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The author explores how taking an intersectional approach to the analysis of social problems, identity, and planned interventions can enhance service learning programs and student preparation for community engagement.

Teaching Community On and Off Campus: An Intersectional Approach to Community Engagement

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Community engagement strategies have been a part of the teaching and service mission of institutions of higher education since their inception (Stanton, Giles, & Cruz, 1999). Although the term *service learning* was coined in 1969, many attribute its proliferation with two key events: the founding of Campus Compact by the presidents of Brown, Georgetown, and Stanford Universities in 1985, and the creation of Learn & Serve America in 1990—a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service whose grant making allowed higher education community engagement programs to grow and spread rapidly.

The pervasiveness of service learning and community engagement in higher education suggests that transformations in practice could impact tens of thousands of students and the communities where their service efforts are focused. This chapter explores an intersectional approach to teaching and learning strategies where students engage in interventions and actions responsive to social concerns. After an overview of community engagement in higher education, the chapter considers how core tenets of intersectionality can be employed to inform and create a community engagement practice that addresses the interconnected structures of inequality in order to affect meaningful change. Service learning in higher education, broadly defined, refers to work in the community that is "tied to learning goals and ongoing reflection about the experience" (Mitchell, 2008, p. 50). Service learning is typically employed in academic courses where the community work, or service, is relevant to theories, concepts, or practices presented in the classroom. Although many advocates suggest that service learning happens in both curricular and cocurricular spaces, community engagement has emerged as an umbrella term to include

teaching and learning experiences that integrate community-based work with reflection, whether research, cocurricular, or academic based.

Service Learning and Community Engagement in Higher Education

Service learning experiences are most often integrated into the curriculum of a course and generally link community service with academic concepts by placing students with local schools or nonprofit agencies to do community work that can be used to inform and ground their classroom learning. These experiences have become ubiquitous with service learning now required in many academic programs; majors, minors, or certificates focused on community engagement; and volunteerism comprising a significant aspect of students' cocurricular activities. In the cocurricular sphere, community engagement may include one-time service plunges—generally campus-wide events that place large numbers of students in short-term service projects, ongoing volunteer experiences with nonprofit agencies near campus, and week-long immersive experiences in international sites. A national survey showed that nearly 70% of college seniors participated in service learning experiences during their undergraduate years (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2014). Given the predominance of this particular strategy for student engagement, it is a key space for developing and encouraging commitments to social justice (Mitchell, 2014).

The decision to develop community engagement experiences most often begins with recognition of a problem in the local community coupled with the belief that higher education institutions—and particularly their students—have the knowledge, resources, and opportunity to engage with the problem effectively and contribute in ways that might ameliorate this concern. Some scholars have critiqued these approaches as exercises in privilege (Bickford & Reynolds, 2002; Robinson, 2000) or representations of whiteness (Mitchell, Donahue, & Young-Law, 2012) that devalue the knowledge of the local community, discount actions the community has taken to address the issue, or supersede community work as universities get publicity and media attention for short-term work in a community where local residents have been hard at work for much longer without recognition (Stoecker, 2016). Higher education institutions have sometimes been lauded for work in the community that would not have been possible without the groundwork, organizing, and labor of community members directly impacted by the concerns the service aims to address.

Intersectionality and Engagement

Intersectionality, as a framework, has been important for marginalized groups to "frame their circumstances and to fight for their visibility and inclusion" (Crenshaw, 2015, para. 6). Emerging as a paradigm "for

understanding black women's subordinated social position and the situated effects of mutually constructing systems of power and oppressions within black women's lives" (Cooper, 2015, para. 16), intersectionality has complicated our understanding of identity, marginalization, inequality, and power by recognizing the complexity of lived experience. Intersectionality emphasizes that identity, when viewed as singular and discrete, provides an incomplete picture that limits our ability to effectively work for and create change (Wijeyesinghe & Jones, 2014). Its core tenets also tie the concept of identity to larger social structures related to power and inequality that are also intertwined (Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Weber, 2010; Wijeyesinghe & Jones, 2014).

