

Community-Based Participatory Research: The College as the Focal Community

Elizabeth A. Heckel and Crystal Dea Moore

This article describes one small BSW program's engagement in community-based participatory research (CBPR) in which the college community was the focus of the social change effort and social work undergraduates were the research partners. Over a 3-year period students engaged college community stakeholders, collected data, and presented findings on student alcohol use and abuse to promote discussion and inclusion of harm reduction strategies in the college response to this issue. The project resulted in an ongoing dialogue among the student researchers and administration regarding revisions to the campus alcohol policy. Written from the perspectives of a student researcher and faculty mentor, an overview of CBPR as a research method is presented, associated challenges discussed, a case study using the method summarized, and suggestions for implementing this pedagogy are presented. CBPR conceptualized this way offers opportunities for students to engage more fully with research concepts while promoting social change on their campuses.

Keywords: *community-based research, research methods, alcohol use*

Effectively engaging students in learning about and applying research methods concepts is challenging. It is no secret that among other offerings in the social work curriculum, research courses are often the most dreaded and feared by students (Epstein, 1987; Nasuti, York, & Henley, 2003). As evidence-based practice becomes increasingly important, it is vital that students understand the process and methods of empirical research so they can provide high quality services, improve policy and service delivery, and evaluate their own practice (Council on Social Work Education, 2003). The literature is replete

Elizabeth A. Heckel is in the MSW program at the Columbia University School of Social Work in New York, NY. Crystal Dea Moore is associate professor and director of the social work program at Skidmore College. The authors would like to acknowledge the contributions of Meredith Freeman, Jessica Rubin, Susannah Altesman, Noel Miner, Chris Bergen, and Erin Irvine to the success of this project.

The Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2009)

© 2009 by the Association of Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors. All rights reserved.

with pedagogical strategies designed to promote student engagement with research content. Jacobson and Goheen (2006) concluded that these approaches have common features: Students actively engage in research that demonstrates how such a process can enhance practice and service delivery and ultimately make a positive difference in people's lives.

Although the majority of these pedagogical innovations to teach research methodology involve collaborations with outside community agencies, Jacobson and Goheen (2006) described a participatory BSW program evaluation that employed social work students as their own program evaluators. This participatory research model in which students comprise the focal community and serve as research partners can be an effective method to promote student engagement with research concepts and contribute to the quality of campus life simultaneously. This article describes one small BSW program's engagement in community-based participatory research (CBPR) in which the college was the focus of the social change effort and the students were the community research partners. This work seeks to add to the burgeoning literature on social work research methods pedagogy by highlighting the student perspective on the process (the first author, EH, is a 2006 graduate of the program) and suggesting ways in which faculty, particularly junior faculty, can incorporate CBPR strategies in their research and teaching agendas. We begin by discussing CBPR in general along with the challenges to implementing it; describe the CBPR process specific to an undergraduate campus, including examples from our project; elaborate on the value of CBPR from both a student and faculty perspective; and conclude with lessons learned. We hope that our work can inform and inspire faculty and students to implement CBPR projects on their campuses.

Community-Based Participatory Research: Overview and Challenges

CBPR has received increasing attention in the literature and holds promise in promoting collaboration between the academy and community (Couch, 2004; Fogel & Cook, 2006; Greenwood & Levin, 2003; Kember & McKay, 1996; Quoss, Cooney, & Longhurse, 2000; Wagner, 1991). In addition, CBPR has been touted as an effective vehicle to involve college students meaningfully in the research process (Jacobson & Goheen, 2006). CBPR activities are directly connected to the community where data are collected, analyzed, and interpreted with the goals of promoting action and social change (Hendrickson, 2001), providing a context for program development and service delivery that is responsive to client and community needs. Using this model, professional researchers and community members collaborate in the research process. Researchers function as partners with community members, providing consultation and assistance. Those in the community are thus empowered to ask relevant research questions and perform their own data collection, analysis,

and interpretation, which provides the basis for social change and helps meet their self-identified needs (DePoy, Hartman, & Haslett, 1999).

