BOTH SIDES OF THE FENCE

Community as Colleague

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It is time to reconceive campus / community partnerships as collegial collaborations rather than as service-learning partnerships. Drawing on the literature and my own experiences as both a community partner and faculty member, I will discuss the ways that collaborative collegiality differs from current conceptions of campus / community partnership and show why this improves student learning. Because I have considerable experience on both sides of campus and community fence, I draw on my own observations and that of my colleagues from both spheres.

The fact that the style and content of this chapter vary from more traditional academic literature is illustrative of one of the main points I make: in embracing community-based learning, the academy must also consider how to respectfully partner with those whose expertise is differently derived and manifests in substance and forms which diverge from those of the academy. My use of the first person and personal observations are illustrative of wider patterns, not merely anecdotal. This chapter intentionally straddles the divide between campus and community, with a foot firmly planted in both worlds.

The Problem

The Association of American Colleges and Universities -is just the latest in a long litany of calls for higher education to incorporate substantial beyond-the-classroom experiences as an integral part of an undergraduate degree. Of course, the role of experiential education has a storied history, from medieval apprenticeships through the pedagogy of John Dewey, Jane Addams, and Paulo Freire. However, while professional and vocational education have always viewed hands-on, place-based education as necessary, liberal arts educators have often viewed outside-the-classroom learning as secondary to the degree seeking endeavor (Fish, 2008). Recently, however, scholars have sought to conceptualize liberal arts and experiential education as complementary rather than opposing pedagogies (Menand, 2012, Westerberg and Wickersham, in press).

Called by various names—service-learning, experiential education, cooperative education, public scholarship, community based research, and civic engagement—the perceived value of beyond the classroom learning continues to increase (Eyler, 2009; National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). Demand is not only driven by recognition of pedagogical value, but is also responding to clear calls from employers (The Chronicle and American Public Media's Marketplace, 2012), as well as from anxious students hoping to ensure that their considerable investments in tuition will lead to post-graduate opportunities. My own institution, Beloit College, recently instituted an experiential-education requirement for graduation, and we are not alone. Membership is rising in organizations that seek, catalog, and provide resources to institutions committed to integrating classroom and experiential education, e.g., Campus Compact, the Presidents' Honor Roll for Service Learning, the Carnegie Classification and National Society for Experiential Education.

Rising demand for beyond-the-classroom learning has increased the need for campus / community partnerships delivering quality educational opportunities. Since the 1980s, the most common conceptualization of these partnerships, particularly at an undergraduate level, has been heralded by the 1989 Wingspread Conference and resourced by publications such as the *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning.* Service-learning assumes a reciprocal partnership between the campus and community; but scholarship has overwhelmingly focused on the benefits and challenges for higher education. Community partners' perspectives are usually addressed only as afterthoughts, though recent scholarship has sought to remedy this, especially with partnerships geared towards research (Cruz & Giles, 2000; Ferrari & Worrall, 2000; Simons & Cleary, 2006; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). Despite increasing awareness of the need to understand how service-learning impacts the community and then to structure it in a respectful way, practice still falls short of intention. Even the term *service-learning* contributes to disparity: one partner is seen to provide service, while the other is served (Stoecker &Tryon, 2009).

Perspectives from Each Side of the Fence

How the Academy Views the Community

While higher education relies increasingly on community partners, the community's value as both classroom and teacher is seldom acknowledged (Jones, 2003). The language may refer to service, but the reality can be unwitting exploitation of field sites by students and their institutions (Eby, 1998). For instance, the community is often perceived as having interesting problems for academics and their students to study and write about. Sometimes the communities themselves are viewed as problems to be solved and student service as ameliorative. Kretzman and McKnight's seminal work on community development and the helping professions unpacks

the damage that can be done when communities are defined primarily in terms of their deficits rather than assets (Kretzman & McKnight, 1993). While some in academia approach communities as sources of insight rather than ignorance (Delano-Oriaran, 2012; Glasson, 1997), others continue to send students into the community with little preparation to and vague instructions to "to do good and learn" (Eby, 1998; Stoecker and Tryon, 2009). I have known professors who sent out their students to reform aspects of communities which they labeled as repressive or ignorant before the students ever set foot in those communities. Students are, thus, set up not to learn from the community partner, but to remake the community to fit their classroom understandings (Ward &Wolf-Wendell, 2000).

