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From the Editor…

Shannon O. Brooks

The *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* (JHEOE) is pleased to publish its first issue of 2024—28(1)—which features an array of approaches to engaged scholarship that address timely topics and novel strategies for supporting community engagement work.

The **Research Articles** section leads off with "Amplifying Community Partner Voices in Rural Community Service-Learning Partnerships," a mixed-methods study exploring the underresearched perspectives of community partners involved in rural service-learning partnerships. Paulson and Davis's study identifies unique challenges faced by rural communities that—combined with many strengths—make partnerships challenging as well as beneficial for students, institutions, and community members. The authors discuss compelling recommendations for higher education institutions engaged in rural service-learning work. These include encouraging a shift to critical service-learning approaches connected to social issues important to rural communities, an emphasis on capacity building and economic development related projects, and becoming more aware of the ways anchor institutions provide access to resources that are sometimes inaccessible in rural communities.

In our second featured research article for this issue, Whaley et al. reaffirm the importance of civic education through a study examining student understanding of and engagement in the 2020 Census. This study was undertaken by a campus center for civic engagement in partnership with students in a political science course who developed the 2020 Census Assessment. This instrument was administered as both a pre and posttest to students before and after implementation of the 2020 Census Education and Engagement program, a program designed to educate the campus community about the census and encourage participation. Findings highlight the need for and impact of civic education and programming targeted at college students around the census, as well as the implications for communities with large populations of college students who stand to benefit from robust student participation in civic engagement activities.

The aim of the **Reflective Essays** section of JHEOE is to present thought-provoking examinations of current issues related to university-community engagement that are anchored in the literature. Often, these essays tackle provocative topics that researchers, practitioners, and community members alike are wrestling with and untangling in their work. Ambo and Gavazzi's thoughtful and nuanced essay delves into the fraught history of land-grant universities and Native lands gifted to states through the Morrill Act. This history is juxtaposed with the growing popularity in higher education of adopting land acknowledgements, which can be viewed as performative and disconnected from a larger conversation with Indigenous communities. Instead, the authors offer ways institutions might move beyond written statements to actions designed to build better relationships with Indigenous communities. Not only is this essay a primer on the impetus and rationale behind settler land acknowledgments, but also it challenges land-grants to go beyond these statements to engage in true restorative work.

This issue's **Projects with Promise** section features early to mid-stage projects and research studies designed to demonstrate promising indications of impact. In our first article in this section, King et al. present a case study of the Baltimore Field School, an intensive humanities-focused training program that creates opportunities for collaboration between faculty, graduate students, and community partners in Baltimore. This case study explores two iterations of the Baltimore Field School through a self-reflexive assessment and evaluation process. Early-stage findings show promising new approaches and practical considerations for avoiding unethical, extractive, and unfair practices in university-community partner-

ships.

Further exploring ways to bolster equity and engagement principles in community engaged research, Julian et al.'s case study tests the potential use of a translational research model by university personnel working in land-grant institutions to explore and address important community issues, in this case the Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) movement. The authors argue that this study provides a framework to support the use of translational research to accomplish the mission of land-grant universities in a way that is more aligned with equity and engagement principles.

In "Refugee-Background Youth Workers as Agents of Social Change," Kennedy et al. employ a narrative inquiry methodology in a study highlighting the power of storytelling to help U.S.-born community members understand the experiences of immigrant and migrant communities. In this study, a long-term research-practice partnership between one of the authors and a center that works with refugees established The Stories Project. This project provides time for summer youth workers to engage in structured reflection activities between refugee-background and U.S.-born participants so they can learn from one another through storytelling. The authors themselves tell a compelling and valuable story of community-engaged research based a premise that storytelling can lead to change.

Building upon this theme of understanding and uncovering underrepresented voices, Allen et al. explore the impact of *promotores de salud* on the ability of medical students to more effectively provide health resources and outreach to underserved communities, particularly Hispanic communities. Promotores are community health workers with knowledge of the community being served. Findings from this study of medical students and promotores at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso indicate that interaction between promotores and students improved student communication skills with community members and their understanding of the local community, thus providing a potential pathway for medical students to serve as community educators in underserved communities with the guidance of promotores.

Finally, our last **Projects with Promise** article shifts focus to a broader public input process designed to build a new economic and natural resource asset for a region. Yeager et al. describes community asset mapping between multiple university and community stakeholders which resulted in the development of a blue economy corridor in the eastern portion of the Tar-Pamlico River Basin in North Carolina. This article describes the development of a project that celebrates the region's natural resources and assets, community engagement approaches for public input, and innovative ways that artificial intelligence can be employed in similar asset mapping projects.

Finally, the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* seeks to publish and showcase the work of emerging scholars and new voices in the field through the **Dissertation Overview** section, featuring summaries of recently completed dissertations and theses on a broad range of university-community engagement topics. Stephanie J. Brewer's (2023) dissertation explores the connection between undergraduate participation in academic community-engaged learning and mental health and wellbeing. The findings from this qualitative interpretative phenomenological analysis highlight themes of identity, belonging, and agency and ways that institutions support the wellbeing and mental health of students through a variety of means, including employing solid pedagogical approaches (i.e., critical reflection) in community-engaged learning. This is especially important as this type of learning can have both positive and negative impact on participants' mental health because of the real-world implications of the work students engage in.

We thank our talented editorial team, associate editors, and reviewers for their contributions to the successful completion of this issue. As always, we are honored to showcase the work of scholars and practitioners who choose to publish with JHEOE. We invite authors and potential reviewers to join us by submitting future scholarship to JHEOE or volunteering as a peer reviewer to help advance the field of outreach and engagement.

References

Brewer, S. J. (2023). *Academic community-engaged learning and student mental health and wellness: Understanding the lived experiences of undergraduate students* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Michigan State University.

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Amplifying Community Partner Voices in Rural Community Service-Learning Partnerships

Lauren R. Paulson and Caitlyn Davis

Abstract

This mixed-methods study delves into rural community service-learning (CSL) partnerships, shedding light on the complexities and dynamics of collaboration between colleges and rural communities. Through quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, the research amplifies the voices of rural community partners, emphasizing the crucial role of trust, communication, and reciprocity. Challenges such as staff demands and organizational mismatches underscore the need for rural institutions to better prepare students and allocate resources to support their community partners effectively. The study advocates for transformative CSL approaches that prioritize community needs and nurture long-lasting collaborations. By providing insights into the impact of CSL on rural partners and organizations, this research offers valuable recommendations for improving future practices and fostering meaningful engagement in both rural and urban settings.

Keywords: Rural, community service-learning, community partnerships, collaboration

The foundation of a liberal arts education is to teach not only broad knowledge and practical skills but also personal and civic responsibility and integrative learning. Community service-learning (CSL) is a pedagogical tool that can be used to help meet this aspirational goal. It has been well established that experiential activities such as CSL can enhance academic, personal, social, and civic outcomes for students and provide opportunities to apply classroom knowledge in an ecological setting (Celio et al., 2011; Conway et al., 2009; Kuh, 2008). In addition, CSL can assist communities in addressing pressing needs (Slavkin, 2007). A growing number of colleges are institutionalizing CSL and civic engagement, and several initiatives have been developed to advocate for this type of work. This increasingly broad-based use of CSL has led to a push for a better assessment of its impact on various stakeholders. Smith and Paine (2015) described five different types of impact that may result from CSL work: economic, human, social, physical, and cultural capital. These five types of impact may result in either intended or unintended effects, which are both equally important to address when working with community partners (Smith & Paine, 2015). Research supports the positive outcomes of CSL for the community and for mitigating the common "town–gown divide'' (Edwards et al., 2001). The limited research in this area has revealed benefits to the local community, including filling program and service needs and improved relationships between the college and the community (Eyler et al., 2001). Community partner benefits of CSL include increased capacity/efficiency, increased networking, high-quality outcomes, and tangible work products (Srinivas et al., 2015). Conversely, some of the risks and challenges to community partners associated with CSL work include time constraints or pressures, poor communication with faculty and students, lack of supervision of student work, insufficient student engagement and follow-through, the challenge of training students for real-world/workplace practice, restrictions of the academic calen-

dar, lack of reciprocity, faculty attrition, and deficits in cultural competence (Srinivas et al., 2015; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). In some instances, the aforementioned benefits do not outweigh the risks to agencies who are often already facing many obstacles, such as infrastructure challenges, staff turnover, and shifts in priorities (Barreneche et al., 2018; Karasik, 2020; Rinaldo et al., 2015).

The current CSL research emphasizes student teaching and learning and impacts on campuses, rather than impact of CSL on the community (Celio et al., 2011). Some argue that institutions of higher education do not involve their host communities in developing projects and that there is a disconnect between the social demographics of the community members served and the students (Hidayat et al., 2009). Scholars have questioned who CSL is actually serving and have called for a shift, moving beyond a charity or deficit-based model of CSL that reinforces negative stereotypes (Weah et al., 2000) to a more critical or democratically engaged model that focuses on reciprocity, assets, inclusion, collaboration, shared power, and cocreation of knowledge (Hoyt, 2011; Mitchell, 2008). Due to the above concerns and gaps in research, the purpose of this study is to address the college–community relationship and the impact of CSL on partners who engage with a college in a rural setting. The majority of CSL examples and models in the literature are from urban or suburban research institutions (Holton, 2003). Therefore, our study recognizes a need to begin developing a CSL model for rural institutions of higher education in order to understand and ground this work in the context of a local, rural community (Harris, 2004) where collaboration and partnerships may be especially important.

College–Community Partnerships

There is a general consensus that research on community partnerships in the CSL field needs the greatest amount of attention (Berkey et al., 2018; Bortolin, 2011), especially in rural areas (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). CSL work would not be possible without meaningful, authentic, mutually beneficial partnerships that include community involvement (Barreneche et al., 2018; Davis et al., 2017). Cruz and Giles (2000) advocated considering the college–community partnership a unit of analysis, and only recent studies have focused on community partners' experiences and the college–community relationship, specifically in rural areas (Creighton, 2008). Historically, colleges have tended to treat community sites as learning or community labs, where the community is expected to be flexible to meet student learning needs, rather than colleges meeting the needs of often underserved community organizations (Stoecker et al., 2009). As a result of the potentially exploitative nature of CSL, some communities may deny institutions of higher education access to their site.

Effective partnerships are characterized by commitment, communication, closeness, equity, reciprocity, and integrity (Bringle et al., 2012; Hidayat et al., 2009; Tinkler et al., 2014; Tryon et al., 2009). Developing a deep relationship based on these qualities can help address the challenges and risks inherent in CSL work. College–community partnerships require trust, and if that trust is broken, the foundation of reciprocity is as well (Malm et al., 2012). This reciprocity and trust develops over time from mutual sharing of power, risks, and vulnerability. CSL work can be messy and complicated. The communication, cultural, and power dynamics at play in these relationships can become problematic if not addressed and navigated intentionally and directly (Mitchell, 2008; Stoecker et al., 2009). Addressing these partnerships may be even more important in a rural area where building collaboration is especially relevant (Paulson, 2018).

Rural Community Service-Learning

Scholars have suggested that "rural" is a complex concept and that rural areas and geographical locations consist of distinct cultures (Stamm, 2003). However, defining "rural" is difficult, as there is no agreed-upon definition in the literature and most definitions are based on population and economic factors (Smalley et al., 2012). "Rural" can mean different things to different people, and the existence of multiple definitions of "rural" reflects the reality that "rural" is a very multidimensional concept. This study uses the U.S. Census Bureau's (2010) definition: "Rural" is anything (population, housing, territory) not in an urban area. By this definition, the community in which this study was completed is rural. Additionally, the community in which this study was completed is eligible for rural grant funding via the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and qualifies for the Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) Designation. CSL in a rural area

differs greatly from urban and suburban CSL; it requires specific skills, experience, and relationships to navigate (Stoecker et al., 2016). Stoecker et al. (2016) used the term "rural service learning" to refer to CSL in rural areas (p. 3).

In contrast to their urban counterparts, rural communities face unique challenges and offer unique strengths. A sense of community and tight-knit, close relationships that lack formality are common in rural areas and can be an asset to CSL work. These relationships have the potential to bridge the town–gown divide seen between colleges and the communities in which they are situated (Stoecker et al., 2016), and community–college relationships may be even more important in rural versus urban areas, because of the deep collaborations local colleges and rural organizations engage in (Curtain & Hargrove, 2010; Paulson & Casile, 2014; Paulson et al., 2015). However, people living in rural areas with dense social ties may be suspicious of `outsiders and distrust institutions of higher education, leading to relationships taking time to develop (Hidayat et al., 2009).

Challenges specific to CSL in a rural area include economic depression and lack of resources, lack of public transportation, and organizations' tendency to be fewer and spread out over larger areas (Stamm, 2003). Rural agencies and organizations are often understaffed and stretched thin, have less formal organizations and budgets, and tend to fill in with voluntarism where capacity is limited and organizations risk being overwhelmed beyond their capacity (Stoecker et al., 2016). For example, due to the aforementioned challenges, rural organizations may come to rely on students to produce professional-level work and products. Students conducting CSL in rural areas are sometimes given larger projects and more responsibility than students in urban areas, which can have a wider reaching impact with both positive and negative consequences (Harris, 2004). Given the present challenges to rural residents and the difficulties conducting CSL in rural areas, institutions of higher education can provide a good opportunity to serve in the role of capacity building and community development via collaboration, open communication, and reciprocity with the rural community. Finally, many positive and negative stereotypes are associated with rural areas and residents (Stoecker et al., 2016), and the negative connotations related to rurality can lead to ruralism, a pervasive form of discrimination (Bassett, 2005). Many college students come from nonrural backgrounds and may have preconceived notions about residents in rural areas that could interfere with their ability to work effectively with diverse communities.

The Present Study

The purpose of this mixed-methods research is to gain a better understanding of the community's perspective related to rural CSL and to identify what is working and what needs improvement in the college–community partnership to work toward creating lasting, symbiotic relationships in rural areas. Quantitative surveys provide a generalized starting point for understanding community partners' perspectives, whereas individual responses through in-depth interviews allow us to examine the complexity of these relationships in greater detail. Due to the nature of CSL work, individual experiences vary greatly, so it is important to hear each individual's lived experiences (Polin & Keene, 2010). Complementing quantitative data with the sensitivity of qualitative data could provide critical insights into the nature of college–community relationships and a deeper understanding that might be missed in survey data alone. The in-depth understanding and focus on the combination of this data could potentially give us a better understanding of rural community partners' experiences.

The main unit of analysis of this work is the campus–community relationship itself, specifically from the community partner perspective, an area that is relatively underrepresented in the literature (Blouin & Perry, 2009; James & Logan, 2016; Pillard Reynolds, 2014; Shalabi, 2013; Smith & Paine, 2015; Srinivas et al., 2015; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009; Worrall, 2007). This relationship, or social capital as described by Kendall and Knapp (2000), is a nontangible construct that focuses on partnerships and building bonds of trust between people (p. 110). Given the importance of community partners' perspectives, it is crucial to value and hear from various community members and to demonstrate the institution's commitment to reciprocity (Stoecker et al., 2009). The findings from this study may also provide a model for any institution in its mission to implement best practices in CSL.

Background

Research Setting

This study was conducted in a rural town located in the northeast region of the United States, where 87% of the residents identify as White (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019), compared to 69% of the student population at the college. The college is a small, private, highly selective liberal arts institution with an annual enrollment of approximately 1,600. The median income of the town in which the college is situated is $36,793, compared to the 2019 U.S. median household income of $68,703, with 24% of the residents living in poverty (U. S. Census Bureau, 2019). In general, the students at the college are more diverse and come from a higher socioeconomic status than the population in the town, reflecting the disconnect sometimes observed between the social demographics of the community members served and the students at the college (Hidayat et al., 2009), which could impact the development of partnerships.

History of Community Service-Learning at the College

In 2003, the Office of Community Service was renamed the Office of Community Service and Service-Learning to formalize the supportive role the office was undertaking with faculty interested in service-learning (SL). Since that time, it has evolved into the Office of Civic Engagement, with the function of support and coordination, but never oversight or requirement fulfillment, of SL courses. In addition, the college received the Carnegie Foundation's Classification for Community Engagement in 2006 and again in 2015. Beginning in the mid-2000s, the college began tagging courses with "SL" to designate CSL courses. In 2013, the Civic Engagement Committee was developed to take on the responsibility of educating the faculty about the process to apply this course designation. In 2016, the course-tagging symbol was changed to "E" to designate courses with a "community engagement" component. To qualify for this designation, courses were required to include the following four criteria: integrated learning, identified community issues and/or needs, reflection, and engaged course pedagogies. Faculty would complete an application form and submit it to the director of civic engagement, who would review and approve applications. In 2020, the college changed its online portal and, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the course designation was temporarily suspended. The college has no requirement that students participate in an "E" course or that faculty have specific training in forming partnerships or implementing CSL, other than meeting the aforementioned criteria for an "E" course. Some faculty do not complete the "E" application but still have an engagement component in their courses. Finally, no single repository or network exists to track these courses, making it difficult to get a complete picture of the community engagement efforts at the institution. Because of this lack of centralized coordination, the college engages with the community through a variety of both official and unofficial methodologies. CSL faculty development started with a book study in spring 2000. Since then, faculty CSL workshops have taken place most years with inconsistent attendance. Various endowments and minigrants have also been offered to faculty for course development, with the focus on education on CSL best practices and trusting the capabilities of the faculty to implement the work.

Methodology

Procedure

A mixed-methods approach, using surveys and interviews, was utilized in this study. After IRB approval, the primary researcher obtained contact information for community partners from the college's director of civic engagement. The difficulty in defining "community" is that there is no one definition for "community" and no agreement about who makes up the community. Establishing qualifications for "community partner" was a complex task, as partnerships are very fluid with changes in structure, personnel and faculty, and other environmental and situational variables. The college also did not have a comprehensive partnership tracking system in place. However, for the purposes of this study, community partners were identified as any person or organization with which students interact and carry out an academic CSL project (James & Logan, 2016). Thus, all identified community partners were connected to academic CSL, but their involvement varied tremendously. The list of contacts included 48 different organizations, and each contact was recruited via email invitations. Twenty-three participants out of the total 48 organizations contacted (a 48% response rate) completed the survey. The participants

were not compensated for their involvement in the study. Quantitative surveys provided a starting point for understanding community perspectives; however, to examine the complexity of these relationships and attempt to get an in-depth, nuanced understanding, individual confidential interviews were conducted (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The interview participants were recruited at the end of the survey via follow-up emails. The anonymous quantitative surveys included a researcher-developed Community Voices Survey and Satisfaction Survey and the Transformational Relationship Evaluation Scale (TRES; Clayton et al., 2010).

Participants

Of the 23 community organizations surveyed, 70% of the participants identified their organizational status as nonprofit and 83% (n = 19) have worked with the college for more than 3 years. Table 1 shows the participants' responses to the question regarding the type(s) of organization with which they identify.

Measures

Quantitative

Community Voices Survey and Satisfaction Survey

The Community Voices Survey and Satisfaction Survey questions were modeled by best practices in CSL assessment (i.e., Gelmon et al., 2018) and other resources in order to gain a better understanding of each partnership's level of satisfaction, costs, benefits, and quality and sustainability of the relationship (Hutchinson, 2011; Shinnamon et al., 1999; Srinivas et al., 2015). The Community Voices Survey consisted of 10 forced-answer questions and two open-ended questions: "What was the best aspect of this experience for you?" and "What aspects of this experience would you change?" Example multiple-choice questions included "What was your main motivation/reason for deciding to participate in CSL?" "How did your interactions with the college influence your capacity to fulfill the mission of your organization?" and "What are some of the challenges you encountered?" The Satisfaction Survey consisted of 14 items on

Table 1. Community Partner Profile

Survey participants*	
Organizational benchmark addressed	***n* (%)**
Education	17 (74)
Environmental	7 (30)
Housing	6 (26)
Public service	4 (17)
Safety	3 (13)
Mental health	3 (13)
Interview participants**	
Organizational benchmark addressed	***n* (%)**
Social services	6 (54)
Environmental	2 (18)
Education	2 (18)
Public service	1 (10)

Note. *N = 23; **N = 11.

a 5-point Likert scale.

Transformational Relationship Evaluation Scale

The Transformational Relationship Evaluation Scale (TRES; Clayton et al., 2010) is a self-report questionnaire designed to measure key characteristics of a relationship and map responses on a continuum with three levels: exploitative, transactional, transformational (E-T-T). The participants' choices range from exploitative (reflecting negative outcomes) to transactional (reflecting mutual benefits) to transformational (reflecting the growth of both parties through the relationship; p. 8).

The goal of the TRES is to provide a concise, nuanced summary, from the point of view of community partners, allowing a snapshot of the actual and desired qualities of their relationships. Thus, the TRES was used in this study to examine the nature of the college–community partnerships in order to provide suggestions to improve the practice of future partnerships. The TRES can also be used diagnostically, formatively, and summatively along multiple points during a partnership, allowing for a better understanding of partnerships for this study and in future studies. In the current study, the TRES demonstrated excellent reliability (α = 0.91).

Along with the items on the TRES, a Venn diagram assessment tool was used in the individual interviews to measure *closeness*. Clayton et al. (2010) designed an assessment tool to study closeness in partnerships based on the frequency and diversity of interactions, along with reciprocal influences on decision making. This tool is grounded in a well-known CSL model that describes partnerships as a network of discrete relationships among students, organizations, faculty members, administrators, and residents (SOFAR; Bringle et al., 2009). Clayton et al. (2010) found that indicators of closeness between faculty and community were positively correlated with other positive impact measures reflecting the transformational nature of these relationships.

Qualitative

Interviews

Out of the 23 survey participants, 11 agreed to participate in an online, semistructured interview with the same set of questions asked of each participant. To encourage candid feedback and reduce researcher bias, a student research assistant who had no association with the partners (Waters & Brigden, 2013) conducted the interviews. The interview questions were open-ended and included questions related to the outcomes and impacts of the partnership with the college. In addition to the interview questions, each participant completed the Venn diagram assessment on closeness (Clayton et al., 2010).

Results

Quantitative Findings

Community Voices Survey and Satisfaction Survey

Descriptive data analyses were conducted on survey items. When asked about their motivation for participating in the CSL, the top three responses from community partners were positive experience with students/mentoring students (54%), connecting with the college (25%), and capacity building (16%). The top responses to "How did this experience impact you?" included "It helped me feel committed to the student(s) development" (60%), "Gave me a sense of community" (43%), "Allowed me to interact with others who are different from me" (35%), and "Gave me a sense of accomplishment" (35%). Finally, the question "What challenges do you face in this work?" yielded these responses: staff demands (70%), unprepared students (13%), mismatch in values (4%), and insufficient timing (4%).

The Satisfaction Survey (adapted from Gelmon et al., 2018) demonstrated excellent reliability (α = 0.96). The majority of community partners indicated that they were satisfied with the experience, assigning a score of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale (see Table 2). However, it is important to note that three outliers in this data set were not satisfied with their experiences.

Finally, when examining the relationship between satisfaction and how long the community partners have worked with the college, the results indicate that the longer the participants worked with the college, the greater their overall satisfaction (see Table 3).

Transformational Relationship Evaluation Scale

The TRES was completed to assess the actual

Table 2. Respondents Scoring 4 or 5 on a 5-Point Scale on the Satisfaction Survey

Item	*n* (%)
Communication (Student)	17 (74)
Communication (Faculty)	15 (65)
Interaction (Student)	18 (78)
Interaction (Faculty)	16 (70)
Quality of student work	18 (78)
Feedback and input into the planning of experiences	17 (74)
Scope and timing of activity	15 (65)
Level of trust with faculty	18 (78)
Level of trust with the student	18 (78)
This partnership was successful	18 (78)
I will pursue a partnership in the future	19 (83)
This partnership made a difference in the community	17 (74)
This partnership was mutually beneficial	19 (83)
This partnership is sustainable	14 (61)

Note. *N* = 23; scale 1–5 (*strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*).

Table 3. Overall Satisfaction and Years Working With the College

	Overall Satisfaction		
	Less than 1 year (*n* = 1)	1 to 3 years (*n* = 3)	3 years or more (*n* = 19)
Mean	2.36	3.62	4.10
Minimum	2.36	2.43	1.36
Maximum	2.36	4.21	5.00

Note. *N* = 23

and desired quality of relationships, with higher numbers indicating relationships closer to transformational. A paired-sample *t*-test was conducted to evaluate the difference between community partners' actual and desired scores on various key elements of the TRES (see Table 4). The results indicated statistically significant differences in the following key areas: (1) outcomes/benefits of the CSL partnership, (2) collaborative decision making, (3) contribution of resources, (4) the role of the partnership in work and identity formation, (5) what matters in the relationships/partnership, and (6) overall level of satisfaction in regard to growth and change. Specifically, partners indicated a desire to move toward a more transformational partnership/relationship in each of these areas compared to the actual partnership/relationship.

Open-Ended Survey Questions

In a thematic analysis of the responses related to the best aspects of CSL, three themes were identified: (1) meeting and collaborating with faculty/student and mentoring students (*n* = 16), (2) deliverables (new projects), and (3) expanding capacity (*n* = 6). Responses to what the community partners would change about the CSL included (1) the need to prepare/screen students (*n* = 6), (2) nothing (*n* = 5), (3) change calendar/timeline and restrictions with student and/or partner schedule (*n* = 5), and (4) the need to work on shared goals/expectations (*n* = 4).

Table 4. The Transformational Relationship Evaluation Scale

Key attributes	Actual		Desired		*t*(22)	*p*	Cohen's *d*
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Outcomes (scale 1–9)	6.34	2.32	7.82	1.72	2.875	.009*	0.27
Goals (scale 1–4)	3.26	.810	3.39	.782	1.000	.328	0.04
Decision making (scale 1–6)	4.91	1.34	5.30	1.10	2.398	.025*	0.21
Resources (scale 1–3)	2.56	.589	2.86	.344	3.102	.005*	0.30
Conflict (scale 1–4)	3.73	.751	3.91	.417	1.699	.103	0.11
Identity formation (scale 1–8)	4.73	1.71	5.73	2.00	2.615	.016*	0.24
Power (scale 1–3)	2.69	.558	2.86	.344	1.699	.103	0.11
What matters (scale 1–6)	4.47	1.47	5.26	1.32	3.458	.002*	0.35
Satisfaction/change (scale 1–9)	6.82	1.77	7.73	1.78	3.254	.004*	0.32

Note. $N = 23$.
*$p < .05$

Qualitative Findings

Community Partner Interview Results

Following the guidelines presented by Braun and Clarke (2012), a thematic analysis was completed on the interview data. The researchers recorded and transcribed each semistructured interview. Then each researcher read and reread the interviews and began to individually identify various codes in the transcripts. The researchers met several times to compare their findings, and categories were developed across participants based on extensive discussions. In order to improve the trustworthiness and authenticity of the qualitative data (Patton, 2014), several verification strategies were used in data collection and analysis, including triangulation, peer reviewing, negative case analysis, clarifying researcher bias, member check-ins, and external audit trails. Through this iterative process four themes were developed: (1) personal/individual motivations for partnerships, (2) challenges to successful partnerships, (3) keys to successful partnerships, and (4) the role of the college. The following section will provide an overview and examples of each theme and subthemes.

Personal/Individual Motivations for Partnerships. When asked for the reasons they got involved in their partnership. the majority of community partner responses identified personal benefits or individual motivations. Similarities across the findings included mentoring, "co-educator," career development, providing students with broader skills such as civic and leadership skills, and "expand[ing] student's belief systems." Other motivations involved the desire to have students "grow roots here." In fact, three of the 11 participants disclosed that they were college alumni.

The majority of the participants talked about positive relationships with students as a personal motivation or benefit. One participant noted, "[Some] students would have dropped out if it were not for their relationship with [our organization] and the support they got." Another powerful quote related to mentoring students contained the following:

> The most important thing is that there are amazing benefits to both community partners and the students. That it is a two-way street—there are benefits to the partner which also has a positive benefit in our region. But also, we change the lives of students in ways that are really profound. I just got an email yesterday from someone who worked with me as an intern 12 years ago and her life has never been the same. We impact each other for the better. I appreciate [the college] for giving us that opportunity.

Challenges to Successful Partnerships. Specific challenges identified in the thematic analysis were the episodic nature of the work, limits in agency capacity, difficulties working with students and faculty, and unclear expectations and inconsistent communication.

The difficulties surrounding the episodic nature of the work and limits in agency capacity, also supported by the survey data, were expressed by the interview participants. As one participant explained,

> The one-semester experience is just so brief that by the time the student starts to really get an understanding and is invested, it's over. With the amount of time that is structured to put into it, they get some experience. . . . There could be so much more learning and impact with a model that was longer than one semester.

All but one participant discussed how this work can be labor intensive, where many nonprofits are often "stretched thin" and understaffed. Of the 11 participants, 10 worked for nonprofit organizations. A related example included the increased workload that occurred as a result of taking on students or from students not following through on obligations. In one unfortunate example that a participant described, "Staff went out and had to do additional fieldwork to resolve issues that arose." And in another, "I don't have a lot of nice things to say about the partnership with the college at this point. I probably wouldn't work with [the program] because it wasn't beneficial for me." Clearly, the relationships reflected in these comments are not transformational or transactional and might even be considered exploitative.

Working with students was consistently noted as an additional challenge. Several participants commented on the need for better screening and preparation of students. Specific examples included "students were inconsistent," "arrived late," "did not follow through," and "demonstrated poor and inconsistent communication skills." Three participants also noted the challenge of transportation to sites that were not within walking distance from the campus.

In line with the survey data, a majority of participants noted that working with faculty was sometimes difficult. Specific problems mentioned included a lack of accessibility to faculty and communication with faculty. A powerful quote from a participant explained,

> Honestly, I recommend that the college clearly define expectations for their students and their faculty better on how they are engaging with the local community and agencies. I found the expectation of the partnership was not clear at the forefront of the project, even though we had met and discussed what the expectations were, which ultimately ended up causing issues closer to the end of the project.

All 11 partners indicated that the expectations were sometimes unclear. However, interestingly, seven out of 11 partners indicated that their expectations were met, two indicated that they were not met, and two said their expectations were sometimes met.

Keys to Successful Partnerships. The overall keys to successful partnership identified in the interview data entail developing clear goals/expectations and communication before the start of the projects, maintaining flexibility in hours, ensuring a fit between the goals and values of all partners, and specific student and faculty qualities. In relation to clearer expectations, one partner suggested:

> I think [in] our experience would be to do a better job connecting in the beginning. . . . I would pay much more attention to this. If we did it again. The other would probably have had a pretty clear discussion on accessibility of the faculty member when the project started, that might have avoided some frustration in communicating back and forth and making sure we both understood where the project was going.

Another subtheme related to successful partnerships and expectations was the need for open communication. One specific suggestion stated, "I think we would probably give students written expectations and discuss preferred methods of communication and understand the students' time and schedule and availability prior to engaging them for a project."

The third subtheme related to successful partnerships encompassed positive student qualities. The student qualities related to

success were numerous: "engaged," "enthusiastic," "interested in the members," "committed," "reliable," "showed up and followed the rules," "were a good fit for the agency," "independent, driven to success," and "provided new and diverse ideas/perspectives." One participant provided a clear example of positive qualities: "I think the factor [to success] is that we had students who were willing to engage themselves, and commit time and effort to make their time valuable towards the agency." Another example related to building capacity, skills, and fresh perspectives:

> Students are bringing their ideas and their gifts, so we've had everything from, [*sic*] yoga and relaxation classes to creative writing clubs and . . . just a lot of different things like that happen and those often are legacy projects that carry on at least for a while, or come and go, which is wonderful. The students bring, you know, new faces and new opportunities for individuals to interact with and share and just have an interchange. Then, of course, we have some big projects that can get accomplished too. That probably wouldn't happen if it were not for the outside support because, with a lot of the day-to-day, you know, obligations and the work that we have to do.

The final subtheme consisted of faculty qualities related to success. Participants gave favorable descriptions of faculty who were accessible, provided student supervision, maintained open communication, and provided specific skills. As one participant reflected,

> I think that, in especially more recent years, I think we've gotten way better on both ends of communication roles and responsibilities of the college to professors and us as far as, you know, how this works. It may not have gone so well early on that we did not always feel we had support from the professors that we needed, given the time we needed to put into it, but that has been much, much improved and gone much better for the most part.

The Role of the College. The community partners discussed the positive and negative aspects of building relationships with the college, and what they would change about the college. Some of the positive aspects of these relationships involved the college helping with "building linkages" and "knitting the community together." A specific comment indicated, "I know community partners are not all non-profits, it is good for us to network with each other and some of that is facilitated through our relationship and partnership with [the] College bringing us together." Colleges can serve as bridges between various organizations, connecting different groups together to help create a linked community.

One drawback that hinders establishing and maintaining a relationship with the college is a lack of support and trust in the college. Only one participant expressed this specific sentiment, but the researchers wanted to give voice to those who expressed a negative experience. As mentioned earlier, two of the 11 interviewed participants were not satisfied with the CSL experience and did not have their expectations/goals met, and there were three outliers in the satisfaction survey. One participant explained,

> I don't have a lot of nice things to say about the partnership with the college at this point. I probably wouldn't [do it] again . . . because it wasn't beneficial for me. . . . I'm just so worried about the fact that I can actually trust that they would send me a student who I could work with. So I don't know. I'm very leery about possibly ever having a [student] again because I just went through all those years of challenges and stress.

Relationships with community organizations can remain viable only through ongoing evaluations by the college and partners to ensure that mutual benefits continue. If a partner starts to lose trust in the college, as in the example above, open communication is essential to address the issues at an early stage.

Several participants discussed their hopes moving forward in CSL work with the college. Those hopes entailed longer term "deeper relationships," for the college to better recognize the work that the partners put into CSL, better preparation of faculty and students for CSL work, and partnerships outside [city]. Some partners prefer that

students continue with their organization over the course of a few years, rather than a short semester-long project, to develop deeper connections; however, in some instances this may not be possible. One participant gave this example:

> I would say that [the students] who are with us for 4 years tackle different types of problems and I think that we get more out of that . . . we develop a real relationship with students who are with us for a long time. There's a lot more that they get out of [the experience]—they become a part of our organization—and they may not come in with a specific, you know, defined project, but they learn more about what we do and are able to in some ways, they help us grow from the inside out.

Another desired change was related to better recognition and support of community partners by the college. Suggestions related to this theme included "more recognition of partners," "more showcasing of work," and "increasing media exposure of the CSL work." One participant offered a telling example: "I think it's really important that [the college] also understands how much work it is on the part of the community partners to make this happen. How could we get more creative with supporting that, recognizing that in some way?" Understanding and addressing the amount of effort and commitment that is required of partners may be necessary to help them feel valued throughout the course of the relationship.

The next desired change was "preparing faculty and students for this type of work" and the need to "set a standard for everyone." If a college hopes to create lasting community partnerships, expectations must be established for anyone that plans to work with a partner, and the college should monitor the conduct of these individuals. According to one participant,

> Maybe setting the standard with professors for healthy communication with the partners to make sure that we don't just have certain professors that are outstanding but that anyone that's involved with this has a certain expectation for, you know, respecting the time it takes on the other end. Also, if the professors are willing to maybe come to the community site and also understand what it's about.

Standard training for all faculty and students working with community partners may be helpful to ensure that there are consistent experiences within varying relationships. Educating all faculty and students on the nature of the organization they are working with may be a stepping stone in preparing them for this work.

The final suggested change was to expand CSL work beyond the city in which the college is located. For example, "My group is a countywide organization and it would be nice to have more of a county focus by the college. It tends to be [city] centered. If I could change something, that would be it." The expansion of partnerships may be beneficial for some organizations, but also ties into the concern regarding transportation to sites that are not within walking distance of the campus. Addressing some of the above wishes may create better relationships; however, colleges should also express clear boundaries of feasibility, and ensure partners understand what may and may not be possible.

Interview Venn Diagram Level of Closeness

A paired-samples t-test was completed on the Venn diagram level of closeness from the individual interview responses (Mashek et al., 2007) and revealed a statistically significant difference between actual closeness and desired closeness, $t(10) = 3.96$, $p = .003$, with a moderate effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.61$). The mean score of actual level of closeness and desired level of closeness was 3.54 ($SD = 1.12$) to 5.09 ($SD = 1.04$), respectively.

Discussion

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to examine the impact of rural CSL on community partners who are involved in CSL, an area of study often ignored in the literature (Bortolin, 2011; James & Logan, 2016; Kenworthy-U'Ren, 2008), especially in a rural area in the United States (Harris, 2004; Pillard Reynolds, 2014; Stoecker et al., 2009). The goal was to provide an opportunity to amplify the voice of rural community partners, to develop a better understanding of the community partner's satisfaction, and to provide recommendations to improve practice. The results of this study both con-

firm and add to the existing literature on both positive and negative experiences and outcomes of CSL for community partners and organizations in rural areas and provide a framework for conducting CSL, focusing on the unique considerations of working in a rural community.

Rural Community Partner Satisfaction

Consistent with previous research, the majority of the participants indicated overall satisfaction with the CSL experience. However, to improve practice it is important to note and address the areas of least satisfaction: faculty communication and sustainability of the partnership. At the heart of this conversation is the fundamentally relational nature of CSL work. Relationships among CSL participants may be even more important in rural areas.

A common thread throughout this research, and in the CSL literature, is that a successful and sustainable campus–community partnership is based on trust, clear and open communication, and reciprocity, no matter the location. Therefore, it is imperative that faculty spend time nurturing relationships (at the beginning, middle, and end of the CSL process), understanding community strengths and needs, and working toward shared goals. As expressed in this research, and noted in previous CSL research, faculty often appear only as bookends of the semester, demonstrating a lack of respect for the time and commitment of community partners (Creighton, 2008; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). This lack of consistent communication from faculty can be especially problematic in rural areas because people in these areas often have dense social ties with one another and value deep collaboration (Stoecker et al., 2016). In rural areas, there also may be initial feelings of doubt and lack of trust in institutions of higher education (Hidayat et al., 2009). For this reason, rural CSL partnerships may need extra attention to ensure that trust can be built, meaning faculty should prioritize open communication and carefully assess their availability before entering and committing to these relationships.

Although the majority of the participants were satisfied, it is important to note that three of the 23 survey participants were outliers in the data set who indicated overall dissatisfaction with the rural CSL experience. When the majority of people are satisfied, the minority are often ignored (Stoecker et al., 2009). Hence, it is important to amplify the unsatisfied voices, learn from them, and work toward resolutions to maintain the sustainability of all relationships with community partners. Dissatisfaction has the potential to reinforce feelings of skepticism that can spread quickly throughout a small community, creating negative perceptions of the college.

The item regarding sustainability of the partnership received the lowest score on the Satisfaction Survey. The findings from this study, as indicated by the TRES and the Venn diagram level of closeness, are consistent with previous research (Shalabi, 2013), demonstrating that rural communities also want to move to a more mutually beneficial and transformative relationship. One way to make these relationships more transformative is to provide a basis of reciprocity (Davis et al., 2017) in which stakeholders work toward collective decision making on projects and goals from the beginning of the project, and through mutual, shared distribution of resources and power (Creighton, 2008; Mitchell, 2008). It is important to note that transactional relationships and outcomes may be appropriate and satisfying in some CSL situations, whereas movement toward mutual transformation may be desirable in others. In other words, transformational relationships might not be optimal or even possible in some partnerships (Barreneche et al., 2018). Most of the participants in this study indicated that students were providing a service and expanding organizational capacity, suggesting that the partnerships were, at a minimum, transactional and reciprocal. This range of possibilities highlights the importance of assessing community partner satisfaction with the relationship.

Recommendations

The importance of relationships in CSL work stands as an overarching theme in this study. Its significance may be even greater for rural organizations, which often have multiple needs that CSL students can fulfill. Relationships also take on added significance in rural areas where deep ties are more common and more highly valued, and a mistrust of outsiders may exist. In fact, relationships with rural community organizations can endure only through ongoing evaluation by the college and partners, to ensure maintenance of mutual benefits. If a partner starts losing trust in the college, open communication is crucial to address

any issues or concerns. Developing CSL boards could be useful to hear the concerns expressed by partners to relay information back to faculty, and to support both parties in creating trust and more effective partnerships. The participant's suggestion of facilitating networking might be beneficial to allow varying opinions, especially negative opinions of the college, to be openly shared and addressed. Such networking would also offer a good opportunity for the college to discuss how they could mend ruptured partnerships and create support systems across varying community organizations. The use of satisfaction surveys may provide an opportunity to continuously assess the partnerships over time, to ensure a sustained symbiotic relationship, and to allow an opportunity for reflection and discussion. Finally, it might behoove institutions of higher education to pay attention to the key relationship areas outlined by the TRES and work toward thicker relationships. By measuring partner satisfaction and relationships and using this information to engage in a dialectical feedback process, rather than a linear cause-and-effect process, institutions can strive for a greater positive impact on their local communities that is also more desired by these communities (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009).

As we have addressed, collaborators in rural areas yearn for these closer relationships and truly want them to be collaborative in all areas of engagement. They want to help create, grow, and expand these relationships, as indicated by their dedication to mentorship and coeducation roles. In contrast, urban community partners have the opportunity to work with multiple institutions with a large pool of students and might not deem these relationships as important or require the social capital, which CSL in rural communities can help foster, that a rural partner might (Sandy & Holland, 2006; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). As revealed in this study, partners in rural areas value not just the positive aspects of an organization, but also the personal growth they experience while teaching students. Institutions could be mindful of partners' value for mentoring students and let community partners lead the relationships more, to let institutions explore how these partnerships could promote growth for themselves and the students.

Benefits of Rural Community Service-Learning to Community Partners

Consistent with previous research (Creighton, 2008; James & Logan, 2016; Miron & Moely, 2006; Pillard Reynolds, 2014; Srinivas et al., 2015), research participants indicated multiple benefits to CSL partnerships, such as mentoring students, deliverables, increased capacity, media exposure, increased program effectiveness, leveraging of resources/skills/expertise, future hires, and fresh ideas and perspectives. In fact, 83% of survey participants indicated that the CSL was mutually beneficial. This finding is promising, as Cruz and Giles (2000) noted a lack of research to support the claimed benefits of CSL on community organizations.

A positive finding of the TRES is that there was no difference in actual and desired scores in the following areas: goals, conflict management, and power. This finding might indicate that the partners felt that when conflicts arose, the partners would deal with the issue openly. One could argue, as suggested by this study, that this result may be an outcome of an open and trusting relationship that has been built over time. For example, 82% of the survey participants have worked with the college for 3 or more years and had the highest levels of satisfaction, whereas the few partners who had worked a shorter duration with the college had lower levels of overall satisfaction. One could also speculate that the community partners who are newer to this work might see it as an added burden or have not established deeper relationships to address unmet needs or manage conflicts when they arise. In regard to mutually shared goals and shared power, the results seem to indicate that the survey participants' actual and desired status were compatible, indicating that they felt that both community partners and the college respect each other's goals and that these relationships are based on reciprocity, shared resources, and joint ownership for projects.

