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SAGE Open
July-September 2016: 1–15
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DOI: 10.1177/2158244016656392
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Street Smarts ↔ Book Smarts: Three Neighborhoods and One University School of Nursing Partnering for Health

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Abstract

This article describes the development, implementation, and evaluation of an interdisciplinary undergraduate course embedded within a campus–community partnership initiative involving McMaster University School of Nursing, and three urban priority neighborhoods in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. Students worked together with community residents and faculty to address selected priority community issues identified by neighborhood members. Using the qualitative interpretive description method, the evaluation explored different partners' (students, community residents, and faculty) perceptions of the course (SWOT analysis: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, as well as outcomes) as a community engagement and knowledge exchange intervention. Results provide lessons learned and recommendations for future campus–community engaged courses that can be transferred to similar contexts.

Keywords

community engagement, community health, community-embedded learning, curriculum, education, interdisciplinary learning, neighborhood, nursing, service learning, social sciences, SWOT evaluation

Background

Introduction

Campus–community engagement is often described as a partnership between community and university participants intended for mutual benefit: Such partnerships address the gap between scientific knowledge creation and the pragmatic knowledge needs of communities (McCormack, Buck, & McGraw, 2010). The first challenge is the identification of common ground that includes a real-world community problem as well as the need to develop a strong relationship between all partners to ensure there is benefit to all involved.

Motivations for these partnerships are mixed (Peacock, 2012) including a true desire to contribute to communities on the part of universities, students, and faculty (Klein et al., 2011); an era of economic constraint in which universities are called to the table to demonstrate their relevance to society in concrete, direct terms (Dempsey, 2010; Peacock, 2012; E. P. Smith, Wise, et al., 2014); and communities themselves wanting partnerships with academia to have greater application to their own concerns and priorities (Dempsey, 2010; Sorensen & Lawson, 2011). Community members and organizations gain resources and also opportunities to engage in community actions through synergies offered within these initiatives (Griffin, Williams, Hickman, Kirchner, & Spitler, 2011; Miao, Umemoto, Gonda, & Hishinuma, 2011). University students involved in these partnerships benefit through applied learning and transformative processes that enrich their appreciation for difference, social injustices, and the consequential disparities in society (Mc Menamin, Mc Grath, Cantillon, & Mac Farlane, 2014). Students may be seeking real-world experiences to help prepare for work-life after graduation (Preston et al., 2014). Given this multitude of interests, expectations, and motivations, outcomes and what is ultimately valued from such experiences are not always straightforward, or easy to measure.

This article will describe a campus–community partnership involving undergraduate students in an interdisciplinary course designed to bring students, faculty, and community members into a forum of shared learning while addressing priority needs of communities identified by their residents. We begin with a brief literature review of campus–community experiences. Following this is a description of a process of

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community engagement in Hamilton, Ontario, involving several of the authors within three local neighborhoods; evolving trust among partners that enabled participation of university students from McMaster University; an overview of the interdisciplinary course that was subsequently offered, and results from its evaluation. Given the growing international interest in campus–community partnerships, this article adds an innovative strategy for engagement with lessons learned that can assist others.

Practices in campus–community engagement. University partnerships with communities have historically reflected traditional academic goals of education and research (Dempsey, 2010; Klein et al., 2011; Sorensen & Lawson, 2011) with local communities serving as research sites for addressing research questions of graduate students and faculty (Bringle & Steinberg, 2010; Dulmus & Cristalli, 2012; Klein et al., 2011). More recently, principles of engaged scholarship, civic mindedness, and service have reemerged as the third mission of academic institutions (Bilodeau, Podger, & Abd-El-Aziz, 2014; Bringle & Steinberg, 2010; Klein et al., 2011; K. M. Smith, Else, & Crookes, 2014). This transition is indicated in initiatives in which universities and communities embark on partnerships that aim to be mutually beneficial (Bringle & Steinberg, 2010; Dempsey, 2010; Dulmus & Cristalli, 2012; Klein et al., 2011; Mc Menamin et al., 2014; Miao et al., 2011; Parker et al., 2012; Sorensen & Lawson, 2011). While continuing to address academic interests of universities, many campus–community partnerships have benefited communities; for example, through increased community awareness of their capacities and needs (Klein et al., 2011); skills development in community capacity building (Griffin et al., 2011); opportunities for employment in partnership projects (Dulmus & Cristalli, 2012); development of leadership skills (Dunlap, Marver, Morrow, Green, & Elam, 2011; Miao et al., 2011); and initiation of new community programs and improvements (Carney, Maltby, Mackin, & Maksym, 2011; Cashman et al., 2008).

University students have been vital to successful campus–community partnership (Klein et al., 2011). Student involvement has brought university resources into local initiatives, including administrative resources (Gazley, Littlepage, & Bennett, 2012), knowledge resources such as grantsmanship and funding opportunities (Dulmus & Cristalli, 2012; Klein et al., 2011; Miao et al., 2011), as well as content expertise and scientific knowledge (Dunlap et al., 2011). Students have also increased visibility of community initiatives both within communities and on campus (Gazley et al., 2012), enhanced program delivery (Bringle & Steinberg, 2010; Sowan, Moffatt, & Canales, 2004), and contributed to community advocacy and policy development (Carney et al., 2011), while offering synergies for greater community engagement on local issues (Griffin et al., 2011; Miao et al., 2011). Mooney-Melvin (2014) described how a community engagement initiative involving history and geography students with community members contributed to community building through the resurrection and dissemination of historical resources resulting in a source of community celebration and identity. As Mooney-Melvin (2014) attested, ". . . engaged learning in the urban setting infuses life into the meaning of the urban university and captures Schön's notion of 'actionable knowledge,' which privileges multiple sources of information, including practice-based insights drawn from the field" (p. 474).