Students frequently use community opportunities to fill blank spots on their resumes or philanthropy-hours quotas for campus organizations. Similarly, faculty may assign a few hours of service at a community site as a way for students to apply or inform their classroom learning. The community is often not informed about these intentions, and the students are often not well prepared for their encounters (Ward, K. & Wolf-Wendel, 2000).

How Community Partners View the Academy

When asked, community partners say that they see themselves as providing service, in addition to receiving it (d'Arlach, Sánchez & Feuer, 2009; Miron & Moely, 2006). My own experiences on both sides of the fence confirm that, while the relationship is usually reciprocal, with students **usually** providing valuable service; community partners **always** provide educational opportunities. If we think about it, this is not surprising because the educational mission is why the academy seeks out the partnerships in the first place.

Personal Stories from Both Sides of the Fence

In the 1980s, before the current popularity of service-learning, I was the pastor of a congregation within an easy commute from nine seminaries; thus, we were much sought after as a community placement site. Initially, I did not realize the value of my, and my community's, expertise. We were flattered to be asked, but after supervising a couple of students, we became acutely aware of the amount of time it took to teach well-meaning, but inexperienced students—even when things went smoothly. Most frustrating was the lack of information about what the students were supposed to be learning. At this early juncture, not long out of graduate school myself, it didn't occur to me that I should be helping to shape the logistics and goals.

In addition, I had no idea what the students already knew about ethical expectations or professional boundaries—let alone matters of faith. The unspoken assumption was that their presence with us was meant to hone all of it—whatever *it* was. This was further complicated by the students' understanding that their role was to serve, rather than learn from us.

One example illustrates the downside of this. My congregation was recruited by a regional seminary as a field site for a service-learning intern, a senior who needed the position to graduate and be ordained, though the request was shaped as an offer of free help. After a few weeks, it became clear that her agenda was to reform the church's retrograde ways. Armed with the latest theological jargon, she went to work on both worship and the youth group. My suggestion that she might learn from us met with stiff resistance. She already knew what a church should look like, and we weren't it. Eventually, with worship attendance down and parents refusing to let their teens attend the youth group, the church board asked her to leave. At that point I finally heard from the school, seemingly surprised that we were not grateful for the free help they had provided. There was no acknowledgement of the cost in terms of the time

involved in supervision or to deal with the fractiousness her service-learning engendered.

Nonetheless, even after this and similar experiences, the community and I usually said "yes" to requests. Partly, we were loyal to the denomination but, more importantly, we believed we had something to impart. In other words, while we were taken for granted as instrumental cogs in the academic machinery, this was not how we saw ourselves.

Later, I found myself on the other side of the fence as a faculty member seeking field placements for my students. I approached a nonprofit organization that provided farm-based education. Their director was less naïve than I had been and initially rebuffed me. He told me that many institutions of higher education were seeking out bucolic, organic experiences for their students, but, when students arrived, they found that shoveling manure, weeding in the hot sun, and juggling financial spreadsheets was more like work than Eden. It took a lot of time to train and supervise students who had never worked at all, let alone on a farm. They would argue about when, why and how to do tasks. He quoted a student who said, "I'm going on spring break, so I'll just plant the cucumbers when I get back." Only when I agreed to negotiate schedules, teach the basics of professionalism, and troubleshoot problems would the farm agree to a trial period. The director of the nonprofit said to me, "We're doing this because we know that students can't learn about organic agriculture without hands-on experience, so we're making an investment in future farmers."

Conceptualizing Campus/ Community Collegiality

How Collegiality Differs From Other Forms of Partnerships

In *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* **(1947)** Max Weber discusses collegial partnerships as one way to organize power and authority. He notes that collegial

partnerships differ from bureaucratic partnerships in significant respects. Bureaucracy promotes efficiency through specialization and limits on discretion, while collegiality is self-defining and self-limiting, granting both authority and discretion to those who are members of the collegium. Weber claims collegiality weakens bureaucracy. "Collegiality unavoidably obstructs the promptness of decision, the consistency of policy, the clear responsibility of the individual, and ruthlessness to outsiders in combination with discipline within the group" (Weber, 1928). In other words, colleagues are viewed as insiders. As insiders, they not only implement policy, they create it; they not only espouse jargon, they define it; they not only respect boundaries, they establish them.