Recommendations

Another benefit noted by participants is public recognition of community partners by the college. Some comments related to this theme include the desire for the college to provide "more recognition of partners," "more showcasing of work," and "increasing media exposure of the CSL work." Understanding and addressing the amount

of effort and commitment that is required of partners may be necessary to help them know that they are valued throughout the course of the relationship. The college should consistently recognize the work of all community partnerships and the benefits of these relationships.

Finally, another way to enhance the benefits of CSL to individual community partners could be to prioritize individual community partners' different motivations for engaging in this work (Bell & Carlson, 2009). For example, many partners see this type of work as a way to expose students to civic service philosophies (Ferrari & Worrall, 2000) and possible future careers (Gelmon et al., 2018). The importance of the variety of community partner motivations is supported by the significant difference found in the Identity Formation Subscale of the TRES and by the majority of participants in both phases indicating that a benefit of CSL is to be a mentor and "coeducator" with students. Therefore, faculty and institutions of higher education can prioritize the importance of this identity or role.

Challenges of Rural Community Service-Learning for Community Partners

In both phases of the study, participants expressed the risks, obstacles, and burdens of rural CSL and provided suggestions for the college to mitigate some of these costs. The top responses for the challenges in this work included staff/organizational demands, unprepared students and faculty, organization and student mismatch, and insufficient time available for projects. The findings related to staff demands and increased workloads have been supported in previous research (Creighton, 2008; Srinivas et al., 2015) and may be even more salient in rural areas where partners are already stretched thin and do not have adequate resources to mitigate these extra costs. Since people in rural areas often wear multiple hats, sustaining and finding time for these partnerships may be harder than for their urban counterparts. In urban areas, most organizations have more people and resources available to distribute work and establish partnerships; rural areas struggle in this aspect. Considering there are typically fewer people in resource-stretched organizations, such organizations' communication shortcomings may be more noticeable, whether that is with the college, faculty, students, or the partners themselves. All but one participant discussed how this work can be labor intensive, stating directly that many nonprofits are often "stretched thin" and understaffed. Importantly, in this research, 70% of the survey participants and 90% of the interview participants reported working for a nonprofit organization.

As mentioned previously, sustainability of the partnership had the lowest score in the satisfaction survey. If a relationship does not provide a benefit, causes excessive workloads, or is exploitative, can it be sustainable in the long term? There is a need for institutions of higher education to deepen their commitments to community partners, ensuring that the partnerships are mutually beneficial, while honoring the workload of community organizations. Notably, 83% of the survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that they would continue to pursue partnerships with the college, despite the aforementioned costs and drawbacks, implying that the benefits of this work might outweigh the costs. On the other hand, this finding could highlight that rural partners feel a sense of desperation and need help so badly that they are resigned to being taken advantage of in some ways. However, institutions of higher education should attempt to mitigate the risks and costs of CSL, as they often have greater resources and power, especially in rural areas where funding for community organizations is often limited. Participants suggested the following as ways to address these risks: improved preparation or screening for students, more faculty training and mentorship, and open and clear communication.

Recommendations

Faculty and institutions of higher education have an ethical responsibility to screen and orient students to this work and help students understand the rural context (Barreneche et al., 2018; Harris, 2004), perhaps addressing issues of ruralism. Rural CSL work presents unique challenges and barriers, and faculty can play a crucial role in mitigating these challenges and barriers by making connections, educating students, and monitoring their work (Harris, 2004). One interesting comment by an interview participant included insight about connections that formed during their CSL experience: "The relationship is with the individual faculty, not with the college." Successful development of CSL courses and relationships with community partners is contingent upon faculty nurturing relationships and managing students and on

institutions supporting faculty in their work.

One suggestion is to facilitate rural learning programs in institutions of higher education to ensure that students understand the area they are working in and the specific organization in which they will be placed during a CSL experience. Allowing students the opportunity to learn about common issues in rural communities could also provide them with tools that they could apply more generally to other rural communities and agencies. Faculty can also help students understand the demands rural community partners may experience and that, because of these demands, students may need to take the initiative and work independently on projects. Due to the aforementioned role of faculty in CSL, it is especially imperative that when colleges advocate for institutionalized engagement work, they support faculty in their implementation, development, assessment, and recognition of CSL, mandating clear goals and communication with all stakeholders before the start of a project (Harris, 2004). If institutions fail to work directly with their partners when developing CSL projects, a mismatch in goals and expectations can arise, creating projects that may not apply to the partner organization, resulting in overall dissatisfaction and ineffectiveness. Thus, institutions should attempt to have open conversations with their partners and involve the community in developing projects from the very beginning of the CSL engagement process.

Since the majority of participants noted that working with faculty was sometimes difficult, specifically noting lack of accessibility to faculty and communication with faculty, we conclude that preparation is key to healthy and sustainable community partnerships. Educating all faculty and students on the nature of the organization they are working with may be a stepping stone in preparing them for this work. Institutions should provide standardized criteria regarding CSL best practices and clear guidelines that can help educate and support faculty in implementing high-quality CSL into their curriculum and cultivating relationships with rural community partners. Providing faculty development and peer/community mentorship and ensuring core competencies (Creighton, 2008), providing incentives (money, course releases), support (with logistics, student TAs), and recognition, especially through tenure and promotion policies, could encourage the implementation of high-quality CSL and strong relationships with community partners. Institutions could also develop CSL course designations with specific standards for implementing CSL to track and monitor CSL projects.

Related to student–organizational mismatch, if a college hopes to create lasting community partnerships, certain expectations must be set for anyone who plans to work with a partner, and the college should monitor the conduct of these individuals. Interestingly, all 11 partners interviewed indicated that the expectations for their partnerships were sometimes unclear. However, seven out of 11 interviewees indicated that their expectations were met, two indicated that they were not met, and two said their expectations were sometimes met. Faculty can create a manifesto that makes expectations and goals explicit before the start of a program. Lastly, faculty need to have frank conversations with community partners about what students can and cannot offer in the context of their education and developmental level (Creighton, 2008; Green et al., 2017).

Another area of concern found in both the survey and interview data was the scope and timing of the CSL projects. This problem is a common concern for community partners, as institutions of higher education work on an academic calendar, which organizations and nonprofits do not. This schedule mismatch is problematic because organizations still need assistance during midterms, finals, summer and winter breaks, and at the end of semesters. Institutions of higher education and faculty might need to find creative ways to extend projects beyond the academic calendar and move beyond short-term CSL. Examples can include focusing on project-based service-learning (Tryon et al., 2008) or allowing different groups of students to work on the projects each semester. An added suggestion includes collaboration among the partner, faculty, and student to create a timeline and communication plan, which would ensure a clear understanding of what is expected throughout the partnership, and generating possibilities for work during institutional breaks, such as remote work or a summer position. Some final suggestions for improvement provided by the participants in this study and supported by the literature included the need to maintain flexibility in hours and ensure there is a good fit between the goals and values of all stakeholders (Creighton, 2008; Stoecker &

Tryon, 2009).

Implications for Rural Institutions of Higher Education

To maintain and foster college–community partnerships, institutions of higher education can move away from traditional models of CSL that focus on student learning to a more critical service-learning approach that advocates for a social change orientation, working to redistribute power, developing authentic relationships between college and community, and encouraging community partners to be coeducators who can assist institutions in making important decisions related to the community (Howard, 2014; Long & Campbell, 2012; Mitchell, 2008; Stoecker et al., 2009; Taylor et al., 2018).

Institutions of higher education can serve in the role of capacity building and community and economic development within a rural community via CSL. Many institutions of higher education are seen as anchors in their communities, playing a key role in enhancing the physical, social, cultural, and economic well-being of the community and engaging the community in addressing local and pressing concerns. These concerns can be addressed by providing communities with access to educational materials (e.g., providing access to the campus library and digital databases), research (e.g., completing needs assessments), and entrepreneurial capacity building (Mitchell, 2008; Perry & Menendez, 2010).

Colleges and communities have a long history of segregation. As mentioned by participants in this study, colleges need to be aware of the impact of budget concerns on organizations and that time is a limited resource for many rural community partners. Some institutions have more funding, power, and influence over others, and the potentially problematic power dynamics between a college and a community organization can result in a partner being less willing to share their discontent with the college out of fear of "being taken off the list" of potential community partners (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009, p. 34). This hesitancy might be even more relevant in rural areas because federal grant money tends to be funneled to urban areas with larger populations and a greater likelihood of finding students for CSL work. As the participants in this study remarked, partners that work at the agencies are already stretched thin and are often working in multiple roles. Therefore, the college can act as an anchor institution to leverage assets in a more equitable way, moving toward a transformative approach and commitment to long-term community capacity building (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009) and just being better neighbors.

Limitations, Future Research, and Conclusion

One limitation of this research is the degree to which the findings can be generalized to other colleges and communities. The themes developed in this study are not intended to be all-encompassing and comprehensive. They are local to the geographic location of this study, and the goal was to broaden the understanding of rural CSL in the community in which the study was conducted to improve future work. Furthermore, this research included a convenience sample that may have resulted in bias. Specifically, this sample included only organizations that have worked with the college, with the majority having worked with the college for over 3 years. Therefore, it would behoove future research to attempt to recruit participants who did not respond to the survey or interview request or who choose not to work with the college. Additionally, future research could target participants who are new or have worked with the college for shorter periods of time. The survey instruments utilized self-report measures, and the participants may have over- or underestimated their responses to conceal vulnerabilities or enhance social desirability. However, anonymity in the surveys was maintained and hopefully did not have a negative influence on the outcomes.

To further expand on the current findings, future research could assess current or new CSL partnerships, following them throughout a project or course to address specific issues in the moment. Another suggestion would be to interview rural community partners who had a negative experience with CSL or had a negative experience initially that later became a positive experience with a healthy, reciprocal relationship to provide an understanding of how that relationship transformed. In addition, specific outcomes and assessment measures could be evaluated using the SOFAR framework (Bringle et al., 2009) or the impact areas (Smith & Paine, 2015). For example, it may be useful to talk to actual community members or clients that are impacted by CSL work. The TRES can also be used to look at relationships over time through longitudinal research and

to take a more nuanced look at why some rural college–community relationships are successful and why some are not. Finally, conducting a comparison between rural and urban community partners' needs, experiences, similarities, and differences could provide valuable information to all institutions of higher education.

In conclusion, although several findings from our study could be generalized and useful for any CSL program regardless of geographical location (the importance of trust, open communication, time and resources constraints), we provide a few takeaways for rural institutions of higher education to consider. First, to ensure partner satisfaction and partnership longevity, institutions in rural areas should prioritize building trusting and potentially transformative relationships with community partners and assessing these partnerships through frequent check-ins with all stakeholders in each partnership (students, faculty, staff, organizations, and residents). This is not a novel idea in CSL work, but based on our findings we argue that trusting and collaborative relationships may be even more important in rural areas, which are characterized by dense social ties so that deeper relationships are important and valued. Open and frequent communication with faculty, in order to build trust, can also provide a safe outlet for partners to express direct concerns without fear of retaliation by the institution, as rural organizations may rely more on social and economic assistance from institutions than their urban counterparts. Second, reciprocity is a key ingredient to any effective and mutually beneficial partnership. The results indicate that some rural partners yearn for more transformative relationships and truly want them to be collaborative in all areas of engagement. Specifically, the partners discussed motivations and dedication to mentoring students and working as coeducators. In contrast, urban community partners often work with a large range of institutions and groups of students; they might not have the opportunity to form close mentorships; they may have the capacity to easily manage a preestablished project from a class or institution. Finally, our research reveals that numerous rural partnerships are primarily focused on addressing the scarcity of organizational personnel at their CSL sites. In such cases, students play a crucial role in assisting partners to undertake projects that might not have been initiated otherwise. It is important to note that rural areas are frequently underserved and lack sufficient funding in comparison to urban areas. Consequently, we assert that rural institutions of higher education possess the potential to utilize and share their assets, resources, and social and economic influence to effectively support rural CSL partners in ways that bring mutual benefits and drive transformative change.

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Counting on Higher Education: Teaching and Assessing Knowledge and Participation in the 2020 Census

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Abstract

Mandated under Article 1, Section 2 of the United States Constitution, the decennial census determines the distribution of power and resources based upon population counts. College students are a hard-to-count population with limited knowledge about why the census matters and how to complete it. Politics and the global health pandemic made the 2020 Census exceptionally challenging. A university's center for civic engagement and students in a political science class collaborated with local, state, and national partners to develop and implement a campuswide 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program. Assessments of 2020 Census knowledge were administered to almost 2,000 students on a required university-wide Assessment Day. Subsequent data collection indicated knowledge about the 2020 Census is malleable, as evidenced by sizable gains over time as well as a positive relationship between census completion and participation in the 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program.

Keywords: census, civic learning, assessment, civic engagement

Mandated under Article 1, Section 2 of the United States Constitution, the decennial census determines the distribution of power based upon population counts, as well as the distribution of some $1.5 trillion dollars from the federal government to states and localities, including funding for programs like Head Start, Medicare, SNAP, and Pell grants, as well as for roads and other public services (Reamer, 2020). In addition, census data are used by state governments to determine reapportionment and redistricting, and by state and local governments, businesses, and faith and community-based organizations for an array of decisions that affect American democratic governance, society, and economy (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019).

The stakes of responding to the census are high, as participation ensures that communities receive their fair share of power and resources; however, prior to the 2020 Census, over 20% of all adults, and 36% of those ages 18–29, indicated that they definitely would not or probably would not participate (Cohn et al., 2020). People cited concerns about sharing information and distrust of government as influencing their likelihood of participating. 2020 Census participation challenges were compounded by the COVID-19 global pandemic, especially for college students across the country as the self-response window opened during the week that many were sent home as part of public safety measures. As a result, some students did not receive participation notices from the Census Bureau with instructions for completing the census. Furthermore, because of budget constraints and concerns about public distrust in government, the U.S. Census Bureau employed a highly decentralized approach to census education, encouraging self-organized Complete Count Committees (CCCs) by a range of actors, including local and state governments, nonprofit organizations, corporations, and institutions of higher education (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). One author of

this article was appointed by the governor of their state to serve on their state's Complete Count Commission and served as an advisor to national higher education efforts.

Even in the best of circumstances, college students are a hard-to-count population as they are highly mobile and tend to be short-term renters. Perhaps even more consequential, as first-time participants, students are less likely to be knowledgeable about why the census matters and how to complete it. Furthermore, as first-time participants, students are less likely to understand that completing the census is a civic responsibility and that it directly benefits their communities. Of course, some parents may include their college students as living at home due to the temporal nature of college living, and some students may believe their parents are taking care of this responsibility for them. Federal guidelines, however, require students to be counted where they live for most of the year, which is often on campuses away from their hometown. Therefore, colleges and universities have a special responsibility to the communities in which they are situated to ensure a complete count of their student populations.

Drawing upon lessons learned from scholarship in the voter education and engagement literature (Bennion & Nickerson, 2016; Teresi & Michelson, 2015; Thomas & Brower, 2017), a university's center for civic engagement and students enrolled in a political science class developed and implemented a campuswide 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program. Because research indicates participation is more likely when people know how to participate and how census data are used (Pew Research Center, 2010), the program was designed specifically to educate students about the purposes of the census and the participation process. Focusing on educating students as a means to enhance participation in the census also better serves the civic mission of colleges and universities.

Below we describe the goals and components of the 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program, which form the basis for this research. We then outline our research questions and data collection efforts to better understand students' knowledge about the 2020 Census, the malleability of such knowledge, and to assess the effectiveness of the 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program. Following our results we provide our conclusions, limitations, and future directions and implications.

Learning Objectives: 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program

In spring 2020, a university's center for civic engagement and students in a political science course co-created and co-implemented the campuswide 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program. Four learning objectives were created to capture how individuals should change as a result of participating in the program. Specifically, participation in the program was intended to facilitate students' ability to

- identify important purposes of the census,
- recall the logistics for participating in the 2020 Census,
- identify what kind of information is being obtained from individuals on the 2020 Census and laws pertaining to the use of personal information, and
- participate in and understand the value of the 2020 Census.

The 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program centered efforts on understanding and addressing motivational and informational barriers students face to completing the census. Given widespread public distrust in government, the effort relied on collaboration across campus and leveraged the influence of trusted individuals, organizations, and their networks. Further, the students collaborated with local, state, and national partners to design and implement the learning-centered get-out-the-count campaign. Student organizers and faculty participated in a day-long learning trip to the U.S. Census Bureau headquarters in Suitland, Maryland, which included a meeting with the Census Bureau director appointed by President Donald J. Trump. During the semester, students also regularly participated in state and local Complete Count Committee meetings to learn about the census and challenges facing it. Course assignments used for program development purposes included interviewing members of hard-to-count communities, such as students and marginalized populations, to learn what messages would most resonate. Students then designed communications and organized educational opportunities to meet learning objectives and to increase student participation in the 2020 Census.

A range of tactics was deployed as part of the 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program, including in-person and virtual classroom visits by trained student leaders equipped with educational materials on the census, in-person and virtual town halls with experts, bus advertisements, door hangers used for canvassing high density off-campus housing complexes, and a strategically designed social media campaign across platforms. The program also included tabling at key events and highly trafficked public spaces on campus prior to the university's changing operations in response to the global pandemic. Critical information and direct links to the census online portal were sent via a campuswide email and text message. Census materials were also included in a global alert for one week in April 2020 in the university's course instructional tool system. The program also included a global reminder from the university's registrar to complete the 2020 Census when students were registering for Fall 2020 courses or checking in for May 2020 graduation. Every aspect of the 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program required the student organizers to collaborate with units across Academic Affairs, Students Affairs, Communications and Marketing, and the business operations of the university.

The 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program organizers also collaborated with leaders of the institution's Assessment Day in February 2020, which required all enrolled students with 45–70 credit hours to complete a series of assessments in a variety of different areas. The authors of this article developed the 2020 Census Assessment, a multiple-choice instrument created to address the learning objectives, and it was administered to nearly 2,000 students participating in Assessment Day. After students completed the instrument, proctors said:

> We would like to encourage you to participate in the upcoming census, as it is an important part of our country's governmental process. If you reside on or off-campus in [the community where the campus is located], you are counted here and it will impact local funding, political representation, and other decisions.

A link to the 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program's website with additional learning materials about the census was also provided. Thus, in addition to all components of the 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program, almost 2,000 students were encouraged to learn about and participate in the 2020 Census following completion of the instrument.

Research Questions

The development of the 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program and the partnership with the institution's required Assessment Day provided a ready-made opportunity to develop and test research questions focused on this work. An ideal approach to assessing the effectiveness of the 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program would include three phases. In the pretest phase, a test aligned with the program's learning objectives would be developed and administered to all students. In the intervention phase, students would be randomly assigned either to participate or not participate in various combinations of program elements. In the posttest phase, all students would again complete the same test that was administered during the pretest phase. This ideal approach would allow for the (a) examination of change over time in knowledge for students who did and did not participate in various aspects of the program, (b) investigation into various threats to internal validity, and (c) potential ability to claim that the program is the cause of changes in student knowledge.

Typical of most assessment of programs in higher education, our approach falls short of the ideal, as it would be impossible to use random assignment and irresponsible to shield any students from important global messages about the census. A strength of our approach is the development of the 2020 Census Assessment, a measure aligned with the 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program's learning objectives. This assessment was administered in February 2020 to a random sample of almost 2,000 students and yielded information about what college students did and did not know about the 2020 Census. The administration of the 2020 Census Assessment served as a pretest, as most facets of the 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program had yet to be implemented at the time of completion. The pretest data were used to answer the following research question (RQ):

> RQ1: What do students know and not know about the 2020 Census?

All students enrolled at the institution (i.e., not just those who participated in the February 2020 Assessment Day) were invited to complete the 2020 Census Assessment in late April of that year, along with a survey inquiring about their participation in the 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program and other related activities. For those who participated in the February administration (pretest), the April administration served as a posttest. The data from students completing both pretest and posttest were used to address four additional research questions:

> RQ2: To what extent does students' knowledge about the 2020 Census change over time?
>
> RQ3: To what extent are students participating in activities developed for and promoted by the 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program?
>
> RQ4: Is change in knowledge about the 2020 Census related to participation in 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program activities?
>
> RQ5: Did students complete the 2020 Census and is completion related to participation in 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program activities?

Although the pretest/posttest data is not ideal in that it is based only on students who chose to complete the assessment at posttest, it can be used to understand whether knowledge about the 2020 Census is malleable (RQ2), to ascertain levels of participation in the 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program (RQ3), to explore the relationship between program participation and changes in knowledge (RQ4), and to capture 2020 Census participation (RQ5).

Methods

Measures

Two measures were created for the 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program. The 15-item 2020 Census Assessment was created to assess the student learning objectives of the program. The 2020 Census Program Participation Survey was developed to ascertain the extent to which students experienced and participated in activities developed for or promoted by the 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program. Some items on the survey also asked about related activities outside the program (e.g., viewing non-program-related social media posts about the 2020 Census). Because the intention was to pinpoint what students do and do not know, only item-level results for the 2020 Census Assessment were considered.

Procedures

The 2020 Census Assessment was administered twice: once in early February 2020 during Assessment Day (pretest) and again in late April 2020 (posttest). The 2020 Census Participation Survey was administered along with the 2020 Census Assessment, but only during the posttest administration.

Pretest

All 3,274 students with 45–70 credit hours going into the Spring 2020 semester at the institution were required to complete a series of assessments during Assessment Day in February 2020. The 2020 Census Assessment was administered to a random subset of these students (N = 1,947). After completing the assessment, proctors encouraged students to learn about and complete the 2020 Census, and a link to the 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program's website was provided.

Posttest

In April 2020 all students at the university (about 20,000) were sent an email inviting them to take the 2020 Census Assessment and 2020 Census Program Participation Survey. Participation was voluntary. After responding to each item on the 2020 Census Assessment, students were provided with feedback (i.e., whether they got the item right/wrong) and shown results from those who had completed the survey at pretest. This step was added to make survey completion not only interesting, but educational and fun. To entice students who participated at pretest to voluntarily participate at posttest, their name was entered in a lottery to win a $10 gift card.

Participants

Pretest Sample

The pretest sample included 1,947 students and was used to answer RQ1, which addressed what students knew and did not

know about the 2020 Census. Demographic information for this sample was obtained through university records and missing for two students. Of the remaining 1,945 students, 70% were sophomores and 30% were juniors. With respect to gender, 59% self-identified as female and 41% as male (given those options). With respect to race, 74% identified as White, 6% as Black, 7% as Asian, and 6% as Hispanic. All other race categories or combinations of categories were each represented by <5% of the sample.

Pretest/Posttest Sample

The number of students choosing to participate in the posttest administration was low, which might partly be attributable to the mass disruptions caused by COVID-19. Only 162 students participated, and of those, only 122 had pretest data. Results from the 122 students who participated in both pretest and posttest administrations were used to answer RQ2–RQ5, which address whether knowledge changes over time, exposure to and participation in the 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program activities, whether change in knowledge is related to program exposure, and whether participation in the 2020 Census is associated with participation in the 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program.

Demographic information for this sample was obtained through university records and missing for one student. Of the remaining 121 students, 72% were sophomores and 28% were juniors. With respect to gender, 79% self-identified as female and 21% as male (given those options). With respect to race, 70% identified as White, 7% as Black, 6% as Asian, and 5% as Hispanic. All other race categories or combinations of categories were each represented by <5% of the sample.

We explored the extent to which student characteristics and pretest item responses differed for those who did and did not elect to participate at posttest using chi-square tests of independence. Only one item out of the 15, Item 3, yielded statistically significant results, $X^2(1) = 12.87$, $p < .001$. Specifically, 57% who elected to participate in the posttest obtained the correct answer at pretest compared to 40% who correctly answered at pretest but did not participate in the posttest. Thus, more students who chose to participate in the posttest were aware that the primary purpose of the census is to count how many persons (not citizens) are residing in the United States. We also considered demographic differences for those students from the pretest sample who did and did not choose to participate in the posttest. No differences were found with respect to year in college ($X^2(1) = .24$, $p = .623$) or race ($X^2(5) = 2.46$, $p = .783$), but differences were found with respect to gender ($X^2(1) = 21.78$, $p < .001$). Specifically, more females than males voluntarily participated at posttest. Thus, the subset of students who chose to participate in the posttest differs somewhat from the larger pretest sample.

Results

RQ1: What do students know and not know about the 2020 Census?

Learning Objective 1

The majority of items on the 2020 Census Assessment were aligned with the first learning objective, which is to understand the purpose of the 2020 Census. The percentage of students who answered Learning Objective 1 items correctly ranged from a low of 41% for Item 3 to a high of 88% for Item 11 (see Pretest Sample column in Table 1). At least 75% of students selected the correct response on Items 11 and 15, which inquire about the use of 2020 Census information to inform the allocation of federal, state, and local resources. This purpose of the census appears to be well known by students. A sizable percentage of students were also aware that the census is *not* used to do any of the following: determine who has not paid taxes (Item 13; 73%); locate people living in the country without documentation (Item 10; 65%; this was important given malinformation circulating at the time); determine who can vote (Item 14; 57%); and help decide whether conscription would be needed in the next major military conflict (Item 1; 63%). Although these results indicate the majority of college students can identify how census information is used, they still point to sizable percentages of students who responded that census information can be used for purposes it is not in fact used for. It's also important to note that assessing what mis-, dis-, and malinformation students were exposed to about the 2020 Census was beyond the scope of this study.

For Item 3, which asked: "The primary purpose of the census is to count how many _____ are residing in the United States," only 41% of students selected the

Table 1. Learning Objective 1 Results

Item #	Item (correct answer bolded)	Percentage selecting correct response			Difference (posttest–pretest)	McNemar's test (*df* = 1)	
		Pretest sample	Pretest/posttest sample			X^2	*p*
			Pretest	Posttest			
11	Information collected from individuals in the 2020 Census will be used to: Inform how federal and state resources for schools, emergency services, roads, etc. are allocated to localities. (**True**/False)	88	90	98	8	8.33	.004**
15	Information collected from individuals in the 2020 Census will be used to: Inform your local government about making changes in your community. (**True**/False)	75	79	82	3	0.44	.505
13	Information collected from individuals in the 2020 Census will be used to: Determine which individuals have not paid taxes. (True/**False**)	73	84	100	16	7.00	.008**
10	Information collected from individuals in the 2020 Census will be used to: Locate people living in the country without documentation. (True/**False**)	65	71	89	18	15.12	<.001**
14	Information collected from individuals in the 2020 Census will be used to: Determine who can vote. (True/**False**)	57	61	81	20	14.40	<.001**
1	All of these are purposes of the nationwide census conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau EXCEPT: a. To provide data necessary for determining representation in state and federal government **b. To help decide whether conscription would be needed in the next major military conflict** c. To assist in the understanding of the population of the United States d. To help determine how much money communities will get from the government	63	66	87	21	18.78	<.001**

Table continued on next page

Table 1. Continued

Item #	Item (correct answer bolded)	Percentage selecting correct response			Difference (posttest–pretest)	McNemar's test (*df* = 1)	
		Pretest sample	Pretest/posttest sample			X^2	*p*
			Pretest	Posttest			
3	The primary purpose of the census is to count how many _____ are residing in the United States. a. Adults b. Voters c. Citizens **d. Persons**	41	57	68	11	4.67	.031*
2	Census data is used to make decisions regarding funding for all of these EXCEPT: a. Public education b. Medicare c. Pell Grants **e. Military bases**	49	49	73	24	4.84	.028*
12	Information collected from individuals in the 2020 Census will be used to: Determine how much taxes individuals will pay. (True/**False**)	44	44	62	18	11.00	.001**
4	The census is required by the U.S. Constitution. (**True**/False)	49	43	63	20	14.40	<.001**

Note. For the pretest sample, *N* = 1,947 for all items except 13 and 2, where *N* = 887. For the pretest/posttest sample, *N* = 122 for all items except 13 and 2, where *N* = 45. Sample sizes depended on which version of the 2020 Census Assessment was completed.
*$p \leq .05$. **$p \leq .01$.

correct answer of "persons," compared to 45% who selected the incorrect answer of "citizens." It is important to recall that the Trump administration made a bid to include a question about citizenship on the 2020 Census and explicitly aimed to exclude immigrants living in the United States without government documents from census counts, which could account for such a low correct response rate for this item.

Slightly less than half of students knew that the census is required by the U.S. Constitution (Item 4) or that census information is *not* used to determine how much tax individuals will pay (Item 12). Just less than half of students knew census data were used to make decisions about funding public education, Medicare, and Pell grants, but not military bases (Item 2). These results suggest that students need opportunities to develop knowledge about why the census matters and its value in democratic and social institutions.

Learning Objective 2

The 2020 Census Assessment included two items related to Learning Objective 2 regarding college students knowledge of how to go about participating in the 2020 Census. One assessment item inquired how a student who is from out-of-town but living in a residence hall should participate. Another item inquired about how students who are living off-campus in an apartment together should participate. As shown in the Pretest Sample column in Table 2, slightly less than half (46%) of the respondents knew that a student living in a residence hall should be counted in the census with the residence hall as their place of residence (Item 5). In contrast, only 18% of students knew the appropriate procedures for students living together in an off-campus apartment to complete the 2020 Census. Results on these items suggest that students need opportunities to develop skills for participating effectively in the census.

Learning Objective 3

The 2020 Census Assessment included three items to help us understand what students know about the kind of information obtained from people and knowledge of the laws pertaining to the use of the personal information collected. As shown in the Pretest Sample column in Table 3, results indicate the majority of students (61%) know personal information cannot be shared with other governmental agencies or courts (Item 9). However, more than half (56%) of students erroneously believed the 2020 Census collects political party affiliation (Item 8), and a much larger percentage (86%) responded that the 2020 Census would collect status on U.S. citizenship (Item 7). As mentioned above, the Trump administration attempted to include a question on the 2020 Census to collect citizenship status, which led to mis-, dis-, and malinformation about what information was actually collected in the count. Results on these items also demonstrate knowledge development opportunities.

RQ2: To what extent does students' knowledge about the 2020 Census change over time?

The percentages of students in the pretest/posttest sample selecting the correct response to each item at both pretest and posttest are shown in Tables 1–3 and Figure 1. The results suggest that students' mastery of the learning objectives associated with the 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program increased over time. For all items, more students selected the correct response at posttest than at pretest. McNemar's test was used to ascertain if the percentages of students selecting the correct answer at pretest and posttest significantly differed from one another. Differences between posttest and pretest were statistically significant for 12 of the 15 items.

The two items with the largest changes include Items 7 and 6. A correct answer to Item 7 required students to know that U.S. citizenship status is not collected on the 2020 Census. Only 17% of students selected the correct answer to this item at pretest, and a substantially larger percentage, 63%, selected the correct answer at posttest. A correct answer on Item 6 required identification of the appropriate procedures for 2020 Census participation for students living together in an off-campus apartment. Whereas only 22% of students selected the correct response at pretest, over half (51%) selected the correct response at posttest. On some items a sizable percentage of students still did not choose the correct response at posttest. For instance, at posttest about 40% of students still responded that the 2020 Census collects political party affiliation and U.S. citizenship status.

Table 2. Learning Objective 2 Results

Item #	Item (correct answer bolded)	Percentage selecting correct response			Difference (posttest–pretest)	McNemar's test (*df* = 1)	
		Pretest sample (*N* = 887)	Pretest/posttest sample (*N* = 45)				
			Pretest	Posttest		X^2	*p*
5	Wade is from Localtown and started at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, VA in August 2019. He has lived in a residence hall since that time. Does Wade need to be counted in the census and if so, how? a. Since Wade is a college student, he does not need to be counted in the census. b. Since Wade is a college student, he should be included and Wade's guardian(s) in Localtown should include him when filling out the census. **c. Since Wade is a college student, he should be included and his place of residence is in Harrisonburg, VA when completing the census.**	46	53	69	16	1.96	.162
6	Liz and Heather are James Madison University students who live off campus in an apartment. Do they need to be counted in the census and if so, how? a. Since they are college students, they do not need to be counted in the census. b. Since they are college students, their guardian(s) should include them when filling out the census. **c. Only one of them (either Liz or Heather) needs to fill out the census for their residence and include all residents in the apartment.** d. Liz and Heather each need to each fill out the census separately.	18	22	51	29	11.27	.001**

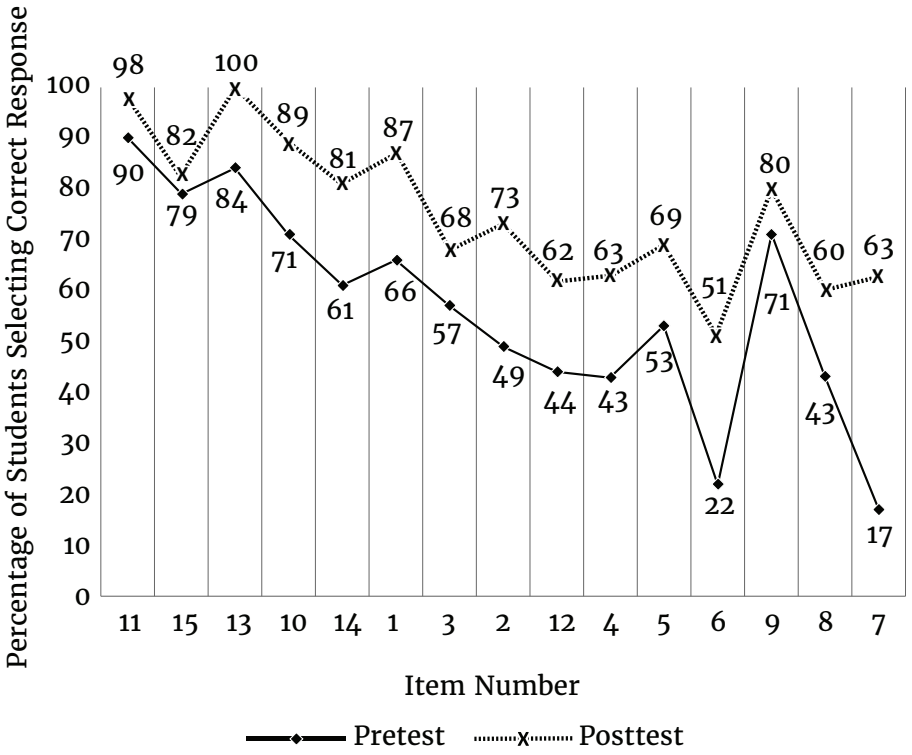
**$p < .01$.

Table 3. Learning Objective 3 Results

Item #	Item (correct answer bolded)	Percentage selecting correct response			Difference (posttest–pretest)	McNemar's test (*df* = 1)	
		Pretest sample	Pretest/posttest sample			X^2	*p*
			Pretest	Posttest			
9	Personal information collected via the federal census can be shared at any time with other governmental agencies or courts. (True/**False**)	61	71	80	9	1.14	.285
8	The 2020 Census collects information from individuals about: Political party affiliation. (True/**False**)	44	43	60	17	8.00	.005**
7	The 2020 Census collects information from individuals about: U.S. Citizenship status. (True/**False**)	14	17	63	46	54.07	<.001**

Note. For the pretest sample, *N* = 1,947 for Items 7 and 8 and *N* = 887 for Item 9. For the pretest/posttest sample, *N* = 122 for Items 7 and 8 and *N* = 45 for Item 9. Sample size depended on which version of the 2020 Census Assessment was completed.
**$p \leq .01$.

Figure 1. Percentage of Students in the Pretest/Posttest Sample Selecting the Correct Response by Item



RQ3: To what extent are students participating in activities developed for and promoted by the 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program?

The percentage of students reporting participation in each 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program activity and activities promoted by the program (e.g., discussing the program with others, completing the census) is provided in Table 4, recognizing that some activities could have come from outside the program (e.g., seeing a post on social media about the 2020 Census). Although operating during a chaotic information environment, many students reported receiving communications that were part of the 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program. For instance, 79% reported receiving a university-wide email about the 2020 Census, 69% saw a social media post (which may or may not have been from the university), 64% saw an alert on the university's primary learning management platform, and 56% noticed an alert on the administrative platform for students, where they can register for classes, manage financial aid, apply for graduation, and so on. A little less than half (46%) received information from their professors, and about one third received a university text message (35%). Students also reported discussing the 2020 Census with others. More students reported discussing the census with their families (68%) or roommates/friends (44%) than with students in their classes (20%). However, it should be noted that class meetings moved to virtual-only format during this time.

As noted in Table 4, discussions with families/roommates/friends were heavily promoted by the 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program. Such discussions with others were positively correlated with the messaging students received as part of the program, indicating that student exposure to aspects of the program stuck with them and benefited their networks. For example, discussions with roommates/friends were significantly correlated with receiving text messages ($r(120) = .24$, $p = .008$) and seeing a video about the 2020 Census ($r(120) = .31$, $p < .001$). Discussions with families were also significantly correlated with seeing social media posts ($r(120) = .30$, $p < .001$). In addition, discussions with roommates/friends were significantly correlated with discussions with families ($r(120) =$

.33, $p < .001$), and both kinds of discussions were correlated with classroom discussions ($r(120) = .41$, $p < .001$ and $r(120) = .26$, $p = .003$, respectively).

Perhaps not surprisingly, especially given the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, activities that required more effort were less common. For instance, only 27% of students took action to learn about the 2020 Census by visiting the 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program's website, and far fewer (5% or less) asked questions via social media, email, or tables on campus.

RQ4: Is change in knowledge about the 2020 Census related to participation in 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program activities?

To ascertain the relationship between change over time in knowledge and participation in program activities, we used only those students in the pretest/posttest sample who had been administered all 15 2020 Census Assessment items on Assessment Day. Items were summed to create a total score at each time point and then a difference score was computed from the pretest and posttest totals. The difference score was then corre-

Table 4. Percentage of Students Reporting Participating in Each 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program Activity or Activities Promoted by Program (N = 122)

Item	%
Complete the 2020 Census Assessment during February 2020 Assessment Day	100
Receive an email from campus administrators with information about the 2020 Census[a]	79
See a post on social media about the 2020 Census[b]	69
Discuss the 2020 Census with your families[a]	68
See a Canvas alert about the 2020 Census[a] (learning management platform)	64
See a MyMadison alert about the 2020 Census[a] (administrative platform)	56
Receive an email or receive other communications from a professor with information about the 2020 Census[a]	46
Discuss the 2020 Census with roommates or friends[a]	44
Receive a text message from James Madison University about the 2020 Census[a]	35
Coordinate 2020 Census completion with roommates[a]	30
See a video about the 2020 Census[b]	30
Review information about the 2020 Census on the James Madison University website[a]	27
Discuss the 2020 Census with other students in your classes[a]	20
Ask questions about the 2020 Census on social media or by email[b]	5
Ask questions about the 2020 Census at a table on campus[a]	3
Attend a virtual discussion about the 2020 Census[b]	2
Update your social media profile picture to include a frame indicating you had completed the 2020 Census[a]	2
Participate in the Student Government Association/James Madison University 2020 Census art/video/photo contest[a]	2

Note. Considering that many of these items inquired about information that was sent to all students regarding implemented program activities, results are indicative of whether students noticed the implemented activity.
[a] Activity specifically promoted by the 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program.
[b] Activity may have been experienced through program or outside program or both.

lated with the total number of activities the student indicated they had participated in on the 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program Participation Survey. The correlation was small but positive, indicating greater participation was related to greater increases in knowledge. The relationship, however, was not statistically significant ($r(43) = .15$, $p = .341$).

RQ5: Did students complete the 2020 Census and is completion related to participation in 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program activities?

Completion of the 2020 Census was the most critical activity promoted by the 2020 Census Education and Engagement program. Of the 122 students, 69 (57%) reported completing the 2020 Census at the time of posttest, and 30% reported coordinating with their roommates to do so. Each of the program activities in Table 4 was correlated with 2020 Census completion, and four correlations were statistically significant. Specifically, 2020 Census completion was positively and significantly correlated with asking questions on social media or by email ($r(120) = .18$, $p = .05$), seeing an alert on the university's administrative platform ($r(120) = .19$, $p = .03$), and discussing the 2020 Census with roommates/friends ($r(120) = .49$, $p < .0001$) or family members ($r(120) = .19$, $p = .04$).

Conclusion

To provide information about the purposes of the 2020 Census and logistics for participation, a campus center for civic engagement and students in a political science class developed and implemented the campuswide 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program. To inform the learning objectives of the program, the 2020 Census Assessment was developed and administered to almost 2,000 students. Results were incredibly useful for understanding gaps in students' knowledge about the importance of the 2020 Census and what they needed to know to participate. Findings indicate many students are aware of the purpose of the census, but also reveal a troubling number of students who don't know what information is being collected and how that information is used. The results also indicated most students are unclear about the logistics for participation. That students fared much better on questions about the purpose of the census could be a reflection of the emphasis placed on knowledge acquisition in modern civic education. As other scholars have also found, our results indicate young people need more education and opportunities to develop important civic skills and to participate in critical democratic practices and institutions rather than solely focusing on knowledge (Hart & Youniss, 2018; Holbein & Hillygus, 2020).

A subset of students voluntarily completed the 2020 Census Assessment again later in the Spring 2020 semester. This allowed us to explore change over time in 2020 Census knowledge. More students selected the correct answer at posttest on almost all items, with statistically significant gains on the majority of them. Even though it is encouraging to see increases in knowledge, it is disappointing that on some items, a sizable percentage of students still did not perform well at posttest. For instance, at posttest about 40% of students still believed the 2020 Census collects political party affiliation and citizenship status. However, such misconceptions are not necessarily surprising given the politicization of whether the census would include a citizenship question and significant mis-, dis-, and malinformation in the news ecosystem and emanating from President Trump and his administration.

The pretest/posttest design permitted exploration into whether students can accrue knowledge about the census, and results strongly indicate that they can. Of course, why knowledge changed is a relevant question. Many 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program activities (e.g., emails, social media alerts) were designed to raise awareness and share resources, but did not require students to carefully digest or study the information provided in the resources. Although it is possible program activities designed to facilitate more meaningful engagement with informational materials increased knowledge, the study design did not permit quality assessment of such activities.

Although knowledge acquisition is important, the ultimate goal of the program was to promote completion of the 2020 Census. In April 2020, 57% of students in the pretest/posttest sample reported completion. This rate is encouraging, given that it was based on data collected soon after the 2020 Census participation window opened and as students were inundated with messages

about the global pandemic and needing to make alternative living arrangements. However, we also recognize it is based only on a subset of students at the university and also on self-reported participation, which, much as in voting studies, is likely exaggerated relative to actual participation (Górecki, 2011). It's also worth noting that the Census Bureau reported large overcounts for the 18–24 age group, but undercounts for the 25–29 age group in the 2020 Census (Jensen & Kennel, 2022).

Unlike gains in knowledge, participation in particular activities was associated with 2020 Census completion. Some activities associated with census completion were part of the 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program (e.g., alerts on the university's administrative platform). Other activities associated with completion may or may not have been part of the program (e.g., social media alerts). Still other activities were heavily promoted by the program, but may or may not have occurred as a result of program participation (e.g., discussing census with others).

