

Catalyst for Democracy? Outcomes and Processes in Community-University Interaction

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Abstract

Regional colleges and universities are unique in their historic commitment to serve the economic, social, and cultural interests of particular communities. Drawing on the findings of a multi-site case study of two regional institutions, this paper outlines the goals of community-university interaction, then focuses more specifically on the processes of collaboration as distinct from the participants' desired outcomes. Separating goals from process in this way allows us to explore the civic/democratic impact of these initiatives beyond their economic impact. Findings suggest that when community-university engagement initiatives focus too narrowly on economic development goals, project leaders sometimes neglect the potential of engagement initiatives as catalysts for participatory democracy, thereby limiting input from traditionally under-represented groups. Scholars and practitioners can draw from community development literature, as well as the scholarship related to community-university engagement, allowing simultaneous attention to the nature of relationships between universities and the communities they serve and the process of building inclusive relationships.

"The first and most essential charge upon higher education is that at all its levels ...it shall be the carrier of democratic values, ideals, and processes. ...Its role in a democratic society is that of critic and leader as well as servant; its task is not merely to meet the demands of the present but to alter those demands if necessary, so as to keep them always suited to democratic ideals. Perhaps its most important role is to serve as an instrument of social transition, and its responsibilities are defined in terms of the kind of civilization society hopes to build."

The President's Commission on Higher Education, 1947
(as cited in Peters, 2010, p. xv)

Every day, the nation's state colleges and universities demonstrate, in ways large and small, the inextricable linkages with their communities and with the world at large. These linkages, collectively referred to as 'public engagement,' are an essential part of the heritage of [regional] institutions [and] reflect a constant challenge to institutions to serve as 'stewards of place' . . . in tackling the myriad of opportunities and issues facing our communities and regions.

American Association of State Colleges and Universities Task Force on
Public Engagement, (AASCU, 2002, p. 5)

Introduction

In 1948, the President's Commission on Higher Education positioned higher education institutions as key to strengthening democracy. More than 50 years later, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities described regional colleges and universities as part of the socio-economic fabric of the communities they serve. In this new climate, universities are no longer purely agents of democracy, nor simply "providers of educational services. They are also large economic institutions that either strategically

or inadvertently play a major role in community economic development" (Dubb & Howard, 2007, p. 62). This paper draws on data from a multi-site case study of regional campuses with their origins in the normal school tradition to explore community-university partnerships as catalysts for community development and also for democracy. The story of engagement in each case reflected the key role educational institutions play in regional economic development (Drucker & Goldstein, 2007), and in doing so drew attention to voices that remain silent in the story line. This paper outlines the goals of the

engagement, then focuses more specifically on the processes by which partnerships were established and maintained as distinct from the participants' desired outcomes. Separating goals from process in this way allows us to better explore the civic/democratic impact of these initiatives beyond their important economic impact.

Key Concepts

Achbar, Simpson, Abbott, and Bakan (2004) operationalize the legal doctrine of corporate personhood (*Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad, 1886; Trustees of Dartmouth College v. Woodward, 1819*) in their critique of corporate behavior. I take a similar approach here, conceptualizing universities themselves as members of the geographic communities they serve, with the capacity to foster participatory democracy while contributing to the social and economic well-being of the region. I treat these partnerships as, at least in part, civic initiatives. This departs from the recent trend toward situating the university as partner in community economic development; these two roles need not be mutually exclusive. The argument is grounded in three key concepts: regional economic development, the role of higher education institutions in particular geographic regions, and participatory democracy.

Regional Economic Development

Regional development scholars and practitioners commonly examine university impact on a geographic region's economic well-being (Drucker & Goldstein, 2007; Dubb & Howard, 2007). For example, economic impact studies by Anselin, Varga, and Acs (1997) and Sivitanidou and Sivitanides (1995) suggest that spatial/geographic spillover effects from knowledge production happen fairly uniformly, although these effects vary in magnitude and quality of impact from one region to the next. Jacobs and Dougherty (2006) highlight community colleges' important contributions to workforce development. Sharp, Flora, and Killacky (2003) treat higher education administrators as key corporate/business actors in their study of business leaders building community social infrastructure. Keane and Allison (1999) argue that "[t]he value of higher education," in the knowledge (or "learning") economy "lies in the linkages and quality of [universities'] embeddedness in the local economy" (p. 896).

