Community–University Engagement: A Process for Building Democratic Communities

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Community as Classroom

College and university students contribute to the geographically defined communities where they live during their college career through course-based and cocurricular activities; they will also play important roles in the communities where they live and work after graduation. Because the contributions made by individual citizens are important to communities, university faculty and administrators have emphasized preparing students as civic leaders as another response to the call for increased engagement described in the previous chapters. Scholars and practitioners have, in turn, written widely about approaches to and outcomes of service-learning as the primary pedagogy of the community–university engagement movement (Cress, Burack, Giles, Elkins, & Stevens, 2010). Faculty, in their role as teachers, have adopted service-learning approaches to connect experiential learning activities with course content through structured reflection activities (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Students in a course on juvenile delinquency at the University of Indiana-Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI) completed a service-learning project providing mentoring for incarcerated youth transitioning back to their home community upon release from a detention facility; through these experiences, the IUPUI students learned firsthand from transitioning youth about patterns of delinquency as well as the challenges of reintegrating into their home community and avoiding triggers to reoffend. First-year engineering students at Louisiana State University explored principles of engineering through a partnership with the Baton Rouge School District focused on designing playgrounds for elementary schools. Both instructors received national recognition from service-learning organizations.
and their academic disciplinary associations for these projects, which have been promoted as best practice models. Through service-learning experiences such as these, students can connect what they learn in the college classroom with the people, experiences, and places beyond the campus where the concepts will ultimately be applied.

Service-learning is not the only method through which students and university educators interact with their communities. Beyond their academic coursework, students can participate in a wide variety of community-based experiential learning opportunities during their university career, including cocurricular leadership development and citizen education activities (Kendall, 1990; Stanton, Giles, & Cruz, 1999). Student services professionals offer community service activities such as the Big Event, a nationwide day of service drawing students into university communities to build houses with Habitat for Humanity, clean up neighborhoods, and collect food for food pantries. Leadership development programs, blending community service with academic coursework focused on principles of leadership, invite students to reflect on providing leadership for community-building initiatives (Keen & Hall, 2009). National initiatives, such as the American Democracy Project sponsored by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, invite students and faculty to adopt service-learning and also to engage in discussions of current events as reported in the New York Times.

When educators and their students connect with people, experiences, and places beyond the campus in these various ways, teachers and learners frame community as a classroom where formal and informal learning takes place. Doing so has implications for all involved in these encounters because the classroom metaphor holds such considerable power in the public imagination (Plater, 1995). The word classroom traditionally evokes specific images: a space inside a building, on a campus, set aside for learning structured by a recognized expert (i.e., a university faculty member) and free of distraction. The community-university engagement movement “tak[es] the [classroom] door off its hinges,” challenging images of the college classroom as a sacred place separate from the real world (Zlotkowski, 2001, p. 26). By framing community as a learning space, the engagement movement also acknowledges the expertise of community members as teachers (Plater, 1995).

This chapter begins by considering the prevailing rhetoric about the intended outcomes of (a) higher education. Where one stands on that issue has dictated subsequent attitudes regarding if, how, and to what end students should engage with their community, and therefore the question of intended outcomes is treated here separately from discussion of the role of higher education institutions. By distinguishing the role and the purpose of higher education, I am also intentionally highlighting twin responsibilities for colleges and universities. Universities must prepare employees and also educate citizens. To that end, this chapter focuses on teaching for active citizenship, community experiences with civic engagement, and finally the issues of institutional purpose brought to the fore when community is understood as a classroom.

Intended Outcomes of (a) Higher Education

Concerns about the U.S. economy and its global competitiveness emerged in the 1980s; at that time, leaders in government and industry looked to higher education institutions to produce graduates who were more and better prepared for working in a new economic climate (Newman, 1985). Two distinct ideas about the purpose, or intended outcomes, of a college education are evident in this discourse. One emphasizes citizenship education, and the other focuses on preparing for the global workforce, framing higher education alternatively as a public or a private good.

The public good argument is straightforward: College "educate[s] citizens"; along the way to earning a degree, individuals must also prepare to assume "their political roles both as members and agents of the body politic" (Cadwallader, 1982, p. 404). From a public good perspective, educating future civic leaders is particularly important given the documented decline of student interest and participation in politics in the decades prior to the 2008 presidential election (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). This decline has been a source of ongoing concern; a decade earlier, the American Political Science Association Task Force (1998) painted this decline as "threatening the vitality and stability of democratic politics in the United States" and called for more civic education (p. 636; see also Colby, Beaumont, Ehrlich, & Corngold, 2007; Skocpol
for structured reflection on the connections between the service and the course content. However, in the last 10 years, scholars are pointing out the limitations of service-learning as an eponymous label for community-engaged learning, given the wide variety of curricular and cocurricular activities beyond those described earlier in this chapter which can foster student development as active citizens (Smith, Nowacek, & Bernstein, 2010). Saltmarsh and Zlotkowski (2011) suggest instead civic engagement to encompass various curricular and cocurricular teaching and learning modalities positioning community as a classroom; throughout this monograph, I have respected individual authors' choice of language and use civic engagement to describe any of the wide variety of ways in which students can and do prepare for their roles as active citizens. The following section examines the various categories of student civic engagement activities individually, first to overview the empirical basis for arguments about the impact of college on future citizens and, second, to make two final points about student learning outcomes of civic engagement in general, and the experiences of participating communities and the individual community members involved.