The insights and perspectives of community participants enhance researchers' knowledge and understanding of community dynamics and issues that affect social conditions and well-being; CBPR builds on the strengths and resources in the community (Higgins & Metzler, 2001). The promotion of empowerment and social change—as well as the acknowledgement that communities are the experts on their own strengths, needs, challenges, and capacities—resonates well with the mission, values, and ethics of social work. Ideally, CBPR can help agencies meet the need for the empirically based evidence required for program development and implementation. Academics can use CBPR to serve the community and provide engaging and meaningful learning and research experiences for both students and faculty.

The many benefits of CBPR are evident, but implementing a project using this model is no small or easy feat. First, community engagement, a key principle of CBPR, is a challenge to many researchers. Such engagement extends beyond the mere inclusion of visible, well-known, and research-savvy stakeholders (Mosavel, Simon, van Stade, & Buchbinder, 2005). Stakeholder cooperation, collaboration, and buy-in are essential, but identification of community partners can be challenging, especially for faculty and students new to a community. CBPR requires some connection to and familiarity with the collaborating community, which takes time to nurture and develop (Fogel & Cook, 2006). In addition, finding the time during the academic year for numerous meetings with community stakeholders off campus can be difficult, particularly for baccalaureate faculty who have substantial teaching loads and the pressure of tenure, publication, and external funding processes (Lantz, Viruell-Fuentes, Israel, Softley, & Guzman, 2001). Involving undergraduate students in the process also presents challenges related to transportation to the agency setting and the time constraints of an academic calendar (Fogel & Cook, 2006).

Although the prospect of using this exciting and meaningful approach to research, pedagogy, and social change can be daunting, BSW faculty and students can and do successfully engage in CBPR projects with their local communities. One strategy for those interested in learning more about this model and attempting its implementation is to conceptualize the college or university as the target community and the undergraduate students as the collaborating community members. This approach to CBPR in which the college community is conceptualized as the focal system addresses some of the challenges outlined above—such as familiarity with the target community, stakeholder cooperation and collaboration, transportation and time issues—and has numerous benefits for students, faculty, and the institution. The following is a description of one small baccalaureate program's implementation of a CBPR project on substance use and abuse on campus.

Case Study: Students' Perceptions of Substance Use and Abuse on Campus

Over a 3-year period a group of social work students and a faculty mentor (CDM) undertook a series of research projects that examined the community's perceptions of substance use and abuse at a small liberal arts college. The composition of the student group changed over the course of the projects, and at times a single student along with the faculty mentor continued the work. The following describes this project from both faculty and student perspectives.

Faculty Perspective on Project Genesis and Development

As a new tenure track faculty member in a small BSW program, I (CDM) was eager to engage my students in my course offerings—*Research Methods* being one—and to learn about and connect with my new campus community. In discussions held during my fall semester course, *Introduction to Social Work and Social Welfare*, I quickly learned that student substance use and abuse was an important topic to the campus community. At this time the administration was considering changes to the Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy and was developing on-campus programming intended to serve as alternatives to substance use. In the spring semester I taught *Research Methods for the Human Services*, in which the final project for students was completion of a research proposal that could be feasibly implemented. As research material often deals with concepts that are not clearly relevant and meaningful to practitioners and social work students, faculty members who teach research courses are challenged to help their students connect with the material in a manner that is understandable, relevant, and manageable (Kapp, 2006). To address this issue I encouraged students to write on topics that had personal relevance to them and that could potentially be implemented in a community with which they were familiar. The issue of substance abuse prevention was offered as a topic by several students during a brainstorming session, and by the end of the semester three students wrote proposals on this topic with the college community as the focal system for the research.

The CBPR model encourages student interest and skill development through experiential learning, empowerment in decision making, group interaction, and application of research principles and techniques (Anderson, 2002). Given these benefits and my institution's increasing emphasis on collaborative research with students this was an excellent opportunity to experiment with CBPR implementation and assist students in developing their research skills while learning about and contributing to my new academic community. The limited one-semester time frame of the *Research Methods* course did not allow for project implementation during that semester, so I presented the idea of a collaborative research project with me—credit given as independent study for the students—for the following academic year.

Specifically, the independent study option would expand student mastery and application of data collection, analysis, and reporting strategies (Kapp, 2006). The three students agreed to commit to the project and even recruited two other social work majors from the class to join the effort.