Benefits for students through partnership participation have been multifaceted. They have adopted values related to civic mindedness and social justice while acquiring contextual and disciplinary knowledge (Bringle & Steinberg, 2010; Carney et al., 2011; Dulmus & Cristalli, 2012; Klein et al., 2011): Klein et al. (2011) argued that not only does community engagement support enquiry-based learning, but it also affects affective domains transforming students' lives and preparing them with skills desired by employers such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and collaboration.

The principles of service learning and benefits to students in such practice placements have long been recognized by professional faculties such as nursing and medicine (Carney et al., 2011; Dulmus & Cristalli, 2012; Feenstra, Gordon, Hansen, & Zandee, 2006; Landry, Lee, & Greenwald, 2009; Siegrist, 2004; K. M. Smith, Else, & Crookes, 2014; Sowan et al., 2004). However, interdisciplinary approaches add to the university's ability to address more diverse needs of community members themselves (Gazley et al., 2012; Klein et al., 2011) while giving students greater appreciation for different forms of expertise and knowledge that can benefit community members (Silver et al., 2014).

Contemporary experiences in community engagement have followed similar foundational principles in campus–community engagement to those of Dulmus and Cristalli (2012). These included using a strength-based approach; facilitating collaborative, equitable partnerships using empowering processes while attending to social inequalities; capacity building; balancing knowledge generation and intervention for mutual benefit; addressing community public health problems that address multiple determinants of health; disseminating results with and for all partners; and finally committing to a long-term process and sustainability. These principles are reflective of values and beliefs that guided the creation of an interdisciplinary course embedded within a campus–community partnership involving McMaster's School of Nursing (SON) and three inner-city communities.

The McMaster–Hamilton partnership initiative. The SON was interested in enriching student experiences by having them learn about communities and finding ways to actively contribute to their health. To that end, interested faculty with doctoral and master's degree preparation and various community clinical experiences (e.g., public health nursing, epidemiology, community-based managed alcohol program,

leading immigrant and refugee programs, and community development) discussed ways to increase the SON's community engagement efforts. Through the faculty's personal networks, a municipal community developer was recruited to work with the SON and, in return, was given a small stipend. University educated, the community developer had many years of experience working with grassroots and informal groups, including long-standing connections to a number of neighborhoods. He provided a roadmap to enter a neighborhood and become engaged with neighbors and brokered building relationships based on strengths and assets of the community and the university. As a champion of asset-based community development (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1996), his experience and relationship with the residents and service providers were essential in nurturing trusting campus–community relationships. The job description was primarily focused on the following: the outreach process to develop relationships with residents that would prove to be the building blocks of engagement, assistance to the local community planning team that was to be led by residents, and the development and implementation of a neighborhood action plan. Together, a decision was made to explore the potential for working with three priority neighborhoods' local planning teams (LPTs) in neighborhoods traditionally identified as economically challenged.

Led by residents, LPTs used a strengths-based approach to identify, engage, and mobilize local assets to address concerns. LPTs supported partnerships between residents and community organizations with a common goal—making neighborhoods better places "to live, work and raise a family." Typical attendance at LPT meetings ranged from approximately 12 to 25 people, including residents (adults, teens, and children), health and social service providers who serviced the neighborhood, the community developer who was a support for the LPT, and one to two SON faculty depending on the neighborhood.

The SON's active participation in LPT's began by deploying adjunct faculty members to their monthly community meetings to build trusting and supportive relationships with residents. Over time, faculty with residents explored how the SON's assets could complement each neighborhood's strengths with a particular focus on contributing to LPT's problem-solving capacity.

With help from nursing students, the SON assisted LPT's to conduct door-to-door surveys in the neighborhoods so that LPT's could understand improvements that residents wanted. A report was developed for the communities by faculty. The experience of working together through data collection and analysis provided a strong understanding of neighborhood concerns and helped solidify everyone's commitment to find ways that the SON could add value to LPT's in addressing identified concerns. The next natural step was for the SON with LPT's to co-create a knowledge exchange intervention, which was blithely yet appropriately named "Street Smarts ↔ Books Smarts" to help address neighborhood concerns. This was the conceptual foundation for the undergraduate multidisciplinary elective course that eventually followed.

Course Description

The course was designed based on integrated knowledge exchange, community development, evidenced-informed, and participatory approaches to working with communities. Twelve third- and fourth-year students were selected to participate, coming from undergraduate programs in nursing (two), biochemistry (two), arts and sciences (two), social work (one), psychology (two), health sciences (one), life sciences (one), and biology (one). Four students were assigned to each neighborhood or "hub" (Sites A, B, and C). A report from the Social Planning and Research Council provides data on neighborhood statistics (Mayo, Klassen, & Bahkt, 2014). Three of the Local Neighborhood Planning Teams who participated in this study share the challenge of places where people experience poverty, varying degrees of housing insecurity, and additional emergency room visits of its residents with more residents reporting a lack of a family doctor than the city as a whole. All three neighborhoods have an average age of death that is younger than the city's average and when taken together residents from these three neighborhoods live 3.3 years less than residents in the city as a whole. All three neighborhoods have fewer seniors, and all are home to residents, who identify as Aboriginal, which is more than the city as a whole. All three neighborhoods report high school non-completion rates that are higher than the city as a whole. Although these are characteristics that are shared, there are a few distinct differences in the profiles of the three participating neighborhoods. Table 1 provides differences between sites.

Student groups joined with two resident consultants selected by the LPT (two residents per neighborhood) to address one community-identified issue: These included walkability, social enterprise through food security, and neighborhood beautification.

The full-term course was held off-campus in a location near the neighborhoods in the evening to encourage resident participation. First, faculty members (one course tutor and two other faculty with roles in the community who periodically attended) introduced students to critical concepts in working with community. The community developer acted as an advisor to residents in their community expert role. From the start, class time was dedicated to faculty, student, and resident interactions. Students and residents worked to refine a researchable question based on the priority neighborhood issue. Residents used knowledge of their community (*Street Smarts*) to help clarify student's understanding of community needs. Guided by faculty, students explored and critiqued research (*Book Smarts*) to identify the best available evidence to address the priority issue. Students and residents planned ways to share key messages with the community, using residents' Street Smarts to come up with an acceptable dissemination strategy.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Three Participating Neighborhoods.

