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Abstract

Higher education community engagement has an emotional context, especially when it focuses on people who have been traumatized by oppression, exploitation, and exclusion. The emotional trauma may be multiplied many times when those people are also dealing with the unequally imposed consequences of disasters. This paper is based on interviews with residents of the Lower 9th Ward of New Orleans who experienced various forms of higher education community engagement in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. The results are surprising. First, residents most appreciated the sense of emotional support they received from service learners and volunteers, rather than the direct service those outsiders attempted to engage in. Second, residents did not distinguish between traditional researchers and community-based researchers, and perceived researchers in general as insensitive to community needs. The article explores the implications of these findings for preparing students and conducting research in any context involving emotional trauma.

The practices of higher education community engagement—service learning, community-based research, and similar practices going under different labels—have in common their focus on people who are suffering from exclusion, oppression, and exploitation in contemporary society. In essence, the targets of our service are people experiencing trauma of various kinds. It does not require a deficit approach (McKnight, 1996) to understand that people denied access to the quality of life enjoyed by those of us accorded dignified and fairly paid work, safe streets, and public voice will experience those conditions on an emotional level. In fact, the most important consideration for our engagement may be the emotional trauma of such circumstances.

How prepared are community-engaged scholars to understand and empathize with, rather than exacerbate, the emotional trauma of oppression, exclusion, and exploitation? And how important is it for us to do so? We focus on higher education community engagement in the Lower 9th Ward following Hurricane Katrina. There has been perhaps no group of people more subject to higher education community engagement than the people of New Orleans and especially of the Lower 9th Ward. Uncountable college students have spent spring breaks, summers, and sometimes semesters in New Orleans, gutting houses, running surveys, and doing all manner of other projects. It is important to understand, however, that the context in which these students were working was not simply that of a natural disaster.

The Case of the Lower 9th Ward

The Lower 9th Ward in New Orleans is east and down river of the central city and the French Quarter. Landowners originally built plantations in long strips extending from the river to the Bayou Bienvenue for river access, and located plantation houses on the highest elevations. After slavery ended, the higher area transitioned into a business district, and wealthy residents built on this natural levee, while freed black men and women settled the back areas of swamps and wilderness. Human activity led to large-scale deterioration of coastal wetlands and made low-lying areas of New Orleans more vulnerable to flooding (Day, Boesch, Clairain, & Kemp, 2007) where minority populations, due to discriminatory housing practices, were more likely to live (Colten, 2006). The construction of canals further decreased the storm protection qualities of the wetlands and cut the Lower 9th Ward's land connection to New Orleans proper (Germany, 2007; The Data Center, 2014) creating a community that has experienced isolation and neglect from the rest of the city (Germany, 2007). Residents of the area felt like the backwater of New Orleans (Langhorst & Cockerham, 2008).

The consequences of this history became clear in 1965 during Hurricane Betsy (Bullard, 2007, when the levee failed along the Industrial Canal, flooding 80 percent of the Lower 9th Ward, stranding people on their roofs and leading to 81 deaths (The Data Center, 2014). Many Lower 9th Ward residents did not view Hurricane Betsy merely as a natural disaster but suspected the government

intentionally blew up the levee along the Industrial Canal to save other parts of the city (Bullard, 2007; Colten, 2007), which actually happened in 1927 (Barry, 2007).

Even though the area suffered from Hurricane Betsy and white flight, it also boasted one of the highest home ownership rates in the city. Corner stores, personal gardens, and local hunting and fishing opportunities supplied many residents' needs. The Lower 9th Ward has never had a bank, but residents created a local subsistence-based economy (Ross & Zepeda, 2011) with a vibrant community of active social aid and pleasure clubs, including the local Mardi Gras Indians tribe—a central component of the African American Mardi Gras. Neighbors knew each other and extended family members often lived within blocks of each other (Jackson, 2006).

Hurricane Katrina exposed the effects of poverty, class, political decision-making, community structure, and discriminatory land use practices (Pastor, Bullard, Boyce, Fothergill, Morello-Frosch, & Wright, 2006; Yodmani, 2001; Cannon, 1994) in creating unequal vulnerability to disaster (Kellman, 2011). When New Orleans mayor Ray Nagin ordered mandatory evacuation for the entire population, the main evacuation method of personal cars was not available to many in the Lower 9th Ward, where, in 2000, 32.4 percent of residents did not have a vehicle (The Data Center, 2014). Thus, many of the residents attempted to ride out the storm. When multiple levees failed, the most powerful and deepest water was in the Lower 9th Ward. The residents could not occupy their homes for six months (Colten, 2007), and could only visit in daytime. Many were relocated far away. The Lower 9th Ward was the only community forcibly prevented from resettling, even though other areas of the city sustained similar flooding damage (Langhorst & Cockerham, 2008).