My motivation to undertake this independent study project was multifaceted, yet personal workload credit was not a factor because my institution does not give such credit for independent study activities. Although the administration indicates that independent studies and collaborative research with students are valued (e.g., faculty are asked to document such activities on their end-of-year reports, and collaborative research is included in the action plan to meet the goals of the college's most recent strategic plan), such experiences do not count for workload credit, and there is no mechanism to formally recognize these activities vis-à-vis tenure review. Quite understandably, this can be a detriment for new faculty because demands on assistant professors' time can be daunting, but I saw this as a unique opportunity to embrace the teacher-scholar model that my institution promotes. By focusing some of my energies on research collaborations with students, my scholarship truly began to inform my teaching, and my teaching became a catalyst for scholarship. These collaborations gave me the opportunity to publish and present with students, which could motivate other undergraduates to explore the world of research and add to my tenure file at the same time. There is no doubt that receiving workload credit for such endeavors would have motivated me (and possibly other colleagues) even more to pursue collaborative research with students on an independent study basis. But in my case I was able to see other factors that made this enterprise worthwhile.

The first year of the project focused on student perceptions of substance use and abuse in general. Trained in qualitative interviewing and sampling techniques both in the Research Methods course and during the independent study, the student researchers interviewed students, faculty, and administrators. After the first semester they presented their findings to the dean of Student Affairs staff, who gave them further direction for their work and follow-up questions to explore for the next semester of interviewing. At the end of the second semester the students and I developed a report and presented it to the dean of Student Affairs staff at the college's student conference and at a local social work education association professional meeting. Petras and Porpora (1993) describe CBPR as both research and service simultaneously, seeking action and change as its ultimate goals. The students' research occurred when the campus was changing its alcohol policy and implementing new programming; the student findings informed these efforts and thus were able to contribute to positive community change. In addition, the project gave me an opportunity to make a presentation at a professional conference, an important scholarly activity for tenure consideration.

The following academic year I taught Research Methods again in the spring and discussed the students' research from the previous academic year to

demonstrate the relevance of the research process to community life, showcase student accomplishments, and inspire other students to consider joining the CBPR project. My coauthor (EH) became interested in the issue of student substance abuse and decided to implement her research proposal with me over the next academic year, also receiving independent study credit. The next section summarizes her experiences with and evaluation of the year-long project.

Student Perspective on CBPR

Implementing CBPR using the college as the target community was a methodical and multifaceted undertaking throughout which student–faculty collaboration was key. The entire process was grounded in academic social work course content and implemented systematically over a prolonged period of time. From start to finish the project was inspired and driven by my interest in a serious community issue, student substance abuse, specifically student drinking and driving.

As a social work student, my interest in CBPR within the college community was first sparked in the Research Methods course taught by CDM. Being interested in CBPR as an approach to raising awareness about social problems and cultivating positive social change, and being encouraged by CDM's discussion of her own research in class, I felt both inspired and compelled to commence my own research to address a problem in my college community: student drinking and driving. During Research Methods I learned the basic components of the research process, which became the foundation of my completed study proposal. Within the proposal two research questions were posed: "What is the prevalence rate of student drinking and driving at this college?" and "What are community stakeholders' perceptions of the issue?" The questions translated into quantitative and qualitative research components, respectively, forming a framework for study design. Additionally, Mosavel et al. (2005) note that research question development is particularly critical in the context of CBPR; questions formulated without the input and involvement of community stakeholders can undermine the research and its chances of success from the outset. In the case of this research the issue of student substance use and abuse at my college had already been explored by community members—the student researchers from the previous academic year—indicating that it was of interest and importance to them. Moreover, I attended myriad campus forums on the topic and networked with various stakeholders to gain their perspectives on the issue. It became clear that both inside and outside of the classroom the topic of student substance abuse, particularly drinking and driving, was significant to the entire community and movement was being made to modify campus policy surrounding it.

After community relevance had been substantiated and interest garnered, the next step was to establish a realistic and structured design for project implementation. Using my revised research proposal as a guide my faculty

mentor and I developed a timeline for work over the next academic year with explicit milestones. We first submitted the proposal to the college's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Next, we jointly agreed that as part of the project I would work one-on-one with the college's social science librarian to complete an exhaustive literature review for additional academic credit. To answer the two research questions, the study was broken down into two cross-sectional phases: one semester of quantitative research with college students and one semester of qualitative research with other community stakeholders. This mixed-method approach proved to be beneficial on many levels: providing me the opportunity to implement both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis, allowing me to answer different components of the orienting research question, and enabling me to translate abstract research concepts such as reliability, validity, conceptualization, operationalization, trustworthiness, and triangulation into practice (Bisman & Hardcastle, 1999).