Cocurricular Civic Engagement

The Campus Outreach Opportunity League (COOL), founded in the mid-1980s by Harvard University alumnus Wayne Meisel, is one of the oldest campus organizations dedicated to facilitating community service and civic engagement opportunities for students (Liu, 1996; Meisel & Hackett, 1986). COOL helped Harvard students address social and community issues in the greater Boston metropolitan area through volunteering and community service activities; in this sense, COOL was a typical student organization focused on volunteer activities for individuals and groups. These community service opportunities are synonymous with service-learning (Rhoads, 1998, pp. 279–280). Where service-learning is explicitly positioned as the pedagogy of the civic engagement movement, students are exploring academic concepts in the context of community as a formal classroom. Cocurricular and other experiential learning opportunities such as student leadership programs featuring community service activities also present learning opportunities in the community as an informal classroom (Bonsall, Harris, & Marczak, 2002; Dugan, 2006).

Today, many community service activities have been subsumed under the aegis of student leadership programs (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2006). Fifteen years ago, as scholars and practitioners sorted out the distinctions among various civic engagement activities and their possible outcomes, Perreault (1997) advanced what she called the "citizen leader" framework for student engagement to foster active citizenship. Through this approach, students learn to see themselves as "concerned citizens" who, along with other residents, seek to effect positive change in their communities (p. 151). Her approach connects with other calls for expanded citizen involvement in public work and the promise of the university to draw students into their roles as active citizens (Barker & Brown, 2009; Boyte, 2008). Subsequent research on the impact of various kinds of civic engagement activities, including these cocurricular opportunities, has repeatedly emphasized the importance of structured reflection and intentional connection to broader curricular learning objectives (Keen & Hall, 2008, 2009). Experiences more overtly connected with the academic curriculum provide more support for achieving student outcomes in a variety of areas (Warren, 2012).

( Academically Based ) Service-Learning

While the civic engagement movement is widely considered to have its roots in social justice activism of the 1960s and 1970s (Liu, 1996; Stanton et al., 1999), the term service-learning originates in community economic development projects during Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty. Robert Sigmon and his colleagues at the Southern Regional Education Board (1973) first used the term to describe the work of student volunteers in the Tennessee Valley between 1968 and 1973. Several authors carefully differentiated service-learning from other activities by insisting on mutual learning and mutual benefit for both student and community organizations as characteristics of community service learning experiences (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Furco, 1996).

By the late 1990s, the tone of the civic engagement literature reflected a broad consensus about the value of service-learning as a pedagogical tool (Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011). The consensus faltered around the intended
outcomes of the educational experience. This argument mirrored the dialectical nature of the ideological roots of service-learning and civic engagement, reflecting philosophical differences, or what Zlokowski (1995) referred to as the “ideological biases” of the movement’s pioneers (p. 123; see also Stanton et al., 1999). One group argued for harnessing the university’s resources “to serve a larger [democratic] purpose” (Boyer, 1996, p. 20; see also Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011). Others saw service-learning less as a tool for social change than as a powerful pedagogy to advance discipline-based academic learning.

DiPadova-Stocks (2005) points to four principle issues cycling through the literature on academically based service-learning across two decades: defining service-learning; doing it effectively; measuring the outcomes; and assessing the impacts, on students and on communities. A thorough review of the literature in each or even any one of these areas is outside the scope of this monograph. Conway, Amel, and Gerwein’s (2009) meta-analysis of more than 75 studies explores the effect of service-learning on academic, personal, social, and citizenship outcomes for K–20 students and other adult learners. Their results confirm the crucial link between course design and student learning outcomes. Teaching for active citizenship also requires attention to related impacts of civic engagement on communities. This section offers suggestions for further reading for those interested in exploring any of these topics more thoroughly.

**Course Design.** The earliest literature on service-learning included reports from instructors on how they integrated the pedagogy into their courses and the outcomes of these decisions. Explicitly connecting service-learning to formal courses in which the student had a particular interest (i.e., in their major field of study) seemed—in the early literature—to have greater impact on desired student outcomes than did other forms of community service (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000). Further, longer periods of service, such as those embedded in a particular course, led to more positive outcomes than short-term volunteering or community service experiences (Berger & Milem, 2002; Knapp, Fisher, & Levesque-Bristol, 2010). Scholars continue to offer support for these initial findings (Battistoni, Longo, & Jayanandhan, 2009; Einfield & Collins, 2008; Engberg & Fox, 2011). Based on three decades of research, two elements make

the most difference in terms of student outcomes. Rigorous reflection has been repeatedly demonstrated to be the most important element of service-learning course design, from the perspective of achieving desired outcomes (Conway et al., 2009; Felten & Clayton, 2011).