Residents felt forgotten and neglected by their own country, and the labeling of them as "refugees" reinforced this notion. They had to make a strong and immediate case to rebuild if they were ever to occupy their homes again. One of the first and most significant sources of help for the residents came from individuals and organized volunteers, including academic groups that came down to do research and planning exercises. The very first house occupied after Katrina was the headquarters of Common Ground, a volunteer-based grassroots organization that provided rebuilding and legal assistance to residents. No data are available on the numbers of volunteers in the Lower 9th Ward but many organizations and academic institutions partnered with the community. By 2012 at least 15 organizations had formed to coordinate volunteers working within the Lower 9th Ward community. When asked how many volunteers their Lower 9th Ward organizations facilitated, community leaders responded with a range of numbers from 3,000 to 50,000. Volunteers participated in gutting homes, mowing lawns, and numerous other tasks for individual homeowners and community spaces. These efforts lent credibility to the Lower 9th Ward's rebuilding efforts and put attention on the plight of the residents trying to rebuild.

Not all of the attention was altruistic. "Voluntouring" became a popular description for people going to New Orleans through an alternative break or church program to do a service project and have fun in the city. Large organizations and research groups came in but provided limited assistance to community residents (Pyles, 2009). It was the place to be for movies, documentaries, public art projects, books, and studies. Tour buses continually drove through with people snapping pictures while residents went about the task of rebuilding. These least altruistic visitors are clearly insensitive to the emotional trauma experienced by the residents. But how did those acting from more altruistic motives influence the trauma felt by residents? This question requires learning more about the emotional trauma created by the intersection of oppression and disaster.

The Emotional Trauma of Disaster and Discrimination

It may go without mention that natural disasters are emotionally traumatic events, but it is useful to establish how they are traumatic. For the emotional impacts may vary in ways that are relevant for this analysis. A review of studies on emotional trauma and disaster contexts from 1981 to 2001 found that youth seemed to suffer most. But among adults, women, ethnic minorities, people of middle age, those experiencing more severe disasters, those already having secondary stressors, and those with weak or declining psychosocial resources were likely to feel more traumatized (Norris, Friedman, Watson, Byrne, Diaz, & Kaniasty, 2002). In a companion article, the research emphasized the importance of early intervention for people in disaster contexts (Norris, Friedman, & Watson, 2002). In this research, the

authors included mass violence in their definition of disaster. Neighborhoods in Chicago that suffer dozens of shootings in a weekend would qualify, under this definition, as disaster contexts.

A strangely prescient study collected stress data from local college students 14 days before the Loma Prieta earthquake, and then was able to collect comparison measures after it. The study found, among other things, that students who experienced greater stress symptoms before the earthquake had even greater stress following it (Nolen-Hoeksema & Morrow, 1991). One can imagine people suffering the daily injustices of racial and economic exclusion having higher stress levels that would be further elevated by a disaster.

One of the potentially defining characteristics of people experiencing disaster situations is a traumatic sense of loss and loneliness. Walsh (2007) explored some of these feelings among disaster survivors, including from Hurricane Katrina. She proposed that, rather than providing individual treatment for people suffering traumatic loss in disaster contexts, rebuilding social networks is more important. Such an intervention, we will see, is particularly important in our case.

The Question of Community Impact of Higher Education Community Engagement

Concerns are growing about the value of higher education community engagement. While superficial surveys suggest that community agency staff are generally satisfied with service learning (Vernon & Ward, 1999; Ferrari & Worrall, 2000; Birdsall, 2005; Bailis & Ganger, 2006), more in-depth research shows that they also have low expectations and see themselves as providing as much to the service learner as they get back in service (Bell & Carlson, 2009). Beyond these studies of agency staff, however, there is almost no research looking at actual community outcomes of service learning, or asking the constituency members served by organizations and service learners how they perceive service learning (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009; Stoecker, Beckman, & Min, 2010). Further, while community-based research is touted as a "higher form of service learning" (Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, & Donohue, 2003) there is no research assessing its actual value to communities.

