Developing Multi-disciplinary Course-based Action Research Projects

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CbR

Familiarity, Experiences

Interests,
Concerns

Teaching CbR
POP. 2,695,598 (2010)
(-6.9% REDUCTION)

WHITE 32%
BLACK 32%
LATINO 29%

PERSONS BELOW POVERTY LEVEL 21%
($11K/PERSON; $22K FAMILY OF 4).
Vincentian, Catholic, Urban Mission (founded 1898)

25,000 students; 27% self-identify as students of color

More than 3,200 students/yr working with 400+ CBOs
Approach

Long-term Relationships

Slow Growth of New Communities

Asset-driven

Community as Intellectual Space
Most Segregated City in U.S.
Critiquing the paradigm

Why CbR?

Whose interested?

Why are they interested?
In 1929, the president of the University of Chicago responded to the question “what is a matter with Chicago?”

Why, it is simply an experiment in social science research” (Gee 1931)
Defining CbR

Participatory Action Research
Community-based Participatory Research

PAR “challenges established academic routines without discarding the need to accumulate and systematize knowledge, and to construct a more comprehensive and human paradigm in the social sciences…” Orlando FalsBorda
Research in the community is most successful when driven by interests of those who are experiencing social, economic and political issues.

Research participants should ideally participate in all steps of the research and dissemination process.

“Community” defined in multiple ways.
Teaching CbR
CbR as Pedagogy

Research Expectations

Quantity - low

Quality - high
Course-based Action Research (CBAR)

Community-based pedagogy that has a commitment to engaging undergraduates, faculty and local community partners in research that seeks to improve the lives of members of marginalized communities (Hofman and Rosing 2007)
Critique of CbR as Pedagogy

CbR projects are always enmeshed in politics within communities and higher education institutions.

Hyatt (2001) and Keene and Colligan (2004):

“university-based service-learning initiatives linked to efforts to promote volunteerism and individual responsibility during government downsizing, reduction in social welfare spending, and privatization of public resources.”

“Students become believers in self-help mantras, i.e., the notion that communities can rebuild themselves from within without government assistance.”
“Its not about you”: Community-driven Pedagogy

Potential to

...apply knowledge production toward creating positive social change

...enhance organizational capacity of CbOs

...Secure program funding to address critical issues thru providing evidenced-based research

...Support organizational strategic planning

...Support program implementation

...Support efforts to change policy

...produce data that complements knowledge produced through traditional research
Examples of CBAR

Single Course

Single Course, Multi-year

Multi-Course, Single Discipline

Multi-Course, Multi Disciplinary

(Rosing and Hofman 2010)
ANT 328 International Applied Practice

Partnership with local environmental justice organization

Students conduct indepth interviews to determine how the organization is viewed by its various constituents? What can they do better?
Single Course CBAR

FCH 323 French Translation II: Oral History for Chicago’s Western African Communities

Partnership with CbOs supporting refugees and immigrants from Francophone West Africa

Students trained to conduct oral history interviews and to translate them for the organizations’ use in advocating for the interviewees
Multi-year partnership with affordable housing advocacy organization

Students engage in block-by-block property inventory, investigate zoning requirements, Tax Increment Financing (TIF), and property taxes

Urban Geography
(7 years ongoing, 1-2 sections per year)
Multi-Course, Single Discipline

Community Health Assets and Needs Assessment
4 sociology courses; 9 sections, two years

Partner with community health clinic to conduct 4-neighborhood study of immigrants and health care access

Analyzed data collected by more than 200 residents:

32 interviews
24 focus groups
1,190 residential surveys
685 block inventories.

Statistical analysis
Asset mapping- healthcare assets
Multi-Course, Multi-Disciplinary

Humboldt Park Food Access Research Project
(2 years ongoing, 4 disciplines, 7 courses)

Anthropology - Ethnography
Sociology – Survey
Geography – ArcGIS Skills
Community Service Studies – Impact of Community Responses

A two-year study in partnership with a community-based health organization and faculty and students from four disciplines
Multidisciplinary Food Access Research Project

What foods are available?

How are fresh fruits and vegetables brought into the neighborhood?

What are the social and cultural contexts of food access for residents?

How are residents procuring food?

What barriers hinder access to “healthy” fruits and vegetables for neighborhood residents?
Food Availability

Survey Area & Locations

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Geocode_Stores_326_GeocodeAd

TYPE_OF_ST

- Chain Drug Store
- Chain Market
- Corner Store
- Discount Store
- Gas Station
- Independent Market
- Liquor Store
Community-based Research

Local food availability
• survey/inventory
• market analyses
• GIS mapping

Perceptions and Attitudes
Quantitative and qualitative research on perceptions of food resources among local residents, food business owners
Outcomes/Impact
Educational Benefits of CBAR

Students gain self-reflexive research skills as researchers (to think critically about the role of research and the researcher)

Opportunity for students to correct misconceptions and stereotypes about groups

Students begin to see communities from an asset-based versus deficit-oriented perspective

Potential to motivate students to become interested in social justice; to understand how they can apply their skills toward social change
Student begin to see .......... 

the community repositioned as an “intellectual space.”

the university and themselves as a resource for local residents

local residents as partners/collaborators in research

application of social science methods to resolving critical local/global social issues

their own privilege
Challenges of CBAR

Balancing the number of organizations with need to produce student projects

Balancing of power between university and community partner

Quality verses quantity of data collection

Unpredictable circumstances

Potential for reinforcing negative stereotypes

Using an asset-based approach to community engagement
More Challenges

Internal Review Board (IRB) Approval

Not considered in tenure/promotion decisions

Planning and preparation time consuming

Limited faculty support and funding

Limitations of undergraduate research skills

Time constraints of academic term
DePaul Community-based Research Faculty Fellowship
2009- present

Support development of CbR projects with DePaul community partners

Support integration of CbR with DePaul curriculum (CbR as pedagogy)

Support community engaged scholarship among faculty

(Gallagher 2006)
CBR Faculty Fellowship

Fellow receive a $3000 stipend (in two installments)

Funded research assistant.

Funding to present their research at an academic conference of their choice (w/ grad assistant).
Fellowship Proposal Evaluation

• Strength of partnership with a community-based organization

• Significance of the proposed research question(s)/pursuit

• Level of involvement by the community partner (at a minimum, the research question(s) is defined in partnership with Chicago CbO

• Integration of some aspect of the research project (e.g., survey development, data collection, etc) into an undergraduate or graduate course

• Planned integration of some component of the research into a DePaul undergraduate or graduate course in the 2012-2013 academic year;
Fellowship Requirements

• research report submitted to the community-based organization partner

• paper proposal submitted to academic conference of the Fellow’s choice

• Fellow submits article based on the research project to a peer-reviewed journal of their choice within one year of completing the project.

• Fellow and/or research assistant will present on the research at the annual Services Speaks Conference (May) sponsored by the Steans Center
Fellowship Examples

Professor of Social Work - West Side Domestic Abuse Project

Exploring the strengths and needs perpetrators of intimate partner violence who successfully complete their group services and the extent to which they remain nonviolent.
(Graduate MSW course: Family Violence Across the Life Span)

Professor of Writing, Rhetoric and Discourse

School partnership - development of digital storytelling training workshop with training of parents and teachers on how to produce digital stories that express their values about and priorities for education

(Graduate course: Digital Storytelling in Organizations)
Thank You!

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