenderloin for 20 years. *(p. 334)*

Echoing the words of Mark K. Smith, he reframes such a pedagogy of compassion to include "accompanying learners; caring for and about them; and bringing learning into life" *(p. 334)*. Through our connections with each other, building relationships with the community, learning is brought into real life. His point, though, is that learning is not just a social experience, but also a shared human experience. The personal stories shared in this volume—from students to the Tenderloin community—are stories of resilience and transcendence. Sharing personal stories allows others to see

themselves and build compassion for others. This fundamentally changes the value proposition of community-based teaching and learning.

With compelling, evocative narratives that require attention, depth, and openness, this book demands commitment. Although it is unconventional in structure, it is appealing for its harsh honesty and blunt reality in regard to learning in the community. Read Stannard-Friel's book for a variety of reasons: to learn a different way of teaching; to identify a unique approach to community-based learning; or to experience, through narratives, a walk through the Tenderloin. Enroll in his class through this book. You will be immersed not only in a community, but in the pedagogy of compassion in action. Know that you will jump down the rabbit hole and reemerge thinking differently about teaching and learning with the community.

## About the Reviewer

**Patrick M. Green** is the founding director of the Center for Experiential Learning at Loyola University Chicago and a clinical instructor of experiential learning. His research interests include intersections in experiential education. He received his Ed.D from Roosevelt University.

Brunner, B. R. (Ed). *Creating citizens: Liberal arts, civic engagement, and the land-grant tradition.* Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press. 192 pp.

Review by Timothy J. Shaffer

## *Articulating Engagement in the Land-Grant University Through the Liberal Arts*

What is the purpose of higher education? What role do academic institutions have, especially land-grant universities, in shaping students in particular ways? And, most relevant to this edited book, in what ways do faculty members in the liberal arts define the essence of university and community engagement through their teaching and research?

What's striking about this relatively thin collection of case-based chapters from scholars at Auburn University is how *normal* their chapters are. In many ways, this book could have been written by faculty members at any institution that is committed to civic and community engagement. When I first read the book, not much stood out to me. This isn't a flaw; instead, this feel of the book can make it more accessible. Chapters are devoid of jargon or overly theoretical arguments about the topics at hand. If you are looking for new terrain in the theory of engaged scholarship, this volume may disappoint. But if you're a faculty member, department head, director of a center for engagement, or administrator (particularly in the liberal arts), this book offers concrete examples of how faculty members have engaged diverse communities, which could be useful as real-world examples for others trying to find their place in the academy while also remaining committed to engaged scholarship.

Brunner begins her introduction by helpfully framing the work of Auburn University as having emerged from the land-grant and extension traditions, two critical elements that shape how higher education has played a role in understanding and responding to public challenges. Land-grant universities, or "democracy's colleges," as they have been called, are important sites for democratic work *(Peters, 2015; Ross, 1942)*. Although land-grants can be viewed as research-intensive universities in which basic research is conducted at a distance from messy community issues, these institutions also play critical roles in teaching future generations and cultivating more vibrant communities through community-based participatory research and service-learning opportunities. In short,

they are multifaceted and complex institutions. Given the multiple, competing views of what the university is and should be, it is helpful to tease out what engagement looks like within a research university context. It is within that particular context that I raise concerns about two aspects of this book that, I feel, weaken the argument made by the volume's contributors.

First, Brunner and the other authors chose to use the phrase "Civic and Community Engagement" or "CCE" for the diverse forms of CCE found in communities throughout Alabama. Because this phrase is ubiquitous throughout the book, I would have liked to see the editor more clearly define it at the beginning. The statement that "a liberal arts education is Civic and Community Engagement (CCE)" *(p. 3)* didn't really explain much. What about the colleges of engineering or human ecology? Would those faculties not be able to say that they are seeking to cultivate skills and responsibility within students while building reciprocal relationships with partners beyond campus? What is unique about the liberal arts? A more explicit and critical edge would have been welcomed, especially since the book is framed around CCE through a liberal arts college experience. I say all of this as someone who was educated in the liberal arts tradition and is in agreement about the deep civic concerns emerging from the humanities. I believe strongly in the liberal education model, and it seems that connecting humanistic approaches and understandings to public problems is an essential element to dealing with the many complex issues facing our world. A challenge is that departments in liberal arts colleges are often *prima facie* disconnected from the "real world." Engaged scholarship is a way to counter that perception, but we need more emphatic and convincing statements and demonstrations to assuage the concerns of skeptical colleagues and publics.