Regional Colleges and Universities

By positioning the university as an active

participant in community economic development, scholars and practitioners diminish the salience of traditional distinctions between town and gown. The notion of connecting universities and communities is not new (Veysey, 1965). What has changed over time is the intentional linking of university activities to the common good through community-university engagement initiatives (Boyer, 1996; Kellogg Foundation, 1999; Pasque, 2010). Ramaley (2000) describes regional colleges and universities, such as the two highlighted in this study as unique in their ability to address society's "real problems" occurring at "neighborhood, regional, and international levels" (p. 232). Regional universities are rooted in the social networks of the particular geographic region they serve. From this perspective, community leaders and policy makers should, in turn, see state colleges and universities as valuable "knowledge asset[s] and resource[s]" (AASCU, 2002, p. 10).

Participatory Democracy

In her study of the national discourse about higher education's role in U.S. society, Pasque (2010) notes frames for characterizing higher education as both private and public good, as balanced in the mission of higher education, and as interconnected and articulated "with a voice of advocacy" (p. 31) aimed to increase access to higher education for students from traditionally under-represented groups. The private good perspective echoes the regional economic development literature; in this model, taxpayer investment in higher education is returned "solely through an investment in private individuals, who will then contribute to the public good by economic means" (p. 21). This frame, Pasque argues, has the "potential to further stratify the system of higher education in terms of race, gender, nationality, and class" (p. 42).

We need to understand more about the workings of participatory democracy in order to (continue) think(ing) about how universities might contribute. This line of thought is important now because of growing concerns about a shift first noted more than a decade ago: "Everyday Americans are increasingly mere spectators of public affairs" (Skopcol & Fiorina, 1999, p. 2). The continuing trend toward "bitter partisanship in national politics" (Mehaffy, 2005, p. 68) may not be reversible, but there is increasing hope for change by "remember[ing] and seek[ing] old advantages [of active citizen participation] in new ways" (Skopcol & Fiorina, 1999, p. 7).

Regional colleges and universities remind

us of some of these old advantages, in their origins as former normal schools. The normal school movement, strongest between 1890 and 1920, specifically emphasized the role of higher education to serve the public good by strengthening the system of universal education in the United States (Petersen, 1993), and thereby supporting an educated citizenry, particularly in rural communities. Peters' (2010) portraits of faculty civic engagement highlight the contributions of community-engaged scholars to the democratic traditions fostered by higher education institutions and their constituent members. Today, authors of AASCU's (2002) report, *Stepping Forward as Stewards of Place*, encourage regional university administrators to embrace their responsibilities as partners in regional development. The growing focus on higher education as an economic engine may distract us from developing a broader understanding of community-university interaction as a catalyst for strengthening participatory democracy.

Methodology

This paper offers a deeper reading of previously collected multi-site case study (Stake, 2006) data from two regional institutions—the University of Central Oklahoma and Lewis-Clark State College (Idaho) — and the communities they serve where “public engagement” initiatives (AASCU, 2002, p. 5) link a regional campus with the larger community. Using convenience sampling (Patton, 1990), I identified institutions to which I had ready access, “choos[ing] . . . case[s] from which [I felt I could] learn the most” because I could “spend the most time with” them (Stake, 2005, p. 451). Data collection proceeded in a two-phase process. First, to gain an “insider’s view” (Jones, 1970, p. 239), I employed Foster’s (1991) community nomination process, identifying participants (Stake, 2006) on campus and in the community for initial interviews at each site. In these initial interviews, I asked six key informants to nominate the initiatives which they considered the most relevant to the topic (Stake, 2006). In the second phase, through snowball sampling, I identified and interviewed 48 additional participants who spoke specifically to the successes and challenges encountered in the interaction between communities and the universities they serve.