Why the dearth of research on community outcomes? Mostly, service learning has been designed for educating students, and the research has followed that objective, with myriad studies dis-

cussing the effects of service learning on students (Warren, 2012). The lack of focus on community outcomes also appears in our definitions. Academics distinguish between various forms of community engagement, and especially between supposedly curricular-based service learning (sometimes called academic service learning) and student volunteerism or extra-curricular community service (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). But such distinctions are irrelevant to community people, who often only see students volunteering in their communities and neither know nor care whether they are receiving course credit (Garcia, Nehrling, Martin, & SeBlonka, 2009).

Most importantly, when professors and their students attempt to work with people in crisis, whether people are experiencing those crises as disconnected individual trauma or as a collective disaster, it is difficult to figure out how to have the greatest impact. Whether we wander into the Lower 9th Ward of New Orleans or multiple neighborhoods in Detroit or other communities, there is almost nothing to guide us. How should we work with individuals experiencing the traumas created by oppression, exploitation, and exclusion? How do we avoid prolonging or deepening the trauma? And can our community engagement help people manage the experience of trauma?

Research Methods

This research focuses on Lower 9th Ward residents' perceptions of higher education community engagement in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. As such, it is an "extreme case" in Yin's (2013) terms. Extreme cases allow us to see processes operating more vividly, while the findings may still be relevant to less extreme cases. Indeed, the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina in the Lower 9th Ward may only be different from that experienced by communities in U.S. cities such as Newark, Detroit, Chicago, and others in its suddenness. It is entirely possible that the focus of service learning on people suffering from deep-rooted oppression, exploitation, and exclusion may mean that the practice is dealing with people experiencing disaster circumstances even when they are not interpreted that way.

This research was designed in collaboration with the first author's networks of Lower 9th Ward organizations and residents, with whom she had been working for a number of years using a community-based process. During the research planning and interviewing stages, she organized a

research planning team of 10 individuals, including residents and representatives from multiple organizations who had worked with academic partners. This team helped to identify key questions to ask, and key people to interview.

This article is part of a broader study of community, academic, and outside stakeholder perceptions of higher education engagement in the Lower 9th Ward. For this article, the data includes semi-structured in-depth interviews with formal and informal community leaders collected in January, March, June, and November of 2013. The first author interviewed a total of 22 community leaders—14 residents and eight community organization leaders. She interviewed five residents twice to gain a deeper understanding of themes that were emerging from the interviews. These five residents had a broader understanding of issues and could discuss and interpret the themes and place them into the larger context of rebuilding. These residents had also made themselves available to the researcher and were invested in the research while other residents preferred to play a less active role. The interviews typically lasted 30 to 60 minutes, and focused on involvement with and perceptions of campus-community partnerships and were approved by the University of Wisconsin-Madison Institutional Review Board.

It is important to note that, while this research attempted to determine residents' perceptions of service learning and community-based research specifically, it is unable to do so. Residents did not distinguish between service learners and volunteers, mostly neither knowing nor caring whether a young person was getting course credit for volunteering. Likewise, they did not distinguish basic research from community-based research or journalism, even when pressed. Residents tended to refer to all labor-focused student assistance as "volunteers" and all students and faculty doing research or planning exercises as "researchers." It should give us pause that all our efforts to make service learning and community-based research differentiated practices has been to no avail in this setting. In this research, then, we will use the residents' terms of "volunteers" and "researchers."

We also want to note that the research did not set out to study the emotional consequences of higher education community engagement in disaster contexts. There were no specific questions attempting to assess psychological health or post-traumatic stress symptoms. Rather, this theme of the emotional impact of higher education

community engagement began to emerge out of the interviews unexpectedly, and is presented here as an initial exploration into what we believe is a new crucial area of research and practice for the field.

Findings

Widespread trauma provided the backdrop for academic involvement in the Lower 9th Ward where residents had collectively and individually suffered a catastrophic event. They felt broken and forgotten by the government. Their homes were destroyed and they had lost personal possessions from photographs to favorite clothes, all of which held memories from their pre-Katrina lives. Many family members who had lived within blocks of each other were now scattered across the country, some were still missing, and others were deceased. Residents didn't know if they would be able to rebuild their houses or if they would get their old jobs back. Every single aspect of their lives was upended.