Site A is in the heart of what was once the home of high-density industrial development, now in decline. The pre- and post-war housing stock supported the working industrial class.

- The majority of residents are homeowners (78%), and the poverty rate is higher than the city average (23% vs. 18%).
- Annual mobility rates are high (37%).
- More than ¼ of Site A families are headed by a female-lone parent (29%).
- There are fewer individuals who identify with a visual minority than the city (8% vs. 14%) with a smaller portion of recent immigrants than the city as a whole (1% vs. 3%).
- There is a higher proportion of residents (14%) who have an apprenticeship/trades certificate/diploma than the city's rate as a whole (10%).
- There is a larger proportion of persons who live with activity limitations than in the city as a whole (26% vs. 21%).

Site B with its vast green landscape was once the home of a World War II airport facility along with temporary housing for airport personnel. Because affordable homes for families of returning veterans was needed following the war, a housing complex of one, two, and three bedroom homes were built that makes up the majority of area known as the Site B neighborhood. Today, there is a large stock of city-supported social housing units with a 50-50 mix of affordable housing units versus private homes.

- The child poverty rate (75%) is almost triple the city's average.
- Families led by a female-lone parent are high (40%).
- Children (below the age of 20 years) make up 31% of the population.
- More than 1 in 5 residents identify as a visible minority (22%) with a higher than an average rate of newcomers than that of the city (10% vs. 6%).
- Three in 10 residents report that they live with an activity limitation compared with 2 in 10 for the city as a whole.

Site C was once home to the city's leaders of industry with a housing stock of large and formerly luxurious estates with many homes now divided into multi-unit dwellings.

- Residents of site C are younger than the city's average (3.7 years of age younger).
- Almost half of residents rent their homes (49%) and the numbers of those who own (51%) have not kept pace with city wide rates of home ownership (68%).
- A quarter of homeowners and renters spend more than 30% of their income on shelter costs.
- Poverty rates double the rates for the city.
- Sixty percent of children and more than one third of seniors live below the poverty line.

Source. City of Hamilton (2011), Mayo, Klassen, and Bahkt (2014), and Semogas et al. (2011).

Students received course credit based on performance in working with community members and three graded assignments: (a) an individual written summation from a literature search, including critical appraisal of research methods and a brief discussion on relevance to the target community; (b) a small group dissemination activity (knowledge translation/mobilization) for local residents in the community; and (c) a small group formal academic presentation at the university for faculty and other students.

As a critical component of the initiative, an evaluation study was implemented to explore perceptions of the Street Smarts ↔ Book Smarts initiative as a community engagement and knowledge exchange intervention delivered through the course. Since the 1950s and 1960s, SWOT (strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, and threats) has been commonly used as an analysis tool to support strategic planning through the exploration of internal and external organizational environments (Chermack & Kasshanna, 2007). It has also been used in community assessments for community mobilization for health and welfare (Minkler, 2012). In an academic environment, Balamuralikrishna and Dugger (1995) noted that understanding internal factors, that is, strengths and weaknesses, as well as external factors, that is, threats and opportunities, can facilitate forming a future vision for a program or initiative. Because our course was newly developed and related to community mobilization, we chose to use the SWOT framework to guide the formulation of our research questions to gain insight into needed course improvements as well as ways to strengthen campus–community partnerships.

The following research questions were developed to gain multiple partners' perspectives about the following:

Research Question 1: What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the Street Smarts ↔ Book Smarts initiative?

Research Question 2: What do partners perceive to be the impact of this campus–community partnership?

Method

A qualitative interpretive descriptive method was applied, using an inductive analytic approach to develop an understanding of the phenomena and explore participants' perceptions of the process and impact of the intervention (Sandelowski, 2000, 2010). Credibility was established through triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Focus groups and content analysis of documents (meeting minutes) from various sources were also conducted. Twelve participants were recruited for focus groups from each of three communities to ensure that at least six to eight participants attended. They consisted of residents and local service providers who

Table 2. Characteristics of Focus Group Participants and Participation Rate by Group.

Focus group participants	No. recruited	No. participated (%)	Males (%)	Females (%)
Students	12	9 (75)	5	4
Faculty[a]	4	4 (100)	2	2
Neighborhoods—Total	32	18 (57)		
Site A	8	5 (63)	1 (20)	4 (80)
Site B	2	5 (58)	1 (29)	4 (71)
Site C	12	6 (50)	3 (50)	3 (50)
Total	48	31 (65)	13 (41.9)	18 (58)

[a]One participated in an interview.

participated in LPTs. We conducted one focus group and one interview for faculty and two student focus groups. Confidentiality was maintained by removing identifying information from transcripts. Although some community members participated as community-based co-investigators, they could not access interview transcripts and only viewed anonymized and aggregated data.

LPT focus group questions were drafted with input from LPT representatives, and sessions were conducted in each neighborhood. Focus groups were 1½-hr long, audiotaped, and transcribed verbatim. Written consent was obtained for participation and audio recording: Students and residents were given a CAN$15 gift certificate as a token of appreciation.

Trained facilitators conducted all focus group sessions and promoted group discussion to ensure that all participants provided comments. They included co-principal investigators R.V. and O.W. who are PhD-prepared nursing faculty members and recorders, including N.M.—a PhD-prepared research coordinator who was supported by undergraduate nursing students in a research practicum.

Field notes captured focus group procedures, group dynamics, and the setting. Relevant documents, such as minutes of LPT meetings and student/faculty meetings during the intervention stage, were also collected for analysis. This study received approval from the Hamilton Integrated Research Ethics Board.

