

BOOK REVIEW:

Cress, C. M., Stokamer, S. T., Van Cleave, T. J., & Kaufman, J. P. (2022). *Faculty Service-learning Guidebook: Enacting Equity-centered Teaching, Partnerships, and Scholarship*. Stylus Publishing, LLC.

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Using ORID, a collaborative book charting process (Stanfield, 2000), members of our interdisciplinary learning community read Cress et al.'s (2022) *Faculty Service-Learning Guidebook: Enacting Equity Centered Teaching, Partnerships, and Scholarship*. Our learning community focused on critical community-engaged learning scholarship and the connection between theory and practice. We approached our readings from multiple lenses resulting from our collective knowledge and experience as community engagement professionals and practitioners (CEPs), including tenured faculty, academic specialists, researchers, administrators, and graduate students. For this book review, our community compiled thoughts on each chapter and then engaged in focused conversation to consider the book. Specifically, we wondered if this content would be applicable to all our varied roles, disciplines, and experiences.

The book begins with the authors connecting the foundations of service-learning and the public purposes of higher education, making a case for why community engagement, as a discipline, must embrace a shared critical framing of focus and action. The authors stress CEPs must use equity-centered principles as a lens for evaluating service-learning experience design, and they detail their conceptual model of equity-centered community engagement excellence (ECCEE) as a framing for enacting such principles. The authors emphasize that through such a model, critical service-learning becomes the predominant format in community-engaged pedagogy, centering epistemic justice, critical solidarity, and methodological integrity and aiming toward outcomes of student agency, community efficacy, and scholarly advocacy. Chapters 1 and 2 provide the base-knowledge and graphics necessary to understand the ECCEE model and set the stage for remaining chapters.

The successive chapters of the book are alliteratively categorized into sections entitled, *Cultivate*, *Create*, *Craft*, and *Compose*, which nicely align with categories of other prominent current works for CEPs such as *The Craft of Community-Engaged Teaching and Learning: A Guide for Faculty Development* (Welch & Plaxton-Moore, 2019). Within the *Cultivate* section, Chapters 3 and 4, the authors stress that to cultivate community-engaged learning experiences based within ECCEE, faculty must carefully research and take intentional steps

for identifying and communicating with community partners, detailing ideas and tools to consider, particularly because partnerships take time to identify, establish, and then nurture. Further, students should be adequately prepared before engaging in cross-cultural, immersive experiences, both to increase their own learning and combat a savior mentality, which ultimately reduces potential harms to the host community both locally and globally.

To create community service experiences based on the ECCEE model, Chapters 5 and 6 comprise the *Create* section of the book, and detail instructional strategies related to service-learning course design and collaborative online international learning (COIL). The authors discuss strategies for intentionally integrating service and learning into syllabi to target the ECCEE outcomes of student agency, community efficiency, and scholarly advocacy. Specifically, they highlight the importance of aligning student learning goals with community partner needs. Additionally, the authors share strategies for designing COIL experiences for community-engaged classrooms including online teaching tips. They note these online tips may be helpful for practitioners at large even if they are not interested in COIL specifically.

Chapters 7 and 8 make up the third section of the book, *Craft*, which focuses on the importance of reflection for CEPs as well as students. First, the authors focus on the importance of creating learning communities that intentionally foster equity-centered relationships and note that these relationships require monitoring and leadership to ensure all involved are empowered to share, learn, and interact. Second, the authors move into the importance of student reflection, using the term *conscientization* to represent the idea that students use reflection to become active, intentional, and empowered individuals who work toward the construction of a more just reality. The authors outline the four key pieces of reflection (continuous, connected, challenging, and contextualized) and note that these are crucial for students to practice developing conscientization and to have a successful community-engaged learning experience.

The fourth section of the book, *Compose*, covers Chapter 9 and 10, which focus on the importance of community-engaged scholarship alongside course development. Following the creation and enactment of equity-centered service-learning experiences, the authors highlight the importance of creating scholarship in order to share research, data, and lessons learned with other practitioners. Chapter 9 highlights various assessment and evaluation models to help with this process. Chapter 10 closes this section with a summary and synthesis of the preceding chapters and the ECCEE model. The authors note that in summary, “As a form of justice learning, the equity-centered principles of epistemic justice, critical solidarity, and methodological integrity serve as curricular focal points in strategizing the pedagogical components...” (p. 320).