Residents were in a fundamentally different mental space than their out-of-state academic partners in dealing with these intensely emotional issues of personal loss coupled with feelings of vulnerability to both government decisions and natural elements. Any in-depth conversation with a resident usually included discussions of loss and lasting trauma, which provided a constant reminder about the immensity of suffering that many residents were experiencing. When the first author, during an earlier community survey, walked up to talk to one man who was sitting on a chair outside of his house she enthusiastically introduced herself and asked if he wanted to participate in the survey. "I just lost my wife and my son," he said. "I'm sorry, I can't right now." Another survey respondent became physically and mentally stressed when the conversation turned to water, requiring a change of subject.

University and college faculty and students, even if they came with mental health training, were rarely equipped to handle the level of trauma that the residents suffered. Many of the faculty and students came to address an issue such as labor needs, planning and design, environmental restoration, and historic preservation. They did not anticipate dealing with residents' mental and emotional support needs. There was a gap between what residents needed and what academic groups expected to provide in terms of a holistic approach to the disaster.

Even though most academic partners were not fully aware of and did not understand the complexity of the residents' experiences, the most surprising finding of this research is that residents report experiencing some select psychological emotional benefits as a result of the compassionate academic presence. The presence of academics, especially student volunteers, demonstrated to residents that they had not been forgotten and their lives were valued. Residents reported getting an emotional boost from the company of students that helped make them more determined to rebuild. This is an important, if unplanned outcome from academic efforts since the students' stated goal was to make tangible changes to the physical surroundings and not explicitly address the emotional needs of residents. We do not know about the extent to which students thought about their impact on the emotional well-being of residents, but doing so was not part of their planned actions.

Also surprising is the finding that residents did not experience this same sense of emotional support from researchers, even though many of the researchers surveyed for the broader study suggested that they also became involved in the rebuilding. Instead, as we will see, residents perceived researchers as being less caring and providing fewer immediate benefits. Thus, although the overall influx of academic assistance was physical proof that the area was not fighting the rebuilding battle alone, Lower 9th Ward residents and organization leaders perceived different motivations of researchers and student volunteers.

Resident Perceptions of Student Volunteers

The residents expressed gratitude for the volunteers because they demonstrated that someone cared enough about their lives to come down and personally help out. As one resident said, "There is not a person in the Lower 9th Ward whose life was not touched by a volunteer." The volunteers helped carry the emotional load by listening to residents, which provided a cathartic release for some of them, and by working side-by-side with residents to rebuild their homes and their lives. Eight interview participants discussed how volunteers brought hope and inspiration, and provided motivation and support for the residents in the rebuilding process. People referred to the ways that volunteers freely gave their time and offered their compassion, mentioning how students directly impacted the recovery, or noted the mental benefits they felt from student involvement. One resident

illuminated this perception, saying "You get to see these young people and it restored your faith in humanity."

One resident said the effect of the volunteers grew because there were so many volunteers contributing. He spoke to how this would make the community better than it had been:

> All the students who come here come here unasked. They come here willing to do whatever they can. They may not be able to do more than just tear down a wall of sheetrock but that is something special…those students that actually make up this world. So it is going to be a great place, greater than people actually know because [we] see so many students…the bucket is getting filled one drop at a time…. What I was trying to say to them is it's like a drop in the bucket and those buckets are getting full. So now instead of having one bucket we have thousands of buckets.

Another resident shared the story of her first experience with volunteers and how volunteers provided emotional support at a crucial time in her rebuilding story:

> I am forever grateful to the volunteers. The first people that helped me in my house, and I still had floodwaters in the pots, and it was students that said in January '06, "Let me help you." So knowing that firsthand, I'm grateful at the most vulnerable time, not knowing where money was going to come from, not knowing if we were going to come back and rebuild. There was no trailers. It was dead silence. I'm confused. I'm somewhere else, you know, where I don't want to be. And here's these young people saying, "Look, let me help you." Don't know me. Would never see me again, but "Let me help you."

Four residents shared personal stories of working with volunteers and the mental and emotional strength it provided. Residents spoke to how volunteers provided hope that helped them to keep going and rebuild. One organization leader said that much of the feedback he got from residents was about the emotional support they received from working with volunteers:

Yes. I can definitely say, because this was communicated to us. A lot of times residents felt that having the students working with them side by side, it was motivation, you know…. It made them feel like there are still some humans out there who care…. 'Cause that bit of help, it builds up hope and it builds up dreams in a person and that carries people.