Sociologists have much to say about how all communities define their boundaries by establishing norms and defining deviance. They use various informal and formal mechanisms, such as educational requirements and credentials. Those who meet the standards belong to the community; they are colleagues. Professional communities, such as medicine, law, and higher education, have clearly prescribed requirements that the initiate must acquire. The line between insiders and outsiders is quite bright. In recognition of their expertise, those within the collegium are granted status and discretion that is withheld from those outside. For instance, only those who pass the bar can practice law.

Higher education could not be clearer about the nature of their community. The roots of their self-referential vocabulary make it evident that professors are members of a profession, full colleagues. Higher education is a community with formal and rigidly defined boundaries between outsider and insider: tenure is the boundary. Non-tenured members of the community have peripheral standing and do not enjoy full collegial status.

This gets tricky when the academy looks to community partners to provide educational

experiences which the college cannot. Tenured faculty are not only limited by their classrooms and campus settings, but also by their very training. To claim that students' educational experiences are not complete without community-based learning is to state the need for colleagues with expertise derived outside the academy and differently credentialed.

Of course, collegiality does not erase differentiation. Colleagues differ in terms of status, task, and disciplinary approach; however, to consider a partner to be a colleague is to regard these distinctions to be secondary to the shared enterprise. The differences are ones of degree and the approaches are regarded as complementary. And once granted collegial status—insider status—partners then have the responsibility and right to help shape the enterprise itself.

Complementary Ways of Knowing

Academic knowledge is tested through a process of attack and defend. This is most clear when a Ph.D. candidate defends a thesis. It is an excellent way to test ideas for robustness, but it is not the only way. Communities use a different process to establish meaning and what they claim to know.

Social learning theorist Etienne Wenger has studied communities as systems that create meaning through social interactions. He calls these systems "communities of practice" and describes how membership in a community grants the legitimacy and, thus, the right to participate in the negotiation of shared meaning (Wenger, 1998). Communities of practice are another way to discuss the dynamics of collegiality. Communities or collegiums patrol their boundaries. Like a cell wall that repels toxins but admits nutrients, they must be selective in order to maintain health, deciding who is in and who is out, what is acceptable or not, and together they decide what makes sense—sometimes with conscious, formal sanctions, but often without.

Thus, a student who enters a community field site, planning to argue a point of view or prove a point as is expected in class discussions or papers, is in for a surprise. A student is predisposed by the very nature of the academic enterprise to think that her or his job is to persuade the community to see their point of view. They may want to change the way community members think or practice, not understanding the relationship between the two. I have seen students critique how people discipline their children or express their sexuality, and even lecture them on what to eat while students are guests at the table. They often do this with the very best of intentions, informed by what they have learned in class, and they often do this unconsciously because this is what they have been trained to do and what has been modeled for them (Menand, 2012; Shulman, 1997). However, the community will not react to a student's well-supported arguments as the academy does. As the community's guest—an outsider—the student lacks the legitimacy to help construct community norms. Additionally, culture and meaning are not constructed in most communities through argument, rather it accrues through shared practice (Wegner, 1998).

When communities feel under attack, they become defensive and hold the attacker at bay. This is the opposite of what students need if they are to learn from a community. This dynamic is illustrated by an encounter described in a student's field notes:

> I was lucky to be able to go with my supervisor to a meeting of people who provide assistance to sexual assault survivors, but I felt really out of place. First of all they didn't look like feminists. Some had long, fake nails and some wore frilly, flowery dresses or tight embroidered jeans. I was really surprised to hear them talk about how much they hated the label 'feminist.' I tried to talk to one of the women about this, and she said that feminists were anti-men and anti-

Christian. I told her that was not true, that I was a feminist and I didn't feel that way, though I admit I am an atheist. I shared with her some of what we had talked about in class. She said, 'Good for you,' with a tight, sort of smile, and she didn't talk to me for the rest of the meeting.

By explaining the differences between classroom and community-based ways of knowing, students can both make more sense of their encounters and negotiate them more gracefully and effectively.