Midway through the second stage of data collection, I received approval from the Washington State University Institutional Review Board to modify the study protocol by requesting

permission from all participants to identify explicitly their institution in future publications. Previously interviewed participants were contacted and completed a revised consent form. Most agreed to be identified by name; those who did not are quoted here as a “community member” or “representative of the college/university.” The collected data represented multiple perspectives on the initiatives: interviews with 54 residents, civic leaders, university faculty and administrators, elected officials, leaders from non-profit organizations and businesses; documents and other artifacts (Stake, 2005, 2006), and a research journal (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). (See Table 1.)

Specific engagement initiatives served as entry points for studying the interactions of university and community through a critical geographic lens (Harvey, 1993; LeFebvre, 1991). Therefore, I used narrative inquiry methods associated with organizational studies (Czarniawska, 2007) to collect the stories and portraiture (Lightfoot & Hoffman-Davis, 1997), together with writing as inquiry (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), to analyze the data and to represent the narrative of engagement between community and two regional universities as narrative portraits (Lightfoot & Hoffman-Davis, 1997) of each of the two cases. The individual participants, institutions, and municipalities have been given pseudonyms in this paper; the historical, social, and cultural descriptions are masked, but remain true to the lived experience of these regions to emphasize the role of geographic place (Creswell, 2004) in community-university interaction.

To construct the portraits, I created what Czarniawska (2007) refers to as “emplotted” narratives, or “a set of events or actions put chronologically together [with]...a logical... connection” (p. 387) to one another. Data gathered through interviews, observations, and document analysis provided fibers for weaving institutional portraits (Lightfoot & Hoffman-Davis, 1997). Data analysis occurred in three stages, unfolding in a nonlinear fashion. I first worked with the data using a postmodern constant comparison method (Shinew & Jones, 2005) similar to Maxwell’s (2005) connecting strategies: Reading, marking themes, topics, and common experiences as they appeared and re-appeared, and considering the possible connections among themes. Then I identified the most widely reported perspectives. I also noted the tales that stood counter to more prominent stories. Once I had what seemed a fairly clear picture of the case, I wrote an emplotted narrative (Flyvbjerg,

Table 1. Interview Guides (in sequential order of usage in the research)

Informational Interview Guide	
I am studying the interaction between Lewis-Clark State College/University of Central Oklahoma and the larger community, so I want to learn about the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley/the Greater Oklahoma City Metropolitan Area from your perspective. 1. When I ask you about “community,” what does that mean to you? 2. I haven’t lived here very long/in a long time. Tell me a story about this community that will help me understand the place where you live. I also want to learn more about specific initiatives that are linking the university with the larger community. I want to know more about initiatives both that have been successful and those that have met challenges and perhaps failed. I would appreciate your help in identifying projects and people I should speak with. 3. Tell me about initiatives that you consider to be particularly successful. 4. Tell me about ideas for engagement that have met with significant obstacles, and/or have not been able to go forward I’m also interested to speak with partners who may have been involved with projects linking the university and the community who are no longer participating in those efforts. I would appreciate your help in identifying some of these folks. 5. Tell me about people who may have previously been involved in partnerships but are no longer working on these efforts. Thank you for your assistance with this research project. I look forward to continuing our conversation during my visit to Lewiston-Clarkston Valley/the Greater Oklahoma City Metropolitan Area later this fall.	
Non-Advancing Initiative/Withdrawing Partner Interview Guide	Nominated Initiative Interview Guide
I am studying the interaction between Lewis-Clark State College/University of Central Oklahoma and the larger community. In our conversation, I want to learn about the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley/the Greater Oklahoma City Metropolitan Area from your perspective. 1. When I ask you about “community,” what does that mean to you? 2. I haven’t lived here very long/in a long time. Tell me a story about this community that will help me understand the place where you live. 3. Tell me about your role in the community. 4. I’d like to know more about the place where you work. 5. Tell me about your vision for this community. What is important to you about the place where you live? 6. What else do I need to know to understand this community and your role in it? 7. Tell me a story about a time when you were involved with something that included people from the community who worked at the university, as well as people from other sectors of the community. 8. I’m interested to know about challenges that have come up in initiatives linking the community and the university. Based on the experience you just shared with me, tell me about the obstacles you see in making these relationships work. 9. What else do I need to know to understand your experiences with frustrating or failed initiatives?	I am studying the interaction between Lewis-Clark State College/ University of Central Oklahoma and the larger community. In our conversation, I want to learn about the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley/the Greater Oklahoma City Metropolitan Area from your perspective. 1. When I ask you about “community,” what does that mean to you? 2. I haven’t lived here very long/in a long time. Tell me a story about this community that will help me understand the place where you live. 3. Tell me about your role in the community. 4. I’d like to know more about the place where you work. 5. Tell me about your vision for this community. What is important to you about the place where you live? 6. Tell me a story about a time when you were involved with something that included people from the community who worked at the university, as well as people from other sectors of the community. 7. What else do I need to know to understand this community and your role in it?