Limitations and Future Directions

There are several limitations to the study and opportunities for future research and improvements to the program. First, the generalizability of the findings is limited by the collection of data at a single university and further limited to students with 45–70 credit hours at pretest and those voluntarily responding at posttest. Second, program participation, implementation, and data collection were impacted by COVID-19. Pretest data collection occurred before national shutdowns, but posttest data collection occurred in April 2020, and many of the program activities were implemented during the chaotic months of March through September 2020. The rates of participation in the program, posttest data collection, and 2020 Census itself are impressive, given this chaotic context, and encouraging for future program implementation under stressful circumstances. Third, other objectives associated with the 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program require further consideration. For instance, this study did not address the extent to which students value the completion of the census. Thus, future research should consider how program activities affect not only knowledge and behavior, but also attitudes toward the census. It also did not measure political ideology as a potential intervening variable. Especially given the politicization of the census, future research should explore how information ecosystems affect attitudes and understanding of the census, why it matters, what information is collected, and how the information collected is used.

Fourth, many of the program elements that were easy to implement and able to reach a large number of students (e.g., emails, social media posts) were designed to increase awareness about the census, but *may* have limited utility in fostering meaningful changes in knowledge about the 2020 Census and logistics for participation. We suspect these program elements affected knowledge and 2020 Census completion and regret not collecting data immediately before and after such activities to capture their relative effectiveness. Program elements with the potential to alter such outcomes (e.g., participating in virtual classroom discussion, watching a video about the 2020 Census) were not as widespread and often relied on voluntary participation because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Showcasing the effectiveness of such activities would provide a solid argument for their future implementation, ideally required of all students.

Perhaps the most meaningful knowledge gains were for students in the political science course who had the opportunity to spend an entire semester learning about the census and developing and applying civic skills through creating and implementing the 2020 Census Education and Engagement Program. A future project will discuss the extent to which these students experienced changes in knowledge and skill development. Students also reported that the course showed them the value of civic engagement and expressed the importance of learning how to identify issues and work on them in the community for the greater good.

Implications

On the whole, results from the pretest administration strongly suggest the need for census education and engagement programming targeted to college students. Results also suggest that such knowledge is malleable, providing further support for program development and implementation. In addition, our findings suggest that higher education can impact census completion and take a range of actions to support the census. Our study provides objectives for such a program, program activities, and assess-

ment tools other colleges and universities may want to consider for the next decennial census, along with suggested improvements to the existing program, its assessment, and our research design.

We also provide an example of how students can be involved in program creation. Although our focus in this study was on the students for whom the program was intended, we learned from course evaluations and interviews that students involved in program creation were affected in even more positive ways. This outcome suggests that experiential learning opportunities through coursework can contribute to knowledge and skill development. Recent scholarship has emphasized that practicing democratic engagement in academic settings is superior to rote memorization as a means to develop knowledge and encourage future participation (Hart & Youniss, 2018; Holbein & Hillygus, 2020). Of course, more evidence is needed, though understanding what activities promote knowledge, skills, and actual democratic engagement can better position scholars, practitioners, administrators, funders, and policymakers to prepare students for meaningful participation in civic life.

Students *and* communities benefit when institutions of higher education invest in efforts to educate people on the census and encourage participation. This work fits within a larger movement for campuses to serve as anchor institutions in their localities, connect student learning to community-based issues, and reengage the public mission of higher education. The momentum is promising. More than 350 colleges and universities currently hold Carnegie's Elective Classification for Community Engagement, which formally recognizes institutions of higher education for fostering mutually beneficial collaboration between campuses and broader communities (Carnegie Foundation & ACE, n.d.). Further, outlets such as the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* and *International Journal of Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement* have provided countless scholarly and reflective articles to promote good practices for community-engaged learning. Organizations such as Campus Compact and the Students Learn Students Vote Coalition have built important networks for scholars and practitioners engaged in these efforts. Developing and implementing a campuswide census program checks all of the right boxes. It simultaneously addresses an important community need while better preparing all students for participation in civic life and merits the attention more typically placed on service-learning and voter education.

Unfortunately, however, these efforts are undermined by exploitive and extractive institutional practices that are often (though not exclusively) initiated outside academic and student affairs units. Davarian L. Baldwin (2021) prominently chronicled ways that institutions of higher education exacerbate the same problems community-engaged scholars and practitioners are trying to solve. Such interference often comes in the form of expanding campus footprints, real estate development, elevated housing costs, expanded campus policing without public oversight, service worker exploitation, and psychological and physical wedges between campuses and the communities many of us hope to serve. Scholars and practitioners in the field should pay close attention to threats to community engagement and outreach that come from within our institutions. We fear that community engagement is justifiably perceived as window-dressing for larger business practices that shape relationships with partner organizations and the people we hope to serve.

Colleges and universities should assume an important position in efforts to strengthen democracy while promoting desirable civic behaviors and educating students on how to engage in democratic practices, institutions, and processes (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). Our findings provide evidence that student participation in democracy need not to be left to chance, and institutions can successfully embed civic learning into campus programs and discourse. Doing so aligns the interests of students, campuses, and the communities in which they reside. Colleges and universities aiming to contribute to strengthening democracy and the communities in which they are embedded can develop census education and engagement courses and programs as an element of broader efforts to prepare students to be active and informed participants in civic life.

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Native Nations and Land-Grant Universities at the Crossroads: The Intersection of Settler Land Acknowledgments and the Outreach and Engagement Mission

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Abstract

This reflective essay addresses the nexus of two recent events in the United States: (1) the public scrutiny of the relationship between land-grant universities and the expropriation of Indigenous lands and (2) the often uncritical and rapid uptake of settler land acknowledgments at public college and university events. We argue that written land acknowledgment statements need to accompany actions that align with declarations of respect and honor. Specifically, we offer readers three concrete ideas through which institutions may further land acknowledgments: challenging their historical legacies, fostering meaningful partnerships with Native Nations and Indigenous Peoples, and materializing resources for this highly underserved, long-neglected, often ignored community.

Keywords: land acknowledgment, land-grant university, outreach, engagement, tribal engagement

Among land-grant universities (LGUs), outreach and engagement activities have historically been tied to the institutional mission (Meyer, 2000). Such efforts with and for communities are seen as the centerpiece of an overall "foundational practice" for LGUs, largely due to the presence of Cooperative Extension Services (Burkhart-Kriesel et al., 2019; Ostrom, 2020). Although the initial reasons surrounding the creation of Extension Services may have been more politically based (cf. Sorber, 2018), the provision of services to communities—especially rural communities—has been an important component of the land-grant mission since the Smith-Lever Act was passed by the U.S. Congress in 1914. More recently, however, land-grant institutions have invested in more urbanized issues, as well as becoming increasingly concerned with their worldwide footprint (Gavazzi & Gee, 2018). In fact, concern around climate change and racial and social equity in the United States and the world has required a more robust expansion of engagement activities beyond what Extension typically offers (Kopp, 2021). This reflective essay considers the outreach and engagement activities between LGUs and Native Nations, specifically how institutions can take actionable steps that reckon with past injustices regarding the engagement aspect of the institutional mission.

Although LGUs have been celebrated for providing access to an affordable college degree (Gavazzi & Gee, 2018), recent scholarship has started eroding the distinguished origins of these public institutions of higher learning, placing institutions under increased public scrutiny (R. Lee & Ahtone, 2020; Nash, 2019; Stein, 2020). In March 2020, for example, *High Country News* released the *Land Grab Universities Report* (*LGUR*; R. Lee & Ahtone, 2020), which exposed in detail the various ways that the 1862 Morrill Act—sponsored by Vermont Senator Justin Morrill and signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln—"gifted" states with scrips or vouchers of land that had been taken from Native Nations,

typically by brute force or lopsided treaties. Specifically, states were gifted 30,000 acres of public lands per congressional representative, with more populous states such as New York receiving upward of 990,000 acres and smaller states receiving 90,000 acres at a minimum. In essence, this research challenged the seemingly virtuous legacy of land-grant institutions to uncover a history steeped in violence and removal. The resulting transfer of wealth from Native Nations to universities has contributed to the ongoing exclusion and disenfranchisement of those dispossessed peoples (Roediger, 2021). For some, this was news. However, for Indigenous Peoples, the exposé was a sobering reminder of the depth of dispossession in the United States for the benefit of the settler state—that is to say, public education.

The *LGUR* provided exact details regarding the amount of land taken from Native Nations. This compendium meticulously documented the precise sums of monies raised in the sale of these territories. The painstaking picture painted by this database challenged LGUs to respond both to this ignoble history and the present life circumstances of Indigenous Peoples (Ahtone & Lee, 2021). In reaction, several LGUs formed committees to attend to their tripartite mission while simultaneously reckoning with their university's past. For example, internal funds from The Ohio State University (OSU) were used to create the Stepping Out and Stepping Up (SOSU) Project, an initiative aimed at reaching out to the leaders whose lands were taken and sold in service to the establishment of Ohio State (Williams et al., 2022), as well as fostering partnerships among Tribal Colleges and Universities and LGUs (Williams et al., 2021). Likewise, the American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program at Cornell University launched the Indigenous Dispossession Project after the *LGUR* highlighted the institution as having received the most land of any U.S. university under the Morrill Act across 15 states because of the number of New York congressional representatives at the time (Jordan, 2020). Institutional responses also included the quick adoption of settler land acknowledgment statements (Gavazzi & Low, 2022), a practice that is being popularized across the United States.

We find the nexus of public scrutiny and quick uptake of settler land acknowledgments to be an ideal entry point into a conversation among land-grant leaders and practitioners regarding university outreach and engagement with Native Nations. Drawing from our study of and involvement with fostering tribal community–university partnerships, we offer several ideas about the deployment of settler land acknowledgments in LGUs: efforts that can move an institution of higher learning beyond performative theater and toward more meaningful truth-telling and reparative activities. We also raise questions about the degree to which university outreach and engagement activities can and should be an effective means for LGUs to connect with dispossessed Native Nations.

Our intent is to urge LGUs, particularly university leaders, to move beyond the adoption of settler land acknowledgment statements and implement practices that transform higher education institutions, including their outreach and engagement activities. We want to clarify that our intent is not to give institutions a script or answers on *how* to adopt acknowledgment statements, as we believe that institutions need to be critical of their commitments to such practices (and hence scripts ultimately are defeatist in such efforts). Moreover, numerous toolkits and guides outlining the elements of a "good" acknowledgment authored by and with Indigenous Peoples and organizations can be referenced in these efforts (for sources see, for example, Native Governance Center and California Indian Culture and Sovereignty Center). Finally, drafting an acknowledgment statement also needs to occur in conversation with Indigenous communities named in the statement. Therefore, our goal is to call on institutions to think and act more deeply, concretely, and tangibly regarding how these statements relate to the long-celebrated, publicly professed, and politically ascribed land-grant mission.

To accomplish our objectives, first, we briefly explain our positions in this work. Next, we offer background information on tribal engagement and settler land acknowledgment practices, as well as our present orientation to these innovations. Finally, we offer readers three concrete ideas: that land acknowledgments should compel institutions to challenge their historical legacies and colonial inheritances, foster meaningful relationships with Native Nations and Indigenous Peoples, and materialize resources for an extremely underserved, long neglected, and often ignored community.

These reflections stem from ongoing social critique by Indigenous Peoples activists and scholars, the existing research on tribal engagement, and our experience working with Indigenous Peoples and Native Nations.

Throughout this essay, we borrow from Stewart-Ambo and Yang's (2021) use of settler land acknowledgments, which describe the recent and rapid uptake of rhetorical practices by settler institutions to "acknowledge the land that a university occupies or that a gathering takes place on through naming the people who are in Indigenous relationship to that land" (p. 21). We intentionally adopt the phrasing "settler land acknowledgment" to highlight the performativity tied to the uncritical adoption of these statements as part of a campus social justice or equity initiative, not as an Indigenous relational practice. We also use the terms *Indigenous*, *Native*, *American Indian*, and *Native American* interchangeably to refer to the peoples indigenous to what is known as the United States, to be inclusive and make appropriate references when necessary. Finally, we preference the term *Native Nations* to denote the inherent sovereignty of Native Nations in the United States and use the terms *tribe* or *tribal* in accordance with their use in policies, laws, and scholarship.

Author Introductions

Before proceeding, we want to acknowledge where we live and work, how we position ourselves to this work, and how we came together to write this essay. I (Theresa) am a Tongva woman living in unceded, ancestral homelands of the Payómkawichum, territory shared with the Kumeyaay Nation. I am also an assistant professor in education studies at the University of California, San Diego, located on Mat-koo-la-hoo-ee (known as La Jolla, California). Before arriving at UC San Diego, I was born and raised in Tovaangar (known as Los Angeles, California), the homelands of my Tongva ancestors and community. After years of struggling on my own higher education journey, I was called to work in the field of education and focused my energy primarily on supporting Indigenous students on their academic journeys. My research mainly focuses on historical and contemporary relationships between public universities and local Native nations.

I (Stephen) am a White settler of Italian–Polish descent and a longtime professor of human development and family studies at Ohio State University, a campus that occupies the ancestral territories of the Delaware, Miami, Ojibwe, Peoria, Potawatomi, Seneca, Shawnee, and Wyandotte Peoples. Although the primary research focus of my career has been issues pertaining to adolescents and their families (I am a family therapist by training), more recently, my scholarship has turned to higher education concerns. This includes my having coauthored a book on the future of LGUs (Gavazzi & Gee, 2018), as well as coediting another volume on the modern-day mission of LGUs (Gavazzi & Staley, 2020).

In late 2020, we were invited to submit individual contributions to a special section of the journal of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA) that responded to the *LGUR*. The special issue resulted in a session at the 2021 NAISA Annual Conference where we met, albeit virtually. Then, in October 2021, OSU hosted a symposium as part of the SOSU initiative, which brought us together again, this time in a more focused and personalized effort to unpack the ramifications of the land-grab legacy. Subsequently, we sustained our dialogue to probe more deeply into our individual and collective efforts to advocate for institutional change. Eventually, we concluded that our conversation could be helpful to others doing the same work or grappling with the *LGUR*, so we decided to coauthor a paper that would bring together specific Native and non-Native perspectives on land acknowledgments at LGUs.

Tribal-Focused Engagement

There is a noteworthy scholarly record on LGU history (including works written by the second author). Significantly less scholarship exists on university engagement efforts and initiatives by LGUs with Native Nations. Among this literature is a record of engagement between Native Nations and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), institutions receiving land-grant designation in 1994 under the Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act. These land grants were traditionally developed by Native Nations, thus historically serving more significant numbers of American Indian and Alaska Native students. A core part of the mission of TCUs is fortifying the sovereignty and self-determination efforts of Native Nations, mainly those sponsoring the TCU, but also Native Nations more broadly

(Carney, 1999). Said differently, TCUs proactively address the needs of tribal citizens as part of their inherent mission instead of reacting solely to historical obligations that are now coming to light (Gavazzi, 2021).

TCUs were established as land-grants in 1994 and have their own rich history of engagement activities that should not be conflated with commitments of land-grant universities (Benham, 2002). On the 10th anniversary of the founding of these Tribal College land-grants, Phillips (2003) noted that "the 1994 land-grant institutions represent models of community engagement that have implications for mainstream universities, foundations, and government agencies" (p. 34). Fast-forward a decade and a half later, we find Crazy Bull and White Hat (2019) pointing toward the growth and development of engagement activities among TCUs, especially in areas that focus on the sustainability of land and water resources. For example, the development of direct connections between university personnel and Native peoples was described as an "imperative" form of engagement at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (Stortz et al., 2003). Similarly, the creation of the 2+2+2 Project (Kayongo-Male et al., 2003) at South Dakota State University—programming that provided career training to American Indian students through partnerships with local Tribal Colleges and Native-serving high schools—was couched in engagement terminology first articulated by the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities (1999). The Native Youth Exchange in Old Harbor, Alaska Project (Richmond et al., 2010) illustrates how a LGU (in this case, the University of Minnesota) can cross state boundaries in the pursuit of important engagement opportunities.

McCoy et al. (2021) have asserted that improved associations among the 1994 and 1862 LGUs were among the most critical restorative actions that could be taken in response to circumstances surrounding the founding of the "land-grab universities." While documenting that such 1994–1862 partnerships have emerged over the last three decades, Williams et al. (2021) argued that there is so much more that the 1862 LGUs can and should be doing to help support the 1994 Tribal Colleges, especially through various engagement activities that represent "low-hanging fruit" for institutions and communities alike. Taking this thinking a step further, we would encourage 1862 LGUs to consider what they can learn from the ethical commitments of TCUs to serve Native Nations to support fortifying tribal sovereignty and forwarding relationships beyond partnerships with TCUs alone.

Land Acknowledgments

Similar to scholarship on university engagement with Native Nations, literature on land acknowledgments practices in the United States is limited, albeit rapidly growing. Given that the practice is rapidly evolving as it spreads across higher education institutions, it is difficult to determine what specific circumstances have led to the increasing adoption of settler land acknowledgment statements in the United States. These practices were likely imported from Australia and Canada, where they were adopted following significant social and political movements around truth, reconciliation, and national apologies (Keefe, 2019; Keeptwo, 2021; Kowal, 2015; Merlan, 2014). In these countries, land acknowledgments practices hold a variety of names, including *Indigenous* or *territorial acknowledgments*, *Welcome to Country*, *Welcome of Country*, and *acknowledgment of country* (Kowal, 2015; Merlan, 2014). In Australia, for example, acknowledgments and welcomes gained traction in the 1990s as part of institutionalized reconciliation efforts, including a public apology by then Prime Minister Keating to Australia's aboriginal communities (Merlan, 2014).

Similarly, it is understood that acknowledgments practices in Canada came following two significant events. The first of these events surrounded the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement, the largest class-action settlement in Canadian history. This settlement led to the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada in 2007, the second significant event in the emergence of land acknowledgment practices. Between 2007 and 2015, the TRC of Canada collected accounts from those impacted by the legacy of the Indian Residential School system. The final Truth and Reconciliation Report contains 94 "calls to action" or recommendations to move reconciliation between Canada and Indigenous Peoples. In Australia and Canada, land acknowledgments are not legally mandated, and there is no consensus on how the practice should be engaged (Keeptwo, 2021; Robinson et el., 2019). It has been observed

that land acknowledgment practices started to be imported into the United States around 2015 (Beckmann & Wilson, 2021; Stewart-Ambo & Rocha Beardall, 2023).

Settler land acknowledgments in the United States are viewed as a social justice practice adopted by Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples to recognize the land on which an event is taking place and the people who are Indigenous to those lands (Stewart-Ambo & Yang, 2021). When reciting acknowledgments, speakers have numerous intentions, all valid but not without issue. For some, acknowledgments recognize the enduring relationship between Indigenous Peoples and their ancestral territories, often unceded. For others, acknowledgments represent opportunities to correct or disrupt colonial narratives that have been suppressed, or to create momentary discomfort around settler privilege and complacency. Most often, land acknowledgments come at the beginning of events, and the intentions around the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples often and ironically fade into the background. This performance, as it is often referred to, explains why the uptake of this practice is surrounded by critique and tensions. In fact, in higher education institutions, the insertion of acknowledgments can be viewed as a multicultural or social justice practice, a part of a "checklist," if you will, that is void of real or meaningful political, legal, or structural change impacting local Indigenous Peoples, faculty, staff, or students.

Rightfully, Indigenous activists and scholars publicly critique the practice for its superficiality and performativity, in large part because such actions are not grounded in reciprocal relationships or material commitments. In alignment with this critique, Wilkes et al. (2017) and Stewart-Ambo and Rocha Beardall (2023) examined the presence and patterns of acknowledgment statements across universities in Canada and the United States, respectively. Both studies found two prominent characteristics across institutions: (1) adopting informal statements and (2) using past tense phrasing and multicultural language in statements that erase Indigenous Peoples. Critiques emphasize the need to "move beyond" empty and rote gestures; land acknowledgments can be intervening and open conversations that (with hope) reduce harm and repair relationships between Indigenous communities and institutions.

Relational Accountability

In general, our position is that words without action are worthless. And yet, what actions are meaningful, and how do we label such efforts? "R words" such as reparation, restoration, remediation, reconciliation, restitution, and redemption have long been associated with addressing past wrongs through various activities intended to reduce the pain and suffering of victims (Ashworth & von Hirsh, 1993). Often, but not always, these terms have been used in juxtaposition with retributive actions designed to inflict punishment on perpetrators for the offenses they have committed (Daly & Proietti-Scifoni, 2011). In some very real ways, these concepts represent a continuum by which justice can be sought.

We prefer the term "relational accountability," which has been employed in Indigenous scholarship (see, e.g., Wilson, 2008; Wilson & Wilson, 1998) to describe connections among individuals that are based on a different set of "R words," including respect, reciprocity, and responsibility (Weber-Pillwax, 2001). Wilson (2008) extended the use of relational accountability to a research perspective to privilege the relationship between storyteller and listener (e.g., participant and researcher). Here, such relationships do not simply shape the reality that exists between scholar and reader: They are the reality. Relational accountability is strongly connected to the "relational justice" approach that scholars have utilized to conceptualize various social justice efforts (Dankoski & Deacon, 2000; Magistro, 2014; van der Meiden et al., 2020).

The relational justice approach is built on the work of Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy and colleagues (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986; Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1973), who created a modality of clinical work known as contextual therapy. Several constructs within this relational justice approach seem to have direct application to the past, current, and future relationships between Native Nations and LGUs, including concepts such as posterity, ledgers, and multidirected impartiality. Simultaneously, we recognize that using relational justice frameworks as an orienting framework falls short in many ways. Nevertheless, it is offered here as a starting point for long-overdue dialogue.

Relational accountability between LGUs and Native Nations rests on the inher-

ent propensity for people to care for and about others, which the relational justice framework asserts is the prime directive of all human life. If someone needs care, they are ethically entitled to receive what they require. In turn, if someone notices another individual in need of assistance, they are ethically bound to deliver support to them. From the standpoint of posterity, the expectation is that there is a "fair give and take" among individuals, which leads to a balanced "intergenerational ledger." This balanced ledger is the manifestation of fair treatment and therefore is equated with relational justice. In contrast, an imbalanced ledger is associated with dysfunctional relationships—characterized especially by distrust—resulting from unjust (and unresolved) situations.

It is axiomatic to note that the intergenerational ledger between Native Nations and LGUs is extraordinarily imbalanced at present. From a wealth standpoint alone, the *LGUR* estimated that the 10.7 million acres of Native territories seized and sold to fund these institutions of higher learning are worth approximately $500 billion in today's dollars (R. Lee & Ahtone, 2020). In addition, LGUs are underperforming in their efforts to enroll and graduate American Indian and Alaska Native students compared to similar universities (Feir & Jones, 2021). Further complications in Native Nations–LGU relationships involve the "legacy of mistrust" that directly results from improper and/or culturally insensitive research practices aimed at Native American families and communities (Crump et al., 2020).

To create any sort of meaningful action to accompany the words contained in land acknowledgments requires a recognition of the gross imbalance in the intergenerational ledger, a disparity that may very well never be restored because of continued dispossession and ongoing harms endured by Indigenous Peoples. Moreover, this imbalance complicates matters in dialogue and action that ideally would be predicated on finding a starting point that allows LGU representatives to work through and own their present-day blameworthiness. For example, there is incontrovertible evidence that LGUs were and are the beneficiaries of stolen goods in the form of territories that were taken—often as not through broken treaties or violence—from Native Nations across the continent. Even so, colonial inhabitants often find culpability difficult to grasp because of the long interval between confiscation of those lands by the federal government and their sale for the benefit of states under the 1862 Morrill Act. In fact, what seems so far away in time to White settlers is the present-day reality of members of Native Nations.

In any event, one might assume that facilitation of the role of a benefactor from the get-go for LGU representatives will lead to much more productive outcomes from a relational accountability perspective. This is where the concept of "multidirected partiality" from the contextual approach comes into play (Coppola, 2020). In the classic therapeutic approach, the clinician takes everyone's part—one at a time—in the search for the proper "crediting" due to each member involved. This search for mutual acknowledgment among members of both obligations sets the stage for rebuilding relationships that are more balanced. We recognize that the obligations of LGUs toward Native Nations are complex and often irreconcilable; nonetheless, one of our aims is to identify these obligations in relation to outreach and engagement.

Beyond Settler Land Acknowledgments and Engagement Activities

Bringing together the civic mission of LGUs and the emergence of acknowledgment practices, we seek to offer three specific ideas for LGUs on how to move beyond the performativity of settler land acknowledgments to take up activities of relational accountability meaningfully: acts that deliberately work toward balancing the ledger while simultaneously recognizing the inability to ever restore justice in any complete sense. Many scholars argue that settler land acknowledgments can be an important starting point in building relationships with Native Nations. We agree. We also contend that settler land acknowledgments do not need to, nor should they, be the first and only mechanism to address relational accountability. Our intent here is to emphasize that written statements need to be met with actions that align with those statements; otherwise, they are empty and merely rote gestures. We also impress here that now is a unique opportunity for institutions to address their historical legacies, foster meaningful relationships and partnerships with Native Nations, and make commitments to programs, services, and initiatives that ben-

efit the present and futures of Indigenous students and communities, both on and off campus.

Address Historical Legacies and Colonial Inheritances

First, we urge LGUs to contend with their historical legacies and colonial inheritances by deeply examining the social, political, and historical circumstances that allowed for the establishment of their campuses and develop mechanisms for publicly recognizing and atoning for their institution's role in the violent dispossession and exploitation of Indigenous Peoples. This work should be used not to generate excuses or alibis, which land acknowledgments often do, but to paint an accurate and factual accounting of this history.

From its inception in the United States, higher education has been deeply entrenched in the exploitation of Indigenous Peoples and lands. Colonial Colleges, such as Harvard University, William and Mary, and Dartmouth College, are highly referenced examples. These institutions began under the auspice of "serving" Indigenous students only to extract financial resources (Carney, 1999; Wright, 1991). For instance, it has been well documented that Harvard revised its original charter in 1650 after financial difficulties forced the institution to draw funds from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England, a charitable organization focused on the assimilation of Indigenous youth. Similarly, Dartmouth College was established by Eleazar Wheelock with charitable funds collected by exploiting the labor of Samson Occom, a member of the Mohegan Nation (Wright, 1991). Carney (1999) pointed out that "virtually every instance of professed devotion to Indian higher education by the colleges during the colonial period was an exercise in fundraising or access to funds requiring an Indian mission" (p. 3). Relatedly, the *LGUR* clearly illustrates how LGUs financially benefited from Indigenous removal, dispossession, and lands under the 1862 Morrill Act, which coincided with the Pacific Railroad Act and Homestead Act of the same year to demonstrate a deliberateness by the U.S. government to settle on Indigenous lands.

The process for addressing these histories is necessarily determined by the political climate of each state and each institution, but whatever form it takes, this recognition is vital to fostering relational accountability. In multiple U.S. higher education institutions, scholarship highlighting the relationship between higher education, Indigenous dispossession, and chattel slavery has led to implementation of strategies that can serve as important models. For example, Harvard University, Northwestern University, the University of Colorado, and Rutgers University have each examined their financial connections to settler colonial events (Fuentes & White, 2016; Wilder, 2014). Some of these historical studies have prompted institutional atonements and reconciliation efforts, including apologizing and providing scholarships to descendants of enslaved people. We also turn to several ongoing efforts at our institutions as examples of how LGUs can engage this recommendation.

In October 2021, in response to the *LGUR*, University of California (UC) Berkeley hosted The University of California Land Grab: A Legacy of Profit From Indigenous Lands, a forum held with the intent of examining the 150,000 acres of Indigenous lands that funded the University of California, how this expropriation is intricately tied to California's unique history of Native dispossession and genocide, and how UC continues to benefit from this wealth of accumulation today (Joseph A. Myers Center, 2021). Concurrently, research teams at UCLA and UC San Diego began conventional historical studies that examined the movement of communally stewarded Indigenous lands over three waves of colonialism. "From Tovaangar to the University of California, Los Angeles" (Stewart-Ambo & Stewart, 2023) examined the connections between the university and illegal seizure of lands by Spanish missionaries to construct Mission San Gabriel Arcángel in 1771, the privatization of lands into ranchos under Mexican governance after 1821, and the subdivision and sale of lands under U.S. rule after 1850. Likewise, (Un)mapping UC Mot-koo-la-hoo Project is a participatory research project that extends previously mentioned research to examine the cultural significance of Mat-koo-la-hoo-ee, a known village of the Kumeyaay Peoples. The 5-year study was launched in January 2021 in partnership with five Kumeyaay community scholars with expertise in culture, archaeology, history, theater, and teaching. In addition to rewriting the existing narrative of the university from the Kumeyaay perspective, the research team has codesigned and coinstructs an undergraduate community-engaged learning course.

The Stepping Out and Stepping Up (SOSU) project at the Ohio State University has, to date, invested almost a quarter-million dollars of internal funds in search of truth and reconciliation efforts connected to the dispossession and subsequent sale of Native territories used to establish LGUs. This initiative was designed to push these LGUs to "step out" of their comfort zones and "step up" to the responsibilities inherent in the ignoble roots of their foundational finances. In partnership with First Nations Development Institute, the SOSU Project Team set out to accomplish two main objectives: (1) establish connections with the 108 tribes and bands whose land was used to fund Ohio State as per the *LGUR* and (2) interview tribal leaders of those affected communities to determine an appropriate path forward. In so doing, the SOSU Project Team aimed to develop an initial understanding of what specific reparative actions would most benefit the Native American communities impacted by this land dispossession, particularly with respect to food security and sovereignty, and the process by which reparative actions could be jointly designed through Tribal–University dialogue.

We want to express two important realities when considering debts and relational accountability. First, all U.S. colleges and universities occupy stolen Indigenous lands. All. Although most institutions of higher learning may not have financially benefited on the same terms as 1862 LGUs, they are beneficiaries of past and ongoing Indigenous dispossession. Second, many LGUs benefited from the lands of Indigenous Peoples in states other than their own. Cornell University, for example, received land scrip across 15 states and financially benefited from the dispossession of several Native Nations outside New York (Jordan, 2020). Most LGUs east of the Mississippi River were, in fact, primarily given vouchers or scrips to lands elsewhere. The perceived lack of Indigenous presence and proximity to Native Nations because of dispossession and distance creates abstraction regarding institutional responsibilities to Native Nations and their members. We find this especially true in states like California, where Indigenous removal was and is severe and federal recognition remains contested. Through various complex circumstances, LGUs are implicated in Indigenous dispossession elsewhere and must also address this reality.

Research by Ambo (2017) has demonstrated that, when possible, university leaders resist opportunities to account for their complicity and compliancy in Indigenous dispossession. Relatedly, the lack of response or acknowledgment by certain LGUs to the *LGUR* is indicative of this motive (R. Lee & Ahtone, 2020). LGU leaders have offered the rationale that events occurring before the establishment of the United States are irrelevant to their current institution. As a matter of equity, leaders also contend that if concessions are made for one group, they must be made for others (Ambo, 2017). We do not take a position on how institutions should take up matters of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) that account for past and ongoing injustices impacting other communities, as it is not our place to press for these concerns. However, we do argue that injustices cannot be wholly addressed without acknowledging that they have occurred and how LGUs have benefited from the violent and coercive dispossession of Indigenous Peoples. In brief, such truth-telling remains a central part of accountability to both the past and the present.

Actualize Relationships

Second, we contend that the recognition and atonement of the historical and continued dispossession of Indigenous Peoples should materialize tribal community–university partnerships between Native Nations and LGUs to serve as another mechanism of relational accountability beyond settler land acknowledgments. Such collaboration is not a simple or easy task given the ongoing neglect and harm endured by Native Nations and Indigenous Peoples at the hands of LGUs, especially regarding the historic and ongoing resistance by institutions and faculty to repatriation of Native American ancestors. Drawing from our understandings of relational justice and accountability, we recognize that the ledger can never fully be balanced between LGUs and Native Nations. We acknowledge the impossibility of having ethical relationships with someone who stole your land, extracted knowledge, unethically studied your ancestors, and so on (C. Pewewardy, personal communication, April 23, 2022). We draw from the words of Indigenous colleagues and communities we collaborate with, who invariably have stated that we "cannot fix the past" but "can do what is right moving forward."

We impress upon LGUs the need to develop and fortify government-to-government

relationships with Native Nations. Stewart-Ambo (2021a) defined tribal community–university partnerships as the external, economic, curricular, and cocurricular relationships and partnerships between Native Nations and universities that recognize, reinforce, and respect tribal sovereignty and self-determination. This term builds on scholarship about community–university partnerships, a robust area of study and readily understood institutional practice, to emphasize the importance of centering tribal communities and decentering universities. Community–university scholars and practices primarily focus on the "interactions between faculty, students, administrators, or other professional staff members on a given campus and [members of] the geographically delineated communities primarily located external to the university" (Ward & Moore, 2010, p. 39).

Typically, building relationships with Native Nations is a responsibility delegated to or taken up by Indigenous staff, faculty, and even students, whose job duties are intended to support other functions of the institution (Stewart-Ambo, 2021b). Research indicates that most of these relationships are formed because of personal relationships with communities; they are often housed in Indigenous studies or cultural centers instead of being situated in institution-wide efforts (Stewart-Ambo, 2021b). A survey of literature gives further evidence of such partnerships (Ambo, 2023). Absent from scholarship, yet observable at institutions such as Arizona State University, University of Arizona, University of Washington, and more, is the fortification of institutional relationships between the elected and hereditary leaders of Native Nations and universities that honor and respect the inherent sovereign authority of tribes. Again, we turn to ongoing efforts at our institutions as examples of how LGUs can follow through on this recommendation.

Although relationships have slightly changed over the last few years, UC San Diego does not have long-term sustained or collaborative relationships or partnerships with the Kumeyaay Nation. Instead, relationships are tenuous, reflecting decades of legal contention for ancestral remains unearthed during renovations of the chancellor's residence in 1976, when several archaeologists conducted excavations and collected burials and other cultural material for study. In December 2011, the Kumeyaay Cultural Repatriation Committee (KCRC) won the legal battle, though the physical return of these ancestors did not occur until 2016. This history resurfaced during the 2019–2020 academic year, with the passing of California Assembly Bill 275 and 2836 and the subsequent drafting of the new University of California Policy on Repatriation and Cultural Affiliation, all of which intend to bring the UC System into compliance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) and CalNAGPRA. Over the last several years, UC San Diego has responded to these new policies by hiring a full-time repatriation coordinator and subsequently developing a campus infrastructure to attend to repatriation. In April 2022, the chancellor sat down with representatives of KCRC to discuss concerns regarding repatriation, land management, and institutional relationships. In his opening address, the chancellor acknowledged the past and gestured to the future, remarking, "We are all here to share, to listen, to learn, and to work together with the goal of building upon our relationships" (P. K. Khosla, personal communication, May 2, 2022). Upon leaving, attendees remarked this meeting was a critical turning point in fostering relationships between the community and university. Each committed to meeting quarterly to discuss the Kumeyaay Nation's educational needs and UC San Diego's institutional obligations.

Ohio State University, in contrast, is at the very beginning phase of potential actions designed to actualize relationships with Native Nations. The state of Ohio is one of only seven states (the others being Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New Hampshire) that have neither state nor federally recognized Native Nations within their borders, which has contributed significantly to an "out of sight, out of mind" perspective on Indigenous Peoples. Publication of the *LGUR* certainly provoked a response from the team of Native and non-Native scholars involved in the SOSU project as described above, at least in terms of prompting a "discovery phase" by university personnel that focused on coming to grips with the history of Ohio State's foundational monies. The presence of Ohio State's Newark Earthworks Center (NEC)—focused as it is on the study of some of the world's most well-preserved mounds built by Indigenous Peoples during the Hopewell Era—has helped these initial efforts by providing a conceptual home for some of this work, especially in terms

of outreach and engagement efforts with Native Nations. Here, NEC personnel have been interacting for years with the leaders and other members of those Tribes who were historically present in Ohio prior to the Indian Removal Act. In essence, even though Ohio's citizens largely have forgotten about these Native Nations, present-day members of those Native Nation communities have not forgotten about Ohio.

As our institutions' experience indicates, institutions of higher learning must take significant and concerted actions in preparation for engaging with Native Nations. We also argue that relationships with Native Nations should not and cannot be "mutually beneficial." Mutuality is often cited as a cornerstone of successful community–university partnerships, with each party benefiting from entering a partnership, albeit not necessarily equally. We challenge this notion in view of the past and continuing financial benefits that institutions realize from Indigenous dispossession. The intent of building relationships should not hinge on "what more" can be taken from Native Nations but must be related to atoning for past and ongoing harms and neglect. Moreover, we argue that tribal community–university partnerships must focus primarily on Native Nation–building goals and address capacity-building across tribal members.

Relational accountability may be most easily accomplished through connections between 1862 land-grants and their 1994 sister land-grant Tribal Colleges. In general, it is fair to state that TCUs are most well-versed in connecting with other institutions of higher learning. The difficulties to be expected in establishing such relationships are best compared to the stumbling blocks encountered in forming government-to-government relationships that must be struck with Native Nations, owing to their sovereignty. Within this context, we believe that LGUs' first concern should be addressing the staggering imbalance of resources between the 1862 and 1994 land-grant universities (and 1890 Historically Black land-grant colleges and universities, for that matter). Gavazzi (2022) has employed the term "structural isolationism" to describe the continuous and compounding impact of differential access to resources in ways that systematically privilege 1862 LGUs over their 1890 counterparts and further benefit both of those groups of LGUs in comparison to the 1994 Tribal Colleges. In general, for every $100 that the 1862 LGUs obtain from the federal government, the 1890 LGUs receive $10 (J. M. Lee & Keys, 2013), while the 1994 LGUs receive about $1 (Martin & Hipp, 2018).

Moreover, we argue that sustained tribal community–university partnerships should be supported by offices of outreach and engagement or government and community relations to ensure greater institutional accountability and sustainability over time (Stewart-Ambo, 2021a). We challenge the idea that EDI offices should provide space for this work or be responsible for its advancement. Although EDI units have important responsibilities on campuses in addressing inequities broadly, such efforts are not often concerned with tribal sovereignty and self-determination; the aims of EDI initiatives often subvert Indigenous community needs and concerns (Smith et al., 2018; Tuck & Yang, 2018). Instead, we argue for the addition of university personnel, such as a tribal liaison or special advisor, to the offices of outreach and engagement and government and community relations. In our experience, this recommendation is often made by Indigenous faculty and staff with a clear understanding of tribal sovereignty and the political nature of government-to-government relationships, and is often resisted by university leaders. The "messes" created when universities and other complex systems interact with one another may require more innovative ways of conducting engagement-oriented activities (McNall et al., 2015).

Materialize Commitments

Our final action addresses the necessity for material resources to enable LGUs to respectfully engage Native Nations and Indigenous Peoples on and off campus. Resource distribution on college campuses is inequitable, with communities with the greatest need often receiving the least support: the smallest budgets for centers, the smallest number of staff, or even the least square footage. Thus, we approach this recommendation from a very practical and ethical standpoint. First, outreach and engagement efforts cannot and do not miraculously happen without structural changes and institutional resources. Even locally, there are expenses associated with supporting travel and respectful hosting of guests, including proximally located Native Nations. Second, we find the redistribution of institutional resources a very practical

and tangible opportunity for LGUs to bring some balance to the ledger. In their 2021 contribution to the NAISA journal, Ambo (2021a) pointed out that "Indigenous people have contributed more to higher education per capita, all the while receiving far fewer benefits" (p. 166). Building off this premise, we argue that material commitments through outreach and engagement activities are one mechanism for redressing past and ongoing injustices, albeit not the only way. We do not believe that institutions should perceive these resources as a form of reparations, restitution, or absolution for the past injustices. Relational accountability does not have a designated endpoint, nor do LGUs have the authority to determine when the harms have been addressed.

In preparation for working with Native Nations, we encourage institutions to undertake in-depth assessments to understand the current state of their campus regarding the status of Indigenous student enrollment, staff and faculty hiring, existing campus resources and centers, and sustained community partnerships. This assessment alone will require time and resources. It should not be thrust upon the first and, likely, the sole Indigenous person at the university without appropriate compensation for their time and resources to support the assessment. Indicative of national rates, institutions will likely recognize that Indigenous students, staff, and faculty are grossly underrepresented at every level of higher education, making it likely that resources historically committed to these initiatives have comparatively been less than those allocated to other communities. Again, we are not of the mind nor in the position to speak on how institutions should fund initiatives regarding other marginalized communities. Rather, our position is that current initiatives targeting Indigenous communities are grossly inadequately funded and need to be sufficiently supported to fully operationalize campus and community engagement to a degree that would tangibly impact educational outcomes. For our conclusion, we once more look at ongoing efforts at our institutions as examples of how LGUs can engage this recommendation while simultaneously recognizing that this type of assessment and support is a needed area of improvement for our campuses.

UC San Diego is in the early stages of strategically planning its tribal-engagement activities and grappling with what resources this step will require. UC San Diego has several campus resources dedicated to supporting Native American students. In 2016, the campus opened the Intertribal Resource Center (ITRC) and hired its inaugural director. In May 2020, the Academic Senate Undergraduate Council approved the Native American and Indigenous Studies (NAIS) minor, led by Dr. Andrew Jolivétte. In September 2020, Drs. P. Keolu Fox, Theresa Ambo, and K. Wayne Yang launched the Indigenous Futures Institute (IFI). These programs were initiated in reaction to student and faculty activism and involvement in response to previously mentioned concerns regarding NAGPRA. Aside from the ITRC, the NAIS minor and IFI were initiated and supported by Indigenous faculty and staff at UC San Diego. The current tribal engagement plan brings together these areas of campus as well as other parts of campus, such as enrollment management, government and community relations, and residential life. A committee of faculty are currently discussing the resources (e.g., money and personnel) necessary for fully executing this plan over multiple years to request support from campus leadership.

Work undertaken at Ohio State University surrounding the materialization of resources is even more nascent than at UC San Diego. An American Indian Studies program is offered as an interdisciplinary undergraduate minor degree through the College of Arts and Sciences. Faculty connected to this program are relatively few in number and reflect a mix of Native and non-Native scholars, although recently there has been a decided uptick in the hiring of additional Indigenous faculty members (five new such hires have occurred in the last year alone). The numbers of American Indian and Alaska Native students have fluctuated over the years, ranging from over 150 students a decade ago to less than 40 students at present. The absence of state or federally recognized Native Nations residing in the state of Ohio seems to account for the lack of outreach or engagement actions at an administrative level. Since the *LGUR* was published and the SOSU Project was launched, the university has provided almost a quarter-million dollars in grant support for various scholarship efforts involving Native Nations and Tribal Colleges.

As mentioned, a critical aspect of effectively allocating institutional resources is hiring university personnel for offices of

outreach and engagement and government and community relations. We also encourage individuals within institutions to consider how research and curricular partnerships support building the capacity-building tribal members and governments. For example, Bang et al. (2016) wrote about their successful collaboration with the American Indian Center of Chicago, which has "now successfully managed five large National Science Foundation grants, including the scientific, administrative, and fiscal management and oversight" (p. 37). We also find it necessary to briefly comment on the emerging tendency of colleges and universities to seek support from Native Nations with profitable economic development enterprises—as of 2020, there were 248 Native Nations engaged in casino-style gaming activities nationwide (National Indian Gaming Commission, 2021). This pattern of seeking assistance is notable in California, where 62 Native Nations engage in such efforts. Over the last two decades, Native Nations have made significant financial contributions to higher education for programmatic initiatives, research endeavors, and student scholarships. Again, we are not in a position to speak about how Native Nations exercise their sovereign authority; we have found that decisions about where to allocate resources primarily focus on Native Nation–building goals, including capacity building. With this in mind, we discourage universities from requesting donations from Native Nations and organizations as these actions do not allow institutions to enact their responsibilities.