Second, Brunner's introduction draws on scholarship published in the *JHEOE* by Alperovitz and Howard *(2005)*. Brunner notes, "Engagement is more than extension, conventional outreach, and public service"; it is "about a two-way, reciprocal relationship in which both the university and community partners share in the development of learning and knowledge" *(p. 4)*. This broader definition aligns with much of the literature about the advocacy of community engagement; however, acknowledging the roots from which contemporary engagement efforts have grown remains important. Given this volume's focus on the land-grant institution, it is unfortunate that engagement is positioned in a way that assumes extension, for example, is only a "one-way interaction" *(p. 4)*. Although this view might be accurate in certain circumstances (or, frankly, all

too often), engaged scholars must be careful not to create strawmen within their own institutions. As someone who studies the history of land-grant universities and Cooperative Extension, I can attest to the frustrations with the system but also the rich examples of scholars and educators committed to the tenets of CCE, often without explicitly speaking about their work in such ways. There are historical and contemporary examples to acknowledge and learn from, so this statement positioning CCE in contrast to the other elements of our institutions was disappointing (see *Peters, 2010; Shaffer, 2017*). It felt like a somewhat obligatory statement to make—ensuring that CCE was distinguished from other aspects of the university—but a more nuanced approach would have been appropriate and more useful, especially when trying to make the case for this work. Those criticisms aside, the book is a useful resource addressing the intersection of the liberal arts and CCE.

The book is divided into three sections with nine chapters, in addition to an introduction and conclusion by the editor. Brunner states explicitly that "this book [is] a guide for those who want to create a community or civic engagement program at their respective institutions" (p. 6). Auburn's College of Liberal Arts looked to other institutions for models and inspiration as they developed their own programs and courses, and the editor assembled this volume as such a resource for others. A common theme throughout the book is the connection between CCE and a sense of oneself as an academic. That concept of self is important because of the various obstacles that departmental, college, and university cultures present for individuals committed to CCE. For faculty in colleges of liberal arts, this book gives a detailed look at ways to align civic commitments and identities with teaching and research endeavors. For those in other settings, the chapters provide a useful case-study approach to outlining what was done in curricular, cocurricular, or research contexts.

## Making the Case for Support of Community and Civic Engagement

Although CCE is typically found across universities in academic affairs, student affairs, and other administrative and service offices, the heart of the university remains with the faculty. Achieving acknowledgment and acceptance for engaged scholarship alongside more traditional forms of scholarship remains a central challenge for the field. Brunner references key documents such as *Returning to Our Roots: The Engaged Institution (Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities,*

*1999)*, "The scholarship of engagement" *(Boyer, 1996)*, and more recent works that have further defined how engagement isn't something in addition to teaching and research, but is an approach and disposition that grounds one's scholarly work. Brunner laments the ways in which typical metrics for promotion and tenure do not align with or encompass CCE, concluding that scholars committed to CCE have a choice: "They can either decide to fight the current structure by reforming expectations and reward systems, or they can seek ways to fit their work within the current structure by explaining their work in terms that are understood in the current system" *(p. 16)*. This acknowledgment of the multiple paths for approaching CCE as a scholar is important because it highlights the practical aspects of navigating professional identities and roles. Doing so encompasses both figuring out how to frame one's CCE scholarship to be understood by colleagues who are not grounded in the literatures and methods of CCE, as well as broadening definitions of scholarship to include such artifacts as technical reports and community partner reports *(p. 16)*. Expanding definitions of scholarship so that CCE can be evaluated for merit, support, and rewards is important for its practitioners, and Brunner rightly speaks to this issue.

In another practical aspect of the book for faculty, Brunner offers suggestions for developing a scholarly identity and record based on engaged scholarship. Subsections such as "Know the Movers and Shakers" and "Find a Mentor" serve to remind the reader that being an engaged scholar requires navigating an institution that might be more sympathetic to one's work in principle than in practice. When reading this chapter, I was struck by how the book builds on a development within the engagement literature that feels like a "how to" approach to making CCE a possibility on university campuses *(Shaffer, 2013)*.