Service learning and community engagement projects frequently fail to recognize the intersectional—the multiple, interconnected, and compounding—societal aspects shaping the concerns highlighted and targeted through these efforts. In addition, because service learning and community engagement programs are organized to respond to social concerns that exist in the community, limited attention is given to the confluence of these same concerns on the campus sponsoring the service learning opportunity, or how this campus might be complicit in the proliferation of these concerns in the community. Community engagement strategies too often target issues (for example, homelessness and educational inequity) from a single position of marginalization and with a single identity solution. Homelessness becomes a socioeconomic issue that impacts people whose class identity or experience is poor or low income. Community engagement responses to homelessness, then, are aimed at remedying that economic challenge—food banks, clothing drives, shelter services—as if the causes for homelessness were not myriad and diverse or that the needs of people without homes were limited to class-based, short-term interventions. Similarly, educational inequity in service learning circles becomes an issue singularly framed by race. Brown or black skin becomes a condition of "risk," test scores and graduation rates are key challenges, and an emphasis on the acquisition of so-called "proper English" becomes a goal. The work of service learning students participating at this venue is tutoring and mentoring, which purport to offer models of potential achievement, support for better academic performance, and willing partners to practice skills. This single frame for social concerns, however, misses the fuller picture of how problems manifest, are experienced, and may be remedied. Intersectionality is an important framework to understand "how converging identities contribute to inequality" (Museus & Griffin, 2011, p. 10) that can inform community engagement practice.

Community engagement best practices suggest that communities should identify their needs, students should be educated about the communities where they serve, and reflection should be a key practice. These ideas moved community engagement from a practice of "doing for to doing

with" (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000, p. 767). More critical approaches to community engagement:

- advocate for prolonged action in the service site
- aim to build solidarity
- encourage reflection on identities and social location to understand the manifestations of oppression
- push for actions that are transformative rather than ameliorative
- center the knowledge, perspectives, and voices of marginalized people to advance community engagement practices in ways that might yield more just communities (Mitchell, 2008, 2015).

Service learning and community engagement strategies that do not take an intersectional approach to both the analysis and understanding of social concerns, and planned approaches or interventions tend to also ignore the ways that these same issues manifest on campus. Recent media attention toward adjunct faculty experiencing poverty (Brave New Films, 2015; Kovalik, 2013) and students living in their cars (Biagiotti, 2016; Ramos, 2014) demonstrates issues of poverty and homelessness as higher education concerns. Campus initiatives aimed toward tutoring and mentoring to improve college-going rates in local schools fail to investigate the admissions and financial aid policies that limit access to their institutions for those same students tutored or mentored. "Intersectional work requires concrete action to address the barriers to equality" (Crenshaw, 2015, para. 11), and an intersectional approach to community engagement aims to identify and redress those barriers to effect meaningful change.

Wijeyesinghe and Jones (2014), drawing from the work of Dill and Zambrana (2009), identified "the unveiling of power, recognizing interconnected structures of inequality, and promoting social justice" as "core tenets" of intersectionality (p. 12). Community engagement, operating from an intersectional framework, is situated to support learning and development that advances each of these tenets on and off campus. The chapter now addresses each of the core tenets of intersectionality and how attention to these tenets impacts community engagement and service learning.

Unveiling Power

Mitchell (2008) identified work to redistribute power in campus–community partnerships as a central task of a critical service learning practice. Power concerns those "manifold relations...which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body" (Foucault, 1980, p. 93). Recognition of power in community engagement begins with understanding the asymmetry that sometimes undergirds and is often reproduced in these exchanges. "Simply by choosing which agencies will be 'served' and how

and when students will enter the service experience to complete certain tasks or meet certain objectives," Mitchell (2008) explained, "allows power to be retained firmly in the grasp of the instructor and students" (p. 56). The redistribution of power requires identifying and naming power to begin to think about a process for redistribution. Work to unveil power engages personal reflection about identity and positionality to understand power as it operates in one's own life.