Conclusion

The goal of this reflective essay was to call on institutions to think and act more deeply regarding how settler land acknowledgment statements relate to the long-celebrated, publicly professed, and politically ascribed land-grant mission. We believe institutions without settler land acknowledgments are perfectly poised to deeply engage this practice, as it allows authors of statements to consider how they can intentionally and strategically plan collaborations with Indigenous Peoples and Native Nations. If institutions are morally and ethically compelled to serve Indigenous students and communities, we argue that they should engage in silent efforts of engagement and not use land acknowledgments as performative entry points to strike conversations about collaborations. In these instances, land acknowledgment can come last and follow a long list of demonstrated commitments. We offer three key actions to prepare institutions for meaningful engagement: (1) challenge historical legacies, (2) foster meaningful partnerships with Native Nations and Indigenous Peoples, and (3) materialize resources that support Indigenous students and engage communities. Our hope is that these recommendations for moving beyond land acknowledgments serve as disruptions and amount to profound structural changes to the LGUs' typical ways (where they exist) of engaging Indigenous Peoples and Native Nations.

We close by recognizing the dissonance that readers might be grappling with while reading and that the concepts addressed may be challenging. Outreach and engagement with Native Nations is not easy; it is complex, uncomfortable, and challenging. Our recommendations call on institutions and colleagues to confront generations of individual and institutional complacency toward ongoing injustices. There is an irreconcilable and inconsolable sense that these harms can never be addressed. We do not claim to solely hold the answers; thus we invite you into conversation with us and look forward to hearing from Indigenous and non-Indigenous readers their reactions, challenges, worries, and hopes.

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Rethinking the Field in Crisis: The Baltimore Field School and Building Ethical Community and University Partnerships

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Abstract

This Projects With Promise case study offers insights for addressing tensions between universities and communities in building partnerships and collectively rethinking "the field" of community engagement. We explore moving beyond a solely place-based understanding of "the field" into an ethos based on human interactions and mutual trust. Through an analysis of the Baltimore Field School (BFS) project, we argue that partnerships must be designed to create the time and space for self-reflexive qualitative methods that emerge from a personality-proof and sustainable infrastructure that can respond to crises and needs in both communities and universities. Rethinking and even "undoing" notions of institutional time and space within universities allows community-centered reflection that begins to cross the boundaries imposed by neoliberal institutions focused on profits above people. Exploring the distinct scholarly communities of higher education can inspire academics to rethink how universities can work with and not just for local communities.

Keywords: public humanities, urban studies, field research, research ethics, crisis

I say within the next 10 to 20 years, University of Maryland [Baltimore] and Johns Hopkins [University] is taking over the entire city. University of Maryland is taking over West Baltimore and Johns Hopkins is taking over East Baltimore. And that's just how it is. They unstoppable.

—Baltimore resident, "Word on the Street" from the *Downtown Voices* podcast series (Holter & Singlenberg, 2016, 9:24–9:38)

Universities have long served as agents of gentrification and employed extractive research practices in Baltimore, Maryland and cities like it (D. L. Baldwin, 2021; Moos et al., 2019). In light of this institutional history, how can university faculty, staff, and graduate students develop more ethical and equitable humanities-based community engagement projects in city neighborhoods? This guiding question informed the planning, execution, and assessment in the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) inaugural Baltimore Field School (BFS) in summer 2021 and the planning for the BFS 2.0 in July 2023. BFS is a humanities-based training intensive designed to create an infrastructure of engagement for faculty and graduate students to collaborate with community partners in Baltimore in ways that share power and are mutually beneficial (Fouts, 2020; Wollschleger et al., 2020).

In 2019, the BFS was developed based on the theory that ethical principles for collaborative work in city neighborhoods would organically emerge through relationship

building "in the field"—working directly in city neighborhoods with local partners in South and Southwest Baltimore (Yamamura & Koth, 2018). Such a grounding pushes humanities research outside university offices, classrooms, or laboratories and into the city while critically rethinking "the field" of the humanities itself to be more publicly engaged with local communities in meaningful ways. From moving "out of the classroom and into history" (Scarlett et al., 2019, p. 11) toward "experiential, affective and critical learning in engaged fieldwork" (Golubchikov, 2015, p. 143), we shifted our focus and our resources to city neighborhoods through the process of building Community Fellows partnerships. However, our early thinking of "the field" solely in terms of place needed to expand, and we began to rethink "the field" as a place-based ethical position. Place matters only when people give space meaning (Tuan, 1977). "Methods as ethics" was a theme in our early discussions—meaning, how you do the work and engage with other human beings is a direct reflection of the project's ethos.

Building productive partnerships requires first showing up and listening, with the goal of "doing no harm" (Kostovicova & Knott, 2022). In this work, we acknowledge the numerous ways that institutional expansion in cities often displaces residents of Black neighborhoods and university researchers often collect information from Black residents that is not used to correct historical injustices imposed upon their communities (Brown, 2021). For the first iteration of the project, we worked with foundational partners and Community Fellows Eric Jackson (Partner 1, P1) of Black Yield Institute (BYI)—a Pan-African power institution in the Cherry Hill neighborhood of South Baltimore that serves as a collective action network and community farm to address food apartheid—and Curtis Eaddy II (Partner 2, P2) of the Southwest Partnership—a nonprofit coalition of seven neighborhoods and seven institutions working together to build a better community in West Baltimore. Both foundational partners had worked with university faculty on previous projects in some capacity. The goal of BFS was to provide a space to collectively and openly acknowledge, discuss, and negotiate power, perception, and expectations from the inception of project planning while allowing for the organic evolution of projects over time.

The perceptions, expectations, and goals of Community Fellow partners Jackson (P1) and Eaddy (P2) were outlined in the *Pre-Evaluation Report* (Mahdi, 2021a) completed early in the planning process. This report highlighted their expectation that BFS would be a "mutually beneficial" endeavor between their organizations, the university, and the people in the neighborhoods served by their organizations. Both partners described very concrete ways in which an engaged group of university scholars could join and assist residents in promoting their own projects on the preservation of culture, teaching neighborhood history, and building community power. Each described specific tasks such as assisting with collecting stories from residents, working with residents to create multimedia products for distribution, and offering support to navigate Baltimore City's barriers of red tape and bureaucracy that hindered residents' goals of thriving in their neighborhoods (Mahdi, 2021a).

We knew that reflecting on the historical harm done by powerful institutions would be a difficult but necessary part of building trust. Community-engaged humanities is often touted as addressing real-world problems through a "relational model of engagement" (Schalet et al., 2020). However, we did not anticipate "the field" itself shifting from a physical place in city neighborhoods to virtual space due to the global COVID-19 public health crisis. The situation of crisis and shifting spatial dynamics exacerbated the central tension between human individuals and bureaucratic institutions. Through honest conversations and integrating self-reflexive assessment throughout all stages of the process, we tried to see humanity within (or perhaps beyond) institutional structures in the process of rethinking the field of publicly engaged humanities (Harkavy & Hartley, 2012; Schroeder, 2021; Woodward, 2009).

This Projects With Promise case study offers insights into the ethical tensions between universities and communities and the difficulty of collectively rethinking "the field" of community engagement through various crises—from uprisings to displacement. We cannot predict crises, but we can build trust and formulate principles that enable our institutions to cope with them in productive and humane ways, despite the neoliberal universities' settler-colonial focus on expansion and prioritization of profits over people and a failure to see and hear people

already on the land or in the neighborhood doing the work (Baker, 2020; D. L. Baldwin, 2021; Brown, 2021; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Neoliberal cities and universities operate by an "ideology that privileges profits and prizes private and corporate entities as the ideal providers of public services" (King et. al., p. 2). The BFS project team felt that such a transactional ideology should not dominate community engagement discourses in higher education. Of course, money matters, but the work focuses on the dignity of human relationships.

Through an analysis of the 2021 inaugural BFS, we argue for the importance of building relationships and a comprehensive and self-reflexive evaluation and assessment process at the start of university–community partnerships. Ethical partnerships must be mutually beneficial, with scholars and researchers being thoughtful in how and when they show up and deeply listening to local residents and community members already doing the work. University employees should do no harm—that is, we should strive to avoid extracting community stories and resources primarily for our own personal gain—in the process of any university public humanities project.

The History and Evolution of BFS

The idea and ethos of BFS evolved from the impacts of the 2015 Baltimore Uprising—protests and unrest following the death of Freddie Gray in April 2015 while in police custody—on the city and those who live and work there. The Uprising pushed scholars working in and on Baltimore to refocus researching, teaching, and archiving on the impacts of segregation and racism while building a more inclusive history of the city (Meringolo, 2015). Collective thinking on addressing such moments—and working with, not just for, the community—led to the development of a working group focused on building an undergraduate public humanities program focused on Baltimore at our university.

From 2016 to 2019, UMBC's Public Humanities Working Group developed the first public humanities program in the United States focused specifically on undergraduate education with a minor in Public Humanities (Schroeder, 2021). In fall 2019, the inaugural Introduction to Public Humanities seminar, Listening to the City, piloted a Community Fellows program funded by a Humanities Teaching Lab course transformation grant from the university's Dresher Center for the Humanities. We knew we could not build this program the right way without the expertise of community leaders (Fisher, 2019), who often are not inclined to trust scholars and universities, as academia has a history of swooping in to extract stories and data without mutual benefit (Sanjek, 2015).

BFS was designed to move away from such extractive research models for humanities-based urban studies projects (Coldiron & Capó, 2022). The program was jointly influenced by greater scholarly and media attention on Baltimore following the uprisings in the city—and the larger Black Lives Matter movement—and the flourishing of research and collective work as part of the "Baltimore School." In a quote printed on the back cover of the collection *Baltimore Revisited: Stories of Inequality and Resistance in a U.S. City* (King et al., 2019), political scientist Lester Spence described an emerging Baltimore School of inquiry, which "seeks to radically change how we understand cities and how we redistribute resources within them, by taking space, race, and political economy seriously." This line of inquiry (Brown, 2021; Fabricant, 2022; Rizzo, 2020) fuels humanistic scholarship and meaningful engagement with neighborhoods in Baltimore City. However, before building an infrastructure for engagement at universities, we needed to unlearn and rethink the role of university employees working on the ground in the city with our Community Fellows (Pulido, 2008; Tuck, 2009).

BFS Planning, 2020–2021: What We Wanted to Do

In January 2020, we received a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and built a project team. In addition to our two foundational community partners (Jackson, P1, and Eaddy, P2), our core project team from the university included the dean of our college, chair of the department where the public humanities minor is located, and an assessment coordinator and program manager—both university alumni with strong connections to Baltimore. The dean convened a BFS advisory group of humanities faculty from across the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences. We had our first group meeting on March 11, 2020. We affirmed our goals: (1) convene, listen to, and plan with community partners; (2) develop ethical principles for public humanities research and teaching; (3) pilot

a Baltimore Field School summer institute to build a community of practice; and (4) develop an infrastructure of engagement for undergraduate education and research. We welcomed the tensions and were committed to performing the difficult work with our Community Fellows.

The following day—March 12, 2020—our plans were altered when the COVID-19 global pandemic shut down all in-person operations at the university. We soon paused the project and were granted a one-year extension from our funder. During the global health crisis in early 2020, many large institutions were able to shift resources. We shifted funds already allocated to in-person public humanities programming to directly support our BFS partners' needs to address pressing public health and food access crises. For example, funding for a public campus film event on Arabbers—Black food vendors who have traditionally delivered produce by horse-drawn wagon in neighborhoods suffering from food apartheid—was shifted to support a local farmer and artist who made a COVID-19 public health zine distributed by Arabbers in the majority-Black neighborhoods they serve in Baltimore. As we know, the pandemic increased the inequities already present in society. Crisis harms some more than others.

In fall 2020, Jackson (P1) and BYI—an organization focused on food justice issues in Black neighborhoods—collaborated with our Introduction to Public Humanities seminar for virtual events and the creation of a digital timeline that was turned over to the organization. Jackson (P1) had already established that community ownership of research data and stories was essential during our initial BFS planning. The Preserving Places, Making Spaces in Baltimore public humanities course worked with Eaddy (P2) on the A Place Called Poppleton project—documenting the history and culture of the Poppleton neighborhood of West Baltimore. The project (Baltimore Traces, 2021) focuses on the neighborhood's rich Black history and places and people in danger of being displaced due to urban renewal and redevelopment projects by Baltimore City and outside developers.

Within this context, we began to reboot planning for the BFS in the beginning of 2021. Our entire team was dealing with the new normal of an ongoing global pandemic that severely limited face-to-face connections and place-based experiences *in the field* as we had envisioned back in 2019. With these unprecedented transitions, our assessment coordinator became essential for rethinking our project. The *Pre-Evaluation Report* of February 2021 (Mahdi, 2021a) was "composed to inform Baltimore Field School planning by illuminating community partners' stated objectives and goals, promoting transparency in the project processes, and providing valuable information for project participants and other stakeholders" (p. 4). Our community partners' goals were to "embrace historical reconciliation specifically regarding Black/majority-Black communities and neighborhoods and harms imposed upon them" (p.7). by Baltimore institutions. Examples included university-related expansions by Johns Hopkins University (JHU) and University of Maryland Baltimore (UMB) that displaced residents in neighborhoods in East and West Baltimore, respectively, or research that treated these residents like lab rats in an experiment. Our partners desired to "create a new culture of shared power in university–community partnerships" (Mahdi, 2021a, pp. 5–6).

The 2021 BFS *Pre-Evaluation Report* (Mahdi, 2021a) illuminated the ways in which the project team were on the same page with project goals before they selected participants from the university. It was necessary, given the intention of building an infrastructure for collaborative work, to demonstrate that community partners do not enter into university engagements as blank slates waiting to accommodate the teaching and research goals of scholars. Perhaps the most promising aspect of the BFS project was that the project team (college dean, department chair, assessment coordinator, and program manager) all had extensive backgrounds in community work—outside the highly structured, grant-funded opportunities attached to universities' institutional objectives. The team agreed that even though money (how a project is funded and how each entity is compensated), power, race, and shared ownership of data and outputs are crucial elements of such partnerships, these topics are often avoided when university personnel plan projects for communities.

Addressing the harm of powerful institutions connects to projects like Martha S. Jones's Hard Histories Project (https://snfagora.jhu.edu/project/hard-histories-at-johns-hopkins/) launched in 2020 at JHU, the largest employer in Baltimore City. The project examines the role that histories of

racism and discrimination have played at JHU and beyond. This "historical reconciliation" and the role of money and power in such partnerships in the current day were central tensions, and community partners "discussed positive relationships with individuals at [universities], as well as concerns about the university as an institution with the power to undermine this work" (Mahdi, 2021a, p. 6).

Eaddy (P2) was quoted in the report: "We are asking people [in our communities] to be vulnerable. They trust the individuals, not organizations" (Mahdi, 2021a, p. 10). Jackson (P1) pointed out, "This project seeks to go beyond liberalism, to shift power in the [university–community] relationship, and to use that power to support [the community]" (Mahdi, 2021a, p. 16). The report suggested: "Engaging the humanity within an institution can be a protective force against the violence of bureaucracy" (Mahdi, 2021a, p. 16). Clearly, the project goals required directly addressing the tensions of universities and how they have historically worked for and not always with communities.

The pre-evaluation also revealed that potential participants in BFS were split in preferring in-person or virtual programming. Based on issues of accessibility and safety, we decided the inaugural BFS would be virtual with some optional in-person outdoor events.

The Inaugural BFS, June 21–June 25, 2021: What We Did

We created a (virtual) and nonhierarchical space where tenure-track faculty and graduate student fellows (funded at $3,000 each) met on equal terms with our partnering Community Fellows ($4,000 each). We funded 14 university fellows (eight assistant professors and six graduate students) and invited 19 speakers from humanities institutions and community organizations (see 2021 BFS schedule, https://baltimorefieldschool.org/?p=2628). Speakers received $500 honoraria for participating in BFS panels. June 21–25, 2021, our virtual programming engaged with community partners, discussed publicly engaged methodologies, and built community. We concluded programming with a walking tour led by Eaddy (P2) in the Poppleton neighborhood of West Baltimore—where our university's downtown classroom was located and a university BioPark development project was connected to the potential gentrification of the neighborhood and displacement of residents (Brown, 2015).

We began by discussing the essay "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor" (Tuck & Yang, 2012) to define what we were doing and what we were trying not to do—performative inclusion. Use of the "decolonial" metaphor in our call for fellow applications brought about tension in the working group; group members recognized that such metaphors can let us—scholars and Community Fellows—off the hook without really reckoning with the tensions and harmful settler–colonial practices within both U.S. institutions in general and higher education specifically. The tensions between Black and Indigenous efforts for land sovereignty showed the importance of the time invested building trust and holding space for honest conversations on difficult and complicated topics. The overarching outcomes for university fellows were to produce (1) personal research statements (individual manifestos) and (2) collective ethical principles for collaborating on public humanities work in Baltimore. We also provided space for the community partners to determine the organization of the inaugural BFS.

Sovereignty Is Community Control and Ownership

Jackson (P1) spoke to university fellows on the first day with a talk, "Sovereignty and Relationships With the Academy," defining how power worked, and a panel "Embodying Black Land & Food Sovereignty," exploring what sovereignty can look like. Day 2 began with Eaddy (P2) discussing the A Place Called Poppleton community–university collaboration and then a public panel later in the week on how art can help process trauma in Black neighborhoods in Baltimore, "The Beautiful Side of Ugly: Unspoken Discussion Panel." We analyzed transcripts of those first days of the BFS with our partners as a way to find themes within difficult but honest conversations (Koopman & Seliga, 2021; Sutcliffe, 2021).

Jackson (P1) began by pointing out "there is an unnecessary dichotomy between academy and community" (Jackson, 2021a). He defined "sovereignty" as "ultimately about how we [the local community] largely control the narratives, the relationships, and how those relationships go, especially when it relates to white institutions." Jackson (P1) framed the importance of sovereignty very clearly: "Look, if you want to help us, it has

to be on our terms. And it has to be what we are doing." He discussed "radical accountability" and how communities must own their own data and own their own stories. Jackson (P1) referenced the BFS project director's thorough understanding of such contractual issues of ownership by acknowledging that his organization "combs through those documents." This mention of contractual issues reflected that the university had sent Community Fellows the stock "Contract for Consultant Service," in which Section 4.1 "Ownership of Intellectual Property" stated that "all designs, plans, reports, etc. [New Developments] shall be assigned to University as its sole and exclusive property."

This clause went against the ethos of engagement the project was based on. Once Jackson (P1) brought this language to the project team's attention, we shared the language in the original grant application on intellectual property with the university procurement team handling the contracts: "Key issues to be explored in the course of this planning grant include intellectual property, public access, and shared ownership of knowledge." Furthermore, the language in the grant stated: "We do not foresee the requirement to copyright or license any cultural or intellectual materials produced. In the spirit of the project, these materials will be licensed in accordance with the principles of Creative Commons" (quotes come directly from the grant proposal).

Jackson's (P1) discussion of ownership/sovereignty on the first day of the field school offers the valuable lesson that project ethics and university contracts must align from the inception of a project. Because Jackson (P1) performed due diligence in closely reading contractual documents and because the project team had written "shared ownership" into the original grant, we were able to challenge and alter the stock language in the institutional contracts. Staff in grants and procurement offices should be involved in the planning of projects from the inception so they understand the complexities of the project goals; however, institutional policies should be challenged and changed when they do not align with ethical practices. As Jackson (P1) stated in his talk: "And if we want to show real commitment to moving away from traditional means of scholarship, a radical scholarship means that you have to change your process" (Jackson, 2021a).

Who Do You Speak For/As? Informed Consent Is an Ongoing Process

When Curtis Eaddy (P2) spoke about the A Place Called Poppleton project, we delved into issues of informed consent. Eaddy (P2) explained how the Baltimore Traces project team, which has IRB approval, would not only obtain signed consent forms but would bring back the interview transcripts and, especially, edited media or videos for review before public release or archiving on the project's website. Informed consent, like all forms of consent, should be an ongoing process that centers transparency and positionality. We discussed the first time we went to interview Eaddy (P2) at his family home in Poppleton in 2019. Before the camera started rolling, he asked who we wanted to interview, "Curtis Eaddy who works for the Southwest Partnership or Curtis who grew up in Poppleton [one of the seven West Baltimore neighborhoods in the Southwest Partnership]." The team responded that we wanted to interview whomever Eaddy (P2) wanted to speak as. He (P2) decided to speak from the position of someone who grew up in the neighborhood. Eaddy (P2) made the choice to speak as an individual rather than for the institution where he worked—a complicated choice to navigate in the field.

The project team discussed the tensions and emotions surrounding speaking as an individual versus speaking as and for an institution, especially in emotional situations such as families—like the Eaddys—being displaced from their homes. A team member explained, "I have a relationship with Curtis [Eaddy, P2] and his family, and his mother, and at those moments, you have to decide who you're going to be and what part of yourself you're putting forward" (Eaddy, 2021, p. 5). Eaddy (P2) added a similar sentiment: "I had to then choose which side I would fight for. . . . I can't go against my job at one end, and then the other, assisting my family from, from preserving their, our family home." Eaddy (P2) explained his own conflicts from his job and his personal connections: "You have to make decisions and choices in your life. . . . Sometimes you got to put things aside and say, look, this is what's right" (Eaddy, 2021, p. 6).

These virtual conversations unpacked actual collaborations in the field. We came to understand that there is no single set of ethical principles to institutionalize. Instead, issues and processes must be considered in relation to current issues of how power is perceived

and experienced in the field at that moment. As much as possible, these issues must be worked out in advance and in dialogue with those most affected on the ground. As Jackson (P1) summarized, this work is really about "relationships with people." He continued: "If we're actually going to have a Baltimore Field School, honor the field, and this is the field right here, you know what I'm saying? We are the field" (Jackson, 2021b).

Notes From the Field

In addition to our foundational partners (Jackson, P1, and Eaddy, P2), we had panels led by project consultants—scholars on Baltimore history and culture and experts in public humanities. Consultant Mary Rizzo (Rutgers University, Newark) wrote the 2020 book *Come and Be Shocked: Baltimore Beyond John Waters and The Wire* (Rizzo, 2020), exploring the cultural representations of the city in popular culture and imagination since the 1950s. She also started the Chicory Revitalization Project (https://collections.digitalmaryland.org/digital/collection/mdcy) and led a session, "Black Poetry Does: Connecting Young People to Their History Through Poetry" with her community partners. Consultants Nicole Fabricant (Towson University), author of 2022's *Fighting to Breathe: Race, Toxicity, and the Rise of Youth Activism in Baltimore* (Fabricant, 2022), and Lawrence Brown (Morgan State University), author of 2021's *The Black Butterfly: The Harmful Politics of Race and Space in America* (Brown, 2021), are also collaborators in the field. They coled a session, "Nurturing an Ethics of Solidarity & Care: Fostering Collective Impact in the Public Sphere" influenced by "FAQs: Frequently (Un)Asked Questions About Being a Scholar Activist" (Pulido, 2008). All these project consultants have worked together collectively in some way and published early research for their monographs in the 2019 *Baltimore Revisited* (King et al., 2019) collection.

We concluded the summer institute with colleague consultants who left academia to work in the public sector. Michelle Stefano, who also has a chapter in *Baltimore Revisited* (King et al., 2019), organized a panel discussion, "Community Collections at the American Folklife Center." The discussion provided specific examples of the politics and practices for building community-led archives (Caswell et al., 2017; Stefano, 2021). Samir Meghelli, who is a curator at the Smithsonian Institution's Anacostia Community Museum—the first federally funded community museum in the United States—led the concluding session, "The Practice of Public Scholarship in a Gentrifying City: Working in, With, and for Communities." Meghelli discussed the theory and practice (Glee & Robles-Inman, 2019) of public projects he worked on in D.C. with local communities. During the post-project assessment, one of the BFS university fellows described the week: "It was too much, and also not enough" (Mahdi, 2021b).

We could not show up in the ways we planned back in 2019; however, our understanding of the field shifted from a place in a neighborhood to encompass the ethical relationships to other human beings located in place. Understanding the human component of "the field" was important, as our two foundational partners were both dealing with real human crises of displacement during the inaugural summer 2021 BFS summer institute.

In early 2021, Jackson (P1) and his organization had received notice of eviction from their community farm in Cherry Hill from Housing Authority of Baltimore City and held a rally on their land the weekend after the BFS summer institute on Saturday, July 3. Local newspaper the *Baltimore Sun* published an article on the displacement, "The Cherry Hill Urban Community Garden Has Served the Neighborhood for Decades: Now, It's Facing the Threat of Eviction" (Campbell, 2021). Eaddy (P2) and his family and neighbors in Poppleton were also facing displacement through the use of eminent domain by the Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development for a long-stalled redevelopment project. His mother, Sonia Eaddy, led the fight against displacement in Poppleton from 2004 to the present. On Saturday, July 10, 2021, Poppleton residents and supporters held a Save Our Block rally in the Sarah Ann Street park to fight to save the Eaddy family home from condemnation and to keep tenants of the historic Sarah Ann Street alley houses from being displaced. On July 23, 2021, Sonia Eaddy appeared on the front page of the *Baltimore Sun* in an article reporting on the displacement of her neighbors, "As Baltimore's Poppleton Neighborhood Braces for Change, Residents Liken It to a 'Family' Being Broken Apart" (Miller, 2021). Many in the BFS community showed up at these rallies to listen and offer support.

University entanglements with development

projects can also lead to harm. The redevelopment of the Poppleton neighborhood was connected to the University of Maryland, Baltimore's BioPark (a public–private partnership) moving into Poppleton and West Baltimore in 2004 (Beamon, 2004). The quote from "Word on the Street" at the beginning of this article alludes to that expansion of the universities into disinvested neighborhoods in Baltimore. However, the A Place Called Poppleton cultural documentation project based on a BFS university–community partnership sought to fight for development without displacement with residents in Poppleton.

Even as they collaborated with us, our two foundational partners were dealing with crises of displacement in addition to the ongoing global pandemic. This juxtaposition reflects the ongoing and constant crises in 21st-century society, especially in Baltimore's majority-Black neighborhoods, that call for a response from community-engaged public humanities. Can universities develop public humanities projects that repair damage from past or ongoing harm?

Eliminating Unnecessary Dichotomies and What We Learned

> There has to be, from my perspective, an undoing process and a "doing anew" process. And I think that the way that Baltimore Field School is designed right now is the "doing anew" and not really enough time in undoing. . . . We use the right words, but our methodologies don't change because we don't unlearn them and we don't spend enough time there unpacking, undoing, feeling like the world is over . . . and then finding ways, very smart and nuanced ways, of learning to walk again.—Eric Jackson (P1), BYI (Mahdi, 2021c, p. 36)

Undoing harmful institutional procedures and policies in community engagement and research is a process that takes time, reflection, and established relationships. As seen in our process with BFS, residents of disinvested neighborhoods have been vocal about their lack of trust in institutions.

The project assessment following the week-long summer institute found that the 14 university BFS fellows noticed and appreciated the sustained relationships between the university project team and the community partners (Mahdi, 2021c). Qualitative analysis of fellows' focus groups generated themes among strengths and benefits of the BFS, including building community with colleagues doing similar work, learning more about "the real" or "the true" Baltimore, exposure to a wider array of ways to think about ethics, and a notable absence of hierarchical roles between the participating graduate students and professors. University fellows also reported immediate personal and professional growth during and after the summer institute, such as increased confidence in their ability to teach publicly engaged humanities, increased perspective into career options, and increased commitment to collaboration. Moreover, fellows detailed new insights into ideas of mutual benefit between universities and communities, checking their egos, and allowing the work to take a longer time than expected.

The latter insight is one of the ways in which time, especially *moving at the speed of the work*, emerged as a primary theme. In this case, university fellows described learning more about "slow scholarship" (Berg & Seeber, 2016) as it pertains to deep listening and relationship building to ensure mutual benefit. They connected the idea of more time on a project to the intention of establishing trust, sustainability, and longevity with community partners. This connection also weighs heavily in the recommendations from the evaluation report: time—specifically deceleration and extension of the Baltimore Field School learning processes—allows for the relationship-building infrastructure needed on and off campus. Close examination of these themes—time and relationship building—serves to illuminate the difficulty in resolving what Jackson (P1) called "the unnecessary dichotomy" between university and community.

Time and Relationship Building: Moving at the Speed of the Work

When asked what they would have changed, focus group participants from the university discussed wanting more time to debrief with one another after panels, more time to learn about one another's work, and more how-to discussions about real and hypothetical ethical dilemmas. Commonalities among fellows' suggestions for future iterations of the BFS included "unstructured time" to socialize together, opening participation to university staff, and time dedicated to cultivating this community of like-minded

individuals on campus. Despite fellows' expressed desires for more time spent on these matters, when asked specifically about their thoughts on the time structure of the summer institute, professors were more likely than graduate students to say that, because of personal and professional time constraints, they could not imagine the summer institute lasting longer than one week. Some of the graduate student participants suggested a 2-week structure. Most fellows did reiterate, however, that an in-person format, made impossible by the COVID-19 safety measures, would have provided the peer interaction they were missing.

These evaluation findings regarding fellows' opinions on the time required for the BFS may appear inconsistent on the surface, but academics might find a familiar understanding in the conflicting perceptions. Fellows confirmed that the brief "intensive" structure of the program, which allowed for concentrated delivery of new, useful knowledge in a convenient/desired time frame, contributed to their professional goals and met their expectations (13 out of 14 participants). Confirming the "too much, but also not enough" paradox described by one participant, fellows still wanted more time to focus on campus-based relationships and to absorb the new information. This contrast in perceptions of sufficient time, taken in consideration with fellows' desire for more how-to instruction, is consistent with the institutional structure in which academics are socialized and prepared for careers. A concise time schedule is the basis of universities' educational structures, with knowledge (courses) prearranged in a systematic format (semesters). After a predetermined progression of how-to instruction, the academic is awarded with confirmation that levels of sufficient proficiency have been achieved, from undergraduate degrees through the doctoral level, even from postdoc positions through full professorship. This professional structure matches the fellows' expectation that within a week or two, the BFS could provide new insights on ethics, information about the city, peer socialization, how-to instruction on relationship building with community collaborators, and how-to instruction on the logistics of carrying out a project. An awareness of the professional socialization process of academia underscores Jackson's (P1) observation that an *undoing* process is necessary if the BFS is to be successful in creating an infrastructure for publicly engaged research and teaching.

Time was also a consistent theme from the community partners' perspectives, from the pre-evaluation to the final evaluation following the summer institute. In the final evaluation, one finding highlighted how a well-established relationship between university personnel and a community partner is different from the usual university–community partnership established within the guidelines and schedule of one specific grant-based project. The pre-evaluation emphasized Jackson's (P1) and Eaddy's (P2) assertions that they had working relationships and a level of trust with individuals from the university, not with the university itself. Jackson (P1) and Eaddy (P2) also pointed out that the work was funded by a grant from a foundation, not from the university. In individual interviews after the summer institute, Jackson (P1) and Eaddy (P2) discussed BFS, but also referenced other instances in which they worked with or were in community with members of the project team.

These data suggest that within the context of a well-established partnership, community partners' and university personnel's experiences with a specific grant-funded project—for example, BFS—may be conflated with other activities and projects that have happened during their relationship. In a group interview, a project team member also confirmed that she was not inclined or able to compartmentalize her public scholarship by project or task. "I can't disentangle . . . the work that I'm doing in Poppleton and my commitment to housing justice in the city that has come out of the past couple of years" (Mahdi, 2021c, p. 32). This phenomenon of perceived time/place and project conflation relates to the impact of relationship building between scholars and community partners. Rather than the usual transactional, time-limited, grant-based collaborations that are customary in academic cultures, individuals in successful community partnerships may be more likely to comprehend these relationships holistically—with each project having very little weight compared to the entirety of the important work being performed together during the relationship. Such well-established relationships may muddy the waters for specific project reflection; however, they demonstrate the resolution of the "unnecessary dichotomy" between universities and

communities.

Membership in Communities of Trust

BFS university fellows expressed confidence in building community with each other—"like-minded scholars" at their university—but desired how-to instruction on building relationships with individuals and communities outside the university. This difference in approaches to relationship building also contributes to the difficulty in resolving ethical tensions in university–community partnerships with varied power dynamics. Exploring the university as a community can inspire academics in the *undoing* process and support the inquiry guiding this rethinking: Can we remake public institutions of higher education through community engagement in the field?

Universities are rarely regarded as communities in this context, though academics are professionally socialized into a larger academic community. McMillan and Chavis's (1986) definition of *membership* provides a lens for understanding the academic community orientation. "Membership" is defined as "a feeling that one has invested oneself to become a member and therefore has a right to belong" (p. 9). This definition matches the academic experience of investment into this professional orientation and earning the right to membership in the academy, as well as the social status conferred upon this group as society's experts. Relatedly, BFS university fellows named "ego-checking" as one of the most important insights they gained from the summer institute panels (Mahdi, 2021c).

This context of community membership as an earned right supports our understanding of the paradigm in which academics have been trained, which may influence the way they approach relationship building. Given their socialization to the academic arrangement of time based on benchmarks of learning and achievement, academics may be approaching community relationships using the logic of achievement and earning awards within academia. For example, BFS evaluation results showed that fellows wished for instruction on how to initiate and maintain trusting relationships with community partners. Given the historical exploitation of less powerful communities by universities, the idea of earning the trust of a community perceived to be less powerful seems to be a heavy one. However, the predisposition toward instructions for gaining someone's trust may be straying from our path of proper ethics in publicly engaged work. An "undoing," then, must address the fallacy of asking "What must I do to earn the award of membership and trust?" Like informed consent, trust is also an ongoing process.

Examination of the differences between having membership and being "of the community" can facilitate a shift in perspective as members of academic communities explore their positionality in an off-campus partnership. Mahdi's (2018) case study of the Go-Go cultural community (predominantly localized to the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area) provided evidence that neither the membership construct nor expectations of trust are relevant in all types of communities. Participants in this study rejected the term "membership," regarding it as an indication of exclusionary attitudes, and they denied any expectation of trust between community members. Qualitative analysis revealed a pattern that Mahdi termed "being of the community." She defined this construct as embodying "a personal, interactive knowledge and experience of the community such that one is recognizable as a community member" (p. 97). Where "membership" is a feeling one *has*, tied to earning and investment, "of the community" is something a person *is* because the community knows it to be true. When it comes to being of the community, community is as community does, and *we* know who *we* are. Instead of the boundary-regulated, in or out membership model, being of the community operates by levels, with a core community allowing the capacity for both supportive and potential community members.

The focus here is on recognition of shared personal experiences within the community's common history and culture. Specifically, all are welcome as community if they demonstrate love and support to the core community. It was important for the BFS team to include scholars and local partners who show up in and with communities in Baltimore to support communities' rights—outside university-based opportunities and funding. In other words, these leaders are recognizable as community members, independent of the university–community arrangement, because of the personal experiences they have shared with others, most notably relationship building and support. Being of the community,

with its deemphasis on trying to earn trust and emphasis on shared experiences with actions of love and support, is another potential path to resolving the unnecessary dichotomy of university and community in these types of partnerships.

Conclusion and Takeaways: "We Are the Field"

> Having access to the campus a little more. The university is a resource in itself. . . . I think just having other departments or students with other skills . . . having other experts . . . of the university that can assist and provide either services, skill sets, or equipment. And maybe some of that can be done in the pre-production if we plan it out, just considering some of the needs of the project.—Curtis Eaddy (P2), Southwest Partnership (Mahdi, 2021b)

At the outset of the project, Jackson (P1) and Eaddy (P2) named concrete actions that university-based partners could take to "serve the community" with their organizations. Their asks, as conveyed in the pre-evaluation, were not in the spirit of "You must do this so that we will trust you." They communicated their goals in the name of service as in, "This is what we do for our communities. You are welcome to contribute."

In fall 2021 and at the request of representatives from the nonprofit news organization The Real News Network (TRNN), BFS team leaders met with the head of the university's Special Collections archives to discuss the acquisition of the To Say Their Own Word series of films recorded in 1980 with funding from the National Endowment of the Humanities (NEH) orchestrated by Eddie Conway, a Baltimore Black Panther who had been incarcerated at the time. The series consisted of approximately 40 VHS tapes that documented an educational outreach program for people incarcerated in the Maryland Penitentiary. Prisoners came together with outside organizers and academics to discuss salient themes like the prison industrial complex, capitalism, and surveillance. During our meeting back in 2021, Conway, a TRNN producer, established his interest in partnering with university faculty and students to develop programming using the archive. "I just wish there was money to pay us to do this," said Conway, lamenting the dearth of funding to support these important, community-led initiatives. Conway's concern links directly with feedback from Jackson (P1) and Eaddy (P2). We know this work already exists and is ongoing, yet how do we shift our objectives and adjust our resources to offer support for the work?

In February 2022, the BFS project team was awarded an American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) Sustaining Public Engagement Grant (made possible through the NEH Sustaining the Humanities through the American Rescue Plan [SHARP] initiative) to support Baltimore Field School (BFS) 2.0: Undoing & Doing Anew in Public Humanities. With this funding, we expanded BFS into BFS 2.0 by inviting more Community Fellows—increasing the number from two to eight—to be a part of an extended planning process, offering more financial and institutional support for their ongoing work, and basing our programming modification on our extensive qualitative assessment. As quoted above, Eaddy (P2) also discussed the off-campus communities' lack of access to campus resources, including equipment, people, and skill sets, which was exacerbated by the virtual format that the COVID-19 crisis necessitated. Eaddy's (P2) feedback raises a question: Can universities offer the community tangible and equitable access to campus? For the 2022–2023 Community Fellows, we were able to offer university ID cards with all the benefits—library, technology, gym, transportation, and the like—that the institution provides its faculty, staff, and students.

Of note, the institution/university did not remember the revised language on ownership in the contracts, but the individuals in the project team did. This ethos of community ownership from the inaugural BFS contract issue became formalized (following some work by the project team) for BFS 2.0. The project team worked to create contract language that expressed community—not university—ownership of their intellectual property, data, and stories and to share that language publicly and widely.

BFS 2.0 aims to address concerns from our assessment by developing a paradigm of collaborative partnerships with a cohort of eight Community Fellows, supporting their ongoing work in Baltimore, adding staff to the faculty and graduate student university fellows, and continuing the evaluation process from the 2021 BFS project. Both Jackson

(P1) and Eaddy (P2) returned as two of the eight 2022–2023 Community Fellows.

Along with more time, space, and university access, we budgeted more compensation for our Community Fellows ($10,000 per fellow—from $4,000 in 2021) and doubled the compensation for our project evaluator to $10,000. The 2023 Community Fellows projects advance social justice issues focused on three core tracks: access to public information and research, food and land justice, and racial equity in Baltimore. Community Fellows include leaders from institutions like local nonprofit news publication the *Baltimore Beat*, food cooperatives like Mera Kitchen Collective, and housing justice projects like Baltimore Renters United.

We met with the Community Fellows throughout a year-long term to build from their expertise and design frameworks of equitable and ethical models for community-centered projects. We implement these frameworks with Showcases in the fall and spring semesters focused on the work of numerous Community Fellows. Showcases also encompass planning the next BFS summer institute, most recently with participation expanding to 11 junior faculty, graduate students, and, for the first time, university staff. Offering BFS as an opportunity to staff represents our growing commitment to institutional equity.

University-based BFS fellows received the same $3,000 compensation for a planning meeting in spring 2023 and for their participation in the week-long summer institute in July 2023, which was in person and in the field with Jackson (P1) in South Baltimore, Eaddy (P2) in West Baltimore, and various Community Fellows throughout the city. We integrated Community Fellows into the research and teaching of our Public Humanities program throughout the year. One of the university BFS fellows (an assistant professor) from 2021 is now the principal investigator for the ACLS SHARP grant, a step that presents a model of passing on the collaborative and shared sense of leadership in sustaining projects. Sustainable projects must be personality proof and collective. All of these choices are intentional and derive from our qualitative evaluation process and are invested in radical transparency on how projects are planned and executed.

We provide these final takeaways from the project and its evaluation and planning for the next stages with the caveat that one of the most important things we learned is that there is no one right way to perform community-engaged work; however, community partners and the assessment coordinator must be involved in planning and writing the grant. There are certainly unethical and extractive practices to avoid as well as an ethos of inclusion, equity, and community ownership to aspire toward; however, each project has its own context and shifting landscape. In addition, crises must be acknowledged as a central and ongoing part of the iterative process of publicly engaged work between communities and universities.

Here are our early-stage findings:

- The importance of building relationships is at the heart of ethical university and community partnerships, and those relationships begin with individuals and do not necessarily carry over to the institutions and organizations.
- Community partners must be consulted in the writing of the grant as well as the budget.
- As crises unveil, universities must shift objectives and adjust resources to support ongoing work and emergent demands.
- A self-reflexive evaluation and assessment process is essential at every stage of the process, and the evaluator must understand the nature of the project and its intellectual and practical goals. The evaluator should be a principal part of the project team from inception.
- Rethinking institutional time and space within crisis allows community-centered reflection that might begin to cross the boundaries and the limits imposed by neoliberal institutions. Working at the speed of the work means moving with the time and space of Community Fellows and pushing back against a rigid academic notion of semesters and university policies designed for faculty and students, not communities.
- Just like the concept of "the community," the concept of "the field" is constantly shifting. Any project should start with the project team defining their concepts on their

own terms and in their own words. For us, we expanded from an initial place-based definition to include a human-centered understanding of "the field."

- Radical transparency can also involve a form of translucency, meaning that the individual level is where connections happen in relationship building, but sometimes the individual should disappear into the collective, into the work (*Baltimore School: Translucency Manifesto*, 2019).
- Finally, we must work to address and undo the harms of the past—such as universities as agents of gentrification and extractive research practices—and ongoing harm. We must realize that failures are often based on attempts to "do good" or "help" and shift not only our intentions but the very structures and reward systems in our institutions.

In "The Creative Process" James Baldwin wrote that the artist "must drive to the heart of every answer and expose the question the answer hides" (J. Baldwin, 1962/1998, p. 670). We came up with many important questions collaborating on the 2021 and 2023 BFS. We took into account the evaluator's recommendations and designed BFS 2.0 with an extended timeline to enable deeper relationship building, with participants actually doing the work to achieve the partner organizations' goals, and in continued dialogue with partners. Rethinking institutional time and space should be part of the undoing and doing anew.

This intentionality and transparency/translucency fosters collaboration, trust, and mutual benefit between university and nonuniversity communities to promote a strong and sustainable infrastructure of engagement—one that begins to cross the boundaries and the limits imposed by neoliberal institutions—both inside and outside academia. We must adjust frames and maneuver resources to better respond to ongoing projects and crises.