## Examples in Practice

Although the book is divided into three sections, I found myself putting chapters 2–9 into a similar category of practical case studies, with such topics as internship programs for political science students and partnerships for a German-language program supported by the numerous German-based and German-owned companies in Alabama. These chapters offer insight into how faculty members have developed programs, pedagogical experiences, and partnerships through a CCE lens. Each case study presents a unique opportunity and commitment to "foster a life of the mind and cultivate a general appreciation for literacy and artistic works

that capture the rich complexity of human experience" while also equipping students with "practical learning that they can use to obtain meaningful employment and take an active role in civic life outside the classroom" *(p. 45)*. This approach is particularly relevant for faculty members in a college of liberal arts.

One chapter that stood out to me was Nan Fairley's "Nobody Is Telling Our Story." It highlights the great strength of teaching journalism students not just how to write a story but also to see their work as deeply relational and public-serving beyond the confines of a class assignment. Drawing on the concept of public work— work that makes things of value and importance in cooperation with others, as espoused by Harry Boyte and Jack Shelton—Fairley states that "community journalism produced by university students in often-underserved communities is a clear form of . . . public work" *(pp. 101–102)*. Such an approach to CCE transcends simple articulations of community-based learning. It addresses deeper issues of democratic life and the role of professionals in cultivating possibilities for communities whose members have otherwise felt left behind or ignored. Further, Fairley notes how students who participated in a class assignment about a community established genuine relationships and subsequently worked with partners beyond the class. This chapter points to the prospects that classes and disciplines can realize with CCE through a public-oriented approach. The emergence of these prospects was made possible by an instructor's clear expectations and sense of possibilities, as well as an approach to her own teaching and engagement as something more than an assignment for a grade. Such a public-oriented approach isn't always possible, but when it's done, it can have significant impact on all involved.

## In Conclusion

Overall, the book accomplishes its goal of providing examples of CCE within the context of a college of liberal arts in a land-grant university. Each chapter points to the necessary ingredients of time, thought, and dedication along with passion, commitment, and new thinking. Interestingly, the conclusion includes a section written by a community partner. Writing about volunteer opportunities for students that enable her organization to get books into the hands of at-risk young children, Cathy Gifford captures the critical element of CCE for partners: Without volunteers, some community organizations would struggle to meet their mission. The inclusion of a community partner in the book is powerful, but it's striking that the example offered is of a volunteer program. This was curious

to me, especially as the literature has largely developed beyond volunteerism and critiqued the impact of such experiences.

Nevertheless, there is impact and, ideally, learning about problems and how to address them when students experience CCE. As Brunner notes, "while higher education cannot necessarily solve society's problems, higher education can help everyone to better understand those problems and to develop ideas and strategies that may lead to resolution" *(p. 161)*. Because there is a clear public purpose to this work, it is only appropriate that it occurs within the land-grant university. But challenges persist: Finding support, resources, and recognition remain obstacles for faculty. Following Beere, Votruba, and Wells *(2011)*, Brunner very clearly lays out lessons learned and suggestions for those attempting to develop or expand CCE and engaged scholarship on their campuses. In the end, the content is not earth-shattering or completely unlike other scholarship on CCE. Still, it is very useful to have another resource that demonstrates the possibilities of engaged scholarship and why it is critical for every aspect of the university to think about what that looks like within particular contexts—such as Auburn University's College of Liberal Arts. I could see this volume being particularly useful to faculty and administrators in the arts and humanities, especially for professional development and enrichment opportunities. The book includes useful cases for the novice and established scholar alike.

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## About the Reviewer

**Timothy J. Shaffer** is an assistant professor in the Department of Communication Studies and assistant director of the Institute for Civic Discourse and Democracy at Kansas State University. He is also lead editor of Deliberative Pedagogy: Teaching and Learning for Democratic Engagement (Michigan State University Press). His research interests include historical and contemporary forms of community engagement and deliberation in and through higher education, particularly land-grant institutions. Shaffer received his Ph.D. from Cornell University.