2001). Multiple voices from across the regional community are heard in each portrait, including my own as witness, as interpreter, and as researcher (Lightfoot & Hoffman-Davis, 1997).

The portraits reveal layers (Rogers, 2007) in the relationship between university and community: Superficial descriptions of the interaction, themes that organize these interactions, and the relationship between the engagement initiatives and the cultural, socio-economic, and historical

context within which they occurred. The process reflects Flyvbjerg’s (2001) ideas about phronetic research, revealing the socially and historically conditioned context of the research problem, rather than offering rational grounding to position a study’s results as generalizable, or reducing the implications to a series of best practices.

Portraits of Engagement

The University of Central Oklahoma (UCO)

serves the 10-county greater Oklahoma City metropolitan area of 7,891 square miles. Senior leaders at UCO make purposeful efforts to play a key leadership role in the development of the region. As a point of comparison, Lewis-Clark State College (LCSC) has a student body less than one-third the size of UCO and offers no graduate programs. LCSC administrators must constantly juggle the demands of working in a depressed funding environment, while providing both academic and professional technical programs across Idaho's Region 2 (as defined by state social services programs), the largest geographic region in the state, covering 13,400 square miles of mostly small towns separated in most cases by more than 20 miles. Excerpts from the two portraits provide thick, rich descriptions of the regions, the institutions and, community-university interactions in each region. I focus specifically in this paper on economic development activities discussed by community and university representatives as engagement initiatives. Each excerpt concludes with a specific discussion of the engagement process, identifying key participants and also noting individuals not involved as a foundation for the following discussions of voices, which remain silent in these narratives of engagement.

Lewis-Clark State College

Fifteen years ago, residents in the foothills of the Bitterroot Mountains of North Idaho had snow in their front yards until mid-April. During the frosty gray days of winter, they held onto the hope of what one native told me before I moved there in the winter of 1997: "You'll love the spring. Colors are so vivid here." Indeed, in May and June, colors which might exist only in Crayola's collection of 108 crayons appear in the rivers, on the rolling hills of peas, lentils, wheat, and rapeseed, and in the trees between Pierce and Orofino. Hayashi (2007) describes Idaho as "a pretty place to play" (p. 31). For others, the area evokes stronger words: Josephy (2007) calls the place "rugged and inspiringly beautiful" (p. 2). Lewiston, the largest urban area in the region, lies at the confluence of two rivers, in the mouth of Hell's Canyon, made famous in the 1970s by Evil Knievel and a motorcycle jump. Today, locals and tourists alike think of the Snake and the Clearwater rivers as a destination for fishing and white water rafting. Nearly 70,000 people live in this area, referred to as "The Valley" by citizens across the region. LCSC, located in Lewiston, serves five counties by state mandate and two counties in neighboring Washington by tradition and affinity.

Life in this region is uncertain. Residents recognize the need to become a different place, and yet resist the changes required to craft a new identity for the region. Timber-related jobs have long been the staple, particularly in rural communities across the Valley, and the downturn in the timber industry has left the economy severely depressed. More and more, beginning with Dene Thomas' presidency in 2000, LCSC thinks of itself as simultaneously an educational institution and economic development resource. In 2007, Thomas told me,

(T)he Lewiston Chamber of Commerce gave LCSC the Large Business Employer of the Year Award. Now not many places would think of us as an employer. They do. I appreciate that because we are. We contribute to the economy of "The Valley," and I am so incredibly grateful for that recognition because that says that [the college] being here means a great deal to the community.

Beyond its economic impact, the college prides itself on its flexibility to meet workforce development, human resource, and management training needs.

