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From the Editor…

Shannon O. Brooks

In this issue of the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* 27(3), articles address a wide range of difficult and timely questions with importance to the further development of engaged scholarship. Themes include the following queries: How do faculty navigate the tension between institutional norms and community engagement principles? What lessons were learned from the "pandemic pivot"? In the aftermath, how can we preserve pedagogical practices that encourage more equitable, mutually beneficial experiences for both community partners and students? Who controls the dominant narrative around community-university partnerships? How does that impact our perception of the success of these partnerships? Who decides partnerships are successful and why? How do we support better outcomes for faculty involved in professional development designed to sharpen community-engaged research skills and approaches? What does university social responsibility look like in a global setting? How do we measure and improve campus climate to support the democratic purposes of higher education? Truly, articles in this issue take a broad view of outreach and engagement as these are just a sampling of the research topics explored throughout this issue.

Leading off this issue in the Research Articles section, Sexsmith and Kiely present an extensive qualitative study of faculty involved in global service-learning (GSL). Building on the Kiely (2007) reflective framework, this study identifies and examines five areas of research interest in global service-learning. This adds to the existing scholarship on GSL by shaping an emerging theory of GSL ethics to better understand the ways in which faculty navigate the dissonance between their community engagement principles and conflicting institutional norms.

Next, new directions for higher education's historical democratic purpose are explored as part of a 3-year project between the American Association of State Colleges and Universities' American Democracy Project and Tuft University's Institute for Democracy & Higher Education. Murray et al.'s study examines approaches to improving campus climates for student political learning and democratic engagement. The authors compare two climate study approaches—one led by a team of outside researchers, and another through a guided self-study model. The positive results from this pilot provide potential replicable models for improving campus climate around democratic learning. In addition, the article "University Social Responsibility: A Paradox or a Vast Field of Tensions" touches on themes related to higher education's public purpose but within a European context. Amorim et al.'s study of five public higher education institutions in Portugal critiques the concept and definition of university social responsibility and the inherent tensions and contradictions between social justice aims and market-based goals of these universities. Through a series of focus groups, three main tensions in university social responsibility emerge—change, interinstitutional relationship, and accountability. The study's findings explore ways universities might navigate these challenges.

Switching gears, Visser et al. present the field's first narrative literature review analyzing community involvement in course-based higher education activities. Through a systematic search and screening process, 21 articles were eventually included in the analysis, and the authors present seven guiding principles for community involvement that resulted from the literature. This study provides an important contribution to our understanding of the current processes shaping community involvement in course-based higher education activities.

Who shapes the dominant narrative of community-university partnerships? This is the provocative question at the heart of Kulick et al.'s study of a school garden partnership. Authors employ the principles of permac-

ulture ethics (care of people, care of land, and care of surplus) to analyze ways that dominant narratives are often controlled by privileged university researchers. Based on their experience with a school-based partnership, the authors question whether the narratives advanced by universities might instead perpetuate an idea of "assumed mutuality" that may not actually represent the experiences of partners. This is an important study that adds to the discourse in community-engaged research on who gets to tell the story of engaged scholarship's impact and outcomes, and explores ways that higher education may address these blind spots.

Rounding out the Research Articles section, Couillou et al. revisit the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the perceived state of service-learning by higher education staff and community partners. In this national study, community partners report a decreased number of students engaged in service-learning after the pandemic, as well as differing perspectives between university versus community partners on service-learning's helpfulness for student success and relationship building. This study also looks at the contrasting reasons why community partners and university personnel participate in service-learning partnerships in the first place, and explores potential adaptations to service-learning implementation based on lessons learned from pandemic partnerships.

Reflective Essays are meant to be thought provoking examinations of current issues related to university-community engagement, anchored in the current literature and often focused on mapping out future areas of research. The essay "The Perils of Expert Privilege: Analyzing, Understanding, and Reimagining Expertise in University-Community-Societal Relations," is a challenging examination of research practices that have at times harmed communities—even sometimes within the context of community-university partnerships that may not be fully grounded in community engagement principles that should prioritize participant voice and experience. Stanlick et al., approach this essay using the discipline of economics as a case study, where research by university experts can often be received as detached and removed from community concerns with the potential to further perpetuate systemic issues. The authors provide action steps for engaged scholars to design more equitable, inclusive relationships that mitigate potential harm by university experts. In the second reflective essay in this issue, Kuo and Stanley discuss the expansion of Mapp and Bergman (2019) and Mapp and Kuttner's (2013) dual capacity-building framework for engaging families and K-12 schools. They propose expanding from a dual to a quadruple capacity-building framework that includes communities and universities as additional stakeholders and partners in family and school engagement. The authors identify potential avenues for future research to examine this expanded framework in action in order to ensure student success in K-12 education through the involvement of all stakeholders.

This issue's Projects with Promise section features early to mid-stage projects and research studies designed to demonstrate initial indications of impact. Howell et al.'s article provides a roadmap for replication and lessons learned from the design, implementation, and evaluation of a faculty learning community focused on community-engaged research (CEnR) at the University of Alaska Anchorage. The Community Engaged Research Fellows program was designed to build capacity and understanding of CEnR methodologies, best practices, and dissemination of research in order to increase funding applications and scholarly publications. The authors discuss findings from their evaluation of the initial impact and outcomes of this new program.

Like Couillou et al.'s research article in this issue, August et al. explore another facet of the educational disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically the pandemic's impact on an experiential learning program for Master of Public Health (MPH) graduate students involved in a Real-World Writing program. While remote and virtual opportunities for MPH students to work with community partners has been studied, the unplanned nature of this global emergency presented challenges in making this a beneficial and accessible experience for community partners and an equitable experience for students engaging remotely in a career and professional development opportunity. This study contributes to the ongoing scholarly conversation around so-called "pandemic pivots" and valuable practices that, if maintained, could enhance community and student engagement efforts.

The Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement is committed to publishing and showcasing the work of emerging scholars through Dissertation Overviews which feature summaries of recently completed dissertations and theses on a broad range of university-community engagement topics. This issue features Brandt's (2021) thesis examining ways in which institutional and professional practices support community engagement professionals in higher education. This mixed-methods study yielded five key themes related to institutional practices that affect community engagement professionals and their job satisfaction. Findings contribute to the growing body of scholarship focused on ways institutions can support community engagement professionals, and recruit and retain talented staff and faculty in order to support higher education's public mission.

Once again, we thank our dedicated editorial team, associate editors, and reviewers for their contributions to the production of this issue. Most importantly, we thank the authors who have entrusted their work to our journal and developed needed research studies and models that expand the boundaries of engaged scholarship. A reminder that the journal is soliciting new reviewers to support the peer review process and extends an ongoing invitation to fill out the form on the journal website or email the journal directly with interest. Finally, as you read this issue, we hope you will consider contributing a manuscript to the journal to add your ideas and voice to our expanding field.

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Toward a Transformative GSL Ethics: How Global Service-Learning Faculty Reconcile Clashing Personal and Institutional Values Surrounding GSL

Kathleen Sexsmith and Richard Kiely

Abstract

Global service-learning (GSL) course offerings have expanded rapidly in the last decade at U.S. universities and colleges, yet faculty are not always prepared for the ethical challenges of development work with disadvantaged communities in international settings. Based on a qualitative study of 25 GSL faculty across a range of higher education institutions in the United States, this article describes what drives faculty members to participate in GSL, analyzes the community engagement principles that guide their GSL work, and assesses how they cope with the dissonance that arises when striving to meet the sometimes-conflicting needs of students, communities, and educational institutions. We find that these faculty employ a "transformative GSL ethics" to realize their motivations and visions for a counter-normative approach to community engagement. We argue that higher education institutions must shift their norms, values, and practices with respect to professional development and pedagogy if they are to continue promoting the GSL agenda.

Keywords: global service-learning, counter-normative pedagogy, international education

What's not a conversation point often is . . . the impact on the community in the global setting.

—Director of engaged learning center at private U.S. university

Global service-learning (GSL) course offerings have expanded rapidly in the last decade at U.S. universities and colleges, as part of a nationwide push to create global engagement opportunities for students (Whitehead, 2015). GSL can be referred to by a variety of terms, including international service-learning (ISL), global learning, community-based global learning, and international voluntourism. GSL refers to a mode of instruction in which students in a college or university course engage cross-culturally, often with socially or economically marginalized communities, by working together, conducting research, or providing a service (Hartman & Kiely, 2014, 2017). GSL courses are usually designed and led by faculty members, who must balance student needs, both learning-related and personal, against community needs, priorities, and sentiments (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011). Meeting ethical responsibilities toward both students and communities is challenging, and sometimes next to impossible to achieve (Crabtree, 2013; Larsen, 2015; Taylor, 2009). In particular, if faculty are not well prepared for the ethical challenges of development work with disadvantaged communities in international settings, the needs of communities are likely to be deprioritized relative to the needs of students (Crabtree, 2008; McMillan & Stanton, 2014). GSL courses thus may risk poor outcomes

and even negative impacts for community members and students alike (Crabtree, 2013; Hartman et al., 2018; Hawes et al., 2021).

Based on the results of a qualitative study of 25 GSL faculty across a range of higher education institutions in the United States, this article focuses on the roles, risks, and responsibilities vis-à-vis community partners of faculty members leading GSL courses. Our aim is to describe what drives faculty members to participate in GSL, analyze the community engagement principles that guide their GSL work, and assess how they cope with the dissonance that arises when striving to meet the sometimes conflicting needs of students and communities. In so doing, we make several contributions to the literatures on service-learning and on GSL. First, we add to existing literature on faculty motivation and experiences with service-learning in domestic settings (O'Meara, 2013) by reviewing faculty motivations for participating in GSL. We highlight the contingent nature of GSL work, in terms of how it depends on myriad institutional, cultural, and professional factors and personal relationships developed between faculty and communities over time, and how programs often arise from unanticipated opportunities. The contingent character of some GSL programs and the related risks underscore the need for institutions to invest in preparing faculty for the challenges of international engagement (Kiely & Sexsmith, 2018). Second, we analyze the principles or values that guide faculty members' engagement with communities when implementing their GSL programs. We show that, in the cases of our interview participants, these principles reflect a deep commitment to a nonhierarchical partnership with community organizations. However, and finally, we argue that these principles often clash with institutional norms and values toward faculty professional development, which tend to prioritize individualistic research achievements like publishing and recognition, and toward pedagogy, which tend to prioritize student over community needs (Abes et al., 2002; Cooper, 2014; Ma & Mun, 2019; O'Meara 2011). These conflicting expectations cause faculty to experience cognitive dissonance, which they deal with through the development of a counternormative approach to GSL (Clayton & Ash, 2004; Hartman et al., 2018) that we call a "transformative GSL ethics." We argue that higher education institutions must shift their norms, values, and practices with respect to professional development and to pedagogy if they are to continue promoting the GSL agenda as part of their internationalization efforts (Hartman & Chaire, 2014; Kiely & Sexsmith, 2018; Tiessen & Huish, 2014).

The article proceeds as follows. First, we situate our study in GSL scholarship and explain how it contributes to the growing literature on faculty members' understandings, roles, and motivations for service-learning. The second section describes our qualitative research methodology and details characteristics of our participants and their GSL programs. Third, we present our findings from original qualitative research on faculty members' motivations, guiding principles, and ethical challenges implementing GSL programs. Fourth, the discussion section synthesizes our findings, highlights contributions to the GSL literature, and explains the study limitations. In the concluding section, to address faculty concerns highlighted in our study and support high quality GSL, we provide recommendations for faculty and higher education institutions engaging in this work.

Conceptualizing "Global" Service-Learning

The U.S. contemporary service-learning movement in higher education can be traced to the 1960s and 1970s (Kendell & Associates, 1990). This movement generated several scholarly frameworks for understanding who benefits and how from the service-learning activities. Furco's (1996) "balance beam" provided a useful heuristic for distinguishing the academic and public value of service-learning from other diverse types of educational activities. According to this framework, volunteering and cocurricular community service could be distinguished from field study and internships according to a continuum that identifies whether the "balance" of benefits is tipped toward the recipient (i.e., community partner) or the service provider (i.e., the student; Furco, 1996). In addition to the "balance beam," Hill (1996) and Tapia (2007) offer "quadrants" to visually depict high versus low levels of learning on a horizontal axis, and high versus low levels of service on a vertical axis, where high quality learning and service sits in the upper right quadrant (See Furco & Norvell 2019 for a more detailed description). These conceptual frameworks were intended to distinguish service-learning as a more impactful form of innovative pedagogy

in terms of both pedagogy and service goals, as compared to other outside-of-classroom learning experiences, such as internships and field study (which tend to focus on student learning) and volunteer and community service activities (which tend to focus more on the student's contribution to the community organization). Thanks in part to these contributions, educators and scholars began to see the benefits of service-learning in comparison to other experiential learning activities, which were often not well integrated into university curricula, did not typically earn students academic credit, and very rarely incorporated various forms of structured reflection on the service-learning experience (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Furco & Norvell, 2019; Simpson, 2004; Tapia, 2007).

The early scholarship on service-learning in the U.S. context had a broad influence on the theory and practice of service-learning in other regions of the world (Aramburuzabala et al., 2019; Erasmus, 2011; Kiely & Ma, 2021). One of the earliest conceptualizations of international service-learning (ISL) was offered by Bringle and Hatcher (2011), who described ISL as the integration of study abroad, international education, and service-learning. Consistent with these three dimensions, Bringle and Hatcher offered the following definition of ISL as a

> *structured academic experience in another country* in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that addresses identified community needs; (b) *learn from direct interaction and cross-cultural dialogue with others*; and (c) reflect on the *experience* in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a deeper understanding of *global and intercultural issues*, a broader appreciation of the *host country* and the discipline, and an enhanced sense of their own responsibilities as citizens, locally and *globally*. (p. 19)

Although faculty development, community impact, and reciprocity with partners are included as implicit indicators of successful ISL throughout *International Service Learning: Conceptual Frameworks and Research* (Bringle et al., 2011), this volume (which includes Bringle and Hatcher's chapter) centers on the student from the perspective of the academe and offers a limited view of research on community capacity building and faculty development in ISL. Scholars soon worked to rectify these gaps. Bringle et al. (2009) made a foundational contribution with the SOFAR model, which conceptualizes a more nuanced and authentic representation of a campus–community partnership as dyadic relationships among students, community organizations, faculty, administrators, and community residents (hence the acronym SOFAR). In their model, campus–community partnerships become less exploitive and transactional and more transformational relative to the level of "closeness, equity and integrity" of the relationships or interactions among the dyads (p. 4).

Another shift in the literature that has helped widen the lens beyond the student and university experience has been the change in the language of ISL to that of global service-learning (GSL). This change in terminology helped to expand the borders across which intercultural dimensions of service-learning can occur to include domestic (students' home country) contexts (Hartman & Kiely, 2014). Landorf and Dosher (2015) described "global learning as the process of diverse people collaboratively analyzing and addressing complex problems that transcend borders" (p. 24). Their definition marked a notable shift in how study abroad is defined, by (1) focusing on "people" (rather than students), who are (2) "engaged globally" (which can include not only international but also domestic engagement between diverse people), in (3) a "collaborative" relational process with community stakeholders to solve "complex problems" (facing communities, not just students) that "transcend" borders (such as regional, cultural, racial, or other borders; (Landorf & Dosher, 2015, p. 24).

In concert with this conceptual shift, special sections in two issues of the *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* focused on the move from ISL to GSL in research and knowledge sharing (Hartman & Kiely, 2014; Kiely & Hartman, 2015). This scholarship offered an opportunity for scholar-practitioners to delineate the parameters of an alternative conceptual framing that moves from student- and faculty-centric theories and practices to a community-driven approach. This work, along with scholarship in the related field of development studies (Epprecht, 2004; Langdon & Agyeyomah, 2014; Simpson, 2004; Tiessen & Heron, 2012; Tiessen & Huish, 2014), challenges the dominant discourse of "service" and

classroom-based pedagogy and attempts to facilitate a theoretically and ethically informed counterhegemonic discourse that addresses how higher education institutions and other stakeholders might serve communities across multiple, sometimes ill-defined borders and boundaries (see also more recent work by Hawes et al., 2021).

Building on their ongoing work and dialogues with GSL colleagues, and to move away from the language of "service," Hartman et al. (2018) offered the concept of community-based global learning (CBGL) as

> a community-driven learning and/or experience that employs structured, critically reflective practice to better understand global citizenship; positionality; power, structure, and social responsibility in global contexts. It is a learning methodology *and* a community-driven development philosophy that cultivates a critically reflective disposition among all participants. (pp. 203–204)

Hartman et al.'s definition integrates three main dimensions: (1) a community-driven learning methodology that aspires to be equitable, participatory, democratic, and inclusive; (2) a community needs-oriented experience that cultivates a critically reflective disposition and social responsibility in all stakeholders; *and*, importantly, (3) a development philosophy that recognizes the global interdependencies of both domestic and international social and environmental problems (Hartman et al., 2018, p. 21). Our theorization of a transformative GSL ethics below engages with and builds on this approach.

Faculty Motivations for Service-Learning

Although research on faculty experiences with global forms of service-learning is limited, scholars have shown a growing interest in studying faculty participation, motivation, learning, and professional development in service-learning writ broadly (Berkey et al., 2018; Britt, 2012; Clayton et al., 2013; Demb & Wade, 2012; Hou, Su-I & Wilder, S. 2015; O'Meara, 2013). Understanding why faculty undertake service-learning, how they hone their service-learning knowledge and skills, the common challenges and barriers they face, as well as how institutions might support their ongoing professional development in the area of service-learning, are all essential to maximizing benefits and averting negative impact on students and communities (Berkey et al., 2018; Chism et al., 2013; Ma & Mun, 2019). Such research is essential in the context of GSL, where sensitive issues of cultural and other forms of difference must be well-managed to prevent harm to marginalized communities.

O'Meara's (2013) extensive review of research on factors that influence faculty motivation for engaging in service-learning found a number of studies (Abes et al., 2002; Banerjee & Hausafus, 2007; O'Meara & Niehaus, 2009) that focused on individual variables such as "teaching goals, gender, race, ethnicity, experiences growing up working class, epistemology or orientation to knowledge, a desire for learning and a desire to enact commitments to specific community organizations and issues" (p. 216). O'Meara's review also indicated that institutional environment and culture are important influences; according to her, "discipline, institution type, perception of institutional support, type of appointment all act as motivating forces" (p. 216; O'Meara's Table 3.2.1 offers a useful summary of research on individual, institutional, and environmental factors that influence faculty motivation to undertake service-learning). Demb and Wade's (2012) research indicated that the level of faculty engagement and motivation to incorporate service-learning into their teaching and research is influenced by the complex interrelationship among diverse factors in four dimensions: personal, communal, institutional, and professional. Ma and Mun's (2019) more recent study added a dimension related to student factors that affect faculty motivation. They found that students' academic and personal development were among the "most significant motivators" for faculty in Hong Kong to engage in service-learning teaching (p. 48). Although research results are mixed in terms of the relationship of faculty engagement in service-learning and faculty ranks and tenure status (O'Meara, 2013; Wade & Demb, 2009), overall, much of the research confirms that faculty feel that the value of service-learning is not recognized in terms of institutional support (i.e., funding, promotion and tenure policies), which has implications for the time and effort they put into building relationships with community partners vis-à-vis their investments in scholarly publication (Abes et al., 2002;

Barreneche et al., 2018; Demb & Wade, 2012; Ma & Mun, 2019; O'Meara & Niehaus, 2009). Competing priorities between campuses and communities continue to present ethical dilemmas for faculty, especially when the time commitment required for responsible GSL practice is extensive and when institutional support for addressing funding and logistical challenges is lacking (Crabtree, 2008, 2013; O'Meara, 2011, 2013; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009).

According to Clayton et al. (2013), faculty learning "is an underdeveloped yet ripe arena for research in service-learning" (p. 266). Indeed, much of the research on faculty learning in service-learning assesses the impact of faculty development programs on faculty learning outcomes and competencies (Berkey et al., 2018; Blanchard et al., 2012; Katz Jameson et al., 2012; see also reviews by Chism et al., 2013; Clayton et al., 2013; and Welch & Plaxton-Moore, 2017), collaborative inquiry or communities of practice (Miller-Young et al., 2015), and autoethnography (Tilley-Lubbs, 2009). However, a review of scholarship in GSL reveals very few empirical studies examining faculty learning experiences in this field (Miller-Young et al., 2015; Morrison, 2015; Taylor, 2009; Tiessen & Huish, 2014; Tonkin, 2004, 2011). For example, a few qualitative studies have focused on how faculty learn important "threshold concepts" such as reciprocity or critical reflection (Miller-Young et al., 2015; Tilley-Lubbs, 2009) or "reflexivity" in research (Morrison, 2015) in developing quality relationships that benefit both students and community partners (Kiely & Sexsmith, 2018). A pattern in each of these studies was the recognition that GSL, when not planned well in collaboration with community partners, particularly with a robust understanding of what constitutes reciprocity (Barreneche et al., 2018; Larsen, 2015; Miller-Young, 2015; Tilley-Lubbs, 2009), can potentially cause harm or damage the nature of the relationship with community partners (Hartman et al., 2018).

Given the paucity of research specific to faculty learning in GSL, and the potential harm to vulnerable communities that can come from poorly designed GSL programs (Hartman & Kiely, 2014; Hartman et al., 2018; Huish & Tiessen, 2014; Larsen, 2015), understanding faculty members' experiences with GSL, as well as the factors that motivate them to stay involved in GSL, can have important implications for how institutions structure professional development activities and provide faculty support. To that end, in this article we pose three questions: (1) What motivates faculty to lead GSL courses? (2) What principles guide faculty members' engagement with communities in their GSL courses? (3) Do faculty members' community engagement principles align with the dominant norms and values of institutions of higher education?

Methods

Research Design

For this qualitative study, 25 faculty members, including 15 women and 10 men, were recruited to participate in semistructured interviews. IRB approval was obtained at Cornell University. The interviews addressed six main topics: (1) motivations for participating in GSL, (2) philosophies and ethical considerations toward community partnerships, (3) GSL pedagogies, (4) the institutional environment at the faculty member's home institution, (5) research and its relationship to GSL teaching, and (6) projections and hopes for the future of the GSL field. The semistructured nature of the interview questions allowed us to develop in-depth insights into faculty members' motivations for particular behaviors, their reflections on best and worst practices in GSL, and their opinions of available theoretical models for GSL. Interviews were conducted by Kiely, Sexsmith, and two research assistants. An interview guide was developed and used by all four interviewers to ensure consistency in the interviewing approach and comparability of results across interview participants. The interview guide was designed to yield interviews of approximately one hour, but some interviews lasted only 45 minutes and others several hours. Interviews were conducted primarily by telephone or Zoom, audiorecorded, and transcribed by the authors.

The interviews were semistructured and designed to probe faculty experiences in GSL according to the four lenses of the Kiely (2007) reflective framework. Kiely's four-lens model conceptualizes service-learning as a transformative practice that engages students and faculty in critical reflection on their (1) teaching and learning, (2) institutional change, (3) knowledge generation and application, and (4) community partnerships and capacity-building (Kiely & Sexsmith, 2018; Swords & Kiely, 2011). Another sec-

tion of the interview inquired about faculty members' motivations to pursue GSL work. Thus, the interviews integrated Kiely's (2007) model to create five main lines of inquiry: (1) What motivated participants to teach GSL and/or conduct research in GSL? (2) How do participants approach pedagogy and program models in GSL? (3) In what ways do participants engage with their academic institutions to support GSL? (4) In what ways do participants include research in their GSL work? (5) How do participants develop and maintain relationships with community partners?

We then used an iterative approach to identify and refine codes for data analysis (Patton, 2002; Ryan & Bernard, 2000). Metacodes were developed for each of the main lines of inquiry (faculty motivations, pedagogy, institutional environment, professional development, community partnerships), as well as for emergent themes (definitions of GSL, ethical dilemmas, future of GSL). Each of these metacodes was refined to second and sometimes third levels using an iterative process and according to themes emerging in the interviews (Patton, 2002). This article focuses on findings related to faculty motivations and community partnerships, including as they relate to and intersect with the other topics. A full coding scheme is available upon request to the authors. Transcripts were coded using NVivo software in order to identify patterns across participants. The results below include participant numbers, gender, and rank to help provide a sense of the range of opinions presented while still protecting participant confidentiality.

Interview participants were selected using purposive sampling methods, to maximize heterogeneity across four factors: gender, type of postsecondary institution (community college, private, state, or Research One [R1] university [per the Carnegie Classifications of Institutions of Higher Education]), progress toward or beyond tenure, and major academic field of training (Patton, 2002). In this way, we used theoretical sampling to aim to capture the range of possible explanations for our qualitative, interview-based study (Gerson & Damaske, 2020). Prospective participants were identified from within the authors' professional networks of faculty conducting GSL work and at scholarly events and conferences in the GSL field. Participants were recruited through in-person or email requests to participate in the study. The research was conducted over several years between 2012 and 2015 to help ensure that the sample captured a range of participant experiences according to the four purposive sampling criteria described above. Capturing a diverse sample was important to examine trends regarding community partnerships that cut across institutions regardless of size, available resources, and major fields of study. Moreover, we were able to explore with both new and seasoned faculty how time and accumulated experience with GSL has shaped their approaches to community partnerships. Analysis of results and preparation of the manuscript took place over several years as the first author completed a doctoral dissertation and transferred to a new institution. Interview participants were not recontacted for additional interviews, since they had been sampled according to their career stage and years of experience doing GSL work and at their institutions at the time of interview.

Participant Characteristics

Table 1 demonstrates that participants were distributed across type of institution and rank, although the largest share of participants (11 interviewees) were employed at private colleges or universities. Participants represented a range of disciplinary backgrounds, including education (5), social sciences (8), humanities (6), agricultural and physical sciences (4), and health and human development (2).

Participants ran programs in multiple countries across several continents, including (in alphabetical order) Belize, Bolivia, Cambodia, China, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Ghana, Haiti, Honduras, India, Jamaica, Libya, Malaysia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Northern Ireland, Peru, Poland, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, U.S.A. (Navajo Nation), and Zambia. Their service-learning programs ranged from one week in length to a full summer or semester, with most having a duration of 1 to 3 weeks.

Table 2 summarizes our participants' GSL programs. A handful of participants had extensive multiyear experience developing service-learning programs across countries and sectors, and their full range of experience could not be summarized here. Moreover, some programs involved multiple activities that are listed in different categories.

Table 1. Breakdown of Research Participants by Institutional Classification

	Community college	State university	Research university	Private college/ university	Total
Assistant professor/Senior lecturer		2	2	2	6
Associate professor		1	1	4	6
Professor or professor emeriti	2	1	2	3	8
Director or administrator		1	2	2	5
Total	2	5	7	11	25

Note. Blank cells represent an absence of applicable data.

Findings

Faculty Motivations for GSL

Table 3 categorizes our findings regarding faculty members' motivations for participating in GSL work into five broad categories: pedagogical impact, development ethics, personal growth and identity, professional development, and unanticipated opportunity. Most of these broad categories are subdivided to capture the rich variation in faculty member GSL motivations, and each subcategory includes a representative quote. Respondents sometimes gave several motivations for participating in GSL work, and individuals may straddle categories.

Those motivated by pedagogy described two major ways that GSL has impacted their teaching. The first, and the most common motivation overall for participating in GSL, was to provide students with an experiential learning opportunity. Many of our participants expressed the value of GSL as experiential learning—that is, learning through doing (rather than reading about) international development work. In these responses, several participants explicitly noted the potential of GSL as a means of effecting personal transformation in students, referring to the "eye-opening," "awareness-raising," or "transformational learning" value of GSL. The other pedagogical motivation participants mentioned was to build and improve student–teacher relationships. The closeness created by traveling internationally and facing challenges together was described by Participant 19, a male associate professor, as generating "excitement" about students through "really seeing their human side." Although this data speaks to pedagogical motivations to engage in GSL, our interviews generated a larger data set about the specific pedagogical practices and techniques of GSL instructors that lies beyond the scope of this article.

Motivations for GSL that fell into our development ethics category included engagement in international development and improving or further developing existing relationships with a community. Those who saw GSL as a vehicle for international development often framed their interest explicitly in terms of a desire to achieve "social justice" through their community partnerships. Participant 13, a male professor emeritus, spoke in particular about GSL as a "grassroots" way to "disrupt the traditional structure of global power," both in terms of its "transformational" impacts on students and its capacity to "show our hosts that people from the rich portion of the world can be interested in what is often denigrated as . . . 'poor countries without economic resources.'" Another related motivation for GSL work was the opportunity to improve or develop relationships with communities in an explicitly nonresearch setting. Several faculty members told us about their desire to engage with marginalized communities in a way that did not feel self-serving, as research sometimes does.

Personal growth and identity were the third major category we identified as a motivation for GSL work. Many of our faculty respondents said they had a personally transformative experience during their youth or university career that instilled a personal interest in international or cross-cultural work, and then explained that they are now using GSL as a vehicle to pursue this interest. A common sentiment among faculty was the desire to recreate these transformative

Table 2. Classification of Research Participants' GSL Programs

Support to community organizations	• Hold workshops and analyze workplans for a center for breast cancer survivors. • Work in community garden. • Volunteer at health clinic, after-school program, and sports complex. • Assist with implementation of a design for a park and community center. • Volunteer at center for children with disabilities. • Run a summer day camp for local students. • Volunteer at health clinic organizing patient records and collecting and monitoring data to assist with grant writing. • Help design water plants to bring clean water to communities.
Teaching, training, and curriculum development in schools and communities	• Provide feedback on local doctoral students' dissertation proposals. • Educational projects in schools on sanitation, water, and personal hygiene. • Help school-aged children apply for private schools outside a low-income community. • Work with special needs children from low-resource families. • Bilingual writing workshop for students and local women around difficult moments in women's lives. • English language classes. • Develop standards and curriculum for local school. • Create fact sheets to disseminate to local community members. • Develop classroom activities for student nurses. • Training health care providers in preventive education.
Physical labor	• Pouring and moving concrete to assist with building homes. • Carrying blocks to help build playground. • Construction of a forest management station for an Indigenous community. • Help construct a hospital. • Help build classrooms for rural community. • Build playground and swing sets and maintain sports field. • Help build wind turbine. • Turn school rooftop into an income-generating café. • Plant trees in a nursery. • Paint traffic signs. • Pick up garbage.
Independent research	• Research on impacts of local tourism industry. • Evaluation research for a women's rights organization to help them obtain grants. • Research for a health clinic under supervision of lead doctor. • Community photography project on peace and justice. • Soil experiments and interviewing farmers to propose solutions to small farmers' agronomics concerns. • Research project together with a local student partner.
Interpersonal relationship development	• Share meals with locals and play with young children. • Interview local women informally to listen to their stories and coproduce a bilingual publication. • Interview women about difficulties in their lives for a legal rights organization.
Observation of life and work in communities	• Visit health clinics and migrant aid organizations to talk with organizers and watch activities. • Spend a day in a fishing village and go on boats with fishermen. • Shadow nurses at a health clinic. • Visit apparel factories to observe labor conditions.
Financial support	• Bring funds raised in the U.S. to construct sanitation and water collection infrastructure.

Table 3. Faculty Motivations for GSL Work

Category	Motivation	Representative Quote
Pedagogical impact	Experiential learning	"I wanted to bring other students to the field to realize that it's not enough to just sit and imagine and theorize about development. I think that it's important to interact with people and see it up close; see the struggles. . . . I didn't want them leaving and thinking that they need to save Ghana, that they could save Ghana."—*Participant 18, female professor*
	Closer teacher–student relationships	"And I think that breaking down that boundary and those types of relationships allows for us, for me to challenge them in ways, to be quite honest. I think that I can say things sometimes that maybe they would get more offended by. But if they feel like it's a space where they could talk about it rather than shutting down, and why it's making them uncomfortable, we can get someplace."—*Participant 2, female assistant professor*
Development ethics	Engage in international development	"I was too much of a critical thinker to dive right into the humanitarian industry. But this seemed like a good way to bridge those values and interests for me. I could still engage with humanitarianism, but from the perspective of a critical thinker. . . . I could help [students] to reflect critically about their engagements in that field in a way that hopefully would indirectly contribute to improving some of those services and their approaches."—*Participant 14, male assistant professor*
	Build nonresearch relationships with communities	"Part of the reason I built the school was because I knew I wanted to study development and I'm starting with a debt, and this was my repayment of the debt upfront."—*Participant 18, female professor*
Personal growth & identity	Formative international experience during youth	"I guess what I'm saying is that the motivations as well as the structure of the program flowed out of my own autobiography and personal experiences. That no one could convince me out of. It wasn't just one good book against another. It was, wait a sec, this is a decade of interacting deeply intimately with people and you're gonna tell me that their experiences and perspectives are not legit? They are!"—*Participant 20, male professor*
	Spirituality	"You know there is a spiritual teaching that all is one. And I think that people experience that in a different way when they are deeply immersed in another culture."—*Participant 4, female senior lecturer*
	Travel and exploration	"When I was on sabbatical, I wanted to do something, anything: go somewhere for the first time in my life outside of places that are connected to the United States, like Canada, Mexico or perhaps the Bahamas. So, this was really a great opportunity insofar as the availability of getting involved in an adventure. I think that I was in a situation where any adventure would have sufficed."—*Participant 9, female professor*

Table continued on next page

Table 3. Continued

Category	Motivation	Representative Quote
Professional development	Natural extension of scholarly identity	"As an anthropologist, I'm interested in participant observation and I believe, I believed I guess, that I could learn a lot from studying development from the inside out."—Participant 18, female professor
	Transformational learning	"I have learned an awful lot of important lessons about how not to be the arrogant outsider; how not to make assumptions; how not to ask the wrong questions; to say the wrong things, in terms of local experiences—would be totally different from my so-called 'good intentions.'"—*Participant 6, female professor emerita*
	Utilize existing community connection	"So, I developed it as a result of many years of me thinking, how can I use my research connections, my personal interests, and my desire to share my country with the rest of the world? All three."—*Participant 25, female associate professor*
Unanticipated opportunity	Unanticipated opportunity	"But then, actually, getting involved taking students to [country] just happened through a series of kind of surprising contingencies and connections. . . . It all happened in about a month. The doctor called in May, and we were on the plane in June. . . . In retrospect, thinking back to that first summer I'm just amazed at how we jumped into this."—*Participant 14, male assistant professor*

moments for their students, or "return the favor" of being introduced to other cultures, as Participant 13 put it. Another, less common personal reason for participating in GSL was spiritual. Two respondents (Participant 7, a male administrator, and Participant 20, a male professor) spoke of Christian values, and Participant 4 noted that cross-cultural communication and friendship offered the "spiritual teaching that all is one." Participant 9 shared an uncommon view among participants that she was drawn to GSL as a means of traveling and experiencing places she considered "exotic," signaling the importance of critical self-reflection and better institutional preparation for GSL work, as discussed further below.

The fourth overarching category we distilled from our findings was professional development. Several faculty members noted that GSL created transformational learning moments that helped them become more reflexive about their teaching and research, which in turn enhanced their relationships in the field and ultimately their work as academic researchers. Some participants explained that GSL was a natural extension of their professional identity, either because of its epistemological focus on grassroots perspectives, or because it provided a logical new branch for their globally engaged scholarship. Several faculty noted that they saw an opportunity to engage in GSL in order to build on prior professional or personal relationships.

Finally, several respondents described their GSL experience as a totally unanticipated opportunity. Some described their personal concern at leading a trip on short notice without adequate preparation or having no prior knowledge of the destination country. These cases do not represent GSL best practices; in fact, they represent circumstances that can undermine the strength of community relationships, or even reinscribe university–community hierarchies. The finding that some faculty do not actually have a longer standing interest in—and thus lack a personal preparation for—GSL work relates to our finding below that faculty often did not feel supported by their academic institutions. Although they had meaningful community engagement intentions, these faculty felt "thrown into" GSL work without having received sufficient resources, time, or opportunities for necessary self-preparation from their institutions. Together, these findings point to the need for greater institutional support to prepare faculty for GSL work, including critical self-reflection at all stages.

Community Engagement Principles

Participants described several common principles that guide their engagement with community members in their GSL work. Table 4 presents a synthesis of our findings with respect to community engagement principles, including representative quotes that we felt best express the meaning of each principle.

The most commonly expressed community engagement principle was partnership, well-defined by one participant in terms of "mutuality" of effort and benefit between the university and the community. Faculty members described the principle of partnership in a careful way that implicitly or explicitly differed from the principle of reciprocity, a more common referent in the literature. That is, faculty recognized that the efforts made, and the benefits gained by the university and the community partners, do not have to (and almost never will) be equal. Rather, they were sensitive to the fact that community partners put in whatever resources they have available, even if limited, to develop what Participant 24, a male senior lecturer, called a "strong sense of

Table 4. Faculty's Community Engagement Principles for GSL

Community engagement principle	Representative quote
Partnership	"I call what I do 'civic engagement.' . . . what I try to promote in my study abroad class really focuses on mutual benefit and relationships that have a lot of equity in them, between our university group and the various community partners. . . . what we're trying to do is a lot richer, much more involved, and strives for mutuality between the two sides so that it's not . . . it tries to overcome the traditional relationship in which the university is the domain of the answers, and the community is the domain of the problem."—*Participant 13, male professor emeritus*
Community needs–driven	"And we do listen to what they want. It's not just coming in and saying, 'Okay, we've got this great idea, we've got the students from [university name].' We had multiple meetings with the school, the principal and chairman, all the gamut all the way up. And decided what they wanted."—*Participant 12, female administrator*
Long-term relationships	"We talk about how even though this is a sort of a one-shot deal for the students; that is, they're going one time, [but] our project is long-term. . . . So that's really important that they not have a sense of just sort of landing there, working, and going away."—*Participant 4, female senior lecturer*
Student–student collaboration	"[Ideally] students from the host country are with the American students as peers rather than everything being 'our' students interacting with the kids. . . . having college students with college students can be really powerful. . . . to have cross-cultural understanding develop, people should have similar status and shared goals."—*Participant 3, female administrator*
Communication	"So, the fact that we've been able to communicate our ideas and their ideas back and forth so that everybody has an understanding of what's going to happen next, I think has really helped out a lot for us."—*Participant 5, female Professor*
Student–community relationships	"So, their service is always going to be communicating with others. And the service that we're providing really is that sense of being there in the moment. And helping with education, being role-models. Being, you know, friends of the Cambodians."—*Participant 9, female professor*
Nonpaternalistic	"We work really hard to set boundaries for them so that they don't abuse White privilege in the settings in which they find themselves. Sometimes their host, partners, or clients confer more authority to them than they should. We really work with them on that in advance."—*Participant 22, female administrator*
Cultural humility	"So, I always like to make very clear to the students that they're not going down for a week to transform the lives of Nicaraguans. As a matter of fact, they will barely change their lives, if at all. And that's not the point, right? . . . the reason why my trip works and has values is because they're working with an organization that is doing that."—*Participant 8, male assistant professor*

ownership" over the project. They also communicated that the benefits to each partner will necessarily vary; the spirit of the partnership is that each person involved gets out of the partnership what they expected and desired. As Participant 22 put it,

> In the service-learning literature, the word that is used is "reciprocity." I'm not as fond of that word because to me, the metaphor is like a mirror image. I speak and think in terms of finding the points of mutual reward. I need to be really clear about "this is what I want out of this partnership." These are the rewards for me. What are the rewards for you? And these rewards don't have to be the same.

However, participants also mentioned many different constraints on the feasibility of implementing the principle of partnership. Participant 1, a female professor emerita, outright questioned the idea that community should be involved in program planning, observing that in some contexts the lives of locals are so "strenuous" that they cannot be expected to have the time or resources to contribute to GSL planning. This case illustrated a lack of critical self-reflection and need for better institutional support for GSL best practices. Others underscored the difficulty of doing GSL work in a way that does not reinforce the more powerful position of universities vis-à-vis communities. For example, some commented on the difficulty of coordination between a bureaucratic organization, like a university, and an informal and grassroots organization, like many of their Southern NGO partners. As Participant 10, a male assistant professor, succinctly stated: "Community-driven processes typically do not function in the form of large bureaucracies." In fact, sometimes the informality of the Southern partner organizations lies in stark contrast to the heaviness of university bureaucracy. For example, Participant 23, a female associate professor, said a partner organization "didn't even have a bank account." Another type of problem emerges when the dependence of the organization on the university partner is too strong. In some cases, a perceived absence of strong input and coordination from the partner organization led faculty to believe that the community was not sufficiently invested, raising questions for them about whether the project was being imposed by outsiders and/or about the project's sustainability over the long term. As Participant 18 said, "It should be something the community is so wedded to that they're willing to support it, and that has its own way of sustaining itself. It shouldn't be one person; it needs to be an institution, which is nonprofit." These faculty members were concerned about the intrinsic power dynamic that exists between Western universities and the marginalized communities they worked with, and they struggled to articulate solutions to these concerns.

Another common guiding principle for community engagement in GSL work was that programming be driven by stated community needs. For example, Participant 4 explained how her students had helped a community partner to self-publish a children's book about gardening after realizing that the available books were from the United States and depicted only American children, possibly leading to a sense of disconnection or alienation. This community-needs-driven approach represents a GSL best practice and relates closely to another frequently cited community engagement principle, namely longevity of the partnership. Participants described the importance of long-term commitment to relationship-building and the quality of the experience for the university and community partners, which speaks to the transformational relationship qualities of the SOFAR model (Bringle et al., 2009). As Participant 6 said, with long-term presence comes "the development of mutual trust, and that's really to me the toughest part of all of this." Participant 11, a female associate professor, explained that this trust helps prevent the perception of the program as "tourism of poverty." And as Participant 9 pointed out, long-term relationships with individuals help prevent the collapse of a program if institutions change or disappear, but the individual and the community they are tied to maintain interest in the GSL program. She recalled that "We ended up learning [that] long-term relationships really have to be in there; when the NGOs and the structures fail you should still have a relational tie." Regularity of communication is a closely related community engagement principle that many of our participants expressed. With reliable and regular interaction, a space can be created for community members to honestly reflect on their experiences in the program. Participant 21, a male administrator, described holding "quarterly forums" with the community NGO partners year round, including when students are

not engaged in the service component of the program, in order to "meet each other and talk about their experiences . . . they've appreciated that."

Student–student collaboration was an integral element to a handful of the programs our faculty participants were involved with. These collaborations sometimes took the form of Fair Trade Learning (Hartman et al., 2018), in which local university students are equally engaged in the learning component of the GSL project. Faculty described how this helped address an underlying inequality in GSL programs, whereby Western university students see their own careers boosted by the international experience, thus reinforcing global inequalities between the student participants and participating marginalized communities. As Participant 6 commented, "Often times we forget that the local folks also are interested in resume building." This faculty member was pointing out that many education-based GSL projects fail to take the professional development of local students into account.

Several faculty provided evidence from the student–community interactions they had observed to redefine conventional notions of "service." That is, the closeness of the relationship between students and community partners was, for some, a service in itself, in the sense of creating friendships and the effort to connect. Participant 22 described how she struggled with the local community organization's emphasis on relationships as service, whereas she and her students had a much more traditional notion of service as an activity with a more tangible impact. She said, "So, is it service to be a guest in somebody's home? That's what's so hard for our students to conceive of . . . but [community organization director's] conception of service and I think where that program is headed is that service isn't a thing that you do by 'now I'm doing it, now I'm not.' It's much more a disposition, or an attitude, or an intention."

For faculty members whose GSL program included a research component, efforts were often made to avoid the replication of conventional research methodologies in which data is extracted from communities and efforts are not necessarily made to use findings in a mutually beneficial way. Participant 21 clearly described the capacity to "contribute to the information deficit" in the host country as an overarching objective of his program. This nonextractive approach to research is related to the principle of nonpaternalism, expressed by several faculty members. Participants were aware and reflective about the detrimental impacts of assuming the natural right to be present and intervene in a marginalized community. For example, several participants were critical of the notion of "charity," with Participant 9 particularly concerned about the risk of an "uneven, patron–client relationship" developing through the provision of financial or in-kind gifts. A faculty member whose students engaged in support work at a remote clinic in an African country lamented the "colonial" behavior of doctors who believed they had the right to conduct natural experiments on the population, and said he worked hard to prevent his students from replicating a model of "cowboy doctors." A faculty member working with Native American communities works hard to incorporate local authors into her syllabus to undermine the conventional notion that descendants of White Europeans hold more valid knowledge.

Finally, faculty members were keen to instill humility in their students, in the sense of having them recognize the limited impact they could themselves have directly on the community partner organization and its members. Several emphasized their efforts to show students that the project existed before and will continue to exist after their short-term stay in the host community. This lesson was not intended to make students feel disempowered, but rather to learn to appreciate the sustainability of the community organization and the partnership.

Clashing Institutional and GSL Norms

What becomes apparent from the above discussion of faculty members' community engagement principles is that they do not always mesh with common values held by institutions of higher education toward faculty professional development or toward pedagogy. Indeed, faculty members (particularly those at research-focused institutions) usually face significant pressure to "publish or perish" and to produce quantifiable measures of the impacts of their teaching that deprivilege the interpersonal, transformative, ethical, and critical learning achieved through GSL courses. As a male pretenure faculty member told us, "You can't do global engagement because you can't get tenure that way." When faculty members' motivations to participate in GSL and their community engagement principles

are counternormative vis-à-vis institutional values, they experience dissonance—defined here by the authors as an inconsistency between the institutional values to which faculty are expected to adhere and the principles they value more and seek to promote through their GSL work.

Although several of our participants described that their department or college was supportive of GSL work, or held a service-oriented attitude, or believed their institutions were moving in a progressive direction toward promoting GSL learning experiences, not all enjoyed a supportive environment. Participant 25 said that her department head had advised her not to continue pursuing her international work after returning from a GSL trip abroad. Even though as an individual the administrator understood and supported her cause, she described his intentions as "protecting me from naysayers and people who would say that I wasn't doing what I was 'supposed to be doing.'"

Faculty perspectives on whether their GSL programs could contribute to their ability to get tenure were mixed and depended on a series of factors such as discipline, subjective aspects of the institutional environment, and the characteristics of their individual tenure case. One faculty member who developed his program as a postdoc felt that the experience gave him a leg up on the increasingly competitive academic job market. He felt that his GSL work had given him an "added layer of professional and institutional skills and know-how." However, more commonly, faculty described how they were admonished during their pretenure period or otherwise reluctant to pursue work that appeared to defy the bounds of "traditional scholarship," as several put it. Likely as a result of this lack of support, faculty described feeling without a mentor, guidance, or support in their work. As Participant 2 said, "I am kind of winging it right now. . . . It's not really grounded in best practices, you know?" Another who had run a GSL course for 8 years said, "I'm in a position where I could still use mentors. . . . Especially 7 years back, if I had had a mentor of my own, it would have been helpful and instructive."

The institutional clash is also sometimes ideological, as several faculty described. A long-term advocate and practitioner of GSL said that his programs "move outside of ideological precommitments" such as neoliberal capitalism and American exceptionalism, and thus inevitably meet up with an unspoken but strong resistance. He described his GSL work as "a different idea of a preferred future" to the university's own vision. The value clash between GSL and institutions of higher education is sometimes more fine-grained. For example, a faculty member whose GSL course integrated his teaching with his international research portfolio was critiqued by his college for the appearance of seeking institutional resources for his research when they argued he should have been seeking external grants instead. In this way, the entire teaching element of his program held very little visibility and was deprioritized by the institution. The lack of institutional support led some faculty to despondence over the future of their programs, which often rest on them as individuals. Participant 24 said, with respect to his GSL course, "If I didn't teach it, it would die." This problem is exacerbated by the fact that faculty time often goes uncompensated, particularly at R1 universities in the United States, where summer teaching sometimes goes unpaid.

Overcoming Dissonance Arising From Clashing Values

We also highlight another, understudied dimension of dissonance arising from clashing values, namely, that many faculty lack awareness of theoretical frameworks to guide their actions in both GSL teaching and research when they encounter ethical dilemmas while attempting to pursue the community engagement principles described above. Several faculty expressed difficulty finding a theoretical framework that could guide a reconciliation of these forms of dissonance. Participant 14 said, "I have no theories I draw on; I'm a novice at this." Participant 22 said, "I have to confess I'm not a theory-driven practitioner. And I don't think about theories. I think about my experience. I'm much more inductive in my work." These comments further point to the need for institutions to provide not only practical but theoretical orientation for faculty engaging in GSL work. Nevertheless, although unable to transform the barriers embedded in conventional institutional norms, values, and structures, faculty participants expressed a deep commitment to a set of GSL principles and were intrinsically motivated to devise strategies to overcome these barriers in their research and teaching. We find that they are building a new, emergent, transformative theory of GSL

ethics that forms the new set of values and principles with which they can realize their motivations and vision for a transformative approach to community engagement.

The strategies that emerged from this transformative theory of GSL ethics are listed in the second column of Table 5 and juxtaposed against the conventional institutional norms listed in the first column.

Table 5 illustrates the strategies that our faculty participants have adopted to overcome the dissonance they experience as a clash between institutional and GSL values and norms with respect to their teaching and research. The strategies also reflect their deep commitment to the principles described in Table 4.

With respect to pedagogy, several strategies are particularly innovative and merit further discussion. One is the decentralization of instructional authority with students. Participant 11 said, "I followed the idea of learning being reciprocal, and being a give and take between professor and student. And that you're learning from your students." Participant 24 said, "One of my phrases is, 'it's a short walk to the edge of knowledge.' And so, students realize that they are part of [a] knowledge generation cycle. Right away, in my class." Similarly, the director of a student learning exchange program in which U.S. and African students work together on a research project said, "There was this blurring of lines between who's learning, who's teaching, who's the program for, who's serving who in a fantastic way." In this way, faculty members promote the principle of mutuality in their pedagogy, similar to how it informs their community engagement.

Another interesting pedagogical innovation these instructors offer was a radical new form of reflection. Critical reflection methods were central to a significant number of the faculty members' pedagogies. This critical approach included reflection on the right to hold knowledge about others. A professor whose GSL work engages with the Indigenous communities said, "Even

Table 5. Transformative GSL Ethics

	Conventional institutional norms	Transformative GSL ethics
Research	• Intellectual property • Sole-authored publications • Right to "discover" all worldly data	• Public knowledge generation • Student/community coauthors • Critiques the "right to knowledge" and to reflect • Embraces researcher subjectivity • Participatory research methods • Students as research subjects (SOTL*) • Studying GSL as development process as well as pedagogy • Publishing outside disciplinary journals
Teaching	• Single discipline • Centralized classroom authority • Student at center of reflection practice • Course impact evaluated within semester	• Interdisciplinary • Decentralization of instructional authority with students • Program design and facilitation shared with communities • Deeply critical and reflective • Long-term learning objectives and evaluation methods • Transformational learning

Note. *Scholarship of teaching and learning.

knowledge itself can't just always be had for the sake of knowledge being a good thing. Some knowledge is not appropriate for everybody. And some knowledge you simply don't have the right to." In this way their pedagogy promoted the community engagement principles of community partnership, nonpaternalism, and humility.

Finally, their pedagogy promoted transformational learning, which requires a longer term timeframe than most approaches to student learning assessment and evaluation. GSL faculty expressed awareness that their learning objectives were incongruent with conventional pedagogy. Participant 3 said,

> If you're a faculty member who really cares about teaching and about students having an empowering, transformational learning [experience], then [throughout] your journey as an educator you're constantly experimenting . . . you're looking for the best way for students to not only learn the material but also to grow and to become people who care about the world and who feel empowered to act in that world.

She went on to say that this form of learning is often not manifest until long after the course has been completed. Faculty participants face obvious logistical constraints in measuring transformational learning both contemporaneously and into the future after the students have completed the course. Some techniques they cited during interviews included reentry courses, alumni clubs, and peer evaluation, although most expressed dissatisfaction with their capacity (i.e., time and level of resources) to carry out these different forms of evaluation.

Faculty also developed strategies to overcome the dissonance caused by clashing values between institutional research expectations and GSL work. A solution to the lack of mentorship was to develop on-campus networks built on strong interpersonal connections to pursue GSL work. Participant 14 said that GSL faculty and administrators "find each other and connect . . . organically and informally. And they really have depended on all of us taking the initiative to connect with each other, as needed, both for advice and to work out some of these concrete details." Another constructs a document synthesizing students' reflective writing and circulates it around the university (as well as to the community partner organization abroad). This helps garner support and build new relationships.