Students especially need formal opportunities for reflection as part of the civic engagement experience when they encounter unfamiliar or uncomfortable situations (Diaz & Perrault, 2010; Keen & Hall, 2008, 2009; Knapp et al., 2010). This is a well-established tenet of the field; Eyler and Giles (1999) consider reflection critical for the resolution of cognitive dissonance students may experience when serving in a setting different from their previous experiences. Motivation to bring about structural change is another possible positive outcome of structured reflection activities. Ash and Clayton (2004) offer the “articulated learning” model; through this approach, students describe the civic engagement experience, analyze this experience in the context of the course material/relevant phenomenon, and articulate the learning they have experienced (p. 135; for evaluation rubric, see Ash, Clayton, & Atkinson, 2005). This model for reflection “clearly demonstrates rather than reports learning; pushes students beyond superficial interpretations of complex issues; and facilitates academic mastery, personal growth, civic engagement and critical thinking” (Ash & Clayton, 2004, p. 140). Teaching students to develop comfort with repeated structured reflection is “central to creating a habit of questioning and integrating experience and subject matter” (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 146).

Another element of course design frequently mentioned in the literature is the instructor’s approach to issues of diversity, and students’ racial and/or socioeconomic privilege. Indeed, service-learning may not be an appropriate teaching strategy, if it is not possible to mitigate negative impacts of Whiteness or other forms of privilege on service-learners’ attitudes (Catlett & Proweller, 2011; Endres & Gould, 2009; Sroocker & Tryon, 2009). Engaging with differences does “matter,” as it supports key personal and professional learning outcomes (Keen & Hall, 2009, p. 59; Buch & Harden, 2011; Holsapple, 2012). Accordingly, careful thought must be given to designing civic engagement experiences so as to support students in exploring differences while also
coming to understand their own experiences of privilege (Seider & Hillman, 2011).

**Civic Education.** “Civic mindedness,” a quality institutions seek to nurture through civic education efforts, is “a person’s inclination or disposition to be knowledgeable of and involved in the community, and to have a commitment to act up a sense of responsibility as a member of that community” (Bringle & Steinberg, 2010, p. 429). The “civic-minded graduate” is one who “has the capacity and desire to work with others to achieve the common good” (p. 429). The 10 domains of the civic-minded graduate reflect the comprehensive list of learning outcomes identified in previously published studies on civic engagement in higher education (Bringle & Steinberg, 2010, pp. 430–436; Steinberg, Hatcher, & Bringle, 2011, p. 22). Co-curricular civic engagement and academically based service-learning both have been demonstrated repeatedly to foster civic learning and may, if designed intentionally, support the development of civic-minded graduates (Steinberg et al., 2011).

**Student Learning Outcomes**

The scholarship related to civic engagement discusses a variety of learning outcomes, ranging from discipline-specific knowledge to the cognitive and psychosocial development which occurs during the college years for traditionally aged college students. Students have the opportunity to experience public places, social spaces, and specific issues as connected with their learning in such a way as to make a two-fold difference in their education: Discipline-specific, academic learning outcomes are facilitated in a profound way through educative experiences (Dewey, 1933), and students practice citizenship skills upon which communities depend (Scobey, 2010).

Early scholarship documented the positive impact of “community service” on student academic learning and personal development (e.g., Markus, Howard, & King, 1993). Positive correlations between service and academic learning continued to be strong across several longitudinal studies conducted by researchers at UCLA’s Higher Education Research Institution, using data from the CIRP Freshman Survey (Astin & Sax, 1998; Astin, Sax, & Avalos, 1999; Astin et al., 2000; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000). Service-learning in particular “is seen to enhance students outcomes (cognitive, affective and ethical), foster a more active citizenry, . . . support a more equitable society and reconnect K–16 schools with their local communities” (Butin, 2003, p. 1675).

**Learning Outcomes.** Beginning with Cohen and Kimey’s (1994) survey of 217 communication students, Warren (2012) considered the 11 extant studies that have examined the impact of service-learning on some aspect of student learning. She notes a variety of positive effects, “including cultural awareness, social responsibility, and student cognitive learning outcomes” (p. 59). Continued research and theory development are warranted, to further explicate the precise elements of the service-learning experience that effects learning not achieved in a traditional course design.