Six years ago, the successful engagement initiative most frequently mentioned by everyone in the region positioned the college as both educational institution and economic development resource (Dubb & Howard, 2007). Three outreach centers—then located in Grangeville, Kooskia, and Orofino—provided access to educational opportunities for residents, most of whom were seeking skills or credentials for employment. The outreach center coordinators are described by their supervisor as liaisons in the community and extensions of the college, able to answer questions about financial aid, admissions, and registrar functions. There is an unspoken assumption: The larger role of the centers is to reach out to a broader base of potential students and connect them to the educational opportunities of the regional college.

Each outreach center offers a combination of academic coursework, computer classes, and continuing education programming, for example, nuns from the Monastery of Saint Gertrudes, a Benedictine convent in nearby Cottonwood on beewax candlemaking in Grangeville. The centers and their staff reflect the outreach model commonly associated with university extension and the land-grant universities. Scholars have differentiated engagement from outreach by pointing out the one-way nature of the outreach from university expert

to community (Ward, 2003). Users of the centers' services do factor into the decision-making about course offerings to the extent that community demographics and previous participation figures indicate the most popular offerings, which are in turn offered more frequently. The logistics of offering credit-bearing coursework in an off-campus location do, however, mitigate availability of complete degree programs, which would be very popular at some of the outreach centers.

University of Central Oklahoma

During the state of Oklahoma's recent Centennial Celebration, Shirley Jones reprised her role as "Laurie" in the musical "Oklahoma", singing about a bright future as the original settlers saw it 100 years earlier. Through evocative lyrics, she reminded audiences of big dreams and high hopes. While she sang, elected officials and local leaders celebrated the state's emergence as a very popular destination for new business.

After 20 years of recession following the oil booms of the 1970s, many in the Greater Oklahoma City area focused on economic growth to rebuild their community. Impressive rejuvenation projects contributed to new business development, to the success of established companies based in the city, and to an improved quality of life for residents of the metropolitan area (Lackmeyer & Money, 2006). Fully explaining the new era in Oklahoma City requires an examination of a major municipal initiative of the 1990s. Debt-free construction of pedestrian walking trails, parks, bridges, a new minor league baseball stadium, a 20,000-seat event center, and the Chesapeake Boathouse, a riversports facility, have been made possible by private investments and public funding through a temporary one-percent sales tax earmarked for Metropolitan Area Projects (MAPS). In the eyes of local leaders, the resulting transformations fueled Oklahoma City's emergence as a "major league city" (Lackmeyer & Money, 2006). The picture painted by economic development and municipal officials in 2007 suggested dynamic growth, and exciting opportunities in a strong economy capitalizing on the educated workforce and the metropolitan area's central location at the intersection of three major interstate highways.

Oklahoma City may be best described as recreating itself through these initiatives. The transformation is not complete, however, and there are many opportunities for higher education to play a key role in moving toward the more prosperous future. Against this backdrop, the

University of Central Oklahoma (UCO), located in the affluent Oklahoma City suburb of Edmond, actively repositioned itself as a metropolitan university, described by the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities as "striving for national excellence while contributing to the economic development, social health, and cultural vitality of the urban or metropolitan centers served" (<http://www.cumuonline.org>). The university has also consciously positioned itself as an economic development engine in the Greater Oklahoma City area. The most visible, and frequently cited, example of community-university interaction is the partnership to locate the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation's (OSBI) Forensic Science Center directly across the street from the UCO campus. The new facility came about through a state-local-university partnership initiated by UCO in discussion with law enforcement officials in 2000. The project simultaneously creates economic opportunities for the city, meets the state's criminal investigation needs, and provides unprecedented access for UCO students and academic programs. Edmond economic development officials estimated the initial economic impact of this project at \$44 million (Baldwin, 2008). The new building represents a very promising economic development initiative for the city/region and provides space for training and other programming to be developed in conjunction with UCO's Forensic Science Institute.

The UCO/OSBI partnership in particular involved senior university administrators, Edmond's city manager and other senior officials in pertinent organizations. Shortly after taking office, UCO Executive Vice President Steve Kreidler reached out to Edmond City Manager Larry Stevens to establish a new practice of bi-monthly information-sharing meetings between university and city officials. Both men mentioned these regular gatherings as an important conduit for collaborative work, such as the extension of water lines to new residence halls constructed at UCO in the early 2000s.

