

Engaged Research and Practice: Higher Education and the Pursuit of the Public Good. Betty Overton, Penny A. Pasque, and John C. Burkhardt (Editors). Sterling, VA: Stylus. 2017.

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Grounded in Boyer's (1990) call for higher education to address "consequential problems" of society (p. 21), *Engaged Research and Practice: Higher Education and the Pursuit of the Public Good* highlights research and practice within the National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good (the National Forum) to demonstrate how engaged scholarship can have a direct impact on local, state, and national communities. By giving examples of engaged scholarship at these varying levels of community, *Engaged Research and Practice* provides snapshots of engagement at different scales, thus advancing a concept of engaged research that moves beyond working with a local neighborhood or a non-profit organization. These chapters provide examples of organizational change at the institutional level and state and national initiatives all informed by or part of engaged research for the public good.

Engaged Research and Practice—12 chapters and nine reflective narratives, divided into five parts—is mostly linked to research initiatives of the National Forum. The reflective narratives are brief interludes between sections of the book and offer students' first-person accounts of linking theory and practice through their participation in engaged research.

Part I, Chapters 1 and 2, is an introduction to engaged research and a historical description of the creation and progression of the National Forum. In Chapter 1 Betty Overton, the National Forum's current director, provides a framework for the engaged research in the book by loosely defining engaged research as a "broad concept," and "accessible research that directly impacts local, national, and international communities" (p. 3). Overton links it synonymously with "engagement," "engaged scholarship," and "applied research." This should prepare readers that not all of the research in the chapters may meet individual standards of say, *community engaged research*. Chapter 2 focuses on the 15-year evolution of the National Forum and its relationship to engaged research and practice. Written by the National Forum's original director, John Burkhardt, Chapter 2 provides a "retrospective analysis" (p. 24) of the creation of the National Forum. For administrators and staff working within similar organizations on high education campuses, this chapter emphasizes the important interconnections between what

was researched, how it was researched, and the internal culture of the National Forum to demonstrate how *research* and *advocacy* are intimately linked in engaged scholarship for the public good.

The chapters in Parts II, III, and IV are divided by a classification of scale: engagement at the local level, institutional level, and policy level. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 (Part II) specifically analyze the concept of partnerships in community-university initiatives. In Chapter 3 Hudson cautions against the homogenizing of community that often occurs in engagement literature. Hudson's research found "competing concepts of community" (p. 41) that had implications at the relational, individual, and organizational levels of partnerships. Her findings reveal the complexities of understanding communities and why some tensions exist between community-university partners. Chapter 4 demonstrates how Participatory Action Research (PAR) could be a research methodology that prevents typical problems (e.g., research fatigue, distrust) that occur when traditional forms of research are applied to/on/in communities. Hernandez-Hamed describes the characteristics of PAR, using a specific case study to examine those characteristics in action, ultimately concluding that PAR can increase community agency. Pasque, in Chapter 5, studies the notions of power, collaboration, and community change, bringing these notions into conversation with engagement literature on partnerships. Pasque provides concise and clear introductions to each of these notions, defining them and important linked concepts. For example, Pasque draws from Dewey and Foucault for the notion of power; introduces relevant concepts like marginalization, target groups, and solidarity; and emphasizes the importance of addressing power and inequity in partnerships.

Part III chapters focus on institutional change informed by engaged research. In Chapter 6 Barnhardt addresses apolitical ways that higher education institutions (HEIs) currently attempt to meet their mandate to serve the public good. Is such work transformational or does it maintain the status quo? Based on a Carnegie-funded project that looked at "contentious engagement work" (p. 123) involving college access for undocumented

Latin@ students, Barnhardt concludes that HEIs can lead and shape the work being done on these issues across campuses and the country. Southern, Wisell, and Casner-Lotto provide a useful historic overview of federal and state policies related to undocumented students' access to higher education and how community colleges are trying to serve such students in Chapter 7. This timely chapter offers helpful background information to administrators, staff, and faculty working with immigrant students. Kovacheff-Badke's Chapter 8 provides a case study of Marygrove College in Detroit, MI, as it underwent institutional change in order to survive the crumbling economy in Detroit. The chapter reviews the steps Marygrove took with students, faculty, staff, and the surrounding community as it adopted an engaged institutional identity.

Part IV offers examples of engaged research that align with, respond to, or inform state and national government priorities. In Chapter 9 Reyes, Kamimura, and Southern track the historical progression of the National Forum's college access for undocumented youth research agenda, highlighting the shifts in focus from influencing state and federal policy to working toward more institutional-level changes. Martinez, in Chapter 10, brings to bear the voices of three college-enrolled undocumented men on the topic of college access. The qualitative study can help challenge the deficit thinking of some faculty members working with marginalized students. Chapter 11 attends to the work researchers in the National Forum were doing with both Michigan residents and the state government to increase college access. With the assistance of a multidimensional model for social change (p. 241), Daun-Barnett makes evident the various ways that local community initiatives are interconnected with state priorities. This chapter reveals the challenges of working collectively on broad topics, trying to balance the desire for generalizable best practices while also recognizing and responding to local communities' unique strengths and interests.

Lastly, Chapter 12 (Part V), includes Overton's concluding thoughts based on the book's "eclectic collection of projects" (p. 273). After highlighting a few key characteristics of engaged research (e.g., collaboration and community knowledge), Overton makes three recommendations to faculty, staff, and administrators pursuing engagement work for the public good.

Overton's description of the engaged research projects in this book as an "eclectic collection" (p. 273) also reflects the audience for the book.

Engaged Research and Practice draws an eclectic readership: Faculty teaching community engaged research or research methods might want to assign Chapters 3 and 5 to students when teaching about the process of developing and sustaining partnerships; researchers, administrators, and student development staff with an interest in college access, especially for undocumented Latin@ students, may gain insight from chapters 7, 9, and 10; administrators and researchers in university centers and institutes with public-purpose missions may appreciate the framing and concluding chapters (1, 2, and 12) along with Chapters 6 and 11 for how they describe the work and decision-making of the National Forum.

Independently, each chapter is well written, addresses engagement in relation to higher education, and describes research grounded in theory or utilizing conceptual frameworks. Numerous chapters provide charts or diagrams of either a model the authors are applying to the research or that they are proposing because of the research, thus offering readers some generalizable take-aways.

The purpose of *Engaged Research and Practice* becomes somewhat muddy when the chapters are brought together as one book, and specifically a book within Stylus's *Engaged Research and Practice for Social Justice in Education* series. There is no definition of social justice in the book. Authors refer to the concept of power, and some authors nod to the tensions between HEIs and local communities due to cultural, social, and economic capital. Only a few authors explicitly discuss these concepts in a social justice framework (Chapter 5 does this particularly well). If the editors had selected chapters specifically linked to college access and success for immigrant students with undocumented citizenship status they could have more securely situated the book within the *Social Justice in Education* series. As a major research agenda for the National Forum for the past 10 years (Reyes, Kamimura, and Southern), the National Forum and its national network of partners have created a strong argument for why this is a high priority issue for HEIs in pursuit of the public good. Within the current collection of chapters, the chapters about college access and success for undocumented students do the most effective job of explicitly addressing the social justice means and ends for their research. It is also that line of research that model a wide swath of diverse community partners at all levels of scale to broaden how we think about building partnerships and make a significant impact in higher education.

References

- Boyer, E. L. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate*. Princeton, NJ: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.