Analysis

We used NVivo 8 qualitative software to support our analysis. Data were analyzed using an inductive coding approach and constant comparison to identify common themes. We considered the number of instances of similar responses that occurred in the data to determine themes and identified the sources of these instances by participant group (faculty, student, and/or community member). Particular themes arose among some groups (students, faculty, and community members), and not others. We indicated this in the results where relevant. Emergent themes were categorized under SWOT categories (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats). Impacts on individuals, community planning teams, and the university were also identified. NVivo matrix queries were used to compare results by type of partner (community vs. academic). R.V., N.M., and O.W. reviewed the coding structure iteratively until coding was completed. To further increase credibility, themes were presented to focus group participants and neighborhood coordinators as a member check. Participants commented on results and confirmed that their perceptions had been captured well. The member checking also acted as a form of dissemination of results to community members.

Results

In total, 19 community members in three focus groups ($n = 6$, 6, and 7), nine students, and four faculty participated in focus groups. (Note: One faculty member was interviewed individually.) Table 2 illustrates the breakdown of participants by type (i.e., student, faculty, or community by Site A, B, or C), including the percentage of representation from each group of the total recruited participants involved in the initiative. From 50% to 63% of recruited community residents participated in the research, while 75% of all students and 100% of all faculty participated. Table 3 summarizes themes under each SWOT category. The number of instances (or quotes) for each theme and the distribution of these instances by participant type are noted in the table to illustrate the sources and strength of the theme. In addition, themes are ordered from most commonly to least commonly occurring themes.

Strengths

Opportunities to engage with and in the community influenced students' career directions. The largest opportunity that arose was the influence on students' career decisions. Most students identified that the course positively directed them toward community-oriented careers (city planning, epidemiology, community development, and community nursing). Some could see clearer how their discipline related to community. For example, one student saw the application of geographic information systems in her community work.

Valuing and commitment of all players. Among the most commonly reported strengths were positive values and attitudes,

Table 3. Summary of Themes From SWOT Analysis, Including Number of Instances and Source for Each Instance by Participant Type (Student, Faculty, and Community).

Strengths		Weaknesses	
5	Opportunities to engage with, and in, the community influenced students' career directions (34 instances: 34 students).	15	Scheduling/timing challenges influence ability to build strong student–community relationships (21 instances: 16 students, 2 faculty, 3 community—Sites A and B).
6	Valuing and commitment of all players (25 instances: 7 students, 10 faculty, 8 community—Sites B and C).	16	Communication challenges between students and community (18 instances: 10 students, 8 community—Sites A and C).
7	Authentic learning approaches used (20 instances: 10 students, 5 faculty, 5 community—all sites).	17	Decision-making difficulties in the neighborhoods (17 instances: 7 students, 10 community—Sites A and B)
8	Quality of the research and dissemination strategies (18 instances: 2 students, 1 faculty, 15 community—all sites).	18	Lack of sustainability and follow through with neighborhoods (16 instances: 5 faculty, 8 students, 3 community—Sites A and B)
9	Positive qualities of students (15 instances: 5 faculty, 10 community—all sites).	19	Students' difficulties connecting and balancing course objectives and communities' expectations (15 instances: 8 students, 7 from one faculty member).
10	Expertise and teaching strengths of faculty and community members (13 instances: 1 student, 11 faculty, 1 community—Site A).	20	Orientation lacking (14 instances: 11 students, 3 community—Sites B and C).
11	Multifaceted problem solving that moves to shared goals and solutions (9 instances: 5 faculty, 2 students, 2 community—Site C).	21	Lack of human and financial resources to move solutions forward (9 instances: 4 faculty, 5 community—Sites B and C).
12	Partnerships with the community (7 instances: 4 students, 1 faculty, 2 community—Sites C and B).		
13	Bringing in new residents through university affiliation (11 instances: 2 students; 7 faculty, 2 community—Site A).		
14	Support from the School of Nursing (5 instances: 5 faculty).		
Opportunities		**Threats**	
22	Opened up future possibilities for continued involvement of students in communities toward community betterment (11 instances: 1 faculty, 2 students, 8 community—Sites B and C)	23	Potential lack of consistency in approaches to working with neighborhoods across faculties (3 instances: 3 faculty).
		24	Potential threat for personal safety (3 instances: 3 faculty).

Note. SWOT = strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

as well as a strong commitment demonstrated by many participants representing different players (faculty, students, and community members). One community consultant shared that she was

> more than just impressed but heart-warmed . . . at how much [students] really seem to care about the work that they were doing and the neighbourhood. I felt that it was not just an academic thing for them . . .

Students valued community consultants because they "got to know the community more" and had help with relevant dissemination plans. Some faculty labeled consultants as community experts or the "community professors" who lay "the foundation, having someone there who really knows the community."

Authentic learning approaches used. In all focus groups, participants spoke about the strength of the non-traditional learning approach used in the course, which capitalized on experiential learning activities and authentic ("real life") engagement between campus and community. As one student puts it, "I liked that it was a little more relevant than most other university projects. You were actually working towards something tangible." Community partners found that students' direct engagement in the community was beneficial: "[Students] kind of took ownership and always involved the community. That was very important to them—to involve the community and the planning team." A student spoke about the non-traditional assignment:

> I didn't just compile a bunch of research and give it to a professor that will just read it and graded it. But this research was disseminated to the community members and stakeholders in the community . . . they had a chance to look at it and make a difference.

This authenticity was rooted in firsthand experience: "Personally you learn through experience better than any other kind of mode of learning."

Quality of the research and dissemination strategies. Many community members from each neighborhood viewed the quantity and quality of research that students brought to their

neighborhoods as a strength. As one resident noted, "I saw they had done a lot of research and obviously they put a lot of time trying to find out what other communities did, and . . . to see what can apply." One resident described how the research had relevance and could be easily adapted to their neighborhood. Another resident explained how students' researched information on walkability was meaningful and effectively presented to community members during a community walk along an urban walkway (the "pipeline"):

> . . . they were ready and prepared to adjust any information to pertain to our neighbourhood as people came up with ideas. That was important 'cause, you know, they could have just stayed with the information. People could read the information and that. But adjusting it to fit our neighbourhood was really important, and they showed that.