In my efforts to learn more about the experiences of Edmondites who did not benefit directly from these initiatives, and who did not have the same story of economic prosperity to tell, I had many conversations with participants who I experienced as racially, educationally, and socio-economically very similar to my white, well-educated, middle-class origins. One such conversation with a community leader was particularly telling: I asked who might have a story

to tell different than his. He did not give me the names of individual people. Instead, he responded with directions for a driving tour of low-income housing developments, and contact information for social service organizations. I subsequently visited one of these organizations, where I met administrators who appeared to be just like me, with similar demographic characteristics and access to social and cultural capital. In the end, I learned very little about community-university interaction in the Greater Oklahoma City region from residents of economically disadvantaged neighborhoods and communities of color. Their voices—like their counterparts in the Pacific Northwest—remain silent in this study.

Silent Voices

By juxtaposing these two portraits, I hope to highlight the heterogeneity of these community-university interactions. Place—the geographic, cultural, social, and historic context—matters a great deal (Harvey, 1993; Helfenbein, 2006) when considering how and with whom a university partners in any type of community development activity. The portraits are, however, incomplete in the sense that typically under-represented racial and socio-economic groups are under-represented in the narrative of engagement at both institutions.

The dominant story of the Greater Oklahoma City area during the data collection phase of this project was one of civic renewal and vigorous community economic development. In that way, Oklahoma City was not all too different from many metropolitan areas in the United States experiencing rebirth before the economic downturn of 2008 (Camp, 1978; Jacobs, 2007; Kaiser, 1980; Neuffer, 1992; Silverman, 2006; Wynter, 1982). Steve Kreidler of UCO referred to Oklahoma City as no longer “the little brother of Kansas City.” In Gotham’s (2001) review of Kansas City’s urban renewal history since 1950, a former assistant city manager recalled how “urban renewal became the synonym for ‘black removal’ and it broke the back of the black stable neighborhood” (p. 304). A similar transformation took place in Oklahoma City’s historic Deep Deuce neighborhood with the building of a crosstown expressway in the late 1980s. This pattern of displacement also happened around UCO on a smaller scale during the mid-1960s, as described by campus historians:

The asphalt that we walk on today was once a community of modest homes with hardwood floors and mature fruit trees in

manicured yards. As we tell the story of [UCO]’s growth and celebrate it, we must also pause and reflect on those who left the

security and familiarity of home for the greater purpose of higher education (Loughlin & Burke, 2007, p. 110).

Like those who lost their homes in northeast Oklahoma City and central Edmond in the 1950s and 1960s, many people are being left out of the story of dynamic growth in metropolitan Oklahoma City today.

Business leaders in Idaho’s Region 2 were also focused on regional economic development, and President Thomas of LCSC clearly saw the college’s role as key to these efforts. Regional thinking can efface the presence of indigenous peoples as unique members of the community with a unique perspective on engagement. The portrait of LCSC suffers from the conspicuous absence of stories from members of the Nez Perce tribe, the region’s indigenous/first peoples, in the organizational saga (Clark, 1972) of Lewis-Clark State College and north-central Idaho. This gap points to political and cultural competencies, as well as institutional policies regarding human subjects research approval, a process to be negotiated by university and community members interested in working with tribal people. These findings support Pasque’s (2010) argument that women and people of color, in particular, are frequently silenced in the national conversation about higher education for the public good (Kezar, Chambers, & Burkhardt, 2005). In Oklahoma City and the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley, when community-university engagement initiatives focus too narrowly on economic development goals, project leaders sometimes (inadvertently) neglect democratic participation and mutual interests, thereby limiting opportunities for input from traditionally under-represented groups in the community.

Current focus on engagement as process for community economic development does not adequately address the continued disenfranchisement of particular demographic groups within the larger society. Pasque (2010) points out that the current discourse pays insufficient attention to “inequality across social identity (i.e., race, gender, nationality, class) and does not adequately highlight the inequalities in U.S. society” (p. 12). Scholar-practitioners interested in community engagement must

attend not only to the outcomes of the interactions (the focus on economic development), but also to the process of the engagement.