Engberg and Fox (2011) offered a meta-analysis of the literature linking a broader array of civic engagement activities and various cognitive and psychosocial measures. In doing so, they demonstrate that service-learning contributes to two aspects of cognitive development: linguistic, cultural, and academic knowledge; and analysis of multiple perspectives, critical thinking, and problem solving (e.g., Battistoni et al., 2009; Einfeld & Collins, 2008; Jay, 2008; Jones & Abes, 2004; Lechuga, Clerc, & Howell, 2009; Morgan & Streb, 2001; Rockquemore & Schaffer, 2000). Students develop intrapersonal dimensions as well. Identity, self-awareness, confidence, and sense of empowerment are increased through civic activities, as are tolerance of and interest in diversity and ambiguity (Lechuga et al., 2009; Moely, McFarland, Miron, Mercer, & Illustre, 2002). Civic engagement also fosters student interpersonal development on two fronts: acquiring skills such as empathy and trust; and strengthening educational, career, and social commitments (e.g., Battistoni et al., 2009; Engberg & Mayhew, 2007; Jay, 2008; Jones & Abes, 2004; Keen & Hall, 2009; Mayhew & Engberg, 2011; Moely, Furco, & Reed, 2008).

Not all reviewers are positive. Eby (1998) judged the service-learning movement as “bad” because, in part, service-learning can, and sometimes does, reinforce negative stereotypes held by service-learners about members of the community in which they are serving. While this is certainly an element of course design requiring careful attention per the previous discussion, the preponderance of empirical evidence on the topic suggests that the stereotypes students held diminished as a result of interaction with diverse
others (see Holsapple's [2012] meta-analysis of the literature related to the diversity outcomes of civic engagement for further discussion of this body of literature). Students' tolerance of difference increases through service-learning and civic engagement opportunities; their level of comfort in cross-cultural interactions also increased. Intergroup dialogue and other opportunities to reflect individually and with diverse others support intra- and interpersonal growth in this area (Diaz & Perrault, 2010). Although Holsapple's analysis generally supports the premise that service learners experience positive diversity outcomes, he expresses several concerns with the various elements of the methodology in the studies reviewed, which in turn limit the trustworthiness of the findings. Continued research, with attention to sampling procedures and data sources, is necessary so as to provide empirical foundation for best practices in teaching for diversity outcomes.

**Impact of Personal Characteristics.** Course design impacts significantly the outcome of civic engagement on student learning and on cognitive and psychosocial development. Targeting specific outcomes, providing ample opportunities for structured reflection through dialogue or writing, and the length of service are all critical elements of course design. Evidence suggests that personal characteristics of the service-learner also impacts outcomes. Eyler and Giles's (1999) analysis suggested that the gender of the service learner impacted outcomes; they report finding that women experienced more, more positive changes as a result of civic engagement than did male students. The changes included knowing themselves better (p. 280), seeing intellectually challenged by and learning more from the experience (p. 281), and reframing issues as a result of the service experience (p. 282). Eyler and Giles found little evidence of the effect of other individual characteristics such as minority status, age, and family income. More recent works contradict this, suggesting racial/ethnic identity, as well as gender, influences the impact of civic engagement on learning and developmental outcomes, given that "women and students of color experience service learning differently than their male and White counterparts" (Engberg & Fox, 2011, p. 96; see also Einfeld & Collins, 2008; Green, 2001; Jones & Abes, 2004; Novick, Seider, & Huguley, 2011; Seider, Huguley, & Novick, 2013). While Novick et al. (2011) did not see the outcomes of civic engagement differ by race/ethnicity per se, the interpretations that students/participants in their study offered of their experiences did.

Individual differences in meaning making is evident in Lee's (2005) study of the experiences of participants (n = 94) in an academically based service-learning project. Although she set out to examine socioeconomic class as a mediator in service-learning experiences, students' class and racial identity became conflated in the findings in the sense that, particularly among students from lower socioeconomic class backgrounds, participants specifically mentioned the racial composition of the communities where they served when discussing their experiences. Frequently, the service learners drew connections between their own racial/ethnic identity and that of the community's residents. This did not, it warrants acknowledging, hold true for all students of color; one Latino from a middle-/upper-class family background spoke to this: "I knew that my advice only ran so deep because of the difference between our lives" (p. 319). Lee's findings speak to the design of service-learning opportunities: sharing socioeconomic class backgrounds with individuals or communities served may be more salient than shared racial or ethnic identity. These findings are also very important in the context of the impact of service-learning on communities, a topic of "noted, and suspicious, absence" (Bortolin, 2011, p. 49) in the scholarship of civic engagement.

One possible explanation for limited focus on community impact in the scholarship is the debate in the 1990s about the role of civic engagement for students and institutions (Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011). Some linked service-learning with social change motivations; this perspective would presumably support paying sustained attention to the effect of particular activities on the communities where they took place. Others valued civic engagement for its efficacy in promoting academic discipline- or program-specific learning objectives, and focused on the student as the unit of analysis when evaluating civic engagement initiatives. On the whole, the scholarship reviewed above reflects the second perspective. Given the university's role as an educator, the effects of civic engagement on students cannot be ignored. As universities make the shift from product- to process-oriented engagement, faculty and academic administrators alike will benefit from recognizing the many "teachable moments" that occur at the confluence of course content and lived experience.
and take this opportunity to clarify abstract concepts and to demonstrate their relevance to students' lives (Ravitch, 2007, p. 211). These are opportunities to draw students' attention to how they interact with community partners and other residents, and to others' experiences of civic engagement activities.

