

DOING THE TOUGH WORK:  
CARE AND THE DYNAMICS OF COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY ENGAGEMENT

BY

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ABSTRACT

DOING THE TOUGH WORK:  
CARE AND THE DYNAMICS OF COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY ENGAGEMENT:

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Many colleges and universities offer their commitment to partnering with local communities, and often do so with the goal of addressing societal needs. A growing field, such engagement between higher education institutions and community partners continues to evolve, including the purpose and rationale for this work, how engagement is accomplished, theoretical contexts, and how success is viewed by stakeholders. A qualitative case study was undertaken with the following questions at the fore: how does a self-described “engaged” university center function when viewed through the prism of an ethic of care? What are the characteristics of engagement efforts undertaken by staff, faculty and community partners associated with this center? What is a cultural description for the work associated with this center? The case studied was the Center for Community Research and Engagement (CCRE) at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. Data collection included a combination of participant-observation, document analysis, and open-ended interviews. Overall findings point toward many aspects of an ethic of care that can be understood to be prominent characteristics of CCRE, including the dynamic of relationships, longevity, and a focus on needs and attention paid. Further, acknowledgement of care is not one-directional, with undergraduate students, and by proxy the university, recipients of care. Findings suggest that relationships are the tough work,

easily overlooked because they are difficult to quantify and capture in forms other than the perceived experience between people. The challenge of funding is also an ever-present reality, and contributions by university staff is a new and novel finding given the previous focus on faculty and students. A description of CCRE necessitates an understanding of context, core center efforts, and additional cultural dynamics that include a changing university. Findings from this research contribute to the theoretical development of engagement through the consideration of Care Theory, and also deepen understanding of community-university engagement by describing the complexity of human relationships.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Historical Engagement

The connection between communities and higher education enjoys a long and intertwined history. Scholarship often describes the origins of this interaction as dating to the passage in 1862 of the first Morrill Act, which extended the reach of higher education across the United States and served as the foundation for what we know today as “Land Grant” institutions (Lucas, 1994; Fitzgerald, Burack & Seifer, 2010). One legacy from land-grant institutions of higher education, which prominently includes Michigan State University (Simon, 2010), is serving in the role of change catalyst. Drawing upon core institutional values, an excerpt from the Michigan State mission offers an example: “advancing outreach, engagement, and economic development activities that are innovative, research-driven, and lead to a better quality of life for individuals and communities” (Michigan State University, 2014). In tandem with public policy, other historical points of reference date to the “Wisconsin Idea” in the late 1800s which also sought to “...engage. . .[higher education] institution’s resources and energies directly in the search for solutions to public problems” (Lucas, 1994, p. 175). Such goals remain contemporary for many colleges and universities, and the federal government has encouraged such a focus. Starting in 1994, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) began awarding grants to colleges and universities with the explicit goal of conducting “outreach and applied research activities that will address problems in urban areas” (Office of University Partnerships, 2009). Prominently, there are also disciplines such as Social Work (Soska & Johnson Butterfield, 2004), as well as Public Health, Education, and fields associated with Cooperative Extension programs, that have a

long history of working with, and on behalf of, communities specific to social and economic development.

### Framing Community-University Engagement

Engagement, or the purposeful effort by universities to specifically partner with communities, typically draws rationale from a commitment to public trust (Kezar, Chambers, Burkhardt, 2005), acknowledgment of institution resources (Kerr, 1995), or the imperative to return to the roots of mission-driven institutions serving communities (Kellogg Commission, 1999). In short, the qualities of engagement dating back to the first Morrill Act and the Wisconsin Idea continue to serve as a reference today as colleges and universities grapple with the tension of institutional purpose and support from public and private stakeholders fluctuates (Palermo, 2011; McSweeney, 2015). Specifically, tensions continue to surround the purpose of universities, including whether higher education is intended to develop human beings or prepare them for jobs (Berrett, 2015); how higher education contends with tension surrounding questions of effectiveness and prestige (Eckel, 2008); and tensions that arise specific to affordability, access, pedagogy, and incorporation of global perspectives (Marginson, 2010). These challenges and considerations have shaped this study. Opportunities remain to contribute new perspective to the interaction between communities and their universities because traditionally, scholars at colleges and universities across the United States have framed their efforts in similar terms starting first and often with the call from Ernest Boyer (Braxton and Luckey, 2010). Boyer encouraged a new view on scholarship, which in addition to teaching and learning is the foundational work of many institutions. His “scholarship of community engagement” encourages “. . . future scholars. . . to think about the usefulness of knowledge, to reflect on the social

consequences of their work, and in so doing gain understanding of how their own study relates to the world beyond the campus” (Boyer, 1990, p. 69). Other operational definitions of engaged scholarship most frequently referenced and cited by colleges and universities include the following:

By engagement, we refer to institutions that have redesigned their teaching, research, and extension and service functions to become even more sympathetically and productively involved with their communities, however community may be defined. (Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities, 1999, p. 9)

Academically relevant work that simultaneously meets campus mission and goals as well as community needs. (National Review Board for the Scholarship of Engagement, 2013)

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 for the Advancement of Teaching, 2013)

Common across such descriptions is the imperative to work and collaborate with communities, and to typically do so with some form of mutual benefit. Often however, questions remains as to whether efforts are in fact mutually beneficial, and theoretical contexts do not always help with understanding such dynamics.

To further illustrate, I point to the three universities I have attended. While personal, each university represents a different type of higher education institution, and they include St. Lawrence University, the University of Massachusetts Lowell, and the University of New Hampshire. While not representative, these institutions span from a small, rural, private liberal-arts institution, to an urban, metropolitan, and public university, and a large flagship Land Grant public institution, respectively. The common thread across all three examples is the similar reference in mission and strategic planning to the goal of community



engagement. For St. Lawrence University, the introduction to their Strategic Map offers that “through its focus on active engagement with ideas in and beyond the classroom, a St. Lawrence education leads students to make connections that transform lives and communities” (St. Lawrence University, 2015). UMass Lowell is even more succinct, offering that they are “a public research university committed to excellence in teaching, research and community engagement” (University of Massachusetts Lowell, 2015). The University of New Hampshire in describing its mission and cultural identity notes not only its service to the state and region, but also “a strong sense of responsibility...[and] a commitment to serving the public good” (University of New Hampshire, 2015). Other institutions such as SUNY Binghamton have articulated the need for a multitude of investments which includes an Office of Community Engagement, an Extension School, and healthy community initiatives (Binghamton University, 2013). An endeavor at the University of Georgia established in 2005 provides a portal for “communities [to gain from] faculty and student expertise, who, in turn, gain practical experience outside of the classroom. Collaborative projects are tailored to address priority issues uniquely identified by each community” (University of Georgia, 2011). For colleges and universities seeking, encouraging, and otherwise promoting engagement and related scholarship, purposeful attempts have been made to make engagement efforts institutionally central. Like all of the referenced institutions, Sandmann (2003) also points to serving the public good as the rationale for engagement, although she notes the paradox between the rhetoric of what is said and what is practiced. Although university aspirations seem rather clear specific to student learning and the goal of community benefit, the underlying theoretical imperative

for such engagement is often less clear and so those considerations will now be carefully examined.

### Engagement Research and Theoretical Considerations

Recent scholarship on engagement has begun to use theory to frame and conceptualize community-university engagement. This has included place-building theory and examining organizational values (Kimball & Thomas, 2012), as well as social theories such as communicative action and the identification of common space (McRae, 2012). Power dynamics, long a consideration of qualitative research (Karnieli-Miller, Strier & Pessach, 2009), are also part of the engagement literature and a source of theoretical foundation. Theories of social justice by Chambers and Gopaul (2010) have included power considerations and they offer that “social justice-centered engaged scholarship reflects our deep belief in the central purposes of engaged scholarship: that is, to recognize, analyze, and seek resolution of socially unjust conditions for individuals and communities” (p.68). One of the defining goals of a social-justice outlook is the reduction of unjust treatment which often entails a focus on power within both informal and formal networks, as well as systematized structures such as institutions and organizations.

More often however, community-university engagement scholarship has focused far less on theoretical considerations and has typically explored individual faculty members’ contributions (Austin & Beck, 2010), discipline or department specific engagement (Townson, 2009), or efforts at large public research institutions (Simon, 2010; Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities, 1999). Faculty in particular have been found to be essential stakeholders given their role as leaders in adaptation (Stephenson, 2011), but also because research has demonstrated the importance

of their ability to span boundaries in the facilitation of community partnering (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010). There is a great deal of research on how faculty view engagement (Glass, Doberneck, & Schweitzer, 2011), opportunities that enable them to integrate outreach and engagement in their work (Franco, 2010; Austin & Beck, 2010; Stephenson, 2011), and even initiatives that provide faculty with a direct link to the Provost's office in the form of dedicated engagement fellowships (Noel, 2011). Gaining faculty interest in, and attention with, engagement typically includes a review of tenure and promotion systems (Austin & Beck, 2010; O'Meara, 2010b). In addition, the use of faculty development models are also becoming more common as potential levers of change (Abrams, Townson, Williams, & Sandmann, 2006; Franco, 2010). With that said, faculty have had difficulty prioritizing engagement because it may not be valued, recognized, or rewarded (O'Meara, 2010). Research also finds that the process of developing relationships with faculty, departments, and institutions can be "mystifying" for community partners (Sandy & Holland, 2006). Even with such a heavy focus on university faculty, there appears to be a paucity of studies examining the human relationships that would seem inherent with community-university engagement.