The Promise of Engagement for Fostering Democratic Practice

Bridger and Alter (2006) differentiate between development of community and development in the community. They articulate development of community as synonymous with Flora and Flora's (1993) idea of building entrepreneurial social infrastructure (ESI), or the "interactive aspect of [community-level] organizations or institutions" (p. 49). ESI, "a specific configuration of [community] social capital" (Emery & Flora, 2006, p. 21), together with individual leadership, provides a necessary "pre-requisite" to support the instrumental activities such as job creation and workforce development referred to by Bridger and Alter as "development in communities" (see also Flora, Sharp, Flora, & Newlon, 1997). Job creation is an increasingly welcome outcome of community-university interaction at a regional level. President Thomas demonstrated this in her emphasis on the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley Chamber of Commerce's recognition of the college as one of the major employers in the region. The prominence of the UCO partnership with the state law enforcement agency also speaks to a new role for colleges and universities in regional development. The problem is, however, as Bridger and Alter (2006) argue:

an exclusive emphasis on economic development or other activities designed to enhance material well-being does not necessarily lead to improvements in individual and social well-being. Growth, for instance, while it can bring needed material resources, can also increase inequality and divisiveness [and in doing so, suppress] the interaction [among citizens] upon which community depends (p. 171).

Increasingly—because of the current economic climate (Dubb & Howard, 2007) and trends in state funding for higher education (Weerts & Ronca, 2006)—engagement initiatives prioritize economic development goals, as in the partnership to relocate the OSBI Forensic Science Center to Edmond and LCSC's embracing of its role as a

major employer in the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley. However, these economic motives for engagement need not be seen as replacing a focus on the public good, or a commitment to community well-being. Rather, the way to look at this is to differentiate the nature from the process of these relationships. The relationships themselves are about community economic development; the way in which the relationships are established and sustained should prioritize broad, inclusive participation in what Boyte (2010) refers to as "politics" (p. xvi) at the local and/or regional level.

Engagement and the Development of Communities

Repositioning individual higher education institutions as members of the communities they serve is not—as with the roles played by LCSC and UCO in the portraits presented here—at odds with the rhetoric of higher education for the public good (Kezar, Chambers & Burkhardt, 2005), even if or especially when the public good is synonymous with economic well-being. Tinkler (2010) has called for greater intentionality in the use of engagement as a tool for advancing social justice aims, suggesting community-based participatory research as an appropriate methodological tradition for faculty committed to the development of communities. Boyte (2005, 2010) emphasizes the need for all university actors—faculty/researchers as well as administrators and professional staff—to embrace engagement initiatives as important public work, to reject the "experts know best" attitudes characteristic of some university outreach, and to acknowledge "the agency of everyone else" (p. xvii), so they can better learn to "work with people of diverse backgrounds and interests on the basis of equality and respect" (p. xv). Similarly, I am calling here for a deeper consideration of the inherent, but largely unrealized, capacity of community-university engagement initiatives and community-based research and teaching (Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, & Donahue, 2003) to strengthen participatory democracy. This call has implications for the practice of community-university partnerships, and also highlights methodological considerations for designing and carrying out further (community-engaged) research with the potential to inform pedagogical approaches as well as administrative practice (St. John, 2009).

Building mutually beneficial engagement initiatives as emphasized in the literature (AASCU, 2002; Driscoll, 2008) first requires a

deep understanding of both the university and the community, reflecting intentional relationship building with the broadest possible representation of the community involved. A community leader in Edmond, in critiquing University of Central Oklahoma's engagement with city residents, inadvertently offered a plan that would increase interaction between university leaders and a broad cross-section of a community. First, he suggested, the university and the city should identify liaisons to work directly with one another. Beyond this, he called for a monthly face-to-face gathering, "probably...a breakfast or a lunch and have the university talk about what they're doing and then have the city talk about what they're doing, and then they can each disseminate information." The absence of these clearly defined structures for interaction, he argued, limits the degree to which the university is truly responsive to community issues. He dismissed the bi-monthly meetings now happening between UCO administrators and city officials as an example of institutionalized interaction, not real engagement:

(T)he city manager's not the soul of the city. They're just the worker bees. And some of these [administrators], they have no soul. They're just...a mechanic, you know. And so the souls aren't really meeting, are they? [Edmund community leader]

When all interested parties—beyond the people labeled by another community member as the "STPs," (same ten people)—are involved, the resulting initiatives stand a better chance of being mutually beneficial.