Other residents shared this feeling about the emotional benefits of volunteers:

I think there were a lot of barriers the residents had in trying to rebuild both their lives and the community back. To some degree, I think the students coming in kind of gave an encouragement of hope, that there's still an interest. And that drives, I think, our community's saying though it has been a while there's still opportunities out there. There's still those that are interested in trying to help make a difference.

Young people come here that have no vested interest here, who are here maybe because of a professor, you get extra credit. But once they got here, it's like, a labor of love for them. Now you have residents working side-by-side with volunteers and volunteers full of so much energy. It energizes you to the point that you are like "hey, failure is not an option."

When asked what would have happened had volunteers not come down, one resident and organization leader said:

Oh, we'd be stuck like chuck. I'm telling you. Because what the volunteers did was not only hands-on labor but it was actually like with my mother—she liked the mothering, the fixing the lemonade and the lunch and making sure everyone is doing fine…and kind of like for a lot of people it rejuvenated them and just talking. And seeing young kids out there giving a hand and stuff; it was really nice.

Overall, volunteers provided the intangible benefit of support, compassion, and hope. And residents returned the caring in a much more personal and relational form of reciprocity than the typical "credit for service" exchange reciprocity in most service learning (Stoecker, 2016). The knowledge that people cared enough to come down and physically support the recovery provided immense psychological benefits for the residents. Although the volunteers were coming down with the explicit purpose of providing labor, another value that they provided was a compassionate and caring presence. This was certainly an unintended consequence of the volunteer participation, but it demonstrates how important it can be to show basic care and consideration and how much that is appreciated in times of need. As one resident and organization leader said, "I want to say that students changed my life. I didn't know people cared, and I found out they care a lot but just don't know what to do."

It is important to understand that the benefit residents felt from having the students was not just because they had someone to talk to. In fact, simply having someone to talk to about trauma may not be helpful (Nolen-Hoeksema & Morrow, 1991). It is about seeing hope and energy and care from the outside world that had previously only offered exclusion.

The above resident's statement about volunteers not knowing what to do shows that volunteers provided emotional benefits to residents even if the volunteers' efforts were not always directed on immediate priorities or effective in achieving resident goals. One organization leader, whose organization works with home demolition and rebuilding, said "We do require that they have training and that they tell us they have the skill set, and they come down here and they don't, and it kind of screws up everything we do." In too many cases during the early stages of rebuilding, volunteers were armed with crowbars and given basic instructions to tear out drywall and move everything in the house to the curb. Overzealous amateur demolitionists did some damage to structures and threw away things of value without realizing their worth:

There was a big problem that happened with all these volunteers and they came to this neighborhood, the Holy Cross neighborhood, at one point and tore out structures that could never be replaced.… It was that zeal of volunteerism versus the reality of what people know in the neighborhood.

The important point here is that the actual official service done by volunteers, including student service learners, could be less useful and less valuable than the unintended sense of emotional support that residents felt from even these unhelpful attempts at helping.

Volunteer Service Versus Research

Residents did not feel the same sense of emotional support from researchers, leading to another way of talking about the emotional impacts of higher education community involvement. As we mentioned, residents do not distinguish between research that attempted to follow participatory principles and traditional research controlled by academics and designed to answer academics' questions that is increasingly seen as colonizing (Smith, 1999). Though our broader research project found that many academics in New Orleans believed they were using the best practices of community-based research described by Strand and others (2003), for reasons that are unknown and are deeply concerning, even the best practices of community-based research were unable to differentiate themselves from traditional academic research in residents' eyes.

The emotional benefits of direct service volunteers contrasts sharply with the perceived meddlesome nature of research efforts, which took time and energy away from direct rebuilding efforts and instead focused on indirect and theoretical benefits. One of the most important principles in any type of higher education community engagement is to not harm the community or its residents. But six interviewees thought that academic research partnerships harmed and exploited the community, from treating people as passive research subjects to focusing resources and energy on projects that were not important to the community or even what residents and local organization leaders wanted.