Exploring identity, especially "in light of social issues and power dynamics" (Jones, 2014, p. xii), can support the various stakeholders in community engagement experiences to understand the complexity of social concerns and create opportunities to recast power across multiple lines of identity to contest the social hierarchies often found in service relationships. This work "requires confronting assumptions and stereotypes, owning unearned privilege, and facing inequality and oppression as something real and omnipresent" (Mitchell, 2008, p. 56). The personal reflections completed by faculty and students before they engage at a service learning site can focus on three questions: Who am I? Why am I here? What can I do to affect change on this issue? These questions challenge students to reflect on the ways their identities have impacted their understanding of an issue. Students and faculty can also consider how they are implicated in an issue—how their identities have sheltered them from or exposed them to the social concerns explored through service learning. Jones, Robbins, and LePeau (2011) discovered that when students confronted "their own privilege" through service learning experiences, and as "participants' constructions of their own identities were destabilized and reconstructed . . . they began to think more deliberately about their own behaviors, belief, and service commitments" (p. 35).

In a campus community partnership focused on homelessness, for example, students might explore their proximity to homelessness via their social identities. It can be easy to focus on power regarding class and see those with wealth as having power and those without as less powerful. Invoking issues of mental health, physical ability, educational attainment, race, citizenship status, age, gender, and sexual orientation may shift where power lies and complicate how homelessness is understood. Unveiling power, with this deeper understanding, creates new and different strategies to respond to concerns of homelessness. This intersectional approach engages different actors, social services, and programs that create a broader response, potentially offering more sustainable solutions for more people.

Too often, social concerns are seen as individual deficits. An intersectional approach reveals the structural and systemic injustice that shapes community problems (Cooper, 2015; Wijeyesinghe & Jones, 2014). It is useful, Cooper (2015) argued, for "exposing the operations of power dynamics in places where a single axis approach might render those operations invisible" (para. 39). Exercises in mapping power can be instrumental in unveiling power and can reveal the relationships, networks, and

institutions best situated to enact change on an issue. Power mapping is a collaborative visual exercise, usually conducted with newsprint or a white board that focuses on a problem or issue (McGarvey & MacKinnon, 2008). Power maps explore where social concerns manifest and the resources in the community that can be leveraged to respond to the problem. Work to build the power map identifies groups and individuals who are "key decision makers" around the problem, explores their relationships to the issue, their positions on the issue, and how they can affect change. In a power map that tries to understand educational inequity, for example, a recognition of power moves beyond the student, household, or teacher and to superintendents, school boards, testing companies like Pearson, and local governments that choose to fund schools via property taxes rather than allocate resources equitably to support schools in high poverty areas. Unveiling power raises questions about the limited impact tutoring and mentoring is likely to have on an issue whose conditions are systemic and far-reaching.

Recognizing Interconnected Structures of Inequality

To recognize interconnected structures of inequality is to recognize the ways "systems of oppression—namely, racism, classism, sexism, and heterosexism—[work] together to create a set of social conditions" that place people, especially those holding multiple marginalized identities in "ever-present social jeopardy" (Cooper, 2015, para. 13). A community engagement strategy informed by intersectionality reveals the ways that social concerns are indicative of interconnected structures of inequality. Such an intersectional community engagement approach is intentional in exploring social concerns through multiple dimensions of identity to ensure that the problem is more fully understood. It also aims to ensure that the community work responsive to the issue or concerns is straightforward about the possibilities and limitations of that service to influence the communities most impacted.

For example, students in a service placement at a homeless shelter would interrogate policies like emergency shelter restricted to men, shelter entry by 3:00 p.m. in order to "get a bed," and required evening (Christian) prayer to consider who is and is not served by this shelter. What happens to the Muslim woman seeking shelter? What happens to the laborer whose minimum wage job requires work until 6:00 p.m.? What assumptions about who needs shelter and, therefore, who is homeless do these policies rely on? Wijeyesinghe and Jones (2014) asserted, "Increased recognition of the connection between personal identities and social systems that either support or confront oppression is an essential component in engaging people in social justice work" (p. 13). Community engagement strategies that intend to impact social concerns in meaningful ways cannot ignore the ways structural inequality manifests in social concerns nor their emergence in enacted remedies aimed at amelioration.