Another strategy faculty use to overcome the clash between institutional preference for "traditional scholarship" in the promotion and tenure process has been to integrate GSL work into their research agenda. Several described the scholarship of GSL teaching and learning as an emergent research stream that contributes to their broader scholarly portfolio. Some disciplines are more amenable to this approach than others. For example, Participant 14 was able to "make a research project about the [GSL] project—about the teaching project, about experiential learning, about what happened to the students, about these ethical dilemmas and engagements and controversies that happened in the course of our collaboration with these institutions." Another faculty member whose college pushed him to keep his research and teaching as separate as possible said he persisted despite the lack of institutional support and now feels that his research program is "incredibly rich" and "has grown substantially." Some, however, face difficulty overcoming this boundary, such as a faculty member in the humanities who says that his main professional priority is to publish his own poetry, which has no clear relationship to a GSL course. Some faculty work around this problem when it arises by simply publishing their GSL work in the disciplinary journals of the GSL field, which more than one participant had begun to pursue. This approach comes with its own challenges, principally feeling like an "outsider" in the field, as Participant 2 described; yet learning a new literature is a surmountable obstacle that many faculty were willing to undertake. Participant 22 described mastering the literature on GSL, which felt "totally outside of [her] comfort zone," through which she succeeded in obtaining a large grant that supported her GSL.

Discussion

We found that faculty participants in our study bring to their GSL work a rich array of motivations that fall under the dimensions of pedagogical impact, development ethics, personal growth and identity, professional development, and even unanticipated opportunity. The five dimensions emerging from our study are consistent with previous research, in that faculty motivations to adopt and sustain GSL teaching and

research depend on complex relationships between various factors, including personal, institutional, professional, communal, and student (Demb & Wade, 2012; Ma & Mun, 2019). Importantly, our study contributes a nuanced and textured understanding of how faculty respond to the factors that motivate them to engage in GSL; we found that faculty responded to dissonance in order to *transform* their teaching, research, and *relationships* with students, colleagues, and community partners. This transformative relational thread was informed and guided by a set of principles and strategies for teaching and research that we represent here as an emergent theory of "transformative GSL ethics." Under the aegis of principles reflected in the transformative GSL ethics, faculty sought to develop relationships with students and community members that were mutually beneficial, community-needs driven, longer term, nonpaternalistic, communicative, and characterized by cultural humility. However, as noted in the findings, we also identified times when faculty members did not pursue or embody the transformative GSL ethics, often due to a lack of personal preparation and sufficient institutional support to embark on GSL work. These quotes and examples illustrate shortcomings and missteps that can potentially harm communities, students, faculty themselves, and other partners when a transformative GSL ethics is not pursued in moments of ethical dilemma and dissonance.

Consistent with literature in GSL (Hartman et al., 2018; Hawes et al., 2021), findings from this study indicate that faculty maintain deep community engagement principles that reflect how intrinsically important this work is for their values and belief systems and provide a compelling rationale for how they understand their teaching and research roles within higher education. However, because this deep commitment to GSL often clashes with institutional structures, norms, and expectations, they experience a tremendous amount of dissonance that leads to personal isolation and professional ethical dilemmas that are difficult to reconcile and often put them in conflict with deeply ingrained institutional or departmental traditions. Notably, even with the dissonance, they continue to search for ways to enhance their knowledge of GSL and connect with like-minded faculty or senior colleagues who might support what is looked upon as counternormative and distracting from the "real" rigorous teaching and research work expected of them.

These concerns are also shared more widely by GSL scholars and practitioners who value both the transformative potential and promise of GSL pedagogy while problematizing and explicitly identifying the potential harm to students, staff, and community members if the pedagogy and practice are not theoretically informed, well planned, and adequately resourced (Bringle et al., 2011; Crabtree, 2008, 2013; Hartman & Kiely, 2014; Hartman & Chaire, 2014; Hartman & Kiely, 2014, 2017; Hartman et al., 2018; Hawes et al., 2021; Kiely 2004, 2005; Kiely & Sexsmith, 2018; Larsen, 2015; Simpson, 2004; Tiessen & Huish, 2014). Given the clash between the norms and expectations that have historically driven the professionalization of disciplines in higher education, the counternormative nature of GSL (Clayton & Ash, 2004; Hartman et al., 2018) makes it a risky educational innovation for faculty to pursue. Such tensions can be intensified by the dissonance caused by unfamiliarity with international contexts (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; Kiely, 2005). The faculty in our study experience distinct forms of dissonance, as they reconcile their commitment to both students and community partners in their GSL teaching and research as well as their beliefs and principles that are often in conflict with institutional norms and policies. Importantly, and in light of Bringle and Hatcher's (2011) bold contention that "subsequent [ISL] research will demonstrate an *intensification effect*—that ISL will have the capacity to intensify any previously documented outcome from study abroad, service-learning, and international education in isolation" (p. 22), our study would suggest that the same "intensification effect" is pertinent to faculty who are engaged in GSL as well.

The principles and strategies that emerged from our study, albeit aspirationally transformational, hold parallels to other approaches and models in the literature on engaged pedagogies, including Two-Eyed Seeing, Indigenizing pedagogies, the SOFAR model, and potentially others. Although a full comparison is beyond the scope of this article (see recommendations for further study below), some parallels merit mention. The Two-Eyed Seeing approach to science education—the teaching of Western and Indigenous approaches to science in tandem without comparing or using one view to critique the other—shares with the trans-

formative GSL ethics an inherent critique of, and challenge to, the pedagogical norms and conventions of Western higher education (Hatcher et al., 2009). Furthermore, this approach similarly employs these challenges to colonial Western educational conventions with the aim of achieving transformative education, or the holistic academic and personal development of students (Hatcher et al., 2009). Parallels to the transformative GSL ethics also appear in the decolonizing approach of the Indigenizing pedagogies suggested by Louie et al. (2017), which include the negotiation of and efforts to minimize power hierarchies between faculty and students, as well as reflective exercises that support students in identifying and connecting to their own positionalities vis-à-vis the colonial experience. We see the transformative GSL ethics as a set of guiding principles emerging through praxis by GSL scholars at a critical moment for the field, which is reckoning with the Whiteness and coloniality of historical and extractive forms of this work (Macdonald & Vorstermans, 2022; Macdonald et al., 2022). We encourage GSL scholars to continue pursuing and seeking guidance from these decolonizing and Indigenizing strategies, yet wish to reiterate Tuck and Yang's (2012) call to move forward with this work through critical pedagogies that avoid the recolonizing effects of the "metaphorization of decolonization."

Our findings also share elements of the SOFAR model conceptualized by Bringle et al. (2009). This study adds to this literature by contributing to our understanding of the intrinsic motivations, challenges, and strategies faculty undertake to create and maintain transformational relationships with students and community members as a response to dissonance between their guiding principles and institutional norms and values. This dissonance underscores the need for institutional change, thereby affirming Bringle et al.'s (2009, p. 15) recommended extension of the SOFAR model from dyadic partnerships to social networks. More specifically, Bringle et al. recommended the model be applied to better understand the development of social networks capable of influencing culture change in institutions with norms, values, and policies supportive of transformative partnerships that are in alignment with GSL ethics. We expand on this recommendation in our conclusions below by highlighting existing and desired future social networks for GSL instructors.

Given the findings of this study, higher education institutions, centers for community engagement, and community engagement professionals who offer programs and training opportunities for faculty to adopt GSL should take into consideration the dissonance that faculty experience when confronted with institutional norms and values that conflict with their deeply held principles (Kiely & Sexsmith, 2018). Given the principles underpinning a transformative GSL ethics and the potential suggested by this study that faculty motivated to engage in GSL will experience dissonance vis-à-vis institutional norms and structures, the design of faculty development programs would have to go beyond service-learning course design, teaching, and research. Rather, such programs should support cohorts of GSL faculty, particularly those with a social justice perspective, in becoming change agents who critically reflect on their dissonance and learn to work together to develop strategies to address and transform the institutional norms, policies, and structures that run counter to their transformative GSL ethics (Kiely & Sexsmith, 2018; O'Meara, 2013). The practical implications for faculty development programs and community engagement professionals who choose to approach the learning process from a transformative GSL ethic—one that may in fact challenge institutional culture, norms, and values guiding teaching and research—are profound (Kiely & Sexsmith, 2018).

Recommendations for Future Research

Several future research directions stem from this research. We believe that research with university and college administrators analyzing their own value systems regarding community engagement, and whether and how they fit or clash with dominant institutional values, would be essential for better understanding how, when, and in what circumstances the dissonance we found between faculty and their institutions emerges. Second, we recommend cross-national research on faculty experiences in GSL and their potential incongruence with institutional values and expectations as a means of better assessing how these factors interact, and to improve our understanding of the potential uniqueness of the U.S. context described here (see, for example, Ma & Mun, 2019). Third, to complement a growing body of research on faculty motivation and learning (Clayton et al., 2013),

there is a need for research and theory development on how GSL faculty learn to address and transform institutional barriers (i.e., policies, norms, structures) in ways informed by transformative, critical, and decolonial perspectives. In particular, recent scholarship on decolonial, Indigenous, and Two-Eyed pedagogies (e.g., Bartlett et al., 2012; Hatcher et al., 2009; Louie et al., 2017; Pratt & Danyluk, 2017) highlights promising disruptive decolonial practices and spaces within institutions of higher education that have potential to support and be supported by transformative GSL ethics. Finally, we propose that researchers systematically investigate how race and ethnicity may shape faculty members' pursuit of GSL work, given barriers to professional advancement for faculty members from BIPOC communities.

Study Limitations

This study faces several limitations. As with other qualitative studies using purposive sampling methods, the views expressed by our participants should not be taken as representative of or generalizable to a broader group of faculty who perform GSL work. Rather, our study was designed using theoretical sampling to capture the potential variation of responses according to gender, institution type, stage of academic progress, and field of study (cf. Gerson & Damaske, 2020). Other social factors such as race or ethnicity were not systematically captured in our sample, and how they shape responses to the research questions may not be fully assessed here. Moreover, our study was limited to university or college professors based at U.S. institutions. Our findings, particularly related to clashes between personal and institutional values, are shaped by professional environments and trends in U.S. academia and are not representative of the experiences of faculty in other Western and Global South contexts. Finally, our data should be interpreted as a consistent representation of prepandemic conditions for faculty GSL work and does not reflect the disruptions to global engagement imposed by the COVID pandemic.

Conclusion

Given these legitimate concerns affirmed by this study, there is a nascent movement in GSL that holds promise for building networks of faculty and practitioners in support of more robust GSL teaching, research, and interinstitutional structures to address these concerns. For example, apart from the necessary support and resources from individual higher education institutions and professional associations such as the International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement, the Engagement Scholarship Consortium, the Forum on Education Abroad, NAFSA (Association of International Educators), and AAC&U (American Association of Colleges and Universities), we see the continued gathering of colleagues in the Global North and South who support initiatives to strengthen faculty and practitioners' ability to design and facilitate high quality GSL as a positive development for the field and as a longer term approach to addressing faculty concerns raised in our study.

Networks that promote knowledge sharing, professional development activities, and convenings that explicitly address the complex, collaborative, and community-driven development approach to serving communities and addressing problems (human rights, health care, oppression, immigration, climate change, etc.) across an expanded view of geographic, structural, and contextual borders are avenues to positively influence the quality of learning and relationships developed through GSL (Hartman et al., 2018; Kiely & Ma, 2021). Examples of such networks include the Community-Based Global Learning Collaborative, the Talloires Network, and the Global University Network for Innovation. In addition, the principles of Fair Trade Learning (Hartman & Chaire, 2014) provide GSL faculty, practitioners, administrators, students, and community partners a set of ethical guidelines for the coconstruction of learning outcomes focused on critical approaches to reflection, global citizenship, intercultural learning, and cultural humility (Hartman et al., 2018). These principles focus reflection explicitly on exploring, negotiating, and transforming positionalities, privilege, and relations of power with GSL participants and partners to build more equitable relationships grounded in mutual understanding, respect, and trust in a healthy and safe environment in order to achieve high quality learning and community impact (Hartman et al., 2018; Tiessen & Heron, 2012; Tiessen & Huish, 2014).

Given that GSL faculty and practitioners in higher education institutions are often tasked with planning and implementing GSL programs in isolation, with little background

and training in international development, such a community of practice with guiding principles is essential. Such networks can work together to share knowledge and provide resources to support faculty development, common standards, data collection, convenings, and knowledge networks, to help navigate the inevitable tensions that come with GSL work in higher education. However, the capacity of these networks to generate valued resources rests on the strengths of individual faculty members to engage in critical self-reflection on their motivations, preparation, and underlying principles for performing community-engaged work. Moreover, the collective success of the field requires that both faculty and their institutions make sufficient time and resources available to invest in learning and emulating GSL best practices, such as Fair Trade Learning. It is our hope that the development of a GSL network will help ensure benefits to students and community partners and assist faculty in reconciling the various forms of dissonance they confront in their home institutions and the communities they work with.

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A Comparative Assessment of Approaches to Studying Institutional Climates for Political Learning and Participation in Democracy

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Abstract

In 2018, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities' American Democracy Project (ADP) and Tufts University's Institute for Democracy & Higher Education (IDHE) formed a 3-year partnership to explore two approaches to studying institutional climates for political learning and participation in democracy. The goals were to repeat IDHE's qualitative approach to examining climates through case studies conducted by a team of outside researchers and to test a second approach—an internal institutional self-study pursued with IDHE guidance. We review these methods and offer a comparative assessment of their efficacy for studying an institution's political climate, as well as a brief summary of the qualitative case studies' findings. We conclude that (1) qualitative case studies of political climate are powerful assessment tools and (2) the self-study method with external guidance or coaching holds promise for scalability and potential to effect campus change but faces significant obstacles to successful implementation.

Keywords: campus climate, political learning, democracy, qualitative case study

From 2018 to 2022, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities' American Democracy Project (ADP) and Tufts University's Institute for Democracy & Higher Education (IDHE) formed a 3-year partnership to explore approaches to improving campus climates for student political learning and engagement in democracy. Years I and II involved identifying campus liaisons to the project, establishing campus coalitions for planning and implementation, participating in virtual learning exchanges involving liaisons from each campus, meeting face-to-face multiple times, ongoing coaching, and assessments of the institutions' political campus climates. Year II and into Year III were dedicated to campuswide dialogues and planning based on the results of the assessments, but given obstacles, this timeline was extended. This article addresses the process of the project; the findings were published in an open-source venue, the *eJournal of Public Affairs*, in 2021 (Thomas et al., 2021). IDHE had developed and tested a protocol involving a team of researchers traveling to each campus to conduct focus groups and interviews using a common focus group protocol and coding and analysis scheme. Although these qualitative case studies proved to be effective in fleshing out structural, procedural, normative, and attitudinal characteristics common to institutions with robust levels of student political participation, they were resource intensive. The goal was to pilot this process to catalyze institutional change to advance political learning and engagement among participating ADP campuses. Here, we sought to explore

1. whether IDHE's political climate assessment process is replicable and can be scaled up to reach more campuses and
2. whether steps beyond the assessment phase—dialogue, planning, and action—are effective in strengthening student political learning and participation in democracy.

We also considered details that might affect or improve the process, such as the roles of coalitions, institutional leaders, and on-

campus researchers and whether a multicampus, cohort model (with virtual ongoing coaching, skill-building webinars, and reflection) strengthened the project. We involved academics outside IDHE in the hope of identifying individuals who might join a research team as needed. We also sought to inform the field through presentations and publications.

We begin this article with a rationale for the initiative and a brief examination of higher education's democratic mission, followed by a review of the literature on studying organizational culture and campus climates. We then describe the two methodologies: the process of having outside reviewers collect and analyze the data vis-à-vis a process of self-evaluation. We also report on the findings from an assessment we conducted of the research methodologies. Because the research methods from the original studies have been reported previously (Thomas & Brower, 2018), we focus more on the process of self-study. What we found is (1) when performed well, the qualitative climate assessment process is an effective approach to assessing and strengthening campus climates for political learning and engagement in democracy; (2) this model is replicable with methodological changes and proper support; and (3) the cohort, multicampus model strengthened the work and provided support for campus liaisons. Finally, at the end is a brief overview of some of the findings from the studies themselves.

Higher Education's Historic Democratic Purpose

U.S. higher education has a long yet ambivalent relationship with democracy. The first colonial colleges were established "to ensure a continuity of religious and civic leadership" (Hartley, 2011, p. 27). Historian Frederick Rudolph wrote about the public purpose of the early colleges, "A commitment to the republic became a guiding obligation of the American college" (Rudolph, 1962, p. 61). Founding Fathers Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin advocated for a strong education system and founded the University of Virginia and what became the University of Pennsylvania respectively. Jefferson (1903/2010) explained that "whenever the people are well-informed, they can be trusted with their own government; that whenever things get so far wrong as to attract notice, they may be relied on to set them to rights" (p. 253). Then, 60 years later, this role was affirmed and expanded through the Morrill Act of 1862, which established land-grant colleges and universities dedicated to the public needs of individual states.

Perhaps the clearest articulation of the importance of higher education to American democracy was made following World War II and the atrocities associated with fascism and the rise of Nazi Germany. President Harry Truman established the President's Commission on Higher Education, which identified higher education as democracy's "necessity." The commission's report stated,

> The principal goals for higher education . . . are to bring to *all people of the Nation* [emphasis added] . . . education for a fuller realization of democracy in every phase of living . . . [and] education for the application of *creative imagination and trained intelligence to the solution of social problems and to the administration of public affairs* [emphasis added]. . . . Education is the foundation of democratic liberties. Without an educated citizenry alert to preserve and extend freedom, it would not long endure. (President's Commission on Higher Education, 1947, pp. 8, 25)

The Truman Commission report catalyzed changes ranging from the establishment of the community college system to the GI Bill providing free higher education to the nation's armed forces.

Despite the Truman Commission's clear mandate, colleges and universities largely avoided the political dimension to civic life. In the late 1990s, reacting to Robert Putnam's (1995) concerns about declines in social capital, captured in the image of Americans' preferring to "bowl alone" rather than in leagues, thousands of campuses responded with programs in volunteerism, service and service-learning, and stronger community–university partnerships. Nonetheless, civic learning and engagement remained steadfastly apolitical. Years later, researchers concluded that these approaches, although helpful for providing students with an increased understanding of civic life, failed to provide students with the skills and values needed to engage in and influence democracy (Finley, 2011, p. 3).

These shortfalls were supported by data. According to the 2013 survey from the Harvard Institute of Politics (2013), 53% of college students engaged in community service, whereas only 11% engaged with government, political organizations, or issue activism. Then, in 2014, IDHE's findings from the 2014 National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) data revealed that fewer than one in five of the nation's graduate and undergraduate students voted (Thomas, et. al. 2019). Higher education is finally taking seriously a long-standing but never fully embraced charge to educate for a more deliberative democracy. The movement to advance dialogue, deliberation, and discussion-based teaching grew exponentially in response to concerns over growing political polarization, persistent exclusionary policies and institutional practices, poor public problem-solving, and the phenomenon noted by the Pew Research Center that Republicans view not just the party but the people who identify as Democrats in an increasingly negative light (Pew Research Center, 2022). Colleges and universities increasingly serve a more diverse population of students, providing one of the best opportunities for people to develop cultural competencies and learn the arts of discussion and collaboration.

Campus deliberation, dialogue, and discussion-based teaching have grown significantly since around 2006. Research at Harvard University established discussion as a powerful teaching and learning tool (Christensen et al., 1991). Education on *civic* learning clearly demonstrates that discussion of controversial issues in the classroom enhances civic learning and produces positive benefits on skills, knowledge, and dispositions (Campbell, 2005; Hess, 2009; Hess & McAvoy, 2014; McDevitt & Kiousis, 2006; Thomas & Brower, 2017). For these reasons, the researchers for this study designed it to advance skills in dialogue while simultaneously exploring the role of dialogue on campus.

The nation faces what President Biden identified in his January 2021 inaugural address as "cascading crises": a violent attack on our democracy and the peaceful transfer of power, as well as on truth, a raging virus, growing social and economic disparities, systemic racism, global climate change, and declining trust in government and other institutions, including higher education. Experiencing increases in hate speech, extreme partisanship, and the presence on or near campuses of White nationalists and other extremist groups, colleges and universities are now asking what they should be doing differently.

Colleges and universities have the academic freedom to either embrace or avoid political learning, speech, and controversy. Given the potential financial implications of angering a partisan state legislature, trustee, or donor, or fear of violence, remaining apolitical has some appeal. Yet the policy questions facing this nation, particularly over racism and discrimination, extremism, climate change, immigration and DACA, gun violence, and more are deeply cultural in nature. Many reflect tensions over growing ethnic and racial diversity. Although most Americans (66%) say that diversity is good for the nation, the same number (66%) live in communities with little diversity, and they are satisfied with that reality (Horowitz, 2019). The need is to affect democracy not just as a form of governance but as a culture, as a way people interact and solve public problems. Colleges and universities are arguably microcosms of democracy; thus, college campuses are ideal opportunities for people to *practice* living in an inclusive democracy.

This effort is nothing short of a paradigm shift for U.S. higher education, away from apolitical engagement and into support for student political learning, activism, leadership, discourse, and participation. Much has been written about the difficulties of effectuating institutional change in higher education. The purpose of this project was to explore an approach to effectuate change specifically in an institution's climate for political learning and engagement in democracy.

Research History and Design

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) supports a subset of 250 institutions that engage in the ADP. ADP campuses commit to preparing students with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and experiences they need to be informed, engaged members of their communities (AASCU, n.d.). IDHE at Tufts University's Tisch College of Civic Life is an applied research center that studies postsecondary student political learning and institutional engagement in democracy. In 2018, ADP partnered with the IDHE to collaborate on a multiyear initiative designed to improve

student political learning and participation in democracy. As part of this multiyear initiative, 12 ADP campuses agreed to work with IDHE to study their campus climates for political learning and engagement in democracy.

Prior to this project, IDHE had conducted 10 political climate studies using focus groups and interviews. Those research methods and findings have been previously reported (Thomas & Brower, 2017, 2018). The ADP–IDHE project augmented that original research by exploring whether campuses could work with a set of instructions and coaching by IDHE to engage in a self-assessment process. Additionally, we wanted to explore whether individuals at the participating campuses could develop the expertise to conduct climate studies at other institutions or, alternatively, could coach new cohorts of campuses through the process. If that was possible, we wanted to know what tools and support they would need. Finally, perhaps most importantly, we wanted to ensure that the climate studies catalyzed institutional change, rather than just gathering data, which had been the case in IDHE's original 10 studies.

Qualitative Research Methodologies

Facilitating sustainable change in complex organizations like colleges and universities has been a subject of study for several decades. Organizational change experts challenged the idea that problems in organizations stemmed from poor leadership or employees. Instead, problems often lie with the culture of the organization, which affects decision-making, behaviors, and programming. We subscribe to a circular change process like those of learning organizations (Senge, 1990), a process of planning, assessment, discussion, implementation of new initiatives, and then, after time, assessment of those new initiatives. The assessment focuses on the campus climate as an early step in the change process (Thomas & Brower, 2018).

Campus climate studies tend to be conducted via statistical surveys (see, e.g., Harper & Hurtado, 2007, whose meta-analysis of racial campus climate studies found that 75% used quantitative methods; Morrow et al., 2000). Surveys certainly have much to recommend them. In comparison to collecting data through interviews, observation, and/or focus groups, a survey can cover a greater breadth of topics (Morgan, 1996; Morrow et al., 2000). Furthermore, surveys pursue statistical research benchmarks like large and representative samples that generate confidence in results. Qualitative research methods tend to reach low numbers of participants and can incur substantial costs (Brodigan, 1992). However, qualitative research has other benefits and has been used effectively in campus climate studies. Harper and Hurtado, for example, used focus groups with 278 participants to examine racial climate across five campuses, developing substantial thematic findings (see also Harper & Quaye, 2007 and Solórzano et al., 2000). Furthermore, Morgan (1996) noted that although surveys can attain a greater breadth, focus group research specifically can achieve greater depth, a view echoed by Morrow et al. According to Maxwell (2013), qualitative research is suited for the following "intellectual goals":

1. Understanding the meaning, for participants in the study, of the events, situations, experiences, and actions they are involved with or engage in . . .

2. Understanding the particular contexts within which the participants act, and the influence that this context has on their actions . . .

3. Understanding the process by which events and actions take place . . .

4. Identifying unanticipated phenomena and influences . . . [and]

5. Developing causal explanations. (pp. 30–31)

Assessing causality, Maxwell said, is approached differently by qualitative researchers who are more interested in examining the process of how one variable impacts the other, whereas quantitative researchers focus on "whether and to what extent" variance in one variable affects another (p. 13).

IDHE has found qualitative campus climate research to be productive and powerful. The conceptual framework for the original case studies was influenced by Bolman and Deal's *Reframing Organizations* (1991; originally published in 1984, now in its 7th edition), which identified four analysis frames necessary to consider for organizational change: (1) structural, defined as formal roles, organizational charts and hierarchies, policies, technology, physical spaces; (2) human, defined as needs, feelings, skills,

limitations, attitudes, and beliefs of the people within the organizations, not just leaders and managers; (3) political, defined as resource allocation, power sharing and decision making, compromise and coercion, coalitions; and (4) cultural, defined as the norms, symbols, and history that shape the institution. The methodology and results have been presented at the Association for Higher Education annual conference and published (Thomas & Brower, 2017, 2018). The campuses in the original set of case studies were selected for their unpredicted high or low voting rates. This assessment served as an important step toward identifying campus structures, norms, behaviors, and processes that created environments supportive of student political participation. Based on the emerging findings, IDHE also published recommendations for strategies for increasing and improving student political learning and participation in democracy (Thomas et al., 2019; Thomas et al., 2020).

As reported in Thomas and Brower (2017), IDHE concluded that colleges and universities can improve their climates for political learning and engagement in democracy by strengthening the following: (1) social cohesion, defined as how the institution builds a sense of shared responsibility within the campus community, student well-being, strong faculty-student relationships, and social networks for personal and collective engagement; (2) diversity, inclusion, and equity as realized practice, defined as how the institution uses diversity, particularly based on social identity, political ideology, and lived experiences, to educate for equity and inclusion within and beyond the campus and to advance social cohesion across differences of perspective, identity, and ideology; (3) pervasive, high quality political discussions, defined as how the institution embeds political discussions into the classroom or student experience more broadly, including promoting respect for the open exchange of ideas and consideration of dissenting or unpopular views; (4) student agency and voice, defined as how the institution treats students as colleagues and partners in addressing institutional and local community problems through collaborative governance and decision making; and (5) active student political engagement, defined as how the institution enables political action and student involvement with government structures (e.g., voting, campaigning) and policymaking (advocacy, activism, lobbying).

The campuses in this study were chosen by ADP. First, ADP hosted an open call and reception in July 2017 at a conference for academic affairs officers. Thirty-five academic affairs officers attended and learned about the opportunity. ADP then selected from the 35 campuses, first inviting a set of campuses that had previously participated in ADP's Political Engagement Project. Additional campuses were selected based on their interest, size, location, and diversity of student body. All participating campuses were state colleges or universities: four-year institutions that usually offer bachelor's and master's degrees and are supported primarily by public funding from the state's taxpayers. This study involved institutions in the following states: California, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas, Virginia, and Utah. They ranged in size from 4,000 students to nearly 24,000 students.

Campuses received an invitation explaining the project and expectations of each participating institution. In total, 12 campuses agreed to participate in this multiyear initiative. Year I would be dedicated to coalition building and planning, virtual learning exchanges involving liaisons from each campus, and climate assessments. Year II would be dedicated to campuswide dialogues and planning based on the results of the assessments.

For comparison purposes, the research team conducted two climate studies, on campuses selected for their unique student bodies, using the original approach involving a team of outside researchers collecting, analyzing, and reporting the data and findings. The remaining 10 campuses worked with IDHE's guidance and each other as part of a learning exchange to conduct self-studies. IDHE guidance consisted of monthly webinars, one-to-one coaching, face-to-face meetings, and training. IDHE also provided resources such as the focus group protocol, a codebook, and templates for analyzing data. At the end of the assessment phase, campus teams (or in the case of the external studies, the research team) created reports of the findings from that assessment. Although individual reports are confidential, most agreed to share them within the 12 campuses, and all have agreed to share aggregated findings without attribution to an individual campus.

Participating institutions were required

by ADP to provide support for the project. Provosts and chief academic affairs officers were to launch the project, identify liaisons who would coordinate efforts, and establish a coalition of faculty members, staff, and, in some cases, students who would convene regularly, review progress, and help recruit participants necessary to a qualitative methodology. Institutions were also asked to participate in virtual and face-to-face learning exchanges where liaisons could exchange ideas, troubleshoot challenges, and work with IDHE. ADP also supported a part-time coordinator who helped IDHE plan the webinars and face-to-face meetings and served to troubleshoot when needed. Institutions received a stipend to cover travel and other expenses. IDHE hosted 24 group webinars covering important aspects of the project, checking in with campuses, and facilitating cross-institutional learning exchanges, as well as five smaller, optional coaching sessions on coding and analysis. The 12 campuses met face-to-face at three conferences where IDHE ran workshops and campus liaisons exchanged ideas. For each of these sessions, IDHE planned relevant content, including tips on building coalitions, sustaining coalitions, equity considerations, facilitating focus groups, note taking, using a rubric to organize the data, coding demonstrations, analysis charts, training on dialogues, and troubleshooting. The opportunities to come together in person proved to be the most valuable; these were the best forums for hands-on training, and they gave us the chance to energize participants. Each session's materials and resources are collected in a shared Google Drive folder for campuses to access. All webinars were recorded so that coalition members on the campuses could view them.

External Study Campuses

Two climate studies were conducted by a team of external researchers that consisted of two researchers from IDHE, another researcher from a participating campus, and a fourth researcher from ADP. The IDHE team trained the two researchers who had not been part of the original 10 case studies. The team collected the data in 2018, using a combination of focus groups and interviews. The focus groups and interviews were recorded. Each involved two people, one to facilitate and the other to take notes. After most of the focus groups, the facilitator and the note taker worked together to complete a rubric that captured the themes and insights. They also wrote memos to the file for each focus group or interview. In total, the team conducted five student focus groups, four faculty focus groups, one staff focus group, one focus group with the coalition, and six administration interviews at one institution, as well as five student focus groups, four faculty focus groups, one staff focus group, one focus group with the coalition, and three administration interviews at the other institution.

After the focus groups and interviews were complete, researchers used NVivo software to code all the data from both campuses. Once this process was complete, the research team analyzed the data. The team met three times to draw findings from their analysis. The coding and analysis process lasted 2 months. When the team had settled on key findings, IDHE prepared reports for these campuses. One was organized in a strengths and challenges format, and the other was organized according to the conceptual framework that serves as the foundation of the codebook. We prepared them with different designs in order to serve as possible templates for other campuses. These reports were delivered to the campuses at the end of December 2018, and then IDHE held meetings with each campus to discuss the findings.

Self-Assessment Campuses

While the research team worked on external study institutions, the 10 remaining campuses worked to build their coalitions; identify researchers who could facilitate focus groups; identify note takers; recruit participants to the focus groups; and complete the process of collecting, organizing, coding, and analyzing the data, and writing their own reports. Several of the campuses recorded and transcribed the focus group discussions; others used note takers and analyzed the notes. Two of the 10 self-study campuses were unable to complete the process, although their liaisons continued to participate in webinars and meetings. The remaining eight campuses completed the data collection process, but only seven of eight completed their analysis and reports, which have been shared with the group. Combined, the eight self-study research teams conducted 110 focus groups with a total of more than 750 participants. This extraordinary amount of data led to key findings and reports for the campuses.

Findings on the Efficacy of the Process

Evaluation Results

From May 2019 to June 2020, we collected data to evaluate the process of the project itself. In May 2019, campus liaisons were asked to fill out a survey, and nine campuses responded. In June 2019 we conducted a first round of focus groups at the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement conference and then conducted a second round of focus groups via virtual meetings in June 2020. All campuses participated in the focus groups. Although nearly all campus liaisons concluded that self-study is a viable method for campus climate research, these conclusions were not without caveats, including the need for more institutional support and a process guide like the researchers at IDHE used, described more below.

Successes

Generally, campus liaisons reported that the self-assessment process brought together people who did not usually interact, led to the discussion of issues that were not usually discussed, and uncovered important insights about their institutions. Liaisons reported the following:

- "This was helpful. We found a lot of good things out. It was rewarding. It was difficult. It needed a lot of energy. But it got a lot of stakeholders together who would never have gotten together."
- "The information we got was rich. I don't know how else we would have been able to get it. The mix of people you requested was nice . . . it was good to get all the voices together."
- "The process itself was an intervention. It connected people. It seeded buy-in."

Campuses were successful building and maintaining a coalition with a diverse mix of faculty, staff, students, and some administrators. They also found the guidance and resources provided by IDHE useful and spoke positively of their opportunities to discuss the project with other campuses and with ADP and IDHE. On the research process, overall, all participants reported that it was useful, with four saying it was "extremely" or "very" useful. Finally, every campus had a champion or two who led the project, and seven of the nine campuses that finished indicated high levels of institutional support.

Overall, campuses found this project valuable. Through the assessment phase, they discovered crucial insights into their political climates that helped them build a foundation for political learning, discussions, and participation. Perhaps most significantly, the process itself—using guided focus group discussions to collect data—matched the goals of the initiative and modeled a process for discussing difficult issues campuswide. In other words, the medium matched the message, as discussed further in the Conclusion section. Participants also reported valuing the opportunities for discussions with their colleagues at other campuses and benefiting greatly from the coaching by ADP and IDHE. This collaborative work has proven encouraging as a method for assessing an institution's political climate.

Challenges

Generally, challenges identified included

1. the project was resource-intensive: The time and labor required to complete it successfully exceeded the capacity of many if not most of the campus participants;
2. the project was too long: Delays in the project due to delayed Institutional Review Board (IRB) approvals, losses of resources, and turnover caused interrupted momentum and precipitated the loss of support; and
3. the self-study research was too difficult without experienced researchers already part of the campus community: Campus teams received extensive coaching on research methods, but the campuses that handled this the best were those with access to experienced qualitative research professionals.

These challenges interrelate, and correcting one might not be enough if the others are not also corrected. Some of these challenges were a result of internal changes at ADP and IDHE and changes in the methodology of the research. Two of the original researchers left their positions in the middle of the project and had to be replaced, which slowed the process. Also, because the campuses were participating as investigators and not just

as objects of study, we had to apply for and receive IRB approval at each of the 12 different campuses, which set the entire project back by at least 6 months. Finally, these delays contributed to what we identify as the central obstacle to the project's success: the lack of resources and institutional support. Many campuses complained that their provosts did not provide the ongoing support necessary to sustain the work. One liaison summarized a view expressed by many: "I think there is a disconnect between our administration and this project—buy-in, understanding, value, certainly resources, outcome, and deliverables." One liaison described the project as a "heavy lift, no doubt about it . . . a monster lift." A liaison at a successful campus said they were in an "advantageous position" because they had buy-in and leadership from an established dialogue center and institutional research office that offered both expertise and people to ease the burdens of the project. Some of these challenges simply reflected that the self-study method was difficult. Only two liaisons at the self-study institutions said the research process was "somewhat easy." Two said it was "somewhat difficult" and the rest were in between. This was one of the most negative responses in the evaluation survey we conducted with the members. Many campuses had difficulty implementing the recommendations suggested by the IDHE team. For example, all liaisons noted that they faced challenges to convening the focus groups and recruiting participants. One liaison said that "just getting people to attend focus groups is like pulling teeth." IDHE had provided many tips for recruiting focus group participants, such as soliciting support from senior leaders, establishing a diverse and broad coalition whose members could recruit for them, and kicking off the project in a celebratory and highly visible way to help with recruitment. IDHE had also suggested that focus groups be served food and that they be scheduled at times when groups were already meeting. Operationalizing this advice was difficult. It required logistical support and a person who had the time to do it. As one liaison expressed, "This is a sliver of our responsibilities on campus. . . . Just having somebody to try to keep on top of things is already a lot." One campus team member suggested "streamlining around the focus group protocols, and particularly, you know, the different protocols for the different groups, sometimes they seem to align, and then sometimes they didn't, very well." Five of the eight self-study campuses reported challenges to coding notes, and five reported challenges to analyzing coded data. (Liaisons have volunteered to work on the focus group protocol as well as the coding and analysis process to shorten the length of the focus groups and streamline the process.)

IDHE stressed from the outset the importance of establishing and maintaining a coalition that reflected diversity in terms of the people and programs on campus. The coalition's role was to guide the process, make recommendations for improvements, help recruit participants to focus groups, and advocate for the project. IDHE supported substantive involvement by coalition members, for example, by offering them professional development opportunities and having them help review and analyze the data. IDHE also recommended that the coalitions be viewed as permanent, not temporary, and charged with long-term responsibility beyond this project for examining and improving student political learning, diversity and inclusion, and voting. Campus teams also had access to resources so that liaisons could engage in a process of self-reflection and improve their collective capacity for engaging in controversial issue discussions across differences of social identity and political ideology. Campuses that already supported coalitions prior to the start of this initiative were able to maintain them throughout. Those that started from scratch, meaning most of the campuses, were less successful at maintaining the interest and involvement of the coalition members.

None of the institutions were able to complete the self-assessment process within one year, as originally envisioned, and all needed two academic years, although some were completed in three semesters. This prolonged duration was a problem in two ways. First, the campuses that were assessed by the outside research team were left waiting for the others to catch up. Second, liaisons reported that it was exhausting and that they had difficulty maintaining the interest of the coalition, other people on campus, and even institutional leaders. Liaisons strongly suggested that, if repeated, the data collection process would have to be more streamlined and efficient. Only one campus liaison suggested that the data should be collected quantitatively, which reinforces the literature we cited above on methodology: Surveys are easier

and shorter, but they often have a low response rate and do not provide the nuance of qualitative research.

Some liaisons suggested that had the institutional leaders provided more financial support, they might have been able to work faster. One liaison pointed to the circular nature of the problem: “We keep saying, time and money, time and money. If there is a way to do it faster, limitations due to time and money are eased.”

Finally, two campuses stalled early in the project and were unable to perform their assessments. Each case is different, but both suffered from team and leadership departures and a perceived lack of resources to organize focus groups and interviews. One took on the project in the midst of budget cuts that removed administrative support, particularly from the office that originally committed the institution to the process, and infrastructure. The campus liaison believed that this lack of support doomed the project from the start.

External Study Versus Self-Study

On the surface, both the external study and self-study campuses made similar progress in their campus climate assessments. Thus, campus self-study is clearly possible. However, important caveats remain, and differences between the processes should be considered.

First, the self-study campuses, while structurally independent, received significant coaching and guidance from IDHE and each other. During the most intense parts of the data collection and analysis phases, campus teams attended monthly online webinars and were offered ad hoc coding and analysis sessions to train them in this IDHE-designed study. That demand for resources has implications for replicability and scalability. Second, the external study campuses’ reports were completed long before the self-study campuses finished theirs; this result has implications for the ability to maintain project momentum, a challenge that campuses identified. Third, the success of each self-study was dependent upon the structure of the coalition and the faculty and staff who volunteered to help. For example, those with qualitative researchers on the team seemed to have an easier time completing the focus groups, coding, analyzing, and producing reports. That type of variance must be considered if self-study is to work as a replicable process. Finally, that two campuses were unable to make progress alongside the other eight speaks to the risk of project failure in the absence of institutional support and stability.

An external study by a team of researchers seems preferable from a process standpoint in that the research process was easier and quicker. It should be noted, however, that campus teams valued the opportunity to use the research process itself to improve campus climate; bringing people together to discuss important issues, they said, was a successful aspect of the project that they valued. It is unclear how that inherent benefit in the self-study process changes when an external team conducts the research. Overall, an evaluation of the process led us to conclude that assessing campus climate through qualitative studies uncovered important findings and, when performed well, proved preferable to survey methods, not only because of the possibility for robust findings but also because the process itself facilitated improvements in the political climate by bringing people together for productive discussions.

Campus Climate Findings in Summary

Nine campuses generated reports from campus climate assessments; in this section, we will present a brief summary of those findings to demonstrate the interesting data that these studies can produce. Prominent themes emerged. Although no phenomenon is universal to all campuses, some themes crosscut several campuses. As previously described, the assessment process was based on a 10-campus series of campus climate studies conducted by IDHE 2014–2016. Those studies were designed around a conceptual framework that examined institutions through four “frames”: (1) structural—policies, departments, programs, and physical spaces; (2) political—internal and external factors that shape institutional governance and decision-making; (3) cultural—shared norms, values and principles, history, symbols, and symbolic events; and (4) human—composition, behaviors, competencies, and knowledge. Below we present brief summaries of the conclusions.

In the structural frame, most of the campuses reported having an institutionalized

commitment to civic engagement, but they were mostly apolitical in nature. Generally, campuses reported more support for community service or service-learning than for political engagement. Thus, the structures reflect thin commitments without the roots necessary for good habits of dialogue. Most campuses reported that political learning and participation were not embedded across the curriculum or campus. Although most of the campuses reported a growing or established commitment to diversity and inclusion, the commitment was alternately described as "shallow" or "slow" or was characterized by gaps (e.g., faculty hiring). Four of the campuses said they lacked an infrastructure for dialogue or political discussions.

In the political frame, many campuses reported being hierarchical and "rule-bound" with regard to institutional governance. Many also reported facing pressures from local or state politicians or religious organizations. Some campuses reported that student activism was met with reticence or resistance, largely due to institutional image concerns. Many campuses expressed the view that the national political scene and the tone of the 2016 election had had a lasting effect and that these conditions made talking about politics more difficult. For example, faculty members reported that they were not sure how to have conversations about elections when, at the same time, students reported that political conversations were happening only in classrooms. If faculty are not managing these conversations well and classrooms are the only place where they are happening, that is a vulnerability.

For the cultural frame, two groups of students complained either that they felt unwelcome on campus or that they could not express their opinions freely due to the campus culture: politically conservative students and historically marginalized groups. Faculty members reported that they avoided talking about politics at all on many of these campuses. Another interesting cultural finding was that many campuses reported a culture of politeness or an underlying aversion to risk, which affected the climate for political discussion. Many of these campuses reported deep connections to the local communities and a strong sense of stewardship that played out in reciprocal relationships and partnerships. One varying perspective was the level of political engagement: Some reported robust electoral and other political engagement from students, whereas others reported a culture of avoidance of anything political.

Finally, for the human frame, faculty across the campuses expressed the view that they were ill-equipped to navigate political topics or to facilitate political discussions in their classrooms. Students agreed, reporting that too many professors were unprepared to lead discussions involving politically charged topics.

Conclusion

1. When performed well, the qualitative climate assessment process, followed by multistakeholder campus dialogues, is an effective approach to assessing and strengthening campus climates for political learning and engagement in democracy. Not only does the assessment process produce compelling insights and reveal areas needing attention (summarized in the preceding section), it also catalyzes programmatic (institutional) and attitudinal (individual) changes. Campuses reported that the data collection method of focus groups itself fostered discussion, raised awareness, and generated interest in democracy. Participating campuses reported that the project will continue beyond the end of the grant, with more campus dialogues and efforts to address challenges that were identified through the assessment phase.

2. This model is replicable with methodological changes and proper support. The political climate assessment process works when an outside team conducts the research or when a campus has in-house, experienced qualitative researchers to conduct the self-study. Campuses using external researchers and with a strong internal research team moved quickly through the processes, finishing all but the final phase a full year ahead of the other campuses. We believe that external researchers working with on-campus researchers (or training experienced facilitators) will reduce the time for data collection and analysis to under 2 months. This proposed procedure points to a need for continued participation by IDHE researchers.

Institutional leaders and respected "change agents" on a campus matter. The process works better when presidents or provosts provide consistent support and encouragement and the work is supported by a strong

coalition, a coordinating team, experienced researchers, and effective organizers.

3. The cohort, multicampus model strengthened the work and provided support for the campus liaisons. It also reinforced an ethos of discussion, collaboration, and community. This model is replicable with all types of institutions. That said, the campus liaisons needed more face-to-face meetings and trainings. Regular, face-to-face convenings for reflection and training—at least twice per year—would improve the process.

Overall, we are encouraged by the power of the method when robustly supported and implemented in full. As a result of this pilot, we can streamline the process to one year, allowing us to scale up. We propose the following timeline:

- Planning, coalition building, IRB approvals (3 months)
- Campus climate assessment (data collection, analyses, and reporting; 3 months)
- Campus dialogues (3 months)
- Planning for interventions, documenting, final reports (3 months)

To succeed, this approach would first need a clear memorandum of understanding, expectations, and instructions for participating campuses. Adherence to this memorandum would cut the planning process to 2 months. As a result of this pilot, we now know more about what institutional leaders, coalitions, project coordinators, and researchers need to do. We know how to expedite the IRB process, one of the sources of delay. We have also streamlined the focus group protocols and data analyses processes. Second, the process requires a larger qualitative research team: Through this pilot, we identified several individuals who could become IDHE "associates," providing the possibility of regional expansion without having to permanently expand IDHE's size. Third, campuses wanting to perform a self-study would need IDHE's ongoing coaching, support, and materials. Campuses would also need to dedicate time for on-campus researchers, coordinators, and liaisons. Using a combination of IDHE and campus researchers, the in-person focus groups could be completed in as little as a week, depending on the size of the institution. Finally, funding would be required for both IDHE and the campuses to support external and internal researchers to conduct the climate study, convene, and participate in ongoing coaching and trainings, including facilitation training. We envision support coming from an outside foundation with a match required of each campus.

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University Social Responsibility: A Paradox or a Vast Field of Tensions?

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Abstract

University social responsibility (USR) is a fashionable concept that is often presented as a paradox, with the implication that it can help universities meet the social dimension of higher education, without questioning the hegemonic meanings of academic excellence and the university mission. We draw on data collected through a focus group of experts on USR to suggest that this concept has the potential to contribute to the transformation of higher education, particularly if its tensions and contradictions are addressed. Three tensions emerged from the data: real versus unreal change, institutional cooperation versus competition, and the right to privacy versus excessive transparency. We conclude that USR is neither a neutral nor a consensual concept; rather, it is eminently political, and HEIs and their leaders, teachers, staff, and students should confront, discuss, and take a stand on its tensions and contradictions.

Keywords: university social responsibility, social dimension of higher education, third mission, university governance, public policy

Although not new, the concept of university social responsibility (USR) may help us to move beyond an image of higher education institutions (HEIs) as ivory towers, and to see them instead as institutions that are increasingly diverse, plural, and in horizontal and bidirectional communication with their communities, local and global. We argue that it is an inclusive and broad concept, covering not only the core missions of the university—teaching and research—but also the third mission (Vorley & Nelles, 2008) and governance. Many authors have problematized topics related to USR while preferring, and sometimes, as Keynan (2014) argued, confusing it with, concepts as diverse as community service and service-learning (Rhoads, 1998), the societally responsive university (Hearn & Holdsworth, 2002), civic engagement (McIlrath & Labhrainn, 2007), civic responsibility (Thornton & Jaeger, 2008), environmental sustainability (Ralph & Stubbs, 2014), prosocial sense (Ayala-Rodríguez et al., 2019), and sustainability (Jones, 2017), among others. Nevertheless, Larrán and Andrades (2017) showed that, despite attracting the attention of higher education academic journals (a selection of 15 of these journals have published 314 academic articles on this topic) and "the changes carried out in the university sector which have emphasized the social dimension of universities, there is still a long way to go on the subject of USR" (p. 315).

Universities' motives for engaging in USR are diverse and can be contradictory. It is not surprising, therefore, that the discussion around USR ranges from applause (Atakan & Eker, 2007) to caution (Kantanen, 2005). Some degree of ideological bias is unavoidable; consequently, some view the concept of USR as framed by a neoliberal logic that is not suitable for the public—as opposed to the corporate—nature of HEIs, and driven by large transnational organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and others, against which

the university must resist. For others, USR is guided by humanistic ideals and represents universities' commitment to fight poverty and build a more just and democratic society (Calderón, 2006).

Aware of this contradiction, we have argued (Menezes et al., 2018) that the definition of USR depends on the "positioning of the concept [on] a continuum that ranges from a conservative-managerialist to a transformative-critical pole" (p. 1). The former is mainly rhetorical and gives primacy to organizational governance and institutional reputation, instead of teaching and research; the latter implies a deep and transversal transformation of the university, encompassing teaching, research, governance, and interaction with the "glocal" community while emphasizing environmental and social sustainability. We think that the latter approach is far more relevant and socially responsible.

The two poles of conservative-managerialism and transformative-criticality represent opposing institutional drivers. Indeed, they are contradictory. It is not possible, we argue, to approach both simultaneously. On the contrary, the closer we get to one of the poles, the further we move away from the other. Nevertheless, it is possible to find a different standpoint in the existing literature, one that attempts to dilute or solve the contradiction through consensus, relying on the idea that it is possible and desirable to have the best of both worlds: market-oriented policies and practices, and social justice. For Vallaeys (2008, p. 203), for example, it is a mistake to see USR as a "right-left dispute," since the promotion of dialogue and "consensus" among stakeholders is its greatest value. This (at least apparent) ideological neutrality is defended also by Evans (2009):

> If greater social responsibility is to be genuinely embraced, a society that learns and pursues the spirit of mastery has to establish an ideological base for itself which attaches as much importance to active and engaged citizenry as it does to economic growth and productivity. (p. 245)

The best example we know of global consensus on USR is the ISO 26000 Guidance Standard on Social Responsibility, which has been the basis for several frameworks, including one we helped create (Amorim et al., 2015, but also Boer, 2013; CGE-CPU, n.d.). Developed by 450 experts from 99 countries and 40 international organizations, this standard has been adopted by countries all over the world. In the EU, for instance, the exceptions are only Greece, Latvia, Luxembourg, and Slovenia (see http://iso26000.info/, a website published by the vice-chair of the ISO 26000 Working Group on Social Responsibility, Staffan Södderberg).

Appe et al. (2017, p. 14), contrary still to what we defend, argued that USR brings together, "with a quintessentially Latin American concept of solidarity," elements of two contrasting models of university engagement—the market-oriented and social justice models—and pursues "simultaneously" the "competing" goals of economic development and social equity (p. 28). Drawing on the organisational paradox theory, Aizik et al. (2017, p. 149) suggested that academy-community partnerships are "'fields of paradox' that allow for the co-existence of opposites at the same time." The same authors also defended the importance of overcoming "the attitude that views conflict as dysfunction" and considered inequality, for example, as "an integral part of institutional success" (p. 149). Even though we agree with the importance of conflict, the question is whether to accept or reject inequality. We do not accept it, just as we do not see USR as a miraculous paradox. We therefore argue that USR is not just a dispute between right and left; it also constitutes a tension between an orientation toward conservatism or social justice transformation.

However, very little can be found in the literature on the tensions and contradictions underlying USR, and this absence is key to understanding the policies and practices applied under the umbrella of USR. We therefore suggest that at least two factors increase the diversity of USR practices: the specific context and mission of each HEI, and the background, perspectives, and interests of people studying or implementing USR. Vallaeys (2008, p. 199) gave some examples of the second factor: corporate philanthropy, social benefit, quality management, labor claims, human rights, ecology, or fair trade. To which we could add, for example, the opening of higher education to underrepresented groups and the reduction of social inequalities and discrimination.

With this study, therefore, we sought to

identify the main tensions within USR, and to understand whether they really are contradictory or whether, on the contrary, it is possible for HEIs to pursue the best of both worlds: market gains and social justice.

Method

The data was collected within a European project funded by the European Commission: EU-USR: Comparative Research on the Social Responsibility of Universities in Europe and Development of a Community Reference Framework. In Portugal, a face-to-face focus group was conducted with experts on USR from five public HEIs (three universities and two polytechnics) with the most systematic and acknowledged work in this field. As shown in Table 1, the group encompassed three females and two males, ranging from 34 to 62 years old. Their roles were diverse: one dean, one professor, two administrators, and one member of a working group on USR. Their background was mostly in economics, management, and finance. The experts were identified by searching for USR on their HEIs' websites and/or through nomination by the respective universities' rectorates and polytechnics' presidents. In this sense, they are both experts and representatives of their institutions.

The focus group, which lasted approximately two and a half hours, followed a script with five "question categories: opening, introductory, transition, key, and ending" (Krueger, 1998, p. 21). We used the structure proposed by Krueger because it allows a gradual focus on the topic under discussion. The most important and/or complex questions, called key questions, were asked after a few rounds of questions, so that participants were more comfortable and willing to share their perspectives.

Initially, we referred to the project within which this group took place, explained its main objectives, asked for the permission of the participants to record the discussion, and guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity of the people and institutions represented. To open the discussion, we asked the participants to present themselves and their role at the HEI.