Quantitative phase one began in the fall semester and sought to describe the prevalence of student drinking and driving. A random sample of 512 students (22% of the college student population) drawn from a list I obtained from the registrar responded to an anonymous online survey, which consisted of nine closed-ended items that addressed student attitudes toward and behavior related to drinking and driving, and one open-ended item about what could be done to prevent the problem. After one e-mail follow-up the result was an excellent response rate of 71%. Phase one indicated three overarching findings: students generally perceive student drinking and driving as ordinary; students are in favor of preventive safety measures against student drinking and driving; a large percentage of students use designated drivers when they drink alcohol off campus.

In the spring semester, armed with the statistics that described the problem, I designed and conducted a qualitative study to provide a more comprehensive view of the reality of college student drinking and driving. To give voice to diverse stakeholder groups, I interviewed student parents, the director of campus safety, local police, local bar owners and staff, and college faculty and administrators using a semistructured interview guide. In total, 26 interviews were completed that covered attitudes toward college student drinking and driving and the development of a safe ride program at the college. I audiotaped the interviews; transcribed the data; and with the help of my faculty mentor, used ATLAS.ti, a qualitative data analysis software package, to manage the data. Results indicated that community stakeholders reflected a broad range of thoughts, feelings, and ideas in terms of the issue of student drinking and driving. In general, themes emerged related to student safety. Thematic analyses of participants' perceptions of college student drinking and driving revealed that it is generally viewed as a serious problem. Overall, in both quantitative and qualitative research phases participants stated that they perceived the issue as a problem and were in favor of some type of safe ride program. See Table 1 for more detail regarding project findings.

Table 1 Research activities and key findings

Time	CBPR ^a Research Activity	Key Findings and Community Changes Observed
Year 1: fall semester	Explored potential research topics with students in Introduction to Social Work related to campus quality of life.	Students expressed strong interest in alcohol use and abuse on campus.
Year 1: spring semester	Three social work students selected the topic of alcohol use and abuse for their research proposals in the Research Methods course.	Students proposed interviewing a cross-section of students and faculty to assess perceptions of alcohol use and abuse among students on campus. Administration considered changes to the Alcohol Policy.
Year 2: fall semester	Five students revised and combined the proposals from previous semester into one project. Feedback on proposal obtained from community stakeholders across campus. IRB ^b application made and approval obtained. Biweekly meetings with research team held to discuss project implementation. Theoretical sampling employed to choose interview participants. Qualitative interviewing, data management, and analysis completed. Presented findings to Student Affairs staff.	Interviewees ($n=13$) had mixed opinions as to the seriousness of alcohol abuse on campus. Student respondents offered various reasons for drinking: nothing else to do, helps to reduce stress in social situations, it is the “norm” for students. Interviewees revealed that alcohol abuse does impact academics in terms of missed classes, hangovers. Freshmen appeared to be more likely to abuse alcohol. Student Affairs staff began to develop alternative programming for students and more education for incoming freshman on alcohol and drug abuse prevention.
Year 2: spring semester	Based on feedback from Student Affairs staff, four students continued interviews. Findings summarized in a report to Student Affairs staff, a local social work educational association professional meeting, and end-of-year student academic conference at the college. Another student (EH) wrote a proposal in the Research Methods course on student drinking and driving.	Interviewees ($n=10$) indicated that alcohol abuse is related to diminished quality of life in the dorms. Some respondents advocated for stiffer penalties for alcohol and other drug violations. Drinking was seen as “normative,” although direct peer pressure not routinely reported. Student Affairs staff increased supervision in dorms and continued to develop alternative and prevention programs. Alcohol Policy revised to include harsher penalties for infractions.

Continued

Table 1 Cont.

