GENDERED DYNAMICS IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: WOMEN LEADERS SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES

“Leaders are best when people barely know they exist, when their work is done, their aims fulfilled, the people will say: we did it ourselves.” — (adapted from Lao Tzu)

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What we are up to today:

I. Community Engagement
   I. As defined (Carnegie Foundation)
   II. Guiding Characteristics
   III. Elements

II. Background Research on Leadership and Community Engagement
   I. Status of extant research
   II. Defining leaders
   III. What are we finding

IV. Your input – Q&A
On Community Engagement: A Familiar Starting Place

- As defined by the Carnegie Foundation:
  - “Community engagement describes the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.” (Carnegie Foundation 2014).

Responsiveness: Are we responsive to the communities that we serve?

Respect for partners: Are we developing joint academic-community definitions of problems, solutions, and definitions of success?

Academic neutrality: Are we playing the role of neutral facilitator and source of information in public policy?

Access: Do we help potential partners navigate our complex structure?

Integrations: Are we integrating institutional scholarship with the service and teaching missions of the university?

Coordination: Are we achieving alignment of the engagement agenda throughout the university?

Resource Partnerships: Are we identifying our partners in government, business, communities, and the nonprofit world?

From Glass & Fitzgerald, 2010, p. 13
Core Elements of Engaged Scholarship (from Austin 2010)

- Connection between higher education institutions and their communities.
- Relevance of engaged scholarship to teaching, research, and service.
- A movement toward “Societal transformation locally, nationally, and internationally” (p. 6).
- A consideration of the “role of leaders in institutions, communities, and professional associations in regard to framing and nurturing the scholarship of engagement” (p. 6)
Research on institutions receiving the initial Carnegie Foundation Engagement classification in 2006 found that “Engagement was leadership driven and stakeholder focused” (Sandmann & Plater, 2013).

Analyses of the 2008 and 2010 classifications revealed expansions “in the number and types of people, including staff, taking on institutional leadership roles in community engagement” (p. 517).

They note “these leaders appear to have brought about fluidity in the infrastructure of their respective institutions, manifested in reconfiguration from centralized to decentralized to hybrid models and back again… that reflect the theories of shared and distributed leadership.” (p. 517-518).
We surveyed 72 scholars in engagement about their general experiences, conceptualizations of leadership, gender dynamics, mentoring, and vision for participation.

Representative questions:

- What motivated you to become involved in community engagement?
- How would you define leadership?
- What has been your greatest accomplishment as a leader?
What is leadership? (in a nutshell)

Part 1 – The classic:
- Vision, motivating/inspiring, direction, management, organization, providing for others.

Part 2 – The extension:
- Encouragement, listening, “building capacity,” appreciation, facilitation, foresight, “comes from within,” sharing.

The question of how both of these perspectives relate is yet to be answered.
Why leadership in engagement?

- Working with the community
- A service to others
- Working with others
- Social justice/positive change
- Upbringing
- Faith
- A sense of contribution and accomplishment
Our preliminary work points to some classic conceptualizations of leadership as service, management/direction, providing opportunities, etc.

In addition, leadership isn’t positional or even necessarily related to a specific power in many responses (many point to individual creation).

More importantly our study is revealing that leadership (in this setting) is *followership* or invisible.
Leadership in Engagement is:
- Mutually constructed
- Based in learning – understanding
- Recognizing “leadership” in everyone
- Collective
- A complete articulation of the perspective is forthcoming…
Leadership in engagement is a departure from most major models of leadership.

The traditional frameworks survive but enjoy significant adaptation in engaged processes.

Implications

Understanding leaders as invisible or as followers can be a great tool in educating about how engagement works.

Seeking those who understand leadership may lead to connections and recruitment of interested others that may be most successful in engaged activity.
Works Cited