Practitioner-Scholars

My position within the academy, both as a community partner and as a non-tenured, semi-permanent member of the faculty, has led me to describe myself as a practitioner-scholar. This descriptor, sometimes reversed as "scholar-practitioner" is defined as "an ideal of professional excellence grounded in theory and research, informed by experiential knowledge, and motivated by personal values, political commitments, and ethical conduct" (McClintock, 2004). Or more to the point, a practitioner-scholar is one who has a "primarily practice-based approach to inquiry" (Hoshmand & Polkinghorne, 1992). This term has come into use fairly recently, however the concept of knowledge which derives from experience which informs theory, rather than theory which explains experience has a long and storied history rooted in philosophical pragmatism manifest in educational theory going back to Charles Sanders Peirce, James Dewey and, most especially, Jane Addams (Barone, Maddox, Snyder, 1997). The practitioner-scholar approach to knowledge and learning is most apparent in professional training (Shulman, 1997), but I am intentionally expanding the notion to encompass thoughtful practitioners in all fields who may or may not have connections with the academy, but whose

practice is informed by the historied corpus and growing edges of their professions: public school teachers, business owners, social service providers and elected officials, to name a few. I work with many of these practitioner-scholars and I am bold to count myself among them.

And I am not alone. Most campuses have those who are asked to teach because of expertise and experience in non-academic realms, though the practitioner must also be able to operate within the broad norms of the academy. Not all practitioners can teach, but many have as much training in teaching as tenured faculty, whose training may include little or no training or practice as teacher. A Ph.D. is, after all, a research degree. On the other hand, I work with community partners who are principals of schools, lead workshops for businesses, and facilitate diversity training for government and nonprofits–all roles that require significant teaching.

While many practitioner-scholars (or community partners) characterize their interactions with students as teaching, the academy has been slow to understand the interaction this way. Even within the academy there is a chasm between the liberal arts, which characterize education as imparting pure knowledge, and the vocational and professional schools that teach application. Given this split within the academy, where colleagues tend to be similarly trained and credentialed, it is unsurprising that collegiality is not extended to community partners whose expertise comes from elsewhere. Harvard Professor Louis Menand describes this divide between the true knowledge of the liberal arts versus applied knowledge, and then dismisses the rivalry by saying, "The divorce between liberalism and professionalism as educational mission rests on a superstition: that the practical is the enemy of the true. This is nonsense" (Menand, 2010, p. 57).

Lee Shulman, writing for the Carnegie Foundation, also rejects the divide. In his essay, "Professing the Liberal Arts," he contends that the vocational or pragmatic does not corrupt the liberal arts canon as many fear, but rather enhances it. "The key to preserving the liberal arts is to

profess the liberal arts." In this construction of the educational enterprise, practitioner-scholars would become "faculty" in liberal arts contexts, just as practicing physicians, lawyers, and social workers become clinical professors in professional schools. Shulman says, "The field of practice is the place where professions do their work and claims of knowledge must pass the ultimate test of value in practice." This is increasingly true for all colleges and universities as we expand beyond-the-classroom opportunities into an integral part of all students' education.

An Initial Experiment with Campus/Community Collegiality

Beloit College's Duffy Community Partnerships (Duffy), now in its tenth year, is an academically rigorous, community-based, sociology course, open to sophomores through seniors averaging 16 students per semester, one-third of whom are sociology students. Students apply and are selected based on academic competence and interest in community-based work and learning. Each student is recommended for placement at a field site that fits their academic and professional goals. They complete 90 hours during the semester and participate in a weekly seminar. The specific tasks, learning objectives, and hours are negotiated in conversations with their community partner and the course instructor. In addition to work on site, students have significant reading and writing assignments focusing on the sociology of institutions and community dynamics. The course also incorporates significant interdisciplinary perspectives bolstered by the support of faculty colleagues from across the disciplines who consult with students on their literature reviews.

Ten years ago I was invited to serve as a visiting sociology instructor and coordinator of the Duffy because of my expertise outside of the academy working on social justice and community-organizing projects—in other words, my practitioner-scholar status. In addition, the

academy had tested my fit within their community when I taught one course for several semesters as a visiting lecturer.

From the outset, I viewed the community partners with whom I work as colleagues, fellow practitioner-scholars, though the wider institution does not necessarily see them as such. I would even go so far as to call them adjunct faculty, albeit unpaid, for I contend that we cannot teach our students what they need to learn without the help of these community experts.

Full collegiality is still a long ways off, but, together, we have moved in that direction. For instance, in their work with the Duffy Partnerships, my community colleagues interview and help select students, set learning goals, establish schedules, and provide assessments. I, as the instructor, provide the community partners with copies of the texts we are reading in class and ask for their suggestions. During the semester I meet at least once on site with each pair of community colleagues and their students to debrief and set goals.