Time	CBPR ^a Research Activity	Key Findings and Community Changes Observed
Year 3: fall semester	EH and faculty mentor developed year-long research plan based on proposal written the previous spring. IRB approval obtained. Quantitative research phase begun, including online data collection and analysis (random sample with 71% response rate). Completion of preliminary report on quantitative phase.	Findings from quantitative survey revealed: The majority of students perceive college's Alcohol Policy inadequate to deal with student drinking and driving; 79% of students have witnessed another student drinking and driving; 42% admitted to driving after consuming more than one alcoholic beverage. Administration decided to run extended hours for the shuttle bus between campus and downtown bars.
Year 3: spring semester	Qualitative research phase including interviews (N=22) with several community stakeholder groups completed including administrators, faculty, parents, law enforcement, and local bar owners. Data analysis completed. Final report on both research phases developed and disseminated to stakeholders. Findings presented to end-of-year student academic conference at college.	Findings from stakeholder interviews revealed: Most stakeholders perceived student drinking and driving as an important safety issue; most respondents were in favor of some sort of safe ride program sponsored by the college, although college officials were less enthusiastic (liability and community perception concerns); respondents had diverse ideas as to how to implement the safe ride program. Administration instituted a taxi voucher system for students who needed a ride back to campus
Year 4: fall semester	EH and CDM collaborated on a manuscript for publication.	EH returns to campus to present key findings in collaboration with the newly hired director of health promotions. Research report became required reading in Law and Society course.

^aCBPR=community-based participatory research.

^bIRB=Institutional Review Board.

The project's findings were presented at the school's annual student conference and resulted in a meaningful discussion of the topic among students, faculty, and staff. A final report was written and distributed to various college offices, including Health Services and Student Affairs, and has become required reading in a Law and Society course taught at the college. In the fall subsequent to my graduation, I returned as an alumna to present some of the study's key findings for a second time, this time collaborating with the college's director of health promotion.

From a student perspective, conducting CBPR in conjunction with a faculty mentor is undeniably valuable. This experience enriched my skill development, allowed me to contribute to my college community, provided the community with needed information regarding a serious social problem, and prepared me for both graduate school and social work practice. Given the broad range of practical and theoretical benefits of CBPR as an academic endeavor, I assert that no other college-level social work learning experience is as meaningful for the student, faculty advisor, and college community.

Of all my undergraduate academic experiences, conducting CBPR in collaboration with CDM was the most helpful in terms of enabling me to internalize practical research skills that can be used across professional settings. Tolleson Knee (2002) describes this knowledge internalization process simply but accurately: Through community-based work, students experience a real-life situation in which to apply research course concepts so they make sense. Particularly crucial to my skill practice and implementation was the study's extended 2-semester time frame, which allowed me to use the mixed-method approach. In the quantitative component of my research I developed effective written communication skills, learned about and used the online research tool Survey Monkey to gather and analyze data, and established and employed techniques gleaned through a thorough literature review that successfully raised participant response rates (e.g., making the measurement instrument available online, personalizing all e-mail messages). In the qualitative component of my research I developed effective verbal communication skills, learned about and used the Atlas.ti program for data analysis, and learned many valuable lessons about the research process—namely, things do not always go according to plan; in fact, they often do not. Obtaining IRB approval proved to be the most time-consuming of all steps in the research process, which significantly delayed initial survey distribution and forced us to rework the original research timeline. Additionally, given the unexpected nature of working with human participants—interview cancellations, excessive participant disclosure of information resulting in very lengthy interviews, survey respondents berating me for asking blunt questions—I feel prepared for virtually anything after this experience. A final presentation on my research at the college's student conference provided me with a great opportunity to hone my presenting skills, a decisive asset in many areas of life. Overall, I could not imagine an academic social work experience more helpful or comprehensive in terms of practical and theoretical skill building for undergraduate social work students.

A second key reason I believe CBPR to be extremely valuable is its function as community service. Although the literature is replete with information confirming that college students do, indeed, drink and drive, these actions simply were not an issue that had become salient to my college community. In fact, the idea of a safe ride program to address the issue had been proposed to the college administration prior to this study, but was rejected partially on the basis that student drinking and driving had not been established as a quantified problem. Equipped with the statistics found in Table 1 regarding the prevalence of drinking and driving on our campus, the college community was alerted to the reality of this issue, and seeds of change were planted.