Community Experiences of Civic Engagement

Surveying the early scholarship on service-learning and civic engagement, Cruz and Giles (2000) asked a critical question: Where's the community in community service-learning? This question is still pertinent, more than a decade later (Giles, 2010). Certainly, since their challenge, more attention has been given to understanding the experience of community agency personnel who host service-learning students (Bushouse, 2005; Sandy & Holland, 2006). The findings from these few studies are mixed.

Worrall (2007) uncovered many benefits, as well as challenges, experienced by community agencies hosting service-learners from DePaul University's Stearns Center for Community-Based Service-Learning. Benefits included: DePaul students served as positive role models for youth in the programs; parents learned about DePaul and had the opportunity to think of it as a college option for their child. Students also brought enthusiasm, new perspectives/ideas, and a basic skill set one might expect from a college student, thereby requiring less training. Having service-learners covering some of the agencies' activities extended those agencies' budgets, allowing them to hire additional program staff; the volunteer hours dedicated by the service-learners could also be leveraged as in-kind donations for the purposes of grant proposals and other funding requests. Hosting service-learning students was not, however, without its challenges. The DePaul Universityacademic term is 10 weeks long; agencies struggled to develop a system for rotating students into and out of volunteer placements so as to minimize the disruption of services to their clients. Several directors also expressed a desire to have closer contact with faculty members and the opportunity to think together about other ways that both the agency and the students might benefit from the relationship. The challenges experienced by DePaul's partner agencies resembled those of peers who hosted students from other institutions: for example, Blouin and Perry (2009) list the key challenges for agencies, which included "issues related to student conduct, poor fit between course and organizational objectives, and lack of communication between instructors and organizations" (p. 120). Nonetheless, agencies partnering with DePaul University and participating in this case study clearly felt that the benefits gained by their organizations more than offset the challenges.

Community agency directors in both Worrall's (2007) study and in Sandy and Holland's (2006) focus groups saw themselves as part of the teaching team. "[A] great partnership," one director told Sandy and Holland, "is when you stop saying MY students. They're OUR students. What are OUR needs? We share these things in common, so let's go for it" (emphasis in original, p. 30). Some participants embraced an educator role because they considered it critical to the future of their home communities. The executive director of a community-based agency in Chicago thought of himself as teaching future policy makers; as such, he focused on giving service learners "a better understanding of what it is to be a Latino or a poor person in these communities, so . . . they can have a true understanding of what impact their [future] decisions will have" on individuals and/or communities (Worrall, 2007, p. 10). It is important, though, to note that the findings outlined here may well be unique to these institutions and communities, reinforcing the salience of place in the study of civic engagement as outlined in the previous chapter.

Based on his introductions to community agencies in Madison, Wisconsin, Randy Stoecker convened a community conversation at the University of Wisconsin with agency directors interested in talking about their experience with service-learning. This led to student interviews with 67 agency directors in the Madison area as part of a graduate course in qualitative research methodologies, and eventually an edited book including chapters on the motivations of community organizations to host service learners, approaches to placing students and managing short-term time commitments, and challenges related to communication between faculty and the agencies entitled The Unheard Voices: Community Organizations and Service Learning (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). Amy Mondloch, an agency director and contributor to the volume, describes the approach she and her colleagues take in...
working with service learners, which embodies her agency’s motto: “everyone a learner, everyone a teacher, everyone a leader” (Mondloch, 2009, p. 137); she provides a wonderful orientation to the environment of nonprofit agencies for those who do not have direct experience, and wise advice for agency directors new to working with service learners. The salient point: there is much to consider by all partners before “opening the door” to service-learning (Mondloch, 2009, p. 138).

Too often university actors think of their activities as “doing for,” rather than “doing with” the community (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000; see also Bortolin, 2011; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). Thinking of service-learning as “doing for” reflects a charity-focused approach to civic engagement (Morton, 1995) and “emphasize[s] the position of privilege of campuses in relationship to their local communities” (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000, p. 767). Such an attitude focuses on civic engagement as a desired outcome, rather than a process by which outcomes/changes are realized in the community. Encouraging a “doing with” approach is another way of advancing engagement as a process: civic engagement is “done with peers in the community, and from that service, new understanding and learning arises for all parties involved” (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000, p. 777). Students who learn to identify problems and then work with the community to solve them may have a much greater likelihood of making meaningful contributions and continuing to participate in the processes of their community later in life (Bringle & Steinberg, 2010; Knapp et al., 2010).

In this chapter, community has been framed as a classroom, a place where college and university students learn discipline-specific concepts and civic attitudes from university faculty and community members who are also nurturing students as active citizens. When community is framed in this way, the picture of community–university interaction that emerges emphasizes both private benefits to the individual student and public gains for communities. This image is somewhat different than current rhetoric positioning universities as primarily workforce training resources. Reimagining institutional purpose could support the shift from instrumental engagement to engagement as a process for interaction. The next step in advancing the shift to engagement-as-process should be a careful consideration of the potential contributions to be made by drawing on theoretical and pedagogical models that presume the educative value of interactions between community and university.