Using intersectionality as a framework for understanding and investigating community engagement programs brings into view interactions of oppression at work in the educational system. The overrepresentation of black students in special education (Losen & Orfield, 2002) reveals linkages of ableism and racism. The revelation of English Language Learning programs as "laboratories of inequality" and "state experimentation" (O'Sullivan, 2015) raises conditions of linguistic bias, citizenship status, and race. The conditions of schools that leave children without books, arts programs, and places to play or exercise (Dunne, 2001; WXYZ-TV Detroit, 2016) rise from policies that disproportionately impact low-income communities of color. Community engagement experiences guided by an intersectional approach should move students away from deficit notions of individuals and communities and toward recognition of structural inequities and the roles of multiple manifestations of oppression in the maintenance of social concerns. Intersectional community engagement recognizes the assets of the community and looks for opportunities to leverage those resources—individual, communal, and structural—toward meaningful change.

Promoting Social Justice

Political scientist Cathy Cohen advocated for an intersectional approach to activism arguing, "the structural transformation of the lived condition of marginal communities has to guide our struggle" (Cohen & Jackson, 2015, para. 9). As critical service learning pedagogy is explicit in its commitment to social justice (Mitchell, 2008), a service learning practice guided by intersectionality must also prioritize a commitment to social justice. This is an unapologetic vision guided by solidarity. Crenshaw (2015) confirmed the need for solidarity stating that we must "sustain a vision of social justice that recognizes the ways racism, sexism and other inequalities work together to undermine us all" (para. 13).

Intersectional community engagement strategies pursue work that advances social justice and requires actions that seek to remedy structural inequality. Through community engagement, higher education institutions have the opportunity to demonstrate their connection to and investment in the communities where they reside by bringing visibility to the groups unfairly impacted by the social concern and pursuing concrete actions that remedy those circumstances. For example, the 2005 decision by Seattle University and the 2012 decision by Seattle Pacific University to host Tent City 3, an encampment of about 80 men and women, provided a safe and stable location for people experiencing homelessness (Brodeur, 2012). The action of a university welcoming the encampment to campus brought new attention to issues of poverty and homelessness in Seattle, while also affording students, faculty, and staff opportunities to build relationships and

understanding that deepened their willingness to work for fair and equitable housing for all.

Similarly, Providence College's decision to lease a 1,000-square-foot building, creating the Smith Hill Annex, forged a new model for campus–community collaboration. The space, intended to "foster dialogue, understanding, and collaboration" in campus–community partnerships (Providence College, 2015, para. 1), supported a deepening of community engagement strategies by creating a college presence in the Smith Hill neighborhood of Providence, Rhode Island. The space is used by a variety of community organizations and groups for meetings and events. Many Providence College classes are also offered through the Annex, bringing college students into Smith Hill and opening those learning opportunities to local residents. A commitment to the development of the Smith Hill neighborhood is realized through intersectionality. The Smith Hill Annex is organized with recognition of the diversity of the neighborhood and the myriad concerns facing the community. The Annex is a shared space where community groups celebrate, an office where community members organize, and a site for learning and development that provides access to college courses to any community member.

Conclusion

Crenshaw (1991) suggested that intersectionality requires that we see ourselves as "coalitions, or at least potential coalitions waiting to be formed" (p. 1299). Promoting social justice through community engagement work creates space for coalition building that enacts intersectionality. Through the processes of exploring identity as a way to unveil power and learning about the interconnected structures of inequality, an intersectional approach to service learning and community engagement seeks to build understanding of how social concerns manifest and persist, as well as the opportunities that can challenge and change those structures. This type of anti-oppression work "can serve to motivate individuals to engage in actions toward a more just and equitable society" (Wijeyesinghe & Jones, 2014, p. 13).

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