The introductory phase was inspired by the nominal group technique. In this research, however, rather than a "silent generation of ideas, in writing" (Delbecq et al., 1975/1986, p. 44), we spread seven cards on the table, each one of them presenting a topic: (1) trust, transparency, accountability, disclosure; (2) governance; (3) ethics, rights, respect, and justice; (4) labor and fair operating practices; (5) environmental responsibility; (6) democratic citizenship, development, and community involvement; (7) social responsibility in teaching, support for learning, and research. These topics were derived from relevant documents on USR (Council of Europe, 2006; European Commission, 2011; ISO, n.d.; UNESCO, 1998, 2009). The participants were encouraged to choose one of the displayed topics, presenting their understanding about it and explaining the reason behind their choice.

Table 1. University Social Responsibility Focus Group Participants

Participants	Sex	Age	Type of HEI	Role	Background
Barbara	Female	52	Polytechnic	Dean of Business School	Economics
David	Male	57	University	Administrator of the Social Action Services	Administration and management
Victor	Male	45	University	Assistant professor	Management
Maria	Female	34	University	Member of a working group on USR	Psychology
Antonia	Female	62	Polytechnic	Administrator of the Social Action Services	Finance

The transition questions focused on the relevance and the importance of the seven topics to USR (e.g., "Is it possible to sort the topics according to their importance?") and the existence (or not) of any missing topic. The key questions regarded the impacts of USR in the self-improvement and self-evaluation of HEIs: "Would a definition of these issues help universities to improve their practices?" and "Would such a definition promote the self-evaluation of universities?" The final question asked the participants what they would do, if they were in charge, to increase USR.

The discussion was transcribed, and the names of the participants and institutions were anonymized. The data were analyzed and reported to the EU-USR partners. For the purpose of this article, we returned to the data collected by the Portuguese team. Using an inductive approach, we searched the data for the most relevant themes. We found three main tensions, which we will address below: the change produced by USR, the interinstitutional relationship, and accountability.

Results

In this section, we present the three main tensions that emerged from the data. The first concerns change and the underlying objectives of USR. Here we question whether USR is really concerned with transformation or is just rhetoric. The advantages of having a USR department in each institution are also discussed.

The second is the interinstitutional relationship, that is, the prevalence of cooperation or competition among institutions. On the one hand, we see the sharing of interesting practices, self-assessment, and improvement; on the other hand, we see competition, benchmarking, and reputation. The market value of USR and the contribution it can make to institutional reputation was also debated.

The third tension was the variability of accountability between respecting and exposing the person who receives certain social support. That social support should be a responsibility of the state and not of the HEIs was also addressed, since USR, according to the participants in our study, should not be confused with charity.

Change: From Real Change to Unreal Change

Throughout the discussion, the experts provided examples of USR practices implemented in their HEIs: "food collection campaign" (Maria); "our Arts Schools give performances for the community, the Health Technology School does disease screenings in the community, the Institute of Education go to kindergartens" (Antonia); "the students provide home support for the elderly. They pick up supplies for them" (Victor); "We do a lot for the community, but it's invisible work, in various schools, from working with elders to . . . because we have health school, we do hearing and vision tests" (Barbara); the schools of arts give concerts to the community every week (Victor and Antonia).

It is precisely in this regard that the first tension arises. If institutions had already adopted these socially responsible practices, even before talking about social responsibility, USR runs the risk of being mere rhetoric; as one participant noted, the institutions' goal then is just "to achieve one more certificate in social responsibility [laughs]" (Barbara).

According to Antonia and Barbara, USR is "fashionable," as it may remind people "about ethics, values, respect for others' difference" (Antonia), but adding, in fact, little or nothing to the previous actions of HEIs. Maria and Antonia agreed, in a different moment of the discussion, that USR is very often a "buzzword."

The excerpt below shows an important moment of the interaction among participants, as different perspectives are perceived in confrontation. Participants questioned the importance of having or not, in each HEI, a structure dedicated to USR, such as Maria's working group.

Addressing the skepticism toward the concept of USR, Maria highlighted the outcomes of her working group: a database of USR initiatives developed by the HEI's services and research units; the organization of a USR week; and the promotion of discussion and reflection about USR. After that, Barbara confessed her envy of the work performed by Maria's working group: "Well, after these provocations, I'm filled with envy, I confess" (Barbara).

> Antonia: Amongst us, Maria is the only one having a structure, al-

though a working group, focused on social responsibility.

Maria: Yes, a structure that is a working group, but that is requested by people who . . .

Antonia: But this is evidence. None of us has a structure like this. What I want to ask you [Maria] is this: . . . looking from the inside, what do you think? OK, am I doing something that is of great importance or . . . is it another working group?

Barbara: Let me just . . . We're on the same wavelength. What was the effect of the working group? For what? What has changed?

Maria: . . . The group was formed with a very clear objective, to respond to those questions of benchmarking, et cetera. On the working group's own initiative . . . we identified the best practices, . . . and with that it was expected that maybe our working group would end there, it was another working group. Initially. But we didn't stop.

Barbara: If it is another working group, it is just an extra working group.

Maria: Yes. We felt, when we started, that we should do something else, we should really promote a culture of University Social Responsibility and lead . . .

Barbara: That there wasn't . . .

Maria: There wasn't at all.

Barbara: There wasn't the culture, but people did things.

Maria: Things were done, yes.

Barbara: So, what's the difference? It's just to see . . . I apologize, but I . . . There are . . . it's like you said . . . much talk and very little is done. Sorry, but it's the experience I have . . .

Maria: We have created a database, at this moment it is available, you can even consult it, where the various initiatives of the institution in this subject are already synthesized, at the level of the various services and research units. It was one of the results, let's say. We also organized a social responsibility week, where we involved the whole institution in the discussion of this issue, after all, it is a lot also what is happening now.

Barbara: It's fashionable.

Maria: It is not fashion, no. No. We put the institution to reflect, to talk about it, to somehow become aware of the importance that this may have, but we are at a very early stage.

Barbara: I'm not provoking, I'm just . . . [crosstalk]

Maria: You have to start somewhere.

David: Of course, of course.

Maria added that her working group "tried to collect scattered information" on "the various USR practices that already existed, . . . which are almost the DNA of HEIs." To achieve it, the "theoretical model" and the USR "framework" were "fundamental." With a clear definition of each dimension, the services, the research units, and the different faculties could identify existing practices in each USR area. The working group surveyed the university staff for their perspectives on USR, and concluded that, despite having "a vague idea, they [couldn't] say whether what they do is University Social Responsibility or not." This response would suggest that a USR model and a clear definition of concepts are essential "to create some consistency and trying to add information on this subject." Maria's and Victor's perspectives seem to align with emphasizing clarity, as Victor also argued for the importance of a clear structure for USR which "implements, monitors, coordinates all the practices, and then the governance, in theory, will have that role, and in [the definition of] what is the mission of the institution."

However, the existence of "a formal structure to develop" (Maria) USR does not mean exemption from USR of staff, students, and stakeholders who are not part of the structure. According to Maria, USR should

be embraced by each HEI as a whole, and not only by a single department. Instead, it should involve "the whole community," from services, such as the social action services, research units, and also student associations (Maria).

Interinstitutional Relationship: From Cooperation to Competition

In terms of the relationships between HEIs, the discussion suggested that the focus on USR has increasing "weight" in university discourse (Victor and Barbara), with both positive and negative impacts. On the one hand, the transparency and sharing of "interesting practices" may foster cooperation among HEIs and serve as an inspiration for transforming them. Victor, for instance, stressed the importance of benchmarking, so that institutions can evaluate their own actions. On the other hand, USR allows not only for institutional self-evaluation but also comparison. When the institutions provide open access to their "materials," for example, this sharing of knowledge and experience is "free" only in appearance, as Victor highlighted. In fact, "they sell, and we buy it though unaware that we are doing it" (Victor). As pioneers, "they are always the leaders," the ones having the "original," while the others have only copies. This "has an impact" (Victor), since it adds "market value" (Victor and Maria) and increases the HEIs' "reputation" (Antonia). Moreover, this impact is inextricably related to distinctiveness: When all HEIs do the same thing or share a certain feature, it is no longer new, so the reason for advertising diminishes: "While there is no one else . . . When everyone has it, this is no longer a reason to advertise . . ." (Victor).

The following excerpt shows that the emergence of this tension is different from the previous one. This time, the tension is stated by Victor, the moderator intervenes in order to clarify the idea, and this idea is concretized by Victor, exemplified by Maria, and accepted by the other participants.

> Victor: We only self-evaluate if we are forced to, point one. Point two, if this creates a market value, that is, if socially . . . if society sees . . . that university is good because it does this, I self-assess myself.
>
> Antonia: Uh, huh.
>
> Victor: If society does not pay any attention to it, I will not waste time on it.
>
> Moderator: And this may have a market value, especially for what Antonia said a little while ago about . . . this difficulty of capturing students, right?
>
> Victor: Yes, of course, it can. Imagine for example the Principles [for Responsible Management Education] . . . when they appear there on the UN website, . . . this is visible internationally, this has an impact. Anyone seeking for it sees . . . in Portugal, the only university is that one [referring to Maria's university]. So if you want, in Portugal, you have to go to that one, and this has an impact.
>
> Maria: By the way, I just add the international accreditations of the schools of management, the accreditation of the AACSB [Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business], EQUIS. One of the evaluation criteria, at least for EQUIS, there is a standard that is precisely ethics, responsibility, and sustainability, so there is market value.
>
> Victor: It has a market value.
>
> Antonia: And reputation.

As mentioned above, it was clear throughout the debate that Maria's HEI was developing USR activity that was more visible. Despite the provocations, Barbara confessed her "envy," Antonia acknowledged Maria's HEI as the only one having a formal USR structure, and Victor said it was the one in Portugal that had signed the United Nations' Principles for Responsible Management Education. So, USR also appears as a guarantee of institutional reputation.

Accountability: From the Right to Privacy to the Excess of Transparency

According to the experts, USR "has everything to do with . . . trust, transparency, accountability, and disclosure, because a socially responsible university is a university whose processes are participatory and democratic, transparent, and where all have an opportunity to participate, to have their

opinion" (Maria).

The experts referred to at least two processes that are essential to transparency: monitoring and dissemination. According to Victor and David, monitoring is indispensable. Without evaluation, and without considering the consequences of that evaluation to correct or improve what is necessary, they agreed that there is no USR. Dissemination, in turn, is important to give visibility to one's actions—and the importance of making practices visible was advocated by the participants.

This idea seemed to be beyond question, but soon tensions emerged and the experts defended not only transparency—that is, the statutory requirement to make public how the nonrefundable subsidies are spent, such as the name of the students receiving a scholarship—but also respect for the person and their right to privacy, a right that is not necessarily guaranteed by a "reserved" disclosure; for example, the person with the password may share the list of "beneficiaries." The excerpt below illuminates participants' experience of the contradiction.

> Victor: There is one thing I even question in the scholarships, interestingly. . . . It is a legal obligation, that is, we comply with the norm, but look it has to do . . . with respect. When I have to advertise who is the student who receives a scholarship, I condemn this, nobody has to know who gets the scholarship. . . .
>
> Antonia: It was required by the State.
>
> Victor: It's a legal responsibility.
>
> Antonia: But do you know why? Because there is a law that says that all non-refundable subsidies have to be . . .
>
> Victor: But I said it is a legal responsibility, I am not condemning this . . .
>
> David: Sorry. This order, . . . which came out in February, . . . it says that the publicity can only be done in a reserved place . . . which means that we put it on our site but only people with the password can see this type of information . . .
>
> Victor: Once I received a file with the student list, but I don't want to know who is receiving a scholarship . . .
>
> David: But I keep saying, not to be inconsistent with transparency and accountability . . .
>
> Antonia: Of course.
>
> David: . . . it doesn't shock me that those who benefit from public money are publicized.
>
> Antonia: Yeah, but then you clash . . . okay. You see, do you see that we get there? From practices . . .
>
> Moderator: But it's exactly these issues that are on the table. That's what you're talking about . . .
>
> David: Because it clashes with the issue of respect for the individual.
>
> Antonia: From transparency . . .
>
> David: And then the transparency.

However, Antonia and David agreed that emergency support to students facing financial difficulties is "a terrible practice," because, with that justification, "policymakers evade responsibility to support students in need since we are creating internally another parallel structure to help those who should be supported" by the state (Antonia). In their view, responsibility for the "need for support" should not be placed on disadvantaged students and their families either. To distinguish USR from "assistentialism," as "USR is not charity" (Maria and Antonia), Maria's working group did not include a single person from the social support services. Although none of the participants would restrict USR to social support, Victor and Antonia stressed that the frontiers between USR and social support are quite complex and difficult to realize.

Discussion

Fashionable or not, the movement for USR is gaining worldwide momentum, reinforced by international networks. We offer a few examples: the Global University Network for Innovation (GUNi), created in 1999 and supported by UNESCO, the United Nations University (UNU), and the Catalan

Association of Public Universities (ACUP); the Talloires Network, created in 2005, with 417 members in 79 countries around the world, committed to strengthening the civic roles and social responsibilities of higher education; the University Social Responsibility Network, founded in 2015 by universities from China, the United Kingdom, Japan, the United States, Israel, Australia, South Africa, Brazil, and Korea (Shek & Hollister, 2017); and the Union of Latin American University Social Responsibility (Unión de Responsabilidad Social Universitaria Latinoamericana, URSULA), with almost 200 members from 15 countries. The Observatory of Social Responsibility and Higher Education Institutions (Observatório da Responsabilidade Social e Instituições de Ensino Superior, ORSIES), in Portugal, is an interesting case of a national network. It was founded in 2017 by 28 HEIs—which is significant participation, considering the dimension of the country and the number of HEIs—and very recently published a wide range of USR indicators (ORSIES, 2020).

Our data show that, despite its global use, this concept is polysemantic, in that it may mean one thing and its opposite. USR emerges as a field of tensions, instead of a politically neutral paradox. We have found three main tensions (see Table 2). Each tension spreads over a continuum, and the poles are contradictory, so it is impossible to increase or improve them both simultaneously. An increase of real change does not mean that everything remains the same; more competition implies less cooperation, and the excess of transparency threatens the right to privacy of the person receiving public funds. Thus the closer the institutions get to one pole, the more they move away from the other.

As regards change, the first tension, two contradictory perspectives arose in the discussion. On the one hand, participants felt that USR may lead to an appearance of change: an alteration of words and discourse, eventually at the service of what Brunsson (2006, pp. xiii–xiv) would term "organized hypocrisy," with talk and decisions compensating for actions pointing in a different direction. This appearance of change may occur given the fashionable nature of USR (which appears also as a result in a study conducted by Larrán et al., 2011), with importance given to gaining a certificate or an award or even the attempt to achieve the highest possible scores—while seeking to change as little as possible—in the existing social responsibility and/or sustainability indexes and rankings. However, USR may also be pointless if it merely serves to name the socially responsible actions that HEIs already carry out (it is really important, however, that HEIs recognize, in an integrated and critical way, their socially

Table 2. University Social Responsibility Tensions

	Transformative-critical pole	Conservative-managerialist pole
Change	Real change: USR promotes discussion, the collection of scattered information on existing socially responsible practices, and an integrated, coherent, and transversal (to the entire HEI) action (although there may be a USR department).	Unreal change: USR has little or no effect (even in the absence of an organizational culture of USR, HEIs adopt socially responsible practices); it's mere rhetoric; HEIs engage in USR to win a certificate; it's fashion.
Interinstitutional relationship	Cooperation: sharing of interesting practices fosters institutional cooperation, and works as inspiration for transformation; institutional self-evaluation and improvement.	Competition: "sharing" of materials (copyrights) reinforces competition, reputation, market value, and distinctiveness; evaluation is mainly aimed at comparing HEIs (rankings and benchmarking).
Accountability	The right to privacy: respect for the person receiving a public fund; USR is not "charity" nor just "social action."	The excess of transparency: control of public money expenditures, lack of responsibility of the state (New Public Management) and responsibility (blaming?) of HEIs, families and "beneficiary" students, monitoring and evaluation, dissemination.

responsible words and deeds, also seeking to identify inconsistencies, omissions, and overlaps). As stated by Menezes et al. (2018), this "pole is conservative as it allows HEIs to appear to change by leaving their core mission (teaching and research) untouched" (p. 1). On the other hand, USR may be transformative, involving "a deep transformation at all levels of the institutional endeavour" (p. 1), and produce real change. This transformative change occurs, as stressed by the group of experts, whenever one or more of the following conditions is true: (1) USR fosters not only the collection of scattered information on existing socially responsible practices, but also debate and reflection; (2) USR gives more consistency and intentionality to socially responsible actions; and (3) USR engages the entire HEI—despite the existence, or not, of a USR department.

The second tension is related to interinstitutional relationships and ranges from competition to cooperation. Sharing and evaluation, for example, show how different and contradictory USR can be. The group of experts highlighted two contrasting cases of sharing. First, competitive sharing—of copyrighted materials published under public and open access, for instance—reinforces the HEIs' prestige, market value, reputation, and distinctiveness. Second, cooperative sharing implies not the attempt to gain an advantage, but reciprocity, the inspiration for transformation, and even the intention to reduce inequalities between institutions. As regards evaluation, the proliferation of USR frameworks throughout the world has sometimes been associated with the creation of tools to measure HEIs' social responsibility and/or sustainability. Applying such tools encompasses two main risks: first, this assessment may enhance benchmarking and, therefore, increase competition among HEIs; second, this comparative (and competitive) measure may not acknowledge properly the situated quality of USR (Amorim et al., 2015; Menezes et al., 2018)—that is, the contextual, historical, and cultural aspects of the different HEIs. However, when aimed at cooperation, HEIs' self-evaluation prevails, as the goal is the self-improvement of each institution in a particular context, and not a comparison with other institutions. From this point of view, the USR criteria identified by the different frameworks can help this self-reflection process.

The third tension exposes the risks of being overly transparent and having increased control over what is done. Increasing accountability has been associated with reducing state responsibility and increasing the responsibility of HEIs, families, and students receiving "support." As we have shown, the duty to disclose the destination of public money can be in conflict with citizens' data protection rights. The degree of complexity of this tension seems to us higher than the others, because of the need for a balance between the public nature of accountability and the nonexposure of socially disadvantaged people. Hence, this tension can be better understood as a matter of power. For Foucault (1975/1995), contrary to the traditional conception of power, according to which "power was what was seen, what was shown and what was manifested," disciplinary power "is exercised through its invisibility; at the same time, it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility" (p. 187). Therefore, and because "visibility is a trap" (Foucault, 1975/1995, p. 200), HEIs should be cautious in the process of becoming more transparent, since they must safeguard the right to privacy of the people who work or study in them.

However, as transparency and visibility of actions is seen as fundamental to USR, the idea that socially responsible HEIs must be accountable and transparent has been widely spread (Amorim et al., 2015; Arango et al., 2015; Baraibar & Luna, 2012). As advocated by Brunsson (2006), "We are responsible for an action if we are regarded as having caused it to happen. . . . So a . . . way of avoiding responsibility is to try to make the action less obvious or visible" (p. 117). Other authors would disagree, as research on the impact of psychological support processes has indicated "that the costs and benefits of visible support hinge on recipients' needs, whereas invisible support shapes recipients' long-term goal achievement" (Girme et al., 2013, p. 1441). Arendt's concept of goodness is pertinent here:

> Goodness can exist only when it is not perceived, not even by its author; whoever sees himself performing a good work is no longer good, but at best a useful member of society or a dutiful member of a church. Therefore: "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 74)

In fact, goodness is one of the roots of university extension—a concept strongly criticized by Paulo Freire (1992), who saw "extension" as "transmission, delivery, donation, messianism, mechanism, cultural invasion, manipulation, etc." (p. 22, authors' translation). He preferred, therefore, the concept of "communication" through which human beings become subjects in the process of transformation of reality, instead of objects—that is, receptacles of knowledge, support, or good intentions.

USR should not be confused with "charity"—as stated by the experts who participated in this research—or "altruism" and "benevolence" (Bacigalupo, 2008, p. 57), or even with "social assistance" (Vallaeys, 2008, p. 202). This distinction cannot (or should not) mean, however, that HEIs are exempt from concerns about the reduction of social inequalities, but only that USR is different from university extension. According to Vallaeys (2008, p. 219), the extension is always "pleasant" and "comfortable," because generosity toward others—or goodness—is a source of pride and not of questioning of the one who gives. On the contrary, USR always "hurts," because it implies a university's reflection about itself.

Another distinction between USR and university extension is that the former should not be considered a less important mission of the HEIs, as the latter frequently is (Vallaeys et al., 2020). For this reason, Vallaeys et al. firmly argued that USR should not be the responsibility of an autonomous department, but instead should be seen as a requirement that cuts across all university departments. This position of Vallaeys et al. offers an excellent example of the lack of consensus concerning USR, as the experts we heard expressed diametrically opposed views: a USR department can be very important to provoke debate and action, as well as an integrated and systemic perspective on the USR developed by a given HEI—although this dynamic should not be confined to that single department but should involve transversally this same HEI and all its policies and practices: research, teaching, third mission, and governance.

From our perspective, USR's raison d'être must be the transformation of what is socially unfair and the promotion of social justice, considering the specific context in which each HEI is situated (Amorim et al., 2015). To achieve this, universities have to first transform themselves (Cruz Ayuso & Sasia Santos, 2008; Vallaeys, 2008).

In conclusion, based on the theoretical contributions we have reviewed and the data we have collected and analyzed, we suggest that HEIs' approaches have been shaped by contradictory policy forces. Currently, one of the most significant—and not surprising, as it was foretold by Martin Trow (1973): "elite functions continue to be performed within mass institutions" (p. 19)—contradictions is related to the fulfillment of the social dimension of higher education, since its "main objective—that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education should reflect the diversity of the populations—is far from being reached" (EECEA, Eurydice, 2020, p. 121).

On the one hand, we find the discourse on excellence and academic performance, translated into rankings, auditing processes, the pressure to publish and to attract funding, and the selection of students who are expected to have more success (Amorim, 2018). These are some examples of policies and practices that aim to reinforce "academic normativity," that is, "the norms of academic practice that include both locally negotiated practices and the performative demands of auditing and metrics that characterise the neoliberal university" (Warren, 2017, p. 127). On the other hand, there is concern with the social dimension of higher education, widening access and participation of underrepresented students, civic engagement, and concerns with the moral and ethical development of students.

Further research should explore these and other tensions underlying USR in order to better understand the concept and the impacts it may have, as well as to try to avoid letting it become a meaningless buzzword. Precisely because there is no consensus, it is important to better recognize the different USR conceptions present in the discourses and practices of different social actors, both academics (e.g., HEIs' strategic plans, higher education syllabus) and non-academics, in USR frameworks and indicators, as well as in research projects. Furthermore, the existence of a specific USR department is a fundamental aspect both for research (by carrying out case studies, for example, that take into account the context, allowing understanding of what is most appropriate in each case) and for practice.

We must recognize, nonetheless, that this research has clear limitations, especially

because our data were collected from representatives of only five Portuguese HEIs. For that reason, what we offer here may be, at most, a national-based perspective on the subject. It is important to underline, however, that the data were collected and analyzed without any pretense of representativeness and transferability of the findings—not even on a national scale. Even so, it seems to us that, among others, these tensions likely occur, in their current or other forms, in other institutions and contexts. Whether people and HEIs recognize themselves in these tensions or not, the most important thing is that the identification of these and other contradictions can contribute to the debate and the critical reflection on USR.

Rather than ignoring the tensions with understandings of USR, and pretending they are paradoxically (and neutrally and consensually) fulfilling opposite aims such as market-oriented and social justice models, HEIs should face the contradiction, position themselves explicitly at a point on the continuum of each tension underlying USR, and clarify the balance (or imbalance) that they seek to achieve.

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Community Involvement in Course-Based Higher Education Activities: Exploring Its Definition, Guiding Principles, and Strategies—A Narrative Review

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Abstract

Higher education institutions are becoming increasingly embedded in their surrounding communities in order to learn from and respond to their often complex problems. Potential mutually beneficial—or reciprocal—collaborations between students, faculty members, and communities are being set up, but few researchers have explored how community actors are involved in collaborative decision-making processes. To fill this gap, this narrative review explores the current literature on community involvement processes in course-based higher education activities. Our research yielded a framework of definitions, guiding principles, and strategies to achieve more successful community involvement in this context. Seven guiding principles and related strategies are presented: alignment, shared ownership, balancing power relations, joint learning and knowledge creation, representation, immersion, and relationship building. The narrative review gave insights into the way community involvement is currently approached in course-based higher education activities and established a basis for understanding and shaping higher education–community collaboration.

Keywords: community involvement, higher education, reciprocity, community engagement, collaboration

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are increasingly connecting with their surrounding communities, seeking to respond to complex societal issues (Bringle & Steinberg, 2010; Schwab, 2017). Experiential knowledge—acquired in the everyday experiences of community actors affected by those complex societal problems—is to a growing extent considered appropriate for the production of valuable and responsive new knowledge (substantive argument) and its implementation in the community (instrumental argument), and creates opportunities for community decision-making power (normative argument; Ahmed & Palermo, 2010; Király & Miskolczi, 2019; Polk, 2014). In recent years, HEIs have invested in collaborations among students, faculty members, and communities (organizations and individual members) for the exchange and/or integration of academic and experiential knowledge, as well as the attendant learning process (Fluegge et al., 2019; Barnes et al., 2009). Although collaborations are sustained through their potential for mutual benefits—or *reciprocity*—this is also their main challenge (Clifford, 2017; Dostilio et al., 2012; Dempsey, 2010).

Typically, collaborations between HEIs and community are set up around a coidentified societal issue, which students, teacher(s), and community actors seek to address together within single or multiple course-based higher education activities (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Tijsma et al., 2020). For this type of course-based higher education activity, different terminologies are used, such

as service-learning, community-based or community-engaged learning, or engaged scholarship (Henry et al., 2013; Vincent et al., 2021). Moreover, there is ambiguity in the focus and implementation of these course-based activities. However, in general they include activities that are organized within the context of a course (from here on referred to as *community-based course activities*) and give students as well as community actors the opportunity to learn from current social issues, deal with existing social dynamics, and address these together (Budhai & Grant, 2018; Dostilio et al., 2012). The outcomes depend on an equitable relationship in which "all participants are viewed as teachers, learners, researchers, knowledge generators and administrators" (Hammersley, 2017, p. 127). The collaboration dynamics are complex, however, as they are sensitive to the different interests and cultural structures (personal and organizational) of all parties involved (students, teachers, community actors) and exposed to ever-changing circumstances (different projects, different people, different values; Brown-Luthango, 2013; Nelson & Stroink, 2020; Sweatman & Warner, 2020).

Although community involvement processes are argued an essential element in course-based higher education activities with community actors (Davis et al., 2017; Saltmarsh et al., 2009; Stewart & Altruz, 2012), most of the literature focuses on implications for HEIs (e.g., institutionalization, student learning, teacher guidance) and less on the involvement of community actors (Astin et al., 2000; Shor et al., 2017). An increasing amount of literature, however, pays greater attention to the perspectives and experiences of community actors in their collaborations with higher education, which highlights the importance of concepts underpinning an equitable relationship between HEIs and communities, such as reciprocity, social justice, empowerment, and solidarity (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Clifford, 2017; Davis et al., 2017; Dempsey, 2010; Kliewer et al., 2010; Kniffin et al., 2020; Olberding & Hacker, 2016; Strier, 2014; Tryon & Stoecker, 2008). A growing emphasis is on the process of community involvement rather than simply delivering a product (Sweatman & Warner, 2020; Clayton et al., 2010). In this article, we consider community involvement in course-based higher education activities to be the active involvement of community actors in and their influence on decision-making processes in course-based activities (Ahmed & Palermo, 2010; Kenny et al., 2015). Our rationale is that the way community actors are involved in course-based activities influences the experiences and outcomes for all involved (Kimmel et al., 2012).

A greater emphasis on the active involvement of community actors aims at *working together with* rather than *working for* communities (Boyle & Silver, 2005). Although much has been written about community involvement in a broader context, less is known about community involvement in the challenging context of course-based higher education activities, wherein the dynamics are influenced by the student learning environment, the changing of student groups and teachers, and the higher education structures. This gap in the literature calls for a more critical understanding of how community involvement processes are currently explicated in course-based higher education activities and how community actors should be actively and successfully involved. We therefore analyzed the literature on descriptions of the process of achieving community involvement in course-based higher education activities, leading to guiding principles and strategies to provide direction in evaluating, building, and/or improving community involvement in higher education. Lastly, this article seeks to contribute to the theory and practice of community involvement in course-based activities in higher education by reflecting on our findings in light of the broader literature scope on community involvement.

Methods

The concept of community involvement and descriptions of community involvement processes in course-based higher education activities are scarce in literature that describes course-based higher education activities. For this reason, we conducted a narrative review based on a systematic search to enable a rich exploration and understanding of this concept (Greenhalgh et al., 2018). We adopted a flexible and interpretive approach to the entire screening process in order to formulate a more precise and critical understanding of the concept (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014). For the initial search, a review protocol was developed based on the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) statement (Moher et al., 2009). A comprehensive search was undertaken

in four bibliographic databases: EBSCO/ERIC, EBSCO/PsycINFO, Web of Science (Core Collection), and Scopus from inception to April 26, 2019, in collaboration with a librarian. The following terms (including synonyms and closely related words) were used as index terms or free-text words: "service learning," "community involvement," "community impact," "higher education." The full search strategies for all databases are available from the authors on request. After removing duplication, all titles were screened and appropriate abstracts reviewed.

Screening

The criteria for both abstract and full-text screening were increasingly sharpened to include only those articles that truly describe the process of community involvement in course-based higher education activities (Table 1). First, a broader understanding was used to select articles based on our definition of community involvement processes in course-based higher education activities and a distinct focus on community (rather than students or faculty). Second, the criteria for full-text screening were tightened, focusing on articles that described community involvement processes. For example, we included articles with descriptions of ways community actors were actively involved or experienced their involvement throughout the course (e.g., articles that included descriptions of ways that community actors have contributed to the design, execution, and/or evaluation of the course-based higher education activity). Simultaneously, we excluded articles that described only community outcomes. For example, many articles did describe tangible outcomes for community actors or the community in general but did not include descriptions of the community actors' contributions or how these outcomes came to be. Moreover, articles were only included that described specific cases of single or multiple course-based higher education activities within a community with a clear course, case, or methodological description. This approach produced a set of articles that give insight into how community involvement is approached in specific course-based activities (case studies), rather than more general reflections on how community involvement processes should be approached, and from which guiding principles and strategies could be extracted.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Title/Abstract and Full-Text Screening

Title and abstract screening	
Inclusion criteria	*Exclusion criteria*
• Course-based activity with involved community actors concerning a societal issue • Higher education • Published after 2009 • Written in Dutch or English	• Noneducational community outcomes • Non-course-based community activities • No community-identified problem • Other than higher education • Not a primary focus on community outcomes, e.g., student outcomes or teacher guidance • Published before 2009
Full-text screening	
Inclusion criteria	*Exclusion criteria*
• Community involvement as part of course-based activities in higher education • Community-based activity as main goal in course, thus an activity in which students collaborate with community actors by exchanging or integrating knowledge and/or skills • A community-based activity beneficial for community • A clear case or course description or clear methodology	• Same as described above and: • No described process criteria • Full text not available • Not peer-reviewed • Book chapters and theses • Community-based activity as means, e.g., for student learning • Reflexive works with no distinct case and methodology

Title and abstract screening were undertaken by author MV and a colleague. Author CP was consulted in the event of disagreement. The first 250 abstracts were screened independently by MV and a colleague, which resulted in a Cohen's kappa coefficient (κ) of 0.88999 (McHugh, 2012). As this result is equal to an almost perfect agreement (94%) on the manner of abstract screening, the remaining abstracts were screened separately. Full-text screening was undertaken by MV in consultation with CP.

Data Extraction

An Excel worksheet was used to extract key practical, empirical, and theoretical elements of the included articles. For each article, data were extracted according to characteristics of the study, course-based activity, and community involvement processes. A more detailed overview of all characteristics is shown in Table 2. The data extraction was undertaken by MV.

Data Analysis

A random sample (n = 10) of the included articles was read carefully and coded inductively. This inductive approach allowed for an exploration of this field in course-based higher education activities (Chandra & Shang, 2019). The initial set of codes of this first sample was imported in ATLAS.ti 8 Windows, then compared and cross-connected through axial coding (Williams & Moser, 2019). Seven themes emerged: alignment, shared ownership, balancing power relations, joint learning and knowledge creation, representation, immersion, and relationship building. These themes formed the basis of the codebook and were subsequently used to selectively code and recode all included articles, including the first 10. In addition, a distinction was made between a theme as either a goal or a strategy. In this second round of analysis, open and inductive coding was applied again for a more comprehensive and complete understanding of themes. The goals and strategies belonging to these themes—or *guiding principles*—were analyzed, compared, and rearranged. The data analysis was discussed in depth with author CP for intersubjectivity.

Results

A total of 21 articles were included for analysis (Table 3). The PRISMA flow diagram in Figure 1 shows that the initial search identified 3,658 records. Then 1,667 works were screened by title and abstract after deduplication and removing records published before 2009. The latter were excluded to examine community involvement in the most recent higher education context and its conceptualization, and 534 records were subsequently full-text screened for eligibility. A large number of records were included for full-text screening, as many seemed to have a focus on community involvement. On more careful reading, many contained no specifics about community involvement, or were focused on communities from the perspectives of students or higher education.

We present the results in four sections. First is an overview of the article characteristics; second, a conceptualization of community involvement; third, seven guiding principles for community involvement; and finally, eight related implementation strategies. These results give insights into how community involvement is currently approached

Table 2. Article Characteristics for Data Extraction

Study	Course-based activity	Community involvement
• Author	• Course description	• Type of community
• Title	• Type of course-based activity	• Role of community
• Year	• Discipline	• Level of involvement
• Study design	• University	• Start of involvement
• Study aim	• Faculty	• Aim of involvement
• Participants	• Students	• Involvement strategies
• Duration of study	• Community	
• Country of origin		
• Country of course-based activity		

in course-based higher education activities and provide a foundation for understanding and shaping this involvement, although the detail of the description of these insights differed across the articles.

Article Characteristics

An overview of the final set of 21 articles is provided in Table 3. They originate from eight countries: the United States (1–4, 6–11, 16–17, 19), Canada (5, 21), South Africa (12, 18, 20), Japan (13), Australia (11), Colombia (10), and Uganda (14). Two are written in partnership with other HEIs, one is a cross-country study (Colombia, Spain, U.S.; 10) and one within country (South Africa; 18). Five articles investigate international course-based activities, of which four originate in the United States and are set up in Nicaragua (8, 19), Ecuador (7), and India (2), and one in Colombia through an exchange with Spain and the United States (10). All articles offer empirical data describing case studies of single or multiple collaborative course-based activities regarding an identified societal issue. Eleven articles describe a single case study (1–7, 11–12, 19–20) and 10 a multiple case study (8–10, 13–18, 21), with mostly a qualitative design (1–15, 17–19, 21). Two articles describe a mixed-methods approach (16, 20).

A Conceptualization of Community Involvement

The concept of *community* often remains vague in the selected articles and refers to different kinds of actors (residents, organizations, key figures), including various groups of people (entire neighborhoods, minority groups, employers). Community is defined in only three articles (7, 19–20), which argue for its complexity and heterogeneity due to the numerous coexisting perspectives in any given community. Descriptions of ways to take these internal differences into account, however, are rarely touched upon. The 18 other articles (1–6, 8–18, 21) generally use the term to indicate a physical place where students and teachers go to help or learn, such as "where we work" (1) or "where the learning takes place" (15), pointing out the central role of HEIs and students toward community in community-based course activities in higher education.

Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram of Article Screening

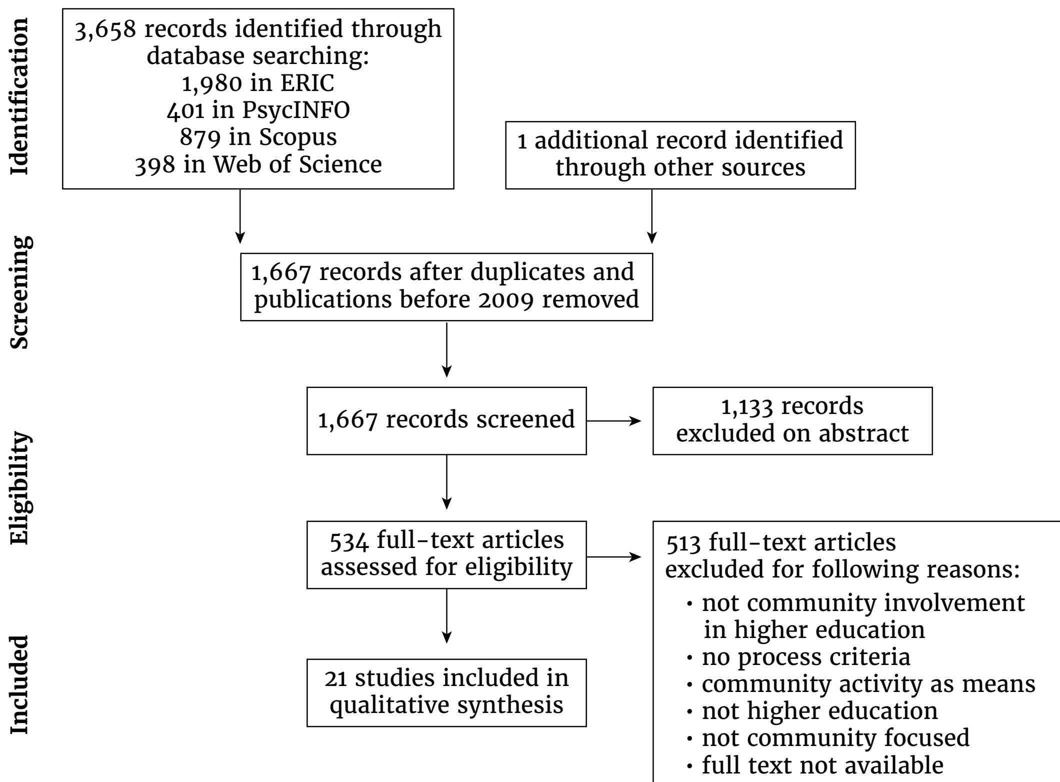

Table 3. An Overview of the Articles Included in This Review

#	Author	Year	Title
1	d'Arlach et al.	2009	Voices From the community: A Case for Reciprocity in Service-Learning
2	Brown et al.	2018	Service-Learning With Tibetan Refugees in India: A Small University's Experience
3	Bucher	2012	Old and Young Dogs Teaching Each Other Tricks: The Importance of Developing Agency for Community Partners in Community Learning
4	Chen et al.	2015	Sustainable Futures for Linden Village: A Model for Increasing Social Capital and the Quality of Life in an Urban Neighborhood
5	Curwood et al.	2011	Building Effective Community–University Partnerships: Are Universities Truly Ready?
6	Donaldson & Daughtery	2011	Introducing Asset-Based Models of Social Justice Into Service Learning: A Social Work Approach
7	Gadhoke et al.	2019	Minga, Participatory Action, and Social Justice: Framing a Decolonization Process for Principled Experiential Learning Among Indigenous Shuar Communities in Amazonian Ecuador
8	Gates et al.	2014	"A Pesar de las Fronteras"/"In Spite of the Boundaries": Exploring Solidarity in the Context of International Service Immersion
9	Goertzen et al.	2016	Exploring the Community Impact of Service-Learning Project Teams
10	Hufford et al.	2009	Community-Based Advocacy Training: Applying Asset-Based Community Development in Resident Education
11	Irazábal et al.	2015	Enabling Community–Higher Education Partnerships: Common Challenges, Multiple Perspectives
12	Jones et al.	2018	Service-Learning Partnerships: Features That Promote Transformational and Sustainable Rural and Remote Health Partnerships and Services
13	Kawabe et al.	2013	Developing Partnerships With the Community for Coastal ESD
14	Mbalinda et al.	2011	Assessing Community Perspectives of the Community Based Education and Service Model at Makerere University, Uganda: A Qualitative Evaluation
15	Mtawa & Wilson-Strydom	2018	Community Service Learning: Pedagogy at the Interface of Poverty, Inequality and Privilege
16	Muwana & Gaffney	2011	Service-Learning Experiences of College Freshmen, Community Partners, and Consumers With Disabilities
17	Petri	2015	Service-Learning From the Perspective of Community Organizations
18	Preece	2016	Negotiating Service Learning Through Community Engagement: Adaptive Leadership, Knowledge, Dialogue and Power
19	Pillard Reynolds	2014	What Counts as Outcomes? Community Perspectives of an Engineering Partnership
20	Van Schalkwyk & Erasmus	2011	Community Participation in Higher Education Service Learning
21	Valaitis et al.	2016	Street Smarts ↔ Book Smarts: Three Neighborhoods and One University School of Nursing Partnering for Health

From the articles, three types of community actors can be distinguished (Table 4). This typology touches upon the different community actors involved: community members (1, 3–11, 13–16, 18–21), community leaders (2, 4–5, 7–9, 11–15, 21), and organization representatives (2, 4–7, 12, 15–17, 19, 20). A distinction can be made from how these community actors' roles are formulated in the articles. Eight articles formulate them as recipients (1–2, 4–5, 8, 12–13, 16) of service or knowledge (1, 21). Despite community involvement in the course-based activities, such as interviews with community members, these articles formulate the community as a target group of the HEI's intervention (1, 5, 8, 16) or in need of aid or assistance (2, 4, 12–13). Related to this type of formulation, students often consult community actors (mostly members) and take along their views to inform agenda-setting and outcomes of community-based course activities. In contrast, 13 articles (3, 6–7, 9–11, 14–15, 17–21) describe the community as contributors, such as community mobilizers (12), resident consultants (21), or key informants (7, 14). Here, articles refer to the community as active collaborators throughout and beyond the course activities and often cocreate the design of the course or courses. This formulation is thus linked with higher education actors' perception of community actors' capability and their level of involvement in these activities.

Seven Guiding Principles for Community Involvement

Seven guiding principles are extracted from the articles and give current insight as well as future guidance to community involvement in course-based higher education activities: (1) alignment, (2) shared ownership, (3) balancing power relations, (4) joint learning and knowledge creation, (5) representation, (6) immersion, and (7) relationship building. These principles can be used both to guide decision-making and action and to evaluate the success of community involvement. These are not standalone principles: They are interdependent and influence each other. They often serve as both a goal and a means. As a goal, a guiding principle is what you would aim to achieve for or with community involvement, such as alignment or balancing power relations. As a means, that same guiding principle can serve as a way to achieve another guiding principle. For example, balancing power relations can achieve the alignment of needs and expectations of a community-based course activity (or alignment) and vice versa.

Alignment

This guiding principle refers to the shared understanding of the purpose and trajectory of the community-based course activities for all parties. Alignment entails cocreating a shared understanding of the most important elements of the activities among students, faculty, and the community actors involved (community members, community leaders, and/or organization representatives). Twenty articles (2–21) emphasize the need to align the purposes, goals, needs, values, and expectations of all parties involved. Challenges in aligning these elements can arise from curricular time constraints and the capacity of those involved. Therefore, the possibilities of

Table 4. A Typology of Community Actors, Its Definition and Description in Text

Type of community actor	Definition
Community members (1, 3–11, 13–16,18–21)	Grassroot community members that live in a specific geographical area (4, 11, 13, 14, 20), share similar characteristics (3, 8), relate to a vulnerable group of people (1, 3, 7, 20).
Community leaders (2, 4–5, 7–9, 11–15, 21)	Key figures in the community that speak for or represent a group of people, such as a spiritual leader (2) or a school principal (12).
Organization representatives (2, 4–7, 9-10, 12, 15–17, 19, 20)	People that work for and represent public agencies and nonprofit organizations.

educational programs (What can be done in a course?), community capacity (What is feasible for the community actors?), and common goals (What do we want to achieve together?) should be carefully considered. Such consideration allows for more realistic expectations and better outcomes both for students (13, 16) and for community actors (2, 6, 12, 17, 20). Without alignment, a community-based course activity can easily result in a mismatch between higher education and community goals:

> The failure of the planned [community-based course activity] was attributed to the hasty attitude of the [activity]. [Students] should have held more interviews and meetings to better understand the local community's interest . . . and to learn the local community's interest is indispensable to the successful setting of project outcomes. (13 [Kawabe et al., 2013], p. 129)

Shared Ownership

Shared ownership entails everyone involved having shared accountability and agency in a community-based course activity. With shared ownership, each party can guide the activity toward fulfilling their needs, interests, and desired outcomes. Fourteen articles (1–3, 5–6, 8–12, 14–16, 21) emphasize the significance of community ownership. To create such ownership, opportunity (Does everyone have a place and time?) and capacity (Does everyone have the necessary skills and resources?) for all involved actors is necessary. Community-driven activities were mentioned as a good practice for shared ownership by starting with a codefined issue existing in the involved community (13). Moreover, Jones et al. (2018; 12) and Valaitis et al. (2016; 21) argued that "true partnership" and "true reciprocity" can be hampered if there is a lack of shared ownership. Lack of shared ownership can result in community actors' reluctance to use the outcomes and a dissatisfaction with the partnership. The quote below emphasizes both an urgency for and frustration with community actors' ownership over community-based course activities:

> "[Students] come in, deliver what they want and it meets their needs. Why would you want to work with them?"—community actor about students (12 [Jones et al., 2018], p. 83)

Balancing Power Relations

Balancing power relations refers to the awareness and redistribution of existing power differentials in community-based course activities. The power relations between higher education and community, owing to differences in background, education, values, and knowledge, need to be recognized, redistributed, and deployed. Nine articles (1–6, 11, 18, 21) discuss the power relations faced when actors from higher education and communities collaborate. The goals of students or HEIs are often prioritized over community actors' goals (2–3, 5, 11, 20) by higher education and even community actors (2, 20). The balance of power influences the way community actors are involved in community-based course activities; for example, community actors try to benefit students or do not dare to speak their own mind (2, 20). Seven articles mention the challenges and urgency of actively balancing out these power differentials (1–6, 11). Having a comfortable environment (Can all involved actors speak their mind?) in which the knowledge and priorities are considered of value (Are all knowledge and priorities taken seriously or weighted equally?) can help (2). These factors are important not only so that community actors can express their needs and interests but also for reciprocity, which influences both experiences (process) and outcomes (product). For example, the outcomes cannot be aligned (alignment) to community actors' needs if they are not valued or if community actors do not dare to speak their mind (11, 20). In particular, community involvement can be used for empowerment and emancipation for community actors if all involved actors are aware of and guided through the power relations (11, 15, 20).

Joint Learning and Knowledge Creation

This guiding principle refers to learning and creating knowledge jointly with all involved actors. Students, teachers, and community actors should all be a part of a learning and knowledge-creating process. Thirteen articles illustrated how a joint experience motivates students and community actors to digest knowledge, learn, and create something new together (1, 3, 5–6, 8, 11–14, 17–18, 20–21):

> Community partners [who] felt a

> relationship with [higher education institution] had reciprocity when they also made a valuable contribution, such as when there was joint creation of knowledge. (17 [Petri, 2015], p. 103)

Valaitis et al. (2016) argued that the integration of knowledge from higher education and community is necessary for good implementation of a community-based course activity and the dissemination of the outcomes (21). In line with this observation, three articles (1, 3, 17) describe this guiding principle as reciprocity in both the outcomes and the process toward achieving them. In other words, the way the involved actors learn and create knowledge as part of the process—or their involvement—can also be considered as an outcome. Two articles (1, 6) argued that all involved actors should have humility (Are you truly open to ideas other than your own?) and deference (Are you respectful of ideas you do not share?) toward each other. This process of involvement and integration of knowledge was described as challenging, awkward, and difficult due to confrontation with differences in values and beliefs among students and community actors (balancing power relations; 1, 11).

Representation

This guiding principle refers to having representative community actors involved in the community-based course activity, so that they can represent perspectives of different community members. Seven articles (1, 4, 6, 13–14, 16, 21) clearly state representation as an important element of community involvement in course-based higher education activities, but do not elaborate why it is important. Donaldson and Daughtery (2011) posed the question "Who represents the community?" and pointed out the fragility of a collaboration between higher education and community when only one community actor is involved. In both Donaldson and Daughtery (2011) and Kawabe et al. (2013), a single community actor is the only access point for community members and community organizations. For a single isolated activity this might suffice, but for long-term collaboration, a network of involved community actors is more sustainable (6, 13). Valaitis et al. (2016; 21) argued that community actors have decision-making power over certain community priorities, and thus power over who is involved (and who is not) to decide what is needed, is a priority, or is important in the community. These two examples point out ethical and power challenges if just one or a selected group of community perspectives is considered. Therefore, the question "Who represents the community?" could be used as a starting point to determine the involvement of (more) community actors.

Immersion

Immersion refers to a deep involvement in the cultural or social circumstances of all involved actors. Thirteen (1–2, 4, 6–8, 10, 13–16, 20–21) articles emphasize the need for awareness, familiarity, and sensitizing to cultural and social differences among the involved actors. Especially, immersion was seen as a responsibility of students and faculty: to get acquainted with the community culture (1–2, 7–8, 10, 14–15, 20). Two approaches for this guiding principle are described: (1) to let students critically think about these differences to raise their own awareness and sensitivity (2, 6–8, 10, 15–16) and (2) to adopt relevant interventions, strategies, or any type of outcome in the community (4, 6–7, 10, 14, 20–21). According to Valaitis et al. (2016), and supported by Gates et al. (2014), immersion can enhance relationships beyond the walls of higher education, prepare students to understand a community's contextual factors, and integrate community actors into the higher education setting. Immersion thus requires a two-way effort: sensitizing community actors to the university environment and sensitizing students and teachers to the community environment. This mutual sensitization can promote a better understanding of each other's worlds to improve social interaction and trust (relationship building; 10) and alignment (21).

Relationship Building

Building a relationship refers to developing sustained interactions between higher education and community actors that are characterized by social bonds and trust. Sixteen of the included articles (1–2, 4–7, 10–14, 16–17, 19–21) placed emphasis on a relationship (characterized by human connection and social bonds) rather than a partnership (characterized by merely the exchange of labor and resources; 1, 6–7, 10, 13, 21). According to Gadhoke et al. (2019) and Petri (2015), such a relationship is central to "true reciprocity." To build a relationship, prior contact or prior collaboration

with community actors was mentioned as a prerequisite. Accordingly, mutual trust and time to build this trust was considered a key value for relationship building (1, 5–7, 12, 14, 17, 21). On the one hand, trust was described as a goal in relationship building, such that through in-person interaction trust is built (17, 21). On the other hand, trust was described as a means for a relationship: With trust among higher education and community actors, a relationship can exist (5, 12, 14). The following quote illustrates the connection between reciprocity and trust in building a relationship with community actors:

> The [community actors] reflected that hosting students . . . and providing them with their time, resources and interviews, frequently without any tangible benefits, was troubling and discouraged willingness to participate. (14 [Mbalinda et al., 2011], p. 8)

Moreover, this quote emphasizes how "community fatigue" can hamper a relationship between higher education and a community. *Community fatigue* refers to the exhaustion of community actors when they are "used" with no tangible benefits for the community. As community-based course activities in higher education are dependent on commitment of both higher education actors and community actors, community actors' willingness to participate has a direct impact on the continuity and sustainability of community-based course activities. A relationship based on trust and reciprocity (outcomes for all involved) can create a safe environment that allows for working and learning together in a sustainable way (5). Curwood et al. (2011; 5) described how such a relationship can make for resilient collaboration, and in this way "can remain on-track without the extensive levels of personal contact characterizing the early stages of teamwork" (p. 21).

Strategies for Community Involvement in Higher Education

Eight strategies were extracted from the reviewed articles (1–21) to make community involvement in higher education more tangible and encourage its implementation. The previous sections implied some guiding principles in relation to some of the strategies. Table 5 presents the following strategies: (1) Shaping the course activity together (1–6, 10–14, 16, 18–21); (2) Having a dialogue (1, 4–6, 10–11, 13–14, 18, 21); (3) Providing feedback on and evaluation of the community-based course activity (10–13, 17, 21); (4) Offering capacity and competency training (2, 5–8, 10); (5) Facilitating accountability opportunities (1, 3, 6–7, 10–12, 14, 16, 21); (6) Familiarization with community and community actors (1, 3, 5–6, 10–14, 16–17); (7) Facilitating participation opportunities (13–14, 21); and (8) Building trust among involved actors (1, 4–7, 12, 14, 17, 21). These strategies appear to be applicable to multiple guiding principles, so one strategy serves multiple principles.