The authors’ framework, and overall motivation for writing this book, is important and timely. The members of our interdisciplinary learning community appreciated the portions of the book that included practical connection to student learning, particularly the teaching tips and specific examples included throughout the book. The QR codes, linked to further learning material, were also engaging, although some no longer linked correctly. Our members were excited about the asset-based perspective that permeated each chapter and felt that the inclusion of academic and co-curricular application ideas recognized the variety of ways this work is happening on campuses and in communities as well as the variety of practitioners engaged in the work. Following our group

reading of the book, we were left with questions about how the various concepts, ideas, models, and frameworks included throughout the chapters related to one another. It was sometimes difficult to connect the dots, and the language felt heavy with jargon. Oftentimes we wished for a glossary of terms to help guide us. We also noted that there were times when the community partner seemed to be lost or overshadowed in the reading by the student learning goals and the higher education setting at large. This book still brings attention to the important conversations happening regarding equity-centered community-engaged learning, a conversation in which we hope higher education institutions are actively and intentionally participating. Even with the varied perspectives of our interdisciplinary learning community, each member was able to enhance their understanding of bringing critical community-engaged learning theory to practice.

References

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Author Bios

Michelle Snitgen, MA, is the Assistant Director for Academic Programs within the Michigan State University (MSU) Center for Community Engaged Learning, responsible for supporting and advancing community-engaged learning across MSU. Drawing upon 18 years of working within Michigan's vibrant non-profit sector, Michelle serves as a resource and consultant for community-engaged faculty, partner organizations, and students, aiming to bridge theory and practice and create connections among spaces, places, people, and ideas.

Stephanie Brewer, PhD, is the Academic Programs Manager as well as the Program Director for the Community Engagement Scholars with the Center for Community Engaged Learning at Michigan State University. Stephanie works with a team responsible for developing, supporting, and advancing academic community-engaged learning at MSU. She holds a PhD in Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education and throughout her career she has focused on supporting individuals and communities while advocating for meaningful social change.

Gina Tremonti Gembel, MSW, Director of Continuing Education, School of Social Work, Michigan State University. With a focus on organizational and community collaboration Gina Tremonti Gembel assists those who work in social work and related fields to understand health equity, social justice, and the social determinants of health to reduce the likelihood that people are disadvantaged because of their race, class, or gender.

Bess German, PhD, is an Assistant dean for the Honors College at Michigan State University. She teaches an honors first-year community engaged seminar on equity issues that involves partnerships and work in our greater Lansing, Michigan community. In her administrative role at the Honors College, she focuses on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, student affairs, and admissions.

Roberta Howard Hunter's, PhD, Research focuses on educators in and out of schools and how they understand and teach about the environment in school and community spaces. She is currently a research associate in the Department of Teacher Education at Michigan State University, working with urban elementary teachers on teaching science outdoors in their schoolyards and communities.

Leanne Kent, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and Cultures at Michigan State University. She holds a PhD in Applied Philosophy from Bowling Green State University, specializing in ethical theory. Leanne has had a long-standing interest in community-engaged learning, seeing its potential to highlight the complexity of real-world problems while, at the same time, allowing students to use and question their academic knowledge and to develop their agency by making a difference in areas that matter.

Taylor Martin, M.Ed., is a Graduate student in the Ecological-Community Psychology program at Michigan State University. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and Educational Studies from Manchester University and a Master of Education in Community Development and Action from Vanderbilt University.

Dr. Jada Phelps, PhD, is an Assistant professor of K–12 educational administration in the College of Education at Michigan State University. Her scholarship includes family engagement, culturally responsive leadership, and equity in education. She takes an intersectional approach exploring families and communities and their educational pursuits.

Paul Schauert, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in the Center for Integrated Arts and Humanities at Michigan State University where he primarily teaches courses on popular music and social justice. He holds a PhD in Folklore and Ethnomusicology from Indiana University. His primary area of research is Africa and its diaspora; in 2015 he published *Staging Ghana: Artistry and Nationalism in State Dance Ensembles* (Indiana University Press).

Gretchen Sheneman, MSW, is an Evaluator and outreach specialist with the MSU School of Social Work. Her current evaluation projects focus on supporting the needs of families involved in kinship care, providing in-service training to Michigan's child welfare workforce and learning about the needs of emerging child welfare professionals as they enter the workforce. Gretchen also teaches several program evaluation and research courses in the Master of Social Work program.