During the BFS 2.0 Spring Showcase on Wednesday, April 26, 2023, at TRNN—a nonprofit media organization and partner—we featured the To Say Their Own Word archive. This public archive project was a partnership between Community Fellows Eddie Conway and Cameron Granadino of TRNN and University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) Special Collections. Conway passed away on February 13, 2023. The Spring Showcase became a tribute to Conway. Our fellows along with Conway's TRNN colleagues, wife Dominique Conway, and close friend Paul Coates, reflected on his lifelong fight for social justice in various communities. In the words of Community Fellow Cameron Granadino, the To Say Their Own Word project is "really about how political prisoners inspire people to organize in the community" (Mahdi, 2023, p. 27). The archive is one small part of the legacy of humanity Conway leaves behind to inform and inspire future generations of organizers.

TRNN published a piece, "Eddie Conway (1946–2023): Remembering the Life and Struggle of a Beloved Comrade and Former Political Prisoner," which explains that Eddie organized the NEH-funded To Say Their Own Word seminar program in the 1980s while incarcerated in the Maryland Penitentiary as a way to cross-pollinate radical thought inside and outside the prison (TRNN, 2023). Throughout BFS 2.0, the university partnered with TRNN Community Fellows to digitize and archive VHS videos from this monumental program in our Special Collections so the public can engage with these materials for generations to come—freely and without charge. The humanities are public when they serve everyone and no one—meaning they are collective and not about individual credit (King, 2021). As Eddie Conway wrote in his autobiography, published in 2011:

> Organizing is my life's work, and even though I initially balked at becoming a prison organizer, that is where most of my work has been done. Friends and family tell me that I have influenced hundreds of young people, but I don't know. I simply see the error of this society's ways up close and feel compelled to do something about it; I have tried my hardest to avoid getting caught up in the cult of the personality that often develops around political prisoners. I have walked the prison yard and seen admiration in the eyes of others, but had to remind myself, as I straightened my posture, that it is about something bigger than me. (Conway & Stevenson, 2011, quoted in TRNN, 2023, para. 8).

Conway called on us all to engage in community organizing in whatever form we can and to embrace our humanity and the humanity of others. "Do your little part. Do whatever you can to help change these conditions. Because we're moving into a critical period of history, not just for poor and oppressed people, Black people, but for humanity itself," he explained in 2019 while celebrating 5 years of freedom. "So you need to engage. Do whatever little bit you can, but you need to do something" (TRNN, 2023, para. 1).

We are the field, and we need to reclaim that time, space, and investment. *The field is us.*

Author Note

Baltimore Traces has IRB approval. The BFS partners signed partnership agreements, and the project uses Creative Commons agreements to make information publicly available.

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Translational Research Approaches in Land-Grant Institutions: A Case Study of the REDI Movement

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Abstract

In this case study we explore the concept of translational research: specifically, how common tools were employed in the context of the translational research process to design and implement a formal intervention to address racism at the individual and structural level. This approach to translational research focuses on the implementation of evidence-based interventions to address issues in communities, schools, and other organizations and is ideally suited to support researchers and practitioners in the nation's land-grant institutions. We discuss the suitability of translational research as an approach to identifying and resolving issues and implications for training and day-to-day operations of translational research organizations. Finally, we point to the necessity of incorporating principles of equity and engagement in the translational research process.

Keywords: translational research, equity, program development

This case study summarizes a formal intervention designed to address racism. The context in which racism occurs is an important factor in understanding the story that follows. Violence perpetuated against Black people (Curtis et al., 2021; Sharif et al., 2021), the Black Lives Matter Movement (McCoy, 2020), and controversies over how racial history is taught in schools (Leonardo & Grubb, 2018) capture elements of the social and historical context of racism in the United States. What might be defined as a racial awakening is currently under way and provides language and space for associates of the organization that developed the intervention described in this article to explore historical and current issues directly related to racist practices. In addition, as one associate notes, the social isolation that went along with the COVID-19 quarantine promoted a feeling of "we're all in this together" that is creating the conditions for the broader organizational community to understand their own personal experiences related to racism and the experiences of their colleagues.

Racism might be thought of as prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed toward people based on race (National Education Association, 2021; Shiao & Woody, 2021). It is clear that racism is a complex construct composed of multiple social phenomena (Harro, 2000a, 2000b; Shiao & Woody, 2021). In a broad review of the sociological literature, Shiao and Woody suggested that racism has historically been conceptualized in terms of four constructs: (1) individual attitudes, (2) cultural schema, (3) the dominance of specific racial groups, and (4) systems that maintain racial dominance. In this case study, racism is viewed from two different vantage points: individual attitudes and actions (individual level) and norms, laws, practices, and policies that tend to perpetuate racism (structural level).

Given the strong connection between racism and health and well-being (American Public Health Association, 2021; Villarosa, 2022), efforts must be undertaken to conduct meaningful research and, ultimately, achieve outcomes that effectively reduce racist practices. Algeria and O'Malley (2022) provided an illuminating discussion of the intricacies inherent in research aimed at establishing causal relationships between

intervention and the reduction of inequality. According to Algeria and O'Malley, designing and carrying out studies of causal mechanisms are problematic due to conceptual issues, the role of the environment in shaping outcomes, and confounding factors present in complex systems. Of course, the inability to establish causal mechanisms can also be seen as limiting the effectiveness of efforts to ameliorate racism through formal interventions.

Questions on how to effectively address issues related to racial justice have particular relevance to Cooperative Extension and the nation's land-grant institutions. Throughout its history, the Cooperative Extension Service, like many other institutions, has operated in ways that perpetuated racism (Harris, 2008). Gavazzi (2020) summarized the historical mission of land-grant institutions as focused on teaching, conducting research, and providing services to local communities. However, Gavazzi noted that in the 21st century, land-grant institutions must fill the role of "servant universities" and put more emphasis on providing for the development and well-being of local communities (Gavazzi, 2020; Gavazzi & Gee, 2018).

There may be no other imperative more relevant to health and well-being than addressing racism in all its forms. This case study describes aspects of the translational research process and specific tools that may be useful to researchers and practitioners situated in land-grant institutions and, more specifically, to researchers and practitioners intent on addressing racism. This case study also provides a description of how research-based knowledge and tools are being used to address the critical issue of racism through the implementation of an intervention referred to as the Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) Movement. Here, an intervention is defined as an intended, planned, and targeted operation relevant to a setting or group of people with the aim of removing or preventing an undesirable phenomenon (Loss, 2008). The REDI Movement is currently being implemented in a translational research center located at a research-intensive university in the Midwestern United States (hereafter referred to as the Center).

Translational Research Defined

Translational research is generally defined as a process for moving scientific innovations into routine use to promote health and well-being (McCartland-Rubio et al., 2010; Woolf, 2008). Abernethy and Wheeler (2011) defined translational research in terms of three distinct activities: (1) research and development, (2) translation or implementation, and (3) policy development. Research and development often yield new insights and/or evidence-based interventions. In addition, theory and research constitute a body of knowledge that can be drawn upon to develop interventions tailored to specific issues and situations. *Translation* or *implementation* refers to the procedures necessary to use evidence-based interventions or practices to effectively address identified issues in specific settings (Wilson et al., 2011). Policy development focuses on the widespread uptake of innovations across multiple jurisdictions.

Development of the Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) Movement

In June 2020, the college in which the Center is located issued a call to action focused on racial equity and social justice that emphasized organization, self-reflection, and engagement in hopes of transforming the communities in which we live and work. REDI emerged from this call to action. The REDI vision states that individuals, organizations, and other societal institutions will make racial equity a day-to-day priority, resulting in settings that are inclusive, safe, and welcoming and where White privilege is acknowledged and has no negative influence on how individuals of color fare. The developers of REDI decided to start with a focus on Black people. This approach was based on the premise that effectively addressing equity for Black people would ultimately result in the enhanced experience of equity for other marginalized populations. It was also anticipated that the evolution of REDI as implemented to address the Black experience would better position the Center to address the unique concerns of other marginalized populations in future versions of REDI.

The Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Steering Team

REDI is managed by a formal Steering Team. The primary purpose of the Steering Team is to develop, implement, and evaluate responses consistent with the REDI vision. The Steering Team aspires to operate at the invitation of and on behalf of the Center's

organizational community (all 50+ associates and students, and affiliated faculty) and intentionally centers and amplifies the voices of community members who have lived experiences of racism, minoritization, and/or marginalization. The REDI Steering Team is an initiative of the Center's Senior Leadership Team and currently consists of 18 Center associates (14 females, four males; three who are White, three who are Black, one who is Asian, and one who is of Pakistani descent). The Center's Senior Leadership Team consists of the director, two associate directors, and the finance and human resources managers.

Procedures

Julian et al. (2021) proposed a "translation forward" approach to translational research. This approach places preeminent emphasis on partnering with interested parties to identify and address a specific issue in a specific location or setting. Julian and colleagues further advocated for the use of the rational planning model (Alexander, 1984; Allmendinger, 2009) as a methodology to support the process of translation. The rational planning model includes several steps: (1) issue identification, (2) consideration of alternative solutions, (3) solution selection, (4) solution implementation, and (5) evaluation. Table 1 and the following paragraphs describe the process of translation as it is practiced at the Center and several foundational tools that support the development and implementation of the REDI Movement.

As indicated in Table 1, movement through the steps in the process of translation (see top row in Table 1) is associated with the application of several distinct tools. Description of the use of this array of tools provides a concrete illustration of what Julian and Ross (2013) referred to as managing the issue resolution process. Julian and Ross defined managing the issue resolution process as initiating appropriate procedures at the appropriate time, fostering relevant

Table 1. The Process of Translation and Selected Translational Research Tools

Tool	Steps in the process of translation				
	Issue identification	Consideration of alternative solutions	Solution selection	Implementation	Evaluation
Facilitated group process	X	X	X	X	X
Project charter	X	X	X	X	
Outcomes template	X	X	X	X	X
Research-based knowledge		X	X		X
Theory of change			X	X	X
Logic model				X	X
Intervention protocol				X	
Work breakdown structure				X	
Work plan				X	
Process improvement planning					X

Note. "X" denotes tool used to support specific step in translational research process.

role-related behaviors, and applying appropriate tools in the appropriate sequence to achieve desired outcomes. The process of translation, as defined by the steps in the rational planning model, provides a scaffolding on which to optimize the use of a variety of tools to support translational research.

Step 1. Issue Identification

A variety of practical and scholarly resources define issue identification (Alexander, 1984; Allmendinger, 2009). Defining an issue implies a set of circumstances or conditions that have been judged unacceptable (Bradshaw, 1972). Issue identification requires clearly stating circumstances, timing, and specific behavior(s) that make observed conditions problematic. The REDI vision statement, noted previously, indicates conditions that represented Center associates' views concerning an issue that warranted attention. The issue statement guiding the development and implementation of the REDI Movement indicated associates' desire to promote antiracism in the Center's operations and business practices. Translational researchers at the Center utilized three primary tools to support issue identification: (1) facilitated group process, (2) outcomes template, and (3) project charter.

A facilitated group process was utilized to develop the REDI Movement vision statement and various descriptions of the issue to be addressed. A subset of Center associates who elected to participate in the REDI Movement formed a Steering Team and engaged in a facilitated process to develop and implement REDI. The Steering Team met once a week in the early stages of REDI development and somewhat less frequently later in the process. The facilitation task was undertaken by various translational research professionals who were, themselves, Center associates. With important modifications, the facilitation process was consistent with recommended procedures designed to facilitate the group process (see Center for Community Health and Development, n.d.; Schwarz, 2002). For example, facilitation was guided by "rules of engagement." Rules of engagement emphasized the identification of microaggressions and facilitator actions to address such transgressions.

The outcomes template was utilized to develop several measurable outcomes (see Chinnman et al., 2004 for a similar treatment of outcomes). The outcomes template poses several fundamental questions that provide a basis for developing a specific and measurable outcome:

1. What intent will be achieved?
2. Who/what will change?
3. Where or in what location will desired change occur?
4. What indicator(s) will be used to judge if change has occurred?
5. What must be observed relative to identified indicators to conclude that desired change has occurred?
6. What is the time-period over which desired change will occur?

Outcomes connected to the REDI intervention evolved over time and encompassed change at the individual, organizational, and structural levels. Finally, a tool referred to as the project charter was employed to capture the purpose of initiating the REDI Movement as a Center priority. The project charter authorized the existence of a project and provided the project manager (in this case, the REDI Steering Team) with authority to apply organizational resources to project activities (Project Management Institute, 2013). The project charter also included a statement of the issue to be addressed, outcomes to be achieved, and descriptive information related to the intervention(s). In the case of the REDI Movement, the project charter existed as an agreement between Center leadership and the Steering Team.

Step 2. Consideration of Alternative Solutions

The second step in the process of translation focused on identifying various alternative solutions or approaches to addressing individual and structural racism. Translational research professionals utilized four primary tools to support this step: (1) facilitated group process, (2) project charter, (3) outcomes template, and (4) research-based knowledge. The use of the first three tools has been described. However, it is essential to note that the products associated with the use of these tools evolved based on insights that developed during Step 2 activities. Generally, products developed early in the translational research process evolved and ultimately supported subsequent steps in the process.

The body of knowledge reflecting best prac-

tices related to interventions to address racism represented the primary tool used to support the consideration of alternative solutions. Understanding of the evidence related to racial justice interventions subsumed several distinct bodies of theory and research: (1) human rights, access, equity, and participation; (2) the social ecology of racism; (3) exposure and development of connections or social ties between White and Black individuals; (4) allyship and skill building related to intervening in situations where racism occurs; (5) enhanced individual readiness to address racism; (6) enhanced community/group readiness to address racism; and (7) procedures designed to correct norms, practices, and policies that perpetuate racism.

Human Rights, Access, Equity, and Participation

The principle of human rights acknowledges that a fair and just society validates, protects, and defends the basic rights that are inherent to all people and should be granted without discrimination (UNICEF Finland, 2015). This principle also requires that a government be held accountable when these rights are violated; it has relevance for both individual and structural level interventions. The principle of access refers to the provision of critical services and resources (i.e., food, shelter, health care, education) to all people regardless of socioeconomic status, race, gender, sexuality, or other social identities (Fouad et al., 2006; Storms, 2012). The principle of access requires that the cycle of marginalization be disrupted by intentionally providing equitable access to the resources that directly influence one's quality of life (Cook, 1990). The principle of equity acknowledges the reality of diversity such that different people have different needs and thus require resources that are responsive to those needs (Storms, 2012). Finally, the principle of participation refers to the inclusion of all voices in decision-making and prioritizing the voices of those with lived experience (Toporek & Williams, 2006). For participation to occur, those in positions of power must remove barriers, increase access, and create intentional spaces for the equitable inclusion of the voices and perspectives of marginalized groups.

The Social Ecology of Racism: Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, and Structural Levels

The social–ecological model (Guy-Evans, 2020; Kelly et al., 2000) suggests several levels of influence relevant to addressing racism and issues related to equity, diversity, and inclusion. These levels of influence range from the microsystem to the mesosystem to the exosystem to the macrosystem. The microsystem is composed of elements that encapsulate the individual. The mesosystem is reflected in interactions between elements of the microsystem, whereas the exosystem is composed of elements that indirectly influence the individual, such as mass media and the political environment. Finally, the macrosystem focuses on interactions between the individual and the immediate environment and encompasses social and cultural elements. Harro (2000a, 2000b) captured the notion of levels of influence in what is referred to as the "cycle of socialization" and suggested that we are all unwittingly socialized to operate in a racist culture.

Harro (2000a, 2000b) further contended that our racist actions are perpetuated through a highly complex and largely invisible set of forces and rewards that work to maintain the status quo. According to Harro, these forces and reward systems operate within and between individuals and are reinforced by the policies and practices of institutions and society in general. Harro defined the intrapersonal level as what people believe about themselves and the interpersonal in terms of how we view others and see the world. Harro defined the institutional or structural level in terms of structures, assumptions, philosophies, and, most importantly, the rules, norms, procedures, and roles that dictate behavior. The forces identified by Harro are embedded in the social ecology of modern western cultures. Thus, an intervention designed to address racism and racial justice must focus on altering the social ecology as it pertains to the individual and structural levels.

Exposure and Development of Connections or Social Ties

The "contact hypothesis" (Emerson et al., 2002) represents a critical theoretical perspective that may have significant bearing on the provision of interventions associated with the REDI Movement. The contact hypothesis states that face-to-face interaction and the formation of connections or social ties lead to positive intergroup attitudes (Laurence, 2014). A meta-analysis by Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) found that interaction tended to have a positive effect on

intergroup attitudes. According to Laurence, the contact hypothesis stipulates that interethnic ties are the behavioral mechanism that accounts for positive impacts on attitudes. Furthermore, the link between attitudes and behavior is well established (Glasman & Albarracín, 2006). This line of reasoning suggests that through exposure, individuals become more aware of the Black experience and their own implicit bias. This awareness and development of connections or social ties sets the stage for learning and predisposes individuals to effectively intervene in instances where racist behaviors are observed.

Allyship and Skill Building

Allyship can be described as a process that focuses on acknowledging the limitations of one's knowledge about other people's experiences and is built on the notion of deliberate action. Allies build relationships with members of marginalized communities and are prepared to confront systemic oppression. Allies take on the responsibility to address oppression as their own and transfer the benefits of their privilege to those from whom it has been withheld (Campt, 2018). Allyship is thus conceived as a set of skills related to confronting inequality, inequity, and oppression; shifting power and influence to those with lived experience; functioning in a manner supportive of marginalized groups; completing the individual work necessary to be aware of and mitigate implicit bias; and taking responsibility for addressing racism in all its forms.

Enhanced Individual Readiness to Address Racism

The transtheoretical model (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997) focuses on decision-making and change at the individual level and has historically been used as a model to understand health-related behavior. However, the basic premise on which this theory is based may have application to individual level change relative to a much more comprehensive range of issues (Xiao et al., 2004). The transtheoretical model operates based on the notion that people do not change behaviors quickly or decisively. According to this model, change in behavior occurs due to movement through six stages: (1) precontemplation, (2) contemplation, (3) preparation, (4) action, (5) maintenance, and (6) termination. Movement through these steps might be conceptualized as enhancing "readiness" for change.

In the precontemplation stage, people have no intention of taking action in the near term. In this stage, people are often unaware that their behavior is problematic or produces negative consequences for themselves or others. In the contemplation stage, people intend to start new behavior(s) and recognize that their behavior may be problematic. In the preparation stage, people are prepared to take small steps toward behavior change. In the action stage, people have changed their behavior and intend to maintain the change. In the maintenance stage, people have sustained their behavior change for a significant period, and in the termination stage, people have no desire to return to their past behaviors.

Community or Group Level Readiness to Address Racism

The stages of community readiness model (Oetting et al., 1995) provides a framework for considering community or group level readiness. Originally developed to address a variety of public health issues, the community readiness model is widely cited as a mechanism for understanding how communities or groups progress through formal stages to address various health and well-being issues. Similar to the transtheoretical model, stages of community readiness can be interpreted in terms of movement on the part of community members from low levels of awareness and intention to act to higher levels. According to the community readiness model, communities progress through nine stages of readiness.

These stages include (1) no awareness of a particular issue; (2) denial or resistance to the idea of the status quo as an issue; (3) vague awareness of the issue as problematic; (4) preplanning or the sense that the issue is problematic; (5) preparation or a growing group awareness of the issue; (6) agreement that the issue is problematic and acknowledgment that the group is responsible for taking action; (7) stabilization characterized by active group engagement and ongoing investment of resources; (8) widespread agreement about the importance of the issue; and, finally, (9) ownership where group members have detailed and comprehensive knowledge, evaluation is under way, and diversified investment of resources has occurred.

Identification and Action to Address Community or Group Level Racism

Theory and research also point to several general principles or guidelines germane to developing and implementing group level interventions aimed at reducing structural racism. Several reviewers have started with a focus on education and awareness (Shim, 2020). According to this body of knowledge, awareness appears to be a fundamental precursor to action. Assuming group or community readiness, Bailey et al. (2017) suggested that insights derived from a systems perspective might be helpful in addressing structural level racism. These authors pointed out that system level interventions must cross multiple subsystems (see social ecology of racism) and disrupt leverage points through the application of "focused, external force."

Building on ideas proposed by Meadows (1999), Abson et al. (2017) defined leverage points as places in complex systems where a slight shift might lead to fundamental changes in the system as a whole. Abson et al. suggested that efforts to promote change too often focus on weak leverage points that have little potential to address the root causes of critical societal issues. Policy development and implementation are identified as powerful tools for acting on leverage points (Shim, 2020). A policy can be thought of as a law, regulation, procedure, administrative action, incentive, or voluntary action that advances goal-related behavior (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022). For example, policies that result in a more equal distribution of power may significantly reduce group level racism (Shim, 2020). Finally, accountability to outcomes also appears to be a fundamental principle associated with efforts to address group level racism (Shim, 2020). Table 2 provides an overview of the research-based guidelines that provide a foundation for the continued development and implementation of the REDI Movement.

Step 3. Solution Selection

Selecting a solution was the third step in the process of translation. Solution selection signified that a formal response to an identified issue was selected and ultimately implemented. As indicated in Table 1, several tools were employed to support the selection of solutions to address racism at the Center: (1) facilitated group process, (2) project charter, (3) outcomes template,

Table 2. Research-Based Principles on Which the REDI Movement Is Based

Guidelines consistent with research-based knowledge
Effective intervention to address racial justice should be based on underlying principles of human rights, access, equity, and participation.
Effective intervention should address multiple ecological levels (individual and structural).
Effective intervention should focus on individual level change, not as a precursor to structural level change, but as a potential accelerant.
Effective intervention should enhance awareness of the personal experience of racism.
Effective intervention should seek to increase contact and social ties between relevant groups.
Effective intervention should promote self-awareness relative to the propagation of racism.
Effective intervention should elucidate factual information and educate relevant individuals.
Effective intervention should build allyship skills and normalize confrontation.
Effective intervention should be promoted by outside force(s).
Effective intervention hinges on the development and implementation of policies that act as system levers.

(4) research-based knowledge, and (5) development of a theory of change. As in previous steps, the project charter, articulation of outcomes, and understanding of the research-based knowledge evolved as the project proceeded. A theory of change represented a primary tool utilized in Step 3. Of course, the facilitated group process served as a vehicle for developing REDI's theory of change. Serrat (2017) suggested that a theory of change is a highly elaborate model that presents a strategic picture of multiple interventions aimed at producing early and intermediate outcomes that ultimately lead to desired long-term change.

Step 4. Implementation

Implementation was the fourth step in the process of translation. Implementation focused on promoting the routine use of and/or initiating the specific steps to employ evidence-based tools supporting REDI (Bauer et al., 2015). As indicated in Table 1, several tools were employed to support the implementation of REDI: (1) facilitated group process, (2) project charter, (3) outcomes template, (4) theory of change, (5) logic models, (6) intervention protocol, (7) work breakdown structure, and (8) work plans. As in previous steps, the project charter, outcomes, and theory of change evolved as insights accrued. Logic models, work breakdown structure, intervention protocols, and work plans were the primary tools that supported the implementation of the REDI Movement.

The logic model provided a systematic and visual way to present and share the understanding of relationships among resources (human, financial, organizational, and community) and how those resources were used to achieve desired outcomes (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 1998). Separate logic models were developed for most of the components of the REDI Movement indicated in Table 2. Such models specified linkages between actions and desired outcomes. The primary value in such models was the degree to which assumptions about linkages were reviewed and tested based on available knowledge and experience. The articulation of the assumptions contained in the project logic model and the description of how the REDI intervention was to be provided in narrative form was referred to as an "intervention protocol." As indicated previously, individual logic models were combined to produce a comprehensive theory of change. According to the Project Management Institute (2013), a work breakdown structure is a hierarchical decomposition of a scope of work carried out by team members necessary to accomplish project objectives. Work breakdown structure often corresponds to the parts of an intervention as defined by a logic model. Center associates use a variation of the Project Management Institute approach where the REDI scope of work is broken down into projects (components of REDI indicated in Table 2); projects are broken down into products (specific and tangible elements such as meetings, documents, events, results, services, etc.), and products are broken down into work tasks (the steps necessary to produce a product). Work tasks are summarized in a work plan. A work plan is commonly described as a schedule of work tasks and responsibilities (Leonard, 2018). The Center's work plan format specifies a set of work tasks, associates responsible for each task, and the projected date when each task will be completed.

Step 5. Useful Evaluation

Evaluation was the final step in the process of translation. Evaluation was described as systematic inquiry focused on the activities, characteristics, and results of programs, policies, or other forms of intervention to make judgments, improve effectiveness, and inform decisions (Patton, 2008). As indicated in Table 1, several tools were employed to support the evaluation of the REDI Movement: (1) facilitated group process, (2) outcomes template, (3) research-based knowledge, (4) theory of change, (5) logic models for each component of the REDI Movement, and (6) process improvement planning. As in previous steps, outcomes, the research-based knowledge supporting the development of REDI, the theory of change, and logic models depicting the components of REDI evolved as the implementation of project activities moved forward. Process improvement planning represented a primary tool that supported the evaluation of the REDI movement.

Process improvement planning was based in a quality assurance/total quality management philosophy. Quality assurance activities focused on the continual improvement of products or services based on customer or user satisfaction and relied on the understanding of systems of production, strategic planning, process improvement, and data as a driving force in decision-making (Ahire

et al., 1995). Members of the REDI Steering Team reviewed evaluation data and reflected on their own experiences on a regular basis. To date, most data have been derived from qualitative assessments of experiences and short questionnaires completed by participants in the REDI Movement.

For example, on two occasions, brief non-scientific surveys indicated that respondents felt the time they invested in REDI activities was manageable; participation in REDI was "very," "somewhat," or "extremely" impactful; and feedback received from their colleagues was positive. In addition, respondents said participation in REDI increased their awareness, reduced stereotypical thinking, and increased their commitment to racial justice. Such information was used on an ongoing basis to assess and modify component parts of REDI. Finally, over the last 12 months, Steering Team members began planning a more formal evaluation of the REDI Movement, which was slated for launch in 2023.

Results

Components of the REDI Movement

As indicated in Table 3, Steering Team members selected several specific components to address individual and structural racism. In July 2020, the Center began offering monthly professional development sessions designed to increase individual associates' awareness of how racial injustice manifests itself and to create opportunities for associates to increase their readiness for change. Optional book-study sessions focused on recent titles related to racism were patterned after a book club and offered to White associates. Short "centering Blackness" experiences were intended to build associates' awareness and reduce stereotypical thinking. White affinity groups provided safe, constructive, and productive spaces to engage in difficult conversations and supported ongoing dialogue to enhance awareness of the Black experience. White affinity group members also engaged in a seven-session series designed to support

Table 3. Components of the REDI Movement

Component	Level of intervention	Description
Professional development sessions*	Individual and/or structural	Formal information programs provided via face-to-face interaction
Book study	Individual and/or structural	Book club style review of recent titles focused on relevant topics
Centering Blackness experiences*	Individual	Video clips and explanation illustrating the Black experience of racism conducted by Black associates for White associates
White affinity groups*	Individual	Meetings where White associates could build knowledge, skills, and confidence in their role as allies
Black affinity groups	Individual	Meetings where Black associates could seek support and/or restore themselves
Critical allies groups	Individual	Cross-racial groups where experiences could be shared and discussed
Getting REDI curriculum	Individual	Curriculum composed of readings, self-assessment, and procedures for developing an individualized learning plan
Team equity inventory & organizational planning	Structural	Formal process for developing and implementing policies to address structural racism

**Core REDI component.* Participating in REDI requires some level of participation in these three core REDI components. Other components are viewed as enhancements to core components. Change at the structural level requires the implementation of the team equity inventory and organizational planning process.

associates' efforts to operationalize allyship and increase associates' sense of competence and confidence in applying allyship skills to address racism in all its forms.

Black affinity group meetings serve as a space for Black associates to restore themselves, support each other, and build consensus relevant to their roles as leaders and participants in the REDI Movement. Critical allies groups provided cross-racial opportunities to dialogue with colleagues about how associates might mitigate the role of race in organizational practices and policies. These groups also identified strategies for how Center associates might impact systems by leveraging their privilege. Steering Team members also designed a curriculum called Getting REDI that includes self-assessments and informational modules that engage REDI Movement participants in ongoing and sustained personal and professional development. Finally, the team equity inventory and the associated organizational planning process are designed to support the Center's program areas in prioritizing and implementing practices and policies to address structural racism.

This case study describes programming aimed at addressing racial/social justice that resulted from the application of a translation-forward approach to translational research. It is important to note that recent criticism suggests that many initiatives that claim to address equity and engagement may be less effective than thought (Zheng, 2022). In a recent review, Ding and Riccucci (2022) indicated that empirical evidence suggests mixed results and pointed out that, if not managed effectively, such interventions can be counterproductive. The REDI Movement is based on a comprehensive review of relevant literatures and decades of research related to effective intervention. More specifically, use of the translational research process, as a means of development and implementation, ensures that as new evidence accumulates it will be incorporated in futures versions of REDI.

Discussion

The mission of Cooperative Extension located in land-grant universities focuses on disseminating knowledge and promoting the identification and resolution of critical community issues (Gavazzi, 2020; Gavazzi & Gee, 2018). The discussion summarized in this case study has several important implications. First, this discussion suggests that the translational research framework is a viable model to support the mission of land-grant institutions. Second, this discussion suggests specific roles for practitioners and researchers in these institutions. Finally, we suggest that principles of equity and engagement are integral to the translational research process. The following paragraphs briefly explore each of these implications.

Translational Research as a Viable Issue Resolution Process

The Abernethy and Wheeler (2011) conception of translational research has three distinct components: research and development focused on knowledge generation; translation focused on the implementation of evidence-based practices in a specific setting or settings; and policy development focused on uptake of evidence-based practices and interventions across multiple jurisdictions. Julian et al. (2021) presented a conception of a translation forward, translational research process that may have significant potential as a model for addressing complex issues in communities across the United States. This potential is illustrated by our review of the process of translation used to develop and manage the implementation of the REDI Movement in a university-based translational research center. We have described a five-step process: (1) issue identification, (2) consideration of alternative solutions, (3) solution selection, (4) implementation, and (5) evaluation. We have also described how an array of commonly used planning and evaluation tools have relevance to the translational research process. We suggest that translational research is a viable approach to identifying and addressing significant issues in communities, schools, and other organizations.

The Role of University-Based Personnel

We also argue that the translational research process provides a viable mechanism for addressing society's most pressing issues. This possibility has significant implications for the nation's land-grant institutions and university-based personnel engaged in translational research. The translational research model proposed by Abernethy and Wheeler (2011) implies that translational research professionals must be competent researchers, implementation specialists, and policy professionals. Recognized bodies of knowledge and skills are associated with each of these activities. It is unlikely that any one individual will be proficient in all

these areas. Thus, translational research professionals are more likely to be successful to the extent that they are specialists in one of these processes and part of teams composed of multiple members with complementary specializations. This need for collaboration suggests that units such as Cooperative Extension must employ individuals with various skills consistent with the brand of translational research described here. This argument also has significant relevance for training programs. Potential translational research professionals must have access to relevant training to develop the specialized skills noted above (i.e., use of the tools indicated in Table 1).

Equity and Engagement as a Foundation of Translational Research

We suggest that principles of equity and engagement must undergird all aspects of the translational research process. Principles of equity require a focus on outcomes and processes to ensure that diverse perspectives are represented in the issue resolution process. Procedures must also ensure that outcomes related to health, well-being, educational achievement, and economic prosperity are experienced equally by all population subgroups. This argument recognizes that current arrangements are inadequate to fully address health disparities and other community issues. In addition, practitioners must consider the processes employed to address societal issues. Such processes must be structured to accommodate diverse opinions and must shift power and authority to individuals who have experienced the very issues that society is trying to address. Thus, equity considerations must permeate all aspects of the translational research process.

Next Steps

It is accurate to portray REDI as in its early stages of development. Ongoing implementation in the Center is proceeding. In addition, nine other organizations are implementing major portions of REDI in a current project. Significant evaluation is under way both relative to the Center experience and in the nine organizations currently implementing REDI. Developers are already at work on modifications to the REDI Movement based on qualitative feedback. As empirical evaluation data are available, additional modifications may be considered. Developers envision a formal program of implementation and research relative to the effectiveness and efficacy of the REDI Movement. As research findings accumulate, efforts will be made to employ REDI in other settings.

This discussion supports the potential of university-based personnel located in the nation's land-grant and other institutions to address critical community issues. Management of the processes that result in the identification of issues and development of effective interventions is a long-standing role of university-based personnel. The three-component model of translational research (Abernethy & Wheeler, 2011) provides an approach to fulfilling this role. Research can be directed to developing viable responses to critical issues, translation to providing a mechanism for implementing such responses in specific settings, and policy development to implementing interventions across multiple jurisdictions. It is also clear that such procedures hold significant promise for improving quality of life and well-being to the extent that equity and social justice are underlying principles infused throughout the translational research process.

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Refugee-Background Youth Workers as Agents of Social Change: Building Bridging Relationships One Story at a Time

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Abstract

In the context of an established research–practice partnership with the Hope Resource Center, we piloted The Stories Project, a narrative inquiry study alongside refugee-background youth workers and U.S.-born community members. Our inquiry explored the process by which storytelling could be used to humanize and advocate for refugee-background youth in the United States. Data sources included interviews, dialogue session recordings, participant artifacts, and researcher memos. Findings centered the voices of refugee-background youth workers as they honored each other's unique perspectives and life experiences as well as recognized each other's shared humanity. Collectively, the youth workers identified the importance of being vulnerable, humanizing the refugee experience, and building advocacy as ways to promote social change.

Keywords: youth workers, refugee, storytelling, bridging relationships, social change

If you know how to learn about other cultures, people and what it is like, it kind of opens up your world and you get a wider perspective. It will help you in the long run.

—Pawan, Hope Resource Center young leader

Unprecedented global migrations are making schools and communities worldwide more culturally and linguistically diverse than ever before. However, anti(im)migrant and anti-refugee sentiments—promulgated through media and political rhetoric—are also on the rise. Currently, over 82.4 million people have been forcibly displaced worldwide (UNHCR, 2021). Of these 82.4 million people, 26.4 million have been granted official refugee status, and of those 26.4 million refugees, around half are under the age of 18. When forcibly displaced, people *have* to leave their homes due to extenuating circumstances that are putting their lives, and often family members' lives, at serious risk (M. M. Suárez-Orozco & Michikyan, 2016). Prior to the U.S. government's restrictions placed on (im)migration in 2017, close to 90,000 refugees resettled in the United States each year, but in 2019, the national number of refugees resettled in the U.S. dropped to just 30,000 (Refugee Processing Center, 2020; UNHCR, 2021). Under the current administration, the U.S. has begun welcoming more refugees into the country, a large number of whom are Afghani due to the U.S.'s withdrawal of military forces from Afghanistan in 2021 (Youssef & Lubold, 2021). And yet pervasive xenophobia and systemic marginalization of resettled refugees remain among the most pressing issues of the 21st century.

In Newtown, U.S.A. (pseudonym), a small city in the upper Midwest, over 15,000 former refugees who are superdiverse

(Vertovec, 2007, 2019), representing different ethnic groups from over 48 countries of origin and speaking over 40 different languages, now reside. A local grassroots, nonprofit, community-based organization, the Hope Resource Center or HRC (pseudonym), offers year-round, educational programming in Newton for "newcomers" (i.e., anyone who identifies as new to the community, regardless of [im] migration status). Since 2017, Carrie (one of the authors) has been co-constructing a research–practice partnership (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017) with the HRC. Together, we have been researching and developing innovative, community-based educational programming and instructional approaches to support refugee-background youths' social and academic well-being. This narrative inquiry sought to unpack the refugee-background youths' experiences with and pushback against xenophobia. Specifically, our inquiry explored the process by which storytelling could be used to challenge the negative perceptions of refugees in the United States according to refugee-background youth workers (Baldridge, 2018) at one of the HRC's summer youth camps.

In an effort to center the refugee-background youth workers' stories, to learn about who they were and their perspectives, our project—affectionately called The Stories Project by all involved, including researchers, HRC staff, and youth workers—was designed to run in tandem with the HRC's 2019 summer camp for newcomer youth in the Newtown community. Collectively, our intention in doing so was to create a designated and recurring time and space for the camp's refugee-background youth workers to reflect upon and dialogue about their experiences as mentors, to share stories from their past and present lived experiences, and to illuminate the vital role the youth workers and their stories could play in challenging the all-too-often negative perception of refugees in the U.S. today.

Conceptual Framework

We frame our argument around youth as agents of social change. Specifically, we theorize that social change, such as the challenging of systemic xenophobia and marginalization of refugees, can be accomplished through refugee-background youth workers' building bridging relationships with U.S.-born community members through telling stories. We discuss these three concepts—youth workers, bridging relationships, and storytelling—as they pertain to social change.

Youth Workers as Agents of Social Change

Although marginalization of (im)migrant-origin and refugee-background youth is particularly pronounced in U.S. schools (Bal & Arzubiaga, 2014; Bigelow, 2010; Nieto, 2016; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008), schools alone cannot sufficiently address this issue (Symons & Ponzio, 2019). Educators in community-based educational spaces, or youth workers (Baldridge, 2018), play a vital role in the lives and education of marginalized youth. Across settings in and out of schools, youth work is distinguished by its focus on the youth themselves and their lives rather than a particular institution's goals or standards (Fusco, 2012). As Baldridge (2018) argued, "youth workers are an essential component to the ideological and cultural practices of transformational learning with counterhegemonic community-based educational spaces" (p. 5). Through building meaningful relationships, youth workers are also agents of social change, as they can advocate for marginalized youth in educational, social, and familial spaces.

Free from school systems' constraints yet well aware of them, community-based youth workers can provide educational experiences that are culturally responsive, rigorous, and relevant for the youth themselves and the sociopolitical realities of their lives (Baldridge, 2018). By engaging youth in critical analyses of the historic and systemic marginalization of their own people in their communities, youth workers can support youth in understanding the sociopolitical contexts of the challenges they face and developing the necessary skills and knowledge to become leaders and agents of social change (Baldridge, 2018; Gutiérrez & Jurow, 2016). In communities of resettled refugees, in particular, youth workers in community organizations play a vital role in supporting the social, emotional, academic, vocational, and economic well-being of refugee-background youth and adults (Forrest & Brown, 2014; Mott, 2010; Shadduck-Hernández, 2006; Symons & Ponzio, 2019). Therefore, to create long-term, sustainable change, educators in and out of schools must work together, and *with* and *for* community members, to build a network of advocacy for (im)migrant and refugee-background youth and families.

Social Change Through Bridging Relationships

According to Dryden-Peterson (2010), "bridging relationships" among (im)migrant and U.S.-born community members are built not only by making an effort to have social contact with individuals of different backgrounds; they are built by developing deep relationships with mutual respect. These bridging relationships work to expand our identities by promoting critical perspectives, sharing stories, developing scholarship, and engaging in activism collaboratively. In fact, research has shown that intergroup dialogues with participants of diverse social identity groups promote perspective taking, changes in negative stereotypes about a particular group, critical consciousness about power structures and systemic inequities, and communication skills (Frantell et al., 2019). Such "interculturality" (Dervin, 2016) is a dynamic, human-centered process created by people of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds who build meaningful relationships with and among one another.

In order to achieve bridging relationships, the "oppressors" and the "oppressed" must work together to break down and build up knowledge (Freire, 1968/2003). Freire called this dialogic work—our collective calling to work in action and reflection toward humanization—the "people's vocation" (p. 43). True revolutionary work that leads toward bridging relationships, however, requires oppressors to work on educational projects *with*, not *for*, the oppressed. For Freire, performing this work means the oppressors must give up their own power and look to the oppressed for leadership and solidarity in an endeavor toward liberation. Building this meaningful bond between the oppressor and the oppressed, then, can develop youth workers in community-based spaces as "resistors and educators" (Baldridge, 2018, p. 5).

Storytelling as Social Change

Storytelling has long been a form of resistance, a process through which knowledge is shared, and a tool for building solidarity. Listening to people's personal life stories can help us learn about others as individuals as well as help us develop a sense of connectedness to other people, which can lead to activism (Grange & Miller, 2018) and foster antiracism (Bell, 2020; Milner & Howard, 2013). To combat "master narratives," members of historically marginalized groups can share counternarratives based on their personal lived experiences as a way to advocate for themselves and their communities (Bigelow, 2010; Chávez-Moreno, 2020; Grey & Harrison, 2020). In turn, such stories can inspire advocacy and social change on a broader scale. When considering how stories can be used to promote social change, the quality of the listening (i.e., the genuine receptivity of the listener) matters. Research has shown that the nonjudgmental exchange of narratives can reduce prejudice toward outgroups (Kalla & Broockman, 2020). Sharing stories can therefore support the building of bridging relationships (Dryden-Peterson, 2010), but for this process to occur, both the storyteller and listener need to be vulnerable (Brown, 2007; Kalla & Broockman, 2020). As Brown (2007) explained, "Courage gives us a voice and compassion gives us an ear. Without both, there is no opportunity for empathy and connection" (p. 43). This shared vulnerability, empathy, and connection can then lead to mutual humanization (del Carmen Salazar, 2013; Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014). When people's lived experiences are centered, they have the opportunity to recognize their stories as valuable and also build relationships on the basis of what makes them both unique and similar (Norton & Sliep, 2019). Across culturally and linguistically diverse landscapes of practice, this type of "global meaning making" (Tierney, 2018, p. 407) involves decolonizing educational spaces, valuing the fluidity of border crossing, interrogating who benefits from our actions, and shifting to an ecology of eclecticism versus exceptionalism (Tierney, 2018).

To contribute to this body of research, the present project heeds Tierney's (2018) and other critical scholars' calls for a type of education that disrupts traditional, Western-oriented approaches to teaching and learning. Although this work needs to be performed in schools, and in many ways, it could be argued that schools should be centering this kind of work, out-of-school spaces are better equipped to cultivate such educational approaches and opportunities. The present study aimed to center the lived experiences of a superdiverse (Vertovec, 2007) group of refugee-background youth who served as community-based youth workers (Baldridge, 2018) at the HRC's 2019 summer camp, asking: How can bridging relationships and storytelling practices

among refugee-background youth workers and U.S.-born community members effect social change?

Situating Our Work

HRC's mission is "to cultivate a welcoming, thriving community that collaborates with refugees and newcomers through education, engagement, and support." The majority of refugees who resettle in the Newtown community come from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Somalia, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, Bhutan, Burma, and Eritrea. Regardless of a person's (im) migration status, everyone is welcome to attend the HRC's programs. Every summer, the HRC offers a 5-week summer camp for middle and high school newcomers, featuring project-based, experiential learning, with a focus on developing campers' English language skills through acquiring life and entrepreneurial skills, building friendships across different cultures and languages, and learning more about resources for enrichment that are available in the local community. Employing a distributed mentorship model (Khasnabis et al., 2013), each summer the HRC hires young leaders (typically high school or college-age youth with refugee backgrounds who are former campers) and volunteer interns (typically college-age, U.S.-born, English-dominant speakers) who serve as teaching assistants and mentors. Although the young leaders and volunteer interns' roles varied slightly, for the purposes of this study, we consider both groups as youth workers in this community-based educational space (Baldridge, 2018).