Residents and organization representatives differed somewhat in their views about the relative benefits of researchers compared to volunteers. Residents were more forgiving of outsider academics, perhaps because of the direct benefit they received for rebuilding their own homes and the emotional support they received in their time of need. Organization representatives, on the other hand, generally agreed that the emotional support provided by volunteers was important, but they had less patience with the lack of tangible benefits from research. One possible explanation

for this is that the organizations, even when run by individual residents, focused on the larger community-wide issues, and the lack of useful academic products meant that community-wide issues did not advance as they had hoped. When asked whether they would welcome academics back if there was another Katrina, a few organization representatives said that they would be reluctant to do so, and six of them recommended that communities in similar situations take time up-front to meet with the academic partners and develop a system for weeding out unhelpful partnerships so they can focus on those most likely to benefit the community.

During discussions about the research-based efforts, residents and organizations frequently mentioned feeling used by academics in research-based projects. Many Lower 9th Ward interviewees reported negative feelings about researchers, even when they said that they had no complaints about academic involvement in general. Ten interviewees reported feeling used by academic groups. One resident said that the community had been "misused and abused" by researchers. Another community resident said, "I think they came in here to experiment. Yeah, most of academics, to me, came in to experiment." Residents generally expressed feelings of research fatigue. Many interview responses illustrated that people had been over-researched and that the residents were left with empty promises and nothing to show for their efforts. One organization leader discussed how this affected the residents:

> Particularly for researchers who have promised to send you a copy of this, and they haven't, that is irritating a number of residents and to some degree whether or not they are interested in talking to academicians and students again because they feel that they are just being used for whatever purposes, and they [the academics] are not living up to their end of the bargain.

The research fatigue impacted this study because people were hesitant to be interviewed for this research. The first author became increasingly hesitant to ask residents for interviews as she learned that many of them had received little in return for their efforts with research, and she did not want to contribute to further research fatigue. During the community leader interviews she had

an increasingly harder time getting people to talk with her. Some interviewees were visibly agitated during interviews and repeatedly expressed their frustration that the research-based efforts would not directly benefit them or the community. Residents that she had not worked with before expressed this feeling more readily than those with whom she had built a relationship. Some articulated that they would have responded differently or not responded at all if they were not familiar with her through past experience working with the Lower 9th Ward. In essence, many were saying that they were already done cooperating with researchers.

It is important to remember that most academic-designed research efforts such as surveys, interviews, and questionnaires take time before they can produce anything usable. Residents expressed frustration with these research efforts and ultimately found many of them to be a waste of time. If residents do not feel like research is useful, it may impact the type of information they provide. A few residents and representatives mentioned that residents became resentful that they had academic groups coming to their doors and asking questions and that the researchers never reached out to share what they were doing with organizations or residents:

The researchers didn't have to explain themselves to the community. They should have and they should need to. They have not done that.

It would have been a different type of impact into the community if we had a conversation of what is really needed in the community, because you got to remember, I go back to the same thing, that you have to realize when I came home my focus was rebuilding my house. You understand. I lost everything we had.

One resident pointed out that, in a time of need, researchers didn't come to help out; they only came to assess:

The academic groups came in as a study to see "okay they had limited resources, limited funds." They wasn't coming in to improve per se the community, they came in to study the community after a tragic event, which is a big difference, if you

understand what I am saying. So they didn't; their agenda was completely different from the volunteers.

There were also issues of academics wanting to document the community rebuilding process, and that got in the way of the community actually being able to handle their business. A community leader shared how the documentation influenced community meetings:

People wanted to come and videotape us. Now there were a couple of instances we allowed it. But we went beforehand and asked, "Do you have a problem if cameras are on us tonight?"… Because you had some folks that would just show up and ask, "Oh, I want to film you." Slow your roll, bro. This is not a movie. Okay. Yeah. It was a bit too much sometimes.

Ultimately, researchers may have had a negative emotional effect on residents because of the intrusive nature of the data gathering and the lack of tangible return it provided for residents. This is a negative outcome of academic involvement that may have real repercussions for how the community chooses to partner or cooperate with researchers in the future.

Implications and Recommendations

The unexpected results of this study have deep implications for service learning and community-based research. They point to the need for careful reflection on our practices and consideration that we may at times be doing more harm than good. This research also suggests ways to rethink higher education community engagement to do less harm and potentially more good in communities in general and especially where significant emotional trauma is present.