Price (2006) indicates that self-determination requires us to consider the relevance of our research activities through the perspective of our participants; thus, as both a community member and a motivated student who strongly believed in harm reduction, I felt compelled to address this long-ignored issue. In line with the critical social science paradigm and CBPR model, I wanted this study to become a catalyst for social change within the college community. The involvement of a broad range of community stakeholders significantly raised awareness of the issue of student drinking and driving and also prompted people to freely discuss the problem and what should be done to address it. Although at this writing the college has yet to develop a safe ride program as I had envisioned it, the drinking and driving research prompted honest and earnest discussion of the issue by all college community members, a necessary first step toward social change. Recently, the college administration began offering free student cab rides back to campus from downtown with no questions asked. This change may or may not have been prompted by the findings of my work, but I am certain this project contributed to the meaningful dialogue to address this problem. In addition, a recent Research Methods student wrote a research proposal on the implementation of a program in local bars to support designated drivers. Indeed, it is through the practical application of students' work that they fully appreciate the importance of research in opening up dialogue and creating positive change (Jacobson & Goheen, 2006).

Finally, I would say that conducting CBPR as an undergraduate has been invaluable in preparing me for both graduate school and a social work career. The training that such collaborative projects can provide to students is a frequently overlooked benefit of community-based research (Margolis, 2000). Graduate students in social work, public health, and related disciplines typically become community service practitioners. The direct experience gained through participation in CBPR projects can both enhance practical research skills and encourage an understanding of community problems and community research contexts. This fosters the development of practitioners who are more skilled in conducting research that serves the community, which can be an important asset in community building (Anderson, 2002). Furthermore, such research projects provide students with a rich opportunity to practice the

application of some of the key aspects of the NASW Code of Ethics (Kapp, 2006), the very cornerstone of social work in academic and professional worlds. Insofar as CBPR at the undergraduate level prepares students for life-long learning, CBPR is instrumental in preparing students for the social work profession, which benefits the profession overall. With a greater understanding of research, social work graduates become working professionals who truly appreciate the importance and relevance of conducting research to inform their day-to-day practice. As graduates with a greater appreciation for CBPR research fill professional positions, stronger support for such research will grow within the field of social work (Bruzy & Segal, 1996).

Conclusions and Lessons Learned

Table 1 provides an overview of the multiyear project, including a description of the CBPR activities of the student research team and the key findings and community changes observed. We do not assert that our CBPR project was directly responsible for the observed policy changes regarding substance abuse among students, but the research process added a strong student voice to the campus discussion of these issues.

Together, we would like to offer some lessons learned for those contemplating the use of this meaningful and rich approach to helping students understand and appreciate research as an integral component of social work practice. This is not meant to be an exhaustive discussion; each college setting comes with its own unique challenges, but we believe that this perspective on treating the college as the focal community can be successfully used on other campuses. Although our project involved only social work students and faculty as the researchers, other interdisciplinary campus collaborations could be exciting, and possible topics are numerous and compelling (e.g., diversity awareness, eating disorders, intimate partner violence).

Student Perspective on Lessons Learned

From a student perspective, it is necessary to discuss the student researcher–faculty mentor relationship in an effort to highlight best practice principles for faculty mentors; it is critical that CBPR endeavors be rooted in the student–faculty partnership throughout the process to ensure that both collaborators’ research experiences and the ultimate project outcome are optimal. My research relationship with CDM began in the Research Methods course, was sustained and fortified during the year-long project implementation, and continues to thrive to this day.

Students considering pursuing CBPR projects such as this one should be advised that project implementation is no small or simple task; it requires significant planning, time commitment, the involvement of others, and most important, flexibility. I (EH) would recommend that student researchers and faculty

mentors get together and establish regular meeting times in advance of project implementation to ensure that neither collaborators nor the project itself are shortchanged. It is also extremely important that the student in particular is willing to devote the needed amount of time to the project. Although the faculty mentor informs, guides, and oversees project implementation, it is the student who performs the actual research activities: literature review, survey distribution, participant interviews and transcription, data collection and analysis, and the dissemination of findings. These activities are extremely time-consuming and at times tedious; thus, it is imperative that the student researcher is willing and able to devote sufficient time and energy to the project to ensure its soundness, particularly in terms of methodology and ethicality. It is also worth mentioning that students and faculty may want to obtain feedback about the project from other students. When CDM and I implemented this project, we used my fellow research class students as peer reviewers, having them complete and critique the measurement instrument. They also provided feedback about the study in general, discussing their interest in the subject and their willingness to participate in the study given the pressures and time constraints of their academic workloads. As a collective they were very supportive of the research. Finally, both student researcher and faculty mentor must be flexible throughout the research process. One can never know exactly what to expect of the research trajectory, and as mentioned previously, working with human participants virtually guarantees some surprises, so flexibility is key.