The Stories Project

In collaboration with the HRC, we designed and facilitated a global civic engagement course, referred to as The Stories Project, for the 2019 summer program's youth workers in an attempt to provide youth workers with a dedicated and recurring space and time for reflection. Following Internal Review Board approval, 11 interns and young leaders, representing diverse cultural, educational, geographic, and linguistic backgrounds, with ages ranging from 17 to 23 (Table 1), chose to participate. As part of The Stories Project, the interns and young leaders kept daily journals and gathered together once weekly for 5 weeks to engage in reflective dialogue about how they, and the campers, built relationships and worked together across diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

With the interns' and young leaders' per-

Table 1. The Stories Project Participants

Pseudonym	Country of origin	Languages	Age
Sam	Burma	Burmese, Zomi, English	19
Marta	Colombia	Spanish, English	17
Ana	France	French, English, Spanish (some)	22
Pawan	Nepal	Nepali, English	19
Zahara	Sudan	Zaghawa, Arabic, English	18
Halo	Sudan	Masalit, Arabic, English	23
Nam	Thailand	Karenni, Burmese, English	21
Preeda	Thailand	Karenni, Burmese, English	19
Gilly	U.S.	English, Farsi	21
Lyla	U.S.	English, Japanese (some), Spanish (some)	19
Annabeth	U.S.	English, Arabic	20

sonal lived experiences at the core of The Stories Project curriculum, each of the 2-hour reflective dialogue sessions followed a similar structure: an opening circle in which we—researchers, youth workers, and representatives of the HRC staff—came together to connect with one another and share reflections from the ongoing summer camp; small group break-out sessions for sharing stories from our personal histories; and a semistructured whole group time for engaging in interactive activities (e.g., self-portraits, collage, games) that supported self-exploration (i.e., identity work) and informal casual conversation.

Methods

Researcher Positionality

Since January 2017, Carrie has been collaborating with the HRC in the co-construction of a research–practice partnership. As a faculty member in the Department of Teacher Education and a community-engaged scholar, Carrie collaborated with the HRC to develop research projects related to the literacy and language aspects of the HRC's instructional programming. With The Stories Project, she and her team incorporated opportunities for participants to leverage multimodal literacies and languages throughout the project for purposes of civic action and creating educational resources for teachers. As a cisgender woman who was born in the United States, Carrie identifies as an emergent bilingual with English as her first language and Spanish as her second.

At the time of The Stories Project, Laura (the first author) was a doctoral student in the Department of Teacher Education. She identifies as a White "trylingual" cisgender woman with varying levels of familiarity with the English, Spanish, Swahili, and Korean languages. Laura volunteered with a nonprofit, community-based organization supporting North Korean defectors while teaching in South Korea, and she volunteered as a child care provider for the HRC's adult English as a second language (ESL) program for 2 years.

At the time of the study, Lindsay (the second author) was a doctoral student in Curriculum, Instruction and Teacher Education with a focus on literature, language, identity, and multilingual learners. She identifies as a White bilingual (English and Spanish) cisgender woman from the Midwest. She has experience directing a community literacy coalition and teaching in urban bilingual secondary schools in Tegucigalpa, Honduras and Grand Rapids, Michigan.

We acknowledge that this study may have had limitations due to our positionalities as White American women working with refugee-background youth. Therefore, we took a Freirian stance in implementing this study, foregrounding the transnational wisdoms of our youth worker participants, and positioning them as experts, co-teachers, and coresearchers. For example, in the larger research–practice partnership, some of the youth workers have joined Carrie as coauthors, working to publish their own stories. In The Stories Project, the dialogue sessions were cofacilitated with refugee-background HRC staff members, and the youth workers determined which stories were (not) told and how they were told. Although we were intentional about the design of the project, we want to acknowledge that our identities inform the lenses with which we understand and relay the youth workers' stories. The authors of this article believe we each have an individual responsibility to continue to work toward social justice within and beyond the scope of this study.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is an epistemology, a theory, and a qualitative research method that recognizes the "truth" of a particular issue or set of circumstances as inherently subjective and dependent upon the people involved in the research enterprise (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Rather than trying to mitigate human factors and bias, researchers who use narrative inquiry lean into the inevitable subjectivity of the social sciences and make the personal, social, and cultural narratives of the researcher and the participants a central focus in how data is generated, analyzed, and interpreted. Aligned with Freirian (1968/2003) notions of teaching and learning needing to be rooted in the students' lived experiences, in the present study, we employed narrative inquiry to humanize the research process and engage in research practices that center the lived experiences of refugee-background youth workers in community-based education spaces.

Data Sources and Analysis

Data sources included pre- and post-interviews with each of the 11 youth work-

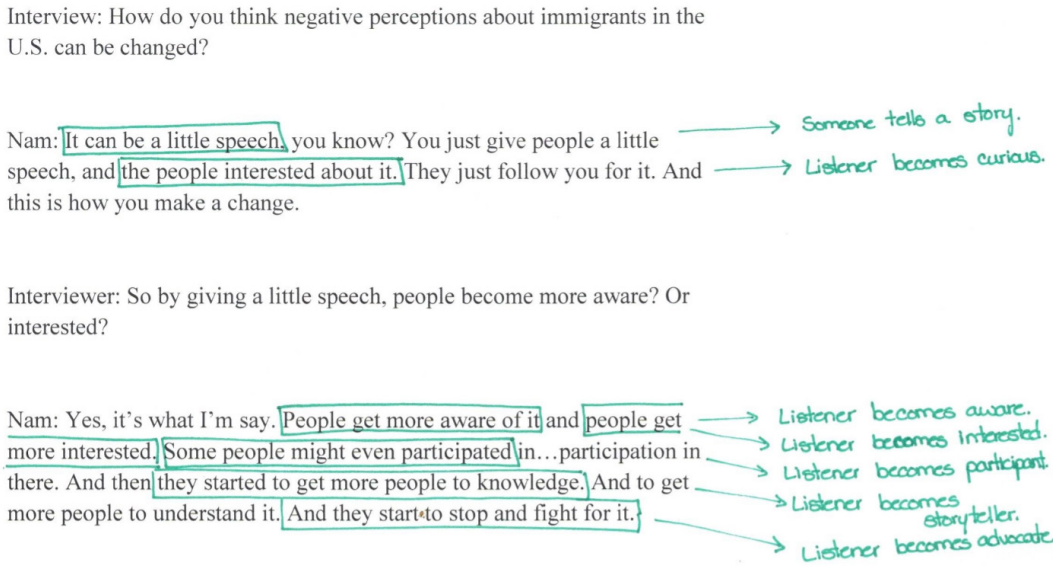
ers, video- and audio recordings of the five 2-hour dialogue sessions, researcher memos, and participant artifacts (self-portraits, journal entries, etc.). Interviews were one hour in length (on average), semistructured, and audio/video recorded. In addition to transcribing all 22 interviews, we identified select portions of the dialogue session recordings to be transcribed based on our guiding question: In what ways might bridging relationships among refugee-background youth workers and U.S.-born community members and their sharing of stories lead to social change?

For this article, we center data generated through one particular small group conversation during the final reflective dialogue session. This conversation among young leaders (Pawan and Halo) and interns (Lyla and Nam) was facilitated by HRC staff member and former refugee Archy. After transcribing the necessary data, we engaged, first, in a round of inductive coding called *process coding* (Saldaña, 2016) to tease out participants' ideas, based on their collective work within the summer camp, of how bridging relationships can be built between refugee-background and U.S.-born individuals. According to Saldaña, process coding aids in the search of actions and interactions as a person works toward achieving a goal or solving a problem. For each participant, we used process coding to identify an ordered series of actions; these steps were then illustrated as flowcharts.

As an example of process coding, consider the following excerpt from Nam's post-interview (Figure 1). In response to a question of how negative perceptions of immigrants in the U.S. might be changed, Nam explained the snowball effect of storytelling. By telling a story, the listener's interest is piqued. When Carrie repeats this process back to her, Nam adds further detail to the process, explaining that by piquing the listener's interest, the storyteller is helping the listener to become aware or even involved. The use of the word "then," near the end of her response, signals a new step in the process. The listener becomes the storyteller, an advocate for the original refugee-background storyteller. Nam's final process for effecting change based on this excerpt, and others like it, will be shared in the Findings section.

After generating a process-based flowchart for each of the five participants engaged in this particular small group conversation, we then engaged in a second-cycle coding

Figure 1. Process Coding Example



method known as *pattern coding* (Saldaña, 2016). This coding approach allowed us to look across the five processes for common categories, themes, or concepts. Pattern coding illuminated three commonalities: vulnerability, humanizing the refugee experience, and advocacy.

Findings

We have chosen to organize the findings conceptually around the importance of being vulnerable, humanizing the refugee experience, and becoming an advocate. We draw on the words of just one or two of the youth workers to illustrate each theme even though all of the youth workers, for example, spoke of the importance of being vulnerable.

Vulnerability [Archy]

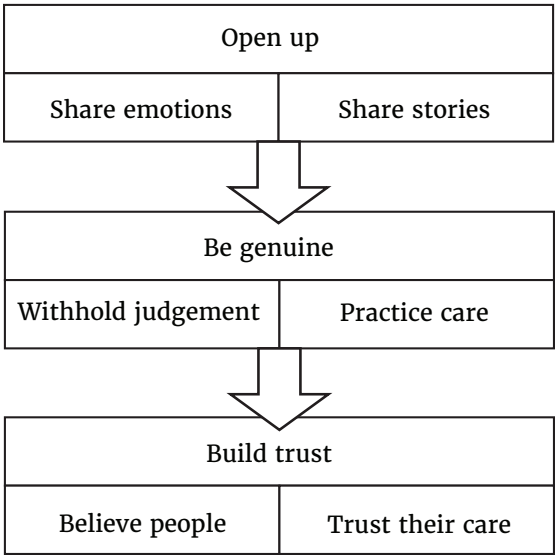
Archy was born in Bhutan, but due to political unrest during the 1980s, he and his family were forced to move to Nepal as refugees. After living in a refugee camp for 18 years, he and his family resettled in the United States in 2008 through the International Organization for Migration. In 2012, Archy joined the U.S. Army as a behavioral health specialist, serving what he calls "this beautiful country" for 6 years. Currently, he is working as a staff member at the HRC, helping newcomer refugees transition into their new lives in the American Midwest. As a staff member at the HRC, Archy worked as a teacher in the 2019 summer camp and helped to co-facilitate The Stories Project. During the final dialogue session, Archy shared his thoughts about the importance of storytelling in the process of opening up, being genuine, and ultimately building mutual trust (see Figure 2).

Referencing an earlier conversation about his experiences being harassed during his military service, Archy explained that he was generally hesitant to trust anyone because of "what [he'd] been through," but as he began listening to others' stories and sharing his own during The Stories Project, Archy started to build confidence and trust in others, saying, "I don't trust anybody, no matter who they are, what they are, but from this place [the HRC], I started believing in people." For Archy, telling his own story and listening to others' stories helped him to believe that by opening up, he might be able to heal:

> I don't know how to cry anymore because I cried so much in my life. . . . But I just get the feelings but not like crying. I want to. I just want to cry, cry, cry and feel like everything is out of my body. So, I'm just waiting for that day, and I hope this place [the dialogue session] will build me to get those things.

He observed that in a space like The Stories Project, there was no judgment, and everyone was willing to show who they genuinely were. Because of these dynamics, he said,

Figure 2. Archy's Process of Building Trust



"I started trusting in people that they care for us." Archy experienced a transformation in his own willingness to be vulnerable and came to the conclusion that storytelling is a way of building trust with one another: "Little drops of water makes a mighty ocean. Same way, like, little Stories Projects can bring us changes and make changes to our community and entire world one day."

Humanizing the Refugee Experience [Pawan]

Pawan was born in 2000 and raised in a refugee camp in the southeast corner of Nepal. His camp was one of seven Bhutanese refugee camps where over 100,000 Bhutanese refugees lived due to religious and ethnic persecution. Pawan moved to the United States when he was 10 years old. He attended middle and high schools in which English was the dominant language. Although he used Nepali to communicate with his family and Nepali friends, reading and writing Nepali were not part of his educational experience past the age of 10. Transitioning into U.S. schools was challenging for Pawan as it is for most, if not all, refugees. Not knowing much English upon arriving here isolated him from other kids. He recalled other students making fun of his accent and bullying him. Upon sharing these memories in our final dialogue session, Pawan became visibly upset. His voice began to shake as he pounded his fist into his thigh. Archy, Pawan's uncle who was facilitating the dialogue and sitting next to Pawan at the time, admitted that he had never known about Pawan being bullied. Archy pointed to Pawan's sharing this untold story as an example of the safety and acceptance The Stories Project and the summer camp had cultivated.

At the time of the project, Pawan was 19 years old, living with his parents and about to begin his junior year of college, majoring in mechanical engineering. At camp, Pawan was a young leader. In his reflections on himself as a youth worker, Pawan expressed his empathy for the youth in the camp. He, too, had a refugee background and had to learn English as an additional language. He, too, felt isolated and frustrated in middle school. His empathy informed how he worked with the students and how he validated their experiences while also encouraging them to take advantage of the camp as an opportunity to learn.

When asked what he thought people should know about refugees, Pawan continually returned to the importance of empathy and recognizing each other as fellow human beings. In his post-interview, he explained:

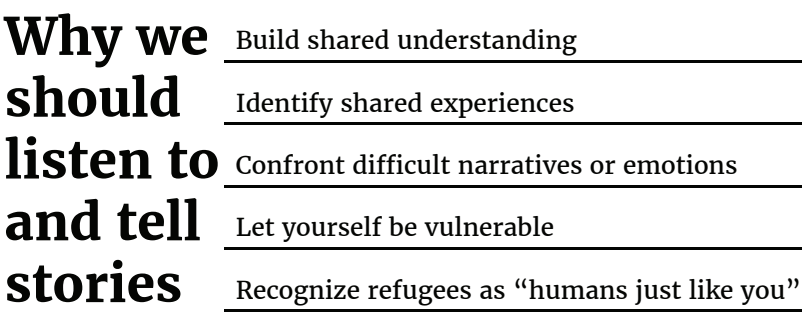
> Some people have this idea that people coming from other countries are bad or here to steal their jobs. But they are just like them, trying to work, make a living, and have a better life. If they are not open to the idea of them being just like them, then I don't know. Their mind will stay as it is—if they do not see them as people, then how can they change?

When asked how to combat negative perceptions of refugees, Pawan said:

> I think stories like this are a great start, and getting them out globally would be the best. Some people's mindsets do not change by hearing stories. They might need to meet up with people and really get to know them.

Throughout the project, Pawan's perspectives and stories pointed to the power of humanizing one another (Figure 3). Stories are

Figure 3. Pawan's Reasons for Sharing Stories



a great starting point, but to truly dismantle xenophobia, we need to "get out globally" and get to know people who are, in many ways, different from ourselves (e.g., country of origin, language, culture, religion).

Advocacy [Halo and Nam]

Above, Archy mapped out a process for learning to be vulnerable and to build trusting relationships, and Pawan emphasized the importance of using these relationships to humanize refugee-background members of the community. Halo, a young leader, and Nam, an intern, both of whom had refugee backgrounds, extended these processes a step further to include advocacy.

Halo

Halo was born in 1996 in Western Sudan during the second Sudanese civil war. He spent the first 8 years of his life in a small village, where most people were from the same tribe and spoke the same language, Masalit. When he was 8 years old, the militias attacked his village, and he and his family were forced to flee across the border into Chad, where they took refuge in a camp. For his first 2 years in the refugee camp, Halo took classes in Arabic: "There was Arabic, math, and English. If you studied Arabic, you didn't have to pay. For English, you would have to pay." But school fees were not the only hurdle to learning English; school policy stated students had to be 18 years old to study the English language. Undeterred, Halo would often hide in the back of the English classroom, hoping not to be discovered. After 11 years in the camp, Halo and his family had the opportunity to emigrate and resettle in the United States.

Adapting to life in the U.S. was difficult for Halo. A few weeks after he arrived in 2014, his resettlement caseworker told him that he was too old to go to high school. At the age of 18, he had "aged out," a common hurdle many refugee-background youth face upon resettling in a new country. Once again denied the education he so desperately wanted, Halo was determined to find a way to learn English. Eventually he found an alternative high school program designed specifically for refugee-background youth and earned his diploma.

During his post-interview, when asked how the summer camp and The Stories Project impacted the people around him, Halo spoke of the power of building relationships, a process that began with a single word:

> I'm going to say hi to them. This is the way we have to know each other. That's the first day. A few days later, we become friends, and we know a lot of things and our stories, our past stories and then how they affect us. . . . When we share these stories, we feel like we are from, we are family, we are same group of people.

"Hi" is a small first step in connecting with the refugee-background youth at the HRC and the Newtown community. However, Halo recalled a time when "hi" was all he knew. When Halo first arrived in Newtown,

> I don't know English. And when I meet people, I just raise my hand because I know the word hello. But then if they say hello, I don't know how to respond. . . . I just raise my hand and they just raise their hand.

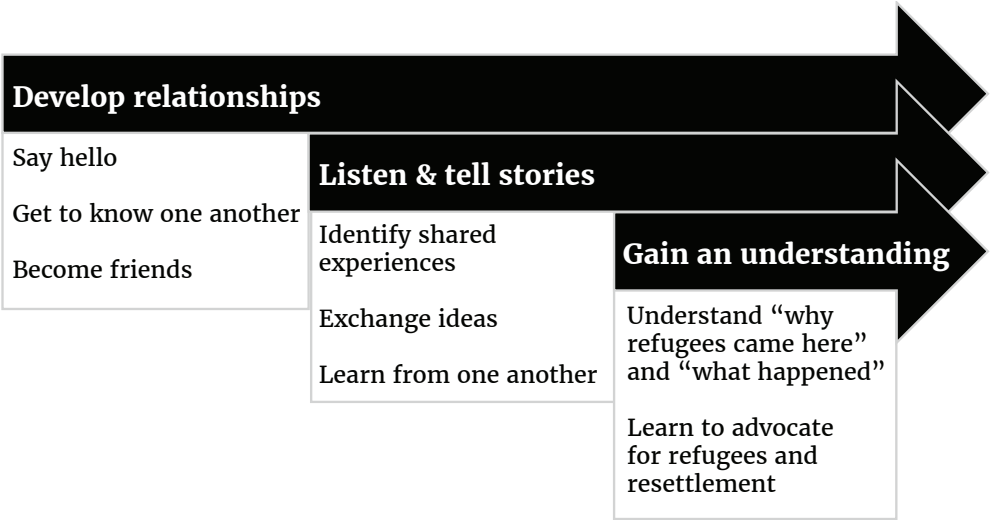
Whether saying hello or raising a hand in greeting, for Halo, this simple gesture opened the door for friendship and the sharing of stories: "I like telling the stories and hearing the stories; it maybe connect our experiences and then we also learn from each other. . . . Maybe our experience connects each other. We also sharing our ideas and learn from our skills."

When asked what people need to know about refugees, Halo explained how the sharing of stories can lead to understanding, even advocacy (Figure 4). Halo shared, "Some people, I would say, some people they don't know why the refugees come here. . . . But they need to know about their stories, and why they came here." Halo added that to change the negative perceptions of refugees in the U.S.,

> They [refugees] gonna tell them why they are here and then they also need to explain like what happened to them and what bring them to the new place. . . . Some people, when they hear these things, they say "you need more refugees here" or "we need more refugee people to came here to save their lives." This is what they need to focus on.

For Halo, the process of effecting change through increased advocacy in the Newtown community begins with a single word or gesture and builds over time to foster a

Figure 4. Halo's Process of Effecting Change



trusting, bridging relationship within which stories can be shared. These stories then inspire community members to enact change, becoming advocates for the refugee-background youth within their community.

Nam

In the summer of 2019, Nam was 21 years old, enrolled in nursing school, and training to be a certified nursing assistant. Her parents had fled Burma, now known as Myanmar, for Thailand before she was born. Nam, who was born in a refugee camp, resettled with her family in the United States when she was 11 years old.

Prior to being an intern in the summer of 2019, Nam attended the HRC's summer program as a camper for 2 years and as a young leader for 1 year. She also helped resettled refugee community members by serving as a volunteer translator in the local hospital. She is pursuing a career in nursing with the intention of returning to Thailand to provide medical care for refugees because, although she was not yet born when her parents fled Myanmar, she knows her family's history, and she is well aware of the dangers people face as they are fleeing and crossing borders due to persecution. As Nam so clearly stated, whether here in the United States or back in Thailand, "I stand myself as a refugee. I believe I can make a change to better for the refugee person, like me and my family."

Although Nam did not consider herself a storyteller, Nam reflected on what she had learned from The Stories Project:

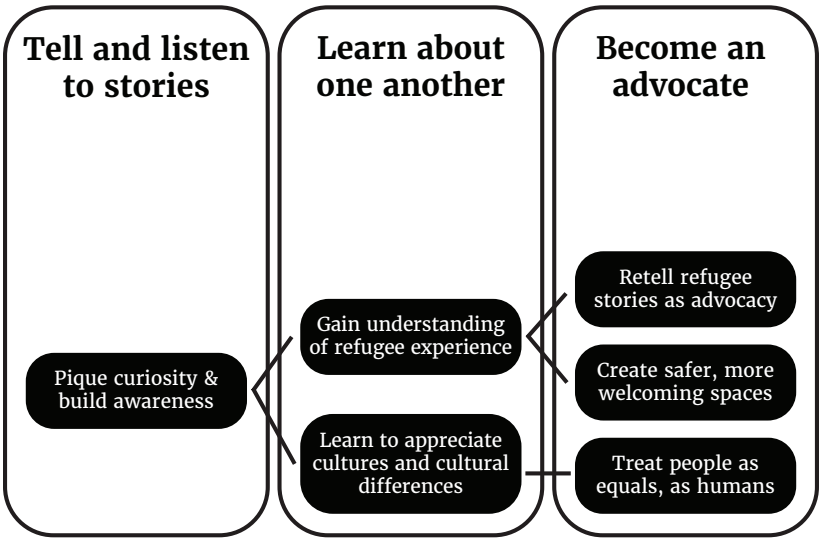
> This Friday afternoon project here is also make me think of who I am before and now . . . it's completely changed my mind sometime. It was like "I don't know even know who I am." But getting to know this project here, it make you more of who you are and then, you know, your complete personality. . . . Before I was super scared to show who I am. Now I feel like I am completely okay. 'Cause I just learn more.

Nam explained how people can learn more about refugees by listening to their stories, which, in turn, can dismantle negative perceptions and inspire people to fight for refugees' rights (Figure 5):

> It's always about people who fight for it, you know? You just give people a little speech, and the people get interested about it. . . . People get more aware of it. Some people might even participate in there. And then they started to get more people to know. And to get more people to understand it. . . . Just show them who you are, and just tell them who you are. And soon it will change it.

Through Nam's wisdom and willingness to share her perspectives on issues relevant to the marginalization of resettled refugees in the United States, she provided a clear and actionable directive for how relationships among refugee-background youth and U.S.-born community members can be built and

Figure 5. Nam's Process of Effecting Change



how these relationships can lead to advocacy for resettled refugees in the U.S.

Discussion

Findings from this narrative inquiry reveal how sharing personal stories can contribute to building bridging relationships among refugee-background youth and U.S.-born community members. Through sharing stories about their past and present lived experiences, refugee-background youth workers and U.S.-born community members in this study learned *from* and *about* one another. They cultivated meaningful friendships. They honored each other's unique perspectives and life experiences as well as recognized each other's shared humanity. Archy, for example, spoke of the vulnerability required in both the telling of and listening to stories. As Archy explained, the willingness to be vulnerable is dependent upon trust. Once trust is established, stories can be shared and heard without judgment. Withholding judgment is essential for sustaining the courage required to share personal stories (Brown, 2007; Kalla & Broockman, 2020). As Pawan demonstrated, the sharing of personal stories enables both the storyteller and the listener to recognize one another's shared humanity. Humanizing refugee-background youths' experiences is one of the most powerful antidotes to the perpetuation of racism, marginalization, and xenophobia (Bell, 2020; del Carmen Salazar, 2013; Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014; Milner & Howard, 2013) and an instigator of advocacy. Through recognizing a person's inherent dignity, coupled with understanding their struggles and the ways in which systems of oppression have perpetuated those struggles, Halo and Nam illustrated how refugee-background youth workers' personal stories are catalysts for advocacy and social change. As the findings from this study show, refugee-background youth workers play a significant and vital role in sustaining and growing the well-being of their own communities as well as in dismantling harmful misconceptions and systemic marginalization of refugee-background youth in the United States.

Storytelling as Advocacy

For refugee-background youth workers, such as Pawan, Halo, and Nam, telling stories is one way to advocate for themselves and their fellow refugees (Grey & Harrison, 2020). When refugee-background youth share their stories, they humanize notions of refugees more broadly. As allies, U.S.-born community members can partner with refugee-background youth to, in turn, listen and share what they have learned. In sum, for the purpose of social change, sharing stories among people of different backgrounds must be a bidirectional, mutualistic process. It involves both telling one's own story and listening to others' stories with openness and a willingness to be vulnerable (Kalla & Broockman, 2020). With this vulnerability, we recognize our shared humanity. When we recognize our shared

humanity, we are inspired to take action, socially and politically, to ensure all people's human rights are protected and all people have the resources and freedoms necessary to live an opportunity-filled life.

Cultivating Interculturality and Global Meaning Making

Community-based educational experiences, like The Stories Project, in which the roles of "teacher" and "learner" are shared by everyone involved, where learners' stories are the center of the curriculum and learners work together toward a common goal, can promote building bridging relationships among U.S.-born and refugee-background individuals. In The Stories Project, the participating youth workers worked together as a team of interns and young leaders, and as such, they were united through a common purpose: supporting the growth of the younger newcomer youth in the HRC's summer program. Our findings confirm the power and importance of membership in intergroup dialogues (Frantell et al., 2019); when the members of the group are also, simultaneously, working together as a community or team (e.g., teachers, artists, athletes), they are united by their shared investment in the success of their collaboration (Dryden-Peterson, 2010). The weekly dialogue sessions provided a space outside the refugee-background youth workers' collaborative teaching context to reflect upon (1) what they were learning, both individually and collectively, from their shared experiences, and (2) how their current experiences were fuel for reflection upon and reconciliation with their individual histories and past experiences.

Although much of what participants—both U.S.-born and refugee-background youth workers—learned about interculturality (Dervin, 2016) came from building relationships with the youth enrolled in the summer camp whose languages, cultures, and past experiences differed from their own, the weekly reflective dialogue sessions provided opportunities for global meaning making (Tierney, 2018). Because the HRC camp model provided opportunities for distributed mentorship (Khasnabis et al., 2013), everyone involved in the camp was positioned as both a teacher and learner. This deliberate flattening of typical status hierarchies is essential for traversing cultural and linguistic borders with the genuine intention of understanding ourselves, one another, and the systems of oppression that perpetuate a sense of separateness and inequitable power structures (Freire, 1968/2003; Tierney, 2018). From the stories and perspectives the youth workers shared during the reflective dialogue sessions, along with pre- and post-interview data, we saw evidence of participants' increased recognition of and appreciation for linguistic and cultural differences and a realization of their commonalities and shared humanity.

Implications

As educational researchers who work in community spaces, we have an obligation to engage with community members in ways that build trust and avoid perpetuating or inflicting more harm. This goal demands the highest standards of integrity in our thoughts, words, and actions. Our work with the refugee-background youth workers would not have been possible without our research–practice partnership (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017) with the HRC, which, by 2019, had been established over a period of 2 years and several prior projects. The Stories Project was the result of a network of trusting relationships and our mutual, continual care of those relationships.

Research–practice partnerships (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017) have recently become recognized as one of the most valued approaches in educational research. Creating mutually beneficial research–practice partnerships requires—on the part of university-based researchers—a commitment to learn alongside and amplify the voices of youth workers within the community whose lived experiences and emic perspectives enable the co-construction of new knowledge that is essential for addressing the persistent and insidious issue of xenophobia in and out of schools. Collaborative, community-engaged models of research that value the building of long-term, mutualistic relationships among stakeholders from across the community—particularly those who have been historically marginalized, such as refugee-background youth—hold promise as a pathway forward and toward sustainable structural, social change.

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The Power of *Promotores:* Enhancing the Ability of Medical Students to Provide for and Communicate With Underserved Populations

Jesse Allen, Suzette Jimenez, Ricardo Belmares, Jose Manuel de la Rosa, Nathan A. Holland, and Jessica Chacon

Abstract

To increase community health knowledge, the El Paso Health Education and Awareness Team (EP-HEAT) was established at Paul L. Foster School of Medicine. The Medical Student Run Clinic (MSRC) emphasizes community health care access. *Promotores de salud* (community health workers) increase health care awareness and connect predominantly underserved communities with resources. Surveys were conducted to determine how EP-HEAT and MSRC patients' communication with promotores affected their access to health care and communication skills. Surveys demonstrated that 91% of EP-HEAT members agreed that working with promotores improved their communication ability. All MSRC patients surveyed stated interacting with promotores helped improve health care communication in various ways.

Keywords: promotores de salud, community health workers, health education, minority-majority, 360-degree training model

In Texas, as in other parts of the United States, Hispanics are disproportionately affected by health inequalities and unfavorable social determinants of health. Hispanics are at risk for many health disparities (e.g., asthma, cardiovascular, diabetes, and obesity) and lack access to health care (Dubay & Lebrun, 2012). In El Paso County, Texas, where our institution, Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC El Paso) is located, the United States Census Bureau (n.d.-a) estimated that in 2021, 82.9% of the population was Hispanic or Latino, and the Texas Department of State Health Services (n.d.) reported that as of 2020, 37.5% of the population was obese, and 16.9% had been diagnosed with diabetes. In addition, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2022) stated that people with obesity, heart disease, chronic kidney disease, and diabetes are at a higher risk of having more severe cases of COVID-19, and that hypertension may increase patients' risk as well.

Therefore, it is imperative to establish programs that can close health care disparities in minority-majority communities. These programs also offer the opportunity to (1) improve opportunities for students to serve as educators during their undergraduate medical school training and (2) improve communication and trust between our border community members, our students, and health care professionals. Physicians often graduate with little understanding of the strategies used to target population level health determinants (Sisson & Starke, 2022). Our project focuses on having medical students serve as health education experts and collaborate with *promotores* to provide bilingual (English and Spanish) health education workshops and resources to the community they serve. In a Montana county, a novel strategy has been established where community organizing, community health workers [promotores], and advocacy are incorporated into medical school training: a promising model for addressing disparities across marginalized communities (Logan & Castañeda, 2020).

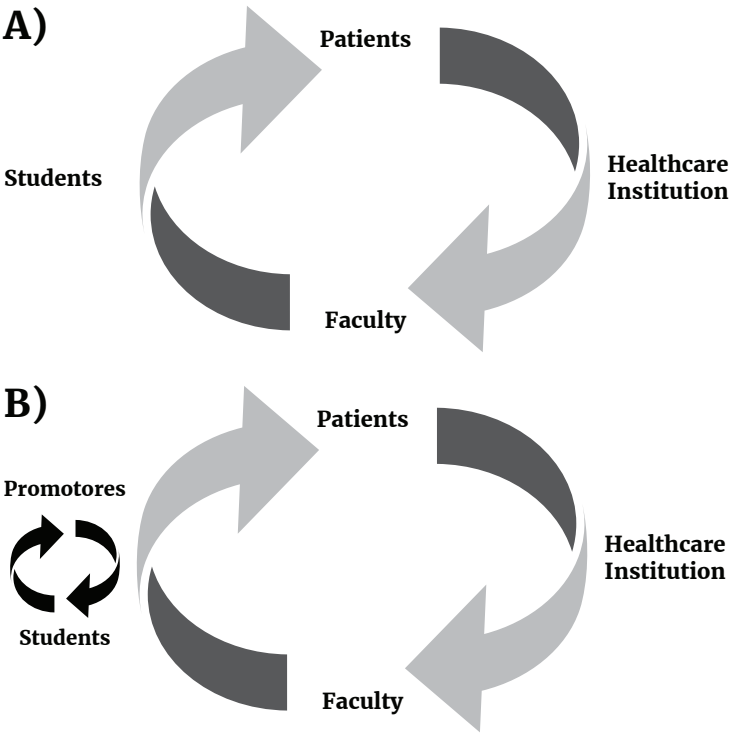
Promotores de salud, also called community health workers, act as liaisons with the

local community and health care resources. Promotores de salud (hereinafter referred to as *promotores*) predominantly work in medically underserved, low-income, minority neighborhoods, and connect vulnerable society members to resources, health education, and health and social services. Promotores are vital to address disparities and are a critical force in overcoming structural vulnerability and inequities in health (Logan & Castañeda, 2020). The unique ability of promotores lies in their existing immersion in the local community. Nationally, it can be a challenge for people to successfully navigate the health care system, particularly in areas with members who are predominantly of a low socioeconomic class (McMaughan et al., 2020). These challenges can be exacerbated by cultural differences and language barriers that many health care workers may encounter, often seen along the general border region, including El Paso, Texas.

The mission of Paul L. Foster School of Medicine (PLFSOM) at TTUHSC EP is to improve the lives of members in the local community and the border region by focusing on the unique health care needs of socially and culturally diverse populations through integrated education, research, and patient care. PLFSOM is a leader in educational innovation, with a cutting-edge curriculum and highly engaged students in the El Paso community. To facilitate the expansion of health care access and information in the border community PLFSOM TTUHSC has implemented two outreach programs in collaboration with promotores: (1) The TTUHSC El Paso–Health Education and Awareness Team (EP-HEAT) and (2) TTUHSC Medical Student Run Clinic (MSRC). Our project's critical, innovative approach utilizes a 360-degree training model we developed as a method to improve student-driven community outreach and engagement (Figure 1).

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, medical students did not have the same opportunities to engage with the community face-to-face as they routinely have in the past. Students' ambition for community engagement led to our project development in 2019, the TTUHSC EP-HEAT. EP-HEAT's overall goal was to develop a bilingual (English and Spanish) educational

Figure 1. Illustration of 360-Degree Training Model



Note. (A) Traditional method of medical education in health care institutions. (B) Proposed method for implementing promotores in medical education for a 360-degree training approach with students for community engagement and outreach.

platform, and to enhance the health and safety of our community by disseminating accurate, helpful information provided by medical students and faculty. Medical students were at the forefront in the design and implementation of our platform, working with peers and faculty to create the content. EP-HEAT's faculty moderators were physicians and scientists with specialties in biochemistry, immunology, microbiology, pathology, internal medicine, pediatrics, physiology, genetics, and cell biology. In addition, a TTUHSC El Paso board-certified psychologist on our team served to moderate mental health topics. Due to the diverse specialties our team contains, EP-HEAT can tailor the bilingual health education material to numerous health-related issues, such as COVID-19, disease prevention, diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and immunizations. Overall, EP-HEAT strives to improve students' professional development by providing opportunities for community engagement, chiefly presenting health education.

The MSRC was established in 2013 in the community of Sparks, Texas. The population of Sparks is an underrepresented community with high poverty and low education levels and is medically underserved. PLFSOM TTUHSC EP students and faculty chose to serve this community due to its low socioeconomic status, lack of health care access, low education level, language barriers, and high percentage of undocumented status individuals. The community of Sparks is composed of 97.8% Hispanic population, where 53.2% are not U.S. citizens, 93.2% are Spanish speakers, only 14.6% hold an associate's degree or higher, 58.2% are living in poverty, and the median household income is less than $30,848 (United States Census Bureau, n.d.-b). The MSRC is run by the medical directors, Student Leadership Team, and promotores. Promotores work closely with the Student Leadership Team to determine community needs and bring health care services addressing those needs to the community. The MSRC provides free primary health care services to patients of all ages, including mammogram screenings and laboratory tests. Additionally, the promotores in the community help collaborate with other organizations to provide colorectal cancer screenings, English language classes, food pantries, and other resources. The students involved with MSRC can practice interacting with patients under the guidance of promotores, who will aid students in the future when communicating with patients by improving patient understanding and shared decision making (Nie et al., 2020).

Organizations like EP-HEAT and the MSRC strive to effectively help the people in the border region and provide a communication bridge between the community and health care access and education with the help of promotores.

Project Description

We hypothesized that the collaboration of promotores with EP-HEAT and the MSRC would enhance medical students' ability to effectively disseminate health education and resources to underserved communities and patients. To test our hypothesis, a 360-degree training program was instituted whereby promotores and medical students learned from one another. Specifically, EP-HEAT faculty and students trained promotores on health-related material (such as COVID-19 and healthy living). Then, during community outreach events, promotores taught students how to effectively communicate with community members, providing students the opportunity to practice Spanish outside a health care setting. As part of the PLFSOM curriculum, medical students must complete a medical Spanish course that enhances their ability to engage and treat the culturally diverse populations in our border region. Promotores ensured all health education material was culturally competent and at an appropriate literacy level for the community to understand the information being communicated. Additionally, communication skills that students obtained during the 360-degree training program will be essential throughout their career in health care, including but not limited to patient encounters, educational presentations to the community, and community town hall meetings (Nie et al., 2020).

Students had the opportunity to interact with promotores on numerous occasions at various EP-HEAT community events, including COVID-19 vaccination events, care package distributions, digital upskilling events, and health education workshops. The MSRC was established in the Sparks community in 2013 and has been a health care resource for the community members with little to no access to traditional health care infrastructure. The MSRC students work closely with promotores, which aids in patient recruitment and dissemination of health care awareness information.

Measuring the Impact

To evaluate our hypothesis, three anonymous surveys were distributed (exempt from IRB formal review, Number E22015). The first survey was an anonymous electronic survey provided to measure how students' ability to disseminate health knowledge was affected after working with promotores. The second survey was distributed to promotores to gain insight regarding their collaboration with students. The third survey was given to MSRC community members to determine the role of promotores in identifying resources. The surveys were designed to investigate both the educational benefits for students collaborating with promotores in disseminating health education information and the broader impact of promotoeas on enhancing access to health care in the community. This multifaceted approach enabled a comprehensive understanding of how such collaborations can positively influence both student development and community health.

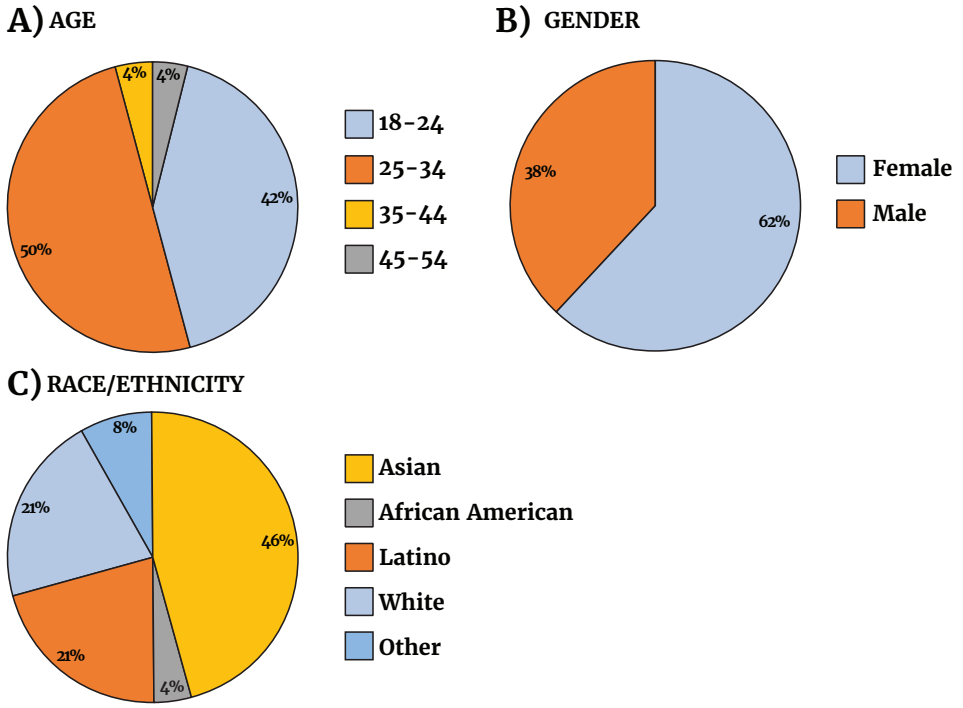
Students, promotores, and community members consented to engage in the research study by responding to the survey. Email reminders were sent as appropriate to students and promotores, based on weekly monitoring of the survey response rates. The survey was open for one month from the day of the initial invite. Voluntary MSRC patient responses were collected anonymously via paper surveys. The MSRC patient surveys were given to each patient as part of their appointment paperwork, and the person administering the surveys explained that it was optional and part of a study. All surveys were placed in a separate folder and remained anonymous. Papers were shredded and disposed of after data was collected. Results were reported only in the aggregate.

Findings

Medical students who interacted with promotores at EP-HEAT community events and at the MSRC were asked to participate in an anonymous online survey. A total of 24 surveys were collected. The majority of students fell in the 18–34 age range (Figure 2A). The majority of participants self-identified as female (Figure 2B) and identified their race/ethnicity as Asian (Figure 2C).