The Invisibility of Community-Based Research

This research questions the assertion by Strand et al. (2003) that community-based research (CBR) is a more effective way to involve students in assisting communities than direct service programs. Even though some researchers operating in the Lower 9th Ward were using CBR methods, residents did not view these researchers as distinguishable from traditional research. The first author attempted to tease out the differences in these two types of research by asking pointed questions

about CBR but residents did not indicate that they perceived a difference in CBR compared to traditional research methodology. The only difference any resident mentioned that pertained to CBR was based on the length and strength of personal relationships. But overall the residents viewed the actual research efforts as more invasive than helpful and did not link participating in research to positive emotional well-being. Research efforts either provided no benefit, or even caused harm through the emotional frustration they created or the cynicism they fostered. Arguing that our findings collapse traditional and CBR is no defense, since residents could not differentiate between the two types of research on the ground in their community. The decision by some community members to not participate in further research efforts should alarm researchers regardless of whether or not they follow the tenets of CBR. We need to be aware that community residents and organizations are actively deciding that it is not worth their time to participate in research. We community-based researchers need to do some deep reflection on why we can't make distinctive a practice that we insist is so much more respectful and useful to communities.

It is possible that many community-based researchers had met, and were partnering, with a community organization. But many organizations also do not communicate regularly or effectively with their constituencies. In such cases, CBR becomes a partnership of a researcher and an organization director and this condition points to the importance of integrating CBR with community organizing so that constituency members remain informed, build power, and use the research to develop their communities (Stoecker, 2016). The problem may be rooted in academics' tendency to treat research as research, rather than as integrated with action. What if researchers had done research with residents while also helping to gut a house or dump flood waters out of pots and pans? What if they had gone door to door with organization leaders, or even with a newsletter from the organization to enhance community communication along with doing research? What if they had organized community events with food at the front end of the research, and along the way and when the research phase was switching into an action phase? And, of course, that is often the problem, as even most community-based research never shifts into an action phase (Stoecker, 2009).

Building the capacity of community organizations to work with and guide researchers may also help. Six organization leaders noted that they need to be more directive with research efforts, and be less willing to indulge in individual academic projects. A couple of Lower 9th Ward leaders said that their organizations were setting up systems so that researchers are more accountable and the organizations have more control over the research.

Attending to Emotion in Higher Education Community Engagement

Perhaps more than anything else we must attend to the reality of emotion and trauma in the communities with whom we attempt to engage. One potential harm mentioned during the community interviews was the problem of academics not recognizing the healing process that the community needed to go through so it would be healthy again. When academics stepped in, they neglected to comprehend the psychological wounds from the trauma of Katrina and the social structural context that produced its unequal impacts.

One community organization representative with academic ties, who has since moved to the Lower 9th Ward, spoke about the discrepancy between the amount of need versus what academics could provide. He mentioned that the emotional complexity of individuals gets lost in the background, and that impedes residents' ability to take control of the academic partnerships:

> We never made people whole and in fact they died behind that and are still dying behind never making them whole. The Lower 9th Ward—they became pawns in a game as opposed to the central part.... So these universities with this abstraction in their mind have wanted to implant the advancements... And that is where you start to hear that pushback and that anti-university, anti-intellectualism in some cases. Because in fact it is really not anti-intellectualism as much as anti-invasion of these advances without making the neighborhood whole.

Another resident spoke of how the lack of "wholeness" impacted the partnerships:

> The community must adopt a position of "we want to make this community whole ourselves and we are going to do

it whether anybody wants to help." But we didn't do that…and I must admit that the relationships between the academics and some of the families, the academics did not know how to handle that. …They didn't know how to deal with people that had been broken.

But rarely do academic groups think about making a community "whole." They come to address a specific issue or carry out a specific program. The issue of "making the community whole" speaks to the need for academic partners to really understand the depth of the experiences that the Lower 9th Ward has undergone. Residents perceived volunteer programs that provided direct service as more beneficial because the process felt more personal and the outcomes were more direct. That is, it seemed more whole. The act of volunteers physically going to the community and helping individual residents left a lasting positive impression, and it provided encouragement and hope in the residents to keep moving forward. Volunteers also left behind tangible evidence of their participation, even when it was imperfect, which visually demonstrated their work and also contributed to a sense of normalcy in the Lower 9th Ward.