Some respondents spoke about ways students got residents out to dissemination events such as neighborhood presentations: For example, they used advertising flyers, personalized messages, and/or asked neighborhood champions to get the word out. As one resident commented, "Yes, that was a big part of the turnout for that final presentation."

Positive qualities of students. Faculty members along with community stakeholders from two of three neighborhood sites noted that the quality of students was a great strength. Diversity in terms of students' disciplines, and their youthful, friendly, energetic, well-spoken qualities were greatly appreciated, as were the creative and fresh ideas that they brought. One community member explained,

> I was very impressed with the caliber of students that you chose to be part of this project. I was also impressed with the fact that they weren't all social work or nursing students. Their backgrounds were very diverse and some of them had some great life experience.

Expertise and teaching strengths of faculty and community members. Most participants including faculty, one community site, and one student focus group, identified expertise of faculty and community members as a strength. Having a PhD-prepared faculty tutor with experience in public health, government, and community development work was appreciated, as was her teaching style: "I think she brought the students along very well, with a very gentle hand. She was very laid back but . . . she was very present." A facilitative approach by community members was valued by students: "I know a lot of the times things were up in the air but I think that helps to always tie it back to the purpose of what we were doing."

Multifaceted problem solving that moves to shared goals and solutions. Participants from two of three community sites and one student focus group felt that the course was an opportunity to bring people together to work on common goals and solutions. One student spoke about moving from theory to practice with the community: ". . . I think we were able to be a part of the project from that first community planning [meeting]. Up until then, I think a lot of it was theory and it was sort of vague." Another student expressed, "How much is possible when like-minded individuals come together and have a real collective view. . . . Everyone had a goal in mind that they all wanted to accomplish." Faculty saw the value in multifaceted problem solving:

> . . . I valued the exposure to different ways of thinking, different ways of approaching a topic, the different resources that were brought forward, and being able to look outside of either a specific nursing or a health discipline in approaching a situation.

Partnerships with the community. In focus groups that involved students, community members, and faculty, participants appreciated further development of campus–community relationships. A community member explained: "It allowed for the development of the relationship between the university and the community, which is really important." Faculty saw personal and professional relationships blossom: "[Student] engagement with [community] consultants seemed sincere and I believe there [were] some personal relationships developing among consultants and students with influence both ways in terms of knowledge gained." Students agreed, as one noted,

> . . . to hear [the community members'] opinions come out . . . , was encouraging to us. Because at the end of the day our participation in this work is to help a community . . . propel themselves further.

Bringing in new residents through university affiliation. Participants from one neighborhood site and faculty indicated that the course brought new community members into neighborhood activities. A resident explained the power of university affiliation to draw neighbors in: "So, if you're putting out a flyer and the university's name is on it and keep it simple, you'll find people have more interest." Other community participants noted that campus–community engagement changed people's perspectives about the university in a positive way,

> . . . just hearing about how involved McMaster [University] is and their students through this class [which] involved walking the streets literally . . . with the students. So, it changes my impression of McMaster University in terms of the halls of academia.

Support from the School of Nursing. Faculty members noted that support was provided by the SON that enabled local neighborhood engagement. This included financial support for community consultant roles and for faculty to work in a community development capacity in conjunction with their teaching role: ". . . there was opportunity to teach students, learn from students, and be ourselves in a community

development role." As well, the school developed a charter for working with communities, which provided principles that "holds us to a certain way of doing things." A strategic direction for the school to work with the community was a key strength.

Weaknesses

Scheduling/timing challenges influencing ability to build strong student–community relationships. Course time allocation and scheduling were challenges expressed by faculty, students, and community residents. Class schedules sometimes conflicted with LPT meetings for some students. Many felt that 3 months was too short for students to understand the project, be engaged in community development, build relationships with neighborhood residents, and spend time with faculty. Community exposure was insufficient. As one student explained,

> It's really, really hard to research, understand a topic first and foremost, then research, and then get on board with the community interpretation, and then bring [it] all together into one cohesive project, when community work usually is a lot slower than that.

Communication challenges between students and community. Some communication challenges occurred among the faculty, students, and community members from two sites. Community member participants as well as students expressed a need for campus–community communications to begin earlier in the course and at the same time in each community. As one student explained,

> It just seemed that the residents came to the first meeting unsure what to expect. So, aside from having to facilitate a partnership, we also had to come up with the expectations and navigate expectations that weren't clear from the beginning.

Participants felt community members needed other ways of communicating messages besides email or the Internet, ". . . they have to be able to go and get [information] somewhere else besides a computer." Community members could also benefit from specific contact information, such as a phone number or person's name at the school.

Decision making difficulties in the neighborhoods. Students and community members in two sites raised an issue regarding decision making related to residents' difficulties in coming to consensus and moving forward on an identified issue within a short time frame. A student reflected, "It's very difficult to have [residents] actually collaborate and find a unified vision." Another student noted,

> Personally I am a person who likes to do things. And I found that the long planning process, which incorporates everyone's opinion and [is] very valuable, although it is frustrating in the fact that it doesn't necessarily produce any visible results within a short period of time.

Finally, there was some question about the representativeness of community in making decisions about priority topics for students to address. As one community member puts it, "I also do think that employment and food security are equally as important. It's so difficult to decide. . . . So it's always worried me . . . was there enough of the right people here that night?"

Lack of sustainability and follow through with neighborhoods. It quickly became clear to students, faculty, and residents from two sites that this course could only address small steps in what were long-term objectives for the community. Participants expressed concerns regarding the sustainability of the partnership. This related to the slow progress toward community action as a faculty member explained: ". . . we've created something that maybe doesn't get followed through or cannot be followed through and the disappointment that would come from that." The lack of continuity as a course intervention was another sustainability concern related to new students each year and given the length of time between terms without student involvement. Community members needed to be continually motivated to work on the next steps of the community project beyond the course. One resident noted,

> Residents really have to take initiative and join along with, piggy backing on the capacity of the students. . . . But not making it the students' responsibility or [the university] course to move the community. . . . That's a balance.