Table 5 provides an overview of all eight strategies, including an explanation, tangible examples, and related principles. Not all examples are explained in the same depth, owing to a lack of explanation in the relevant articles. The strategies are also influenced by the level of involvement of community actors and can be implemented for the desired intensity of the collaboration. For example, shaping the course activity together can be as simple as having one period of extensive contact with community actors before the course activity in order to align goals and expectations. More intensive involvement could look like codesigning the entire course (activity) based on coidentified community priorities. Moreover, these strategies can be implemented for collaboration between higher education actors (teachers and supporting faculty members) and community actors as well as between students and community actors.

Discussion

To our knowledge, this is the first narrative literature review studying community involvement in course-based higher education activities. This analysis supports deepening the understanding and development of community involvement in the specific context of higher education course-based activities. In this section we reflect on community involvement: its relation to community impact, methods for its optimization, its recognition in existing literature, and the practical implications of this review for course-based higher education activities. In this way, this review seeks to encourage critical thinking about community involvement processes and how community involvement should be carefully positioned within the higher education context.

The underlying rationale of community

Table 5. Strategies and Related Guiding Principles for Community Involvement in Higher Education

Strategy	Explanation	Examples	Guiding principles
Shaping the course together (1–6, 10–14, 16, 18–21)	The design, implementation, execution, and evaluation is shaped together with multiple community actors and students through shared decision-making for the most important elements of the community-based course activities	• Inform about, discuss, and cocreate the purpose and trajectory of the community-based course activity, e.g., by Q&A meetings, briefings, discussion sessions, or workshops prior to or at start of the course (3, 10, 12–13, 16, 20–21). • Determine mutually beneficial common goals and outcomes, such as drafting a set of principles, values, or course objectives (6, 11, 13, 16, 21). • Integrate community input during the course, by means of a needs- or asset-based assessment or coproducing the outcome (6, 11, 13, 16, 21).	• Alignment • Shared ownership • Power relations • Joint learning and knowledge creation • Relationship building
Having a dialogue (1, 2, 4–6, 10–11, 13–14, 18, 21)	A dialogue between involved actors focuses on the interaction of the actors with the aim of better understanding each other's world.	• Be democratic (taking turns), with time to listen, talk, empathize, and digest (1, 2, 11). • Express and discuss expectations and concerns, such as transparency about the experiential nature of the activity or the newness of the relationship (5–6, 11, 18). • Reflect together on differences between community and students with respect for diversity of views, e.g., by discussing experiences, sharing key messages, and giving verbal and written comments (1, 4, 10–11, 18).	• Alignment • Shared ownership • Power relations • Joint learning and knowledge creation • Immersion • Relationship building • Representation
Providing feedback and evaluation (10–13, 17, 21)	An evaluation of the community-based course activity with community actors through feedback loops.	• Provide feedback to community on student outcomes and experiences, e.g., how did students benefit from the course activity? (17). • Evaluate and reflect on course and outcomes with community actors, e.g., by quarterly meetings, discussions, participatory workshops (10–13). • Dissemination of and feedback on outcomes, such as writing together in open documents so community actors can see their insights in the outcomes (21).	• Relationship building • Shared ownership • Alignment • Joint learning and knowledge creation
Offering capacity and competency training (2, 5–8, 10)	Training both students and community actors to prepare them better with necessary skills for the social and cultural differences in the science–society interface.	• Introduce critical concepts and train cultural competences, e.g., trained by community actors or students from previous cohorts (2, 6–8, 10). • Provide community actors with information about higher education frameworks (5). • Hold workshops for community actors to recognize their own skills (10).	• Shared ownership • Immersion

Table continued on next page

Table 5. Continued

Strategy	Explanation	Examples	Guiding principles
Facilitating accountability opportunities (1, 3, 6–7, 10–12, 14, 16, 21)	Accountability, in particular to community actors, by placing emphasis on the responsibilities of the individual expert roles in the collaboration.	• Set up community driven–activities led by community actors, through community-identified topics and needs (7, 10–11, 14). • Give community actors a role as expert (not as an equal), so an emphasis lies on the value of community actors' experiential knowledge (1, 6). • Put time and effort into understanding the community expert role through discussion among community actors, students, and teachers (6).	• Shared ownership • Power relations • Relationship building • Alignment
Familiarization with the community (1, 2, 3, 5–6, 10–14, 16–17)	Familiarizing with the community context and its actors through direct contact with community actors and the physical places related to the community-based course activity.	• Community actors in the classroom, as an informant, advisor, commissioner, teacher, or colearner (1, 3, 5, 21,16). • Site visits to community locations, such as a community tour, an introduction to key community figures, and interaction with grassroots community members (4, 6, 11, 14, 16, 12). • Discussion sessions between students and community actors, such as brainstorming sessions, needs or asset mapping, a debate, or a game (1, 3, 6, 16, 21, 13,).	• Power relations • Immersion • Shared ownership • Alignment • Relationship building
Facilitating participation opportunities (2, 13–14, 21)	Creating an environment in which community actors can participate in the entire process of the course.	• Put effort into reaching out, using different access points into the community (2, 13–14). • Set up off-campus meet-ups at locations in the local community to encourage participation (21, 14). • Use language that is understandable for everyone and avoid jargon (14, 21).	• Power relations • Representation • Joint learning and knowledge creation
Building trust (1, 2, 4–7, 12, 14, 17, 21)	Trust is built in an environment in which higher education actors (including students) and community actors feel safe and can speak their minds.	• Take time to get to know each other, have fun together, and overcome potential issues of territoriality (1, 2, 5, 6, 17, 21). • Behave respectfully and inclusively, through active listening; being polite, helpful, interested; and showing deference and consideration (1, 5, 14). • Have frequent formal and informal interactions, such as face-to-face meetings, coffee breaks, telephone calls, emails, community meetings, events (12, 21, 4).	• Joint learning and knowledge creation • Immersion • Shared ownership • Relationship building

involvement is that involvement leads toward greater impact in the community (Clifford, 2017; Sweatman & Warner, 2020). Community impact can be achieved by a process of long-term positive community change and development (Meringolo et al., 2019). The community-based course activities in higher education, however, are often short-term and time-constrained, making it hard to achieve any community impact, even if the outcomes occur in an appropriate and responsive way (James & Logan, 2016). It is therefore argued that to achieve the community-centered values of community involvement (reciprocity, social justice, empowerment, and solidarity), we need to move beyond the exchange of products and toward transformation (Clifford, 2017; Davis et al., 2017). By placing more emphasis on the experience of the involvement (e.g., through participation, cocreation, and shared decision-making processes in course-based higher education activities), greater impact could be achieved (Clifford, 2017; Sweatman & Warner, 2020). The findings of this review give multiple examples of the importance of shaping this experience, in particular with the guiding principle *relationship building*. Other elements, such as trust, two-way efforts, and a comfortable environment, are interwoven in the other guiding principles and related strategies. Therefore, we believe that the current definitions, guiding principles, and strategies can help shape meaningful experiences of involvement.

Thus, this review sheds light on how community actors and community involvement processes are approached in course-based higher education activities. The articles included in this review often have a profound and critical conceptualization of community involvement processes in course-based activities (1, 3, 5, 20, 21) that are in line with community-centered values that emphasize an active and participatory role for community actors (Clifford, 2017; Dostilio et al., 2012; Stanlick & Sell, 2016). Although this review has provided detailed new insights on the how-to of community involvement in course-based activities, the results also show that difficulty remains for incorporating these conceptualizations (e.g., transparency of intended outcomes, community representation, or alignment of goals) into practice. This difficulty is also echoed in our findings on how *community* is generally conceptualized as a "place where students and teachers go to help or learn from a group of people," and the choice of words in eight of the total 21 articles that portray community actors with language such as "providing aid for" or "learning from" (recipients) instead of "active collaborators" or "mutual learning" (collaborators). These findings point toward a discrepancy between the written conceptualization and reflection on community involvement processes and actually incorporating and acting on community-centered values, a conclusion in line with other literature on community involvement in the higher education context (Bortolin, 2011; Butin, 2015; Dempsey, 2010).

This article is not the first to describe guiding principles and/or strategies for community involvement, and therefore adds to the larger literature seeking a deeper understanding of community involvement processes in higher education. Guiding principles, lessons learned, and best practices regarding the broader field of involving actors with experiential knowledge in research and higher education, such as transdisciplinary research, community-based participatory research (CBPR), and participatory (action) research, provide a similar framework to equitably involve community actors in research (Cashman et al., 2008; Collins et al., 2018; Crosby et al., 2013; Davis et al., 2017; Roberts, 2013; Von Peter & Bos, 2022). Similar to our findings, Collins et al. (2018) and Roberts (2013) argued for sharing decision-making responsibilities and mitigating power differentials in CBPR for establishing equitable partnerships between higher education and community actors built on trust, mutual respect, and community empowerment. Moreover, Collins et al. also reflected on how community involvement requires a different mindset, one that includes humility and reflexivity on one's own knowledge, privilege, power, and beliefs. Several studies emphasize how higher education actors should invest more in connecting with community actors personally as opposed to professionally, as a means for mutual learning and community involvement (Davis et al., 2017; Stewart & Alrutz, 2012; Von Peter & Bos, 2022). In line with our findings, one of the main challenges indicated by Cashman et al. (2008) and Collins et al. (2018) is the amount of extra time, effort, and flexibility needed to understand each other's perspectives and build common ground.

This review adds to this literature, as the challenging higher education context in-

troduces an extra dimension to community involvement processes in comparison to other research approaches. Achieving successful community involvement is already messy, complex, and time-consuming in research (Cashman, 2008; Collins et al., 2018), but community involvement processes in course-based higher education activities also deal with (1) rigid higher education structures (Tryon et al., 2008) and (2) the involvement of students and teachers (Burton et al., 2019). These factors merit separate discussion.

First, the organizational structure of higher education curricula limits opportunities to achieve successful community involvement in course-based higher education activities. For example, students and teachers are involved only for the short duration of a course, whereas community actors could be involved in multiple courses (Almjeld et al., 2022; Tryon et al., 2008). Guiding principles, such as relationship building, seem difficult to realize within the time frame of a course and possibly with multiple student groups and teachers (Tryon et al., 2008). Tijsma et al. (2021) have described how a thematic approach for community-based course activities, in which multiple courses (consecutively and concurrently) are coupled to increase the time frame in which community involvement can take place, introduces the commitment of higher education actors to community actors beyond course-based activities. However, for achieving successful community involvement in course-based higher education activities, future research is necessary for finding appropriate ways to prepare students in particular, but also teachers and community actors, for community involvement practices in course-based activities.

Second, students and teachers are often entirely new to community involvement processes (Bringle & Steinberg, 2010). Without prior experience, students and teachers may be unaware of the sensitivity of power relations, social structures, and underlying cultural differences in the community and the collaboration. They can influence these social dynamics with their own (still developing) understanding of power and their potential impact on these dynamics (Clark & Nugent, 2011; Sutton, 2011). For example, students' manner of interaction, knowledge exchange, and translation into knowledge can factor heavily in the outcomes and experiences of community actors, as can the facilitation and communication of teachers toward students and the community. The potential for harm resulting from lack of appreciation for these factors can make community involvement in course-based higher education activities particularly fragile. If students or teachers are unprepared, lack communication skills, or are insensitive to cultural differences, it influences not only the experiences of community actors, but also their own experiences, the outcomes of the course, and the relationship between higher education and community actors (Butin, 2015; Marullo & Edwards, 2000). At the same time, understanding such factors can make community involvement in higher education a powerful means to create professionals who are committed to social justice, who are humble and reflexive toward their own expert role and knowledge and sensitive to power differentials, and who thus can develop capabilities for collaborating with community actors in order to address complex social problems (Jakubowski & McIntosh, 2018). Hence, preparing students and faculty for community involvement seems imperative and can potentially enable them to broker the interaction between science and society (McMillan et al., 2016). These definitions, guiding principles, and strategies can serve as a framework for preparing future professionals for community involvement in this science–society interface.

Methodological Considerations and Future Research

This narrative review aimed to give insights into the current processes of community involvement in course-based higher education activities. Significant effort was required to find case studies describing the way community actors are involved in course-based higher education activities. Although some articles focused on the outcomes of community involvement—such as agency, empowerment, and reciprocity—the main focus was never specifically on process descriptions, such as community actors' own experiences of their involvement or detailed descriptions of the way community actors were involved in and beyond the course. Through careful reading, we identified the articles that did contain a description of the process of establishing community involvement. This interpretive approach (Greenhalgh et al., 2019) gave an in-depth understanding of the current definitions, guiding principles, and strategies. More re-

search is needed to validate these principles and strategies and determine their impact. Moreover, the significance of the principles and strategies in the process of community involvement was not determined in this review.

The depth and implementation of the process of community involvement is likely to be more nuanced, versatile, and complex than is presented here (Nelson & Stroink, 2020). Specifically, there is a need for more insight into the influence of personal, cultural, and organizational values of all involved actors. The power relations and relationships in a collaboration seem highly context-dependent, due to infinite possible combinations of involved actors (disciplines, organizations, and communities). Future research should therefore focus on how these different contexts, as well as personal and interpersonal values, influence the process of community involvement. In other words, the framework of definitions, principles, and strategies calls for deeper understanding and validation, preferably including community actors in this process.

Conclusions

This narrative review can serve as a first stepping stone toward more successful community involvement in course-based higher education activities and higher education in general. To this end, it offers a framework of definitions, guiding principles, and related strategies that have both theoretical and practical implications. This framework can guide the design, implementation, facilitation, and evaluation of community involvement in higher education and encourage rethinking the current approaches and also deepen our understanding. In presenting these first steps, we hope to inspire both academics and community actors to act on the existing conceptualizations and rethink their respective roles in these collaborations. All have a part to play in improving the way these collaborations are shaped. Paying attention to the current discrepancies, rethinking our definition of community, and aiming for successful community involvement could be the next step toward genuinely reciprocal or even transformative collaborations among students, teachers, and community actors.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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The search string was developed by MV and CP and the experienced librarian RV. Abstract screening was performed by MV, RS and CP. Full-text screening was performed by MV and CP. Data extraction was performed by MV. MV and CP rated the quality of the included studies. MV was responsible for writing the manuscript. CP and MZ read several versions of the manuscript and provided their feedback and suggestions regularly. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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NorthEast Grows: Dismantling Narratives of Assumed Mutuality in a Community-Engaged Permaculture Partnership

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Abstract

Higher education–community projects to support food security and food justice can improve health outcomes and increase community cohesion, but university funding may lead to power inequities that perpetuate marginalizing narratives. For this project, a regional state university, a local high school, and a nonprofit focused on building school gardens to offer university and high school students hands-on agricultural education and experience with a permaculture focus. Participant interviews revealed some disconnection and conflict between project goals and participant experiences. In this article we detail the planning phases of the project and self-reflexively unpack what we came to call a dominant narrative of assumed mutuality, which yielded uneven power dynamics that lowered school and community partner participation and buy-in. Findings reveal a need for a project design framework with structured, lateral, reflective communication practices across constituent groups to improve longevity and sustainability of collaborative projects.

Keywords: local food systems, community food security, higher education–community partnership, participatory action research

In fall 2014, our university hosted a screening and panel discussion of the 2012 film *A Place at the Table* (Silverbush & Jacobson, 2012) on our campus. A campus engagement office, a student coalition, and several local community members working to combat food insecurity partnered together in conjunction with this event, which served to engage conversations on our campus about hunger and food justice, security, and sovereignty in our region as well as serving to connect local and campus groups to one another in an educational setting. The event would set the stage for our eventual project detailed in this article—a community-engaged food justice incubator—utilizing a creative economy grant from our university to implement a permaculture-based school–community garden at a local urban high school in collaboration with a local nonprofit from 2015 through 2018.

However, to be clear, the central focus of this article is not permaculture, participatory action research, higher education–community partnerships, or agriculture in and of themselves—though those are all important facets of the complexity of this project. Rather, it is unpacking what we came to call a "dominant narrative of assumed mutuality" that emerged in the project between the various partners we worked with while engaging each of those facets. The narrative was one that we, the university partners—the ones with the most symbolic power—told about our own project.

Dominant narratives are those that reside with social groups who are dominant in terms of race, class, gender, or, in this case, institutional power, and they often foreclose the stories of those in positions of less power or in marginalized and excluded identity groups. They are "those stories we tell ourselves, learn, or share with others—

whether consciously or unconsciously—that also uphold existing power dynamics" (Morrison, 2019, para. 3). In response to the prevalence of dominant narratives, counternarratives and counterstory have emerged as a tool and methodology for regaining discursive and social power on behalf of oppressed groups (Martinez, 2020).

In the project, our narrative was apparent as we sought to engage our emergent community-engaged food justice coalition in ways that responded to local conditions but were grounded in what we knew about the macro landscape of agriculture, nutrition, and culture. In reviewing our own 4-year (and counting) participatory action research project, located in an urban, postindustrial community neighboring our university in the Northeastern United States, we see that a type of narrative developed from it, one of assumed shared goals and aims, which ultimately hampered our success. This type of narrative, which we (the authors) refer to throughout this article as a dominant narrative of assumed mutuality, emerged in our research through our collective analysis of the interviews and field notes, and discussions with one another. We define this narrative as a tool we unconsciously used to create a cohesive story of our project together, in ways that marked shared goals while ignoring tensions and differences particularly related to race, power, and institutional privilege even as we asserted an equity framework in the project. Because of our assumptions, we did not consciously articulate the ethics and values behind our choices, or the critical differences among the partners and participants. Put simply, the narrative was one that we told that allowed us to believe we shared mutual buy-in from all our partners and collaborators. Our telling a narrative of assumed mutuality to ourselves and our partners, we believe, may have resulted in missed opportunities for growth as well as a flattening of perspective about the value of the project itself.

What we describe here is not an uncommon phenomenon in this area of work—the assumption that local communities and partners will be willing, enthusiastic, and able to take up the opportunity provided via funding and partnership with a university, in order to build food security in their neighborhoods or schools (Agyeman & Alkon, 2011; Anguelovski, 2015; Cadieux & Slocum, 2015; Kulick, 2019; Slocum, 2006). Relying on these types of narratives may belie the realities of participation across constituent groups. For example, in global development projects, researchers have seen that participants often enact "public performances" of alignment to governmental or funder goals while making actual decisions about projects through "backstage commentaries" where they are pursuing goals more relevant to them (Cameron, 2009). Other studies (Ramirez-Andreotta et al., 2015) suggest that communication practices in these kinds of projects—a node where we saw our narrative counteracting our larger goals—are often complex. In a community–higher education partnership studying environmental pollutant levels, Ramirez-Andreotta et al. explained that it is often "challenging to maintain bidirectional communication" and that "setting and maintaining" expectations is a challenge (p. 10).

Like Ramirez-Andreotta et al. and others performing environmental justice work, our study, which examined a school–community-based permaculture project from 2015 to 2018, draws from participatory action research, which values community inquiry and local knowledge. The partners included our public university, "Northeast University" (NEU); an urban high school, "Northeast High School" (NEHS); and a community-based gardening program, "Northeast Grows" (NEG), based in building equitable food systems that promote ecological literacy, sustainability, and health. The seed funding for this project, including the planning, programming, and research, came from the university system.

Specifically, this article details key aspects of the planning process of our project, following the three nodes of permaculture ethics (care of people, care of land, care of surplus) detailed in the following sections. Though our primary focus in this article is not permaculture itself, we use its principles—which guided us as university partners—to uncover some of the specific areas that arose as problematic in our project. Here, we reflect on the places that a narrative of assumed mutuality appeared and limited, complicated, undermined, or constrained our work. We hope this article will provide useful takeaways for any university–community partnership; however, rather than making a firm set of recommendations for every context we describe, we have provided a set of critical questions interspersed and italicized throughout this essay. These questions are meant to dem-

onstrate inquiry-driven reflective practice, and they emerged from our own reflective approach to this project. Our hope is that framing this work through a more recursive, ethical, sustainable lens may clarify ways to privilege and fully integrate social justice concerns from the outset of projects, thereby bringing more sensitivity to the particular contexts where we work.

The first section defines and examines how permaculture frameworks can support food security projects. The second section presents our conceptual framework, the narrative of assumed mutuality, with a focus on the theoretical underpinnings of this narrative in terms of equity, ethics of practice, and the key challenges that the partners faced. The third section provides the methodology for the research, including the timeline for the project. The fourth section draws from the three principles of permaculture—care of people, care of land, care of surplus—to delineate how the narrative of assumed mutuality illuminated blind spots and obstacles that the partners faced in the planning and implementation of the high school permaculture garden.

Permaculture Frameworks

Permaculture is the design of food systems and social structures to provide for human needs while restoring ecosystem health. At the same time, permaculture has its own baggage in that practitioners don't always recognize the Indigenous and cultural origins of its approach. Yuan (2020) seeks to provide such recognition, contesting the historical erasures present in the use of the terms *regenerative agriculture* and *permaculture*. Indigenous organizations that speak out against such erasures consider use of this terminology a practice of "whitewashed hope." Using these terms without incorporating an Indigenous worldview perpetuates the historical colonial appropriation of Indigenous techniques, knowledge, and practices by omitting their historical context and dialogue that reflect the basis of this way of developing food and social systems. However, even given this decolonizing viewpoint, permaculture may be well suited to conversations about alleviating food insecurities and food deserts, as it involves building regenerative, socially engaged, and self-supporting systems that can be particularly beneficial for disenfranchised communities contending with food desert conditions (Lovell et al., 2014). As Millner (2017) noted, permaculture has the capacity to work as political action inside food systems in ways that respect existing cultural practices as well as counteracting the histories of colonialism, land theft, and industrialization (p. 766).

Our project centered on an urban area where the poverty rates are twice the statewide rate and childhood poverty levels are significantly higher than that of the county as a whole (Southeastern Massachusetts Food System Assessment Executive Summary July 2014. These elevated rates of poverty contribute to food challenges such that "food intake of one or more household members was reduced and their eating patterns were disrupted at times during the year because the household lacked money and other resources for food" (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2013: 1) NielsenIQ TDLinx (https://nielsoniq.com) and the 2011–2015 American Community 5-Year Estimates (https://www.census.gov) yielded demographic data for the area indicating that 22% of low-income residents live farther than a mile from a grocery store. Given the demographics of this urban area, we imagined that incorporating permaculture ethics and principles (Brush, 2016) in a social and agricultural design process could potentially facilitate food justice with a focus on developing social structures, economic arrangements, and plant materials that yield healthier foods while restoring ecosystem health.

The three principles from the ethics of permaculture practice (Permaculture Principles, n.d.) guided our understanding of permaculture practices: care of people, care of the earth, and care of surplus. Through the lens of care of people—defined as tending to people ranging from our families and communities to all of humanity—we examine specific tensions between constituent groups with whom we thought we (the university partners) were on the same page when, in reality, the group in totality had different ideas of what a food justice project might look like.

With respect to earth care—defined as supporting all living and ecological processes that keep us alive—we examine the challenges of building a permaculture garden on an EPA Superfund high school site where issues of environmental and structural racism bubbled to the surface. (In compliance with our IRB proposal for confidentiality, the name of the Superfund site is omitted.)

Regarding care of surplus (also called fair share)—defined as actions that center on generosity and sharing the abundance—we look at how the distribution of resources potentially undermined the involvement of high school teachers and other key contributors on the project. For example, we prioritized supporting students financially but in some instances took educator participation for granted because we shared surplus with them. Sharing with educators, however, was performed through networking rather than tangible support, because we did not always appreciate the educators' needs.

Nonetheless, our effort was centered in permaculture principles, which seek to integrate multiple levels of life from the biological to the cultural. We therefore hoped it had potential as an incubator and learning laboratory for a microscaled version of a community-based just, creative, culturally sensitive food economy. A key takeaway from our research and reflection centers on how the dominant narrative of assumed mutuality seeped into and undermined aspects of the planning process. Nevertheless, this project continues to operate as an incubator and learning laboratory with the community partner, Northeast Grows, providing ongoing support to the high school garden in collaboration with English language learning (ELL) and environmental studies teachers and students.

Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks: The Narrative of Assumed Mutuality

The emergent concept from our inquiry here we call a "dominant narrative of assumed mutuality." As mentioned, we define this narrative as a tool that the partners unconsciously used to frame a cohesive story of our project together, in ways that highlighted shared food security and justice goals while ignoring differences and potential power imbalances related to race, class, and institutional privilege. We sought to take up equity in this project, as defined by Dowd and Bensimon (2015) in terms of justice as *fairness, care, and transformation* (p. 10). Yet, we admit that the narrative appeared in our interactions and collaboration over the course of multiple years in our project, and we uncovered its features in retrospective, reflexive, narrative praxis that then helped us better understand our participatory action research data.

In that work, we discovered that part of the difficulty for us in identifying the narrative was the scope of our project, which was complex. The project encompassed community and school partnerships, permaculture design, food justice and sovereignty principles, educational practice, antiracism, and partnership alignment and participation. Employing a holistic equity framework that views people, land, and histories as integrally related, we saw all those components as relevant enough to garner our attention and reflection and ultimately, we argue, make the project stronger.

In our understandings, we rely on several areas of extant scholarship devoted to the ethics of practice in partnerships between institutions of higher education and their community partners (Brunger & Wall, 2016; Garlick & Palmer, 2008; Sarkissian et al., 2009) and with diverse constituencies (Gone, 2017), particularly in the "entry process" (Ochaka et al., 2010). Community-engaged research frameworks also illustrate that researchers must work from "foundational scholarship" to build effective, ethical engagement practices with community partners (Doberneck et al., 2014). Further, scholars that practice community-engaged research argue for the usefulness of self-reflexive practices in order to keep ethics in clear sight and to assess, adjust, and better implement project goals and build effective practice (Mitchell et al., 2015; Moffat et al., 2005). In addition, we recognize the importance of considering the role that race, privilege, and power play in educational institutions, our community partnerships, and our service-oriented pedagogies (Lum & Jacob, 2012; Milner, 2007; Verjee, 2012; Yull et al., 2018).

This kind of work also presents real risks for harm and failure. Citing several studies and reviews of literature (Clapp et al., 2016; Cook, 2008; Wing, 2005), Davis and Ramírez-Andreotta (2021) explained that "persistent cultural disconnects, trust barriers, and real structural inequity may prevent academic researchers from establishing equitable research partnerships" and that studies also show how projects "led by community based groups were more likely to result in responsive action than those led by universities" (p. 2). We as the university partners were mindful of these issues and achieved our ultimate goal, which was to leave the project in the care of our community partner and the school itself. To build that foundation, we sought to assemble a consortium of participants across sectors,

paid student participants, and carefully considered shared decision-making processes. However, we understand that at least two difficulties were at work here for our community-engaged project.

The first was that although we relied on foundational scholarship from critical race theory, sociological inquiry, environmental justice, and decolonial studies, there is not often a clear line from theory to practice for research in these kinds of project-based inquiries. As Pulido (2000) showed us in reference to the scholarship of environmental racism, discrete study of a phenomenon in one arena sometimes risks losing deeper understanding of the phenomenon itself (e.g., racism and how to act against it). Thus, foundational scholarship doesn't *necessarily* lead to effective practice. Second, conversations about racial equity in community-engaged projects are often high stakes and may activate behaviors of Whiteliness or color-blind responses on the part of researchers, regardless of racial or ethnic background (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014; Tate & Page, 2018). We argue that these tendencies are attributable to the enculturation of *all* institutional participants into discourses of Whiteness and intellectual privilege even as we exist at many different social locations as individuals.

Specifically, we see those behaviors as problematic in the way they can foreclose conversations about difference, institutional power, and conflict negotiation in meaningful ways that lead to action. We see them as an effort to achieve a kind of multicultural utopia that ultimately flattens difference. Those behaviors can abstract difficult conversations about the shortcomings, failures, and difficulties of projects that seek to build equity and justice in community–higher education partnerships. Literature discussing failure in this kind of transdisciplinary work can be a productive place to begin a process of recursive reflection for institutional researchers, and we attempt to engage that work here by practicing a kind of "practitioner inquiry" into our own project (Dowd & Bensimon, 2015; O'Rourke et al., 2020).

Methods

Guided in this participatory action research by a commitment to community-engaged practice and reflexive critical methodologies, we drew from ethnography, interviews, and a reflexive collective writing practice to examine the ways that the dominant narrative of assumed mutuality infused our planning process. As the institutional partner, we put the implementation of the research hand in hand with the planning, design, and implementation of the high school community garden project. We simultaneously engaged in research methods as we sought to enact what la paperson (2017) called a "school to community pipeline" by harnessing the resources of our institution to serve our surrounding communities and to engage our students in place-based learning. We received IRB university approval for this research.

The timeline for this participatory action research project from 2015 to 2018 included a planning phase with university faculty, students, and staff and community groups working on food systems from fall 2015 through spring 2016 to determine the community partners and site for the permaculture garden project. In winter 2016, NEU, NEHS, and NEG were identified as partners for the project. In spring 2016, the partners met with high school teachers and students to develop a plan and begin constructing the raised beds for the garden project. From fall 2016 through the end of the school year in 2017, the partners worked with two environmental studies classes meeting at least once a month to map out food systems issues in the community, learn about permaculture and food justice, and determine the function and plan for the garden.

During this time from 2016 to 2018, researchers from NEU worked with the partners to develop and implement a research design including interviews, participant observation, grounded theory, and feedback loops as a form of praxis to collectively reflect on the project and attempt to pivot and adjust as obstacles and challenges surfaced. The team received IRB approval in two stages. The IRB granted initial approval in fall 2015 to begin the research project with a participatory community-based focus. In spring 2016, the IRB further granted approval for the high school garden project, after the team submitted additional information about the community partners, as well as a research design including a letter of approval from the high school principal.

The researchers conducted 13 interviews with high school students, teachers, and staff, along with the community partner and permaculture educator (see Table 1), to examine the initial successes and challenges of building social structures (the

garden; student, teacher, and class involvement; community network of experts and practitioners, etc.) and educational programming with three NEHS classes (one ELL class and two environmental studies classes). Students from the environmental studies classes and those that worked on the summer garden project were invited to participate in the interviews; those that participated received a gift card. The adults also received a gift card for their participation in the interviews.

In addition to interviews, this research draws from participant observation field notes from 2015 to 2018 of the planning meetings, summer permaculture garden program, environmental studies classes, partner meetings, and feedback loop sessions. The field notes provide an important layer of thicker description revealing the everyday possibilities and challenges associated with building healthier human and food systems that can address the climate crisis within the context of an urban environment that contends with economic, racial, and environmental injustices.

With a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2005) we developed an analytical framework to examine the evolution of the project, paying close attention to issues of process, engagement, and power imbalance. After coding to identify emergent themes and accompanying thick description, we engaged in feedback loop sessions with the participating partners (high school teachers, students, and administrators; NEG staff) in which we presented the themes and framework for the findings. Participants responded with comments, corrections, and suggestions to enrich the overall analysis and ongoing plans for the garden and to create a recursive view of the project data.

The social locations of the authors Rachel and Anicca, germane to participatory action research, are those of White women faculty, one middle class, one working class. Much of our respective work as scholars and teachers involves a commitment to transparency around our racial, class, and institutional privileges. In this work, we saw the identification of our own blind spots as an opportunity to engage in difficult conversations that call out power and resource imbalances with the aim of finding ways to attend to these inequities as a part of the research process. As a newcomer to the United States to pursue a doctorate in education, Afro-Brazilian woman, first-generation college student, and a graduate student in the United States, the author Fernanda is committed to racial and social justice–oriented teaching and research. She seeks to teach and perform research with multiple designs and possibilities where she can learn from and recognize knowledge, agency, and criticality among students and their communities.

Though we believe our social locations to be of importance, we offer these descriptions not, in the words of Kohl and McCutcheon (2015), to “present a laundry list of identity markers” to “check off”; rather, we seek to move more toward an understanding of how we might engage with a “community-minded approach to reflexivity that extends beyond individual and insular engagements with positionality” (pp. 747–748). We were informed in our research approach by antiracist and decolonizing scholars such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Patricia Hill Collins, Eduardo Bonilla Silva, and Kimberlé Crenshaw, whose work assisted us in ex-

Table 1. Participant Demographics for Interviews

Interviewees	Description
High school students (7)	7 high school students (2 females of Latina descent and 5 males of Latino descent)
High school staff (2)	2 staff from Family Outreach Center (females in their 40s of Latina descent)
High school teachers (2)	2 teachers (White females in their late 20s)
Community partner (1)	1 White female garden project coordinator in her early 30s from local community-based organization
University instructor (1)	1 White female university instructor and permaculture educator in her late 30s

ploring how disciplinary orientations are intricately tied to how we "do" research, including underlying and often unstated motives, aims, values, and points of complicity with normative notions of research that are intricately tied to European imperialism, colonialism, and current exploitative processes (Smith, 1999; Tuck & Yang, 2012). As primary managers of this project, Rachel and Anicca brought academic and research-based institutional perspectives, which ultimately were only sometimes useful and sometimes were deeply irrelevant to the planning stages. Noting specific moments of tension, confusion, and conflict enabled us to investigate our own positionality and accountability, so that a new and more complex picture of our work together emerged.

Four years after our project started and the year following our feedback loop session and initial report, we began to conceive of some type of scholarly product to accompany it. To realize such a product, we engaged in a series of yearlong conversations together. These conversations, which became an additional valuable reflective methodological practice, were tracked in notes and drafts of documents, as well as conversations with some of our partners and multiple reviews of the data collected. This methodology provided us the opportunity to better understand the work, how it unfolded into design and implementation, and how our own set of motives as interdisciplinary participants in community-engaged work and scholarship informed the project. We sought in this process to engage in what Milner (2007) proposed in considerations of race, culture, and researcher positionality to move toward critical race theory approaches by "researching the self, researching the self in relation to others, engaged reflection and representation, and shifting from the self to system" (p. 388). Our process of writing about and reflecting on the planning phase of this project revealed a number of assumptions and tensions that we detail in the following three sections and that we believe can present a heuristic for others engaged in similar projects.

Care of People: Intersecting Roots; Who Is at the Planning Table?

> *How can partners effectively account for diversity of representation from BIPOC communities when addressing food insecurity in project planning?*

Once the university team received funding in summer 2015, we engaged with the larger community outside the institution as we sought to build a "collective landscape analysis" or mapping approach based on listening and engagement, by which we spoke with multiple community groups and coalitions before partnering and implementing our project with our primary partner. This analysis informed our first task: identifying key community partners and introducing them to the project so that, as a group, we could begin to brainstorm how we could work together to build increased capacity for food justice in the area. Effectively, this collective landscape initiated and guided our partnership, instead of the partnership being the first step or nexus of our working design. Rather than plant wholly new ideas in our project, we sought to work rhizomatically, to "intersect roots and sometimes merge with them" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1976).

However, assumptions of mutuality also drove the process, as we decided to hold our first community meeting in September 2015 at our university during workday hours in a small room on the third floor in the library with barely enough seating for the 20 individuals that represented farms, food relief, and policy/education efforts in the area. This group of people reflected the network building Rachel had achieved over the course of the previous years in her outreach and engagement efforts as a new faculty member.

We worked in small affinity groups (farms, food relief, policy/education) to discuss the key challenges, needs, and successes that each sector faces. As the small group reconvened to debrief about the status of food security from our various standpoints, a number of notable observations were made. A few people commented on the social location of the group, as most of us were White educated professionals or professionals in training (university students). The question surfaced: If we are looking to perform food justice work in food-insecure areas with low-income BIPOC communities, who needs to be at the table, and what would elicit their participation? What are their communication needs? What are our own? Participants noted that it was highly problematic to have our first meeting during the workday in a remote space in our labyrinthine university that is difficult to access by public transportation. From this discussion, we developed a chart (Figure 1) to map out some key ele-

ments—coordination, accessibility, diversifying leadership, and time and money—in building a community-driven food justice project.

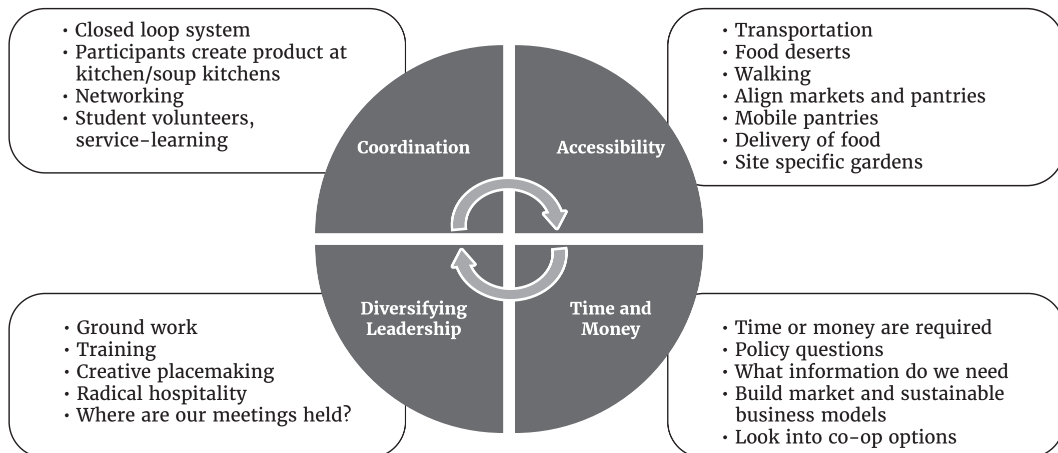
Guided by the feedback and critique of the first meeting, we developed a clearer set of initial project values, and in November, we had the first site selection meeting in the urban area at the YMCA with key community leaders from the local community economic development center, parks and recreation, a regional food security network, and NEG and their parent institute, many of whom had been at our on-campus meeting. These discussions helped us see more clearly the already existing forays, beginnings, growths, and areas where root systems had been abandoned. This knowledge pushed us toward considerations of what site was likely to be the most successful based on which community leaders would actively be involved as the process unfolded.

After much back and forth about potential sites for a permaculture garden for food justice, the community leaders and NEU representatives collectively selected the high school. NEHS is a Level 4 high school of 2,400 students (50% of the students come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, 41% are of Latino descent, and 13% are African American). We saw the partnership as having strong potential for a number of reasons: It could be a way to connect high school students with our university students, and there were already some initial plans under way through NEG to potentially start the garden there. Neighbors living near the high school could potentially benefit from a nutrient-dense garden as the school is located in a disenfranchised area with a number of public housing developments across the street and without access to a supermarket within a one-mile radius. As we began to learn more about the student community there, another question surfaced in relationship to our assumed narrative of mutuality:

> *What was the impact of assuming all partners understood the value of permaculture to this project?*

The three primary partners—NEU, NEHS, and NEG—all served wide-ranging student demographics, including immigrant/migrant, multilingual, and first-generation students and staff. However, because we did not articulate and manifest an overall framework for antioppression, antiracism, and social justice explicitly and structurally, *as a part of our understanding of the affordances of permaculture*, those principles and practices remained *assumed* values. Through praxis (action and reflection) in partner meetings, in interviews, in feedback loops, and in the process of writing up our research, it became clear that various partners and constituencies applied differing notions of equity and ethics of practice. This disconnect became apparent in our work in the garden, when

Figure 1. Focus Group Topic Frequency



students were unsure how to use and didn't recognize many plants common to permaculture, and when our community partner, in a participant interview, was critical of permaculture overall, and saw it as neither relevant nor culturally sensitive.

Although the high school students were not part of the initial planning, they were the ultimate beneficiaries of the project. Once the high school was on board, the project hired two high school students to work with the permaculture educator and NEG staff in summer 2016 to ensure that student input was in the center of day-to-day planning and programming at the onset of the garden project. One student intern commented:

> It was my way to pretty much get out there and to be outside and to be doing something fun. It was a really great experience and since then I've learned how much I really like gardening and plants, because my grandmother has a backyard and I have been working to help her build her own little garden there. And I keep my own houseplants, and I just very much enjoy the company of my coworkers and my bosses and getting to know people and getting to be out there with the plants and the environment. I just love all of it.

The interns described the summer work as a "chance of a lifetime" to be paid (10 hours a week), to be outside, to be in the dirt, and to draw from gardening experiences from their families and countries of origin.

There was also a point, the following school year in December 2016, when the project partners noticed a lack of engagement with the environmental studies classes. As a result, the permaculture educator switched gears and started 2017 with a survey and brainstorming session to determine the students' interests in the project. While the partners were perceiving the project as a means to increase food access to high school families, the students asserted an interest in using the garden as a springboard to think about producing value-added items to sell, such as adobo sauce. One student commented, "We know how to make food tasty . . . because we are Puerto Rican." If we had not drifted away from the original food security plan and pivoted to a focus on students' interests and cultural backgrounds, the students might have been less invested in the overall plan. Participatory action research, and more specifically praxis, facilitated a more organic process.

From our university perspective, we wanted to devise a project that centered student leadership (both at the university and high school), student relationships, and student needs. Led by the president of a student group aiming to address food insecurity on campus, we developed together Northeast University Grows, a project that would include university student participation with our larger faculty and staff collaborative to engage in two ways.

NEG, Northeast Grows, which was a program within a larger nonprofit organization, builds gardens and cultivates programming in public schools in an effort to engage the community and students alike. NEG looks to school-based community garden models to address the participation and engagement challenges that can arise in low-income, food poverty areas. The guiding principles of the NEG model include cultural affirmation, systemic thinking, and environmental consciousness. NEG's work represents a unique hybrid approach and, as a result, is necessarily negotiated with a variety of constituent groups, starting with students, parents, and community members (neighbors, volunteers, nonprofit workers) and including schools (teachers and administrators) and state regulatory bodies (Environmental Protection Agency). Here, our failure to articulate anti-oppression potential in permaculture work resulted in a somewhat fragmented, rhizomatic project that simultaneously embodied aspects of social justice *and* the reproduction of existing inequities and power asymmetries. For example, in some ways we were careful and intentional in our planning process. We sought to identify contributors and partners already working in the sector and add to, or be allies to, their work, not replicate or co-opt their efforts (LaCharite, 2016) or further reify institutional savior narratives (Navin & Dieterle, 2018). Conversely, in a key moment of feedback from our nonprofit partner SCG, their director—a White woman in her early 30s—pointed out her perception of permaculture as being White, elitist, and not culturally relevant. She expressed that we were growing food that local communities were unfamiliar with and might not be culturally appropriate and thereby problematic.

> It is beyond permaculture. Screw permaculture. . . . Permaculture is a tool. It is not my life. And permaculture is very American. . . . So when you're using that term, you're isolating people. . . . when I talk about humanizing, that's part of my goal when I was having trouble vibing with [permaculture]. I had to humanize [permaculture]. Where does [it] come from? You have to humanize everyone.

She had a point, and we had hints regarding the issue well before interviewing her. For example, during indoor and outdoor activities with students at NEHS, students demonstrated how unfamiliar it was to them to plant foods like perennial Egyptian onions, or to taste nasturtium flowers and leaves. We were enthusiastic about sharing this new knowledge and experience but devoted minimal efforts to understanding the impacts of this novelty in order to build a sense of ownership toward the school garden among that local community. In hindsight, these assumptions about permaculture and conversations about difference could have propelled a more honest conversation that included the possibility of permaculture as a form of self-determination work. Instead, we took for granted that permaculture would be an immediately accessible and acceptable framework for our participants.

Nonetheless, our initial phases of the project brought together students, faculty, and community members to write a proposal to support our plans to draw from permaculture ethics and principles to improve food systems on campus and with the community. With permaculture as a foundational touchstone for the proposal, we articulated our project with the framework of three overarching ethics: care of people, care of the earth, and care of surplus. Care of people informed the community engagement component; care of the earth led to garden design with a focus on identifying ways to grow food that involve high nutrient and caloric volume, low maintenance, low carbon, low impact on the soil and land; and care of surplus was reflected in a surplus plan ensuring that any bounty produced would go to individuals and families contending with food insecurity. These proposed efforts were aimed to support students and community groups to develop critical skills in political efficacy and attempt to pioneer and implement practices that are mutually beneficial for people and the environment. We set the bar high with the hope of cultivating systemic strategies for a more just, creative, culturally sensitive food economy in our local context.

Care of Land: (In)Fertile Ground; Telling Partnership Stories

> *What care, knowledge, and attention to physical place are necessary to effectively work with partners in agriculture projects?*

A major blind spot of assumed mutuality surfaced with respect to the land for the high school–based community garden. On an early spring morning, together with our partners, we walked around the future garden site. The space was accessed via a main road, but it bordered a street to the east with less traffic and had access to the facilities area of the school. To the south, athletic fields bordered the neighborhood where the school sits. A large tree would provide a spot for sitting and shade where we would later gather, rest, plan, and reflect together. The permaculture educator and designer, who was a few months pregnant at the time, walked with us. She wondered aloud where our water source would come from, a key element of the permaculture principles we were seeking to engage. She began to help us imagine how we would create mounds of earth and drainage strategies to hold and utilize that water, to allow plant, human, and animal species to interact, to catch the most out of the sun and hold the most rain. The NEG director got a puzzled look on her face.

"No," she said. "We can't grow anything in the ground here. Nothing. We cannot even break the surface of the ground. This is a Superfund site."

This was one of a series of key moments when the narrative of assumed mutuality was turned on its head, a moment of mixed emotions for us—embarrassment, uncertainty, tension, conflict, and disappointment.

Had we better incorporated antioppression epistemologies into the framework of our project, we would have been able to acknowledge more clearly that we were building a permaculture garden on toxic land and, further, to understand the limits of permaculture itself. With more integration of our existing awareness of the structural

and historical impacts of the confluence of racism, classism, and industrial economies, we could have potentially worked to think through possibilities and constraints in more useful, intentional, and explicit ways.

This community we worked with exists within the long history of environmental racism in this country that targets poor, working-class, and immigrant communities. Aspects of its cultural and historical richness range from Indigenous populations to immigrant groups who have been there hundreds of years—a result of the whaling industry—to newly arrived immigrant communities. The high school's student body reflects these racial and ethnic communities: from Mashpee Wampanoag and Narragansett community members to those from Portugal, Cape Verde, the Azores, Central America, Dominican Republic, West Africa, and others.

The community has deep and highly developed knowledge systems in relation to land, water, and people, both from long-term inhabitants and from those who are newly immigrated there. For example, when the high school students brainstormed to select seeds for the garden, their ideas were rooted in their cultures with the aim of harvesting chili peppers to make adobo sauce, or kale and collard greens to make cachupa—a traditional Cape Verdean stew. A few students working in the garden commented on the linear, symmetric approach to planting the vegetables, indicating that their families' gardens in Central America were packed with vegetables. For their families, it was less about the symmetry and more focused on maximizing their yield with as much food as they could grow.

Our own work, based on the land and the people using it, was replete with the complexities of these regional histories and cultures, institutional and grassroots responses to this urban nutrition context, the interweaving of community members and their efforts to combat food insecurity, the relationship of industry to agriculture, the work of funding allocation, education, and collaboration. These dynamics presented themselves in the very soil.

After the initial discovery of the Superfund restrictions, we regrouped. Later that spring, with the help of NEG, several classes of students, and our student partners at NEU, we cut, built, and erected 15 standing garden beds made of lumber, lined with durable plastic, and we filled them with topsoil and compost. These raised beds would become our school garden. This design did not fit with permaculture principles; however, our adjustment did indicate some dexterity with cultural humility, a practice that would serve us well as the project progressed.

Cultural humility (in this case, toward institutional and local culture) was defined by Tervalon and Murray-Garcia (1998) as self-reflective and self-critical practices to "develop and maintain mutually respectful and dynamic partnerships with communities" (p. 118). In that spirit, we worked to plant as best we could, applying permaculture principles of cooperative plant species, perennial edibles and native plants, high-calorie, low-maintenance crops, and planting in a design that would conserve water and use sunlight in efficient ways. We sourced our water from a 300-foot hose, rather than a naturally occurring source. In turn, the process of gathering water each day when we worked on the garden created a new set of relationships with maintenance staff for the school, who stored the hose for us and with whom we interacted on our gardening days. Building these relationships was not formally a part of the epistemological framework of our planning, though if doing so had been, it would have better aligned with our antioppression intentions. Some of that staff would visit the garden, ask questions about the strange plants we were growing, and collect the familiar items to take home to their families. Many students who worked on garden-related lessons and projects indicated that they had small gardens at home, which provided students with an at-home connection and added potential value to the project.

Surplus: Material and Accessibility Constraints in Student and Teacher Participation

> *What do we need to understand about the material conditions of participants to make our work fair, equitable, and valuable?*

On a material level, we believe our project fell short in providing incentives for teachers and their classes. Again, the narrative we told ourselves led us to believe participation would arise altruistically on its own if we were able to articulate the project value. When we first started working with the high

school, we worked with the head of the ELL program to recruit an ELL teacher. However, the ELL director left over the summer, and the ELL teacher, a White woman in her late 20s, received an opportunity to work on a grant that involved compensation and opted for one that paid her for her time:

> I hate to say this, but it's challenging when you're being asked to do these two different things. One's, "Okay, this is really gonna help my students and really benefit the school," because this other thing is also really gonna benefit the students because of that. But I only have time for one thing.

In this context, in the relationship between "care of land" and "care of people," we sought to understand some of the complexities of participation. As we were learning, we ran the risk of our partners concluding that "the time spent on the partnership is not matched by the benefits of participation" (Israel et al., 2006, p. 1029).

Further, even as we worked to strengthen our coalition by working across sectors (Anderson-Carpenter et al., 2017)—university, existing coalitions, nonprofits, school administration and teachers, students and families/community members—we continued to struggle through the project in our efforts to engage a felt sense of ownership of the site itself in the absence of specific training related to permaculture, and/or a sense of ownership and buy-in from all partners. The comments from the ELL teacher point to the realities and constraints of limited time and resources that we heard from a number of students, teachers, and administrators working on the project.

Specifically, our project might also have garnered better participation if we had built teacher labor into our funding structures. Instead, with limited funds, we focused on resource allocation to pay students to work in the garden, a goal we still consider important. The narrative of assumed mutuality was at play here. We assumed teachers would approach our project from the standpoint of opportunity and service, and naturally want to extend themselves into participation for the benefit of their students.

In reflecting back, we see how our narrative of assumed mutuality asserted itself in the material conditions of our partners. In university settings and the institutional citizenships that accompany them, faculty often have appointment types that directly request or materially reward community engagement, community-engaged research and service. Those rewards accrue toward tenure files and/or institutional capital and recognition. In other words, universities expect this kind of indirectly compensated participation. Additionally, we recognize now that our high school partners worked not only on different systems of remuneration but also on different time scales. It is easy to lose momentum in a project for a high school partner when things are unfolding on the glacial time scales of higher education. Continuity was difficult to achieve in this way.

Another consideration that became salient in our reflection was the awareness that institutions of higher education often focus on outcomes and assessment in linear, product-based paradigms. The seed grant for this project required accountability in exchange for funding in the form of reporting progress and achievement of predetermined goals; hence we were unable to fully escape the imperatives of assessment-driven, linear structures. And, of course, we hoped to produce a narrative of success and mutuality in those measures. In fact, it was only by applying a reflective storying methodology (Bratta & Powell, 2016) in the writing of this article that we were able to more deeply consider those complexities from personal, embodied, *and* institutional standpoints.

Conclusion

To revisit, our work here is a response to what we view as potentially dangerous narratives in conversations not only about community-engaged projects and collaborations between educational institutions and communities to support the efforts of food justice/sustainability but even more broadly in service-learning, outreach, and community engagement in institutional settings (Monberg, 2009). We view this particular narrative of assumed mutuality as one of assumed success, mutual benefit, and a problem–solution orientation that can limit understanding of complexity. Further, this narrative runs the risk of positioning this kind of work as the answer to larger systems of power, both agricultural and cultural, without taking on the difficult, uncomfortable work of fully integrating antioppression values into the overall structures and ev-

eryday practices of projects in meaningful, consistent ways.

We continue to believe that permaculture—with its principles of care of land, care of people, and care of surplus—provides a valuable, potentially transformative framework for food justice and food sovereignty work, including a foundation for careful, intentional, reflective practice to accompany it. However, operating within the narrative of assumed mutuality as we did foreclosed some of the rich potentials to engage more deeply across our partnerships and collaborations. We believe that a design without such explicit antioppression structures may silence some participants and reproduce existing power structures. We therefore hope to join the voices of those who question the inherent value of community–higher education partnerships that rest in narratives of assumed mutuality, in order to provide more fertile spaces from which to engage across institutions and communities (Fox et al., 2017). We suggest, as Grabill and Cushman (2009) did, that conflict should not be avoided, and that in fact, "discursive conflict can lead to deliberation and collaborative problem solving" (p. 7). The conflicts we describe here in narrative were the most valuable places to understand the true impact of our project.