**Directions for Future Research: Institutional Purpose**

Throughout this monograph, I have insisted on three ideas as foundational for achieving the democratic possibilities of community–university interaction. First, the history, culture, and socioeconomic relations of the place where community–university interaction happens matter as much as what happens in that place (Cresswell, 2004; Harvey, 1993). A second key assumption reflects community development scholarship: overemphasis on economic development in communities may undermine development of community infrastructures, shift decision making away from community residents, and will likely further disadvantage members of already underrepresented groups (Barker & Brown, 2009; Bridger & Alter, 2006; Matthews, 2009; Neaton et al., 2009). Third, to ameliorate the marginalization of some residents, institutional leaders could adopt an engagement-as-process ethos, prioritizing relationship building over completing specific initiatives (Fear et al., 2006). Where communities are conceptualized as classrooms, making this shift requires rethinking institutional purpose and recommitting to higher education as a public good making a critical contribution to democratic processes and thereby to U.S. communities.

The literature reviewed in this chapter speaks to the efficacy of civic engagement in preparing students for their responsibilities as members of communities. Given the propensity of traditional processes to further disenfranchise already marginalized residents—especially the poor, people of color, those in rural areas, and the undereducated, the civic learning opportunities available to university students should prepare students not only to engage in community building but also to do so in a way that addresses existing patterns of disengagement by particular groups in communities. This is the point made by the participants in Sandy and Holland’s (2006) study quoted above: through civic engagement, students should learn about others' experiences.
because communities need these future policy makers and community leaders to have that knowledge.

Empirical findings support strongly the transformative potential of civic engagement in relation to student attitudes and propensity for future service. Even so, scholars continue to raise questions about the potential of service-learning to harm communities by perpetuating a view of need as deficiency and the possibility that short-term service-learning placements reinforce negative stereotypes, rather than changing attitudes (Eby, 1998; Holtsapple, 2012). These concerns about the negatives of civic engagement should serve as impetus for further development of the pedagogy, rather than a rationale for discontinuing its use.

Place-based learning, and specifically a critical pedagogy of place, offers practical tools and constructs for university faculty committed to strengthening their civic-minded teaching practices. Place-based learning uses "the local community and environment as a starting point to teach...subjects across the curriculum" by "emphasizing hands-on, real-world learning experiences" (Sobel, 2004, p. 7). While place-based approaches would be very well suited to realizing the promise of community as a classroom, place-based educators do not necessarily ground their pedagogical practices in any critique of the power relations that shape a particular location. Cautionary tales about unbalanced interactions between community and university offered in this monograph suggest that such a critique of power is almost a prerequisite for changing the nature and outcomes of these interactions. In other words, place-based pedagogies alone may fall short of addressing the potential for further disenfranchising community residents from already marginalized groups. Critical theory, through its focused analysis of power, and the critical pedagogy tradition provide important conceptual links between the two traditions. The final section of this chapter considers each of these ideas in turn.

**Place-Based Learning**

Service-learning is one pedagogical expression of the larger community engagement movement at higher education institutions and, like all engagement activities, it is inherently place-based (Moore, 2013). Students participate in academically based service-learning and similar cocurricular civic activities offered at most U.S. colleges and universities. Civic engagement initiatives such as these are by definition place-based, in that they occur in specific geographically defined locations. The experiential learning opportunities themselves can be thought of as place-based learning because they foster pedagogical experiences that draw on students’ lived experiences with local phenomena. Positioning the local community as a learning space and creating lesson plans focused on characteristics of the local environment, place-based learning is lauded by K–12 educators for producing student outcomes related to increased academic achievement, strengthened community ties, and commitment to active citizenship, as well as a heightened “appreciation for the natural world” (Sobel, 2004, p. 7). These outcomes mirror those called for by advocates of the university as a public good. Academic administrators and teaching faculty could support a shifting understanding of institutional purpose by translating place-based learning approaches to the university classroom.

The extant civic engagement literature provides examples of place-based learning adapted to a university course/setting. Smith (2002) outlines five overlapping categories of place-based approaches: culture studies, real-world problem solving, nature studies, internships and entrepreneurial opportunities, and induction into community processes. Through culture studies, students focus on “local cultural or historical phenomena directly related to the students’ lives and the lives of people they know” (p. 588). After Hurricane Katrina, students in the Asian American Studies program at the University of Massachusetts at Boston traveled to New Orleans to volunteer in the relief effort specifically targeting New Orleans’ Asian American community. For many students, this was the first meaningful connection they experienced with the culture and realities of daily lives in Asian American communities around the United States. Students explore the natural world through nature studies to learn about ecological issues facing their local community. For example, graduate students in chemistry at the University of Montana take advantage of university–industry partnerships to find research collaborations and funding through a local timber firm.