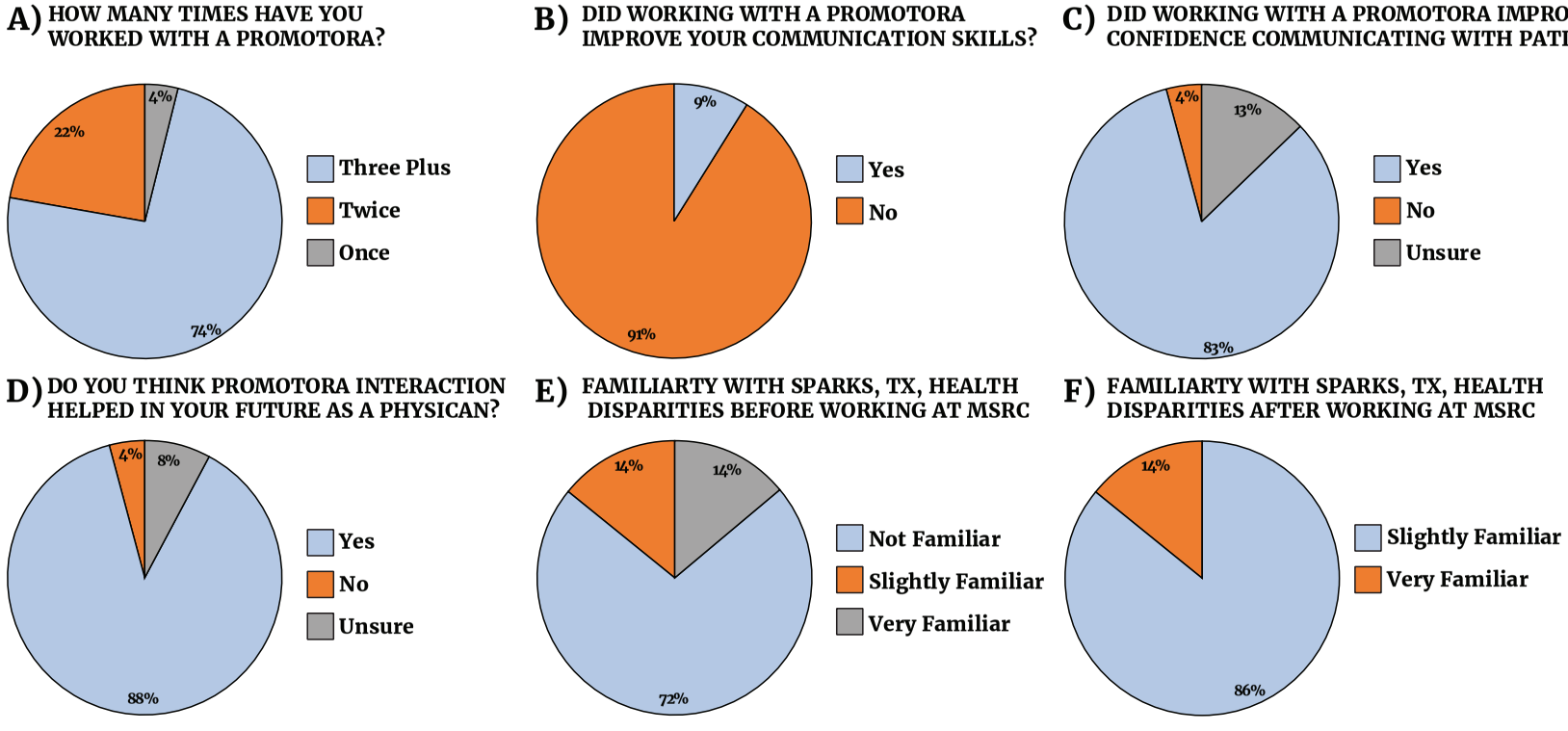
The vast majority of students reported

Figure 2. Demographics of Medical Students Who Worked With Promotores



Note. Demographics: (A) 42% were in the age range 18–24, 50% in the age range 25–34, 4% in the age range 35–44, and 4% in the age range 45–54. (B) 62% identified as female, and 38% as male. (C) 46% identified as Asian, 21% as Hispanic or Latino, 21% as White, 8% as other, and 4% as African American.

Figure 3. Frequency and Efficacy of Collaboration Between Students and Promotores



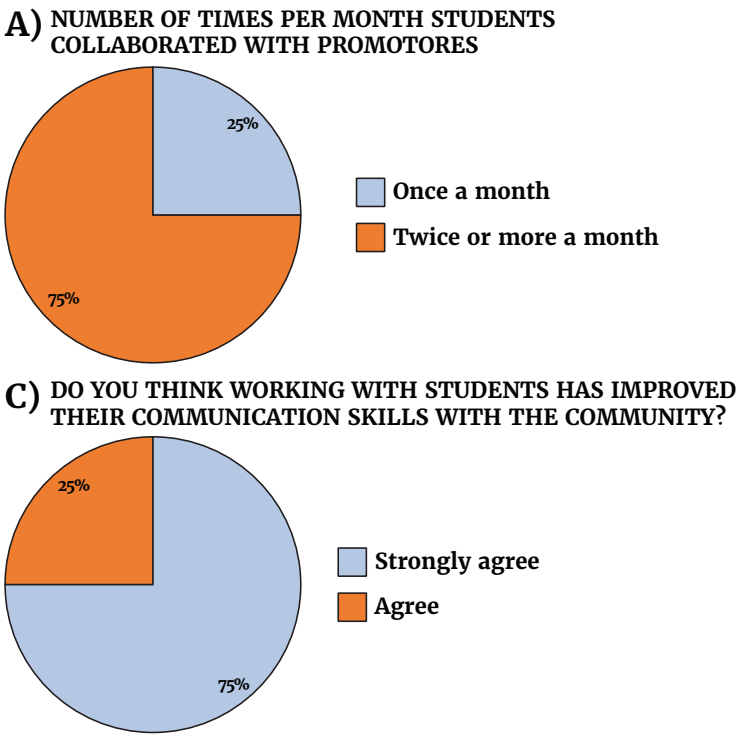
Note. (A) 74% of promotores collaborated with students more than three times a month; 22% of promotores collaborated with students twice a month. (B) 91% of students agreed communication with the community improved after working with a promotora. (C) 83% of students agreed their confidence in communication skills improved. (D) 88% percent of students agreed that working with promotores would help their communication skills as a future physician. (E) Prior to working with community members and promotores, 72% of students reported being unfamiliar with Sparks, Texas. (F) After working with promotores, the percentage of students familiar with Sparks improved to 86%.

interacting with promotores at least three times during MSRC and EP-HEAT events (Figure 3A). Ninety-one percent of the students who completed the survey agreed that working with promotores helped them improve their communication skills with the community (Figure 3B). Students were asked to describe some ways their ability to communicate with the community was enhanced by observing promotores. Some of their answers were as follows:

- The *promotores* helped me to interact with community members as an equal. For example, at one of the vaccination events, a community member had some difficulty getting out of their car due to mobility issues. The *promotora* explained that if you hover over them and continue trying to help, you might hurt their sense of autonomy and independence. She said to offer once, and if the community member does not want your help, do not keep offering.
- Understanding the needs of the community.
- The *promotores* helped me to understand the body language and words to use to connect with the members of the community. The *promotores* allowed me to see how to make a personable connection with those of the community.
- I was able to better connect with my patients in the clinic setting. I worked on continuing to avoid medical jargon in my conversations.
- Learned some basic Spanish skills and ways to approach members of the community.

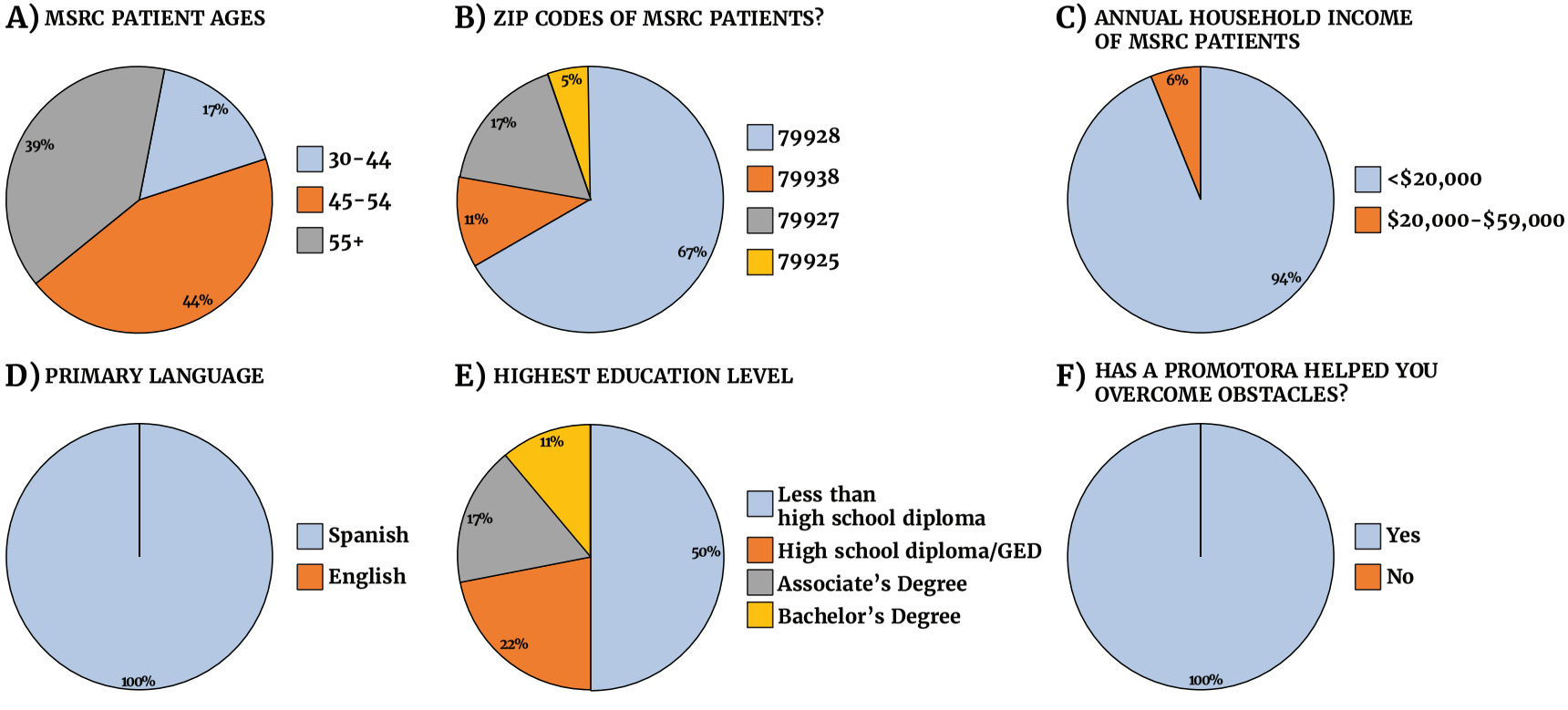
The majority of students working with promotores stated in surveys that not only did their confidence in communication improve after working with promotores but they thought that their experiences would also improve their patient communication as future physicians (Figure 3C and 3D). As a baseline the majority of students surveyed stated they were not very familiar with the health disparities associated with Sparks,

Figure 4. Promotores' Interactions With Students



Note. (A) 75% of promotores reported working with medical students twice a month or more. (B) 75% of promotores reported that they strongly agreed that working with students improved the students' communication skills.

Figure 5. Demographics of MSRC Patients Surveyed



Note. (A) 17% were in the age range 30–44, 39% in the age range 55+, and 44% in the age range 45–54. (B) 67% lived in the zip code area 79928, 11% in the zip code area 79938, 17% in the zip code area 79927, and 5% in the zip code area 79925. (C) 6% had an annual household income of $20,000–$59,000, and 94% had an annual household income less than $20,000. (D) The primary language is Spanish for 100% of patients. (E) 50% have an education level of less than high school, 22% have a high school diploma or equivalent, 17% have an associate's degree, and 11% have a bachelor's degree. (F) 100% of patients said a promotora helped overcome obstacles.

Texas (Figure 3E). However, after working with promotores all students reported having some familiarity with Sparks (Figure 3F).

Promotores were asked to complete an anonymous survey in an effort to determine whether promotores thought student communication improved upon working with them. The promotores reported collaborating with medical students once or more per month (Figure 4A). Overall, the promotores stated they saw an improvement in students' communication skills with the community (Figure 4B). When promotores were asked about their experience working with med students, the open-ended responses were positive and demonstrated below.

- It's a nice experience. They teach me a lot and I feel like I teach them too.
- It is a good experience, but I would like to have more students involved.
- Good and very constructive. Sometimes it is not very difficult to agree with them for their classes and activities.
- I enjoyed a lot working with them. I see them form better relationships and trust with community.

Further, surveys were developed to determine the impact of promotores on the patients at the MSRC. Participants from the MSRC patient population were asked to fill out the survey to determine if the promotora helped with health care access. Only patients who engaged with a promotora were asked to take the survey. A total of 18 participants completed the survey for the study. The community participants' demographics, including age, zip code, annual household income, primary language, and highest level of education, are reported in Figure 5A–E. All patients surveyed agreed that a promotora had helped them overcome some obstacles they faced when obtaining health care.

In addition, participants were asked to provide examples of how a promotora helped them overcome health care barriers (data not shown). The three most common obstacles to health care included lack of money, no nearby clinics, and a language barrier. When surveyed, 100% of MSRC patients that interacted with a promotora agreed that a promotora helped them overcome some of the obstacles they faced regarding health care access (Figure 5F). Our results strongly support that patients at the MSRC received assistance from promotores to overcome barriers to health care and resources. Additionally, our results support the notion that medical students working with promotores increase their confidence level in communication.

Implications of the Early-Stage Assessment

The hypothesis that the collaboration of promotores with EP-HEAT and the MSRC would enhance medical students' ability to effectively disseminate health education and resources to underserved communities and patients was demonstrated by the results. However, despite the vast majority of students agreeing that their communication skills had improved after interacting with promotores, it is difficult to assess the level of improvement due to subjective measurement and the small sample size of 24 students. Additionally, 22% of members interacted with promotores on two occasions per month, whereas 74% interacted with them on three or more occasions per month. The amount of interaction with promotores might impact the level of improvement in communication skills the EP-HEAT members developed.

Only 4% of students disagreed that interacting with promotores allowed them to improve their communication skills with the community. This disagreement might be due to their limited interaction time or the type of event in which they participated. Additionally, these students might have already been very confident in their ability to interact with community members. Some 83% of students agreed that interacting with promotores allowed them to improve their communication skills with the community. Thus, exposure to promotores resulted in an overall increase in communication skills with community members for this small group of students. Physicians mainly communicate in small-group settings with patients, families, and other health care professionals (Nie et al., 2020). Increased student interaction with members of the community further contributes to improving students' communication skills. Additionally, practicing public speaking will aid the students in the future when communicating with patients and improve patient understanding and shared decision-making (Nie et al., 2020).

All of the MSRC patients agreed that a promotora provided help in the community; however, the patient sample size was also small, so extrapolation to other populations might have different results. Despite the sample size, further studies could investigate how promotores can improve health care access across the country. Exploring how promotores in the community help connect members to health care resources will contribute to research and possible interventions involving promotores.

Survey results indicated that promotores and students collaborated on projects once or more per month. Although the overall responses regarding promotores collaborating with students were positive, one feedback was the encouragement of more students to be involved in community events. Limited time for students to engage in community events can be a factor in this 360-degree training model. The more students and promotores engage and collaborate with one another, the more efficacious the 360-degree model could be.

Next Steps and Conclusion

This project strives to improve opportunities for students to serve as educators during their medical school training while bridging health care access to underserved populations. In addition, this project attempts to improve communication and trust between our border community members, students, and health care professionals. Our 360-degree model focuses on providing bilingual (English and Spanish) health education workshops to the community, specifically by having medical students collaborate with *promotores* and serve as health education experts for the community.

If successful, the outcome of this program will be a model that improves health outcomes for a drastically underserved community in border communities and establishes a permanent promotores de salud program at TTUHSC El Paso that will provide community outreach on numerous health-related topics such as diabetes and healthy living, as well as enhanced future physicians' cultural competency and communication skills within the border region. This model has the potential to create a generation of health care providers who are not only skilled clinicians but also advocates for health equity. We are currently working on a train-the-trainer system to establish our 360-degree training model at other institutions.

Other U.S.–Mexico border–related medical schools exist within Texas, including the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley School of Medicine in Edinburg and Long School of Medicine University of Texas Health, San Antonio. Additionally, medical schools exist outside Texas in the border region, such as Burrell College of Osteopathic Medicine in Las Cruces, New Mexico, the University of Arizona College of Medicine in Tucson, and the University of California in San Diego, where this model would likely be effective. Beyond border-associated schools, most medical schools are located in large enough cities to be near health care disadvantaged and at-risk populations, and community health workers can be trained from within those populations to work together with the medical school and better support and address those communities' needs while preparing the associated students to better communicate with underserved individuals.

All the MSRC patient population surveyed agreed that a promotora helped them overcome an obstacle to health care. The MSRC model can be utilized to help the underserved populations in various other communities who lack access to resources and health care. More than half of the population at Sparks, Texas, is of low socioeconomic status and lacks health insurance; many are suffering from underlying conditions, including obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease (Cione et al., 2020). Our results with this population indicate a possibility of further improving health care outcomes across similar communities through promotores. The adequate training of promotores will increase their knowledge of health care information, and they will be able to become a resource of health care information for the rest of their community (Cupertino et al., 2013).

Official implementation of the 360-degree model into the curriculum is still being explored. This model can be taught in preclerkship courses such as Society, Community and Individual, where students focus on health disparities, how health care affects the population, and vice versa. In addition, this model can be taught as an elective course during the clerkship years, providing the students an opportunity to serve as educators and gain the trust of the population that they serve.

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A Process for Asset Mapping to Develop a Blue Economy Corridor

Emily Yeager, Beth Bee, Anjalee Hou, Taylor Cash, Kelsi Dew, Daniel Dickerson, Kelly White-Singleton, Michael Schilling, and Sierra Jones

Abstract

Through a multistakeholder partnership, this research aims to catalyze the development of a blue economy corridor (BEC) through community-based asset mapping in the eastern portion of the Tar-Pamlico River Basin in North Carolina, a geographic area predominated by physically and culturally rural landscapes. Underpinned by appreciative inquiry, this project aims to counter a deficit model of community development in this portion of eastern North Carolina by increasing awareness of quality of life assets that communities currently possess and may leverage for sustainable economic, environmental, and social development through their inclusion in a digital interactive map freely available to the public.

Keywords: blue economy, sustainable tourism, community development, community-engaged research, rural community development

Over the past decade, research has evinced the connection of tourism and recreation to residents' quality of life (QoL), thus creating an argument for prioritizing investment into these industries not just for economic development but for community well-being (Bricker et al., 2016; Kachniewska, 2015). Investing in economic development activities that prioritize residents' QoL is one pathway toward addressing the compounding effects of other challenges to rural destination resilience (e.g., outmigration, conversion of biological to technology crops) that are inextricably linked to rural destination trajectories (Battino & Lampreu, 2019; Bevk & Golobič, 2020; Li et al., 2019).

Through a multistakeholder partnership, this research aims to catalyze the development of a blue economy corridor (BEC) through community-based asset mapping in the eastern portion of the Tar-Pamlico River Basin in North Carolina, a geographic area predominated by physically and culturally rural landscapes. Across North Carolina coastal communities, the tourism and recreation sector comprises over 50% of North Carolina's blue economy (DITC, 2014; North Carolina Sea Grant, 2023). The sector's success highlights increasing consumer demand and opportunities for all North Carolina coastal communities to participate in the blue economy by leveraging their blue resources for tourism and recreation development. Existing secondary data sets suggest a wealth of nonmaterial QoL assets (Lucas, 2022; North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality, 2023) to be triangulated with local knowledge for all users within the corridor to experience (Keen et al., 2018; Okafor-Yarwood et al., 2020).

To extend agency to residents in the design and content of the corridor, we used an appreciative inquiry (AI) approach to identify existing assets within the corridor. Founded within positive psychology, AI is a strengths-based qualitative asset mapping methodology that has been particularly successful when implemented in rural communities to focus on what they currently have rather than what they may lack to contribute to local tourism development (Che Aziz et al., 2018; Joyner et al., 2019; Koster & Lemelin, 2009; Paige et al., 2015). Through AI, this project aims to counter a deficit model of community development in this portion of eastern North Carolina by increasing awareness of QoL assets that communities currently possess and may leverage for sustainable economic, environmental, and social development through

their inclusion in a digital interactive map freely available to the public.

Literature Review

Originating from the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro in 2012 (DITC, 2014), the "blue economy" in its most basic form is an economic development strategy premised on leveraging water or "blue" resources. Although many official definitions of the "blue economy" exist (NOAA, 2021; North Carolina Sea Grant, 2023; Silver et al., 2015; Smith-Godfrey, 2016), all share the industrialization of water resources. The blue economy framework is frequently applied in the context of leveraging ocean and sea assets, but it has also proved applicable in freshwater environments (Graziano et al., 2019). In a related geographic vein, an interesting feature of the blue economy development approach is its inclusion of both urban and rural systems under one "blue" system (Campbell et al., 2021; Keen et al., 2018).

In the United States, states such as North Carolina have embraced the blue economy. An industry cluster analysis, which is a typical asset mapping approach within a blue economy development framework, reveals that tourism and recreation comprise over 50% of North Carolina's blue economy (North Carolina Sea Grant, 2023). In North Carolina, rural coastal communities that are inextricably linked to the state's embraced blue economy vary widely in terms of population density and economic indicators. Indices of economic distress in North Carolina counties include average unemployment rate, median household income, percentage growth in population, and adjusted property tax base per capita, with Tier 1 as the most economically distressed and Tier 3 the least economically distressed (North Carolina Department of Commerce, 2022). Although the eastern portion of the Tar-Pamlico River Basin consists only of Tier 1 and Tier 2 counties, one county within the basin, Beaufort County, ranks eighth in the state for percentage of employment in North Carolina's blue economy (North Carolina Sea Grant, 2023). Critiques of the mainstream blue economy framework for its orientation toward a neoliberal extractive development agenda are found broadly within academic literature, including tourism development research (Islam et al., 2020; Kabil et al., 2021; Okafor-Yarwood et al., 2020; Phelan et al., 2020; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2019).

Counter conceptualizations of the blue economy centralize human well-being (Campbell et al., 2021). For example, through an ecosystem services approach, Phelan et al. (2020) offered a model for community-based ecotourism in Selayar Island and Takabonerate Marine National Park, Indonesia, that attributes existing community social, human, and built capital to the ecosystem services provided by natural capital (i.e., blue resources). Similarly, Okafor-Yarwood et al. (2020) proposed a restructuring of the blue economy framework to that of a "cultural livelihood–ecosystem conservation triangle" that inverts the traditional top-down approach of natural resource commercialization, thus positioning developers' collaboration with local communities as the starting point in economic development strategies that would leverage these blue resources. Others support this version of the blue economy framework, as it acknowledges "historical development pathways" of using blue resources and may reduce negative ecological impacts that are often amplified in marginalized communities (Cisneros-Montemayor et al., 2019; Howard, 2018). Among these marginalized communities are those also classified as "rural" and who depend on blue resources in ways that include but are not limited to subsistence and economic activities such as small-scale fishing (Keen et al., 2018).

Research has long supported the notion that development strategies which include tourism and recreation as economic drivers are most successful when they are underpinned by residents' support for a given development strategy (Boley et al., 2014; Kim & Thapa, 2018; Yeager et al., 2020). Support for tourism among residents, including those in rural communities, is directly linked to feelings of agency in the tourism development process (Boley et al., 2014; Strzelecka et al., 2016). This project aims to leverage an ecosystem services approach supported by the blue economy framework to develop a BEC in the eastern Tar-Pamlico River Basin in the form of a digital interactive map for all users of the eastern portion of the basin. This digital map will also serve as a regional economic development tool (e.g., marketing, identifying new assets) for the communities included in this corridor.

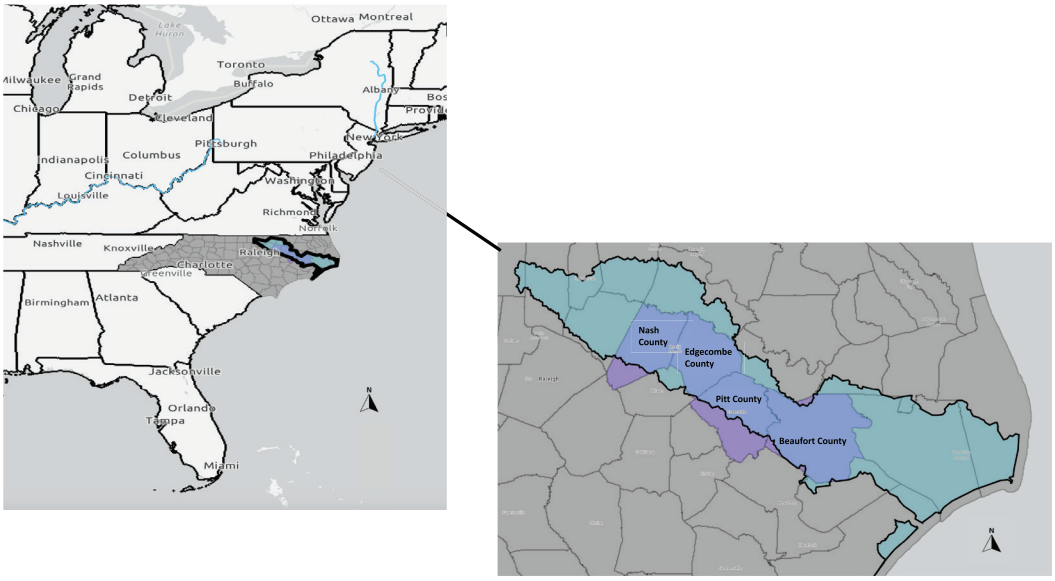
Setting the Context

East Carolina University (ECU), located

in Greenville, North Carolina, has been designated an Innovation & Economic Prosperity University by the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (East Carolina University, n.d.b). This designation was earned in part by ECU's service to 29 counties in eastern North Carolina that are classified by the state as facing greater economic disparities than other areas of the state (Division of Research, Economic Development and Engagement, n.d.). The Tar-Pamlico BEC currently serves three Tier 1 counties (Nash, Edgecombe, and Pitt Counties) and one Tier 2 county (Beaufort County) in eastern North Carolina (North Carolina Department of Commerce, 2022; Figure 1).

Small municipalities comprise most of the population centers within these four counties, with the largest population centers existing in two cities—one straddling Edgecombe and Nash Counties, and another within Pitt County (Mid-East Commission, n.d.). Outside these small municipalities, an average 46% of the remaining population across all four counties is considered "rural" (Ratcliffe et al., 2016). Although indices of population density, distance from large urban centers, and economic specialization help define and measure rurality (Deavers, 1992), social transformations have also evolved the meaning of rurality. For example, during the United States' "rural rebound" in the 1980s, urban transplants amenable to commuting to urban centers exported urban expectations to their rural homes, inducing "rural gentrification," which further diversified the portfolio of the rural nonfarm economy to service and manufacturing sectors (Abay et al., 2021; Hazell et al., 2007; Li et al., 2019). Although manufacturing is an important contributor to each county's economy (Mid-East Commission, n.d.; Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments, n.d.), the service sector, particularly economic activity related to outdoor recreation and tourism, is becoming an increasingly viable option for diversifying local and regional economies within the Tar-Pamlico River Basin and surrounding areas that possess a similar portfolio of natural, sociocultural, and economic resources (Bradshaw et al., n.d.; Fryberger et al., 2016). More specifically, increasing numbers of potential outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities are being created through reinvestment into waterfront structures. Examples include revitalizing manufacturing plants into "live, work, play" places (Rocky Mount Mills, n.d.), downtown revitalization near the Tar and Pamlico Rivers (City of Washington, North Carolina, 2022), and a newly emerging cohort of outdoor recreationists with a wider documented range of motivations and preferences in

Figure 1. Geographical Context of Tar-Pamlico Blue Economy Corridor



Note. The map in the top left corner highlights North Carolina in the United States of America. The map in the bottom right corner reflects the four counties in the Tar-Pamlico BEC where asset mapping is occurring, with the Tar-Pamlico River Basin overlaid on these counties.

outdoor recreation opportunities (Landry et al., 2021; Taff et al., 2021).

For Tar-Pamlico BEC communities, the goal of this project is to work with residents to identify and subsequently map existing assets that contribute to their QoL to be leveraged for sustainable economic, sociocultural, and environmental development within their communities. For students working with the Tar-Pamlico BEC, the goal is to provide a transformative educational experience that includes community-engaged research experience. Faculty working with the Tar-Pamlico BEC aim to invest their expertise and time to maintain and improve the QoL in the Tar-Pamlico River Basin that they call home.

Project Details

In spring 2019, researchers from ECU in partnership with Sound Rivers, the conservation nonprofit for the Tar-Pamlico River Basin, proposed the idea of identifying nonmaterial QoL assets in the river basin and subsequently visualizing them on a digital interactive map. Sound Rivers manages the Tar-Pamlico Water Trail, which features river access points and reservable camping platforms on a digital interactive map (Sound Rivers, 2016). ECU researchers proposed the new and expanded map to live on Sound Rivers' website with the intention that the camping platform reservation system and existing assets remain in place with the addition of the proposed nonmaterial QoL assets (Eslami et al., 2019). Hosting the Tar-Pamlico BEC map on Sound Rivers' website is a win-win in that the nonprofit could potentially receive more site traffic and the project's foundation would be tied to an organization that promotes environmental sustainability in the region. After agreement to partner on the project through a formal memorandum of partnership (MOP) between ECU researchers and Sound Rivers in spring 2020 (Appendix), a subsequent Tar-Pamlico BEC advisory group was formed to include the following stakeholders: county economic development directors, parks and recreation departments, tourism authorities, experts/community leaders in each of the eight proposed asset categories, and residents. There are currently 40 Tar-Pamlico BEC advisory group members. Initial meetings with advisory group members focused on establishing and vetting nonmaterial QoL asset categories relevant to the four-county study area. The proposed nonmaterial QoL assets included nature-based tourism assets (e.g., paddling, wildlife viewing), hospitality assets (e.g., hotels, breweries), sociocultural heritage assets (e.g., African American heritage sites, Native American heritage sites), public health assets (e.g., parks, greenways), conservation assets (e.g., water quality testing results provided by local conservation entities, citizen science programs such as litter-reporting systems), STEAM education assets (e.g., nature centers, museums), tourism and recreation small businesses (e.g., tour guides, paddle outfitters), and accessibility assets (e.g., ADA compliant accessible outdoor recreation sites, free to low-cost recreation opportunities). Nonmaterial QoL assets were initially chosen to reflect recreation amenities (in the broadest sense of the term) and the ability of residents to maintain their way of life (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011; Hwang & Lee, 2019; Woo et al., 2015). QoL indicators that fall within these two nonmaterial life domains are distinct from material life indicators (e.g., housing status, employment; Sirgy, 2002). Since many publicly available secondary data sets exist that paint the portrait of material life indicators (e.g., U.S. Census Bureau demographic data, U.S. Department of Labor statistics) that can be layered onto an existing map, this project focused on inventorying nonmaterial life factors whose prevalence and nature can vary at different geographic scales. Pilot asset mapping in the Tar-Pamlico BEC is concentrated in the four easternmost counties of the Tar-Pamlico River Basin as, collectively, they possess the most public water access in the river basin.

After establishing categories of assets, three goals were set that focused on connecting with communities in the four-county study area in multiple ways to identify and document nonmaterial QoL assets in the river basin: (1) Perform asset mapping with Nash, Edgecombe, Pitt, and Beaufort County residents, (2) provide residents an option to contributing assets outside asset mapping workshops, and (3) create a website to host the digital interactive Tar-Pamlico BEC map and other relevant project content.

> Goal 1: Perform asset mapping with Nash, Edgecombe, Pitt, and Beaufort County residents.
>
> *Objective 1.1*: Conduct one community asset mapping workshop per county in a socially neutral space.

Objective 1.2: Digitize documented assets into a database.

Objective 1.3: Geotag assets in the asset database.

To build resident support for the Tar-Pamlico BEC, it is vital to prioritize resident-identified QoL assets. Should residents be unsupportive of the Tar-Pamlico BEC in their community, they may take political action to discontinue its development (Spencer & Nsiah, 2013). Historically, residents' decision to support tourism and recreation opportunities in their communities has relied heavily on their perceived personal benefits and costs of this economic activity (Hawkins & Cunningham, 1996; Sofield & Birtles, 1996). Including residents early in the tourism and recreation development process can increase support and can ultimately increase the success of the planned tourism and recreation activity (Yeager et al., 2020). In fall 2021, the primary ECU researcher for this project participated in an ECU faculty development program that helps faculty cultivate skills related to community-engaged research (East Carolina University, n.d.a). The program provided various types of support, including a student team to initiate a community-engaged research project (in this case, the Tar-Pamlico BEC). In addition to the four students assigned to this project through this faculty development program, two other students recruited from the primary ECU researcher's courses also assisted with the design and implementation of the asset mapping workshops. In spring 2021, community asset mapping workshops were held in each of the four initial Tar-Pamlico BEC counties at times and locations deemed appropriate by the corridor's advisory group. It was vital to choose locations that would appeal to resident participation regardless of any component of one's social location (e.g., gender, race, social class, age, ability, religion, sexual orientation, or geographic location; Shamah & MacTavish, 2018). Therefore, workshops were held at the following locations/events: a North Carolina Cooperative Extension building (https://www.ces.ncsu.edu/), Edgecombe Community College (https://edgecombe.edu/), a festival hosted by the Association of Mexicans in North Carolina (https://www.amexcannc.org/?lang=en), and a STEAM education museum (https://aurorafossil-museum.org/).

Asset-based community development (ABCD), a community resource inventory method, guided the initial round of asset mapping in each county (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). This approach encourages community members to consider what resources can be leveraged in their community to achieve their development goals rather than focusing on what their community is lacking. Through a heritage asset mapping lens, the ABCD methods of this project asked participants to share what contributes to their QoL and simultaneously might serve as an attraction for visitors to their community (Office for Coastal Management, 2018). Persons over the age of 18 who live in the initial four Tar-Pamlico BEC counties were recruited to participate in workshops through outlets recommended by project partners (e.g., social media sites, significant community sites), fliers in public establishments, and through snowball sampling. Moreover, recruitment materials were prepared in both English and Spanish, and one of the ECU research team members who is fluent in Spanish helped facilitate asset mapping with Latinx community members as needed.

At each workshop, poster-sized maps of the pertinent county were laid on tables. Participants were able to physically locate assets on each map using a dot sticker. Student facilitators labeled each dot sticker with a number and worked with participants to classify each asset by any of the relevant eight asset categories. Each of the eight asset categories was assigned a different color sticky note upon which students took notes about each asset. The description of assets on each sticky note included a physical address. Information from each sticky note was later uploaded into a database and geotagged for subsequent visualization and analysis via geographic information systems software (Motta & Georgiou, 2017).

Goal 2: Provide residents an option to contributing assets outside asset mapping workshops.

Objective 2.1: Develop a resident attitude survey in ArcSurvey 123.

Objective 2.2: Distribute a resident attitude survey to every zip code tangential to the Pamlico River in Beaufort County.

Regardless of the location of in-person asset mapping workshops, the reality is that not

everyone will always be able to attend in-person events due to a variety of constraints (e.g., work schedules, transportation). ABCD can be achieved through a variety of methods, including in-person workshops and surveys; sometimes, multiple ABCD methods will need to be simultaneously employed to ensure opportunities for comprehensive community input (Lightfoot et al., 2014). To provide an alternative mode of participation in the project, a resident survey was distributed in Beaufort County. Since the geographic extent of survey distribution was relegated to any zip code tangential to a county's pertinent river, budget constraints allowed piloting this survey in only one county. The survey was developed in ArcGIS Survey 123 using an ECU account. This software is particularly useful in that when respondents access the survey, ArcGIS Survey 123 (Esri, 2023) recognizes browser language settings and will convert all survey materials accordingly. In total, ArcGIS Survey 123 recognizes 40 different languages, including Spanish, which is vital to increasing opportunities for resident input that is comprehensive and reflective of cultural diversity of the four counties when funds are identified to survey further in the corridor.

A survey link, an associated QR code, and a brief description of the project were printed on postcards that were distributed using the U.S. Postal Service's Every Door Direct Mailing (EDDM) service. Through EDDM, postcards are distributed to every address in zip codes within the BEC's four counties that are tangential to the Tar and Pamlico Rivers. The EDDM method is a low-cost, anonymous, contactless way to reach residents within communities that are geographically dispersed (e.g., rural communities; Al-Muhanna et al., 2023; Grubert, 2019). Surveys were distributed in June 2022 and contained questions measuring residents' support for the Tar-Pamlico BEC and one question allowing residents to add assets to a digital map with pertinent metadata (e.g., address, description, photos). Assets identified in the survey will be integrated with those provided in the AI workshops.

> Goal 3: Create a website to host the digital interactive Tar-Pamlico BEC map and other relevant project content.
>
> *Objective 3.1*: Create a website for the project via ArcGIS StoryMaps.
>
> *Objective 3.2*: Generate a digital interactive map of collected geotagged assets to embed in the project website.

To increase public awareness, pride, and visibility of the Tar-Pamlico BEC, a project website was created via ArcGIS StoryMaps, a web-based application that allows creators to share maps in the context of narrative and other multimedia content (Esri, 2022; Yeager et al., 2022). Within the project website, individuals can learn about the Tar-Pamlico BEC, discover community engagement/events happening with the project, follow the project on social media, access the resident survey, view a digital interactive map of assets compiled thus far, and learn more about other rural and small-town communities across North Carolina who are doing similar work.

Measuring Project Impact

Impact of the Tar-Pamlico BEC work is being measured by the amount of public interaction with the project's digital footprint, which includes the ArcGIS StoryMap and social media accounts on Instagram and Facebook, public interest after participating in the research component of this project, and the number of invited opportunities to present the project to the public. Each of the authors of this article contributed to these areas of project impact in at least one of the following ways: assistance with the promotion and implementation of asset mapping workshops, advisement on asset mapping workshop and survey content, development and management of the Tar-Pamlico BEC's digital presence, collaboration on submission of IRB application (UMCIRB 22-000340), and guidance on best practices for community engagement with this project.

Impact of Project Website

The official website for the Tar-Pamlico BEC was created through ArcGIS StoryMaps (Esri, 2022) ArcGIS StoryMaps allows the user and owner of the site to access the view count over a maximum period of 12 months. As of February 2023, the Tar-Pamlico River Basin Blue-Economy Corridor StoryMap has a total of 1,273 views over the past year with an average of 3.49 views per day (Figure 2). Although average viewership is seemingly low, consistent viewership over time positively indicates that should grant funding be secured to integrate the current web-

site content with a new website for Sound Rivers, the Tar-Pamlico BEC content might contribute to consistent public viewership of the organization's website.

Impact of Project Social Media

The Tar-Pamlico BEC Instagram (@tarpam-bec) was the main source of social media promotion for the BEC. To keep branding consistent and increase name recognition, the BEC Instagram features the same blue circular logo used for workshop materials created by the student BEC team (Figure 3). Most of the posts featured on Instagram were created in Canva, which enables use of a branding kit for a cohesive look on the Instagram feed.

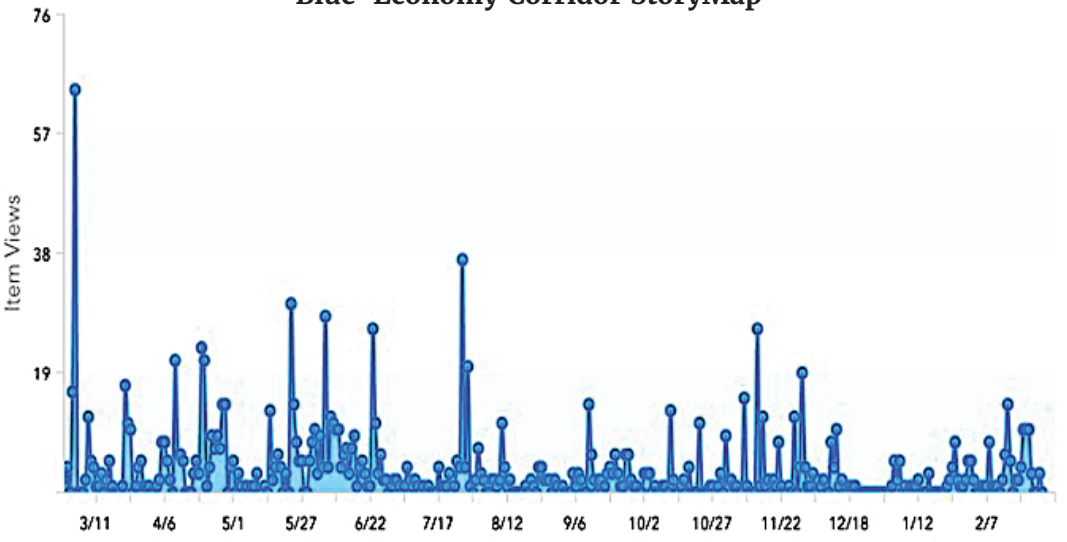
Instagram also allows content to be published through either a permanent post or a 24-hour story. Posts on the BEC Instagram included asset mapping workshop fliers, updates to the project, and additional events happening in the community related to the blue economy corridor. Instagram stories were used to increase user interaction with the BEC page. Although these stories lasted for only 24 hours, Instagram allows all temporary stories to be archived. Older stories are not available to the public eye, but the owner(s) of the account can still access the previously published content.

As of February 2023, the Tar-Pamlico BEC Instagram had 116 followers and 15 posts. Data collected from Instagram Insights stated that 123 accounts were reached in the past 30 days, 44 of these accounts being non-followers. This 127% increase from the previous month was most likely a result of the BEC Bowl Season 3 being released on February 3, 2023, and posting more content.

Since March 2022, the Tar-Pamlico BEC Instagram has been used to host weekly quizzes referred to as "BEC Bowl Friday." Every Friday, a quiz question related to the Tar-Pamlico BEC project is posted. These quizzes enable the BEC team to reach the audience in a fun and educational manner. Recently, the questions posted have been revolving around the different core assets of the Tar-Pamlico BEC project. As Figure 4 shows, posting the BEC Bowl yields a spike in accounts reached. Hosting the BEC Bowl has contributed to an increase in the average number of accounts reached via the Tar-Pamlico BEC Instagram.

Linktree, a website that allows users to create a home base for the resources linked to a project, was utilized to organize and centralize tracking of digital impact of the Tar-Pamlico BEC. This platform was chosen primarily because its free version provides significant functionality and exceeds the basic needs for this project. The Linktree for this project is currently linked within the Tar-Pamlico BEC Instagram, and includes links to the project's ArcGIS StoryMap, the asset mapping survey, the project's Facebook, and the podcast *Hello North*

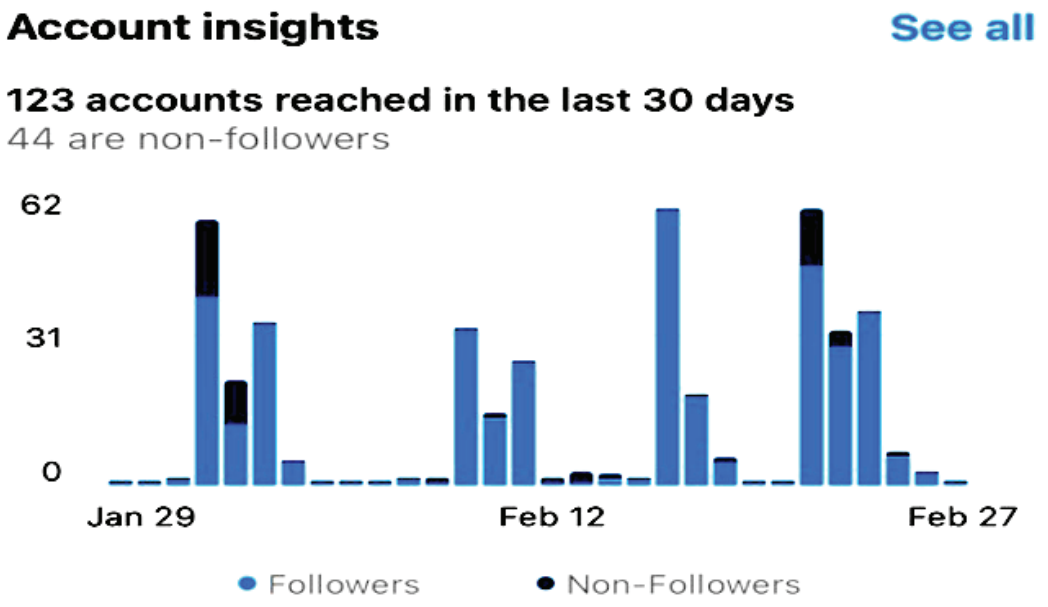
Figure 2. Views of the Tar-Pamlico River Basin Blue-Economy Corridor StoryMap



Note. ArcGIS StoryMap views February 28, 2022–February 28, 2023. Analytics provided through ArcGIS StoryMaps.