We found ourselves working on this narrative and worked to change course, which improved the relationships and outcomes of the project over time. Much of that work was performed reflectively in making sense of our research data, sharing the findings in a series of feedback loops with the stakeholders to identify and unpack areas of tension. For example, the community organization hired one of the students as a high school garden coordinator to improve relations and give a student a seat at the planning and implementation table of the school-based community garden project. In addition, as a result of the feedback loop and other factors at the school, the ELL department has taken a more active role in the project as students from Central American countries expressed a strong interest and specific ideas about the garden. These examples highlight the importance of recursive and reflective practice in community-engaged projects to pivot plans in accordance with both areas of tension and feedback from differing stakeholders.

We write this to acknowledge that even when, and sometimes especially when, we believe we are interrupting conditions of oppression in community-engaged work, we are, in fact, susceptible to reproducing them. It is why we advocate for structured, recursive, reflective practice in this work between all participants in ways that align with differences in cultural, racial, historical, and institutional knowledges. We particularly believe that ongoing, reflexive practice is important for institutional participants (like the coauthors), in order to devise more even and ethical ways to distribute power across all participants when the university holds the symbolic power often associated with distributing funding or designing projects. We believe this practice can lead project participants to a better understanding of the conditions under which institutions and communities interact with one another and share resources.

We finally argue that the orientation of praxis (action and reflection) offers rich places from which to surface and address the ways in which hegemonic or status quo narratives such as assumed mutuality can seep into partnerships and alliances. For us, this work began with unpacking how the narrative of assumed mutuality infused our work so that we could begin to engage a more nuanced awareness of how material conditions, local histories, cultures, and communities both shaped and constrained what our groups of participants and we the authors were able to accomplish. It is through participatory action research and praxis that we can begin to bring to light and redress the deeply rooted grammar of racism and oppression that would otherwise be unspoken, unaddressed, and reproduced (Bonilla Silva, 2012).

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Cautious Collaboration: Community and University Partnerships in the COVID-19 Era

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Abstract

This national study included a quantitative inquiry regarding the impact of COVID-19 on service-learning from 207 participants representing community partner organizations (n = 145) and higher education institutions (n = 62). Community partners reported a decreased number of students engaged in service-learning after the outbreak of COVID-19. Response patterns emerged between community partners and higher education participant groups. The perceived helpfulness of service-learning for student success and fostering relationships differed statistically among the partner types—higher education participants rated these higher than community partners. Reasons for participating varied among partner types, and community partners identified volunteer procurement among the most helpful support higher education offers beyond service-learning. Changing policies, wearing masks, and virtual communication were cited as main adaptations to COVID-19 but prioritized differently among partners. This study uncovered the emerging and varied perspectives of higher education and community partners regarding service-learning at this significant time in history.

Keywords: service-learning, community engagement, COVID-19, higher education, community partnerships

Since 2020, organizations have been grappling with significant changes due to health risks related to the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), such as adapting to a digital workplace (Nagel, 2020) and workplace closures (International Labour Organization, 2021). The challenges presented by COVID-19 are also not uniform and are dependent on many factors, such as geographical region (Almeida & Santos, 2020) and industry type (International Labour Organization, 2021). The impacts of the pandemic on higher education have also been documented, including course delivery (Piotrowski & King, 2020), student mental health concerns (Son et al., 2020), and faculty burnout (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2020). Challenges have also been present for partners engaged in service-learning delivery during COVID-19, which have required adaptations (Doody et al., 2020; Selvanathan et al., 2020). However, research continues to indicate that service-learning is a beneficial part of higher education (Lin & Shek, 2021; Veyvoda & Van Cleave, 2020). The purpose of the current study was to examine both community partner and higher education perspectives in service-learning within the COVID-19 pandemic. This study explored past and recent experiences with service-learning along with how service-learning experiences were adapted due to COVID-19. We also addressed the perceived helpfulness of service-learning and what types of community engagement from universities would best support community partners.

Service-Learning in the Past

Service-learning can be defined as a collaboration "between students and the community that involves explicit learning goals, a response to genuine community needs, youth decision-making and systematic reflection on the part of the students" (Lavery et al., 2018, p. 4). The application

of service-learning may emphasize direct, indirect, research, and advocacy experiences (Bringle et al., 2016). More recently e-service-learning (electronic service-learning) has also been used to facilitate a range of virtual and in-person access to learning and service delivery (Germain, 2019; Waldner et al., 2012). Overall, service-learning represents an array of high-impact and learning activities that can be applied to meet a variety of discipline-specific learning objectives for academic learning, civic learning, and personal growth (Ash & Clayton, 2009; Bringle et al., 2016).

Instructors across disciplines have used service-learning experiences to enhance academic learning outcomes across many competency areas (e.g., Capella-Peris et al., 2020; Midgett et al., 2016; Ramsaroop & Petersen, 2020) and inform a deeper understanding of academic concepts (Hatcher et al., 2017). Benefits that extend beyond direct learning outcomes include student success, retention, and student engagement (Steinberg et al., 2011). Personal growth can also be achieved through service-learning, especially with structured self-reflection activities (see Sanders et al., 2016). Personal growth may also occur in self-awareness, confidence, insight into privilege, responsibility, patience, and respect for others (Gross & Maloney, 2012). Other documented benefits include self-confidence (McClam et al., 2008), cultural learning (Matthew et al., 2018), social responsibility (Gerholz & Losch, 2015), and career benefits (McClam et al., 2008). Furthermore, service-learning "may be one of the most powerful and most effective methods for achieving civic learning outcomes" (Steinberg et al., 2011, p. 19). Civic engagement has been emphasized as a core component of service-learning as projects emphasize social issues and transforming communities (e.g., increasing awareness) to promote social justice (Ash & Clayton, 2009; Bringle & Hatcher, 2009; Steinberg et al., 2011). Overall, research supports that students engaging in service-learning gain benefits related to learning, civic, and personal outcomes.

Community partners are motivated to participate in service-learning by several factors, including altruism to educate students, long-term benefits (e.g., training long-term volunteers, recruiting future staff), building capacity for the organization, and building a relationship with higher education (i.e., forming partnerships that extend outside service-learning contexts; Bell & Carlson, 2009). Partners have a strong interest in sharing a leadership role in service-learning partnerships and are invaluable in encouraging student participation and educating students in social responsibility, professionalism, and cultural competency (Rinaldo et al., 2015). Though community partners are motivated to engage in higher education partnerships, the outcomes of these experiences appear to be mixed. The literature indicates that service-learning experiences may offer both numerous benefits and challenges for community partners.

Community partners may perceive many types of benefits to service-learning. Service-learning provides free labor and important human capital to complete daily tasks (Blouin & Perry, 2009; Jordaan & Mennega, 2022; Rinaldo et al., 2015; Worrall, 2007). Staff also seem to benefit from working with service-learning students, as these interactions can boost morale (Jordaan & Mennega, 2022; Rinaldo et al., 2015) and staff learn new perspectives from students (Blouin & Perry, 2009; Worrall, 2007). Service-learning students may also be more reliable than volunteers (Worrall, 2007). Other benefits of involvement in service-learning may include having access to a steady source of volunteers, recruiting interns or future staff, long-term partnerships with higher education, and access to higher education expertise and resources (Blouin & Perry, 2009). Service-learning has the potential to serve community partners in a variety of ways that support daily operations and organizational missions.

However, the many costs and challenges of service-learning partnerships can outweigh benefits for community partners. Community partners may be exposed to considerable risks, such as harm to vulnerable clientele or students misrepresenting the organization (Blouin & Perry, 2009). Service-learning and other university-community partnerships can require a significant investment of partners' time and energy (Racin & Gordon, 2018; Vernon & Ward, 1999). Unfortunately, partners may gain little benefit after investing resources in the partnership (Blouin & Perry, 2009). Working with students can also be challenging, as some students may not understand the community and organizational needs (Jordaan & Mennega, 2022), lack interest (Worrall, 2007), or focus only on the project and not the context in which it is

occurring (Jordaan & Mennega, 2022). The academic work cycle may be misaligned with partner organizations, as some agencies would prefer to work on projects during the summer when service-learning classes may not be taking place (Racin & Gordon, 2018). Limited time commitments and continuity issues have also been a concern for community partners (Vernon & Ward, 1999; Worrall, 2007). Community partners have reported communication issues with higher education and problems with understanding the purpose of service-learning and required duties (Bell & Carlson, 2009; Vernon & Ward, 1999). Some partners also perceived that faculty had little knowledge about or interest in partner organizations (Worrall, 2007). Negative impacts for community partners range from an inconvenience to substantial risks and hazards; however, some partners elect to continue service-learning despite considerable challenges (Worrall, 2007).

The literature indicates that service-learning is an established high-impact learning method that offers benefits and challenges for students, higher education, and community partners. Overall, the potential benefits motivate many to pursue or continue service-learning partnerships.

Service-Learning and Disasters

Service-learning literature has documented experiences during natural and human-made disasters (Shillingford et al., 2020). For instance, post Hurricane Katrina, service-learning and higher education courses were developed to provide natural disaster support where college students provided valuable skills, knowledge, and effort that helped the recovery process (Johnson & Hoovler, 2015). Research indicates that some specific qualities of these experiences emerge for students engaged in disaster-related service-learning. Students have reported feeling unprepared to assist during disasters; however, such participation appears to yield more robust learning experiences. Benefits include increases in student empowerment, desire to inspire others, motivation to volunteer in the future, and desire for additional training to volunteer after assisting with a natural disaster response (Turner-McGrievy et al., 2018). Another study found that students demonstrated great interest and dedication and were able to learn a broad set of skills, though the project was perceived as intense and impacted students emotionally (Evans-Cowley, 2006). Though there is limited information available about community responses to service-learning during disasters, one study conducted post Hurricane Katrina found that overall community response was favorable and appreciative despite initial resistance from some community members (Evans-Cowley, 2006).

Distance service-learning opportunities in response to disasters have also been documented (see Evans-Cowley, 2006; Weisman, 2021). This type of experience may require flexibility, creativity, the ability to adjust to community needs, appropriate technology infrastructure, and student access to certain technology resources (e.g., reliable internet, hardware; Weisman, 2021). Weisman's approach included proactively reaching out to partners to check well-being, inquiring about remote needs, and providing ideas about how students could assist. Students were able to assist with many remote service-learning activities, including written translations and interpretations of virtual meetings, writing informational materials, making videos, providing instructions, grant writing, social media, funding strategies, and helping develop plans for mergers or shutting down.

Overall, research involving service-learning during disasters indicates that students gain benefits that may extend beyond course objectives. Service-learning students are able to learn skills and assist communities in multiple ways during disasters, even at a distance. This prior work during times of disasters can inform how service-learning may apply to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Service-Learning During COVID-19

The impacts of COVID-19 have caused global disruption and impacted the way that both higher education and community partners operate (see McMurtrie, 2020; National Council of Nonprofits, 2020). At the global level, the response to COVID-19 has been diverse in terms of policy decisions and public response. For instance, most countries' responses to COVID-19 included some form of social distancing; however, implementation and public responses to these measures have varied between countries and are culture-specific (Milani, 2021).

The degree of experientiality that service-learning offers has also been impacted. Higher education and community partners have been adapting to COVID-19 while engaging in preventive strategies to mitigate

future pandemics (Beaman & Davidson, 2020). For instance, researchers documented adaptations to an interdisciplinary service-learning project that involved screening children for developmental delays that occurred in spring 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic (Doody et al., 2020). These authors discussed the implementation of an alternative, online assignment where students applied the screening activity to a training video in lieu of screening a child in person. The quantitative results of the modified assignment indicated that students believed that they gained skills; however, when examining qualitative data, students identified deficiencies of the alternate assignment in the areas of flexibility, communication, and collaboration. Doody et al. noted a further limitation with the alternative assignment in that, although students were still able to learn skills associated with the original service-learning project, the alternative assignment did not provide a service to the community.

Universities and community partners have encountered numerous recent challenges during the pandemic. Operations were affected in substantial ways that impacted their partnerships and approaches to service-learning.

COVID-19 Challenges to Partnerships

According to emerging literature, primary challenges for service-learning partnerships due to the COVID-19 environment are communication, logistics, and health and safety (Grilo et al., 2021; Lin & Shek, 2021; Piotrowski & King, 2020; Veyvoda & Van Cleave, 2020). Logistical challenges to partnerships that existed prior to COVID-19, such as time, resources, task assignment, supervision, and evaluation (Karasik, 2020), have likely been further strained by COVID-19-related complications. Some of the challenges of service-learning for partners include health and safety adaptations, along with reduced or eliminated in-person communication protocols, such as travel bans, social distancing, the use of face masks, and transitioning to digital communication (Lederer et al., 2021; McMurtrie, 2020).

Communication. Due to the impact of COVID-19, both higher education and nonprofit organizations resorted to virtual communication to continue operating (National Council of Nonprofits, 2020). For higher education, many instructors were forced to move quickly to emergency remote teaching in spring 2020 (Hodges et al., 2020). Planned online learning incorporates instructional design within a systematic model (Hodges et al., 2020; Protsiv et al., 2016); however, the rapid shutdown of college campuses across the world left instructors with little time or support to convert their traditional classes to fully online courses.

Though the emergency switch to online learning has passed, some trends toward online learning may be sustained in the future. Virtual communication is efficient and effective; it provides easy access from anywhere in the world and is adaptable to the learner’s schedule. Virtual communication provides worldwide exposure for students and teachers, creates a more personalized learning environment, and sharpens digital skills. However, several barriers to virtual communication also limit accessibility. Access to a computer, a steady internet connection, and technological literacy are requirements for virtual classrooms and may prevent access to some students (Alhat, 2020). It is unclear how these trends toward online learning will impact service-learning in the long term.

The various strategies that organizations have implemented to maintain operations while navigating COVID-19 have likely affected communication patterns. Like higher education, community partners experienced many interrelated communication and collaboration challenges that were exacerbated by stay-at-home orders and school closures (Deitrick et al., 2020). In 2020, employees faced a wide range of challenges, including working from home, becoming an “essential” worker (e.g., medical personnel), or being furloughed or laid off (Kniffin et al., 2021). Even those businesses operating significant online aspects prior to COVID-19 were not necessarily prepared for full virtual operations (Newman & Ford, 2021; Szelwach & Matthews, 2021). The transition had negative impacts on high-quality social interactions and reduced the quality of assessment and feedback opportunities for leaders and employees (Kniffin et al., 2021). Emerging literature suggests that best practices for virtual-based work may include increasing conscious efforts from team members regarding the nature and structure of communication and increasing the frequency of nontask interactions to improve quality bonding among employees (Kniffin et al., 2021). Given the pattern of advantages and disadvantages of online learning and remote

communication, more research is needed on how these trends impact higher education, community partners, and their partnerships.

Logistics. Researchers have started exploring the many logistical challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic in higher education for students, faculty, and university administration. Logistical issues for faculty and administration included the lack of guidance and support for transitioning to online delivery, inability to hold laboratory assessments, and disruptions or eliminations of graduate assistantships and student internships. Students were faced with logistical challenges such as attempting to learn from poorly prepared materials; having little experience with virtual instruction or the technology skills needed to adequately participate in virtual learning; limited or eliminated physical library access; no tutoring assistance; and unique challenges for populations requiring face-to-face class time to maintain visas (international students) or housing (veterans; Piotrowski & King, 2020). Other student concerns noted in another national study were wanting to be close to home, increased family care responsibilities, and changes in employment status (Polikoff et al., 2020). Race, class, and institution types were also varying factors in the number of classes taken, with Asian, Hispanic, and low-income households enrolling in fewer classes, leading to the possibility that racial or ethnic minority students will experience a higher rate of graduation delays (Polikoff et al., 2020). The impact of the pandemic has obviously substantially affected many facets of higher education and educational experiences.

In general, community partner perspectives on service-learning align with many higher education logistical concerns, such as scheduling, resources, communication, and remote site access (Karasik, 2020). These concerns have likely been exacerbated by COVID-19. Guidance from the National Council of Nonprofits (2020) indicates that organizations may be navigating flexible work schedules for staff, public transportation issues, reconfiguring work spaces, or staggering office coverage, among other challenges. Nonprofit organizations have also encountered barriers preventing them from offering services to clients, such as remote working, technology, physical health, safety, and mental health of staff.

Health and Safety. In higher education, the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the already high rates of mental health issues. Son et al. (2020) found that 91% of surveyed students had an increased level of concern about their and their loved ones' health. Students reported increased stress and anxiety from multiple stressors, including lockdown and stay-at-home orders. They also found that most participants worried about the impact of COVID-19 on their academic progress due to the online transition, sudden changes in class requirements, and restrictions on research and projects. Prior research found that not having the ability to network can impact students' sense of belonging, leading to adverse social and psychological effects and poor academic outcomes (Gopalan & Brady, 2019). The pandemic has challenged institutions in managing students' needs and planning for better methods of meeting the future needs of students, as well as faculty and staff (Lederer et al., 2021).

Stress related to COVID-19 has had repercussions on university faculty and staff well-being. The Chronicle of Higher Education (2020) reported that faculty members are reporting higher burnout levels than in previous years due to the mental exhaustion brought on by emergency remote and hybrid classes, budget cuts, and the volatile job market. Faculty members are dealing with increasing workloads while their work–life balance and instances of human interaction are declining. Half of surveyed faculty members indicated that their enjoyment of teaching has decreased since the beginning of 2020 related to typical stressors of academia and newer challenges brought on by COVID-19 (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2020; McMurtrie, 2020). Survey responses from faculty indicated that they hope the public health crisis and push for racial justice in 2020 will lead universities to implement new policies around evaluations, tenure/promotion, and productivity to make higher education more inclusive, fair, and sensitive to faculty mental health (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2020). Thus, the challenges of the recent pandemic have fostered both negative and positive outcomes for faculty and staff.

Health and safety of staff, clients, and students has also been a primary concern for community partners. Guidance from the CDC (Division of Viral Diseases, 2021) advised organizations to implement and update plans that are specific to the business, identify areas and tasks that are asso-

ciated with possible COVID-19 exposure, and implement control measures to reduce or eliminate risk of exposure. Potential strategies included engineering (e.g., facilities), administrative (e.g., communication, cleaning), and personal protective equipment (PPE). One recent study found that organizations protected employees using a variety of means, including remote work, cleaning/hygienic protocols, providing PPE, performing health assessments, and implementing social distancing and travel restrictions (Mahmud et al., 2021). The toll of COVID-19 on community partner employees has also affected well-being. Some employees encountered chronic stress and other mental health issues that may persist after the pandemic subsides (Kniffin et al., 2021). At the broadest level, health and safety concerns remain vital issues for community partners.

New literature has highlighted impacts of COVID-19 on different facets of higher education and community partners; however, there is little available information on how COVID-19 has impacted service-learning partnerships. We explored the following research questions: What did service-learning look like in the past? And now? How are community partners and universities adapting service-learning experiences due to COVID-19? How does service-learning address the needs of community partners? How does other community engagement by higher education address the needs of community partners? These questions were needed to help illustrate current and future service-learning partnership needs.

Method

Participants

This study investigated the perceptions of both university personnel and community partners regarding service-learning. All participants were over the age of 18 and included staff, administration, and faculty who were representatives of higher education and community partners. The 284 initial responses were reduced by 74 who did not complete the majority of the survey and by a further three respondents who did not indicate their partner type. As a result, a total of 207 participants were included in this study. All included responses stated participation in service-learning in the past. Higher education represented 30% (n = 62), and community partners represented 70% (n = 145). The difference between the community partner and higher education representation in the current sample was expected, given that universities typically partner with numerous organizations. Community partners represented a broad range of specializations, including advocacy (20.7%), arts/cultural (10.3%), education (21.4%), faith-based (9.7%), federal (0%), for-profit (1.4%), health care (13.8%), historic preservation (4.8%), information and referral (14.5%), local or state (17.2%), multipurpose (17.2%), not-for-profit (73.1%), nursing home/long-term care/multi level care (2.8%), public housing (1.4%), recreation (9.7%), senior housing/services (6.9%), transportation (2.8%), and other (20.7%). Responses could indicate more than one specialization. The size of the higher education student body also varied among the 58 participants answering the question: up to 5,000 students, 29.3% (n = 17), 5,001–15,000 students, 39.7% (n = 23), 15,001–30,000 students, 17.2 % (n = 10), 30,001 or more students, 10.3% (n = 6), with two participants (3.4%) responding did not know or did not want to report.

Sampling procedures included self-selection into the study after the recruitment email inviting participation. Participants were not offered reimbursement for participating in the online questionnaire (approximately 10 minutes in length). The questionnaire was open from September 29, 2020 to February 9, 2021. The study was approved by the appropriate Institute Review Board and deemed exempt.

Distribution

Multiple sampling procedures were used to distribute the current survey, including emailing potential participants directly, posting the survey information on email lists or virtual groups pertaining to service-learning or community engagement, and using snowball sampling. The standardized recruitment email included a link to the informed consent and survey with a request to share the study with their organization's mailing list and with colleagues involved with community–university engagement.

A list of possible email participants was developed for direct distribution of the questionnaire. This list was started by collecting contact information from the researchers' American university. Specifically, we collected contact information for identified community partners that were published on the university webpage. When the part-

ners' websites included direct email contact information, they were sent the recruitment email. This procedure covered the surrounding counties near the rural, southeastern city with a population of approximately 32,000.

To explore other possible avenues of survey distribution, we initially reached out to our university community engagement office for possible email list options. After researching their suggestions for relevance to our study, we posted on the Community Service and Service-Learning Professionals in Higher Education Facebook page and emailed Campus Compact (https://compact.org/who-we-are/). Three mailing lists were identified: (1) USG Regents' Advisory Committee on Community Engagement and Service (RACCES), (2) National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC) Higher Education Service-Learning Listserv (HE-SL), and (3) National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC) Community-Based Organization (CBO-SL) Listserv.

The researchers also identified all listed schools receiving the Carnegie Foundation's Elective Classification for Community Engagement (https://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/). The classification, housed at the Howard R. Swearer Center at Brown University, represents institutions who engage in internal reflective processes to improve their community engagement. The list of 360 schools was then explored to identify their partners, if listed on their website. Any entity from this process that could have email addresses identified was recruited to participate. Many entities did not have email addresses available on their website, and if their email addresses were not listed, they were excluded. In addition, we performed snowball sampling by encouraging participants to forward the survey link to colleagues who engage in community-university collaborations.

We sent 4,820 email messages, with 590 being undeliverable (e.g., blocked, address not found, unable to receive mail, domain not found). We initially received 284 responses, yielding a 5.9% total response rate.

Instrument

The questionnaire instrument used in the current study was adapted with permission from the Karasik (2020) study, which investigated community partner perceptions of university-community collaborations. Since the Karasik questionnaire focused on community partner perceptions, the current questionnaire was altered to be applicable to both university personnel and community partner respondents. In addition, specific questions were added to inquire about the impact of COVID-19 on community partners and service-learning experiences. In order to make the questionnaire instrument applicable to both higher education and community partners, we offered supplemental questions based on identifying as higher education or a community partner. For instance, only participants who indicated they were higher education were offered a question about the size of their institution's student body.

Participants were sent an email with a general introduction to the project, the informed consent document, and a link to the questionnaire. Participants interested in continuing with the questionnaire were asked to indicate their willingness to proceed by clicking "yes," which linked to the study. Participants who selected "no" on the consent form were directed to a page thanking them for their time and concluding their part in the study. Those who elected to continue were presented with the questionnaire.

The adapted online questionnaire included both fixed-choice and open response questions and had 21 questions (Appendix A). The questionnaire started with the informed consent process and a question asking for confirmation of willingness to participate. To maintain anonymity, IP address tracking was disabled for the questionnaire.

The first block of questions focused on the use of service-learning in the past. It started with a list of definitions providing a standardized vocabulary related to community-engaged learning and service-learning. Participants were asked if they had used service-learning in the past and to identify whether they represented higher education or a community organization. Higher education participants were asked a multiselect question about previous partner types. All participants were then asked to rate the helpfulness of service-learning (0 = *not at all helpful*; 4 = *extremely helpful*) for three aspects: student success, fostering relationships with the university and community, and agency outcomes.

The second block included questions related to the demographics of the organization. These questions included type of organization, size of student body if in higher educa-

tion, and the size of the organization.

The third block was based on Karasik's (2020) questionnaire. It included multiselect questions asking participants to identify their job description and to identify the nature of their current and past community–university partnerships. Community partner participants were asked how many higher education partners they have and how many college students they work with currently and worked with before COVID-19 (one year prior). All participants were asked why they participate in community-based learning with college students (multiselect). The fourth block related to changes due to COVID-19. Higher education participants were asked how many partners they work with currently. All participants were asked what considerations have been made to facilitate service-learning due to COVID-19 (multiselect).

The last block focused on service-learning in the future. All participants were asked to identify how universities may assist with meeting community partner needs in ways other than service-learning (multiselect). At the conclusion of the questionnaire, participants were thanked for their time and then asked if they would like to forward the questionnaire to other professionals in an automatically generated response.

Analysis

The present study used quantitative data analysis techniques and was a posttest-only design. Data analysis included descriptive statistics, a nonparametric Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test, and *t*-tests.

Results

Service-Learning in the Past and Now

The first research questions addressed in this study were "What did service-learning look like in the past? And now?" To address this topic, the researchers explored several sub areas that were relevant to service-learning in the past compared to the present. This comparison involved evaluating differences between past (pre-COVID-19) and current number of students participating in service-learning, based on community partner reports. The comparison also included higher education participants' current number of community partners and what category of partners they have worked with in the past for service-learning. Community partner participant perspectives were addressed regarding how many colleges/universities they currently partner with for community-based learning. Community partner and higher education perspectives were also examined for the frequency of types of partnerships and reasons they participate in community-based learning with college students.

Comparing the Number of Student Participants

A Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was conducted to evaluate differences in the number of students community organizations were working with on service-learning projects in the past (approximately one year prior; pre pandemic) and currently. Results indicated that community organizations reported working with significantly more students before the pandemic, $T = 61.5$, $z = -6.70$ (corrected for ties), N - Ties = 63, $p = .001$, two-tailed. Specifically, 60 organizations indicated that they worked with more students when compared to the present (Sum of Ranks = 1954.50), whereas only three organizations indicated working with more students in the present compared to one year ago (Sum of Ranks = 61.50). There were 50 organizations that reported no difference between past and current student involvement in service-learning. The effect size is considered large ($r = .63$).

Number of Community Partners

Higher education participants' current number of community partners ranged from 0 to over 51. The most frequently cited category was 51 and over ($n = 19$, 30.6%), followed by 1–10 ($n = 8$, 12.9%). Other responses included zero ($n = 1$, 1.6%), 11–20 ($n = 6$, 9.7%), 21–30 ($n = 6$, 9.7%), 31–40 ($n= 0$, 0%), and 41–50 ($n = 1$, 1.6%). There were 21 (33.9%) missing responses.

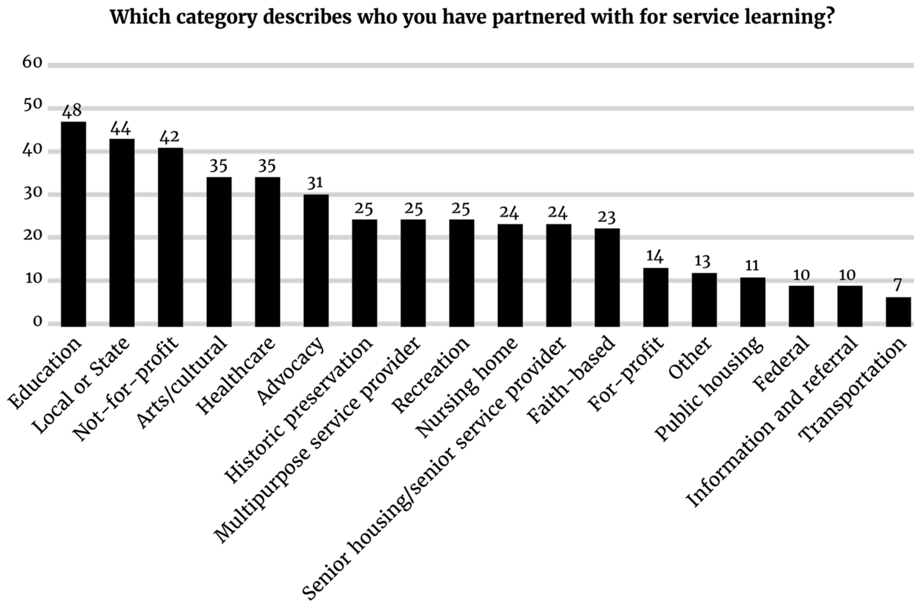
Community Partner Categories

Higher education participants reported past partners among all 18 categories. The number of community partners was led by the category education ($n = 48$, 77.4%), then local or state ($n = 44$, 71.0%), and not-for-profit ($n = 42$, 67.7%). Figure 1 illustrates all categories of community partner specializations.

Number of University Partnerships

Community partner participants reported partnering with a range of colleges/universities for community-based learning.

Figure 1. Frequency of Partner Categories in Higher Education



Participants most frequently indicated working with two colleges/universities (*n* = 36; 17.1%), followed by working with one (*n* = 33; 15.7%). Other responses included zero (*n* = 11, 5.2%), three (*n* = 20; 9.5%), four (*n* = 13, 6.2%), five (*n* = 11, 5.2%), six and seven tied (*n* = 1, .5%), eight and nine tied (*n* = 0, 0%). There were 10 (4.8%) that reported working with 10 or more colleges/universities. There were nine (6.2%) missing responses.

Community–University Partnership Types

The partnership types that higher education and community organizations participated in also varied among the different types of organizations. Higher education most frequently reported partnering for service-learning (*n* = 51, 82.3%). Community organizations participated most frequently to have volunteers (*n* = 102, 70.3%); see Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency Distributions of Responses by Affiliation

Survey response	Higher education		Community organization	
	n	%	*n*	%
Community–university-based partnerships agency currently (or has previously) participated in?				
Community-based research	44	71.0	44	30.3
Field experiences	42	67.7	64	44.1
Fundraising	21	33.9	29	20.0
Guest speaking to classes	40	64.5	72	49.7
In-service/staff workshops	35	56.5	26	17.9
Internships	44	71.0	87	60.0
Service-learning	51	82.3	87	60.0
Site visits	27	43.5	44	30.3
Special events	37	59.7	50	34.5
Volunteers	43	69.4	102	70.3
Not currently participating	1	1.6	8	5.5
Other	0	0.0	6	4.1

Note. Participants were able to select multiple answers.

Reasons for Community-Based Learning Participation

The reasons for higher education and community organizations to participate in community-based learning with students overlapped, with some variations (Table 2). The top three responses for higher education were that community-based learning helps fulfill the mission of the agency/organization (*n* = 35, 56.5%), provides the opportunity to share experience/knowledge (*n* = 34, 54.8%), and fills unmet needs at the agency/organization (*n* = 30, 48.4%). For community organizations, the three most frequent responses included the opportunity to share knowledge (*n* = 99, 68.3%), filling unmet needs at the agency (*n* = 80, 55.2%), and developing relationship(s) with universities for future projects (*n* = 78, 53.8%). Other reasons for participating in service-learning included the following: Higher education response: "[Community engagement] is a graduation requirement and provides students with opportunities to apply what is being learned in courses to real life experiences". Community organization responses: Education; fund-raising opportunities; giving back; mentor future leaders; and to empower students to become agents of change themselves.

Facilitating Service-Learning Due to COVID-19

The second research question concerned how community-based organizations and higher education were facilitating service-learning experiences due to COVID-19. Many areas of service-learning have been impacted by COVID-19, according to the participants. Seventeen specific considerations related to the impact, with an additional "other" option. The top three frequent considerations being made to facilitate service-learning due to the impact of COVID-19 for higher education were increased virtual communication (*n* = 29, 46.8%), requiring masks to be properly worn by everyone (*n* = 25, 40.3%), and updated guidelines/policies (*n* = 23, 37.1%). Community organizations' most frequently cited considerations were requiring masks to be properly worn by everyone (*n* = 81, 55.9%) and increased virtual communication (*n* = 75, 51.7%). Adding more cleaning protocols and updated guidelines/policies were tied as the third most important considerations (*n* = 66, 45.5%; Table 3).

Service-Learning Assisting Community Organizations

The third research question involved how service-learning assists community organizations. A series of independent-samples

Table 2. Frequency of Participation Rationale

Survey response	Higher education		Community organization	
	n	%	*n*	%
Rationale for participation in community-based learning with college students				
Attract future employees	8	12.9	48	33.1
Develop relationship(s) for future projects	24	38.7	78	53.8
Fill unmet needs at the agency	30	48.4	80	55.2
Fulfills mission of agency	35	56.5	69	47.6
Opportunity to share knowledge	34	54.8	99	68.3
Intergenerational interaction opportunities (clientele)	9	14.5	31	21.4
Intergenerational interaction opportunities (students)	24	38.7	62	42.8
Not currently participating	2	3.2	7	4.8
Other	3	4.8	8	5.5

Table 3. Frequency of Considerations Due to COVID-19

Survey response	Higher education		Community organization	
	n	%	*n*	%
Considerations made to facilitate service-learning due to COVID-19?				
Adding more cleaning protocols	18	29.0	66	45.5
Adding signage about policies	15	24.2	51	35.2
Changes in the furniture layout for social distancing	14	22.6	46	31.7
Changes in job requirements for student work	19	30.6	30	20.7
Increased virtual communication	29	46.8	75	51.7
Limited interior visits	17	27.4	59	40.7
Requiring masks to be properly worn by everyone	25	40.3	81	55.9
Optional use of masks	0	0.0	8	5.5
Reduced number of users in a space	19	30.6	62	42.8
Utilizing outdoor areas	22	35.5	41	28.3
Using more touch free features	8	12.9	14	9.7
Updated guidelines/policies	23	37.1	66	45.5
Transportation limited	9	14.5	11	7.6
Transportation not offered	10	16.1	15	10.3
Using social media/web to communicate safety procedures	18	29.0	36	24.8
Indirect projects only[a]	21	33.9	41	28.3
Indirect projects preferred	15	24.2	13	9.0
Other	4	6.5	13	9.0

Note. Participants were able to select multiple answers.
[a] Indirect projects are described as projects that limit physical contact with the site.

t-tests were performed to evaluate the helpfulness of service-learning for student success, fostering relationships between the university and community, agency outcomes, and total helpfulness (the average of the three aforementioned areas) for community organizations and higher education. There were significant differences between community organization and higher education perceptions of helpfulness across student success, fostering relationships, and total helpfulness. Community organization and higher education differences in helpfulness ratings of agency outcomes were not significant ($p = .06$). For student success, fostering relationships, and total ratings,

service-learning was rated as more helpful across each area by higher education participants than by community organization participants. The effect sizes for each area (using Cohen's *d*) ranged from small to medium. The effect size for helpfulness ratings of student success and agency outcomes was small (.36 and .31, respectively), while the effect size for fostering relationships and total helpfulness was medium (.74 and .65, respectively).

When putting the mean scores into context of the qualifiers (referenced in Table 4), both community organizations and higher education participants rated service-learning as being at least very helpful (3) on average, with one exception. The mean agency outcomes (from the community organization perspective) fell between moderately (2) and very (3) helpful qualifiers.

Community Engagement in Higher Education Addressing Community Partner Needs

The final research question regarded how other community engagement on the part of the university addresses the current needs of community partners (Table 5). Participants were asked how they see the university assisting with meeting community partner needs outside service-learning. Frequency of participant responses was examined separately for higher education and community partners. The top three responses for higher education included community-based research (n = 34, 54.8%), volunteering (n = 30, 48.4%), and consultations with faculty experts (n = 27, 43.5%). The top responses for community organizations were volunteering (n = 79, 54.5%) and community-based research (n = 60, 41.4%); consultations with faculty experts and fundraising were tied as the third most frequent responses (n = 45, 31.0%). Other responses centered around needing to be resourceful, faculty community participation, targeted integration into the curriculum, interns, space sharing, research/resource sharing, and reciprocity.

Discussion

Perspectives of both community partners and higher education regarding service-learning have been explored in this study. We examined these partnerships through several research questions. In regard to our first research question, we examined the characteristics of service-learning partnerships in the past and now. One of the most important conclusions is that community partners reported the involvement of fewer students in service-learning projects since the pandemic. Only a minority of organizations stated that they worked with more students, and some found no change. This finding aligns with the University of San Diego's Nonprofit Institute survey of nonprofit leaders, which also found a decrease in volunteers while the need was sometimes increasing (Deitrick et al., 2020). Past research has consistently found that student labor was a key benefit of service-learning for community partners (Cronley et al., 2015), so decreases in human capital would

Table 4. Perceptions of the Helpfulness of Service-Learning

	Community organization		Higher education			
Area	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*t*
Student success	3.23	0.79	3.51	0.77	199	2.33*
Fostering relationships	3.13	0.90	3.69	0.57	164	5.23***
Agency outcomes	2.83	0.90	3.09	0.79	188	1.88
Total	3.08	0.68	3.47	0.48	145	4.43***

Note. Unequal variances not assumed for fostering relationships and total areas; 0 = *not at all helpful*, 1 = *slightly helpful*, 2 = *moderately helpful*, 3 = *very helpful*, 4 = *extremely helpful*.
*p < .05.
***p < .001.

Table 5. University Assistance With Partner Needs

Survey response	Higher education		Community organization	
	n	%	*n*	%
How do you see the University assisting with meeting community partner needs outside of service-learning?				
Community-based research	34	54.8	60	41.4
Consultations with faculty experts	27	43.5	45	31.0
Fundraising	14	22.6	45	31.0
In-services/workshop for staff	23	37.1	42	29.0
Volunteering	30	48.4	79	54.5
Other	4	6.5	9	6.2

Note. Participants were able to select multiple answers.

be detrimental. Higher education and community partners appear to have overlapping but differing reasons for participating in community-based learning. Community partners most frequently partnered to procure volunteers, as reflected in the above findings, whereas higher education participated in partnerships to specifically support service-learning. Past research has found that community partners benefited in service-learning engagement by gaining volunteer recruitment opportunities (Bell & Carlson, 2009; Blouin & Perry, 2009). We found both similarities and differences in the partner types' reasoning for their service-learning partnerships. They both desired to fulfill unmet needs and share knowledge. These findings are similar to Cronley et al.'s (2015) findings that community partners found value in service-learning: Participation expanded their organizational capacity, and organization members enjoyed mentoring students. Community organizations also develop relationships with universities in anticipation of future projects, which reflects the desire to continue relationships longer in duration than a single event. Other important findings included that universities most frequently reported having over 51 community partners, with a variety of partner types. Most community partners were categorized as educational, local or state, and nonprofit organizations. Community partners, on the other hand, most frequently reported working with only one or two universities. This finding is similar to that of Karasik's (2020) study, where 79% of respondents reported working with two or more university partners. The asymmetry of universities' having many community partners while community partners collaborate with few higher education institutions currently remains and is something to be considered within partnerships.

Community partners and higher education participants endorsed similar strategies when asked how they have adapted service-learning for COVID-19, while indicating that they weigh those considerations differently. Health and safety concerns like requiring masks, increasing virtual communication, and updating guidelines and policies were the most common adaptations shared for higher education and community partners. These actions are consistent with national health and safety guidelines followed by many organizations (Mahmud et al., 2021). Challenges to communication, logistics, and health/safety were felt by both organization types in other studies as well (Grilo et al., 2021; Lin & Shek, 2021; Piotrowski & King, 2020; Veyvoda & Van Cleave, 2020).

Higher education participants and community organizations rated service-learning very helpful for student success and fostering relationships. Fostering relationships had the largest statistical difference between partner types. One study did find that "community partners contribute to fostering and sustaining service-learning partnerships" (Goldberg & Atkins, 2020, para. 1); however, in this study higher education perceived service-learning as more beneficial in building relationships. Research supports both direct and indirect effects of

service-learning mediating student success (Simonet, 2008). Higher education, overall, found service-learning to be more helpful, especially as it relates to student success and fostering relationships.

Community organizations and those in higher education both identified volunteering, community-based research, and faculty expert consultations as approaches universities could take to assist community organizations outside service-learning. Benefits to the community had been identified in prior research, including accessing expertise from the university (Rinaldo et al., 2015) and finding volunteers (Jordaan & Mennega, 2022).

Implications

This study examined the differences between community partners and higher education at this unique time. The pandemic has led to a reduction in the engagement between higher education and community partners in service-learning activities. Resuming service-learning experiences will require a coordinated approach. Community partners and higher education should engage in collaborative strategies (see Table 6) to reestablish or increase community-based learning experiences in light of their respective specific challenges post pandemic.

Implications for Higher Education

A power differential may exist when a community partner relies on one or two universities. Prior research (Cronley et al., 2015; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009) has noted that power differentials can act as barriers to service-learning. Power differentials may also be a factor in perceived helpfulness differences between partner types. Overall, the perceived helpfulness of service-learning was high regardless of partner type; however, higher education may perceive service-learning as more helpful because of the academic bias in service-learning partnerships (see Tinkler et al., 2014). Fostering

Table 6. Strategies for Higher Education, Community-Based Organizations, and Improving Partnerships

Category	Implication description
Higher education	• Share missional intent of course and project with related goals and objectives. • Facilitate space for mutual knowledge sharing to increase buy-in and relationship quality. • Choose service-learning approaches that minimize impact of constraints and reduce burden on students and sites. • Opportunities should be flexible, with virtual learning and work from home environments for greater accessibility.
Community-based organizations	• Participate in co-creating service-learning by sharing mission, vision, and goals at the outset of the project. • Assume an active role in the planning process and advocate for goals and needs. • Discuss limitations of resources and staffing issues that may impact the service-learning experience. • Sharing of time, resources, and knowledge can provide legacy implications for the community.
Improving partnerships	• Continue to work to invest in maintaining established relationships, including communicating about changes in needs, wants, and/or goals. • Actively plan to mitigate unequal costs/benefits to service-learning. • Communicate regarding roles, responsibilities, accessibility, flexibility, and the ability to say no. • Follow and plan for changing health guidelines, including how to communicate during times of natural disaster or pandemic. • Build in flexibility to minimize impact of future issues.

relationships showed the most difference among partner types. One important implication for higher education (and community organizations) is that motivations differ for engaging in service-learning. To make these relationships mutually beneficial, fulfilling the mission for higher education (as their most frequent rationale for engaging in service-learning) is important to consider. Sharing with the community partners the missional intent of the course and project along with related goals and objectives is key to ensuring expectations are met. Faculty should also incorporate space to share their knowledge with community partners and allow community partners to share their knowledge in a meaningful manner (these were also frequent rationales for both partner types participating in service-learning). Such knowledge sharing may further propel participation and foster relationship building. For example, a site could be encouraged to provide a presentation highlighting a related topic. Taking a relational approach to service-learning by recognizing power dynamics, openly communicating, and sharing ownership of the process and outcomes can help guide more equitable partnerships and has been highlighted in literature on ethical service-learning (see Doran et al., 2021).

Faculty should be mindful of distinct advantages to different service-learning approaches and choose those that minimize constraints and reduce burdens on students and sites. It may be advantageous to design service-learning opportunities to be flexible by including virtual learning and work-from-home environments. Implementing indirect service-learning or e-service-learning components may provide specific advantages. For instance, indirect projects may help preserve faculty time, avoid site interaction problems, and allow additional control over student learning experiences (Heckert, 2010). Indirect and e-service-learning projects also offer advantages to students, as they may circumvent transportation, time, and cost barriers (Germain, 2019; Heckert, 2010). Planning flexibility into project design by including virtual learning options may also allow for continuation of service-learning activities in the future if campuses close (e.g., for natural disasters or pandemics; Hodges et al., 2020). The community partner can similarly benefit from being prepared for future virtual learning situations to continue service-learning in the future.

Implications for Community-Based Organizations

Research indicates that community partners use service-learning as a vehicle to establish relationships with universities and gain resources. Community partners are encouraged to cocreate service-learning, when possible, to share their mission, vision, and goals from the beginning of the project. When feasible, formalized workshops where both parties participate to develop the service-learning experience together can strengthen partnerships and learning outcomes for students (Gassman et al., 2019). Though it is primarily higher education's role to ensure the reciprocity of service-learning engagements, community partners may further enhance the relationship by playing an active role in the planning process and advocating for their goals and needs. Sharing knowledge, as community partners' most frequent reason for participating in service-learning, can be considered part of the legacy of the partnership work. Considerations for the future include talking with higher education partners about limitations of resources and staffing issues. Open conversations about logistical challenges may lead to creative solutions and further relationship building.

Karasik (2020) identified challenges for community partners related to service-learning that may provide additional insight. These included student-related challenges (time and commitment), problems aligning the university with partner needs or resources, communication concerns, cost-benefit mismatch, and reciprocity concerns that may contribute to the priority mismatch. Future considerations are still needed to address how to approach building these partnerships to be "equitable, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial," as Karasik proposed pre pandemic (2020, p. 113), a task that may be even more important and challenging now.

Partnership Implications

Since communication was reported as a top shared adaptation, partners should find ways of assessing needs and invest in maintaining relationships. Achieving clear communication is especially important since higher education–community partnerships may include long-term changes (e.g., virtual in lieu of face-to-face meetings). It may also be appropriate for higher education representatives to recognize that

their partnerships are not equally benefiting their community organization partners and to actively plan for ways to mitigate this discrepancy when planning future projects. Effective community relationships in service-learning should work to communicate shared defined roles, responsibilities, accessibility, flexibility, and the opportunity to say "no" (Sandy & Holland, 2006). Doran et al. (2021) found that community partners see the need "to have more ownership over decision-making processes as well as the importance of strong relationships grounded in open communication and consent to guide both the process and outcomes of successful service-learning partnerships" (p. 156). Specific COVID-19 partnership considerations will change as the pandemic develops, so it will be important for both partners to prepare students to follow changing health guidelines. To build in flexibility for future global or local issues, all faculty, staff, and students will need to be able to communicate effectively and have access to virtual communication. Overall, the perceived helpfulness of service-learning makes the work of communication and partnership building important for both partner types.

Limitations

This study offers several insights into community organizations and higher education views and use of community-based learning, specifically in the context of COVID-19. However, several limitations impacted the internal and external validity of the study. One primary limitation affecting internal validity is that the current study was a posttest design and included no baseline information regarding service-learning prior to COVID-19. Though we addressed specific research questions involving comparisons of participation in service-learning pre- and post-COVID-19 during the first year of the pandemic, this limitation restricts the conclusions that can be made. This study had the potential limitation of priming higher education participants when asked to identify who they had partnered with prior to questions rating helpfulness. Reflecting on these past partnerships immediately preceding the helpfulness question may have impacted their responses.

Our methodology also presented some limitations regarding the generalizability of the findings. We distributed the survey to community organizations and higher education institutions involved in service-learning by several methods, including directly emailing representatives and snowball sampling. However, our sample may not be representative of community organizations and higher education institutions that are engaged in community-based learning. The title of the project could have skewed participation toward those with an interest in service-learning. Snowball sampling could have inflated the survey response rate. Further, a primary method for recruiting participants was gathering email addresses from higher education websites; therefore, much of our participant selection was influenced by content of higher education web pages. Inclusion in the study could thus have been affected by omission of community partners from the webpage, outdated web pages, or absence of information about community partners on the website. It is also likely that the pandemic itself impacted the availability of some potential study participants.

Future Directions for Research

The current findings of this national study point to several future research directions. It would be helpful for researchers to determine the nature of the reduction of service-learning opportunities for students. This more detailed knowledge could further help the field determine what types of barriers higher education and community partners might encounter. For instance, given that some organizations were able to maintain or increase their community-based learning experiences, it would be helpful for researchers to determine those strategies or characteristics that facilitate service-learning experiences for students.

These findings may align with global experiences. However, gaps in the service-learning literature exist in community-based learning for both partner type perspectives from countries outside the United States and United Kingdom (Koekkoek et al., 2021). The global implications of COVID-19 have required similar lockdowns and social distancing; thus there is a justification for further developing these findings to see similarities or differences among countries. The National Council of Nonprofits (2020) offers resources to provide the latest information for nonprofits, to help prepare and respond to the varied impacts of COVID-19 across the United States and around the world.

Apart from effective strategies, it would also be beneficial to follow up with a qualitative inquiry about higher education and com-

munity partners who are engaged currently in this work to determine what lessons have been learned about service-learning and other community-based learning during the pandemic. With higher education and community partners continuing to encounter and navigate specific challenges, it would be beneficial to see how perceptions and experiences have shifted as we approach new phases in the pandemic.

Conclusion

This study is timely in that the societal impact of COVID-19 is emerging and dynamic. We have seized the opportunity to document higher education and community partner experiences and perceptions regarding service-learning and other community engagement at this significant time in history. Service-learning is in a unique position to offer a purposeful means of strengthening higher education–community ties in the wake of COVID-19. Community partners need student volunteers and also desire to give back through the relationship. Both community organizations and higher education can further their respective missions while reassessing communication and resource sharing. We hope that this study helps guide and inspire those who are developing service-learning partnerships.

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Appendix A. Instrument With Questions per Participant Group

Survey questions	Higher education	Community organization
Block 1. Past use of service-learning		
Definitions provided for service-learning, community-based research, community service, field experiences, internships, and volunteering	x	x
Has your institution used service-learning in the past?	x	x
Which best categorizes your organization? Higher education or Community Partner	x	x
Which category describes who you have partnered with in the past for service learning?	x	n/a
How helpful do you view service-learning? 0 = not at all helpful, 4 = extremely helpful • Student success • Fostering relationships • Agency outcomes	x	x
Block 2. Demographics		
Which category BEST describes your agency or organization?	x	x
What is the size of your student body	x	n/a
Size of organization	x	x
Block 3. Based on Karasik (2020) questionnaire		
Which BEST describes your current job description?	x	x
Based upon the earlier definitions, which of the following types of Community-University based partnerships does your agency currently (or has previously) participated in?	x	x
How many different colleges/universities does your organization currently partner with for community-based learning?	n/a	x
Approximately how many college students do you currently work with on service-learning projects?	n/a	x
In the past, at this time of the year and before COVID-19, approximately how many college students would you be working with on service-learning projects?	n/a	x
Which of the following represent reasons YOUR agency participates in community-based learning with college students?	x	x

Continued on next page

Appendix A. Continued

Survey questions	Higher education	Community organization
Block 4. Questions about change due to COVID-19		
How many community partners does your agency currently have?	x	n/a
What considerations have you made to facilitate service-learning due to the impact of COVID-19?	x	x
Block 5. Questions about service-learning in the future		
How do you see the University assisting with meeting community partner needs outside of service-learning?	x	x

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The Perils of Expert Privilege: Analyzing, Understanding, and Reimagining Expertise in University–Community–Societal Relations

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Abstract

The democratization of knowledge is liberating *and* has presented some new and difficult challenges. When everyone can position themselves as an expert, how do we create new frames of intellectual and pragmatic knowledge with integrity? How do we understand the histories of expert privilege and harm that have led us to this time of uncertainty? And finally, how do we work productively across different types of expertise to ensure that community voice, academic voice, and professional voice (and the overlapping nexus within) connect for epistemic and social justice? In this article, we explore the harm and capacity to dehumanize through expert privilege and focus on economics as a disciplinary case study. We critically examine the factors that often lead to dehumanizing practices, interrogate where our own power and privilege need to be checked and understood, and articulate/imagine community engagement practices that might bring about epistemic justice as a reparative opportunity.

Keywords: community-engaged scholarship, ethics, economics, human rights, social justice

As social scientists, humanists, economists, and practitioners of engagement scholarship, we have grown increasingly concerned about both the widening gap and the mistrust growing between academic expertise, universities, and the public. This is an especially notable disconnect as community engagement becomes a more prominent feature of university strategic plans, academic learning, and espoused values of institutions. Nonetheless, we find ourselves making and remaking the same ingrained systems of inequality that "other" and disempower community voice. From a social justice lens, the implicit biases that are held in the academy and in communities can lead to epistemic injustice—preventing many ways of knowing and forms of expertise from being honored and legitimized. We face this critical challenge: How do we, in disciplines and frameworks that are so ingrained in community, challenge the "otherness" of dehumanization and disempowerment while embracing openness to, and learning from, the harms that our well-intentioned efforts may cause others?