The Rural Entrepreneurship through Action Learning (REAL) Enterprises promotes internships and entrepreneurial activities in more than 30 states, partnering with high school, community college, and four-year institutions to...
identify unmet community economic development needs in local communities (http://www.ncreal.org). MBA students and business faculty at Winston-Salem State University have drawn on REAL resources to open a Center for Entrepreneurship. Initiatives like this center link to the growing emphasis at colleges and universities on fostering entrepreneurial efforts and small business growth as an important area of economic development, and students who participate in the related learning activities are also experiencing an induction into community processes, such as voting and community decision making. Business law faculty at Washington State University challenge students to identify and interview a local business leader who stood up for tolerance when such an act was unpopular or difficult. Students discuss these stories and consider their future opportunities to build inclusive communities.

Smith's (2002) work offers a schema for connecting course outcomes to community well-being and thereby, in the language of the civic engagement movement, for educating students for citizenship and participation in a democracy (Colby et al., 2007). Place-based approaches such as these provide students with powerful learning opportunities by presenting examples that demonstrate the more abstract principles addressed in many courses and texts. Place-based learning has also, however, been critiqued as overly identified with rural settings because of its affiliation with environmental education and other outdoor, experiential learning (Gruenewald, 2003). As a result, a place-based approach may seem irrelevant or inappropriate for implementation in urban settings, where many universities are located and where their students participate in civic engagement activities. Faculty in all institutional settings might choose to address this gap by drawing on the tools presented in critical theory, critical teaching practices/pedagogy, and a critical pedagogy of place.

**Augmenting Place-Based Learning Through the Critical Theory Tradition**

Two key ideas are fundamental to understanding the tools presented through a critical theory frame. First, power is the fundamental unit of analysis: who has it, how they use it, and to what end. Second, those who are marginalized in any society enjoy the possibility of resistance to that oppression. Critical theory positions "humans [as]...active agents of change" (Myers-Lipton, 1998, p. 246), and education as an important process for introducing individuals to their capacity to effect change in their surroundings (Brown, 2001).

Critical pedagogy or teaching practices informed by critical theory, cultivates the disposition, knowledge, and skills necessary to activate change. For example, by developing critical literacy skills, a learner acquires the conceptual tools to read the world, first understanding the surface meaning of a word or a picture and then examining the deeper meanings of that word or image given the particular social context/power structure in which it is produced, and which has shaped the learner's perception of the word. The outcome of this critical literacy is the development of what Freire (1970) referred to as critical consciousness, or an awareness of the social forces/conditions impacting one's individual existence, typically in an oppressive or marginalizing sense (Rhoads, 2009). Freire's ideas have influenced the civic engagement movement for more than four decades, particularly related to course-based service-learning (Mitchell, 2008; Stenhouse & Jarrett, 2012).

Critical theorists have been particularly influential in shaping scholars' understanding of what students learn about power and how they come to acknowledge their capacity as change agents through civic engagement. Reporting on his meta-analysis of data from more than 400 interviews with student leaders across 10 years about eight different social activism initiatives in three countries, Rhoads (2009) highlights the importance of formal and informal civic engagement activities in supporting students' development of a critical consciousness, which will lead them to act and thereby embark on an iterative process of action, reflection, revised action aimed at making social change. Myers-Lipton (1998) supports the general contention that "when [encouraging students to question power relationships] is done through [civic engagement], students can become socialized to a new set of attitudes and values" (p. 256; Brown, 2001; Colby et al., 2007).

Critical pedagogy must consider place to empower students as change agents in the places they live (Gruenewald, 2003). Place-based pedagogies need not consider power dynamics in a place; however, given the potential for community-university interaction to exclude further some members of the community, these are crucial questions. The critical theory tradition offers
theoretical tools to assist university administrators in examining power relations and effecting change in the community–university interaction. Through critical place-based learning approaches, students learn to ask questions about who sets the agenda for community–university interaction, and more importantly about who is involved, who is not, and how that might be changed.

**A Critical Pedagogy of Place**

Gruenewald (2003) brings critical pedagogy and place-based learning together in a critical pedagogy of place, challenging “all educators to reflect on the relationship between the kind of education they pursue and the kind of places we inhabit and leave behind for future generations” (p. 3). This author thinks of place in ecological terms, emphasizing human relationships and also the natural world. Still, his perspective is not incompatible with our focus on civic engagement and citizen action. Gruenewald also advances a model for research, theory, policy, and practice that explicitly shifts the focus of educational institutions, including colleges and universities, away from “individualistic and nationalistic competition in the global economy” (p. 3). This is another way of suggesting that universities ought not abandon their civic duties in favor of supporting economic growth over the well-being of all in the community.