Figure 3. The Official Tar-Pamlico Blue Economy Corridor Logo

Figure 4. Tar-Pamlico Blue Economy Corridor Instagram: Accounts Reached



Note. Accounts reached January 29, 2023–February 2, 2023. Analytics provided by Instagram Professional Dashboard.

Carolina: Stories from Rural NC. The podcast *Hello North Carolina* is produced by the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (NC DNCR). NC DNCR helped fund the first round of asset mapping workshops. By following a give-and-get model, the BEC team decided to feature their podcast on the StoryMap. The Linktree was also used as a platform to host the RSVP forms for the asset mapping workshops. The Linktree analytics that we use show 52 views and 27 clicks since creation; further analytics would require the purchase of Linktree Pro.

Impact From Public Engagement

After distribution of the first round of surveys in Beaufort County, 14 residents directly emailed the BEC research team to be added to the project's email list to receive updates and opportunities to continue participating in the project. Additionally, the Tar-Pamlico BEC has been shared through five public presentations through the following outlets: Sound Rivers, ECU's Coastal Studies Institute, North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality, Pitt County Partners for Health, and the Association of Mexicans in North Carolina.

Findings and Implications for Future Work

The first goal of conducting community asset mapping workshops was achieved, with 20 attendees across the four workshops. Although an attendance rate had not been predicted for the four workshops, workshop organizers felt this attendance rate was low. Discussions of attendance rate with the Tar-Pamlico BEC advisory group resulted in a decision to move away from workshops in future rounds of asset mapping. Instead, should future grant funding be secured, community festivals and events likely to draw a diverse sample of a given county's population will be targeted for future community asset mapping. However, it is important to note that although workshop attendance was relatively low, the intimate nature of each workshop resulted in 82 distinct assets being identified, and rich information for each asset and opinions about the future direction of the Tar-Pamlico BEC were documented. This project recently received additional grant funding that will be used to conduct another round of asset mapping in each of the four target counties in spring 2023. To increase the participation rate, the research team will asset map at one event in each county that is likely to draw a diverse and representative sample of the county's population. These events include two countywide farmers markets, a Founder's Day celebration, and a countywide festival.

The second goal of providing an option to contributing assets outside asset mapping workshops was achieved through the distribution of a survey in zip codes tangential to the Pamlico River in Beaufort County. With 20,000 surveys distributed and 41 responses recorded, the survey yielded only a 0.2% response rate, which was much lower than expected. Some of the constraints to a higher response rate might stem from two issues. First, some post offices that survey postcards were delivered to were in relatively rural locations; they sometimes operate on limited staff and seldom receive requests to process EDDM orders. One of these post offices told us that they simply do not process EDDM orders, which caused confusion and required the research team to deliver that bulk of surveys to a larger post office that was unsure how they would process those survey postcards. Future survey distribution through the EDDM method might not only delineate sampling locations by zip codes that are tangential to the BEC's waterway but also by the capabilities of post offices serving each zip code to distribute EDDM mail. Also, to help increase response rate, additional efforts should be made to post the online survey link in digital spaces such as the Tar-Pamlico BEC social media sites or the project's official website.

The third goal of creating a website to host the digital interactive Tar-Pamlico BEC map and other relevant project content was achieved. ArcGIS StoryMaps proved a useful platform for broadcasting the project because it affords users the ability to integrate data and multimedia into a "story" that becomes an informational and advocacy tool for a user's initiative. The project's functionality will continue to evolve with the planned addition of an ArcGIS Dashboard that can display aggregated survey data in an interactive and aesthetically pleasing way (Szukalski, 2023). Another planned improvement within the project's website is the interactive asset map. Currently, users can hover over each data point in the map and view metadata (e.g., latitude and longitude, resident description of the asset, asset category). However, the layout of the metadata provides only text descriptions. Future

iterations of this asset map will include photos in each point's metadata contributed by residents either through the survey or photos on social media sites that are tagged with the @tarpambec handle. Additionally, to further increase map functionality, each asset category will be populated as a layer on the map that can be turned on and off as a "filter" so that users can tailor the usefulness of the tool to their needs.

Future Strategic Directions of the Tar-Pamlico Blue Economy Corridor

Phase 1
Phase 1 of the strategic plan for the Tar-Pamlico BEC is to engage in community asset mapping, which this article has explored in depth. After the second round of asset mapping is completed in spring 2023, the project will move into Phase 2, which consists of five goals.

Phase 2: Goal 1
This goal will focus on compiling secondary resources to complement the assets contributed by BEC community members in Phase 1. Secondary resources are any data related to the asset categories that are available to the public (e.g., North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality water testing reports, statewide STEAM asset mapping data). These data sets will be cross promoted through the BEC map and will strengthen the functionality and applicability of the final digital map to a wide range of end users, thus ultimately increasing traffic to Sound Rivers' website.

Phase 2: Goal 2
This goal focuses on the implementation of an annual river basin–wide summit of existing and potential advisory group members. The summit is intended to serve as an opportunity for community leaders from the Tar-Pamlico BEC to provide feedback on the process undertaken so far to establish proof of concept for a blue economy corridor. The summit is intended to also provide a space and time for envisioning future functionality and developments of the Tar-Pamlico BEC. The first summit is planned for fall 2023 and will be geographically bound to the initial four target counties of the project. Given the distance between the most western edge and most eastern edges of this stretch of the corridor, advisory group members will be polled for the interest in a face-to-face or virtual summit.

Phase 2: Goal 3
This goal focuses on pivoting the BEC survey distribution method to online outlets, including the project's social media outlets, website, and affiliated organizational email lists. To increase transparency in survey results, a dashboard will be embedded into the project's website reflecting aggregated survey responses in real time that may be explored by the public.

Phase 2: Goal 4
This goal focuses on establishing a financial sustainability plan for the BEC. Previous and current funding support for this project have provided opportunities for pilot data collection that prioritizes residents' needs and wants for their community that a blue economy corridor might help satisfy. This pilot work serves as a springboard to pursue additional funding to build out the remaining portions of the Tar-Pamlico BEC vision. Two major remaining portions of this project to be funded include the transition of the project to a non–ArcGIS StoryMap website and hiring a Tar-Pamlico BEC specialist.

Objective 8 in the MOP signed between the research team and Sound Rivers (Appendix) consisted of exploring development options for the transition to a non-ArcGIS StoryMap website. This objective has been achieved with vendor options and a drafted budget should a funding option present itself. However, this goal will help formalize the funding model that will be pursued in the next 5 years for the BEC (e.g., membership dues in exchange for inclusion on the digital map, grant opportunities).

The Tar-Pamlico BEC specialist position is a brainchild of the research team and Sound Rivers stemming from a persistent trend in visitor phone calls to Sound Rivers requesting information about itineraries within the Tar-Pamlico River Basin. The nature and scope of conservation work that the organization must accomplish unfortunately leaves little bandwidth to assist with these requests. The Tar-Pamlico BEC specialist's responsibilities might therefore include the following: assisting visitors with curating experiences in the Tar-Pamlico River Basin with the assistance of the digital, interactive asset map; managing marketing and branding initiatives for the Tar-Pamlico BEC; managing Sound Rivers' online camping platform reservation system; managing Sound Rivers' website; and assisting Sound Rivers' staff with environmental project

and public outreach initiatives as needed. A position description, hiring requirements and eligibility, and salary have been drafted through review of various data sources (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Census Bureau, GlassDoor, etc.) and is ready to be included in future grant proposals.

Phase 2: Goal 5
This goal focuses on developing a marketing plan for the Tar-Pamlico BEC. Opportunities for strategic connections with regional, state, and national marketing organizations, initiatives, and so on, will be inventoried. Connections that seem promising will be contacted and the marketing plan shared for transparency and collaboration.

Phase 3
Phase 3 of this project is contingent upon securing necessary funding, at which point three developments will occur. First, a contract will be formalized with a vendor to create the new website for Sound Rivers with all their requested functionality that will also host the final digital Tar-Pamlico BEC map. Second, the Tar-Pamlico BEC specialist will be hired. Third, before the website is officially published, the vendor will be asked to help develop a pop-up disclaimer that must be read before users may enter the website that emphasizes the purpose of the map and instructions on using its contents only in conjunction with actual visual observations of conditions in the BEC. This is a particularly important message for users who may have never visited portions of the BEC that they include in their itinerary.

Discussion

Embarking upon regional community/economic development initiatives requires strategic piecemeal planning, especially if its foundation requires community input. Prioritizing residents' voice in this project through AI signals a commitment to transparency, authenticity, and democratic development of an initiative like the Tar-Pamlico BEC that ultimately increases the likelihood of residents' future support of this initiative's growth. However, it should be noted that attempting to capture diverse community input through inclusive methods across a geographic scope of four counties can be challenging, particularly if timelines are a constraint. Smaller funding opportunities are often accompanied with shorter timelines, which in this case meant that securing locations/events and creating marketing materials for each round of asset mapping had to be completed in 6 months. Meeting such timelines is particularly challenging if community events are not primarily scheduled during the time that funding is available. Therefore, to scale up the geographic scope of this project, larger funding opportunities will need to be secured that allow for longer time frames in data collection.

Conclusion

The community-engagement model used to develop the Tar-Pamlico BEC demonstrates a way in which AI may be utilized to support development initiatives that support social, economic, and environmental community sustainability. Even more, this work exemplifies the usefulness of AI in identifying nonmaterial quality of life assets within communities. As the Tar-Pamlico BEC evolves, community involvement will remain prioritized in hopes of not only securing residents' buy-in, but also to improve the BEC's ability to authentically reflect values and community idiosyncrasies across the river basin to its visitors locally and from afar.

About the Authors

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Appendix. Memorandum of Partnership Between the ECU Research Team and Community Partner, Sound Rivers

The purpose of this Memorandum of Partnership (MOP) is to mutually acknowledge a commitment to a working relationship between the community and University Partners related to activities of the East Carolina University Engagement Outreach Scholars Academy (EOSA). The purpose of this partnership is to collaborate on a project to begin a Blue Economy Corridor (BEC) in the Eastern portion of the Tar-Pamlico River Basin. The larger goal beyond EOSA is to document BEC assets through a digital interactive map that BEC visitors can use to curate their experiences in the Eastern portion of the Tar-Pamlico River Basin. The goal of this EOSA project is to complete the first phase of developing the BEC. In this EOSA project, seven objectives will be accomplished to complete this goal.

Objective 1 (Completed by July 25th)
To inform resident survey design and overall vision for the BEC, an advisory board consisting of stakeholders from communities directly located on the Tar or Pamlico Rivers.

Objective 2 (Completed by September 10th)
To gauge resident support for a Pamlico-Tar River Basin Blue Economy Corridor, a resident attitude survey will be distributed to residents within counties located within the proposed corridor. Antecedents for their support of the corridor will be measured using research-supported survey constructs (e.g., perceived empowerment, place attachment) will be measured to inform the design and content of the corridor asset map.

Objective 3 (Completed by November 5th)
An inventory of the current hospitality assets (e.g., breweries, local retail businesses) of communities along the Tar River will be conducted. Identification of hospitality related economic assets (e.g., breweries, hotels) will be achieved in two ways. First, hospitality assets will be verified through researching existing secondary data sources (e.g., Chamber of Commerce websites). Second, residents within the counties of interest will be solicited to crowdsource hospitality assets on a public Google map via the proposed resident survey.

Objective 4 (Completed by November 5th)
An inventory of the current nature-based tourism assets of communities along the Tar River will be conducted. Nature-based tourism assets may include but are not exclusive to kayak launches, camping platforms, fishing locations, and environmental interpretation initiatives. This inventory will be achieved in three ways. First, nature-based assets will be verified through researching existing secondary data sources (e.g., existing paddle trail maps). Second, residents within the counties of interest will be solicited to crowdsource ecotourism assets on a public Google map.

Objective 5 (Completed by November 5th)
An inventory of the current sociocultural assets of communities along the Tar River will be conducted. Sociocultural assets may include but are not exclusive to African American heritage sites (e.g. Shiloh Landing in Princeville) and Civil War sites (e.g. Rocky Mount Mills). The sociocultural asset inventory will be achieved in two ways. First, sociocultural assets will be verified through researching existing secondary data sources (e.g., ECU libraries collections). Second residents within the counties of interest will be solicited to crowdsource sociocultural assets on a public Google map.

Objective 6 (Completed by November 5th)
Advisory board members will be engaged in asset mapping for hospitality, nature-based, and sociocultural assets in the BEC.

Objective 7 (Completed by November 5th)
The BEC ArcGIS Story map will be updated with assets provided through each stakeholder.

Objective 8 (Completed by July 25th)
Options for Sound Rivers' website revamp will be researched. The website revamp might

include combining maps together to centralize data sets and streamline website access points for users. Data generated through this research will include costs for redesign as well as options for control of generating and directly inputting content into the website and its maps.

Each partner may be invited to attend relevant meetings in person or virtually scheduled by the EOSA as participation is expected. A schedule for these meetings will be provided by the director of EOSA.

In addition, each partner is accountable for his/her contributions to the development and implementation of an engaged research project that addresses a jointly identified challenge of interest to both the ECU EOSA scholar and community partnership. The timeline for the project is tentatively outlined above with a proposed completion date for each objective is provided. Resources necessary for completion of the project are expected to come from both the university and community partner. Resources from ECU/EOSA include

- Seed funding to pay for design and distribution of resident survey using ECU University Printing & Graphics ($4000)
- Seed funding to pay for travel for advisory board meetings as well as transcriptions of recorded meetings ($1000)
- Qualtrics to create an online survey (provided through ECU)
- SPSS for statistical analysis of survey results (provided through ECU)
- Subscription to ArcGIS for the update to the existing BEC ArcGIS Story Map (provided through ECU)
- Microsoft Office Suite (provided through ECU)
- Google Maps (free)
- One EC Scholar (provided through ECU)
- One graduate student (provided through ECU)

The roles of the partners will evolve as the project moves forward. Decisions made for the project will involve both the community and university partners.

The project will be evaluated for effectiveness and efficiency by the community and university partner through monthly meetings which will be scheduled to accommodate the availability of Sound Rivers (Clay Barber). Evaluation will include a debrief in each monthly meeting as to whether or not each objective slated for the month is achieved. In each meeting, time will be set aside to discuss project goals that specifically benefit Sound Rivers and adjustments made to those goals where necessary.

Data generated for this project will be managed as follows. Emily Yeager, Clay Barber (Sound Rivers), and an EC Scholar/Graduate Student will have access to the Qualtrics survey. Emily Yeager and an EC Scholar/Graduate Student will have access to the survey data and will be responsible for data cleaning, analysis, and interpretation. Emily Yeager will have access to the Interview/Focus Group Recordings as well as any other meeting materials. Clay Barber and an EC Scholar/Graduate Student will have access to the Interview/Focus Group anonymous transcriptions. The data will be secured on Emily Yeager's encrypted computer on ECU's campus and it will be stored for two years to accommodate data analysis.

Each partner will dedicate the time necessary for the development and implementation of this project. In addition, each partner is committed to the growth and development of the community-university partnership with the intent to position the partnership for further engaged scholarship including publications, grant funding, and other activities upon conclusion of the EOSA.

This MOP specifically applies to the duration of the EOSA project only. Should either partner feel the terms of the agreement are not being met, he/she should contact Elizabeth Hodge, Director of Engaged Research (hodgee@ecu.edu; 252-328-6175)

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Academic Community-Engaged Learning and Student Mental Health and Wellness: Understanding The Lived Experiences of Undergraduate Students

Dissertation Overview

Stephanie J. Brewer

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to illuminate the experiences of undergraduate students who participated in academic community-engaged learning, specifically as those experiences related to student mental health and wellness. The data for this qualitative interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was collected through semistructured interviews with seven undergraduate students. Analysis resulted in the identification of essential components of the student community-engaged learning experience as it relates to students' mental health and wellness and included three main themes: Identity (Head), Belonging (Heart), and Agency (Hands). The implications of these findings are many, including pedagogical considerations for community-engaged classrooms and campuswide considerations for the inclusion of high-impact practices, as well as community partner implications. Ultimately, the findings of this study will lead to a better informed, nuanced, macrolevel strategy that higher education institutions can use to impact the state of student mental health and wellness broadly.

Keywords: community-engaged learning, student experience, mental health, wellness, trauma-informed

Mental health and wellness should be a top priority for higher education institutions (HEIs) nationally. Mental health is a persistence and retention issue, wherein students with a mental health disability tend to earn lower grades, have less social engagement on campus, be less likely to seek out or receive campus services, and have lower rates of persistence to graduation (Amaya et al., 2019; Cleary et al., 2011; Goss et al., 2010; Hartley, 2013; Hawley et al., 2016; Jorgensen et al., 2018; National Council on Disability, 2017; Quin, 2017). Perhaps even more importantly, mental health and wellness is a life-or-death issue. The American College Health Association (2018), in the *National College Health Assessment*, estimated that approximately 11% of undergraduate students have seriously considered suicide, and approximately 2% of students have attempted suicide (p. 14). HEIs are struggling to meet the increasing demand resulting from the rise in the number of students reporting difficulty with mental health (Ackerman et al., 2014; Katz & Davison, 2013; Kruisselbrink Flatt, 2013; Marsh & Wilcoxon, 2015; National Council on Disability, 2017). Due to the invisible nature of mental health and wellness concerns, it is difficult for HEIs to identify students who could benefit from services.

As the demand for student mental health services increases, it is important to consider all strategies that HEIs could implement to promote improved student mental health and wellness as well as improved

persistence and retention. Community-engaged learning, an experiential pedagogy in which students participate in educational activities in partnership with the community, has been presented as a proactive, macrofocused strategy that HEIs can use to promote positive outcomes among its participants, including positive impacts on mental health and wellness (Attree et al., 2011; Checkoway, 2007; Conway et al., 2009; Flanagan & Bundick, 2011; O'Meara et al., 2011; Ortega-Williams et al., 2020; Swaner, 2007). Community-engaged learning practices are thought to have a connection to student mental health and wellness, as evidenced by participant reports of improved decision-making and problem-solving skills, increased self-confidence and self-esteem, and improved social relationships (Checkoway, 2007; Conway et al., 2009; Flanagan & Bundick, 2011; O'Meara et al., 2011; Ortega-Williams et al., 2020; Swaner, 2007). More specifically, student participants have reported improved physical and emotional health and wellness, less feelings of depression, loneliness, and anxiety (Attree et al., 2011; Conway et al., 2009; Flanagan & Bundick, 2011), lower incidence of substance abuse (Checkoway, 2007), and improved socially responsive knowledge and moral development (Conway et al., 2009; Swaner, 2007).

Although some research has shown a connection between student participation in community-engaged learning practices and positive mental health and wellness outcomes, other findings have revealed potential negative mental health and wellness outcomes, such as increased anxiety, stress, and exhaustion (Attree et al., 2011; Kulick et al., 2017). The evidence is sometimes contradictory regarding the impact of participation on students' mental health and wellness outcomes. In addition, little research has directly examined the lived experiences of the student participants, specifically as it relates to their mental health and wellness. We need to learn more about the nuances of the lived experiences of community-engaged learning student participants in order to better understand the role HEIs can play in supporting students who participate in community-engaged learning, in an effort to maximize potential positive impacts and to mitigate potential negative impacts on student mental health and wellness. This study examined the following research questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of undergraduate student participants of academic community-engaged learning, specifically as they relate to their mental health and wellness?
2. How do undergraduate student participants of academic community-engaged learning make sense of the impact of these pedagogical experiences on their mental health and wellness?

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Community-engaged learning scholarship provides the theoretical grounding for my research. Community-engaged learning is supported by the theoretical foundations built by Dewey (1938), Kolb (1984), Mezirow (1997), Kiely (2005), and Kuh (2008). Each of these foundational theories differs from the others, but they all contribute to our understanding of how students experience community-engaged learning, how they make meaning of their experiences, and how that meaning impacts their learning and lives. Welch and Plaxton-Moore (2019) provided a triadic theoretical framework that helps to synthesize these foundations of community-engaged learning:

> Engaged teaching and learning are composed of the following components: (a) epistemology as multiple ways of knowing with an emphasis on the intellectual development of a student as well as generating new knowledge that builds capacity for society at large, (b) ontology as a way of being or doing in the world by applying what is learned and experienced, and (c) critical reflection to contemplate and make meaning of the learning and doing. (p. 39)

Welch and Plaxton-Moore's (2019) theoretical framework provides the base for my conceptual framework, shown in Figure 1. My conceptual framework situates the existing scholarship on community-engaged learning and student mental health and wellness within this existing theoretical base. This resulting conceptual framework provides an overall picture of how I understand the phenomenon of community-engaged learning and specifically its impact on student mental health and wellness. Items noted in ***bold italics*** are those that I have mapped onto Welch and Plaxton-Moore's existing frame-

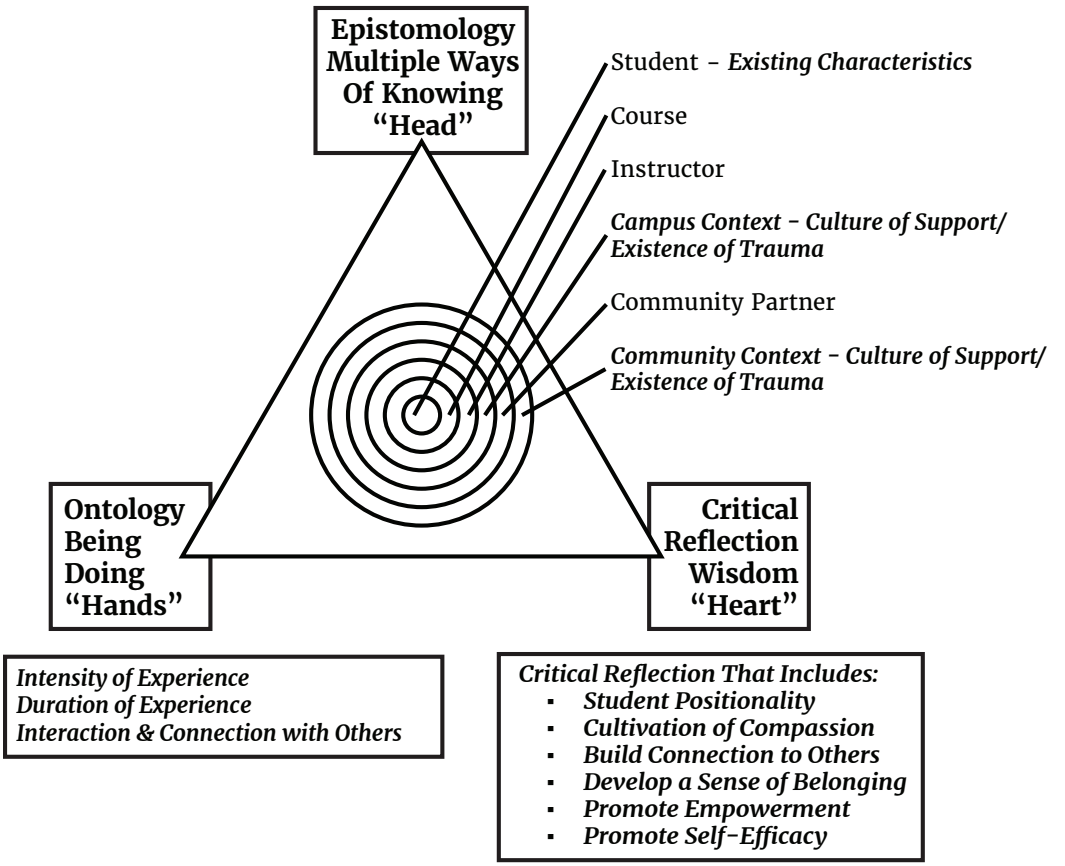
work. To read more about this conceptual framework and the corresponding relevant literature, see the full dissertation (Brewer, 2023).

Brief Overview of Relevant Literature

The existing scholarship shows that community-engaged learning experiences provide mental health and wellness benefits for student participants (Attree et al., 2011; Checkoway, 2007; Conway et al., 2009; Flanagan & Bundick, 2011; O'Meara et al., 2011; Ortega-Williams et al., 2020; Swaner, 2007). Scholars have pointed out that these benefits include increased feelings of connection (Bronsteen, 2016; Checkoway, 2007), an improved sense of belonging (Flanagan & Bundick, 2011; Ribera et al., 2017; Soria et al., 2012), increased feelings of empowerment (Attree et al., 2011; Conway et al., 2009; Swaner, 2007), and increased self-efficacy (Bronsteen, 2016; Conway et al., 2009). Scholars have also agreed that these student benefits are impacted by certain factors related to the experience, such as intensity and duration of the experience (Conway et al., 2009). Additionally, it has been noted that providing intentional critical reflection opportunities is essential to producing these student benefits (Bronsteen, 2016; Conway et al., 2009).

Although less research exists on the potential negative impacts to student participants' mental health and wellness, scholars agree that these potential negative impacts exist. Specifically, scholars have found negative impacts for those students who were already experiencing high stress as a result of existing conditions such as a disability (Attree et al., 2011), as well as for those students who identify as part of marginalized communities (Kulick et al., 2017). Additionally, it is important to understand the potential negative impact of community trauma on the student experience (Falkenburger et al., 2018; Pinderhughes et

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework for Understanding Community-Engaged Learning and Student Mental Health and Wellness at Higher Education Institutions



al., 2015; Weinstein et al., 2014). Although more information is needed to better understand the experience of these students, it is agreed that HEIs have a responsibility to avoid these potential negative outcomes and to support and prepare their student participants in these experiences.

Gaps remain in the existing literature regarding what we know about community-engaged learning and student mental health and wellness outcomes. The definition of "community-engaged learning" has expanded to include multiple implementation strategies (direct service, advocacy, community building, etc.), curricular models, and modalities for delivery (virtual, in-person, hybrid). The majority of existing scholarship is based on traditional direct service. Therefore, we do not yet know if participation in different types of community-engaged learning results in differences in student mental health and wellness outcomes. Additionally, are student experiences different for virtual versus in-person community engagement? How do these experiences differ for students who are experiencing poor wellness outcomes, or high anxiety, already? How do students make meaning of their experiences, and to what do they attribute their mental health and wellness outcomes? HEIs need to know more about the student experience of community-engaged learning in order to better understand how they may best support the mental health and wellness of student participants.

Methodology

This study used interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to illuminate the lived experiences of students who participated in community-engaged learning. The main objective of IPA is to elucidate experience and to understand how individuals make sense of their experience. IPA is a method that allows the researcher to gather rich descriptions and personal meanings of lived experience (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012/2014). IPA is grounded in the basics of phenomenology and hermeneutics. Although IPA draws on the foundations of phenomenology in that it is interested in examining the lived experiences of the participants, it is different in that it does not aim to transcend, or rise beyond, our everyday assumptions. IPA acknowledges that people exist in a broader context and world and are in relationship with others, and participants and researchers cannot remove this existence from their experience of the world; therefore, IPA seeks to understand the meaning made by the participants about those experiences (Larkin & Thompson, 2012; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012/2014; Shinebourne, 2011).

Before gathering data, IRB approval was obtained, and participants were recruited. At a large Midwest Research 1 university, the researcher identified seven different undergraduate academic courses that included a community-engagement requirement. Recruitment emails were sent to 134 undergraduate students. The student participants were selected from the self-identified interested pool of students to ensure representation from multiple courses and disciplines, as well as varied demographic backgrounds, in order to ensure that the phenomenon under study was considered from multiple perspectives or lived experiences. Seventeen students voiced interest in participating in the study, 10 individuals were invited to interview, and seven students confirmed and participated in interviews. As part of this study, participants were asked to talk about their community-engaged learning experiences and how those experiences related to their mental health and wellness. Participants were not asked to disclose personal or confidential information about their mental health and wellness status, including such information as diagnoses, symptomatology, or treatment. The interviews were semistructured, which allowed for the telling of experience in rich detail (Larkin & Thompson, 2012; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012/2014). As part of the interview process, students were asked to submit an example of an assignment they completed as part of the community-engaged learning portion of their course. Possible submissions included reflection papers, journal entries, discussion board submissions, and other related artifacts. The submitted artifact allowed the researcher to access participant thoughts and experiences as they occurred during the community-engaged learning experience, as opposed to the reflective comments obtained during interviews.

Analysis and Key Findings

IPA seeks to understand the examined phenomenon as a whole (Dibley et al., 2020; Groenewald, 2004; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012/2014). IPA directs the researcher to fully immerse themselves in the data in order to best understand the participant's experience and meaning making

(Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012/2014). The researcher followed the IPA analysis steps as outlined by Larkin and Thompson (2012). After considerable time and reflection, three main themes were identified—informed by the researcher's conceptual framework—that provided a meaningful way to talk about the experiences of all the participants: (1) Identity (Head), (2) Belonging (Heart), and (3) Agency (Hands). Table 1 provides a summary of these themes.

The first theme, Identity (Head), highlighted that reflection on identity, and knowledge development around identity, are essential parts of the mental health and wellness experience of community-engaged learning. It is important that these reflection experiences be restorative, give space to explore personal identity-based trauma, and provide opportunities for validation, so that participants are more likely to feel safe to continue exploring new ways of thinking and knowing. One participant stated:

> I know that this really did bring out like a lot of emotion to things that I've been through. I've never seen it be categorized in a specific way. But it has, has really helped me figure out myself and who and how I am.

This finding is supported by existing literature. Critical reflection is identified as

Table 1. Summary of Findings

Theme	Summary
Identity (Head)	• Reflection and knowledge development around the topic of identity are essential parts of student participants' mental health and wellness experience. • Intentional facilitation of reflection activities focused on identity allowed students to explore their preexisting understandings of who they are as individuals, and who they are in relation to others. • Reflection and knowledge development on the topic of identity are inherently emotional experiences. • In-class discussions, and opportunities to share personal stories, allowed students to explore their personal identity and develop a new understanding of self. • Providing space for restorative reflection around identity, and the opportunity to process these reflections with others in the class, resulted in participants feeling a validation of self.
Belonging (Heart)	• Developing a sense of belonging is an essential part of the mental health and wellness experience of community-engaged learning participants. • Intentional facilitation of opportunities to practice vulnerability, empathy, and compassion, as well as opportunities to observe others doing the same, helped participants to feel connected to one another, to their classroom community, the campus at large, and the broader community. • Feeling validated and cared about by their peers, faculty, and community partner(s), as well as having the opportunity to validate and care for others, improved participants' sense of belonging and ultimately had a direct impact on student mental health and wellness.
Agency (Hands)	• Developing agency is an essential part of the mental health and wellness experience of community-engaged learning participants. • Students developed their voice in the classroom and community by making decisions and telling their stories. • Students developed a sense of purpose by struggling with the concept of impact, including what it means to be impactful as well as questioning their own ability to make an impact. • Ultimately, this process of developing agency resulted in a sense of pride and gratitude for their experience and had a positive impact on student mental health and wellness.

a key component of community-engaged learning and can lead to knowledge development and behavior change (Ash & Clayton, 2009; Jacoby, 1996). The experiences of this study's participants add to the idea that critical reflection on identity should be focused on the cultivation of compassion for self as well. Participants described the impact of participating in restorative conversations around identity with their peers, faculty, and community partners wherein they felt encouraged to disrupt their existing perceptions of their social identities and their associated histories.

The second theme, Belonging (Heart), highlighted that developing a sense of belonging is an essential part of the mental health and wellness experience of community-engaged learning. Participants' sense of belonging was facilitated by the practice and reciprocation of vulnerability, empathy, and compassion. One participant stated:

> I think that the only thing is just like I think that stronger connections are formed through shared vulnerability and like openness. And so even my saying, like from my covering that or her reading about it, like that is a vulnerable piece of me and that, that she responded to really openly. And I think that in general that makes her really, that like, opens up the ability to have a stronger connection.

A second participant shared:

> One of the things that felt very impactful to me is that people, whether they're from different communities, different cultures, some identities that they held, whether that was like their sexuality and stuff like that, was never accepted. And they, this was one of their first times being in a group that would accept the identity of them. And I think that was very impactful. To me to see and see the emotions and the backstory of them as people. It was such a common occurrence.

This finding is supported by existing literature. Soria et al. (2012) defined "sense of belonging" as a student's sense of connection and affiliation with their community. The participants of the current study all discussed the various ways in which their community-engaged learning experience contributed to their sense of belonging. They specifically highlighted the relationships they were able to build with their classmates and how those relationships helped them to feel connected and important to others. The participants of this study also highlighted that their developed sense of belonging did not just happen by chance. Rather, they noted the impact of in-class reflections and in-community experiences that helped them to practice vulnerability, empathy, and compassion for others. It needs to be noted, however, that being vulnerable and showing compassion for others was only half of the scenario. Participants in this study also highlighted the importance of a reciprocal experience with their peers, faculty, and community partners. They not only shared vulnerability, but they also witnessed vulnerability; they not only showed care for others, but they felt cared for by others as well.

The final theme, Agency (Hands), highlighted that agency is an essential part of the mental health and wellness experience of community-engaged learning. Participants practiced taking control over their environment and telling their stories, and also struggled with what it means to have impact while ultimately working to understand their sense of purpose. One participant shared:

> The positive emotions are immediately following the moment when I'm having fun with the kids and the kids are enjoying themselves. But when I zoom out to look at the grand scheme of things, it's more negative because it does feel like making an impact, yes, but there's so much more that needs to be done.

Another participant commented:

> I think it goes back to the idea of the impact that I can have with my effort and my time within a community. I think that has changed my idea of thinking about what my time and effort means and what me continuing my education can mean for being able to make a bigger impact to our community.

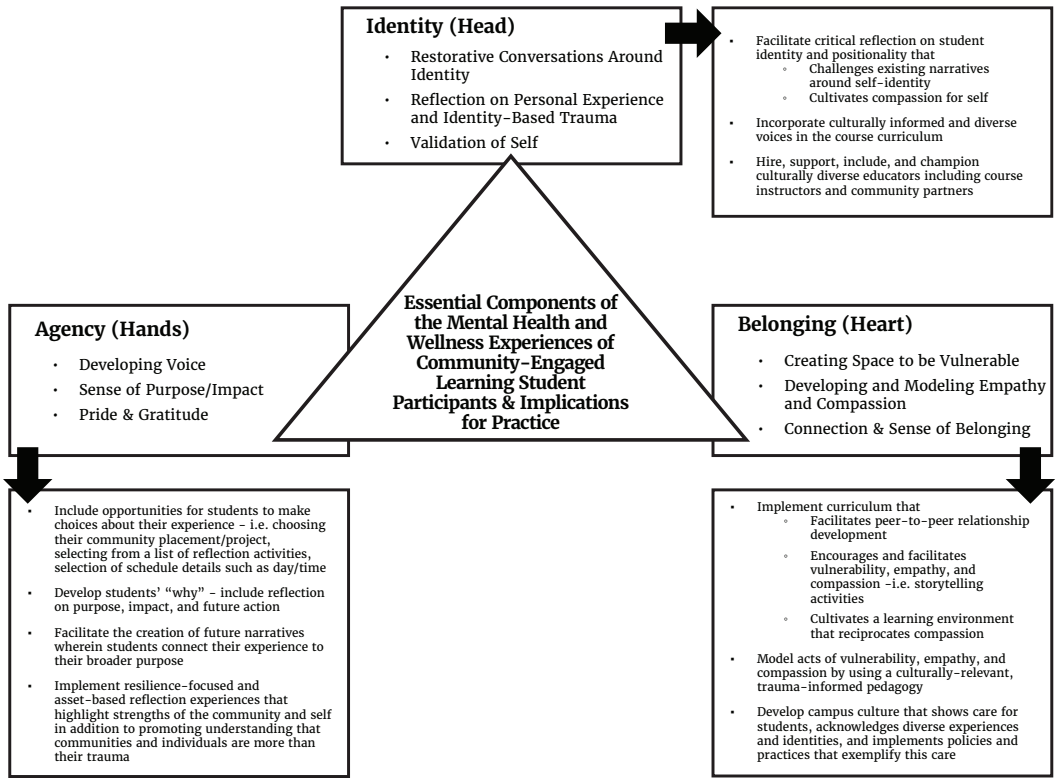
This finding is supported by existing literature. Attree et al. (2011) defined student agency as "the feeling that they are

being useful to others, feeling in control of events, being able to express ideas and having an awareness of individual rights" (p. 252). The participants of the current study all discussed some of the ways that their community-engaged learning experience contributed to their sense of agency. Specifically, students noted that this sense of agency resulted in part from having the opportunity to make decisions about their engagement experience and having the opportunity to tell their stories. The findings of this study also noted that students developed a sense of agency by grappling with the idea of impact, including questioning both what it means to be impactful and their ability to generate their desired impact. The participants of the current study struggled with understanding their purpose in relation to the community experience. They asked questions about why they were engaged in the community, what they could do while they were there, and how they may be able to further their impact in the future. It was the reflection on these questions, and the ability to make sense of them, that ultimately led to students feeling empowered rather than stuck. Community-engaged learning pedagogy creates tension that can decrease student mental health and wellness in the short term (Attree et al., 2011; Kulick et al., 2017; Swaner, 2007). This emotional experience can be processed, and reframed, through the intentional use of resilience-focused and asset-based reflection opportunities. These types of reflection opportunities pose questions, or engage students in readings or other activities, that help them to focus on community strengths rather than deficits, on individual students' strengths as well as their classmates', and to encourage the understanding that individuals and communities are more than their trauma (Ginwright, 2018).

Implications

This section summarizes and briefly outlines relevant implications from this study. Figure 2 summarizes these essential components of the mental health and wellness experiences of community-engaged learning student participants and the resulting implications for practice. Additionally, implications for

Figure 2. Essential Components of the Mental Health and Wellness Experience of Community-Engaged Learning Student Participants and Implications for Practice



higher education practice broadly will be elaborated.

Implications for Identity (Head)

Community-engaged learning faculty-practitioners should facilitate critical reflection on student identity and positionality. Further, this reflection should challenge students' existing narratives around self-identity and work toward cultivating compassion for self. This reflection process should allow space for students to share their own stories and hold space for the processing of emotion that will inevitably be tied to the sharing of those stories. Additionally, faculty–practitioners should incorporate culturally informed and diverse voices into the course curriculum through scholarship and readings, testimonies, community partners, and the faculty themselves. Thus, in order to increase the likelihood that students will see themselves represented in their classroom faculty, HEIs should hire, support, include, and champion culturally diverse educators throughout campus.

Implications for Belonging (Heart)

Faculty–practitioners who are facilitating community-engaged learning experiences should implement curriculum that facilitates peer-to-peer relationship development. These relationships can then be used as a base for facilitating vulnerability, empathy, and compassion between classmates. Critical reflection activities should be designed to incorporate these acts of vulnerability and help students learn to develop empathy and compassion for others. Faculty–practitioners should focus on the cultivation of a learning environment that reciprocates compassion and should not leave this reciprocation up to chance. Reflection activities should be developed and implemented to ensure this reciprocation is happening. Additionally, faculty–practitioners should be student-centered, should incorporate trauma-informed pedagogy in the classroom and broader campus, and should consider the inclusion of brave space concepts and practices. These frameworks exist in the literature and can be used as guides (Arao & Clemens, 2013; Cless & Goff, 2017; Davidson, 2017; Harper & Neubauer, 2021; Harrison et al., 2023; Henshaw, 2022; Wood, 2021).

Implications for Agency (Hands)

Faculty–practitioners should include opportunities for students to make choices about their community-engaged learning experience. Students might implement such choice through choosing their community partner/project, choosing which reflection activities they will complete, having a voice in the due dates and timelines of the course, and so on. The reflection activities in the course should help students think about their "why," including questions around their purpose, their definitions of impact, their understanding of their own impact, and future action. Students may benefit from the facilitation of future-focused narratives, wherein they connect their community-engaged learning experiences to their broader goals and purpose. Finally, faculty–practitioners should implement resilience-focused and asset-based reflection experiences that highlight the strengths of the community as well as each student's own strengths as an individual. These reflections should be intentional in helping students understand that individuals and communities are more than their trauma.

Implications for Higher Education Institutions Broadly

In addition to these implications surrounding identity, belonging, and agency, implications for HEIs broadly also remain. First, as the results of this study have shown, community-engaged learning as a pedagogy has the potential to be incredibly emotionally impactful, particularly if critical reflection is included that explores identity-based trauma and community trauma. In-class activities around vulnerability, empathy, and compassion have the potential to impact students in negative ways. Faculty who choose to include community-engaged learning pedagogy in their courses should do so intentionally and thoughtfully. This type of classroom learning requires a commitment from the faculty–practitioner, and thus it should not be considered an add-on, but rather a fully integrated course component.

Second, campuses must consider similar implications when making decisions around setting graduation requirements involving high-impact practices as community-engaged learning. Community-engaged learning experiences have very real-world implications, for both students and community partners, and therefore it is important to consider faculty motivations for including such experiences in their courses. If faculty are required to include community-engaged

learning but are not personally motivated to facilitate this type of curriculum, the intentional care needed to support these learning experiences may not exist. Additionally, if community-engaged learning is a campus requirement, then the campus also needs to consider how they are providing the financial and human resources needed to support this work, how they are training their faculty in these areas, how they are supporting and removing barriers for student participation (transportation, financial support for work release, etc.), and whether the community partners are interested and/or ready to support that scale of student involvement. This same level of consideration should be taken by HEIs when including community engagement and community-engaged learning in campus strategic plans and other visionary work.

Finally, this study has implications that relate to community partners and site selection. Community partners are considered coeducators in community-engaged learning experiences, and as such, they have a similar set of responsibilities for student learning, student support, and, in the case of this study, student mental health and wellness. HEIs frequently offer a focus on faculty training and support for this type of pedagogy, but we also need to consider the training and support that our community partners receive in regard to their role as coeducators. Community partners and HEIs need to have clear expectations around partner roles and the responsibilities for taking on these students as learners. Consideration for community partner orientation and training should be similar to that taken for faculty-practitioners. Additionally, HEIs need to provide the financial and human resources needed to support these partnerships and the orientation, training, and support required to work toward student learning objectives together.

The purpose of this qualitative IPA study was to illuminate the experiences of undergraduate students who participated in academic community-engaged learning, specifically as those experiences related to student mental health and wellness. Data analysis resulted in three main themes—Identity (Head), Belonging (Heart), and Agency (Hands)—which provided a meaningful way to talk about the experiences of all the participants. The study results concerning the lived experiences of community-engaged learning participants will help HEIs to better understand their role in supporting these students, and to create trauma-informed, healing-centered, and resilience-focused community-engaged learning practices.

Link to full dissertation: https://www.proquest.com/openview/e0912aca9ab55624cb26d3dc8aa3bf86/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y

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