

***A Guide to Collaborative Communication for Service-Learning and Community Engagement Partners.* Rebecca Dumlao. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing. (2018). 192 pages. ISBN 9781620361085 (paper) \$27.50, ISBN 9781620361078 (hardcover) \$125.**

Cristiane S. Damasceno  
University of North Carolina at Greensboro

In her new book, Rebecca J. Dumlao argues that interpersonal relationships are the backbone of sustainable partnerships between campuses and communities. She backs this claim with current scholarship on collaborative communication and a series of anecdotes that illustrate how readers can apply her ideas in different contexts. The combination of research and storytelling creates a practical guide for preparing college students to conduct community-engaged work. Given its accessible language, this guide can also benefit individuals who might not have a background in communication studies, such as university or community members. The book's theme is timely and resonates with current political challenges, in particular, the rise of polarization and extremism around the world (Tufekci, 2017). Professor Dumlao encourages individuals to collaborate despite their differences and teaches them to forge partnerships for social change.

The first chapter discards the traditional dichotomy between individuals and groups by stressing that community-based work requires the ability to transition back and forth between "me" and "we" perspectives. In other words, individuals need awareness of how their worldviews impact relationships and openness to use their skills toward shared goals. To help readers achieve this balance, the author conceptualizes collaboration and scrutinizes its essential components, such as relational climate, relational culture, and trust. The second chapter defines communication as a dynamic exchange of messages. The author presents the relational model (NCA, 2016) and eight principles of interpersonal communication (Wood, 2007). Taken together, these two chapters offer a primary vocabulary to talk about collaboration/communication that can be especially beneficial to novices.

The next two chapters talk specifically about collaborative communication. Chapter three explores a framework of five communicative actions that readers can use to navigate relationships. Dumlao stresses the need for *connecting* and *conversing* before *envisioning* plans and *committing* to a project. Over time, these collaborative efforts create *partner patterns*, or the habits and guidelines that individuals develop in their relationships. In practice, these five actions do not unfold linearly, and readers need to pick and choose the elements of the framework as circumstances require. Chapter four provides some practical ways to implement this framework. In Dumlao's (2018) own words, her suggestions offer a "ready-to-use repertoire" (p. 59) that people can build upon as they progress. Instructors can strategically use this portion of the book to prepare students for community-engaged work and promote reflections on how partnerships are evolving. Professional development workshops can also draw from these ideas.

Chapters five and six talk about leadership and cultural differences, respectively, and prompt readers to enhance their repertoire of collaborative skills. Dumlao starts with a provocative statement that anyone can become a leader. The chapter focuses on the benign uses of power because her approach aligns with the ideals of reciprocity, mutual benefit, and shared responsibility. Dumlao also highlights the importance of developing specific skills before leading others, such as emotional/social intelligence and persuasion. Chapter six explains that communication creates and maintains a culture, or patterns of behaviors shared by a group of people (Humphrey, 2007; Martin & Nakayama, 2007). The author proposes a dialectical understanding of the subject and explores six relations: cultural-individual, personal-contextual, difference-similarity, static-dynamic, history/past-present/future, and privilege-disadvantage (Martin and Nakayama, 2007). Parallels are drawn with the framework from chapter three to connect cultural diversity to the rest of the book. Given the complexity of these topics, the content suits better those individuals who already have some experience doing community work.

The final portion of the book offers go-to roadmaps that the reader might want to revisit as needed. Chapter seven teaches how to handle conflicts and points out that tensions arise because of miscommunication or genuine differences. It presents a *partnership approach*

comprised of practical steps to re-establish peace, deepen mutual understanding, and create positive change. Dumlao shares a couple of tools: a learning/protective mode continuum to assess responses to conflict; suggestions for creating a safe space to talk; and strategies for having tense conversations. Readers can use these ideas as an emergency plan for managing tensions. Chapter eight explores the possibilities that new information and communication technologies open for community engagement. It presents digital networks as creative outlets for storytelling and artwork to compose audios/videos and webinars. The author analyzes some specific characteristics of digital communication and suggests ways of engaging communities. Learners who already have experience with multimodal composition might benefit more from this content than others who lack this skill set.

This book is a valuable guide for service-learning and community engagement partnerships not only for its content but also its format. Every chapter ends with a section dedicated to teaching and research activities. Besides, it brings a series of tables and diagrams that summarizes pieces information and makes it easy to refer back to them. The appendix offers other ideas for activities and check-lists to foster communication among partners in community work.

Rebecca Dumlao's guide purposefully focuses on best practices for collaboration between campuses and communities. For this reason, it does not cover the dark side of communication, such as abuses of power, racism, or even oppression. That said, the author acknowledges that the work of communicating and forging relationships is messy. One of the greatest strengths of the book is the fact that it provides guidance without being prescriptive. In other words, it shares principles based on research instead of "one size fits all" rules. Therefore, readers can adapt Dumlao's ideas to different contexts.

In the introduction of the book, the author states that to create a brighter future, people *must* come together to address today's challenges, such as homelessness, hunger, and violence. By teaching them how to collaborate and forge interpersonal relationships, the author empowers individuals to take action. For this reason, the book is not only a guide but an inspiration to transform the *status quo*. After reading it, readers will feel compelled to ask themselves two questions: What impact do *they* want to make? Who are they taking with them on this journey?

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Correspondence concerning this review should be addressed to:

Cristiane S. Damasceno  
University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
Department of Communication Studies  
106 Ferguson Building  
csdamasc@uncg.edu