Gruenewald’s (2006) recommendations for curriculum reform linked to the Earth Charter offer questions that also point to the potential of a critical pedagogy of place to effect institutional and social change. He suggests that reformers begin by asking three questions: “What happened here in this place? What’s happening here in this place? What should happen here in this place?” (p. 3). Community leaders must, he argues, understand the social, geographic, and historical contexts of their partnership, in addition to their project goals, before they can gauge “what works” in that setting (p. 3). To translate this into the language of engagement as process: when community and university representatives gather, they must first learn about the context of the proposed partners. They might ask about the history of the community or of specific interactions between the community and the university. Partners must also assess what is going on now, focusing attention on the current state of affairs in this neighborhood and identifying opportunities for collaboration. They identify goals for the collaboration by asking questions about what the community/neighborhood wants for the future. In short, partners must study and honor history, attend to current relationships, and develop a shared vision for their future. When university faculty, students, and professional staff participate in such activities, they are fulfilling their civic duty.

Those who position the system of higher education as a public good are arguing, in essence, that the purpose of colleges and universities is to serve the greater good through their roles as place makers, as educators, and as researchers or knowledge generators. In the process of connecting civic engagement to the curriculum, the service-learning movement has lost some of its commitment to the democratic purposes of education and to preparing students for citizenship (Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011). The negative impact has been exacerbated by the typical/frequent conflating of citizenship and voting (e.g., Jacoby, 2006). Promoting a generic service-learning requirement will not address the disappearance of civic education: “The simple fact that the engagement takes place in the community context does not necessarily render that engagement civic in the full sense of the word” (Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011, p. 7). Saltmarsh (2005) has more to say on this point: civic engagement “is resulting in a technically improved teaching and learning method but sometimes without intentional connections to civic learning outcomes (p. 28, as cited in Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011). The focus of the civic engagement movement must now be to “move beyond effective educational strategies like service-learning to learning outcomes that have a civic dimension” (p. 34, as cited in Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011). Teacher researchers and student affairs professionals can support this move by designing empirical research studies with implications for transforming policy and practice related to institutional purpose.

**Methodologies to Transform Institutional Purpose**

Higher education institutions are ideally positioned to cultivate civic-minded graduates who possess skills and dispositions for active citizenship (Bringle & Steinberg, 2010; Steinberg et al., 2011). Place-based learning approaches support the development of civic mindedness. Critical pedagogy assumes a particular approach to citizenship, emphasizing critical literacy skills and preparing
individuals as agents of change. Adopting a critical pedagogy of place facilitates instructor efforts to foster a power-conscious civic-minded disposition that is vital for the preparation of citizens who take an inclusive approach to community building (Miller, 2008).

The work of preparing students along these lines falls primarily on the shoulders of university instructors and student affairs professionals. Teacher research, a tradition associated with common education, provides methodological tools for use in the university classroom and in other educational spaces such as student organizations and leadership initiatives. Teacher researchers focus on the relationships among teaching practices, learning outcomes, and other aspects of the student experience (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). For example, instructors who utilize service-learning in their teaching commonly experience more negative teaching or course evaluations, with student comments focused on logistical difficulties, work load, and difficulties in seeing the relevance of the service to the course material (Beling, 2003). These student concerns represent tensions to be "mined" to generate research questions about the implementation of civic engagement activities, structuring intentional reflection activities, and partnering with community organizations to support service-learners (Shagoury & Power, 2012, p. 20).

Research conducted in learning spaces is common in the service-learning literature (see, e.g., Diaz & Perrault, 2010; Novick et al., 2011); few if any authors ground their scholarship in the teacher research tradition. Drawing on teacher research methodologies more intentionally focuses attention on teaching practice, facilitating evaluation of best practices as they are implemented in the new setting. This evaluation is critical given the limitations of place-based approaches which are embedded in the places where they occur, and as such should not be replicated elsewhere without careful consideration of the new place (Gruenewald, 2003; Smith, 2002).

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009), early contributors to the teacher research literature, now use the term practitioner research for this methodology, advocating its use by a broad range of educators in K–20 settings and community venues to contribute to educational reform. This methodological tradition also shows promise for advancing the necessary shift from engagement as product to engagement as process, particularly in this case by faculty and administrators acting as educators. Future research should also prioritize the involvement of student affairs practitioners, who educate through the cocurriculum. As mentors in living environments, advisors to student organizations, and academic advisors, they contribute significantly to the cognitive, psychosocial, and identity development of college students (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). As such, they also advance the development of power-conscious civic-minded graduates. Understanding more about how that happens in the informal learning spaces of living groups, student organizations, cocurricular leadership programs, and non-faculty academic mentoring could support data-driven policies and practices needed in these settings to support learning objectives in the formal coursework.

The need to reconsider institutional purpose reflects the vital role played by colleges and universities in preparing graduates as active citizens. Building communities through democratic practices relies on community leaders who value the contributions of all residents and who prioritize inclusion. Preparing students for their roles as citizens in a diverse democracy is a long-held, widely agreed upon learning outcome of university education (Morse, 1989). In recent years, the importance of this outcome has been overshadowed by an emphasis on the college degree as primarily a private, economic benefit to individual degree holders with increased earning power. These two outcomes are not mutually exclusive; a university education can teach a graduate to value personal and also community economic and social well-being. Helping students to internalize these mutually reinforcing goals, and then to act accordingly will require university actors to make a conscious commitment to a new understanding of the purpose of a college education.