Although some of our work lies in challenging and reimagining systems, we must first start with a hard look inward, as individual practices can re-entrench systemic inequities. Teachers, educators, researchers, and scientists hold a place of influence on lives, knowledge mobilization, public opinion, and public policy. In addition, we, the authors of this piece, also acknowledge our privilege as White people and White academics and the responsibility of using that privilege accordingly—from following the lead when BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) experts are already doing the work and making the way to calling in White colleagues to the work in responsible ways. Epistemic injustice across community knowledge and university knowledge exists, as does devaluation of BIPOC voices within the academy. If we are to address our role in dismantling inequitable systems

and participating in reparative practices, we must first understand our positionality and capacity for good and for harm.

Our collective failures call on us to reflect, to inquire into our culpability in the perpetuation of such injustice. When we do, we find ample grounds for concern. We surface an uncomfortable truth: White academic experts hold a privilege that amplifies the recommendations and findings of their work and prioritizes their voice over those of their colleagues of color (Dupree & Boykin, 2021). This privileging, in turn, means that those who might be missing out on cultural responsiveness or local/traditional knowledge are making recommendations that are directly affecting communities of which they are not a part. This decision-making has the potential to deeply harm historically marginalized communities. To dismantle systems that perpetuate disempowerment of and indifference to the suffering of our BIPOC colleagues, friends, and community members, White scholars must confront our role in upholding them.

The privilege of Whiteness parallels and is overlaid with other sources and forms of privilege, as scholars on intersectionality have by now documented at length. For this article, we will identify one that often goes unexamined: the privilege that flows through experts across academic disciplines and other professions. Experts pursue influence on the belief that a world in which they enjoy influence will be better for all when their voices and recommendations are heard and implemented. Yet so often these recommendations come from a top-down, external view that yields unintended consequences that disempower and marginalize community expertise. Regardless of intention, the impact of disregard or ignorance of the community voice, local knowledge, and cultural context can harm and/or retraumatize communities and build new systems of inequity.

In what follows, we describe a process by which academics and experts harm communities due to arm's-length theorizing and experimentation. We begin by probing the contradictions of expert privilege, both because we find those contradictions to be deeply consequential for society (and the experts themselves) and because we think that attention to these contradictions helps to illuminate the contradictions of other forms of privilege—not least, White privilege. We take as our case the economics profession, owing to its outsize influence over public policy and community "development." We emphasize that these parallel, overlapping, and reinforcing forms of privilege influence the complicated and sometimes fraught relationships between the ivory tower and the communities that academics hope to serve. Some of these wrongs are traceable to dangerous misperceptions on the part of largely White experts in the academy with what appear to be the best of intentions, armed with the best research strategies, who define their work in terms of social betterment.

Grounding Our Understanding of Social and Epistemic Justice

The concept of social justice has many approaches, definitions, and underlying assumptions that can alter how it is understood and actualized. Tejeda et al. (2003) urged us to explicitly define the term to explain the framing that grounds one's projects and politics, for definitions and meanings are never neutral. They proposed a set of questions that must be posed to one's own definition to interrogate it: "What ideologies underlie particular notions of social justice? Who benefits from the instantiation of those notions? At whose expense are those notions instantiated?"

Historically, the concept of social justice as specifically equated to human well-being can be traced back to Plato (ca. 375 B.C.E./1974), who stated that justice is "derived from the harmony between reason, spirit, and appetite present in all persons." Aristotle (ca. 340 B.C.E./1980) then built upon that understanding to emphasize a resource framework, whereby the inequities of resources are the sources of conflict and aggression. Over time and iteration, the base of this definition has held, while developing more explicit connections to concepts such as racial justice, which is a direct response to racist systems to form a more just society (Adams et al., 2007; Bell 2019). Emerging in the last decade are more explicit explorations of the role of higher education in social justice, focusing on the role of community–university partnerships as a developer of civic self-efficacy and change agent self-concept in marginalized youth (Hipolito-Delgado & Zion, 2017). The transformative potential of these relationships is great, and the need to build habits of mind and practice that help realize that potential is critical.

For the purpose of this article—drawing from our own understanding grounded in the literature—we define social justice as both a conceptual framework and a call to action. With this active orientation, we affirm that rights and responsibilities exist within each of us to build that fabric of a just society. We choose to ground this not as a virtue, but rather through the social psychological definition of a set of benefits and burdens, social structures, and ethos such that:

> (a) benefits and burdens in society are dispersed in accordance with some allocation principle (or set of principles); (b) procedures, norms, and rules that govern political and other forms of decision making preserve the basic rights, liberties, and entitlements of individuals and groups; and (c) human beings (and perhaps other species) are treated with dignity and respect not only by authorities but also by other relevant social actors, including fellow citizens. (Jost & Kay, 2010)

For us to embody mutually responsible forms of community engagement, it is crucial that we address the problem of expert-induced harm. Moral questions arise in the context of professional practices and interventions that generate harm to some in order to benefit others. Furthermore, some community-engaged practices and pedagogies can put undue burdens or impositions on the very same stakeholders who are the intended beneficiaries of said intervention. All of us are concerned with harms imposed by experts on vulnerable individuals and groups—Indigenous communities, women-identifying individuals, LGBTQ individuals, communities of color, immigrants, religious minorities, working people, and others. We are concerned with the impact of professionals who achieve authority owing to their apparent monopolization of expertise and their presumed moral authority that derives from their membership in the body of professionals who commit to service to others.

To reflect on our own framing and identities, we must not ignore that we can only speak to our own experiences as White academics and the resulting harm that colleagues who look like us and have had the privilege of Whiteness can do—implicitly or explicitly—by wielding expertise. But we also must be clear, that we do not exclude the potential for all academic experts—inclusive of marginalized and intersectional identities—to both harm and repair. Dupree and Boykin (2021) called our attention to the "reawakening" stemming from protests like #BlackintheAcademy that highlighted the systemic, exclusionary nature of the academy and the ways in which predominantly White institutions (PWIs) can create structures of belonging and acceptance that demand conforming or shifting one's identity or work (p. 11). These structures are reinforced through practices such as downplaying or undervaluing knowledge of BIPOC communities and enforcing certain standards of rigor or thematic relevance that are rooted in White supremacy.

Buenavista et al. (2021) called out the systems that have conditioned BIPOC scholars to think and act in ways that are individualistic and exact harm, perpetuating a cycle that dehumanizes them and their communities. They advocate for disrupting that system through a praxis of critical race love (PCRL)—creating spaces that center voices of those who are traditionally marginalized, rather than adopting or adapting oppressive practices, and prioritizing Indigenous and local knowledge. Schaefer et al. (2021) provided, for instance, a complex and aspirational model rooted in Indigenous community-based participatory research to frame how community–university research partnerships can lead to restorative and epistemic justice. The point here is recognizing that remaking systems of oppression through re-norming and re-entrenching practices that disregard Indigenous thought, traditional knowledge, and many ways of knowing—through codifying what is or is not scholarship, as an example—does not further the cause for epistemic justice. There is much to be done and that is being done in this area, and we are speaking to one slice of how professional expertise can harm communities from our contexts and identities.

In this piece, our reflective objectives include the cultivation of (a) a deeper self-awareness of the ways in which features of our practice enable intolerance; (b) a sense of how to name injustice in ways that do not contribute to discourses of antipathy and divisiveness; and (c) a sense of how professionals can intervene responsibly as equal partners in projects of social reform rather than as privileged subjects that deserve deference.

We also call attention to our own privilege—in terms of education, race, sexual orientation, and geography. The unexamined White supremacy that undergirds many of our systems of assessment and evaluation must be reckoned with, starting with one's own position and power. We eagerly take on that critical work and engage in a larger dialogue that will hopefully continue to shape and change our educational systems and society. We are not shy to look squarely at the systems that unevenly or unfairly benefit us and ask what we could, can, and are/are not doing to dismantle those systems. That critical reflection starts with asking about the capacity to dehumanize and other through academia and what we can do to change. Active or passive, White supremacy harms communities and undermines our ability to affect the positive, asset-based community engagement we aspire to as a movement.

Further, this type of academic reckoning—to borrow the framing from the work of Seidule (2020)—can serve as part of a larger reparative structure as we try to unmake these unjust systems. Reparations, as defined by United Nations Resolution 60, are actions to be taken to account for egregious human rights violations throughout history (United Nations General Assembly, 2005). They are owed to the victims or those who bear the burden of those violations—which include in our history chattel slavery, internment, illegal or immoral land acquisition, and racist policies (e.g., Jim Crow–era regulations). Also outlined in that resolution is a fivefold strategy for remedy and reparation that includes restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction, and guarantees of nonrepetition. Epistemic justice cuts across each of these strategies as an opportunity to give a space for voices to be recognized and affirmed, provides a forum to bear witness, recommends tangible reparative actions, informs policy and legislation to ensure understanding of systemic injustices, grapples with our shared history, and mobilizes knowledge to prevent future atrocities (Almassi, 2018; Bhambra, 2021).

Academics have a right and responsibility to pursue and secure epistemic justice within this reparative framing. We take an active, critical, and generative approach to understanding social and epistemic justice, its application, and the ongoing mobilization of knowledge for this reparative journey. This iterative and active approach can surface deep contradictions in our personal and professional identities.

On the Contradictions of Expertise: Knowing More, Knowing Too Little

Expertise inherently entails epistemic advantage: an injustice that already sets the field with knowledge-based "haves" and "have-nots." Experts are understood to possess knowledge about their subject matter and research methods that is informed by education and experience above and beyond that of the wider community. We call the resulting condition one of epistemic asymmetry—to be a professional is to *know more* than those individuals and communities that professionals target with their interventions (DeMartino, 2013; Hardwig, 1994). This asymmetry leads to a clear tension between legitimate interests and unwarranted privilege.

The professional–community relationship is taken to be characterized by a second kind of asymmetry that is just as consequential as the first. To be a professional is to take a secular oath, figuratively and sometimes explicitly. Professionals are expected to seek to promote the interests, welfare, and rights of others, over and above the promotion of their own interests. Ethicist William May (2001) referred to this duty as the "professional's covenant":

> The professional's covenant, in my judgment, opens out in three directions that help distinguish professionals from careerists: the professional professes something (a body of knowledge and experience); on behalf of someone (or some institution); and in the setting of colleagues. This summary definition highlights three distinguishing marks: *intellectual* (what one professes), *moral* (on behalf of whom one professes), and *organizational* (with whom one professes). These distinguishing marks call for three correlative virtues—practical wisdom, fidelity, and public spiritedness. (p. 7; emphasis in original)

To be a professional, then, is to live a life of service to others. Used car salespersons are presumed to serve their own interests, not those of the customer—even when they may go to great lengths to earn the customer's trust. The customer who loses sight

of a salesperson's self-interest is apt to be exploited in the exchange. Not so with the professional. The physician benefits from the dependence of their patients, but the physician is expected to enter the relationship with the patient driven above all else by the patient's rights and interests. Whereas car sales might represent an occupation, the professions represent a *calling*—one that is founded on the duty to serve those who need the professional's expertise.

These two asymmetries give rise to a range of consequences. One is professional privilege. Knowing more, and motivated by the best of intentions, the professional is to be accorded a degree of autonomy. To varying degrees, professions enjoy self-governance. This entails varying degrees of control over who can enter their ranks—including what training and credentials are required to join a profession—standards of performance (including the authority to judge the quality of work of each member), expectations as concern conduct, conditions for the removal of a member from the profession, and so forth. Because of the twin asymmetries, professions claim the rights of self-governance since, it is presumed, nonexperts could not appropriately govern the profession. Self-governance is treated not as a privilege in service of the profession's members, but as a duty in service of society.

Ethicist Daniel Wueste helped to draw these features together. Describing the features of professionalism, he listed the following: (1) centrality of abstract knowledge in the performance of occupational tasks; (2) social significance of the tasks the professional performs—professional activity promotes basic social values; (3) claiming to be better situated/qualified than others to pronounce and act on certain matters, even beyond the interests and affairs of clients and in various aspects of society, life, and nature; (4) being governed in their professional conduct by role-specific norms rather than the norms that govern human conduct generally; and (5) usually working in bureaucratic institutions (Wueste, 1994, p. 11).

A particular professional ethic often arises because of the asymmetries examined here. Since experts know far more than the community at large, *experts take on an ethical burden to do what they believe to be best for those they serve*. This motivation bleeds easily and perhaps inevitably into the ethic of paternalism. The case of medical ethics is instructive. The paternalistic, physician-knows-best conception of medical practice survived intact up until the 1960s in the United States (and even up to the present in many other countries). As late as that, it was widely considered appropriate for a physician to lie to a patient or manipulate a patient to get them to do what the doctor thought best. But U.S. events in the 1960s upset this approach to medical practice. Trust in expertise began to give way in the face of movements for empowerment of nonexpert individuals. Patients' rights movements arose to challenge what were increasingly seen to be illicit medical privileges. In the 1960s, litigation led to a series of court decisions that substantially empowered the patient in the physician–patient relationship. In 1966 the U.S. FDA called for prior informed consent in medical experiments. Then, in 1972, the landmark *Canterbury v. Spence* decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals (Washington, DC) finally overturned the physician's authority in *treatment* by finding that "the patient's right of self-decision shapes the boundaries of the duty to reveal" (Sharpe & Faden, 1998). Two years later, in response to the Tuskegee Syphilis Study that inequitably and inhumanely targeted African American men, the National Research Act established Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedures—where other experts must decide what are and are not reasonable research protocols before research can proceed (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). In 1978 the publication of the Belmont Report by the U.S. National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research formalized the duties of medical researchers toward research subjects. Its core principles include respect for persons (autonomy), beneficence (including nonmaleficence), and justice. These principles soon came to govern medical treatment as well. Taken together, by the 1970s "professional paternalism was increasingly challenged by the publicly and politically-forged ethos of patient self-determination" (Sharpe & Faden, 1998, p. 67). The patients' rights challenge shifted the locus of decision-making from the doctor to the patient. Sullivan (2017) reimagined the role of medical provider and their expertise as a pathway to empowerment:

> My department chairman likes to cite the Japanese proverb, "None of us is as smart as all of us." Freire reminds us that we must engage

> patients as already active knowers and problem-solvers if we are to accomplish empowerment rather than mere banking of knowledge. (p. 301)

Despite this ethical advance in medical practice, however, several professions continue to be guided at least implicitly by a paternalistic ethos even today. We explore the case of economics as a disciplinary focus and then branch outward to consider the field and movement of community engagement to further challenge our understanding of how university-scholar-community partnerships can be powerful agents of change or problematic partnerships that recreate systems of injustice.

Epistemic Insufficiency

Even as experts enjoy epistemic advantage over nonexperts, they often know far too little outside their area of expertise to do much of what they seek to do. Professionals face epistemic insufficiency. In applying treatments to individuals and groups, they often run up against the boundaries of their expertise. Beyond these boundaries lies the domain of *reparable* ignorance, defined as what they do not yet know but may someday know, and *irreparable* ignorance, defined by what they cannot in principle ever know (DeMartino & Grabel, 2020). Even reparable ignorance poses severe problems for the expert. The expert may immediately need knowledge that cannot be available until later—after the period when the knowledge was needed. What matters is whether the knowledge can be gained at the moment it is needed to formulate effective interventions. Sometimes, the knowledge can be gained only by making the decision and seeing what comes of it. The hiker lost in the woods asks, are these berries food, or are they poisonous? The hiker may only be able to find out by eating them, in which case the knowledge that they are in fact poisonous arrives too late.

Epistemic insufficiency presents enormous ethical problems for experts. An expert who faces ignorance is in a position to cause unintended and perhaps even unforeseeable harm when they apply their expertise to individual clients or to communities. The greater the influence, and the more restricted the domain of knowledge, the greater the risk of grave harm. Virtuous professionals must confront the fact that they cause harm—and that, sometimes, the harms might be widespread, deep, and even irreparable.

We posit that this condition induces severe discomfort among many experts, especially in those fields where the risk of harming is most acute. We posit further that the way the profession manages this problem is enormously consequential for the communities they serve. And we posit, finally, that sometimes professions manage the problem in ways that are disturbing and deeply damaging. To make this case, we explore next the economics profession.

The Privilege and Perils of the Economics Profession

Economics represents a paradigmatic case of the perils of professionalism and expert-induced harm. Economists certainly know more than others about their field of expertise. The epistemic asymmetry here is vast, such that even other highly qualified professionals in the academy find it difficult to interpret and judge economic analysis. A notable epistemic obstacle is the extreme "mathiness" in which the profession undertakes its work and communicates its findings (Romer, 2015, p. 89). Moreover, economists monopolize knowledge in an area that is taken to be of central importance to society. How the economy functions affects every one of us. Economists therefore expect a degree of deference by policymakers and the public. Indeed, since the founding of the American Economic Association in the late 19th century, the profession has worked hard to increase its influence over matters of public policy (DeMartino, 2011). In that campaign the profession has been very successful—successful, that is, until the 2016 election and the ensuing casting out of experts from positions of power.

But economists face an extraordinary degree of irreparable ignorance, as a long list of economic iconoclasts have warned us. The list includes eminent economists such as John Maynard Keynes, Frank Knight, and G. L. S. Shackle—and more recently, Deirdre McCloskey, Julie Nelson, Nassim Taleb, David Ruccio, and Jack Amariglio, to name just a few. The critics make a series of claims about the limits to economic expertise. One is that economics is largely oriented to knowledge of the future. We want to know about economic relationships, flows, and outcomes so that we can exploit this knowledge to craft policy interventions today that will bring about good

outcomes tomorrow. However, as all these critics have emphasized in one way or another, the future is simply unknowable. We cannot ever know the full range of effects of today's interventions on tomorrow's world. Even the best economic interventions, then, crafted by the most qualified and virtuous economists using the most advanced techniques, are apt to induce all manner of unintended effects, many of which will be harmful to others. *Econogenic* (economist-induced) harm is an ineradicable feature of economists' practice.

A second cause of econogenic harm deserves mention and, unlike irreparable ignorance, has attracted much attention by the profession. Economic interventions affect many people all at once. Even a local, municipal-level economic policy intervention can affect hundreds of thousands of people directly, and millions more indirectly. National and international policy interventions affect many more. A multilateral trade initiative, for instance, can impact billions of people. The problem is, as economists have recognized for well over a century, that economic interventions almost always have disparate effects—harming some even while benefiting others. This principle applies to small-scale, municipal interventions, and its import grows as the scale and reach of an intervention expand. And the harms can be and too often are deep, long-lasting, and even fatal—especially for those communities that are most vulnerable. The case of economic austerity illuminates the relevant risks (see Blythe, 2013; Stuckler & Basu, 2013).

How has the profession dealt with this problem? The simple answer is that it has come to embrace what philosopher Howard Radest (1997) referred to as "moral geometry" to evaluate policy initiatives that will induce both harms and benefits. Moral geometry involves resolving fraught ethical issues by solving simple math problems. For instance, the Kaldor-Hicks compensation test urges economists to support any policy where the gains to the winners exceed the losses to the losers. This test provides the ethical grounding for cost–benefit analysis, which is the chief implement in the economists' toolkit for assessing policy. The use of cost–benefit analysis to adjudicate policy requires a set of extraordinary assumptions about pricing nonmarket goods, like health and even human life, that have been subjected to extensive critique by critics of the profession. For present purposes, we want to emphasize that moral geometry permits the profession to view itself as fulfilling its moral mandate to promote social welfare in the face of even severe hardship that economic practice can and sometimes does induce. Gains to the "winners" from policy interventions are too often taken as sufficient to justify even egregious harms to the "losers," and within these transactions, those roles and labels are made concrete.

Moral Exclusion

We submit that recognition of the fact that economists harm as they seek to help is apt to induce cognitive trauma among the most self-aware economists—and even to immobilize them since acting can and so often does generate harm. One way that some in the profession seem to have managed this trauma, we worry, is to engage in moral exclusion of those who are apt to be harmed by economists' preferred interventions. Susan Opotow (1990) famously defined moral exclusion this way:

> Moral exclusion occurs when individuals or groups are perceived as *outside the boundary in which moral values, rules, and considerations of fairness apply*. Those who are morally excluded are perceived as nonentities, expendable, or undeserving. Consequently, harming or exploiting them appears to be appropriate, acceptable, or just. (p. 1; emphasis in original)

When moral exclusion is successful, the professional comes to exhibit "moral indifference," where the suffering of others is taken to be necessary, natural, or unavoidable—and therefore undeserving of moral concern (Pemberton, 2015).

We find evidence of these processes in economics. Here we can give one stark example that we offer as indicative of a much wider tendency in the field. Through the 1980s and 1990s the world's most influential economists advanced a political project to liberalize economies the world over, especially in the global South and then in the former Soviet Union. This project amounted to social engineering on a world scale—to nothing less than a revolution in economic arrangements. At the time the profession exploited not only the authority derived from its epistemic advantage, but also the influence that came from its institutional

power—its influence over the decisions and actions of the world's leading economic ministries and the chief multilateral agencies, such as the IMF and the World Bank. The operative ethic was that the countries targeted for neoliberal reform were in crisis, that economists were uniquely qualified to diagnose and prescribe, and that unlike the self-interested political and civic leaders in these societies, economists were driven by the unimpeachable duty to serve others, not themselves. Armed with these precepts and authority, the profession promoted dramatic, immediate economic transformation. Economists knew that some would be harmed, even severely, by the transformation. However, they presumed to know that the effects would be short-lived, and that soon societies would be better off on account of the economists' interventions. Little attention was given to the limits to economic expertise—to the extraordinary degree of irreparable ignorance that the profession faced as it undertook to initiate a global economic experiment (DeMartino, 2011).

Knowing that there would be victims who would resist the transformation, leading economists advocated for immediate "shock therapy" to complete the job before those who would be harmed could organize to resist. Jeffrey Sachs deserves mention in this connection, though his views were widely shared by the leading lights in the profession (see Murrell, 1995). Sachs advocated to policymakers in Russia and elsewhere that the economic transformation should happen all at once, before opposition could take root (Angner, 2006; Sachs, 1992; Wedel, 2001). The advice to officials in transition economies was, in the words of Sachs, to "figure out how much society can take, and then move three times quicker than that." To drive home the point, Sachs cited approvingly the words of a Polish economist: "You don't try to cross a chasm in two jumps" (Sachs, 2019, p. 236). In Poland in 1989, he assured nervous legislators that "the crisis will be over in six months" (Wedel, 2001, pp. 21).

Given the absence of historical precedents for economic transformations of this scale, the reformers subjected countries to a grand economic experimentation without sufficient knowledge—let alone the permission—of those who would be most harmed by the interventions. Driven by the paternalistic ethic, economists enacted policies and designed institutions that they surely believed to be in the best interests of these communities. Shock therapy was intended to get the job done before the likely victims could push back. The justification was clear: The economist has the virtue and expertise necessary to do what is best for those impacted by the intervention. No one else could be entrusted to make the right decisions.

In some cases, the resulting harm was severe. A prominent study reported in *The Lancet* found that Russia, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia suffered a tripling of unemployment and a 41% increase in male death rates between 1991 and 1994, immediately following privatization (Stuckler et al., 2009). Factoring out other determinants, the researchers concluded that there were direct linkages between the programs and an array of irreparable harms. Between 1991 and 1994, life expectancy in Russia dropped by as much as 4.7 years overall and by 6.2 years for men (Angner, 2006). More recently, Stuckler and Basu (2013) found that "ten million Russian men disappeared in the early 1990s." These were relatively young men who were thrown out of work in industrial cities across Russia immediately following privatization of the enterprises where they worked. Stuckler and Basu found that in comparison with those Central and East European countries that pursued a more gradual transition to the market economy, Russia and others that were subjected to shock therapy suffered severe erosions in public health, with the effects on mortality noted above.

A second feature of the push for neoliberalism was the campaign to secure new "free-trade" agreements that would open the world economy to international competition in markets for goods and services. By the early 1990s an oppositional movement had arisen in the United States, Canada, and beyond. The "fair traders" demanded that any new trade agreements (such as the proposed North American Free Trade Agreement and the World Trade Organization) ensure protection of labor, human, and women's rights, along with strong environmental standards. The movement induced a quick and sharp backlash by leading trade economists. This case is significant for our purposes since trade theorists have known for close to a century that trade liberalization induces uneven effects. In this case even the proponents of free trade recognized that

many would be harmed by the policy intervention. Paul Krugman was among the most vocal free-trader critics of fair trade. He argued famously that the fair traders were deceitful—claiming to defend the rights and interests of those in poorer countries as a guise to protect their own self-interest—or ignorant of basic economic principles. As he put it (Krugman, 1997), "In short, [fair traders] are not entitled to their self-righteousness. They have not thought the matter through. And when the hopes of hundreds of millions are at stake, thinking things through is not just good intellectual practice. It is a moral duty."

Elsewhere (Krugman, 2001) he argued against fair trade as a "serious position," speaking to a culturally relativistic understanding of acceptable conditions for workers. He affirmed, "Third-world countries . . . can't have those export industries unless they are allowed to sell goods produced under conditions that Westerners find appalling, by workers who receive very low wages. And that's a fact the anti-globalization activists refuse to accept." Krugman reiterated this critique repeatedly up until 2007, when he changed his mind and came to endorse the fair-trade position (see Krugman, 2007). By then, unfortunately, the free-trade agreements he had pressed for during the 1990s had wrought substantial damage, especially by promoting income inequality in the liberalizing economies (Autor et al., 2016; Goldberg & Pavcnik, 2007).

With others, we submit that the misuse of expertise in economics helps to account for the illiberal turn in U.S. and world politics over the past decade (See DeMartino, 2018). In our view, leading economists, driven by the best of intentions and exploiting the privilege that expert authority granted them, induced widespread and deep harm for many they purported to serve. Driven by a paternalistic ethos, they did not feel the need to engage respectfully with those who would be targeted by their interventions. In so doing, we further submit, the profession helped to engender the foot soldiers for the rejection of expertise that recent "populist" politicians have exploited to pursue their various illiberal projects.

We end this short discussion of the profession with one final claim. Economists wielding their expertise find it appropriate to *experiment on* those they purport to serve. Given the severe epistemic limits they face, after all, all economic policy interventions are experimental in nature. What is missing here is collaboration as equals between economists and those on whom they experiment. Professional privilege has been taken as a warrant to impose preferred policy interventions. Missing, then, is a partnership in which economists *experiment with* those they purport to serve. Missing here, too, is full recognition of the autonomy and integrity of communities who will bear the brunt of economic interventions. We fear that in these respects, the economics profession exhibits attitudes and behaviors that are associated with other forms of privilege—such as White privilege that affects our participation in the academy, and in our work that bridges the gap between the ivory tower and outside communities. To that matter we now turn.

Community-Engaged Research and Learning: The Problem and the Solution

Identifying the Tensions in Community Engagement

Using economics as a case study, we can easily see how discipline-specific experts can cause harm simply by providing a detached set of recommendations for policy or initiatives that disempower, degrade, or destroy communities. A more nuanced or quietly complicated context for us to evaluate is that of community engagement. Community engagement can be a practice or strategy by which economics, sociology, or any other discipline can be understood, spread, or implemented. However, community engagement can also be examined as a field that itself has professional norms, ethics, assumptions, and a scholarship that critically examines its practices.

Despite best intentions or dedication to social justice aims, some of the most prominent examples of dehumanization by experts in communities come from the place we least expect it: community-university partnerships. At its most innocuous, a detachment from reality or impact leads to a "relevance gap" of research in which what is precious to the researcher or the field is of little use to society at large (Beebeejaun et al., 2015). The example here is of work that is so far afield from what is needed in communities that research is perceived as a flight of fancy or a rarefied individual experience. At its worst, community engagement

that is not grounded in participatory ethics and community voice can cause true harm: psychological, structural, economic, health, to name a few. Beebeejaun et al. pointed to two distinct challenges—the public value model that is rooted in a "do no harm" mentality that allows for minimal harm if a larger good is being produced (research governance—by whose standard?) and the emerging models of participatory action research that leverages reflexive and generative models across stakeholders to bring about public good (research practice). In this tension, we find the power to either move communities toward more thriving or undercut their autonomy and efficacy. Much like the delineation between "not a racist" and "antiracist," one must take an active orientation to do no harm rather than to adopt a neutral or virtuous position assuming piety through good works. Community engagement that can dehumanize includes community-as-lab paradigms, grant "partnerships" with consolidated decision-making power, absence of community voice in publishing and presentations, dysfunctional rescuing, White savior narratives, and other disempowering structures where the community is an add-on versus the catalyst.

The late physician and anthropologist Paul Farmer described the archetype of the "White liberal" (WL)—a very specific type of positivist, problem-solving progressive who believes that "problems can be fixed without any cost to themselves" (Kidder, 2009, p. 40). Most who read this article will be able to spot the characteristics clearly: those who consider themselves learned, progressive in their politics, well-intentioned in their heart, and utterly oblivious to their role in inflicting harm or upholding unjust systems. But this is not a binary or an individual character flaw. We see examples of the tendencies associated with WLs throughout higher education. Most of us in the academy, including (we hasten to add) we three authors, are easily seduced by these features of professional practice. We are often pursuing projects, performing research, or making policy recommendations with good intentions for community or societal change with insufficient humility or recognition of the perils of privilege. Farmer and his colleagues bemoaned WLs' inability to reflect, sacrifice, and change in the face of complex systems with clear ethical implications. What underpins these ideas is White supremacy and privilege and colonial legacies. There are assumptions in the models of many well-meaning White folks that recreate the very structures they believe they are working against and perpetuate narratives that are at best derogatory and at worst dangerous.

Long before Farmer identified this phenomenon, Illich (1968/n.d.) delivered a scathing rebuke to such do-gooders in his seminal speech to the Conference on InterAmerican Student Projects (CIASP) in Cuernavaca, Mexico. He railed against the one-sided "giver" identity of volunteers working outside cultural contexts that they understood and prescribing solutions technical and philosophical. Programs such as the Peace Corps and Engineers Without Borders (EWB), as well as initiatives such as medical volunteering or external expert-driven assessments, have given us some shocking stories of mishandling of community knowledge, harm, and cultural misinformation—from the engineering solutions that disrupt social norms to medical practice for unskilled volunteers in the global South (Sullivan, 2016). At the same time, EWB has given us some important lessons in expertise, from the students who articulated that they saw their community partners as expert teachers to the ethical challenges they faced that caused a transformative shift in their self-identity around community responsibility (Litchfield, 2014). Again, this is not to point out an inherent evil in the partnerships that have such hope for change, but rather a call to continually reflect and reorient our compass toward the values of justice that must hold up this work for it to meet the goals we so desperately assume we are working toward.

J. K. Gibson-Graham (Katherine Gibson, Australian National University in Canberra, and Julie Graham, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, who wrote as a single persona from 1992 until Graham's death in 2010) has described a new political imaginary. They analyzed, nurtured, and celebrated the reality, opportunities, and challenges of community economies. People all over the world are finding ways of shaping their economic lives to recognize the power of interdependence, not a "common being" but a "being in common." J. K. Gibson-Graham described the ways in which people embody interdependence in such economic practices as employee buyouts in the United States, worker takeovers in the wake of economic crisis in Argentina, the anti-sweatshop movement, shareholder

movements "that promote ethical investments and police the enforcement of corporate environmental and social responsibility," the living wage movement, efforts to institute a universal basic income, and social entrepreneurship. These are all part of a community economy "that performs economy in new ways."

J. K. Gibson-Graham (2006) built on the insights of queer theory and political and feminist theory and organizing, emphasizing that shared questions often lead to different answers. Just as there is no one way to be a feminist, there is no single way to perform economic relations justly. There are, however, salient questions, choices to be made in each situation. Here the economy becomes the product of ethical decision-making, different ways of answering the same questions: "What is necessary to personal and social survival? How social surplus is appropriated and distributed? How social surplus is to be distributed and consumed? How is a commons produced and sustained?" (p. 88). In making these choices, Gibson-Graham made a claim as startling as that of there being no preferred model of economic justice: *It is as difficult for workers to live within community economies as it is for owners*. For all of us, the challenge of new forms of subjectivity, sociality, and interdependence are "best shaped by practical curiosity as opposed to moral certainty about alternatives to capitalism (p. 159)."

Identifying the Areas of Opportunity in Community Engagement

Although community engagement has its share of challenges, it has also provided us ample space to innovate and grow with regard to more counternormative, inclusive, and just practices. Thus, we ask: What are the alternative structures to break this cycle of expert-induced harm? How do we identify privilege and work to mitigate it in our work? And, finally, how might we design more equitable, inclusive, and transformatively reciprocal relationships that identify the expertise across contexts (university, community, disciplinary, etc.)?

Identifying structures of White supremacy and privilege, colonialism, and bureaucracy that sometimes confound our work, we look to promising practices that could hold the key to more humane scholarship and community engagement practices. These include democratic community engagement (DCE) and democratically engaged assessment (DEA), appreciative inquiry, radical mutuality, Fair Trade Learning (FTL), and an increased call for and examples of decolonized learning and assessment practices. We seek new thinking on artifacts of "expertise" such as assessment and theoretical model creation, as well as "found pilots"—projects, practices, or events in which the future is already beginning to show up—to amplify and share to the larger learning community. Thinking of practical steps toward addressing and actively dismantling some of these unjust systems, we offer the following suggestions:

1. Name and challenge colonial, technocratic, or White supremacist conventions and privilege in our work and our fields.
2. Address democratic versus technocratic engagement explicitly and adopt more democratic frames of engagement.
3. Adopt a mindset of appreciative inquiry, radical mutuality, and humility in our work to bring about epistemic justice.
4. Reimagine and reclaim structures we often accept without question, such as assessment, scholarship, and data.

For each of these action steps, we elaborate below on their characteristics and framing. We conclude each section with a critical reflection question for scholar-practitioners to focus on their own work and ask what can be done to further practices of justice.

Name and Challenge Colonial, Technocratic, or White Supremacist Conventions and Privilege in Our Work and Our Fields

Regarding the self-work that must be performed to develop this capacity to challenge, name, and interrogate our systems and ourselves, Daly (1978/2016) described a related process of "learning innocence," noting that the root of the word innocence is *innocere*, "to not harm." In author Welch's work, she reflects on Daly's conceptual framing:

> "Not harming" is something we learn, a continual task that expands as our ability to affect the lives of others expands. We will always need to learn innocence. As our social worlds change and our individual responsibilities change, there will be more opportunities for harm, thus the necessity of learning again how to respect and honor the life around us (Welch, 2000, p. 174).

One example of that ongoing work can be seen in the Summer 2020 training offered by Academics for Black Survival and Wellness. The training, an open-access weeklong intensive offered to anyone who wished to attend and commit to the work, was an opportunity for participants to critically reflect upon and retool their own teaching, advising, and scholarship with a justice-focused lens. Learning networks such as these, where scholars are explicitly called in to question their own privilege and initiate action steps toward antiracist teaching and research—and learn to intentionally choose not to harm—are crucial to transforming the system.

This transformation also hinges upon talking about the work and our partnerships in ways that are asset-based and appreciative. In Tuck's (2009) open letter, she implored the larger community-engaged research community to move past the "damage-centered" research, or the research that aims to bring about positive change by surfacing narratives of pain and holding oppressors accountable. Her central thesis is that this type of research concretizes narratives of pain that, although intended to bring about positive change, end up doing more harm by reinforcing narratives of disempowerment and vulnerability. It oftentimes positions the researcher as the creator of solutions and external force of good, and the community as a recipient.

To counter this giver–recipient paradigm attitude, we can look at the work of organizations such as Amizade and the work of authors Hartman et al. (2014) on the concept of Fair Trade Learning. Fair Trade Learning (FTL) is a framework that upholds reciprocity as the key value of partnerships and cultivates those partnerships through intentional service, learning, and civil society participation (Lough & Oppenheim, 2017; Dostilio et al., 2012). Fair Trade Learning, in opposition to the Krugman example in our economics case study, is a process by which community partnerships can be intentional about shared goals to transform communities together. In this connection we again find inspiration in the revolutionary work of J. K. Gibson-Graham (1996, 2003, 2006) and those working in the community economies tradition. Here, emphasis is placed on the formation of hybrid research communities that put experts in genuine partnership with other community members, opening them up to the vulnerabilities and risks academics too often impose on others (DeMartino, 2013).

Critical Reflection Questions: Do the programs that I participate in include pathways for community partners to be equally enriched by the partnership as I am? Am I changed by the relationship with my community partner? What are our shared goals that we are working toward? Are my daily habits and decision-making changed by what I learn in partnership with the community?

Address Democratic Versus Technocratic Engagement Explicitly and Adopt More Democratic Frames of Engagement

As the field has developed and has become an entity to be studied more concretely, models have emerged to frame our thinking about the work. Palmer (2014) provided a useful framework to help us understand the habits that underpin democratic systems, acknowledging certain tensions that must be held concurrently and productively to contribute to a flourishing democracy. One such tension is the tension around different viewpoints, motivating interests, and values that oftentimes clash in our work within and as part of communities. For community engagement work, the main tensions arise around deficit-based and asset-based approaches to research, inquiry, and action. Community engagement can run on a spectrum from technocratic to democratic, whereby different levels of community voice, shared governance, goal-setting, and democratic practices are observed in the relationships between "experts" and community (Saltmarsh et al., 2009). Transformative relationships—as opposed to transactional relationships—were contrasted by Enos and Morton (2003) as partnerships characterized by bound-up goals, growth, and change that were possible only because of that relationship, rather than a simple transaction of needs. Further, Mitchell (2007) described the type of critical social justice lens that can be affirmed in such partnerships that lead to not only learning outcomes, but also a shift in worldview where community must take precedence in one's decision-making, voting, and life choices.

Critical Reflection Questions: Are all the partners I work with freely able to say no? What power dynamics are at play in the partnership that might influence partners at the table? What is the motivation for doing this work? Do mechanisms exist in our work to address the tensions that arise?

Adopt a Mindset of Appreciative Inquiry, Radical Mutuality, and Humility in Our Work to Bring About Epistemic Justice

Another way in which we can address and transform our practice is by cultivating habits of mind and practice that Freire (1970) called conscientization, or critical consciousness. If we as "experts" can develop a more critical awareness of ourselves, our work, and our social reality, it becomes second nature to address and bring to light those choice points and break those structures of oppression. We need to enter our partnerships asking: Who has "expertise"? What are we doing well? How do we do more of that? Adopting an appreciative inquiry, rather than a problematizing lens, reaffirms the health of the community and messages that there is something worthwhile here of which we are all a part (Ludema et al., 2006).

Here we can draw on the work of the social ethicist and coauthor Sharon Welch, who points us to the important work of Black activists, writers, and scholars, articulating the difference between an ethic of risk and an ethic of control. She described the challenge to Euro-American ethics—control, agency, responsibility, and goodness—when, in writing and scholarship, African Americans share their experiences that flagrantly contradict these held values. She characterized the ethic of risk as containing three elements: a redefinition of responsible action, grounding in community, and risk taking. She elaborated:

> Responsible action does not mean the certain achievement of desired ends, but the creation of the conditions of possibility for the desired social ends, the creation of a matrix in which further actions . . . are possible, sustained, and enabled by participation in an extensive community, a community that offers support in struggle and constitutes the context for work that spans generations. (Welch, 1999, p. 48)

We must engage in ongoing learning and cultivating understanding for the mechanisms that continue to harm our communities and our colleagues. If we center epistemic justice—the process, practice, and valuation of all voices as worthy and capable—we can begin to take proactive steps to promote inclusion and reframe who creates knowledge (Fricker, 2013).

Beyond the question of "who is credible?", Schmidt (2019) extended our understanding of epistemic justice as a participatory process, noting that social injustices such as racism, sexism, and classism have undercut community members' participation in the creation of knowledge. Catala (2015) strengthened the link between epistemic justice and democracy, emphasizing that the only way to undo "hermeneutic domination" (a form of epistemic injustice in which one type of knowledge has primacy) is through equality, legitimacy, and accountability in our roles as knowledge mobilizers. If we appreciate and legitimize more ways of knowing and skills of evaluating and interrogating the information that comes to us, we practice the core of democratic and deliberative dialogue.

It is also critical to affirm that transformation comes only from community-university-society partnerships that are exercising full participation opportunities for all stakeholders. From shared governance to co-authorship and shared credit, our practices and our decision-making must match our espoused values (Bandy et al., 2017; Stanlick & Sell, 2016). One exemplar of work exhibiting governance, credit, humility, and advocacy is the Racial Democracy Crime and Justice Network that administratively sits at the Ohio State University. Through that network, scholars, thinkers, and experts (broadly defined) come together to "collectively undertake research and related initiatives geared to exploring the implications of crime and justice processing for citizens' participation in a democracy" (Rutgers School of Criminal Justice., n.d., para. 1). Work within the prison system and with those who are currently incarcerated is attributed to a collective title, rather than individual names, to protect those who participate but also to reaffirm an identity of a team working together toward policy and social change on some of our most intractable issues.

In each of these examples, we see the "walking the talk," as Clayton urges in so much of her writing and work within the field. Clayton et al. (2014) noted the design implications for such an orientation, naming the practices of democracy that cultivate empowered scholars, actors, and learners. Specifically, they noted that the doing of democracy "requires an investment in people and a fundamental belief that everyone has valuable knowledge, skills, and

attitudes that can contribute to advancing our communities" (p. 23). Walking alongside our community members, practicing the skill sets and mindsets of reciprocity, and developing meaningful collaborative partnerships are essential to remaking the systems of injustice we see.

Critical Reflection Questions: Am I walking the walk in my work? Am I solo-authoring or solo-presenting at conferences? Is my community partner present in the dissemination and celebration of the work? Have I considered my role as the oppressor and the power that my title, position, or identity holds? How will I mitigate that oppression and use the power and privilege toward just aims?

Reimagine and Reclaim Structures We Often Accept Without Question, Such as Assessment, Scholarship, and Data

Finally, we note that so much of our underlying systems—from grant funding and reporting to assessment and reporting expectations—are rooted in positivist, paternalistic, or inflexible systems that reaffirm roles and assumptions that can disempower communities.

One example of a systemic framework to rethink those systems comes from the research team Assessing the Practices of Public Scholarship (APPS), a research group sponsored by the U.S.-based national organization Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life. The collective of practitioner-scholars from a variety of disciplines and contexts works toward social change through service-learning and community engagement. They confront this question: How can we do our work, inquire into our work so as to better understand and improve it, and tell the stories of our work—of our scholarship, our art, and our communities—in ways that are more inclusive, informed by values, and engaged? They have provided a framework, democratically engaged assessment (DEA), to help reimagine assessment in ways that are values-engaged, collaborative, and transformative. By operationalizing a framework of values to guide that evaluation and assessment, the APPS team has provided a set of questions and processes that help to democratize and call in more voices to the process. Through this process, the goal is to include more and diverse perspectives on community-university partnerships and community initiatives to counter those pain narratives that Tuck (2009) lamented. It also reminds us of the ethic of risk, as mentioned above, and the transformative capacity of continually learning to mitigate harm and engender other ways of knowing. Bandy et al. (2017) noted the risk of counternormative practices that upset tradition through storytelling, narrative, assessment, and critical reflection. They affirmed the risk that scholar-practitioners take when moving outside what is "counted" in terms of quantitative and qualitative data to describe success or achievement in community-engaged initiatives. However, they also concluded that this risk is one worth taking, and by challenging those normative structures, and doing so while recognizing the privilege of experts, of Whiteness, and of positionality, scholar-practitioners can use that privilege for positive, empowering ends.

Critical Reflection Questions: What practices in my own work remain unchallenged? What unexamined bureaucratic forces within my context impact my work and my own behaviors of harm? What voices are missing in my practice and my work? How can I cultivate more practices that expand my own lens and check my assumptions?

Conclusion

Expertise is a tenuous and contradictory condition that entails moral and technical privilege that is far too easily abused. Expertise also entails responsibility that reaches far beyond acting with good intentions, in the service of others. As educators, researchers, and citizens, we must not only be aware of the potential for abuse, but actively examine the ideologies, ethics, and structures that lead well-meaning experts to do damage to those they purport to serve. Further, by dedicating our work to epistemic justice and the pursuit of more reciprocal knowledge communities, we not only bolster confidence and trust bonds within our communities, but also refine the very nature of how we understand our world and our place within it. If we do not, we are doomed to repeat or stand as accomplices to the types of injustice that we have seen intensify in recent years based on distrust and misinformation.

Philosopher and social activist Grace Lee Boggs with Professor Scott Kurashige (2012) summed up our collective responsibility to face these challenging times:

> Our responsibility, in this watershed in our history, is to face the past honestly and do the things

> necessary to heal ourselves and our planet. Healing our society will require the patient work not primarily of politicians, but of artists, ministers, gardeners, workers, families, women, and communities. It will require new forms of governance, work, and education that are much more participatory and democratic than those collapsing around us. It will require enlarging our vision and decolonizing our imaginations (p. 164).

We must not be a part of the continuing cycle of oppression by expertise, but rather cultivate the humility to keep questioning our own understandings, our power and privilege, and our role in upholding versus dismantling systems of oppression. In this piece, we aimed to reflect upon the ways in which we can cultivate a deeper self-awareness, a sense and capacity for interrogation of these deficit narratives and divisive discourse, and a path forward for professionals to intervene responsibly and with integrity. Although the potential for experts to do harm is high, that outcome is not inevitable. Rather, we find that there is great capacity for transforming these practices and our systems into more inclusive, democratic spaces that enable the empowerment of all stakeholders toward transforming communities and our world.

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Building Effective Quadruple Partnerships Across Families, Schools, Communities, and Universities

Nai-Cheng Kuo and Keonna Stanley

Abstract

The dual capacity-building framework created by Mapp and her colleagues (i.e., Mapp & Bergman, 2019; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013) lays a foundation for an extended partnership beyond families and schools. In this article, we explore how to extend the value of the dual capacity-building framework to a larger partnership that includes communities and universities. Our analyses are centered on the four essential components of the capacity-building framework—challenges, opportunity conditions, policies and program goals, and capacity outcomes—in the context of quadruple partnerships. Adding examples of successful university–community partnerships to the existing dual capacity-building framework will better support families' and schools' efforts to promote students' academic success. Because the capacity-building framework is grounded in rigorous research and thoughtful analyses, higher education outreach and engagement programs can adopt it to foster more effective partnerships with families, schools, and communities, and positively transform K–12 education.

Keywords: dual capacity-building framework, quadruple partnership, family-school-community-university partnership, higher education engagement

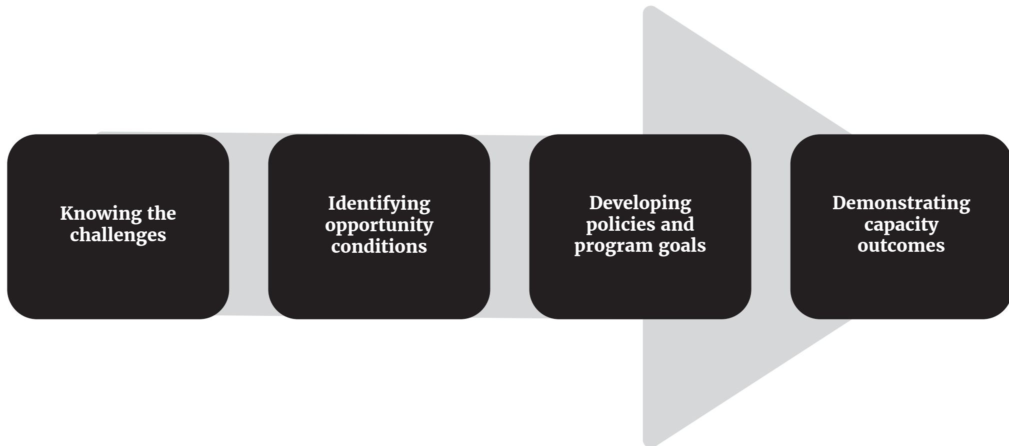
All stakeholders involved in K–12 student learning and success, such as parents, school staff, community partners, and university faculty, are interested in asking and answering questions about how to provide a better education for their students. Although different stakeholders vary a great deal in terms of the questions that interest them, they share a common concern for maximizing K–12 student learning and success through collaborating with each other. Building an effective partnership is key to this collaboration. Although approaches to building an effective partnership are largely influenced by stakeholders' disciplines and beliefs, stakeholders often choose suboptimal approaches (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Because the dual capacity-building framework created by Karen L. Mapp and her colleagues is well-known by educators, we believe that extending this framework would be useful to develop a more extensive partnership that includes not only schools and families but also communities and universities (i.e., the quadruple partnership). To explore how Mapp and her colleagues' work can be extended for a quadruple partnership, it is essential to first understand the original design of their framework.

The Dual Capacity-Building Framework

Karen L. Mapp and Paul J. Kuttner at Harvard University, working in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education, created a dual capacity-building framework to guide the organizing of effective family–school partnerships. Mapp and Kuttner (2013) proposed a sequence of essential components to enhance the effectiveness of family–school partnerships (see Figure 1).

The first component is *knowing the challenges*. It is essential that stakeholders discover the barriers that hinder family–school partnerships. The second component is *identifying the opportunity conditions* needed

Figure 1. The Essential Components of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework



for the partnership to thrive. The third component is *developing policies and program goals* to enhance capacity across the "4 Cs": capabilities (skills and knowledge), connections (networks), cognition (beliefs and values), and confidence (self-efficacy). The final component is *demonstrating capacity outcomes*. Educators value parents' efforts, in which they aim to connect family engagement to student learning and parenting practices (Clark, 1993). Educators work to create a culturally responsive environment where parents know the different roles that they can play to maximize their children's learning (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

Mapp and Bergman (2019) later developed a second version of the dual capacity-building framework for family–school partnerships. Although retaining the four essential components of the framework, the second version refines the language and extends the application of the framework to better support and develop family engagement strategies, policies, and programs. In addition, the sequence of some key ideas is adjusted to prioritize their importance, and explanations are added to clarify the ideas. For example, in the process conditions, the concept of "trust" was added, as it determines the quality of a partnership. Mapp and Kuttner (2013) stressed that their framework "should be seen as a compass, laying out the goals and conditions necessary to chart a path toward effective family engagement efforts that are linked to student achievement and school improvement" (p. 6). In other words, this framework should be viewed not as a cookie-cutter solution but as a tool that guides school staff and families in supporting student learning. Table 1 shows a comparison between the first and the second versions of the dual capacity-building framework for family–school partnerships.

Shifting From Dual to Quadruple Capacity-Building Framework

In this article we posit that there is value in expanding the dual capacity-building framework to a quadruple capacity-building framework that includes two additional partner groups: communities and universities. We consider at least two reasons the framework should include communities and universities. First, many nationwide, statewide, and local nonprofit community organizations offer K-12 students and their families support. In urban school districts with fewer resources than affluent school districts, the impact of community organizations is particularly crucial (Epstein et al., 2018; Gold et al., 2004). Second, universities cultivate future teachers and offer instructional and research resources to maximize students' learning in the K-12 school setting. Using the four components of the Mapp & Kuttner framework (challenges, opportunity conditions, goals, and capacity outcomes), we explore how the extension of the dual capacity-building framework could be reframed into a quadruple capacity-building framework and put into practice.

Reframing Considerations for Component 1: Knowing the Challenges

Mapp and her colleagues have identified common challenges that families and

Table 1. Summary of Program Characteristics

Components	1st Version (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013)	2nd Version (Mapp & Bergman, 2019)
Knowing the Challenges	Educators • Lack of opportunities for **school/ program staff** to build the capacity for partnerships	Educators • Have not been exposed to strong examples of family engagement • Have received minimal training • May not see partnerships as an essential practice • May have developed deficit mindsets
	Families • Lack of opportunities for **families** to build the capacity for partnerships	Families • Have not been exposed to strong examples of family engagement • Have had negative past experiences with schools and educators • May not feel invited to contribute to their children's education • May feel disrespected, unheard, and unvalued
Identifying Opportunity Conditions	Process conditions • Linked to learning • Relational • Development vs. service orientation • Collaborative • Interactive	Process conditions • Relational: built on mutual trust • Linked to learning and development • Asset-based • Culturally responsive and respectful • Collaborative • Interactive
	Organizational conditions • Systemic: across the organization • Integrated: embedded in all programs • Sustained: with resources and infrastructure	Organizational conditions • Systemic: embraced by leadership across the organization • Integrated: embedded in all strategies • Sustained: with resources and infrastructure
Developing Policies and Program Goals	To build and enhance the capacity of staff/ families in the "4 C" areas: • Capabilities (skills, knowledge) • Connections (networks) • Cognition (beliefs, values) • Confidence (self-efficacy)	To build and enhance the capacity of educators and families in the "4 C" areas: • Capabilities (skills, knowledge) • Connections (networks) • Cognition (shifts in beliefs, values) • Confidence (self-efficacy)
Demonstrating Capacity Outcomes	School and program staff who can: • Honor and recognize families' funds of knowledge • Connect family engagement to student learning • Create welcoming inviting cultures	Educators are empowered to: • Connect family engagement to learning and development • Engage families as cocreators • Honor family funds of knowledge • Create welcoming cultures
	Families who can negotiate multiple roles: • Supporters • Advocates • Encouragers • Decision makers • Monitors • Collaborators	Families engage in diverse roles: • Cocreators • Monitors • Supporters • Advocates • Encouragers • Models

schools face when building a partnership (Mapp & Bergman, 2019; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). These challenges can be grouped into four categories: (1) lack of exposure to examples of successful partnerships, (2) a closed mindset about partnerships, (3) distrust in partnerships, and (4) the hidden curriculum. Such challenges exist not only in family–school partnerships but also in the family–school–community–university partnership. Different stakeholders have different answers to questions like "What counts as a partnership?" "How is a partnership best developed and sustained?" and "How is the partnership best transmitted to different contexts?" Discussing challenges at the forefront is needed to promote cross-discipline understanding in partnerships. The four categories of challenges are discussed below in relation to a quadruple capacity-building framework.