Faculty Perspective on Lessons Learned

Faculty contemplating the use of this pedagogy need to consider workload issues. In our example, we employed the independent study mechanism for course credit; as previously discussed, independent studies are not considered part of faculty workload. To institutionalize such an approach with sensitivity to workload issues, faculty can consider integrating this pedagogy into existing courses. For example, proposal development can be integrated into a research methods course and the project implementation phase into a course with a community organization component or service learning focus. Alternatively, faculty may choose to work with department chairs and curriculum committee members to develop new courses that could accommodate this approach to research and community engagement.

As more emphasis is placed on evidence-based social work practice in academic programs, it is imperative that students have the skills to be informed consumers of research. In addition, preparing them to be contributors to the empirical knowledge base at the baccalaureate level is important. BSW graduates may be asked to conduct small-scale research projects as human service professionals; training in CBPR techniques can also give graduates the needed skills to capitalize on the many community development opportunities that may occur in the context of beginning professional practice. The emphasis on

training students in evidence-based practice needs to be supported through the provision of needed resources (e.g., dedicated time, space, equipment) from the college administration. Faculty, program directors, and deans should discuss how to support curricular innovations for appropriately training students in various research methodologies.

Issues related to student and faculty roles in the research process must also be considered. Student interest must drive the project for ownership and self-directed learning to flourish. Because research projects with a social change focus can be fraught with ethical concerns, students need to be well-trained not only in methodology but also in research ethics. IRB approval is a must, and depending on the timing for final approval, this can present an obstacle to fluid implementation. Discussing the project with the IRB chair prior to submission can be helpful in anticipating problems. Faculty members should consider working with students with whom they are familiar (a student in his or her class or collaborators on another project) to fully comprehend student strengths and weaknesses.

The faculty member is an important link to campus stakeholders and resources. Students need guidance in connecting with relevant campus stakeholders and may require coaching in the content of their interactions to negotiate politically charged issues. Campus stakeholders should be engaged early in the research process to discuss the project content and promote community buy-in. These individuals and groups should be kept informed of the project's progress over time to promote feedback to the student researchers and open dialogue that can shape the project direction and increase community relevance. Once data are collected, it is the research team's responsibility and obligation to disseminate the results to the appropriate campus constituencies in an ethical and appropriate manner.

Communication among team members is key, and in our experience regular team meetings were necessary to keep the project on track and to resolve any issues that arose in the implementation process. Team meetings were an opportunity to share and process findings, strategize about optimal stakeholder involvement and future data collection efforts, and connect research theory with implementation and social work practice. In later team meetings manuscript collaboration and development were discussed and resulted in the present article.

The partnerships developed with students over the course of this project required time and commitment to ongoing mentoring. In an article discussing the "scholarship of engagement" (p. 595), Fogel and Cook (2006) use an interpersonal relationship model to address some of the challenges in working in university–community collaborations. Components of this model can also be applied to working with student researchers who are from the college community that is the focus of the research. For example, faculty need to consider how to *initiate the relationship* with the student that will form the basis for the partnership. Students and faculty both should carefully consider the advantages and disadvantages of such an arrangement prior to commencing the project. Partners

need to also *deal with the past* in terms of how it can impact the new research relationship. One student I agreed to work with had previous difficulties with keeping deadlines. This had to be dealt with openly before a research collaboration could commence. Furthermore, Fogel and Cook (2006) indicate that each collaborative partner has “different areas of influence, interest, and expectations” and these must be recognized so that a “mutually satisfying collaboration” can result (p. 600). This proved to be true during the project experience. When I found myself being too directive, this tended to squelch students’ creativity and drive. As I learned more about the mentoring process, I found that I needed to relinquish some control and give students the latitude to engage in the research process in a way that made sense to them yet still was rigorous and ethical. This required open and honest discussions with students about each party’s expectations, including my own expectations about and evaluations of their performance. There were a few times when I had to have difficult discussions with team members about performance and expectations, and I believe it was in those meetings that some of the most valuable learning occurred.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this process has been highly instructive and rewarding for the students, faculty mentor, and community. The student researchers completed an experience that enriched their BSW education through the demonstration that research concepts can be linked to social work practice and social change. All of the students who worked on the project have added this experience to their résumés and graduate school applications, a testament to the impact it had on their professional development as beginning social workers. As a result of the project, the faculty mentor became quickly acquainted with various campus stakeholders, effecting meaningful immersion in the college culture early in her career. A new pedagogy for research methods was developed, connected with diverse campus constituencies, which added meaningful experiences to the faculty researcher’s scholarly record. Finally, the college community benefited through a strong student voice in the process of revising the campus alcohol policy; the college currently employs a system whereby students are provided free, confidential cab rides back to campus with no questions asked. We hope that others are inspired to attempt CBPR with their own campus communities.