Faculty and students also mentioned the need to consider ongoing relationships and sustainability. Long-term planning was considered essential to ensure that communities were not overwhelmed with multiple students.

Students' difficulties connecting and balancing course objectives and communities' expectations. A faculty member identified the need to make stronger connections between course objectives and the engagement process for students with the community. The course design lacked a mechanism to evaluate students on community engagement skills as grades were assigned to other aspects of the course (e.g., presentation, research summaries). A faculty member noted, "I think the ratings themselves were important to . . . the students to understand the overall construct of community development and . . . asset-based community development. But they weren't graded on that." Similarly, students noted that they struggled balancing time spent on working with the community (Street Smarts) and academic aspects of the course (Book Smarts). As noted by one student, there was "inequality in terms of equal time for academics and also research for the community at the same time."

Orientation lacking. Community members from two neighborhoods and students expressed a need to provide earlier and more explicit orientation for all partners regarding course expectations and roles. Community consultants wanted to be engaged earlier in the process to understand "exactly what was the overall intention of it." Students wanted more guidance and feedback from community residents throughout the course. Particularly at the start, students' understanding of roles and expectations were vague, and community members were unclear about students' roles in community. One student explained, "What could have been done better next time was a little more information to the community members prior to the partnership and maybe even to the students."

Lack of human and financial resources to move solutions forward. A lack of human and fiscal resources to move a community issue forward was not only a challenge but also it raised moral dilemmas among participants, which were raised by members from two neighborhood sites and faculty. As expressed by a community member,

> It's not really fair to the students. They come up with all these ideas, put all this work into it and then we just let it hang there for years to come. I think we need to act on it as a community group and start taking it into our own hands to put some of those ideas to work.

As stated by one faculty member, ". . . you can't get people's hopes up and get them involved and then drop it, right? So, that's a terrible colonial kind of research or approach, which we're trying to not do. Right?" Participants identified inconsistent funding to support costs of advertising and communication to engage more community members in neighborhood work. Finally, service providers from LPTs expressed concerns about a lack of skills to move some community agendas forward. As an example, business planning to support a food co-op requires a particular expertise.

Opportunities

Opened up possibilities for continued involvement of students in communities toward community betterment. Students discovered other opportunities to engage in meaningful ways with the community beyond university walls to better the community. As one student explained,

> . . . [the course] gave us an opportunity to connect with the greater Hamilton community. It was a really great opportunity for us, as students, to give back to the community, to the city that's helped us facilitate our future lives, careers and our education.

Community members reported having gained many new ideas from the students' research for dealing with issues such as neighborhood beautification, food accessibility, and community safety programs. Students wanted the opportunity to continue to engage and build on actions suggested from the research beyond the course; some did so after the course. One resident saw potential for more in-depth research on community issues in the future.

Threats

Potential lack of consistency in approaches to working with neighborhoods across faculties. Faculty respondents were concerned that not all faculties who become involved with communities in future would approach neighborhood work using a model of practice that respects the role of community members as partners and decision makers. This was spelled out in the SON Charter noted earlier. A faculty member noted, "As this information becomes known . . . other faculties may want to go in . . . but they need to respect the charter and the process that was followed . . ."

Potential threat for personal safety. One faculty member raised the issue of students' personal safety when working in the community. One minor incident in the neighborhood was described as follows:

> . . . One of the students walked out the door and the door locked . . . two guys went by and they looked like they were going to hassle him. . . . The student seemed totally unaware. But the two guys that went by saw me, smiled and went away.

However, a number of students indicated that they felt no personal threats to safety: "I never noticed anyone feeling scared. Or, I never really heard anyone express any feelings of fear or not feeling safe or anything or that kind of fear."

Perceived Impacts

We differentiate perceived impacts from the SWOT themes. For impacts, we included perceived outcomes or impacts that were reported as an apparent result of the initiative. However, SWOT themes were related to factors that may have influenced outcomes.

Many residents felt that it was too soon to say if the intervention was making community a better place to live, work, and raise a family. Furthermore, because the course was intended to contribute to steps within a long-term project, course impacts were not likely to be visible. However, the intervention was perceived to have moved neighborhood projects forward and brought people together around community issues. The value of community–university relationships increased, and the project was consistent with one of the university presidents' key strategic directions, which was promoting campus–community engagement. Thus, this project was very timely for informing other faculties. Another important impact was that students became engaged beyond the walls of the university, and the community appreciated it.

Perceived impacts on residents and neighborhoods. Residents identified a wide range of outcomes for their neighborhoods and themselves. Relationships were established with faculty and students; projects moved forward; and people came together at events organized by students. Residents started to view the university as a resource or asset for their community with short- and long-term benefits. They also recognized that although participation by residents may vary, partnering with the university could be helpful for their neighborhood.

Some residents mentioned getting more direction toward neighborhood goals and finding others interested in working on the same goal as a short-term outcome. Also, research was now made more accessible for residents.

Perceived impacts on students. Impacts on students included learning what they could achieve as individuals, with other students from different faculties and community members. Also, the students had the opportunity to learn the value of understanding context as key in community work and applied research. Many commented on the impact of learning in this unique setting. Students learned about complexities of working with, and in, communities, the need for time, relationship building, different agendas, and the struggle to find a unified vision. They also noted the importance and reward of knowing that they were offering added value and that their learning could be applied. A few speculated that their learning could be applied to other community and international settings. Student confidence in their own abilities may also have been influenced by the positive feedback they received from community members:

> . . . I remember getting really nice emails from [our community consultants], sort of praising us for our hard work. And I know I really appreciated that. So, it was kind of a surprise to see that they really did value what we had done. . . . That's not what you usually expect to receive from most of your other projects at the university.

Students noted that they learned about bringing about change from a holistic viewpoint. They spoke of empowerment through working collaboratively using phrases such as "inspired me," "opened my eyes," and "being engaged." At the same time, students remarked on learning about the challenges of community work and the process of how to make things happen, specifically the power of people working together.

