

BOOK REVIEW:

Santana, C., Risam, R., Garcia-Guevara, A., Krupczynski, J., Lynch, C., Reiff, J., Vincent, C., Ward, E., & Eatman, T. K. (Eds.). (2023). *Anti-Racist Community Engagement: Principles and Practices*. Campus Compact

Wendie Choudary, Lecturer, Binghamton University

Nearly 15 years ago, I started my graduate career in sociology doing traditional community-based work. At its very core, sociologists study society, social groups, and inequality. Place-based researchers and urban and public sociologists have been in some of the best positions to apply anti-racist community-engaged practices. Unfortunately, replicating past methods and approaches of community-engaged research has left sociologists and many community researchers reasserting the status quo, maintaining complicity with power and privilege (Hartmann, 2022).

Anti-Racist Community Engagement: Principles and Practices is about unlearning. After reading this collection, I concluded social researchers across higher education, including myself, need to reconcile and unlearn how they have been taught to do community-engaged studies.

As place-based researchers across the micro-, meso-, and macro-levels of community and urban social research, we have been taught to study societal phenomenon and to lead community-based research from majority-White institution perspectives. Anti-racist community-based research should in fact be the opposite. Readers of this volume learn to unlearn the research designs that put communities, anti-racism practices, and people second, third, last, or out completely.

A few examples from my own experience represent the books' intended audience. For example, this collection is meant for the place-based research faculty who never once (or only once) stepped foot on the ground of their subjects. This book is for the research faculty who work toward DEI, yet still "speak over" or otherwise marginalize fellow, non-majority research faculty. Finally, this collection is for the social scientists, community service-providers, policymakers, and other community researchers who fail to achieve "buy-in" from community members before presenting research findings.

Anti-Racist Community Engagement: Principles and Practice is organized around 22 cases (out of 91 under consideration) that represent the foundational framework of the book, which are the four principles of anti-racist community engagement practice: 1) counteracting racism on campus and in the community, 2) critical reflection on racism, 3) intentional learning and course design, and 4) compassionate and reflective classrooms. Each chapter illustrates an example of anti-racist community engagement and how it is practiced collaboratively

by community partners, students, community practitioners, and the like. The rubric for the selection of contributors had seven criteria, including but not limited to coauthorship with at least one BIPOC author, lead or coauthorship by a community partner, and studies with replicable materials for future researchers.

The collection centers anti-racist values in community engagement activities and is a valuable contribution to the field of community engagement and DEI research and practice. To my knowledge, no other book has as thoroughly designed and defined principles and practices specifically for anti-racist community engagement. The collection and four principles add to the sparse and multidisciplinary literature in service-learning, campus-community partnerships, and engaged scholarship.

Here, I discuss four chapters, or cases, from the collection that demonstrate the four principles of anti-racist community-engaged research practices. Regarding principles one (counteracting racism on campus and in the community) and two (critical reflection on racism), two key contributors modeled these principles.

In Chapter 3, Alex Henry, raj sethuraju, and Anita Randolph document their honest assessments of successes and failures while attempting to rebuild trust in Minneapolis directly after George Floyd's murder and the 2020 uprising. The contributors discuss how community members in Minneapolis felt the unequal power dynamics of the university as a majority-White institution, providing evidence of historic and ongoing ways in which the university failed to honor community members and relationships. Both the authors' vulnerabilities and extensive metric tracking persuades readers to consider how they can best work with their own universities and/or communities.

In Chapter 7, Zia NoiseCat, Meredith McCoy, Paul Dressen, and Sinda Nichols illustrate how collaboration between campus and community partners is necessary for understanding and applying Indigenous ways of knowing in the development of anti-racist practices. The contributors discuss their efforts in reclaiming the silenced and invisibilized histories of local Indigenous communities across the southern Minnesota area. This chapter is helpful because it includes resources listing campus coalitions toward Indigenous well-being and resources to support amplifying student voices, emphasizing relationality, telling the truth regarding land acknowledgments, and leveraging assets.

Regarding principles three (intentional learning and course design) and four (compassionate and reflective classrooms), two contributors innovatively modeled these principles. In Chapter 15, "Designing Anti-Racist Community Education in Ethnic Studies," the authors, Loan Thi Dao, Sarah Beth Dempsey, and Teresa Giacoman, emphasize collaborative course design in student community-engaged activities. Readers learn how building trust with partners, garnering institutional support, and maintaining flexibility in course design leads to better outcomes for marginalized students and community members alike.

Finally, in Chapter 21, Alexandria C. Onuoha empowers communities, centers intersections of student identities, and provides collaborative learning with an unusual medium: Afro-Caribbean dance forms. Onuoha expansively defines the classroom and provides new meaning to "meeting students where they are." In Onuoha's workshops on Afro-Caribbean dances with Black girls in a community center, collaborative learning builds on the cultural wealth of marginalized students. By centering student and community identities, Onuoha demonstrates a rejection of the deficit thinking model.

Although the volume may help us reshape how we understand the work of community engagement, I found this collection, including its introduction and conclusion chapters, insufficient in defining where the book stands in the field of community-engaged research practice. Moreover, I question the volume's applicability across our divided nation. Future iterations may acknowledge this further, rather than merely including one sentence addressing the disparity in community-engaged work in "geographically privileged" areas versus more hostile DEI environments (p. 7).

This volume is a necessity in the community-engaged literature. The four principles and the broad collection of cases force the reader to rethink traditional practices, unlearn methodological practices grounded in White-majority institutions, consider new and needed approaches to anti-racist curricular, train students to work *with* instead of *for* communities, and build collaborative relationships with community partners, all while rejecting White saviorism, paternalism, and the deficit model. Much unlearning needs to occur in how we go about social research within our communities, and this volume is a great starting point toward learning better approaches.

References

Hartmann, D. (2022). Community-engaged research: What it is and why it matters. *Footnotes*, 50, 1. <https://www.asanet.org/footnotes-article/community-engaged-research-what-it-and-why-it-matters/>

Author Bio

Wendie Choudary is a Lecturer in the Department of Sociology at Binghamton University, State University of New York. Broadly speaking, Choudary's scholarship centers around the impact of *place* on social inequalities. In her community-engaged courses, students participate in experiential and service-based learning with non-profit organizations, community partners, and governmental entities. Choudary's co-authored research has been published with Rice University's Kinder Institute for Urban Research, in *Social Sciences* and the *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*.