

Learning from Community: Methodological and Practical Reflections on Shifting the Academy



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Who We Are

Centre for Community Research, Learning and *Action*(CCRLA)

- CCRLA fosters and facilitates community-university partnerships to advance community knowledge, social policy and practice for community wellness and social justice.

Volunteer Action Centre of Kitchener-Waterloo and Area

- Provides resources and supports to the community benefit sector to strengthen their capacity to deliver service through volunteer involvement.

Research Team:

Jane Hennig, *Community Research Associate*, Terry Mitchell, *Principal Investigator*, Maria Liegghio, *Co-Investigator*, Lindsay Buckingham-Rivard, *Coordinator*, Ravi Gokani, *Research-Assistant*

- With the assistance of four advisory groups



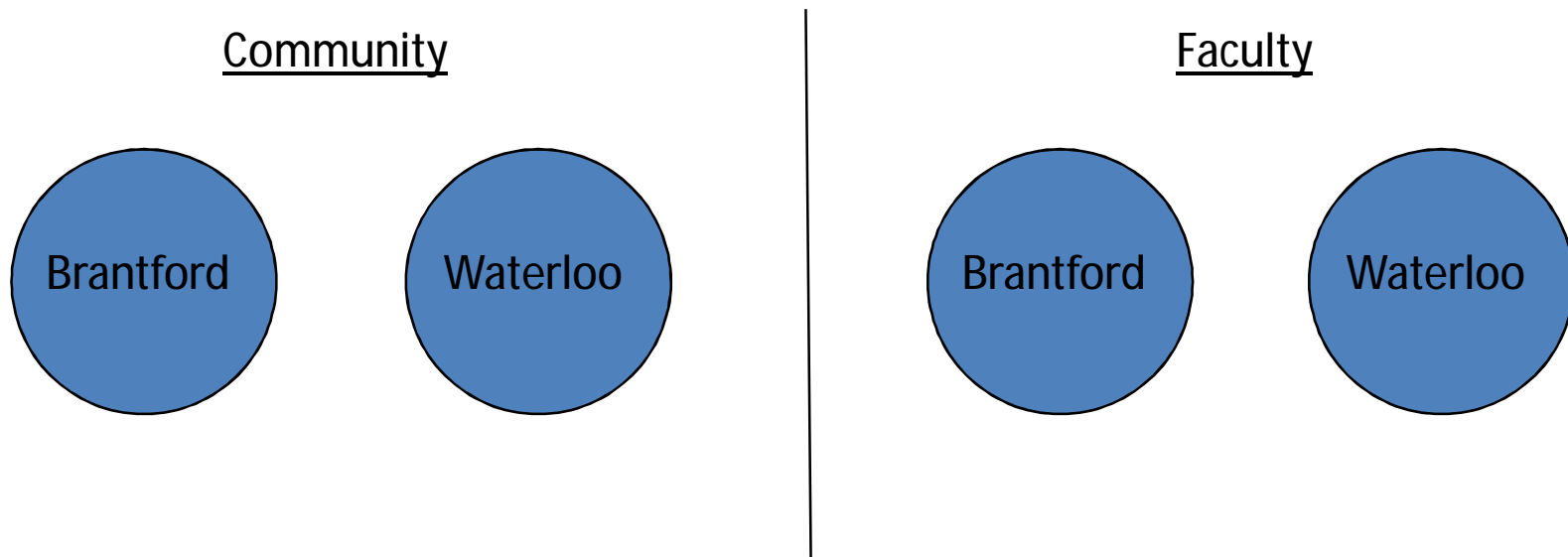
Evaluation Study

The project has three specific objectives:

1. To assess the level of community engaged scholarship (CES) that exists at Wilfrid Laurier University and to identify a strategy to increase CES.
2. To assess the benefits and challenges that community organizations and faculty experience through their partnership in CES.
3. To develop an understanding of the level of systemic, community, university, and student transformation emerging from the university's engagement with the community.

Advisory Groups

- Role is to fulfill participatory approach and provide insights into key issues around CES, and to provide direction re. the research design.
- 17 participants in 4 groups:



Three Stage Advisory Group Process

- First meeting:
 - **What** are the key domains of interest, key questions?
 - **So what?** What is the vision for CES?
- Second meeting:
 - **Who** do we ask? (Sampling, recruitment)
 - **How** do we ask? (Methods)
- Third meeting:
 - Interpretation of the data from the larger study

Contextual Statements

“Creating healthier communities and overcoming complex societal problems require collaborative solutions which bring communities and institutions together as equal partners and build upon the assets, strengths and capacities of each.”

Source: CCPH Website

“Equal partnerships have yet to be realized on a broad scale, due to inequitable distributions of power and resources among the partners involved. Instead, these partnerships are often driven by the priorities and requirements of funding agencies and higher education institutions. Funding tends to be invested in building campus infrastructure, not community infrastructure”.

Source: Achieving the promise of authentic community –higher education partnerships: Community partners speak out! Seattle, WA:CCPH, 2007.

Emerging Questions

- How ready are universities to truly partner with community?
- Are we prepared to address the power imbalances?
- What structural and institutional changes are needed to facilitate transformative community-campus partnerships?
- What is the community's role in institutional transformation?

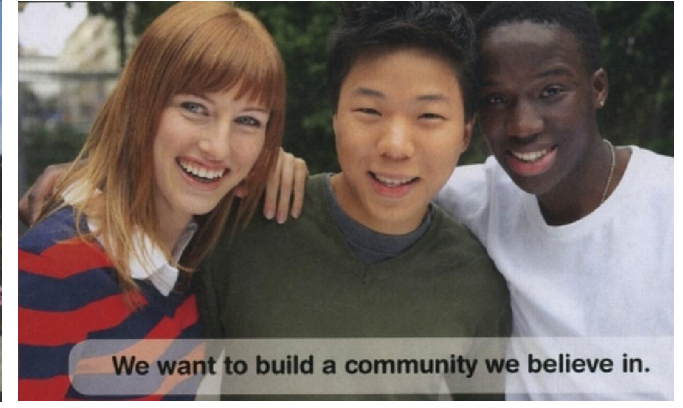




I'm needed.



It's important to preserve clean air and water.



We want to build a community we believe in.

Early Learnings

1. Community and university have different contexts and cultures, strengths and needs.
2. Communication and relationships are central to positive partnerships.
3. Balancing power between community and faculty partners.
4. Advisory groups strongly recommended bringing in university administration.

"I think relationship is so critically important: it builds the knowledge of understanding of what it is we're trying to accomplish and how we're trying to effect change. We've got everybody pulling in the same direction".

Community Partner

Where We Are Heading

- Our research is about learning by consulting with community partners about what are the right questions to ask, what are the important domains of interest.
- Our goal is to learn how to build the social architecture to bridge community and university for equitable, effective and sustainable partnerships.
- To achieve these outcomes, it is essential to have research that is sensitive to distinctiveness of community and university structures. And for us to collaboratively develop structures, processes, tools, and resources that allow university and community partners to address power differentials and work together effectively.

THANK YOU!

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