The most important impact, in many ways, was the emotional support that volunteers provided to residents. But since the purpose of emotional support was not articulated and integrated into academics' efforts, the benefit was also likely a hit or miss proposition. The best practices in higher education community engagement primarily emphasize building a relationship with "a community partner"—an organization or even an individual in an organization—not with the individual community members. It's hard enough for untrained academics to handle the emotions involved in a relationship with a single organization director under normal circumstances. We are particularly ill-equipped to handle the emotional trauma that was all too present following Katrina. Students are even less likely to be trained in dealing with poverty and mental health in community-campus partnerships. The Lower 9th Ward provided an extreme case, and even some students experienced psychological trauma as a result of their volunteering (Heldman & Israel-Trummel, 2012). The lack of mental health training and support left both sides of the partnerships with unmet mental health needs.

We can start addressing this issue by making visible the importance of emotional trauma so that faculty and students can be less discipline-driven and more focused on the personal and emotional aspects of both their organization partners and their community or constituency members to ensure that the personal needs of individuals do not get lost. Mental health support is not usually discussed when preparing students and faculty to work with communities, but it should be. Since academic partners can also emerge from community-based experiences with trauma based on what they experienced (Heldman & Israel-Trummel, 2012), mental health training can help them deal with the issues that the communities face as well as protect themselves and their students. Academic partners can also spend more time discussing the complexity of loss with students so they are aware of the emotional issues that residents face.

In the Lower 9th Ward many students and professors engaged with community residents through formal and informal discussions where trauma was part of the conversation. Some classes held orientations that included discussions with homeowners, and many residents talked of the emotional hardships associated with the disaster and the recovery process. Students were often overwhelmed by these discussions, and some consequently suffered from emotional stress themselves. Clearly, universities and colleges should have organized preparatory sessions to help students learn about how to deal with these emotions and follow-up sessions to help students process them once they returned.

It is also possible to imagine an even more intense preparation of students and faculty involving counseling training and other specialized skills to help students and faculty learn emotional helping skills. However, the positive emotional impacts that residents expressed from their relationships with untrained students should give us pause. We should perhaps not try to prepare students to be professional counselors or therapists. Our best efforts may be directed toward helping students become aware of emotional trauma, and find ways to simply allow their compassion to come through. Attempting to professionalize emotional helping may ruin it.

Attending to the emotional trauma of disaster contexts requires some important work. We need to provide faculty and students alike with educa-

tion and training about trauma. It would behoove service learning administrators to sit down with their in-house counseling staff, or the faculty of their counseling, psychology, social work, and other relevant programs, to design training to help faculty and students recognize and tend to both their own emotions and those of others. Then there needs to be official space provided for their emotional self-reflection, with the support of trained counselors, during the civic engagement experience. This seems especially applicable for those who plan to do civic engagement that involves research, where the contact with residents may be only fleeting but may add to the trauma. Institutional review boards may impose requirements for trained personnel to deal with trauma in such contexts, but we can go beyond such a requirement for one-off crisis intervention to rethink the CBR process so that it reconnects residents to each other and reconfigures the research to express caring rather than simply extracts data. For example, researchers can help organize community meals that are also research planning events or even data collection events, getting to know residents even a little bit by organizing the meals with them, and then eating together with them. In other words, we need to think about CBR as a community organizing process, not a research process. Table 1 lists some recommendations.

In doing this, it is important we remember that such emotional trauma is not necessarily unique to obvious disaster contexts (Norris, Friedman, Watson, Byrne, Diaz, & Kaniasty, 2002). Over the July 4th weekend in 2014, 82 people were shot, 14 fatally, in Chicago, with the vast majority in four south side neighborhoods (Nickeas, 2014). Chicago area higher education institutions have been sending their students into those neighborhoods. We have already seen that those disaster contexts may be as defined by trauma as a hurricane. And they are just as deserving of justice.

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Table 1. Recommendations for Higher Education Civic Engagement in Disaster Contexts

CBR:

1. Make sure residents, not just organization, feel control over CBR.
2. Integrate CBR planning and data collection with direct ongoing emotional support of residents.

CBR and Service Learning:

1. Prepare students and faculty to recognize and understand trauma.
2. Connect residents to adequate and ongoing trauma services and resources.
3. Prepare students and faculty to provide informal and non-expert emotional support.
4. Provide for emotional support of students and faculty themselves.

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