Lack of Exposure to Examples of Successful Partnerships

To help students succeed in school and beyond, schools, families, communities, and universities possess a strong desire to work together. However, the conflicts and preexisting dynamics in established structures can make such collaboration challenging. Consequently, families often struggle to grasp the complexities of their collaborators' roles. According to Mapp and Kuttner (2013), parents often do not have the capacity to navigate the complexities of the U.S. educational system, to say nothing of the extended partnership outside the educational system. At the same time, it can be difficult for communities to build connections and jointly achieve mutual goals with different groups because they all possess different missions and scopes of services (Sandy & Holland, 2006). Research indicates that family and community engagement has not been effectively addressed in the higher education teacher preparation programs (Epstein, 2018; Epstein & Sanders, 2009). As a result of limited exposure to examples of successful quadruple partnerships, each stakeholder continues to embrace its own philosophy and disciplinary standards. They work on their individual entity and do not develop an effective partnership to support student learning, school improvement, and stakeholder development as a whole.

As stakeholders continue the important work in their respective fields, the existing successful examples of community–university partnerships serve an indispensable role in facilitating the expansion of the dual capacity-building framework. For example, in supporting urban students, Warren (2005) argued that urban education reform requires community collaboration. Such collaboration should not be imposed from the top. Rather, authentic participation occurs when people involved in initiatives develop a sense of ownership and commit themselves to mutual goals. Warren also stressed the invaluable role that universities play in offering instruction, training, and examination of the strengths and weaknesses of the initiatives. Moreover, research shows that universities can revitalize their neighborhoods socially and economically through offering voluntary activities, developing community outreach programs, and attracting new people to the college town (Ehlenz, 2017). Universities can serve as key contributors to urban and community development, given their rich human and intellectual resources (Hodges & Dubb, 2012). But however excellent these actions may be, only intentional efforts will enable the sharing of success stories outside local communities, so they can help students in other urban schools.

A Closed Mindset About Partnerships

Stakeholders' competency training in sustaining a partnership is important to children's academic success and school engagement (Spoth et al., 2008). Although guidelines for building effective partnerships are available, systematic training and sustainable efforts require funding and stakeholders' dedication of time, energy, and action. Stakeholders often find themselves engaged in the activities they initiate, but they are not engaged in the unfamiliar roles they are asked to play (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). With a closed mindset about partnerships, stakeholders are unlikely to make time for training and build competency for sustaining their partnership. They may just try to fit into the partnership rather than finding how the partnership is rewarding to them. Therefore, developing and sustaining partnerships is meaningful only if stakeholders consider the partnership an essential practice.

Distrust in Partnerships

The development of the quadruple partnership does not begin and end with training and resources. Partnerships are built upon trust. Joanna Geller et al. (2014), well-known scholars in family–school–com-

munity engagement, believe that trust is fundamental to their development of the Promise Neighborhoods (PN), an initiative in a low-income and disadvantaged community. They defined trust as "one party's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is a) benevolent, b) reliable, c) competent, d) honest, and e) open" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000, p. 556). In this sense, maintaining a trustful relationship depends on each stakeholder making efforts to win their partners' trust. Without trust, stakeholders will not feel comfortable sharing their work with others. Listening to each other and finding solutions to address the identified issues are critical to building needed trust. Mutual respect, transparency, and codes of conduct are also essential components to building trustful relationships.

Research shows that when stakeholders have unpleasant partnership experiences with a particular group of people, they may create stereotypes of that group or allow their experience to reinforce their negative stereotypes (Bryan, 2005; Coleman & Churchill, 1997; Epstein & Sanders, 2002). Consequently, they tend to trust and feel more comfortable working with those who share their social and cultural capital (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). When stakeholders are suspicious about their partners, they become reluctant to share their ideas and data, creating gaps in the quadruple relationship.

The Hidden Curriculum

Partnerships exist in the context of countless unwritten rules from personal beliefs to professional commitments. For example, if the partnership involves funding from one particular group, one stakeholder may have a more dominant position or power over the other stakeholders. In addition, different disciplines have their own definitions regarding suitable practices, which may not be understood or accepted by stakeholders in other disciplines. Furthermore, leaders' capabilities are crucial in building an effective partnership because their leadership carries out directives that influence the partnership structure and atmosphere. Funding allocations, disciplinary practices, and leadership are hidden curricula that make some stakeholders feel devalued or unwelcome in the partnership (Epstein, 2018). Feeling undervalued or powerless can lead to stakeholder apathy (Ajani, 2018). Therefore, stakeholders need to anticipate and forestall conflicts stemming from the hidden curriculum. The alternative may be damage to communication, a decline in engagement, and contingency issues.

In summary, the four categories of challenges discussed in this section—lack of examples, mindset, distrust, and power—can hinder an effective partnership, and recognizing them is essential for stakeholders to identify meaningful opportunities and establish conditions necessary for creating effective partnerships across families, schools, communities, and universities.

Reframing Considerations for Component 2: Identifying Opportunity Conditions

After knowing the challenges, the next step is to identify opportunity conditions that must be met for confronting the challenges. These conditions allow stakeholders to be more explicit in the opportunities they create to build a successful quadruple partnership. Identifying the challenges together encourages stakeholders to appreciate these opportunities as a whole rather than on each individual level. In other words, stakeholders become more intentional in their actions in the quadruple relationship. To maximize the success of the opportunities, Mapp and her colleagues argued that two types of conditions must be met.

The first set of conditions are called *process conditions*. Here the term *process* refers to the actions of individuals, such as educators and parents. Partnership initiatives must meet certain process conditions in order for stakeholders to be willing to create and participate in capacity-building opportunities. These opportunities have to be goal-linked, closely aligned with student learning and success. Mapp and Kuttner (2013) stressed that these opportunities cannot be generic or random acts. School personnel and families want to walk away with new knowledge that has practical applications in their respective roles. This concept is equally important in establishing an effective quadruple relationship in which the opportunities are tied to the development of mutual trust, student learning and development, asset-based approaches, culturally responsive practices, collaboration among all stakeholders, and interaction across all participants (Mapp & Bergman, 2019).

The second set of conditions are called *organizational conditions*. Just as processes for building capacity must meet certain criteria

to inspire stakeholders' participation, organizations themselves must maintain certain characteristics of capacity-building initiatives, with support not only at the frontline employee level but also from administrators. In the family–school partnership, collaborations are feasible and sustainable for teachers and parents only when their school districts back them up. Similarly, community partners and university faculty also need the support of their organizations. This support includes scheduling, training, resources, and funding allocations. According to Mapp and Kuttner (2013), organizations must support three characteristics in capacity-building initiatives: The initiatives must be systemic, integrated, and sustained.

The key concepts related to process conditions and organizational conditions that must be met to achieve effective quadruple partnerships are detailed in the next sections.

Meeting Process Conditions

For initiatives to build capacity for quadruple partnerships, their processes must exhibit six traits: relational and built on mutual trust, linked to student learning and development, asset based, culturally responsive and respectful, collaborative, and interactive.

Relational: Built on Mutual Trust. A successful partnership starts from mutual trust. When stakeholders trust each other, they feel safe to share their honest expectations and visions with their partners (Ishimaru, 2014; Weiss et al., 2014). Trust has been proven a critical factor that contributes to stakeholders' participation and the success of their partnerships (Poynton et al., 2018). Mapp and Kuttner (2013) stated: "a focus on relationship building is especially important in circumstances where there has been a history of mistrust between families and school or district staff, or their negative past experiences or feelings of intimidation hamper the building of partnerships" (p. 9). They pointed out that communication often falls apart when there is no trust between stakeholders. In the quadruple partnerships among schools, families, communities, and universities where stakeholders are already swamped by their respective responsibilities, the key factor that makes them want to make time for their partnership is trust, knowing that they can hold each other accountable and achieve desired results together.

Linked to Student Learning and Development. Mapp and Kuttner (2013) pointed out that partnership initiatives must be closely tied to student learning and success because both parents and teachers

> are more interested in and motivated to participate in events and programs that are focused on enhancing their ability to work as partners to support children's cognitive, emotional, physical, and social development as well as the overall improvement of the school. (p. 9)

To build an effective quadruple partnership, community partners and university faculty need to keep parents' and teachers' interests in mind and provide services that are closely tied to student and district achievement goals. This might involve putting personal preferences aside and focusing on activities aligned with student learning and success. Consistent and systematic services centered on student learning and success are particularly important in lower achieving schools, given that these schools have scarce resources that often come from all directions with random support systems (Weiss et al., 2009). To have an effective partnership, stakeholders should communicate frequently and explicitly. In particular, schools need to inform family, community, and university partners about children's district achievement goals and collaboratively determine acceptable evidence to measure students' progress within and across the services.

Asset Based. When a partnership is built upon assets or strengths, it creates a positive workplace for stakeholders (Kraft & Rogers, 2015). For example, because school staff are acquainted with state standards, they can familiarize the other stakeholders with these standards by providing a list of the standards with descriptions and examples. They engage parents, community partners, and university faculty as cocreators of the partnership and honor their funds of knowledge. Because parents know their children the best, they can share with the other stakeholders their children's strengths and weaknesses. Community leaders, who are more knowledgeable about available resources inside and outside their area, can allocate resources to ensure every

student gets equitable support. For universities, faculty can support schools by strengthening teacher education programs, creating fieldwork opportunities for future teachers to practice partnership skills, and providing training to both in-service and preservice teachers. This training must be grounded in research and learning theories yet provide practical skills. In addition, university faculty can assist by using a rigorous research design to evaluate the effectiveness of the partnership. Research shows that evaluating a partnership with fidelity will enhance its overall quality (Epstein et al., 2018). The evaluation data will enable stakeholders to understand whether students are learning and whether the partnership adds value to student learning.

Culturally Responsive and Respectful. Cultural diversity (diversity in social and economic status, language, education, ethnicity, beliefs, gender, etc.) can create both positive and negative impacts on developing partnerships. Although research shows that families play various and critical roles in their children's education inside and outside school activities, many teachers do not know how to motivate diverse families to become involved in school and how to communicate with them about their expectations for the school and their children (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Weiss et al., 2014). Furthermore, families with different educational backgrounds and social statuses may have different degrees of comfort with the partnership. By first considering families' different contexts and allowing them to contribute to the partnership in different ways (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997), schools, communities, and universities can think more expansively and creatively. They can then design activities to engage culturally diverse parents and identify resources needed to support their engagement in the quadruple relationship. When activities are designed to be authentic to the specific social context, all stakeholders can contribute equally and meaningfully in a dynamic partnership.

Collaborative. Partnership initiatives can succeed only if leaders across groups collaboratively support their stakeholders to build a sense of belonging in the partnership. One way to collaborate is to invite all stakeholders to share their visions of the partnership and rewrite the rules of engagement. Henderson and Mapp (2002) stated: "When schools build partnerships with families that respond to their concerns and honor their contributions, they are successful in sustaining connections that are aimed at improving student achievement" (p. 7). In the quadruple partnership, all stakeholders play irreplaceable roles in uniting each other. Although collaboration is never an easy task, a successful partnership across disciplines will improve quality, equality, and social justice in the public school system (Warren & Mapp, 2011).

Interactive. Engagement participants need the opportunity to practice and apply new skills. It is essential to disseminate information, but doing so does not guarantee that partners acquire knowledge and skills. Coaching is needed to help partners develop and master a new skill. For example, a list of resources and activities may help parents know where to start. However, parents need feedback and coaching from district staff, schoolteachers, and other specialists in the community to help them understand how to use these resources and activities appropriately to maximize their children's learning (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

Concisely, to meet necessary process conditions, capacity-building initiatives must incorporate activities that build trust, link to student learning and success, gather asset-based support, develop cultural competency to better meet the needs of diverse students and their families, support collaboration among all stakeholders, and encourage interaction across all participants. Applying active and effective listening among the stakeholders will enhance communication and help stakeholders navigate complex issues (Poynton et al., 2018). Understanding cultural components can offer ways to highlight the dynamics of each stakeholder, creating a welcoming environment for people to work together. Examining the diversity in ethnic backgrounds, socioeconomic status, and other aspects of school systems' families and communities can lend stakeholders insight to tailor their initiatives to be more inclusive. Continuous feedback is necessary to improve partnerships over time based on the ever-changing needs and diversity of both consumers and stakeholders. Securing early feedback, ongoing feedback, and summative feedback will allow stakeholders to solve emerging problems in a timely manner.

Meeting Organizational Conditions

Organizations must be able to establish and

maintain initiatives that encourage quadruple partnerships by supporting educational improvement throughout their area and over time. This aim can be achieved through initiatives that are systemic, integrated, and sustained.

Systemic. Leaders across disciplines should embrace initiatives that are "designed as core components of educational goals such as school readiness, student achievement, and school turnaround" (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013, p. 10). In a quadruple relationship, schools, communities, and universities need to have organizational strategies in place to ensure that they deliver effective services to students and their families. These strategies include what they will do before, during, and after the partnership. Before the partnership starts, it needs to have an outlined plan of how organizations will help their frontline employees get familiar with their partners, build rapport, and demonstrate an interest in their partnership. At times, planning this engagement would require building a bridge across the knowledge and ability gap. The interaction opportunities created by the organizations will allow stakeholders to identify issues that are particularly intriguing to their partners and give them opportunities to collect each other's thoughts. During the partnership, organizations help their frontline employees recap what they have learned from the partners, explicitly communicate mutual goals, gauge each other's prior knowledge, and provide needed support. The leadership teams continually monitor to ensure the improvement of student learning and success. Various activities are utilized to consider stakeholders' cultural diversity, respond to the dynamic context, and situate their understanding of their partners' services in different disciplines. With organizational support, the frontline employees will grow increased and prolonged engagement in the quadruple partnership. As the partnership ends, the leaders of the stakeholders need to think about how to sustain engagement across schools and school districts. Taking the time to host discussion meetings periodically for stakeholders to reflect on their activities and brainstorm ideas will extend the current efforts to help more students succeed.

Integrated. Mapp and Kuttner (2013) argued that capacity building for all stakeholders should be integrated into all aspects of a district or school's strategy to form productive partnerships, from hiring competent teachers and offering them ongoing training to school administrators and faculty working collaboratively to monitor the quality of curricula, teaching, and assessment. In the quadruple partnership, these strategies would be extended from the K–12 level to encompass college education programs as well. Including families, the community, and higher education in capacity-building work will lead all partners to center their efforts on nurturing the growth of youths.

Sustained. For partnership initiatives to be sustained, it is necessary that "programs operate with adequate resources and infrastructure support" (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013, p. 10). Because not all organizations in the proposed quadruple partnership are equipped with the same capability to support their frontline employees, leaders across organizations need to look at the different aspects of their partnership from the moments before the partnership starts. The key is each organization's making sustainable efforts to encourage their frontline employees' ongoing engagement. Developing sustainability requires leaders invested in family–school–community–university engagement strategies and empowered to coordinate disparate funding streams to support capacity-building initiatives. Stakeholders can further ensure sustainability by asking themselves questions concerning the nature of their initiative and what goal their initiative aims to achieve.

Reframing Considerations for Component 3: Developing Policies and Program Goals

Because an unreceptive or unwelcome atmosphere will hinder the development of family–school partnerships, Mapp and her colleagues emphasized the importance of having policies and program goals to develop educators' and parents' willingness for their engagement in the partnership. They propose using the 4 Cs of *capabilities*, *connections*, *cognition*, and *confidence* to examine the effectiveness of the policies and program goals. The 4 Cs can be used as a guide to establishing a set of criteria to develop metrics for measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of the organization's policies and program goals. With the growing scope of partnerships beyond families and schools, the 4 Cs defined earlier for the dual capacity-building framework can serve as a tool for schools, communities, and universities to develop their policies and pro-

grams for fostering an effective quadruple partnership. According to Mapp and Kuttner (2013), developing capacities establishes the foundation of human capital, skills, and knowledge needed for an effective partnership. In the following section, we explain how the 4 Cs can be further applied in the quadruple partnership.

The first C is *capabilities*: knowledge, skills, and cultural competencies that all stakeholders need to succeed in the quadruple partnership (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Stakeholders in the quadruple partnership must receive systematic training to help them understand techniques they can incorporate into their respective positions. These techniques may include reflecting on their participation in the quadruple partnership and explaining why they are engaged and when and why they do not participate actively. Dialogue is a good way to encourage stakeholders' reflection on their engagement or detachment in the partnership and help them understand misconceptions and ambiguity to discover solutions together.

The second C is *connections*, cross-culture networks that involve different collaborations across families, schools, communities, and universities. The diverse networks within and beyond stakeholders' disciplines will build different types of social capital. Stakeholders need to incorporate skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, and synthesis of ideas. Working collaboratively to create a concept map is one method through which stakeholders can identify common skills needed to help them engage in appropriate activities and build a desired partnership. It is necessary to distinguish the different levels of connections in the partnership: cooperation, coordination, and collaboration. According to Mattessich and Johnson (2018), cooperation refers to "informal relationships that exist without any commonly defined mission, structure, or planning efforts" (p. 42). Partners may have shared goals at this level of connection, but they do not have shared responsibility and accountability. Coordination is characterized as partners having more formal relationships, understanding their mutual goals, communication channels, and shared resources. The highest level of connection is collaboration:

> Collaboration connotates a more durable and pervasive relationship. Collaborations bring previously separated organizations into a new structure with full commitment to a common mission. Such relationships require comprehensive planning and well-defined communication channels operating on many levels. Authority is determined by the collaborative structure. Risk is much greater because each member of the collaboration contributes its own resources and reputation. Resources are pooled or jointly secured, and the products are shared. (Mattessich & Johnson, 2018, p. 42)

Achieving collaboration requires all stakeholders to commit to their shared mission from the beginning to the end. To improve children's learning experience, they hold each other accountable and are willing to share risks of failure.

The third C is *cognition*. In the dual capacity-building framework, cognition involves both the school and families viewing each other as a partner and knowing that they possess different capacities in helping students improve their learning (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). For the quadruple partnership, similar awareness must exist among all four partners. Although stakeholders' assumptions, beliefs, and worldviews may affect how they engage in the partnership, they are aware of their responsibility. They actively participate in events that will impact K-12 students' lives. The quadruple partnership cannot be a didactic form. Instead, stakeholders constantly construct their own knowledge and put forth effective efforts to enhance student learning.

Finally, the fourth C is *confidence*, the idea of self-efficacy, so that stakeholders know how to advocate for themselves to be engaged in the quadruple partnership. Ohmer (2010) pointed out that people's self-efficacy is affected by how much they are involved in communities. She highlighted the importance of advancing from individual self-efficacy to collective self-efficacy to enhance the well-being of youths and communities. To increase involvement, each stakeholder needs to know what they can do to ensure student success. Their collective self-efficacy and successful experiences will help others see how people in different disciplines can work together toward a shared mission. In building a quadruple partnership, shared resources and common goals enable all stakeholders to develop

confidence in their self-efficacy. The matrix developed (see Figure 2) based on the 4 Cs may help stakeholders understand how their policies and program goals support the partnership. It also allows stakeholders to evaluate their own capacities in which they work collaboratively and increase engagement in the partnership.

When stakeholders take the four essential components of capacity-building partnerships into consideration, it will help them understand the challenges of their partnership and plan the next steps in their future endeavors. In this way, they are more likely to expand their scope of practice to maximize student learning and success. Stakeholders can also use the 4 Cs as a guide to conduct professional development.

Reframing Considerations for Component 4: Demonstrating Capacity Outcomes

Mapp and Kuttner (2013) believed that if the school and families follow the steps of addressing challenges, identifying opportunity conditions, and aligning policies and program goals with the 4 Cs, both school staff and parents will gradually develop the capacity for an effective partnership. In the quadruple partnership, school staff are aware of their crucial role in uniting all partners. Their engagement activities aim to connect families, communities, and universities to student learning and success. The activities should create an inviting culture and encourage stakeholders to take initiatives to strengthen the partnership. For example, families will recognize that they can contribute to their children's education through various roles, such as cocreators, supporters, encouragers, monitors, advocates, models, decision makers, and collaborators (Mapp & Bergman, 2019; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). When parents find it challenging to work with service providers outside the school system, the other stakeholders help families to get comfortable with different partners by being transparent and explicit. As another partnership outcome, university faculty should work closely with local schools and community partners to become more intentional in cultivating future educators and leaders for an effective quadruple partnership.

When stakeholders understand each other's roles, they find value in the quadruple partnership and share effective strategies in their local contexts. Each stakeholder holds the responsibility to improve their partnership through extending communication across disciplines. As a result, they will achieve the ultimate goal of their initiative together. Extending the dual capacity-building framework for a quadruple partnership encourages active involvement in K-12 school settings by all stakeholders to increase student learning outcomes and school improvement from their respective roles.

Implications for Practice

An effective partnership is built by effective stakeholders who think about why they partner with others, not only about the initiatives they want to accomplish but also about student learning and school improvement. Stakeholders are aware of the value for students in learning, and they know that there are things that students cannot learn anywhere else. In other words, every stakeholder has something to contribute to student learning and success. An effective partnership involves a series of developmental processes, from discovering challenges that hinder the development of their partnership, establishing conditions for success, and having supportive policies and programs, to speaking about identities and capacities. The dual capacity-building

Figure 2. An Example of the 4 Cs Matrix

Stakeholders	**Capabilities** of achieving common goals	**Connections** to resources and knowledge	**Cognition** about unique yet united efforts	**Confidence** in self-efficacy for the partnership
Family	X		✓	
School		✓	X	
Community				✓
University	✓			

Note. The symbols of "✓" and "X" are used for "good" (✓) and "weak" (X).

framework created by Mapp and her colleagues lays a foundation for an extended partnership beyond families and schools to include communities and universities.

We draw three implications from our rationale for extending the dual capacity-building framework to a quadruple model that includes additional partnerships with universities and communities. First, stakeholders need to build rapport with each other. Improved learning and increased success for K-12 students happens when families, schools, communities, and universities work collaboratively and trust is built. Without a trust-based relationship, some stakeholders may not feel comfortable sharing their struggles, leaving other team members unaware of challenges they might solve at an early stage. Second, all stakeholders need to align their initiatives with student learning and success. Keeping the ultimate goal of student success at the forefront will center all stakeholders' efforts and ensure that policies and programs are established to support the partnership. Third, the capacities encompassed by the 4 Cs (i.e., capabilities, connections, cognition, and confidence) can be used to create a matrix for examining the effectiveness of the partnership. Developing stakeholders' capacities helps them make new connections between efforts with previously unappreciated potential.

Implications for Research

Stakeholders' self-efficacy in quadruple partnerships is neither uniform nor obvious. Different families speak in very different ways about the extent to which they value partnerships. Even service providers across schools, communities, and universities may differ greatly in terms of what they deem to be effective partnerships. Thus, the implications for research cover multiple facets. First, future studies may examine how stakeholders collaborate to develop a better understanding. Without a clear understanding of what partners expect of them, some stakeholders who want to do the right work may feel frustrated or discouraged. Second, researchers can identify the connection between the partnership and students' learning outcomes and explore factors associated with the impacts. Third, researchers can investigate the retention of stakeholders' efforts to learn how to generate long-lasting support or find alternative methods of support. Fourth, future studies may explore factors that cause stakeholders to leave the partnership prematurely. In other words, besides the four essential components of the capacity-building framework, what other components might be needed? Finally, many schools hesitate to collaborate with universities because they have experienced partnership disappearance when a partnering faculty member left a key position or the grant ran out. Thus, synthesizing successful examples will give practitioners confidence and concrete ideas for developing effective partnerships.

In summary, we explored how to extend the value of Mapp and her colleagues' framework as a tool for building a partnership beyond families and schools. Adding examples of successful university-community partnerships to the existing dual capacity-building framework will better support families' and schools' efforts to promote students' academic success.

It is important to note that an effective partnership does not flow automatically from an existing framework. It comes from stakeholders' thoughtful interpretation of the framework and their growth mindset that embraces challenges and development. Because it is grounded in rigorous research and thoughtful analyses, higher education outreach and engagement programs can adopt the capacity-building framework and foster more effective partnerships with families, schools, and communities to transform K-12 education positively.

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Creating and Improving a Faculty Learning Community for Community-Engaged Research at a Midsized, Open-Enrollment University

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Abstract

Community-engaged research (CEnR) occurs when university and community resources are partnered to enrich knowledge, address social issues, and contribute to the public good. The benefits of CEnR include the translation of scientific findings into public initiatives that can improve practice and provide invaluable learning experiences for students. Despite the importance of CEnR, there are barriers to this work and limited information on how to develop an academic infrastructure to support such time-intensive research at teaching-focused universities. In this article, we outline the development, implementation, and evaluation results of a pilot faculty learning community (FLC) at a midsized university, the Community-Engaged Faculty Research Fellows Program. This high-visibility program provided consultation and ongoing support for new and established faculty research projects and resulted in high program satisfaction and multiple scholarly and other published works. We provide recommendations from our lessons learned for similar programs at other institutions.

Keywords: university–community partnership, community-engaged research, community of practice, faculty development program, evaluation

In community-engaged research (CEnR) academic researchers involve community members as collaborators in multidisciplinary teams to conduct research on issues of concern to those communities (Isler & Corbie-Smith, 2012). This type of engaged scholarship may occur in any academic field in which university scholarly resources are partnered with community resources to enrich knowledge, address and help solve critical societal issues, and contribute to the public good (Stanton, 2008). The benefits of CEnR to faculty, students, and communities are well established in the literature (see, for example, Coffey, 2010; Schwartz, 2010; Wallerstein et al., 2020), including the translation of scientific findings into public initiatives that can improve practice and community health (Wallerstein & Duran, 2006). For these reasons, faculty and students are increasingly interested in focusing their research on improving their local communities (Nyden, 2003).

Despite the importance of CEnR, barriers to conducting such research remain, especially at smaller, teaching-focused institutions. There is also limited information on how to develop an academic infrastructure that better supports such time-intensive work while increasing community-academic partnerships (D'Agostino et al., 2015). This knowledge gap is especially problematic for institutions that may not have significant research infrastructure, defined as the physical and human resources for conducting research within the business and academic environment of the university (Videka et al., 2008). To address this gap, we outline the development, implementation, results, and recommendations of a faculty learning community (FLC) at a midsized, open-enrollment university aimed at improving the

university environment to support CEnR, the Community-Engaged Research Faculty Fellows Program or the CE Research Fellows Program.

Community-Engaged Research in Higher Education

Although many institutions of higher education, especially U.S. universities, prioritize and reward research productivity among their faculty, barriers exist within the academy regarding the type of research that is valued. Even at smaller or teaching-focused institutions, the research university culture dominates the construction of the faculty roles of teaching, research, and university service, which often lack the structure and support for CEnR (Saltmarsh et al., 2009). For example, CEnR requires time to build and maintain trusting relationships in the community, demanding frequent communication, negotiation, and compromise (Martinez et al., 2013; Smith et al., 2010). Such labor-intensive processes of relationship-building tend to significantly lengthen the time needed to conduct research and publish results; however, tenure and promotion timelines do not often account for these realities (Acker & Webber, 2016; Gardner & Veliz, 2014; Nicotera et al., 2011). For example, a recent study concluded that many university medical schools have only recently seen an increase in administrative support for CEnR upon receipt of a large institutional clinical and translational science award grant requiring such community-engaged work (Nokes et al., 2013).

Many universities also lack financial support for CEnR, requiring faculty to obtain external funding, which further lengthens timelines of completing projects and producing scholarly works (Stoecker et al., 2003). Because of these and other barriers, many institutions may need to redesign policies and processes to account for the realities of conducting CEnR (Sandmann, 2006); however, little published literature provides guidance for how universities can best support faculty to conduct CEnR (Seifer et al., 2012). One notable exception is Gelmon and Jordan's (2018) chapter that provides literature- and practice-based advice to academic administrators who work as service-learning and community engagement (S-LCE) professionals. However, since S-LCE professionals often hold terminal degrees with training in education or a closely related discipline and provide specific service-learning and community engagement services to faculty, not every university has access to such highly trained professionals.

Much of the related research literature focuses instead on specific practices for improving teaching, such as how faculty can create service-learning courses and community-engaged partnerships for their students in the classroom. Sometimes, faculty also conduct investigations on their service-learning and community-engaged teaching efforts, with projects tending to fall under the scholarship of teaching and learning. Although Boyer (1990) has argued that the boundaries between research and teaching have been overblown in academia, junior faculty may struggle with how to utilize the scholarship of teaching and learning literature when seeking guidance for conducting their original CEnR projects.

Boyer argued that the work of the scholar is not only to conduct original research, but also to step back from the investigation in order to find connections, build bridges between theory and practice, and communicate new knowledge to students. His work (1990, 1996) provided a framework for thinking about scholarship as four different, but overlapping, functions: (a) the scholarship of discovery, (b) the scholarship of integration, (c) the scholarship of application, and (d) the scholarship of teaching. Although scholarship of discovery might constitute activities traditionally seen as conducting an "original research" project, Boyer's framework indicates that faculty should also integrate this new knowledge by putting it into perspective and connecting it to larger contexts. The third function of scholarship moves beyond synthesizing and toward engagement, where the academic should determine how the application of knowledge can solve problems. The last function of academic work is to translate such scholarship to teaching. Although Boyer's scholarship has been around for decades, researchers point out that faculty continue to struggle with how to fit the complications of conducting CEnR into their professional roles and promotion/tenure policies (Jacquez, 2014; Janke et al., 2023). In this article, we explore the conception, implementation, and pilot of an FLC among faculty interested in increasing their research productivity in CEnR.

Communities of Practice and Faculty Learning Communities

The concept of a community of practice

(CoP) has been around for 30 years. It represents a process in which social learning is prioritized over individual learning in the research and theory of practice-based studies (Gherardi, 2009). Wenger and colleagues solidified the concept of CoP and argued that learning, understanding, and remembering are best developed in social situations where participants share information and experiences, resulting in personal and professional development through colearning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Similarly, Pharo et al. (2014) described how a CoP helps members pursue a shared interest through joint activities, discussion, problem-solving, and relationship-building. The CoP model contains three main components: a domain of knowledge to create a sense of common identity, a community of people who care about the domain and create the social learning environment, and a shared practice that the community develops to be effective in its domain.

CoP in higher education tends to gather scholars from diverse disciplinary backgrounds to learn how to better perform in that domain, usually teaching (Blanton & Stylianou, 2009; Laksov et al., 2008; McDonald & Star, 2008) or mentoring (Calderwood & Klaf, 2015; Smith et al., 2016), by interacting regularly and sharing what has worked. A specific type of CoP often used in academia is the faculty learning community (FLC). According to Plaxton-Moore et al. (2018), an FLC is distinguished from a CoP by the small-group learning structure that includes a well-articulated facilitation structure that enables participants to discuss and suggest solutions for problems that arise in the scholarship of teaching and learning. The authors indicated that FLCs often contain faculty from different disciplines, which allows for greater exploration of the dimensions of community-engaged research and practice, which may increase FLCs' potential to influence broader institutional culture and policies around community engagement. However, the published literature contains little regarding the use of CoP or FLC models in higher education for increasing scholarly productivity in CEnR among faculty in teaching-focused institutions. In this article, we address these gaps in the literature by providing details of our program for creating an FLC focused on supporting faculty through their CEnR projects at a midsized, teaching-focused U.S. university.

The Program

The University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) is a public, midsized, open-enrollment institution that administers four community campuses across the southern half of the state. UAA is the largest university in the state, with an annual enrollment of approximately 14,000 undergraduate and graduate students. Although research grants and funding among faculty have been increasing in recent years, UAA is not considered a Research University by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. Instead, UAA is a teaching-focused institution that has received the Community Engagement Classification from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (American Council on Education, n.d.). In addition to the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP), UAA has the Center for Community Engagement and Learning (CCEL), which provides support for faculty involved in service-learning teaching and/or community-engaged research. In an effort to strengthen the university environment for CEnR, the CE Research Fellows Program was piloted in academic year 2020–2021.

Program Purpose

The focus of the CE Research Fellows Program is to support CEnR efforts by supporting faculty in the exchange of ideas and knowledge around CEnR methodologies, partnership development, and research dissemination. Peer support was conceptualized as a vital component of the program from its initial stage. Anticipated program outcomes were that Fellows (a) would engage with each other as active members of the FLC during the program and (b) would demonstrate progress in their community-engaged research agenda through forward movement from (at minimum) one stage of the research process to another, as measured by scholarly output. This goal was to assist faculty who might be struggling with moving past the project design phase to other stages of the research process, such as submitting funding applications, project implementation, data analysis, and/or scholarly publications.

Program Planning

The planning team consisted of the CCEL director and social work faculty member (Aguiniga) and two faculty coleads: one junior faculty member (Howell) in the

Division of Population Health Sciences and one associate professor (Harvey) in psychology. This interdisciplinary team codeveloped, implemented, and evaluated this pilot of the CE Research Fellows Program following Wenger et al.'s (2002) seven recommended principles to enhance FLC success:

1. Design the community to evolve naturally.
2. Create opportunities for open dialogue within and with outside perspectives.
3. Welcome and allow different levels of participation.
4. Develop both public and private community spaces.
5. Focus on the value of the community.
6. Combine familiarity and excitement.
7. Find and nurture a regular rhythm for the community.

Program Participants

The CE Research Fellows Program was initially composed of 14 faculty Fellows, who represented a variety of disciplines, including social work, communication, psychology, languages, human services, history, humanities, philosophy, sociology, civil engineering, and physical education. Faculty positions included adjunct faculty (n = 2), postdoctoral researchers (n = 3), term assistant professors (n = 2), tenure-track assistant professors (n = 2), tenured associate professors (n = 4), and full professors (n = 2). During the course of the program, one Fellow (a postdoc) left the university before the start of the 2020–2021 academic year, and two (non-tenure-track faculty) were unable to continue due to conflicts created by the pandemic, reducing the number of faculty participants to 11.

Program Components

Program components were designed to foster sustained connection and learning between the Fellows, incorporating both an intensive initial experience and then regularly scheduled meetings (which address Wenger et al.'s Principles 1, 2, and 7, above). The COVID-19 pandemic affected the implementation of the program, as university faculty were required to work at home during the entirety of the pilot year, from application in April 2020 to final public recognition of the members' accomplishments in April 2021 (Principles 4–6). The online nature of the program resulted in modifications to the original schedule of events, described below, and also ensured we incorporated Wenger et al.'s Principle 3.

Two-Day Kick-off Training Event

The 2020 May Intensive was originally scheduled to be an in-person 2-day intensive; however, it was determined that a one-day event would better suit the online format. During the May Intensive, Fellows were introduced to their faculty coleads (Harvey and Howell) and each other, creating a sense of familiarity and excitement among faculty (Principle 6). The purpose of the program and the plan for the upcoming academic year (2020–2021) were reviewed, setting a regular rhythm for the community and their time together (Principle 7). Three one-hour sessions were led by the planning team during the May Intensive: Creating Community Partnerships, Partnership to Publication, and Design Clinics for Community Engagement. In these sessions, Fellows were introduced to a variety of CEnR methodologies, and they received tips for developing and sustaining community partnerships, hands-on tools for navigating the complicated process to publication of CEnR projects (including a list of possible journals), and an overview of the benefits and logistics of the design clinics for the program that outlined the value of the community (Principle 5).

Brown Bag Sessions

To develop CEnR skills and help Fellows make progress in their research agenda, four brown bag sessions were held during the academic year. Developed from the Fellows' needs and interests expressed during the May Intensive, the first brown bag session focused on IRB policies and practices. This session was led by the chair of the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and emphasized the conduct and processes typical of CEnR. The remaining brown bag sessions capitalized on the Fellows' areas of expertise, with each brown bag being developed and led by a Fellow. These sessions included Strategies and Considerations for Incorporating Research Into the Classroom, Public Humanities and Community Engagement, and Qualitative Research Methods for Community-Engaged Research. In addition, Fellows led two workshops open to the wider community at the

university's annual community engagement conference, ensuring the program contained both public and private community spaces (Principle 4). These sessions, Community-Engaged Research During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Challenges and Opportunities and Strategies for Transitioning Research Interviews to Online Technology, provided an opportunity for in-depth exploration of CEnR topics and fostered increased awareness of Fellows' interests, skills, and knowledge, strengthening the potential for cross-disciplinary research partnerships.

Design Clinics

Three design clinics were offered during the CE Research Fellows Program, allowing a space for open dialogue where Fellows could ask a CEnR question about their work and gain feedback (Principle 2). Based on the design clinic format taught by the Community Engagement Fellows Program at Western Washington University (Tennessen, 2020), the design clinics encouraged members to share their experiences and insights relevant to a Fellow's identified research question. The structured nature of the design clinics provided for an engaging and quick activity, taking only 22 minutes, which served to increase the value of the program (Principle 5) for Fellows who were able to solve research problems with the aid of other FLC members. This fast format allowed Fellows to pose questions during each one-hour meeting and worked well to engage the group to speak during the Zoom session while respecting different levels of participation from faculty (Principle 3).

Ongoing Peer Support and Consultation

The faculty coleads of the program provided consultation for Fellows through one-on-one meetings, email communications, and opportunities for feedback and questions during brown bag and design clinic sessions. Consultation with the faculty coleads was provided on an as-needed basis, allowing the community to evolve naturally (Principle 1) while also welcoming different levels of participation from the Fellows (Principle 3). In addition, Fellows offered support to each other through an unstructured format in which peers with specific expertise offered their consultation and advice in each session. De Santis (2020) found that such mentoring can improve the level of competency and readiness of faculty and researchers practicing CEnR.

Evaluating the Pilot Fellows Program

Following a description of program participants, a number of outcomes from the CE Research Fellows Program are described here: (a) program survey design and results, (b) Fellows' dissemination of products and publications, and (c) Fellows' participation in university-sponsored community engagement events.

Survey Design

Approval for human subjects research for this evaluation was granted by the UAA Institutional Review Board (IRB #1743041). Following completion of the CE Research Fellows Program, a survey was electronically distributed to Fellows to obtain their feedback. The survey was codeveloped by the two faculty leads using guidance from Guskey's (2000) evaluation of professional learning to examine beliefs and knowledge in relation to changes in participants' application of content. The survey consisted of eight closed-ended questions, which utilized a 5-point Likert rating scale ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*, and six open-ended questions. The closed-ended questions asked about program outcomes (e.g., "I was an active and engaged participant"; "During the fellows program I made progress on my community-engaged research agenda") and program purpose (e.g., "I gained ideas and knowledge about partnership development in community-engaged research"; "I gained ideas and knowledge about community-engaged research methodologies"). The open-ended questions asked about obstacles to participation (if applicable), progress on the Fellow's research agenda, the usefulness of design clinics for those who posed a question or for those who participated, and the most useful and least useful aspects of the CE Research Fellows Program.

Survey Results

Of the 11 Fellows who completed the program, 10 completed the survey, with eight responding to all questions. When asked questions about the program outcomes, the majority of the participants (88%, n = 7) either strongly agreed or mostly agreed that they "regularly attended the monthly meetings and events," with one neutral response. Similarly, most (88%, n = 7) either strongly agreed or mostly agreed that they were "an active and engaged participant" and that they "made progress on their community-engaged research agenda." One Fellow re-

sponded neutrally to both questions. No one reported barriers to participation. Fellows described a range of progress on their research, including starting a new program evaluation for a local agency, modifying data collection via Zoom, or dissemination of process data in the form of writing a book chapter. One Fellow stated,

> The fellows program really inspired me to think about how to utilize process data. I learned that I do not have to wait until I have completed my project or until I have outcome data to think about dissemination and publishing. This lesson was so useful that I began to think differently about what I have done so far. . . . I'm in the process of authoring a paper which utilizes information I would not have, otherwise, thought of as data.

Six fellows responded to questions about the program's purpose. All six either strongly agreed or mostly agreed that they "gained ideas and knowledge about partnership development in community-engaged research" and "gained ideas and knowledge about community-engaged research methodologies." Similarly, five either strongly agreed or mostly agreed that they "gained knowledge about dissemination of community-engaged research," with one who reported neutral. One Fellow reported receiving an article from another Fellow that helped them to clarify their methodology.

When asked about design clinics (N = 7), 70% (n = 5) either strongly agreed or mostly agreed that "[the design clinics] were helpful for thinking through their own research," one was neutral, and one mostly disagreed. Four Fellows posed a question for a design clinic, and all reported it was beneficial for them. For example, "I found the reflections very helpful. They helped me think about things I would not have otherwise thought of . . . it really helped to clarify my methodology." Another Fellow wrote, "It was a useful way to hear from other disciplines and to think through what has worked for other [community-engaged] researchers. It made me articulate aloud the questions I had been wrestling with regarding my research." Only one Fellow reported a barrier to posing a design clinic question, and that was "shyness—I might have done it in a smaller breakout."

Information gathered from the open-ended questions about most useful and least useful aspects of the CE Research Fellows Program revealed a common theme of benefiting from the interdisciplinary nature of the program. As one Fellow stated, "It opened my eyes to how the various disciplines engaged in community research." Others spoke to the ways the program incorporated Wenger et al.'s principles, such as the importance of connecting with other community-engaged researchers, building relationships with colleagues, "meeting like-minded others," and feeling valued for the work they were engaging in. Two Fellows directly spoke to the FLC model as a useful aspect of the program to offer support and accountability.

Dissemination of Products and Publications

During the CE Research Fellows Program, the faculty coleads and Fellows disseminated over 26 products and publications related to their community-engaged research and activity. Products were disseminated through a variety of outlets, including peer-reviewed journals such as the *American Journal of Community Psychology* (Buckingham & Brodsky, 2020; Buckingham et al., 2021), *Ageing and Society* (Howell et al., 2020), *International Journal of Children's Rights* (Mbise, 2020), *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* (Brocious et al., 2020), and *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education* (Harvey & Wennerstrom, 2021), to name a few. Other outlets for dissemination included institutional reports highlighting Fellows' work, such as the Harvard Kennedy School for Science and International Affairs report (Balton et al., 2020), articles in popular publications such as *Newsweek* (Olmos, 2020), an art exhibition about Black experiences in Alaska at a local museum (Hartman, 2021), and community partner publications involving Fellows' work (e.g., Cook Inlet Tribal Council, 2021). An additional seven articles from Fellows are under review, and one book from a Fellow's project is in press. The dissemination of these products and publications provides evidence for the CE Research Fellows Program's purpose of supporting Fellows' ideas and knowledge about CEnR methodologies and dissemination as well as for the CE Research Fellows Program outcome of demonstrating progress in one's CEnR agenda (Program Outcome b).

Fellows' Participation in University-Sponsored Events and Awards

Fellows also participated in a variety of university-sponsored events or received awards during the CE Research Fellows Program related to their CEnR. As examples, three Fellows presented at the university's Annual Urban and Rural in Alaska: Community Engagement Conference, three Fellows participated on the university's CCEL Community Engagement Council, two fellows received university CCEL faculty mini-grants, two Fellows were highlighted in the CCEL Spotlight, one Fellow received the University Selkregg Community Engagement and Service-Learning Award, a faculty colead received the Community Engaged Writing Award, and the other faculty colead received the Community Builder Award. These outcomes are highlighted here to evidence CEnR involvement of the Fellows as a result of their participation in the CE Research Fellows Program.

Limitations

This study is limited by the small sample size of our pilot group of Fellows and the limited scope of the evaluation. Although the results may not be generalizable, these findings provide guidance and strategies for engaging and supporting faculty with their CEnR and directions for additional research. We included program satisfaction as well as more objective measures of success (e.g., scholarly products); however, this study evaluation does not yet measure long-term impact of the CE Research Fellows Program. Below we provide our plans to follow up with the Fellows and improve our next FLC evaluation. This project was also limited by several aforementioned COVID-19 pandemic challenges that required us to conduct the program online (via Zoom), which occasionally resulted in technology and bandwidth problems. However, the online nature of this program actually increased participation from faculty working in our community campuses and other remote locations.

Recommendations and Next Steps

The CE Research Fellows Program appears to be initially successful at UAA for several reasons. Most notably, the university supported the efforts to increase faculty research mentorship. However, we suggest that even faculty-led initiatives without financial or other support from the university may succeed if the program is thoughtfully planned out. For others at teaching-focused institutions, we offer the following recommendations.

Creating the Faculty Learning Community

The program followed Wenger et al.'s (2002) principles for best practices, including focusing on the value of the community and providing opportunities for various levels of engagement, such as through the built-in consultation and collaboration between Fellows. The two faculty coleads who provided consultation were at different points in their career trajectories, as were the various Fellows. Having an FLC inclusive of the variety of roles at the university (including adjuncts, tenure-track, non-tenure-track, junior, and full professors) created an internal system by which faculty were able to assist and provide advice and guidance to others across the range of experiences (Freel et al., 2017; Morrison-Beedy et al., 2001). We found that sometimes newer faculty had excellent advice and experiences with setting up a new research lab to share with faculty who had been in a teaching role for a long period of time. Likewise, we also saw that longer term faculty proffered great advice about integrating research into the classroom and contributing to the scholarship of teaching and learning. Similarly, having Fellows at different points in their careers allowed the program to capitalize on Fellows with CEnR expertise who could lead brown bag sessions, thus benefiting the whole group and increasing the opportunities for peer collaboration. We were also surprised by the number of applicants who did not have a required research component in their workload, but wanted to be more engaged with their students and community through research. Accepting such faculty into the Fellows program may enhance the breadth of knowledge and experiences that can be shared among the members in the FLC.

Encourage Reflection

In the future, we plan to incorporate more time for reflection from the Fellows. In our first year, we spent time planning brown bag sessions, design clinics, and other academic opportunities but found that the FLC could have benefited from more regular reflection on their experiences with the program. More structured reflection would have solidified some of their learning into action planning as well as given Fellows a more accurate perspective as to the value of the program (Rice, 2018). To this end, we will use a

common classroom tool at the end of every session with our Fellows moving forward: the one-minute essay. Each session will end with a brief summary of key takeaways and provide the group time to reflect on how the session may prove useful to their personal research program. The specific reflection method chosen matters less than providing Fellows the space to reflect on their time within the FLC.

Provide Writing Support

Survey results and anecdotal evidence from our first FLC suggested that some Fellows thought that a writing group would have been helpful. Many faculty struggle to find the time to write new grant proposals or journal articles and benefit from having peer writing support (Badenhorst, 2013), especially women faculty (Penney et al., 2015). Therefore, we recommend including a writing support component of a Fellows program. However, if this is not feasible due to lack of resources, it may be possible to connect the FLC to other existing writing support on campus. Our second FLC included the opportunity to attend a weekly writing group in the fall, and Fellows were also encouraged to join the larger university-wide writing support group the following semester, reducing duplication of efforts while still providing continuous faculty support.

Consider a Hybrid Delivery Format

Since our first FLC launched during the COVID-19 pandemic, we were required to shift the program online. This was a tough pivot for many faculty, but it ended up being a blessing in disguise for our FLC. We were able to include more faculty from across our campus locations to participate, greatly increasing collaboration opportunities for some of our most isolated faculty. With campuses spread across large distances of the state, our online delivery format allowed some Fellows to make connections that they would otherwise not have had the opportunity to make. An online or hybrid format (in-person with an online option) is recommended to help foster connections among Fellows. Our latest FLC is moving forward in a hybrid format, so those on campus can attend in person, if they wish, but Fellows located at other campuses in the state (or those that now prefer to work from home) can all participate.

Include Robust Evaluation Measures

Lastly, we recommend incorporating both short- and long-term outcomes as well as self-report and objective measures into the program evaluation design. We collected self-report as well as some objective measures of program success, but we focused on short-term outcomes. In the coming year, we plan to follow up with past Fellows to determine whether they are continuing to use program learnings or peer support in their CEnR. We also recommend including formative evaluation measures, so processes are documented throughout the program planning, implementation, and evaluation stages. Such formative measures may include determining feasibility, acceptability, and sustainability of the program during planning and implementation. Research shows that formative evaluations can help continuously improve the program during implementation, which can strengthen knowledge gained, outcomes, and program impacts (Brown & Kiernan, 2001).

Conclusion

A faculty-led community of practice can benefit the research productivity of faculty, even at smaller and/or teaching-focused universities. Due to the rising popularity of CEnR, more faculty are looking for connections and support to get their CEnR program off the ground. Relatively few university resources are needed to support an FLC of faculty who meet regularly to learn about CEnR best practices and opportunities that can improve community outreach while providing invaluable learning experiences for students. A formal or informal FLC that provides consultation and ongoing support for new and established faculty research projects can result in productive collaborations and increase scholarly publications.

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Successful Implementation of a Community-Based Writing Project With Public Health Graduate Students During a Public Health Emergency

Ella August, Max Ansorge, and Olivia S. Anderson

Abstract

The disruption of education during COVID-19 presented challenges regarding experiential learning intended for Master of Public Health students to develop writing skills. We describe the Real-World Writing Project, wherein students wrote a public health document for community partners, implemented in the context of emergency remote learning during COVID-19. Community partners and students completed surveys related to their satisfaction with the Project and final products. Students reported skills they used and rated the writing project compared to traditional writing assignments. Community partners and students were satisfied working together and with the final products. Most used skills reported by students were writing, creating a design element, and interpreting data. Students were satisfied with the Project compared to traditional assignments. As public health emergencies (e.g., climate disasters) increase in frequency, remote experiential learning will be necessary. This work contributes valuable information about conducting a successful community project during a public health crisis.

Keywords: accreditation requirements, experiential learning, public health competence, remote learning, writing

Although master of public health (MPH) graduates work across diverse public health sectors such as research, nonprofit organizations, policy, or state/local health departments, they have the common goal of promoting population health. To reach this goal, graduates must be able to successfully advocate for health resources, develop policy, correspond through media, and influence health behaviors through written communication. The Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) underscores the significance of writing for public health professionals as part of their accreditation criteria (CEPH, 2021); public health trainees are expected to meet the competency "Communicate audience-appropriate public health content, in writing." Further, MPH students are required to work with public health practice sites to apply writing skills to a real public health problem and create tangible products. This type of experiential learning situates MPH students within a professional setting to gain experience communicating through diverse types of public health writing aimed at specific audiences.

Emergency situations such as disease outbreaks, climate disasters, and other public health and infrastructure crises have increased in frequency across time and can seriously disrupt student learning, especially in an experiential setting (Kiviniemi, 2014). Planned experiential remote learning that connects public health students and practice sites virtually has been shown to foster public health student competencies (Anderson, McCabe, et al., 2021; Goodman, 2015). However, the question of whether unplanned remote engagement with practice sites provides MPH students meaningful opportunities to develop their professional writing skills has not been explored.