> . . . these are the people that work so hard to improve their communities, and I know that wherever I am in the future, finding those people . . . and bringing them together can have a huge impact on really building momentum and having things . . .

Completing research was perceived by students as more valuable when it is relevant to communities, and it is clearly evident how it can be used. Residents and faculty spoke of long-term outcomes for students. Residents noted that their investment in student's learning may come back to benefit the community in future.

Perceived impacts on the SON and university. Few impacts were reported for the SON or the university; almost all comments related to gaining positive recognition for participating in and engaging with the broader off-campus community. Only one individual separated the SON from the university in his or her comments:

> I think there may be future applications . . . that we haven't thought of, where people in the neighbourhood come up and say: "Wouldn't it be great if we could do this. If only there was somebody at the university who could." And we can say: "Call the School of Nursing."

Other impacts included a long-term return for the university from giving back to the community. Students and faculty acknowledged that the university is listening to its citizens. Both groups noted how this campus–community partnership with Hamilton neighborhoods is living a vision within the university:

> . . . I understand the goal of [the university president] is . . . to promote community engagement throughout . . . with community engagement projects for all of the university. So, I guess this is a front runner.

Desired impacts to be achieved. Participants acknowledged that this partnership is the beginning of change and that many residents are not yet involved. Time was mentioned as a factor that will influence future outcomes of the initiative—time to understand, build relationships, and limitations imposed by only one semester for the course. Students also noted their personal challenge of competing priorities affecting community impact (understanding, building relationships, and completing course requirements):

> . . . it sort of takes possibly a bit away from the community development aspect of it, which is very process-based, community-led, less accomplishing tasks and more building trust . . . and relationships.

Differing expectations were also evident. For example, a community member valued "getting people talking" as a valuable outcome; in contrast, a student was hoping for action and a plan for follow-up. Community residents also noted that it was good to see some research actually being used that could potentially be turned into something useful. This remark was articulated with the sentiment that their community had been researched many times without the community benefiting. In addition, both faculty and a few community members expressed caution about overwhelming the community.

Table 4. Recommendations for Changes to Books Smarts ↔ Street Smarts Based on Study Findings.

1.	Orient and engage community consultants earlier prior to the beginning of the course.
2.	Provide insight/instruction on how community consultants can work with students.
3.	Clarify course objectives with students and prepare them about how to work with community members.
4.	Invite members of the neighborhood planning team to academic presentations at the university.
5.	Provide students with more exposure to the community, that is, beyond the classroom setting, to include more visits to community meetings.
6.	Engage the broader community more with special events in the neighborhood using planning teams to work through logistics during early evening hours to allow families with young children to participate.
7.	Offer consistent communication regarding the course/project through websites, blogs, emails, and regular reports at community meetings.
8.	Involve more community partners such as the city partners through broader, strategic communication.
9.	Address research recommendations earlier to promote expedited community action.
10.	Consider strategies to obtain resources to move actions forward; for example, grants leveraging community assets, and more local government involvement.

Discussion

Structural issues faced by campus–community partnerships in general include a lack of experience with students in planning, orientation or training, supervision and evaluation (Klein et al., 2011), and training for community members to empower their ability to participate (Huang, 2002; Klein et al., 2011; Parker et al., 2012). These and other challenges were identified through our study and have been the impetus for a set of recommendations (Table 4) toward improving the Street Smarts ↔ Book Smarts initiative.

Many recommendations have been incorporated since the course launch. For example, an orientation session was developed and offered to community consultants prior to the beginning of the semester to address information needs and introduce instructors. Consultant, faculty, student, and community developer roles were made more transparent through documentation and discussion. A charter outlining the principles that guide the course and the overall campus–community partnership was incorporated in the orientation for residents, consultants, and students. The community LPTs began holding discussions with the community developer in the spring and summer to ensure clearer, researchable questions were identified at the start of the next course. A more comprehensive orientation for students and residents meant an earlier launch into working together. This restructuring allowed for the timely completion of the literature research and additional time for engaging with community members in dissemination planning.

Many strengths and opportunities reported through the initiative were similar to other partnerships involving students as reported in the literature. However, one of the greatest strengths of our approach was the degree of relationship building between students and community residents. This was accomplished in spite of the acknowledged time limitations available within one semester. The respect students held toward consultants as educators was evident from the start: Community residents and not faculty were identified as the primary resource for students in understanding their "assignment." The students' ability to accomplish all assignments and commitments with their consultants was appreciated by community members. This solidified a bond and interest among faculty and community leaders to carry the course forward into future years.

Resident participation in a classroom setting alongside students was reported by Martinez et al. (2012) as follows:

> Community residents in the classroom provide unique insights that strengthened the research process and helped students to (1) develop relationships beyond the walls of the university, (2) understand contextual factors that influence health and well being, and (3) integrate residents into the university community. In addition, this model provides a mechanism by which to fully incorporate undergraduate students in interdisciplinary partnership research for health. (p. 498)

Similar gains were made in our experience with lively debate between students and residents in an exchange of ideas as they tackled issues together.

Campus–community partnerships require a long-term vision, with sustainable commitments among partners (Carney et al., 2011; Klein et al., 2011; Miao et al., 2011). As in this initiative, student engagement is often short-term, limited to a course or single semester; this has raised concerns about issues of continuity and sustainability (Dunlap et al., 2011; Gazley et al., 2012; Sorensen & Lawson, 2011). Continued participation of faculty, however, along with formalized relationships endorsed by universities, has enabled communities to appreciate the potential for community betterment from an ongoing relationship. This was also our experience, with community participants acknowledging welcomed support from the SON.