Twice a semester the community partners provide evaluations that offer insight into their perception of their roles as teachers. (Pseudonyms are used for the discussions of students that follow.)The director of a local social-service agency wrote, "When I asked Trudy what was most beneficial to her in doing the Duffy, she stated it was to test out what she had learned. I'm glad I was here to help. Thank you for the opportunity to help teach." Or a leader in the business community commented, "It has been very interesting to work with Miguel. He was not the only person who has learned something! As an international student, he was eager to compare approaches to community development in his country with ours. I think all of us in the office helped him to grow in his understanding and as a young professional."

Of course, my role and responsibilities as a college instructor, and those of my community colleagues, differ in many important respects. Because I have been on their side of

the fence and value their authority and expertise, I am extremely respectful of their time constraints and priorities. I know that their lines of accountability differ from my own, as do their schedules, so I make it my job to help the two contexts mesh as smoothly as possible. Most importantly, I attend to communication and endeavor to have my students and faculty colleagues do the same.

This is not always easy or a foregone conclusion. In the past three years, my work at Beloit College has expanded. I am now the director of community-based learning. In this role, I help to broker partnerships between faculty in all disciplines with community colleagues. Sometimes there is a learning curve when college faculty do not approach the community in a collegial manner.

On one occasion, I received a 10 p.m. phone call from a local elementary school principal who was furious at the tone of an e-mail from a faculty member who was irritated that the principal had not returned a phone call promptly. The e-mail began with, "Perhaps you don't know who I am. I am Professor _____ at Beloit College and I would like to bring 20 of my students to work with your third grade classes between 10 and 11 a.m. next Monday." The principal, tired and cranky from a long day, told me that, of course, she knew who the professor was, but perhaps the professor didn't know who she was. The principal did not want to give up valuable instructional time on such short notice and without discussion about the value of the project, and felt that the faculty member failed to recognize that he was asking the school for a favor. Though both were highly trained professionals in their respective communities, their status did not hold sway outside their own realms. The principal then asked me to point out to the professor that he was asking the school for a favor, not offering one. She went on to say that she could not give up valuable instructional time on such short notice and without discussion about

the value of the project. ~~Of course, most collisions between community and faculty colleagues are not this clear or extreme, but this illustrates the need to construct intentional, collegial relationships between campus and community.~~ Of course, this story is told from the principal's side of the fence; the faculty member would have another point of view, which is precisely the point. The fact is that the principal views her status as a highly trained professional as equal to that of the professor, but the professor's communication reveals her assumptions about the relative differences in their status, creating an impression of disrespect and friction in the partnership.

One source of conflict is the failure of some college faculty member to recognize K-12 teachers as equals. For example, according to one school principal, a professor assumed he could bring some of his students to work with classes at a school with very little advance notice. When his call was not promptly returned, he was irritated. Although both the principal and the professor were highly trained professionals in their respective communities, their status did not hold sway outside of their own realms. The professor's assumption that his call would be quickly returned and that his students would be granted access revealed that he had little understanding of the constraints under which the principal operated. From her perspective, his insistence bordered on disrespect. "Of course, most collisions between community and faculty colleagues are not this clear or extreme, but this illustrates the need to construct intentional, mutual, collegial relationships between campus and community.

Challenges and Opportunities

As the demand grows to incorporate community-based learning as an integral part of higher education, it is critical to go beyond viewing community partners in an instrumental way. This

chapter has been an attempt to look at the underlying dynamics of campus-community relationships to best foster student learning. The challenges are many. It can be deeply threatening to open a collegial community to new members. What is suggested here is not to scrap the culture, credentialing mechanisms, or standards in either the academy or wider communities, but to develop ways to see the academy and these many communities as sharing the goal of teaching. This shared goal will necessitate and continue to evolve through shared practice. At this respectful intersection, the differences between higher education and the community would be secondary to the educational mission, and the partners would meet at a point of equal status, with differing, but complementary, approaches.

There are still unresolved issues, such as compensation. It is tempting to say that student service is fair compensation for the community practitioner-scholars' time and expertise, but this is not always the case, especially with short-term student involvement. Additionally, there will continue to be logistical challenges, including schedules and communication. However, there will be ample motivation to overcome the barriers if these three aspects of campus / community partnerships are valued: the dynamics of communities of practice, the expertise of practitioner-scholar colleagues, and complementarity ways of knowing. Broadening the collegial circle to include practitioner-scholars will enhance learning as students become nimble at appropriately and effectively transferring understandings between classrooms and communities, thus enhancing knowledge in both realms.

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Biography

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