References

- Anderson, S. G. (2002). Engaging students in community-based research: A model for teaching social work research. *Journal of Community Practice, 10*, 71–87.
- Bisman, C., & Hardcastle, D. (1999). *Integrating research into practice: A model for effective social work*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

- Bruzy, S., & Segal, E. A. (1996). Community-based research strategies for social work education. *Journal of Community Practice, 3*, 59–69.
- Couch, S. R. (2004). A tale of three discourses: Doing action research in a research methods class. *Social Problems, 51*(1), 146–153.
- Council on Social Work Education. (2003). *Handbook of accreditation standards and procedures* (5th ed). Alexandria, VA: Author.
- DePoy, E., Hartman, A., & Haslett, D. (1999). Critical action research: A model for social work knowing. *Social Work, 44*, 560–568.
- Epstein, I. (1987). Pedagogy of the perturbed: Teaching research to the reluctant. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work, 1*(1), 71–89.
- Fogel, S., & Cook, J. (2006). Considerations on the scholarship of engagement as an area of specialization for faculty. *Journal of Social Work Education, 42*, 595–606.
- Greenwood, D., & Levin, M. (2003). Reconstructing the relationship between universities and society through action research. In N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research* (pp. 131–166). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hendrickson, D. (2001). *Community-based research: What is it?* Tufts University College of Citizenship and Public Service. Retrieved December 2, 2006, from http://uccps.tufts.edu/04_Community/doc/Communityresearch.doc.
- Higgins, D. L., & Metzler, M. (2001). Implementing community-based participatory research centers in diverse urban settings. *Journal of Urban Health, 78*, 488–494.
- Jacobson, M., & Goheen, A. (2006). Engaging students in research: A participatory BSW program evaluation. *Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work, 12*(1), 87–104.
- Kapp, S. A. (2006). Bringing the agency to the classroom: Using service-learning to teach research to BSW students. *Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work, 12*(1), 56–70.
- Kember, D., & McKay, J. (1996). Action research into the quality of student learning: A paradigm for faculty development. *Journal of Higher Education, 67*, 528–605.
- Lantz, P., Viruell-Fuentes, E., Israel, B. A., Softley, D., & Guzman, R. (2001). Can communities and academia work together on public health research? Evaluation results from a community-based participatory research partnership in Detroit. *Journal of Urban Health, 78*, 495–507.
- Margolis, L. H. (2000). Educating students for community-based partnerships. *Journal of Community Practice, 7*, 21–34.
- Mosavel, M., Simon, C., van Stade, D., & Buchbinder, M. (2005). Community-based participatory research (CBPR) in South Africa: Engaging multiple constituents to shape the research question. *Social Science & Medicine, 61*, 2577–2587.

- Nasuti, J., York, R., & Henley, H. (2003). Teaching social work research: Does andragogy work best? *Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work, 9*(1), 149–173.
- Petras, E. M., & Porpora, D. V. (1993). Participatory research: Three models and an analysis. *American Sociologist, 93*, 107–126.
- Price, S. K. (2006). Experience as educator: The journey from clinician to practice-based researcher. *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping, 11*, 37–47.
- Quoss, B., Cooney, M., & Longhurst, T. (2000). Academics and advocates: Using participatory action research to influence welfare policy. *Journal of Consumer Affairs, 34*, 47–61.
- Tolleson Knee, R. (2002). Can service learning enhance student understanding of social work research? *Journal of Teaching in Social Work, 22*, 213–225.
- Wagner, D. (1991). Reviving the action research model: Combining case and cause with dislocated workers. *Social Work, 36*, 477–482.

Copyright of *Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work* is the property of *Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work* and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.