Directions for Future Research

Civic engagement grounded in a commitment to participatory democracy and social justice also has implications for the research related to community-university interactions. To date scholars have examined partnerships as examples of a university's civic responsibility, challenges to the research imperative, opportunities for training for students as future citizens through civic engagement and service learning, organizational innovations, and collaborative enterprises. We must also consider the methods being used in the empirical study of community-university partnerships and explore the possibilities presented by other methodologies.

Tinkler (2010) calls for an approach aimed at

advancing social justice outcomes; such a model is necessary at this juncture, she argues, because:

existing realities point to the need for significant changes in our society. ...If we want to expand democratic participation to include those individuals who have been excluded because of lack of economic and social capital, we need to push for...a radical model of research. (Tinkler, 2010, p. 16–17)

Several avenues exist to achieve this end. As Tinkler has suggested, critical theory, with its emphasis on power—who has power? how is that power being used? to what end?—may offer important tools to advance this search for more democratic research methods for, and thereby the more democratic practice of, community-university interaction in regional contexts. Placing (Helfenbein, 2006) engagement in its geographic, historical, cultural, and socio-economic context—as this study does—offers another possible route to holding outcomes and processes of community-university interaction as equally important in the further development of scholarship and practice in this area.

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) traditions also offer methodological tools for keeping questions of how and to what end in dynamic tension during the research process. In Lewiston, I met a man who is a lifelong resident of the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley with a family history of community involvement spanning several generations. He is himself actively involved in civic activities; he expressed to me his frustration that LCSC has not been very involved historically in "community improvement projects." His solution: the college should require each faculty member to get involved in the community. If this aligned with their research interest, that would be even better, he said. In the context of school funding, a faculty member in political science might help district leaders better understand voter behavior in bond elections, as a foundation for examining the outcomes of a present bond election, when very low voter turnout negatively affected (in his view) the outcome. He was unaware of the degree to which this might violate an individual faculty member's academic freedom; he may have, nonetheless, identified a wonderful opportunity for a CBPR project for an interested faculty member. As we continue to think about more consistently emphasizing both process and outcome, these are

the sorts of ideas and initiatives that may hold the most promise in the future. To be clear, they are not a panacea for democratic outcomes, given the almost inherent misalignment of the academic researcher's training as an expert and the community organizing work that is necessarily a part of CBPR partnerships (Stoecker, 1999; Sorenson & Lawson, 2011).

Higher education administrators must also "think in actionable ways" (E.P. St. John, personal communication, July 20, 2011), investigating problems of practice by collecting data while engaged in their professional responsibilities to study new initiatives as they are implemented. By conceptualizing the findings and conclusions of research as "actionable knowledge" (St. John, 2009, p. 75), action inquiry holds great potential for the continuous improvement of any system. St. John's approach taps into the strengths of the broader action research tradition, but it also suggests a research team limited to university actors. Civic scholar/activist Harry Boyte (2010) calls on university administrators and faculty to "help change the meritocratic culture of American society, which devalues the talents and intelligence of the great majority of people" (p. xv). Nyden and Percy (2010) address this issue as it pertains to research design by "adding seats to the research table" (p. 313) to directly involve constituents in all elements of the design process. This team model expands what Boyte (2010) refers to as the "agency of everyone" (p. xvi).

In a new era of increased accountability and decreased state funding for higher education, regional colleges and universities like the University of Central Oklahoma and Lewis-Clark State College are developing entrepreneurial activities to generate revenue, many of which reflect enlightened self-interest over traditional commitments to serving the public good (Boyer, 1996; Kezar et al., 2005). The portraits of engagement presented here suggest great benefit may also be realized by developing practices that link both the process and the intended outcomes of community-university engagement with discussions of what is necessary to sustain a participatory democracy.

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