Although not raised by participants, current literature is rife with concerns regarding the lack of recognition toward community engagement activities during tenure and promotion reviews, consequently discouraging the participation of developing faculty struggling to find time for this form of commitment (Feenstra et al., 2006; Huang, 2002; Klein et al., 2011; Landry et al., 2009; Marrero et al., 2013;

Mooney-Melvin, 2014; E. P. Smith, Wise, et al., 2014; Sorensen & Lawson, 2011). Community members themselves may struggle to find time—their commitment to community initiatives is often unpaid, taking them away from either family or paid work (Dempsey, 2010; Feenstra et al., 2006). For community members to commit to the work involved in partnering with universities, they must see the value—either through personal monetary gain and/or through recognizable benefits to their community as a whole (Dunlap et al., 2011; Klein et al., 2011; Sorensen & Lawson, 2011). In our case, residents were paid a stipend for participation as community consultants. As well, while receiving research evidence to address identified concerns, community participants also appreciated the outcome of bringing more residents out to community-based dissemination events.

Too often communities have participated in university initiatives only to see research completed with no follow-up. These experiences have created wariness toward future partnership participation (Dempsey, 2010). This was clearly a worry for faculty in our study. However, it was community residents who reversed this concern, noting their responsibility to ensure action would follow student work. Clearly, something in this initiative supported rather than deterred the recognition of community power and self-determinism. Prior to the course, LPTs were already committed to asset-based community development principles, an empowering framework for community members (Green & Goetting, 2010); this was reinforced within the course content offered to students.

Communities are often disadvantaged in decision-making power when given limited resources, or if project funding is dependent on university-managed grants (Dempsey, 2010; Kindred & Petrescu, 2015; Klein et al., 2011; Wilson, Campbell, Dalemarre, Fraser-Rahim, & Williams, 2014). Actual or perceived inequities that inhibit full community participation also include a lack of access to communication tools such as Internet and email, distances between universities and communities, scheduling based on faculty availability (Parker et al., 2012), use of technical jargon in meetings reducing the full participation of community members (Dempsey, 2010; Klein et al., 2011), and attitudinal issues that devalue the contribution of community members within an academic arena (Klein et al., 2011). In our case, we attempted to address accessibility issues for residents by hosting classes within a community location and providing transportation to the university to attend students' academic presentations. To share monetary power while recognizing resident contributions, stipend funds for community consultant participation were given to LPTs for distribution to selected consultants.

Campus–community partnerships require leadership from the community (Dunlap et al., 2011) and university (Siegrist, 2004) and structures supportive of (a) venues for ongoing communication that enables problem solving and conflict resolution and (b) with time for review and reflection on successes and lessons learned from partnership initiatives (Miao et al., 2011). Formalized structures for the partnership itself should be based on a shared vision with co-created objectives (Miao et al., 2011). The course has been continued because this study and partnerships have been sustained in each of the three communities. Therefore, dialogues among partners continue to be ongoing within the Street Smarts ↔ Books Smarts initiative. Results of this study allowed partners to reflect together on what could be improved and raised the capacity of new and existing members both within community and university to be leaders in a sustained partnership. Future research could be conducted to compare factors influencing successful campus–community relationships by comparing experiences with outcomes in specific neighborhoods. This would require the identification of outcome indicators of successful campus–community relationships, more sources of data, and in-depth cross-case analysis.

As noted earlier, faculty respondents were concerned about involvement of other faculties in the selected communities, questioning if relationships might evolve to meet community needs rather than simply fulfill academic pursuits. These concerns, however, can be counterproductive as administrative interests are to encourage a model of campus–community engagement within the university community as a whole. Communities too could benefit from the diversity of expertise and knowledge held throughout campus, assuming a coordinated approach for any future expansion guided by principles of campus–community engagement.

Study Strengths and Limitations

A significant strength of this initiative was that perspectives were captured from many partners, and comparisons were possible by type of participant group. However, community participants were limited to those already engaged in community action through their LPTs and between 50% and 63% of them participated in the focus groups. Ideas and concerns toward the partnership from residents outside of this group were not represented, nor were perspectives of uninvolved faculty or students. Students entered the course with an established interest in community work, whereas some were encouraged to participate based on previous positive community experiences. Therefore, results may not be transferable to courses that mandate student participation. Peer influence within focus groups may have deterred participants from offering negative views.

Faculty members who led the evaluation were part of the initiative, collected data, and completed the analysis (R.V., O.W., and N.M.), but were not involved in teaching the course, therefore, may have had a more objective perspective. The lead author (R.V.) was also the course coordinator who had a vested interest in making course improvements. Study results were very useful for this purpose. S.I., D.D., S.R., and D.S. were involved in teaching the course, contributing to the overall design of the evaluation, and provided

support in the interpretation of results and writing and editing of the article. This engagement with faculty along with member checking with participants added to the credibility and rigor of the evaluation.

Conclusion

Collaborative partnerships necessitate a "commitment to mutual relationships and goals, a jointly-developed structure and shared responsibility, mutual authority and accountability for success and sharing of resources and rewards" (Monk et al., 2003, p. 95). This can take considerable time as partners build trust and overcome potential issues of territoriality or historical legacies (Klein et al., 2011, p. 438). The Street Smarts ↔ Book Smarts initiative has evolved within an organic mix of experience, feedback, and changing interests. This entailed the following: changing community priorities, changing students from different programs, changing faculty responsibilities, and growing experiences of community members working with the university. As noted by many participants, expectations were extremely high for a single-term course. Yet, partnerships and the course have been sustained. The challenge will be to manage expectations and ensure that ongoing work continues to be mutually beneficial without overburdening partners. Sustainability across years, despite competing demands for time and changing priorities, speaks to something beyond specific project goals, objectives, and measurable impacts—it is about relationships, mutual trust, and valuing all partner contributions toward a shared initiative that can meet individual and collective needs.

Future research could explore perceptions of other residents and faculty toward initiatives. Raised by our participants, two key questions were articulated as follows: How do we engage others in community action? How do we share a vision of practice within campus–community partnerships?

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research and/or authorship of this article: This work was supported by the Community Health and Education Research (CHER) Grant from the Hamilton Community Foundation.

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