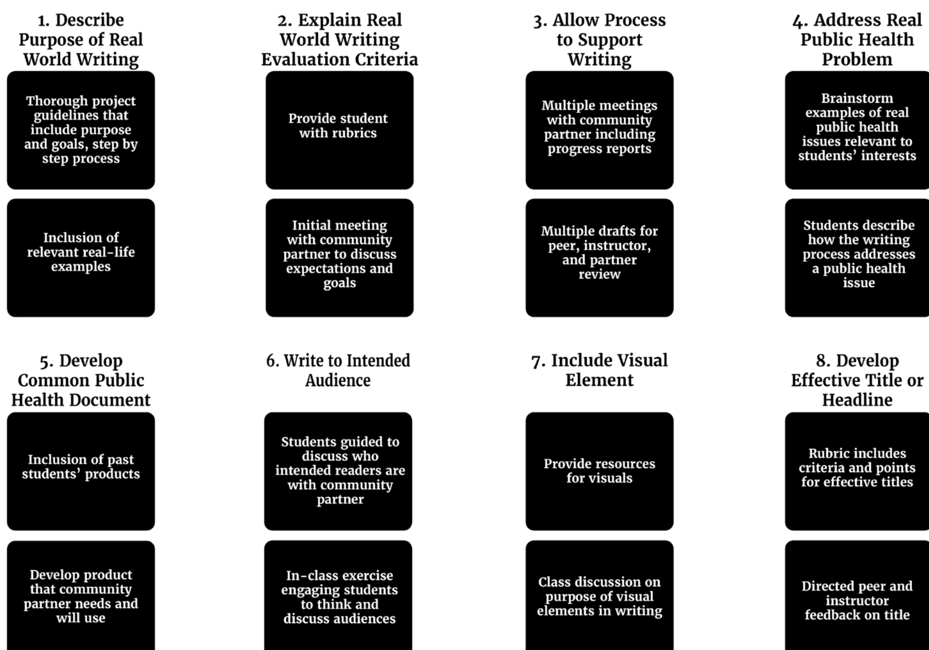
We describe the Real-World Writing Project, an ongoing program in which MPH students are guided through a series of assignments to develop a written product for a community partner. Previous reports of the Real-World Writing Project have illustrated that the Project supports the development of various tangible public health writing products like fact sheets, project briefs, social media content, and infographics used by practice sites (August & Anderson, 2020, 2022). In this report, we present evaluation data from community partners and students who participated in the program as part of a class in which an unplanned transition to remote learning occurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our objectives were to describe the number and general type of community practice sites who participated, type of products MPH students generated, and skills students used to complete their project while working remotely. We determined community partner and student satisfaction with engaging in the Project in the remote format and community partners' satisfaction with the written products.

Methods

Real-World Writing Project: Overview and Setting

The Real-World Writing Project partners an individual student or a pair of students with a community organization in Southeast Michigan that needs a written product. Organizations across this region were identified by the School of Public Health at the University of Michigan and asked to register projects through a Symplicity website. Students identified writing projects that had a projected timeline of about three months (i.e., equivalent to one academic term). The product is defined by the organization, and common examples include pamphlets, fact sheets, or social media content. Over an academic term, each student produces multiple drafts of their product in response to feedback from peers, their instructor, and a contact from the community organization. Students are required to meet and consult with the partner contact regularly, with the goal of creating a professional product usable for the community organization (i.e., the "real world"). For example, once a project and document format were established with a community organization, students were required to meet with their community partner to discuss the intended audience, public health messaging, and distribution of the document. For MPH students, this procedure fulfills the Applied Practice Experience (APEx) accreditation requirement for graduation in which students engage with a public health organization and apply CEPH competencies to a real public health project.

Figure 1. Examples of How the Eight Recommendations for Assigning Writing in Public Health Were Applied to the Real-World Writing Project



The Project incorporated eight recommendations for assigning writing in public health (Figure 1). These recommendations are designed to support students in building optimal writing and critical thinking skills and further developing their professional identity (August & Anderson, 2022; August et al., 2019). The recommendations include describing the purpose of the writing, explaining the assignment's evaluation criteria, allowing for a process to support writing (e.g., multiple drafts), and asking students to address a real public health problem with their writing. The Project required students to develop a document format common in the public health workplace, write to intended readers, incorporate a visual element such as a figure or diagram, and develop an effective title or headline.

Data were collected from second-year MPH students (*N* = 81) who were enrolled in required writing courses in Fall 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic at a large university in Michigan. Due to the pandemic, students were shifted to a fully remote environment with about a month's notice. Thus, the Real-World Writing Project was completed remotely. This work has been evaluated by our university's Institutional Review Board and has been designated as exempt from IRB oversight (HUM00157405).

Surveys

At the end of the semester, we emailed community contacts and students links to an anonymous survey via Qualtrics.

Community Partner Surveys

Community contacts rated their satisfaction with their overall experience with the Project, students' communication and professionalism, and the quality of the written product on a 6-point Likert-type scale, where 6 = *Extremely satisfied* . . . 1 = *Extremely dissatisfied*. Community contacts rated clarity of communication from course instructors about the expectations, timeline, and process of the Project with two options: (1) Communication was clear or (2) There could have been better communication. An open-response space was offered to describe what was not clear. Two open-response questions asked what went well and what could be improved.

Student Surveys

Students rated the ease of working with their community partner on a 3-point scale, where 3 = *My community partner was very easy to work with*, 2 = *My community partner was somewhat easy to work with*, and 1 = *My community partner was difficult to work with*. Students rated two aspects of working with a student partner (if they worked in a pair). First, they responded to whether their "Workload was lightened" and second, whether "Peer feedback helped" improve their product. Each item was rated on a 4-point scale, where 4 = *Agree* . . . 1 = *Disagree* and 4 = *Extremely helpful* . . . 1 = *Not helpful at all*, respectively.

Students rated their satisfaction with their written product on a 3-point scale, where 3 = *Very satisfied* . . . 1 = *Not satisfied*. Students were asked to identify the skills they used to create their final product with choices including (1) writing, (2) data analysis, (3) map creation, (4) creation of a document with a design element such as an infographic or fact sheet, (5) using a design software such as Canva or other specialized software, (6) gathering statistical information from sources such as the U.S. census, (7) interpreting scientific data, (8) deciding which information is most relevant to include in the document, and (9) conducting a literature review. Students could describe additional skills in an open-ended option.

Students rated their satisfaction with the project compared with a traditional assignment, referencing a three-page paper on a public health topic, where 10 = *Most satisfied* . . . 1 = *Least satisfied*. They were offered an open-response option for additional comments.

Data Analysis

Frequency distributions describe community partner organization types, type of product developed, and skills students used to develop their product. Means and standard deviations were calculated for all Likert-type-scale responses. Text from the open-ended questions was coded and analyzed for themes using a conventional content analysis approach. Statistical analyses were performed in Microsoft Excel version 16.30.

Results

Seventeen community contacts (85%) and 40 students (49%) responded to the surveys. One hundred percent of respondents who completed a survey consented to have their data used for this study.

Community Partner Results

Of the community partner organizations responding to the survey, seven were for-profit organizations, nine were nonprofit organizations, and one was a health department. Overall, respondents were satisfied with the Real-World Writing Project, including interactions with students (average satisfaction across student-related items >5.1 on a 6-point scale; Table 1) and the quality of their final product (mean score 4.8; Table 1). The majority of respondents (*n* = 10/17, 59%) indicated that communication from the teaching team was "good," whereas the other 41% needed "better communication." One community partner indicated "a clear timeline of what would be completed at specific times would help."

Eleven community partner respondents provided open-ended responses. Content analysis of what worked well revealed high levels of satisfaction with the students and process. Four respondents described the products as "high quality," and one noted, "Students were very courteous and thoughtful in their work with me. They developed a product that was exactly what I wanted with minor tweaks." Three respondents indicated they were pleased with the students' listening skills and communication. As one indicated, "Students listened very well to what I explained about my business. It was obvious from the end product they nailed the listening skill." Two respondents made note of how quickly work was completed.

Student Results

Student respondents indicated that working with their community contact was "easy" (mean score 2.9 on a 3-point scale). Respondents were satisfied with their written product (mean score 2.6 on a 3-point scale). Collaborating with a peer was satisfactory (mean score 2.8 on a 3-point scale). Student respondents indicated that working with a peer lightened the workload and peer evaluation was helpful (mean score 3.7 and 3.3, respectively, on a 4-point scale).

Three skills reported most frequently were writing, creation of a document with a design element, and interpreting scientific data (Figure 2). Nine respondents said they used skills other than those listed, but only one described this skill ("Proficient use of a word processor, i.e., Microsoft Word").

The most common types of products that were created through the Real-World Writing Project included infographics (*n* = 13) and fact sheets (*n* = 11; Figure 3). Brochures and blogs were common products as well.

Student respondents were satisfied with the Real-World Writing Project compared to a traditional writing assignment (mean 7.5 on a 10-point scale). One respondent stated, "I think the Real-World Writing was valuable and I liked the many opportunities to find something that reflected our interests."

Implications

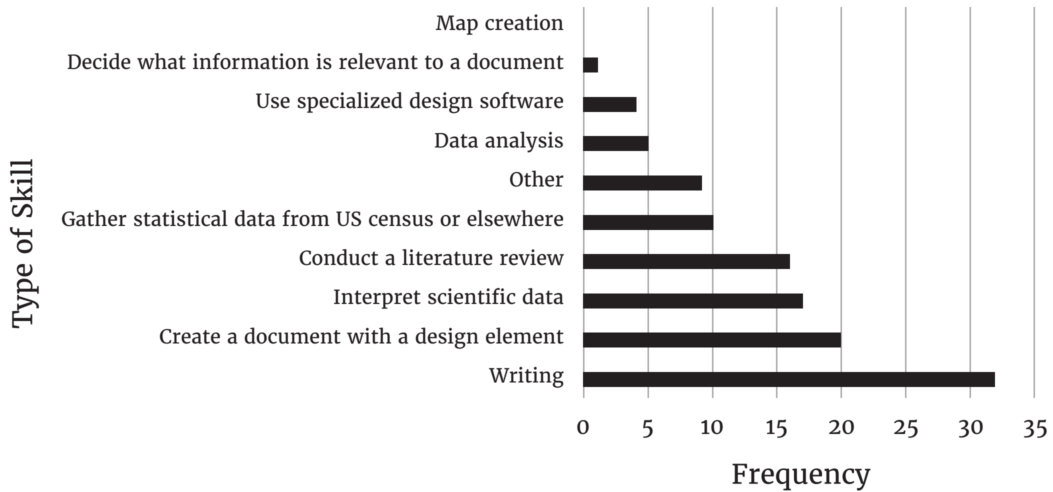
Overall, the Real-World Writing Project was a meaningful, experiential opportunity that worked well for community partners and students during a public health crisis in which severe restrictions limited in-person

Table 1. Community Partners' Satisfaction with Students, Products, and Project Rated on a 6-Point Scale* (*n* = 17)

Survey Item	Mean (*SD*)
Overall satisfaction with the Real-World Writing Project experience	5.33 (0.69)
Clarity of student communication	5.10 (1.40)
Student professionalism	5.42 (1.31)
Quality of final product	4.83 (1.44)

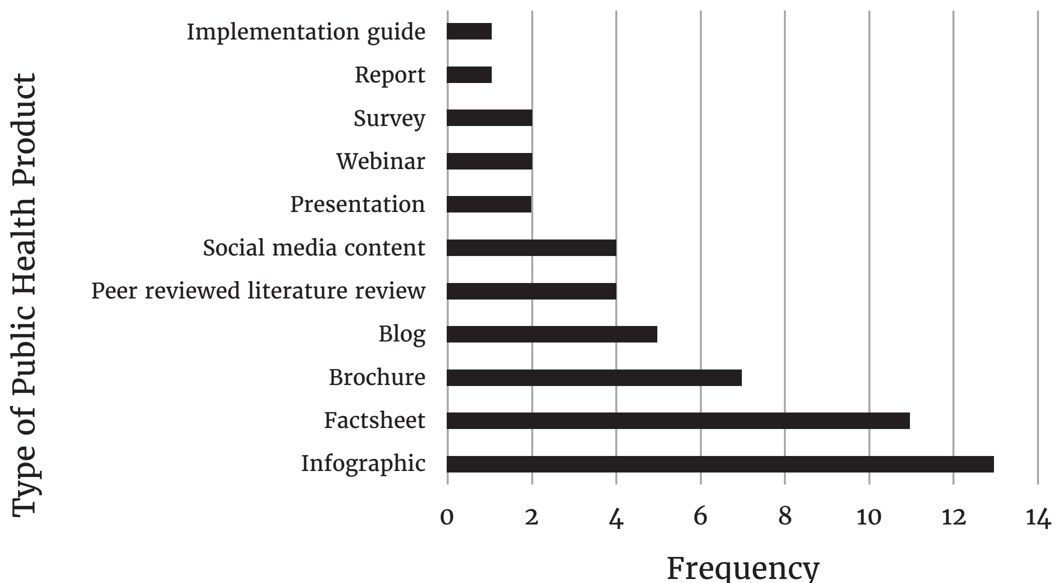
Note. *1 was the least satisfied and 6 was the most satisfied.

Figure 2. Frequency Distribution of the Skills That MPH Students Reported Using for Their Real-World Writing Project (n = 40)



Note. Students could choose more than one skill.

Figure 3. Frequency Distribution of the Types of Products That the MPH Students Created for Their Real-World Writing Project (n = 51)*



Note. * Students had the option to work in pairs, so a total of 52 products were turned in.

engagement. Community partners were satisfied with the students' written products and their professionalism. Students practiced a variety of skills related to public health writing. It's clear that this remote, experiential learning allowed students to apply knowledge and skills to real-world projects that engaged them in various modes of public health writing while giving them an opportunity to play a role in addressing public health issues.

The logistics of coordinating and creating effective, feasible experiential learning opportunities for students can be difficult (Comeau et al., 2019), and the COVID-19 pandemic presented new challenges. During the pandemic, students were scattered across the world, connecting with school-related activities remotely. Community organizations were largely locked down, with most employees working remotely. The pandemic was still fairly new at the time our data were collected, and students and community partners were still adjusting to the restrictions. However, advances in technology provided an opportunity to make experiential learning environments more flexible, and even accommodating for students and their community partners (Wojciechowski & Palmer, 2005). Virtual internships have made experiential learning easier for community partners and more equitable for students to engage in, while allowing for professional and career development (Anderson, Weirauch, et al., 2021; Goodman, 2015). As flexibility in work environments continues beyond the pandemic, virtual experiential offerings will also continue, offering students an effective means to learn valuable public health skills.

In addition to public health, other health profession fields were forced to implement remote experiential learning as the COVID-19 pandemic ensued. Fields like pharmacy, psychology, and medicine quickly pivoted to telehealth for training to ensure their students were gaining skills necessary for practitioners (Anderson, Weirauch, et al., 2021; Bell et al., 2020; Cooley et al., 2021). Likewise, the Real-World Writing Project successfully connected MPH students to public health organizations during a period of remote learning. This project offered students an opportunity to practice writing in different formats targeting specific audiences, resulting in products that promote population health. Products that were created, such as fact sheets, brochures, and social media content, gave students insight for working in practice sites. Building the capacity to offer health professional students experiential curricula that support learning in times of a crisis will equip educators for ongoing and future events.

Next Steps

The Real-World Writing Project provides students with an experiential opportunity within the context of a public health practice site that fosters their professional development. Implementing the Real-World Writing Project in the context of a disrupted learning environment proved feasible. As work settings shift to hybrid formats and the workforce learns how to effectively collaborate within online formats, we will experience an increased capacity to work with community partners across the region and expand our reach to organizations that may have been hesitant to participate. Collecting information that specifically asks community partners about collaboration skills that students may need to develop, as well as assessing the estimated impact of the products created for the organization, will help to shape the instruction that supports the Real-World Writing Project.

We relied on school-level coordination to identify community partners; however, we encountered challenges regarding the communication stream through Symplicity. We believe that, as instructors, identifying and compiling our own list of organizations with associated contacts would be a more direct, streamlined way for students to communicate and establish partnerships with organizations that they feel passionate about working with. We also plan to work with the Ginsberg Center for Community Service and Learning, a community and civic engagement center at the university with the main mission of connecting the academic community with community organizations to help identify relevant organizations.

Conclusions

This study contributes valuable information about professional development experiences during a public health crisis and shows it is possible to conduct a successful community project during a global crisis. As public health emergency situations continue to increase in frequency, MPH programs must go beyond the classroom to adapt remote learning to support trainees with professional development in the "real world."

About the Authors

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Examining the Critical Practices Supporting Community Engagement Professionals Toward Fulfillment of Higher Education's Civic Mission

Elizabeth Brandt

Abstract

This thesis overview summarizes a study (Brandt, 2021) examining the institutional and professional practices that enable community engagement professionals (CEPs) to play vital roles in fulfilling higher education's civic mission. Drawing on field-building research by community-engaged practitioners and scholars, such as Welch and Saltmarsh (2013) and Dostilio (2017), this study employed a mixed-methods research design through an electronic survey of open- and closed-ended questions administered to a national network of CEPs. The analysis points to five key themes that should be addressed by institutions and the field: faculty development and institutionalization efforts, positionality and power dynamics, compensation and support, institutional infrastructure, and demographic implications. Findings from this study showcase the importance of CEPs in effectively and equitably leading their institutions in actualizing their civic missions, as well as their access to resources and advancement opportunities.

Keywords: community engagement professional, infrastructure, civic mission, power dynamics, job satisfaction

Seven years ago, while serving as a community engagement coordinator at a small liberal arts college in a rural southern community, this researcher grabbed a coffee with the executive director of the local food pantry. We discussed how our community faced serious issues of hunger and food insecurity; meanwhile, the pantry struggled to keep its doors open. Six months later, with guidance from this researcher (a student in the Bonner Scholar Program, a cohort-based four-year developmental community engagement program), the pantry organized its largest, most successful day-of-service event in its history. The day's achievements included raising thousands of dollars in donations, completing building renovations, revitalizing support for the pantry, and educating individuals on food insecurity in the local community. The student went on to lead the college's annual poverty and homelessness week of programming, complete a summer internship working on the intersections of food and climate change, and complete a master's of public administration in sustainable development. A few years later, the community, with support from the college, opened its first pay-what-you-can cafe committed to serving locally sourced, nutritious food for everyone regardless of ability to pay. Faculty at the college began to partner with the cafe to offer community-based learning courses. Conversations over coffee that result in positive impacts for student learning and development, the institution, and the community are not an unusual experience for community engagement professionals (CEPs). CEPs are often the conveners and organizers of ideas, people, projects, and resources.

CEP is a vital role, given that institutions of higher education are uniquely positioned to leverage their distinct mix of institutional resources (funding, technology, social capital), faculty expertise and mentorship, community engagement staff's knowledge and connections, and student capacity (time,

energy, passion) to forge deep, reciprocal institutional–community partnerships. Strong campus–community engagement is a vehicle for higher education institutions to advance their civic missions and has demonstrated positive impacts on pressing challenges, such as student retention and completion, diversity and inclusion, and student learning and development (Brown & Burdsal, 2012; Burke, 2019; Cress, 2012; Cress et al., 2010; Finley, 2012; Gilroy, 2012; Kuh, 2008; Marts, 2016; Saltmarsh, 2005; Tos, 2015).

However, due to competing demands and limited resources, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, institutions face difficult decisions regarding prioritization of programs and units. Despite the benefits highlighted in the literature, many institutions situate community engagement on the margins of institutional priorities. Subsequently, the professional staff whose primary job is to support and administer campus–community engagement—CEPs—may not always receive adequate resources or support (Dostilio, 2017; Welch & Saltmarsh, 2013).

This thesis overview reports on a study (Brandt, 2021) intended to provide a better understanding of how higher education can more effectively and equitably support CEPs. The purpose of the study was twofold: (1) to investigate and conduct an analysis of the practices that support community engagement professionals and (2) to contribute to the limited body of scholarship on CEPs. It explored two research questions: Which practices related to CEPs are in effect at higher education institutions? Which practices make the most impact on CEP job satisfaction?

Overview of Literature

Decades of literature point toward the transformative power of community and civic engagement to address the most cited challenges for higher education today, including student learning, retention and completion, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (AAC&U, 2011; Astin, 1993; Bonner Foundation, 2018a; Bonner Foundation, 2019; Finley & McNair, 2013; Fitzgerald, H. E., Bruns, K., Sonka, S. T., Furco, A., & Swanson, L., 2012; Kuh, 2008; Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011; Sturm et al., 2011; Tinto, 1987; Tinto, 2016). Community-engaged scholars and practitioners have highlighted the roles that higher education can play in driving social change (Brown & Burdsal, 2012; Burke, 2019; Cress, 2012; Cress et al., 2010; Finley, 2012; Gilroy, 2012; Marts, 2016; Saltmarsh, 2005; Tos, 2015). The majority of research and resources, however, has centered around three of the stakeholders in campus–community work: students, faculty, and, increasingly, community partners (AAC&U, 2002; Battistoni & Longo, 2011; Creighton, 2008; Eatman, 2012; Estes, 2004; Freeman et al., 2009; Kuh, 2008; Moore et al., 1998; Saltmarsh et al., 2009.

Although drawing attention to students, faculty, and community partners is important, the CEPs whose primary responsibilities are to administer, support, manage, and lead campus–community engagement are largely missing from the field's scholarship (e.g., Welch & Saltmarsh, 2013). In recent years, a growing body of CEP literature has focused on defining, conceptualizing, and professionalizing the CEP role, including the development of competencies, credentialing, and professional development programs (Atiles, 2019; Bonner Foundation, 2018b; Campus Compact, n.d.; Doberneck et al., 2017; Dostilio, 2017; Fang, 2016; Pasquesi et al., 2019; Trebil-Smith, 2019; Tryon & Madden, 2019; Weerts, 2019). However, the current literature lacks a meaningful examination of the institutional practices that can successfully attract, retain, and advance CEPs.

In addition, CEPs are often marginalized in higher education due to insufficient resources, challenges around positionality, academic culture, and power dynamics. For example, many CEPs are not afforded faculty status even though they may hold advanced degrees and teach (Welch & Saltmarsh, 2013). Whether in curricular or cocurricular settings, CEPs are expected to design, facilitate, and assess student learning and development for complex student learning outcomes such as civic agency, social justice, and empathy. CEPs are also expected to have knowledge and experience in training faculty in community-engaged teaching, learning, and research pedagogies and practices (Bonner Foundation, 2018b; Campus Compact, 2022; Dostilio, 2017). Despite their significant roles in changing curriculum and supporting faculty development, in many cases CEPs experience challenges around securing respect, power, and recognition for their knowledge and authority with peers and colleagues. The impact of this marginalization of CEPs in higher

education is pervasive, posing potentially damaging consequences for themselves, colleagues, students, the institution, and the community at large. These consequences include increased job dissatisfaction, lack of motivation to perform job functions, lack of leadership for initiatives, less effective student mentorship, less integration and cross-campus collaboration, high turnover rates, burnout, loss of institutional and community relationships and knowledge, breeding campus–community mistrust, and inefficient use of institutional and community resources (Kezar, 2011; Ruffalo Noel Levitz, 2019).

Research Methods

This study drew on field-building literature by community-engaged scholars Welch and Saltmarsh (2013) and Dostilio (2017). The research partner was the Corella & Bertram F. Bonner Foundation, a national nonprofit organization, and its network of colleges and universities across the United States who are working to advance civic and community engagement in higher education.

Community engagement professionals, defined as employees at higher education institutions whose primary job is to support and administer campus–community engagement (Dostilio, 2017), were recruited as research participants through online outreach to approximately 6,000 self-identified CEPs across three platforms: the National Bonner Network staff email list, the National Higher Education Service-Learning email list, and the Community Service and Service-Learning Professionals in Higher Education Facebook group. The study sample included 51 CEPs who self-defined by responding "Yes" to the survey question "Are you a staff member at a higher education institution whose primary job is to support and administer campus-community engagement?" These CEPs voluntarily responded to and completed an electronic survey. The study aimed to involve individuals from diverse institutions and demographic backgrounds. See Table 1 for participant demographics, Table 2 for institutional demographics, and Table 3 for characteristics of the centers for community engagement.

The thesis study used an electronic Qualtrics survey that included 27 closed and two open-ended questions, based on the researcher's experience as a community engagement professional, as well as Welch and Saltmarsh (2013), Dostilio (2017), and the Bonner Foundation's Bonner Pipeline Project Core Competencies Framework (Bonner Foundation, 2018b). A pilot survey was conducted to solicit feedback prior to administering the final survey. Data collection was conducted over a 2-week period on participants' responses to questions that assessed (1) community engagement practices related to staff, (2) job satisfaction, and (3) quality and institutionalization of campus–community engagement. The researcher used quantitative descriptive data analysis, including data coding and univariate analysis (frequency distribution, central tendency, and dispersion) and manual, inductive coding for the qualitative responses (Creswell, 2005). The study followed key criteria and standards of ethics, quality, and rigor of mixed-methods research, including voluntary participation, IRB approval, informed consent processes, and secure data storage. (See the full thesis for more robust review of the methodology and data.)

Analysis and Key Findings

Five key themes related to institutional practices emerged from the findings and analysis in response to the two primary research questions (RQ1: Which practices related to CEPs are in effect at higher education institutions? RQ2: Which practices make the most impact on CEP job satisfaction?). These themes were (1) fulfillment through faculty development and institutionalization efforts (RQ2), as well as challenges from (2) positionality and power dynamics (RQ2), (3) compensation and support (RQ2), (4) institutional infrastructure (RQ1), and (5) CEP demographics (RQ2). Key themes were determined based on results (see Tables 4–7) that rose to a level of significance operationalized as one standard deviation from the mean and highest frequency responses, and these findings were triangulated with the open-ended responses from participants to further give voice to the themes.

CEP Fulfillment Through Faculty Development and Institutionalization

According to research findings, out of eight categories of typical roles and responsibilities for CEPs, respondents ranked institutionalizing community engagement (60%) and faculty development (47%) as the responsibilities least contributing to their job satisfaction (see Figure 1 and Brandt, 2021).

Table 1. Survey Respondents' Demographics

Demographic Variables	% (frequency)
Gender	
Female	78% (40)
Male	22% (11)
Race/Ethnicity	
White or Euro-American	84% (43)
Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American	8% (4)
Biracial or multiracial	2% (1)
Middle Eastern or Arab American	2% (1)
Latinx or Hispanic	2% (1)
Native American or Alaska Native	2% (1)
Employment type	
Full-time	96% (49)
Part-time	4% (2)
Current Job Title	
Program coordinator (VISTAs, managers, etc.)	22% (11)
Program director (Asst. Dir., etc.)	45% (23)
Center Director	33% (17)
Total years working in the field (not including undergraduate college experience)	
0–2 years	8% (4)
3–6 years	31% (16)
7–10 years	22% (11)
10–15 years	16% (8)
15–20 years	12% (6)
20+ years	12% (6)
Teaching Experience	
Does not teach courses	31% (16)
Teaches credit-bearing courses	57% (29)
Teaches non-credit-bearing courses	12% (6)

Positionality and Power Dynamics

The second theme amplifies the first theme, delving deeper into how positionality and power dynamics significantly impact CEPs. Institutional politics and/or power dynamics were the factors least contributing to their job satisfaction (Table 4). Respondents' narrative comments also suggest that CEPs in staff roles experience barriers to fulfillment and advancement due to structural academic hierarchies and power dynamics, which privilege faculty. Open-ended responses highlighted this concern, with comments such as "not feeling like my contributions are adequately respected, supported, or financially compensated" indicating an interest in leaving their position and/or the field. When asked to recommend changes, respondents said, "Recognize and value the decades of effort in developing partnerships and programs," "Centralizing and institutionalizing community engagement on campus and having our work more respected by faculty," and

Table 2. Survey Respondents' Institutional Characteristics

Demographic Variables	% (frequency)
Institution type (check all)	
Liberal arts	69% (35)
Private	61% (31)
Public	24% (12)
HBCU or MSI	10% (5)
Ivy League	2% (1)
Total enrollment (undergraduate and graduate)	
Under 1,000	10% (5)
1,000–2,000	29% (15)
2,000–5,000	31% (16)
5,000–15,000	14% (7)
15,000+	16% (8)
City/town population size where institution resides	
Under 10,000	24% (12)
10,000–50,000	22% (11)
50,000–100,000	16% (8)
100,000–500,000	20% (10)
500,000–1 million+	20% (10)
Received the Carnegie Elective Community Engagement Classification (2020, 2015)	
Yes	47% (24)
No	53% (27)

"Allowing students, faculty and nonprofits to see the staff as experts/primary contacts would do wonders for motivation."

Compensation and Support for CEPs

Third, the study found concerns around inadequate compensation (salary and benefits) and support (pathways for advancement, professional development opportunities) for CEPs as a significant result (Tables 4 and 5). Despite their distinctive expertise, many CEPs are not being adequately compensated or supported in their roles. Nearly half of respondents in the survey reported not being adequately compensated, with salary/benefits as a factor detracting from their job satisfaction and potentially leading to CEPs leaving their position or the field altogether (Tables 4 and 5); this theme is illustrated in participant responses explaining why they would leave:

> A position with another organization (whether nonprofit or for-profit) that compensates to my level of education and skill, that offers consistent and reliable opportunities for career advancement and skill development. My future at my institution is uncertain because I cannot anticipate a stable, upward trajectory, and am currently living barely above the poverty line despite 5–6 years of professional experience and a Masters degree.

Institutional Infrastructure and Support for Campus-Community Engagement

The fourth theme reveals a lack of institutional infrastructure (resources, space, staffing) and support (involvement in decision-making processes, senior leadership) for community engagement. Fifty-six percent of respondents identified a lack of

Table 3. Survey Respondents' Center for Civic and Community Engagement Characteristics

Demographic Variables	% (frequency)
Institution's total # of community engagement centers	
One	65% (33)
Two	22% (11)
Three or more	8% (4)
Total # full-time staff	
0–1	18% (9)
2–3	35% (18)
4–6	31% (16)
7+	16% (8)
Total # part-time staff	
0–1	67% (34)
2–3	24% (12)
4–6	2% (1)
7+	8% (4)
Reporting line	
Student Affairs	27% (14)
Academic Affairs	47% (24)
Other	18% (9)
No response	8% (4)
Annual operating budget (including salaries)	
Less than $50,000	12% (6)
$50,001–$100,000	10% (5)
$100,001–$250,000	12% (6)
$250,001–$500,000	16% (8)
$500,001+	16% (8)
Don't know	35% (18)

institutional support for community engagement as the factor that would most influence them to leave their positions and/or the field of community engagement in higher education altogether (Table 5). In response to the recommendations to improve the experience for CEPs on their campus and/or in the field more broadly, the two significant responses were "realistic, clear, and reduced workload expectations" (33%) and "more support and funding for community engagement" (30%; see Table 6). Additionally, CEPs identified inconsistencies in ways that their institution promotes civic/community engagement as a priority (in statements, strategic plans) while not providing resources, staffing, and support consistent with that prioritization. The inclusion of civic/community engagement in institutional strategic plans was the highest mean response for factors influencing quality and institutionalization of community engagement (Table 7), yet a lack of institutional support (infrastructure, staffing, resources) was found throughout the research findings (Tables 5 and 6). One respondent said, "Fully integrating service and volunteerism as part of a strategic plan, not just in words, but in resources and institutional practices and actions" would

Figure 1. Descriptive Statistics for the Variables Influencing Ranking of Job Roles and Job Satisfaction

Facilitating Student Learning & Development
Community Partnerships & Projects
Social Action & Movement Building
Community Development & Impact
Program Management & Administration
Faculty Development & Engagement
Institutionalizing Community Engagement
Leading Change on Campus

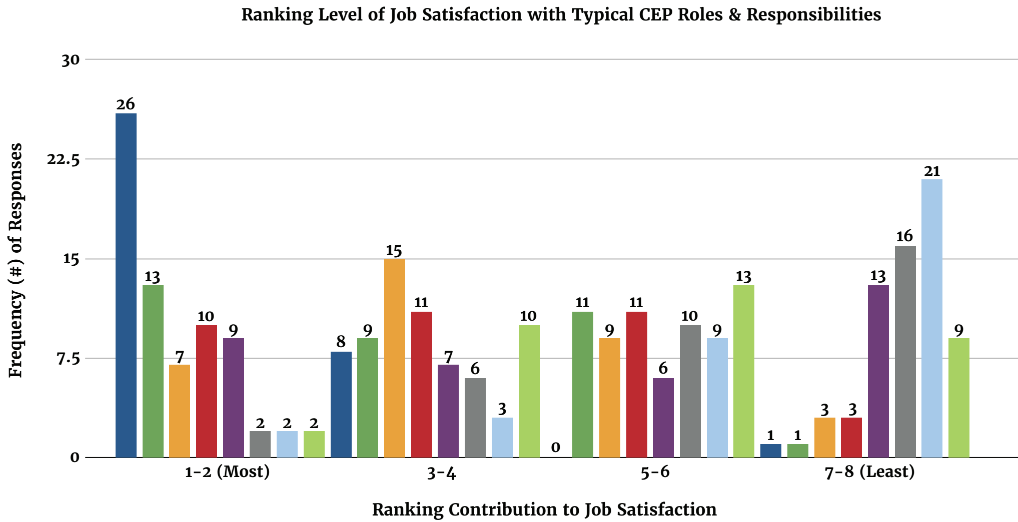

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for the Variables Influencing Factors Contributing Least to Job Satisfaction

	% (frequency)
Institutional politics and/or power dynamics	59% (22)
I am not adequately compensated with salary/benefits	49% (18)
I don't have the time	46% (17)
Institution lacks or does not provide adequate resources	43% (16)
I have to spend too much of my time on administrative responsibilities	41% (15)
My voice isn't represented at decision-making tables	39% (14)
I am not or my position is not adequately respected	35% (13)
Lack of work–life balance	32% (12)
My institution has unsupportive senior leadership and/or experienced transitions in senior leadership	27% (10)
I'm not interested in those particular areas	24% (9)
I am not given opportunities to advance professionally	22% (8)
Frequent staff transitions and turnover	19% (7)
Impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic	16% (6)
I don't have the particular skill or knowledge	14% (5)

Note. *N* = 37, Mean = 0.33, *SD* = 0.14, Significance threshold = 47% (Mean +1 *SD*)

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics for the Variables Influencing Job Satisfaction—Factors Most Influencing a CEP to Leave Their Position and/or the Field of Community Engagement in Higher Education

	% (frequency)
Lack of institutional support for community engagement (including lack of respect from colleagues and/or leadership)	56% (23)
Lack of compensation (salary) and advancement	46% (19)
Burnout, self-care, mental health	34% (14)
Ideological differences with the institution	10% (4)
More direct engagement with community partners	7% (3)
Make more of an impact in different field/position	2% (1)
Lack of creativity in role	2% (1)
Difficult staff culture	2% (1)
Make scholarly contributions outside of the field	2% (1)

Note. *N* = 41, Mean = 0.20, *SD* = 0.22, Significance threshold = 42% (Mean + 1 *SD*)

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics for the Variables Influencing Job Satisfaction—Recommendations to Improve the Experience for CEPs

	% (frequency)
Realistic, clear, and reduced workload expectations (better work/life balance, more time for reflection, sabbaticals, readings, writing)	33% (13)
More support and funding (infrastructure, communication, etc.) for community engagement on campus (including from senior leadership)	30% (12)
Hire more community engagement staff	23% (9)
Increase compensation (salary, benefits) and support (professional development opportunities, pathways for advancement) for community engagement staff	20% (8)
Integration of community engagement (including with DEI) and relationship building across campus	15% (6)
Institutional consistency in stated and expressed versus actual (resources, staffing, etc.) support for community engagement on campus	13% (5)
More respect for the community engagement field and staff (including from faculty and higher education)	10% (4)
Centralization and institutionalization of community engagement on campus	8% (3)
More direct engagement with community partners	5% (2)
More focus on social justice education	3% (1)

Note. *N* = 40, Mean = 0.16, *SD* = 0.10, Significance threshold = 26% (Mean + 1 *SD*)

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics for the Variables Influencing Quality and Institutionalization of Community Engagement—Rating of Level of Agreement With Perceived Engagement in Practices by the Center for Community Engagement

	Mean	*SE*
Civic/community engagement is included in institutional strategic plan(s)	3.22	0.12
Has adequate office space to meet program needs	3.11	0.15
Offers a service-learning/community engagement minor/certificate/designation	3.07	0.12
Has an academic affairs reporting line	2.84	0.19
Provides faculty development programs	2.80	0.16
Has an established faculty award	2.74	0.18
Evaluates community partner satisfaction	2.73	0.14
Provides faculty fellowship/grants	2.69	0.17
Provides course development grants	2.65	0.17
Has official/operational definitions of service-learning, community-based research, community engagement (posted online, website)	2.62	0.15
Publicizes faculty accomplishments	2.61	0.14
Collaborates on presentations with partners	2.60	0.15
Provides faculty development funds (e.g., to attend conferences)	2.57	0.16
Collaborates on grant proposals with partners	2.54	0.16
Evaluates student satisfaction with service-learning/community engagement/ community-engaged learning	2.50	0.15
Provides awards/incentives to community partners	2.43	0.15
Offers a service-learning/community engagement minor/certificate/designation	2.33	0.19
Institutional leadership promotes civic engagement as a priority	2.30	0.14
Has a full-time administrator with faculty status	2.11	0.19
Provides faculty mentor program	2.11	0.15
Facilitates faculty research on service-learning/community engagement	2.09	0.15
Has an advisory/governing board	2.09	0.15
Has an advisory/governing board with community representation	2.04	0.15
Collaborates on publications with partners	2	0.15
Provides funding for community partners to coteach courses	1.89	0.14

Note. N = 46, Strongly disagree (Min) = 1, Strongly agree (Max) = 4

be their recommendation to improve the experience of CEPs on their campus and/or in the field more broadly. The respondent further explained,

> I am an office of one with little clerical support and a very small budget (less than $7000 annually) yet "Civic Responsibility" is one of the five stated values of the College. Institutions must support their community engagement offices with resources that adequately address the interests and needs of students and our community partners.

Two other respondents echoed this sentiment by stating, "Community engagement needs to be at the heart of the institutional mission. I'm tired of it being tangential or performative" and "Continued mismatch between what the institution says they want to do/value and the resources and/or actions of the institution."

Community Engagement Professional Demographics

The fifth theme highlights the finding that CEPs in this research represent a less senior perspective. In this research, 67% of respondents indicated their position title as program coordinator or director, with only 33% as center director (Table 1). In addition, the majority of respondents in this study (61%) had a total of 10 years or less working in the field (not including undergraduate college experience; Table 1).

Discussion and Limitations

This study's key findings are affirmed by the field's scholarship. The literature suggests that staff, especially compared to faculty, experience multiple and more severe forms of power dynamics that are extremely difficult to overcome, and staff typically wield less power and influence within academia (Kezar, 2011). This finding is echoed in Michigan State University's competencies research explaining, "this next generation is committed to equality, social justice, civic duty, and the public purposes of higher education, but is often confronted by institutional structures, policies, and practices that delegitimize their experiences, perspectives, and approaches" (Doberneck et al., 2017, para. 1). Staff members' typically lower position within an institution creates barriers in navigating systems and advocating for change, even though these staff members possess significant and unique knowledge, skills, experience, and relationships.

Additionally, the connection between CEPs' participation in faculty development and institutionalization efforts and lack of job satisfaction is an important finding because the literature suggests that supporting faculty development, building infrastructure, and integrating and aligning community engagement with other institutional initiatives are key components to advancing and institutionalizing community engagement campus-wide (Harkavy, 2005; Saltmarsh & Johnson, 2020). If higher education is to be successful in retaining uniquely talented and skilled CEPs to foster quality programs and carry out its civic mission, institutions must address the barriers facing CEPs, including in their faculty development and institutionalization efforts, lack of resources for campus–community engagement, inadequate compensation, and respecting staff as experts in their field.

A key difference in this research compared to that of both Dostilio (2017) and Welch and Saltmarsh (2013) is that the data captures and represents a less senior perspective. (See Brandt, 2021 for more demographic descriptive statistics.) In Dostilio's research, 42% were center directors, and in Welch and Saltmarsh's research, the survey instrument was sent exclusively to center directors of campuses that received the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement in 2006, 2008, or 2010. Thus, this study reflects the experiences of some CEPs who are not yet in senior leadership but would seek to advance professionally into a center director role. These individuals are administrators who, often rising through their own experiences as students, advance to positions at the middle of their careers. Then, they may be dissatisfied with compensation, opportunities, the lack of infrastructure and support for this work, institutional power dynamics and politics, and challenges around positionality and lack of respect for the CEP role and the CE community engagement field. If budding CEPs are continually dissatisfied, higher education runs the risk of losing these skilled, experienced, and talented staff to other fields and positions.

Significance and Recommendations

This study sought to explore the practices that community engagement professionals perceive at their institutions, and the

key themes connecting these practices, job satisfaction, and quality and institutionalization of community engagement efforts. The study's findings showed that there are significant areas for improving the CEP experience on campuses. Four recommendations arise from this research, which are well supported by other studies, yet contribute to the field. The recommendations are concrete actions that institutions should implement if they take seriously the expertise CEPs bring and the impact they have on students' learning and development, institutional priorities, and fostering social change.

The first recommendation is to support community engagement professionals in their efforts toward advancing faculty development and institutionalization of community engagement. Recommended practices include (1) reducing the CEP workload by shifting or eliminating low-level activities and responsibilities to open time and capacity for CEPs' work on faculty development and institutionalization of community engagement and (2) reducing power dynamics and positionality challenges, including by providing faculty status, teaching opportunities, and shifting culture.

The second recommendation is to invest in community engagement professionals with adequate compensation and support. Recommended practices include (1) providing adequate compensation, including salary and benefits; (2) ensuring mentoring and advancement opportunities; (3) engaging CEPs in conducting research; (4) providing publishing opportunities for CEPs; and (5) developing campus professional development programs for CEPs.

The third recommendation is to provide more infrastructure and support for community engagement, particularly by adequately resourcing units and hiring more community engagement staff. An institution could partner with external organizations (national or community foundations, other grants, local businesses) to secure funding and resources or shift existing institutional funds to hire more staff. Supporting staff to work with advancement offices to cultivate donors is critical.

The fourth recommendation is to address inequities that foster barriers posed by power dynamics, positionality, and institutional politics. Recommended practices include (1) leveraging and building internal and external support (engaging faculty allies, consultants, using literature and data), (2) establishing awards for CEP staff, and (3) publicly recognizing CEP accomplishments.

Concluding Reflections

The study contributes to the CEP literature by investigating experiences and practices that CEPs identify as motivational and demotivational in their roles. The findings from this study can be applied by colleges and universities nationally as they take stock of their current practices and serve as a tool for CEPs to gain the resources and support needed to keep steering institutional and community change.

The findings and recommendations in this research are also relevant and timely for the staffing and hiring challenges facing higher education. According to a 2023 annual survey by United Educators, "half of college leaders identified recruitment and hiring—employing talented staff and faculty—as one of the most pressing risks facing their institutions" (Seltzer, 2023). Amid the Great Resignation, the findings echo a rallying cry across higher education to address staff burnout, resignation, boundaries, and compensation (Rodriguez & Carpenter, 2022). It is time for higher education to answer this call to both retain and support talented staff and to live out its civic purpose.

About the Author

Elizabeth (Liz) Brandt is the director of community engagement at the Corella & Bertram F. Bonner Foundation. Her research interests focus on community engagement professionals, specifically understanding the pathways for advancement and dismantling barriers for CEPs to thrive in higher education. She received her master's in higher education with concentrations in administration & leadership and educational policy from Drexel University.

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Cann, C. N., & DeMeulenaere, E. J. (2020). *The activist academic: Engaged scholarship for resistance, hope, and social change*. Myers Education Press. 250 pp.

Review by Marisol Morales

As I cozy up in my bed and put myself in the perfect position of comfort and focus, I open up the book *The Activist Academic: Engaged Scholarship for Resistance, Hope, and Social Change* by Colette N. Cann and Eric J. DeMeulenaere. I possessed some background on the book and the authors since I interviewed them for a Campus Compact podcast when the book was first released in 2020 (Seligsohn et al., 2020). The conversation from the podcast was inspiring, and I very much appreciated the way they framed their work, but I expected to open this book and find the same academic ease that so much of our field produces. What I uncovered as I read through the prologue was something different and unlike other engagement-focused articles or books I have read. Their conversations, their deliberations, their families, and their realities made their way to the pages. At first, I was a bit confused, but in a good way. The casual approach drew me in and made me want to understand their process and how this duo arrived at this space of depth and reflection.

Cann and DeMeulenaere introduce themselves in their first year as "activist academics" with the ever-looming tenure process ahead of them. For them, the identity belongs to academics who seek to find ways for their research, teaching, and service to promote justice and equity inside and outside higher education. The authors shared stories of their educational journeys, their work in public education before entering academia, and the practicalities of their choices to be academics or work at their institutions. The 10 years of field data from their experiences are captured in the pages. Understanding why they entered academia and the rules of engagement for tenure created a tension they were trying to make meaning of in this book. They hope to remain true to their activist identities while knowing the importance of challenging hegemony and creating different tools in this space. It reminded me of the many conversations I have had with junior faculty and the pressure they feel to conform to rules that are built on what Cann (Cann & DeMeulenaere, 2020) called the "three-headed monster that plagues US institutions": institutional racism, White privilege, and White supremacy (p. 4).

Activist academics want to do more than just survive in academia. They are about engagement, the practical use of academic tools for social change, and personal examples conveyed through narratives to challenge the traditional use of research, teaching, and service in order to challenge injustices. This work, like the many stories I have heard over the course of my career from junior faculty, is deeply personal. It can feel lonely if you do not have others who understand the pressure to conform that many of our senior colleagues and institutions place on those seeking tenure. *The Activist Academic* contributes a great deal to the body of literature that seeks to redefine academia so that it can be more accepting of activist academics, move beyond its hills and ivory tower, and stand side by side with communities in their social justice aims.

The authors' use of critical coconstructed autoethnography, along with the understanding that their friendship played an important role in their data collection and writing process, allows for the emergence of a beautiful narrative that makes the reader feel as though they are part of it. Reading the back-and-forth banter as ideas are exchanged, agreements are made, different points of view are shared, and the struggle toward understanding is achieved created an inviting process that welcomes the reader into the fold.

Chapter 2, "Capturing Praxis—Critical Co-Constructed Autoethnography," lays out how the authors selected the methodology they use as they were proceeding with the question they wanted to explore. Most

important to the authors was landing on a shared methodology that could hold all that they were trying to communicate. Their use of the end notes as a space to provide context and understanding of the various critical pedagogies that undergird their work is particularly valuable. This is a luscious place to delve into the literature and learn about the body of work that informs their methodology.

As the progression of their book moves into Year 3 of Cann's and DeMeulenaere's academic activist journey, they tackle the critical pedagogies that they are introducing future teachers to in their classrooms. The reflection on their "whys"—why they love critical theory, why they include it in their courses, and why they believe it is necessary—becomes a powerful introduction to the history and development of critical theory. They discuss the roots and origins of critical theory, voices included and voices often overlooked, as well as critiques of critical theory, such as where it falls short on the inclusion of intersectionality. As a reader, you imagine yourself in the café with them thinking about the first time you were introduced to critical theory: what it did for you, and how it made you understand yourself and your agency. The use of narrative invites you in as a participant in much the same way that a good novel does.

Chapter 4, Year 4 of their journey, turns to activist research. What I appreciate about the framing of this chapter is that it is grounded in the impact of activist research. Still, the authors begin by trying to define activist research and put parameters around it. At a basic level, activist research is seen as research that critically theorizes and creates material change. This kind of research is rooted in critical theory, critical pedagogy, and critical race theory; focused on social justice; and "committed to bringing about change at the spaces and sites of research" (p. 71). Cann and DeMeulenaere identify three dimensions of impact: ideological, material, and scale. The ideological dimension of impact is concerned with the degree to which the research is counterhegemonic and disrupts dominant narratives. The second dimension, material, is focused on the degree to which structural change and/or improvement occurs for participants. The final dimension, scale, reflects the number of people affected by the research.

The authors map these impacts on a graph, in which the *x* axis is ideological impact and the *y* axis is material impact, and scale is represented by the size of circles on the graph (p. 78). Although Cann and DeMeulenaere acknowledge that their graph is not a precise measurement tool, they offer it as a useful reflection device to assess intent from impact and to focus on continuous improvement for social change. I found the prospect of this three-dimensional framework exciting when I began to read the chapter, but questions arose for me about a fourth dimension: timing. Often, we cannot see the impact of our projects in real time. Is impact measured by the duration within which the project happens, typically confined by academic calendars and not by community timelines? Do we have to wait to call a project "activist research" until after we are able to assess these three dimensions of impact? Is it the researcher who should assign that label to their research or the community or is it codetermined? I see the usefulness of a visual tool like this for plotting and assessment, but I wonder if the graph should be accompanied by a set of reflection questions for activist academics to consider as they cocreate projects in partnership with communities.

As the authors turn to their 5th year on the path as activist academics, they embark on conversations about activist pedagogies, those concerned with liberation and freedom. It is the imagination of the possible in the present. It serves as the "being about it" stance that activist academics must remain in to perform the emancipatory work.

Chapter 5 offers an important contribution by providing substantive information about activist pedagogies, particularly the way critical pedagogies help us to understand schools or schooling as spaces that reproduce inequities. The process by which they discuss the way they introduce students to these pedagogies and theories is not only one of logical progression in how these pedagogies inform, support, or expand on each other; it is also a solid introduction for readers who are new to critical pedagogies. In this chapter, I was introduced to Red and killjoy pedagogies. The authors' narrative also offers us the opportunity to witness them teaching each other about these critical pedagogies. The colearning portrayed in this book is generative. The authors ask questions about what this pedagogy looks like when it is performed and modeled in the classroom, showing the reader how important these questions are for educa-

tors. Those of us who believe in and teach critical pedagogies have to be aware of and cognizant about how we live them in a classroom. It seems hypocritical to teach those theories in a way that supports and upholds the banking method of education. Fortunately, the authors offer a way to think about activist pedagogy as "a pedagogy that is anti-oppressive in *four* dimensions in the classroom. It's concerned with:

- Purpose: How is justice prioritized?
- Content: How is content shaped by the identities of those in the classroom through issues of identity-based justice?
- Identity: How is identity considered and navigated in classroom spaces?
- Process: How do students and teachers interact in interpersonal space in ways that do not mimic oppressive relationships in society outside the classroom?" (p. 97)

The remainder of the chapter goes in depth on these important questions, which are critical for educators to explore not only when teaching about critical pedagogies but also in their own practice. I highlight the ones above because they are essential for us to hold close in our own practice. However, I was concerned about the way the "process" dimension was treated in Chapter 6, which covers the role of activist service in schools and the community. I question whether the process was handled with integrity in the engagement experience that DeMeulenaere described with his college students, most of whom were White, as they were engaging with high school students of color. All of us who facilitate these sometimes-difficult cross-cultural exchanges have those cringe moments where we witness the way identity-based power dynamics diminish the voice and experience of young people of color. Here, DeMeulenaere offers it as an example of the challenge of identity work. As I read the process, I struggled with whether DeMeulenaere adequately protected those voices while acknowledging his desire to allow the tension to rise among the students so that authentic dialogue and learning could take place on both sides.

Cann offers the idea of creating "discordant communities," which involves "creating a community of trust where conflicts are welcomed, coaxed even, and where that conflict can be processed in ways that are productive, creative, and generative" (pp. 130–131). What Cann describes is not an easy task. It weighs on the educator and is shaped by the identities they have and the different spaces they occupy. Healing and liberation cannot come without awareness, acknowledgment, and the courage to confront the difficult. But this idea is precisely what the activist academic offers to our teaching spaces.

In the final chapter, we are made privy to the prize of tenure having been awarded to the authors and their friends, while they analyze the joy and conflict of that accomplishment around a campfire. The introduction of the undercommons by Moten and Harney (2013) provides a space of acknowledgment of this conflict. They confront the "common" academic trajectory that demands recognition for work, such as the pursuit of tenure, which requires participating in the reproductive aspects of professionalization that reinforce capitalism and other forms of oppression in institutions. The only alternative for those of historically marginalized identities is to be part of the undercommons, a place for collective study where academics are "in but not of" the academy. This space of resistance for activist academics is one that is "liberated from the capitalist commodification of ideas" (p. 143) and challenges the status quo. The conversation that ensues among the academics around the campfire ranges from abolition to fugitivity to transforming from the inside out. It highlights the labor exploitation that happens in higher education and the importance of creating spaces of refuge.

This chapter underscores the importance of cultivating relationships to create restorative spaces of inspiration and support among activist academics who perform this critical work at institutions and push up against increasing political and economic pressures. The afterword, by John Saltmarsh, offers a powerful call, directive, or indictment in the form of a letter to a departmental personnel review committee chair that challenges the archaic institutional culture and standard epistemology that so many tenure and promotion processes utilize to assess achievement. In this piece, he beautifully questions whether the standards and institutional cultures that reinforce power, privilege, and oppression are ones that can adequately assess activist scholarship. It is a profound reinforcement to the authority of the book.

The Activist Academic deftly explores the personal and connected process of doing work that most aligns with the values and identity of an activist academic. The authors accomplish this by inviting readers to witness their journey navigating the current limits for achieving tenure to move toward creating a space within academia or from the undercommons that feels most authentic to them and aligns with their purpose. The book offers readers exposure to relevant, critical pedagogies and theories, insight into practice, and a lens into the ways those who seek to impact social justice find spaces of liberation within and outside the restrictive system of higher education in America.

About the Reviewer

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