A number of research methods have been applied in the building of engagement scholarship, including a variety of community-university partnership assessments (University of Washington, 2013), evaluation studies seeking to measure impact and outcomes (Noel, 2011), and the use of survey methodology (O'Meara, Sandmann, Saltmarsh, & Giles, 2011). Quantitative studies in particular have examined promotion and tenure specific to faculty engagement scholarship (Glass et al, 2011) and disciplinary differences (Townson, 2009). Additionally, and as previously noted, the relationship

between partnership characteristics has been studied, including tension in needs and the joining of goals and resources (McNall, Reed, Brown & Allen, 2009), concerns regarding access (Walsh, Brabeck, Howard, Sherman, Montes, & Garvin, 2000) and funding and related financial considerations (O'Meara, 2010). The literature also notes efforts by institutions to track engagement work using tools that include the Outreach and Engagement Measurement Instrument (Glass & Fitzgerald, 2010).

There are also a diverse number of case studies found in the engagement literature (Levine, Hargett, McCann, Potts and Pierce, 2011; Harris & Pickron-Davis, 2013), including the study of a Chicago service-learning program with DePaul University (Worrall, 2007); land management and natural resource scholarship with Virginia Tech (Kimmel, Hull, Stephenson, Robertson & Cowgill, 2012); health disparity research with a diverse community (Silka et al, 2008); interdisciplinary collaboration (Amey & Brown, 2005); and the challenge of describing faculty and community partner relationships (Glass, Doberneck & Schweitzer, 2011). These examples however, while descriptive, do not necessarily consider or seek to understand the underlying philosophical, theoretical, or normative reasons as to why or how the engagement is being done. Therefore, there remains a good deal of room within the engagement literature to develop what Schram (2006) describes as an instrumental case and that is also one of the goals with this dissertation. Again, previous research, including case studies, have informed, but there remains room to richly capture how engagement is done including the experiences of those doing the work, but to also introduce additional theoretical considerations to further understand why engagement occurs. Given that universities today, both public and private, continue to place engagement prominently at the core of institutional purpose, some of the

goals for this dissertation include both an understanding of how and why community and university elements engage, and a theoretical understanding to frame considerations as to why engagement ought to occur. To understand the linkage between engagement efforts and theory, it is beneficial to more closely examine engagement in the context of a key university activity: research.

### The Traditions and Significance of University Scholarship and Research

When I was an undergraduate enrolled in a Community Psychology course, I had the opportunity to read an article titled “On Being Useful” (Caplan & Nelson, 1973). This article offered a unique critique of psychological research and approaches to social problems, as well as the use of problem definitions and default blaming applications. To be specific, Levine and Perkins (1997) offer the following example when discussing mental health:

Once the problem is defined as a pathological characteristic of certain individuals, the range of relevant solutions naturally becomes restricted to interventions that change those individuals. We can congratulate ourselves that we are a caring society, while at the same time neatly avoiding defining social problems in economic and political terms that have different implications for change. Putting it simply, blaming the victim enables advantaged citizens to reconcile humanitarian values with their own self-interest. (p. 392)

Bound together in disciplines such as community psychology is the opportunity to connect social action and scholarship. Further, the scope of intervention if you will, is not individual, but systematic, and it empowers researchers to identify who they are, including their own values. The notion of being useful in a research capacity is a call I still hear and it serves as a compelling source of energy and direction for me personally. I have come to realize however, that such an outlook can run counter to the culture and traditions of higher education research. It is perhaps a conundrum, and one framed succinctly by Cancian

(1996) who argues that “the major requirement for academic success in research universities – publishing regularly in academic journals – is incompatible with doing research that is controlled by community members. . .” (p. 203). Her use of the term control may be a bit strong, but the joining of academic scholarship with community needs and change can be tension-filled as questions arise about rigor, as well as other considerations. While not necessarily a dichotomy, as I consider the landscape and traditions of university scholarship, it is important to acknowledge the tension created by discussing scholarship in terms of values, reciprocity, needs, and the actual research process, not just products. Consider that:

Traditional objectivist demands of detached researcher documenting the world of the Other are increasingly critiqued – by academics, researchers, and the communities of those researched. Such demands still exist alongside new requirements of research to serve the interests of those who are researched and for the researched to have more of a say at all points of the project. (Harrison, MacGibbon & Morton, 2001, p. 324)

Depending on the theoretical perspective and the worldview espoused by a given researcher, friction can occur, particularly with post-positive research paradigms which often espouse a view of objectivity (Creswell, 2007), and hold that a scientific approach is logical and deterministic. This occurs despite debate as to what constitutes “scientific” (Popkewitz, 2004; Bloch, 2004), and the debate about the gendered nature of science, including the ubiquitous “hard” and “soft” designations (Fox Keller, 1995). To be fair-minded, qualitative research can be undertaken using a post-positivist stance (Creswell, 2007), and I note this because methodology and epistemology can easily be conflated. The point to be made however is not only are there university research traditions, but that those traditions, including research methods, can and are critiqued. Just as important a point to consider is that research is a powerful endeavor, and one with import and meaning. For example,

Kennedy (1997), writes “in the world of scholarship we are what we write. Publication is the fundamental currency. . .” (p. 186). There are many reasons for this standard, including the view that “. . .teaching is difficult without the new ideas and inspiration provided by research” (Rosovsky,1990, p. 84).

Part of contemporary exploration of university scholarship also considers the power differential between researcher and participants, including the question as to whether research can improve lives as part of the endeavor (Brodsky, 2001). Stacey (1996) offers a feminist perspective, sharing that conventional research can be exploitive, with a call for reciprocity between researchers and their “subjects” (p. 89). For many university studies, the research process is often structured primarily for the researcher’s purposes, and the researcher, not the participant, is typically the author of any resulting products of the research activity. Some forms of investigation, namely “participatory research,” or “participatory action research” seeks to address some of the inherent paradoxes of university research (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011; Delane, 2010). A crucial aspect of participatory research design is the emphasis on political action and community involvement. Cancian (1996) writes:

Activist research is ‘for’ women and other disadvantaged people and often involves close social ties and cooperation with the disadvantaged. In contrast, academic research aims at increasing knowledge about questions that are theoretically or socially significant. Academic research is primarily ‘for’ colleagues. It involves close ties with faculty and students and emotional detachment from the people being studied. (p. 187)

A specialized element of participatory research is that the people being studied, or the intended beneficiaries of the research, have substantial involvement with the research, and participate in most, if not all, phases. This often includes the forming of research questions, data collection and analysis. This type of research also explicitly seeks to produce results

that are valuable to both researcher and participants. Sometimes referred to as an “advocacy/participatory approach,” this perspective advocates for an action agenda that seeks to help marginalized people, and that agenda includes reform that may improve the lives of people as well as institutions (Creswell, 2009, p. 9). By willingly acknowledging the relationship between researcher and participants, this conceptual framework “requires an . . . understanding of the social meaning and social relationships that make up the study environment in order to clarify possible explanations and suggest new interpretations. . .” (Barbera, 2008, p. 145). Examining university traditions specific to scholarship opens the door for further inquiry and invites further questions such as, how can communities directly benefit from university research? What does engaged research look like, again, noting the definition supplied by the Carnegie Foundation (*mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources*)? Have strength-based approaches been used to identify successful university/community partnerships, and do those exist in the literature? What might perspective on these questions offer with regard to the purpose of colleges and universities? Who supplies the answers to these questions has been the source of previous consideration:

The purpose of many institutions of higher education is to engage in research, and, in particular, research for the common good. . . So this is not a challenging question until we deconstruct it. Who initiates the research? Who decides on its purpose and focus? Who controls the research – how it is undertaken? And, how it is used? (Soska & Butterfield, 2004, p. 235)

As noted in two seminal books on the subject of universities, the university has essential uses which includes the production of research (Kerr, 1995; Rosovsky, 1990). Kerr (1995) in describing the “multiversity,” remarked that “today the large American university is, rather, a whole series of communities and activities held together by a common name. . . and related purposes” (p. 1). Although critics seized upon the term “multiversity” for



opportunistic critique and negative connotation, Kerr clarified that he used the word simply as a descriptor. Again, in an effort to be fair, an important point about university research that might be lost on those outside the academy is that scholarship is an essential contributor to the formation of new ideas (Rosovsky, 1990). The concept is not without implications however, and Kerr (1995) notes that research, and associated resources in the form of faculty and facilities, only further differentiates and distinguishes institutions from one another. By proxy, the ability for institutions to then utilize research and scholarship as part of community engagement can vary widely.

### Theory and Clarity of Purpose

A rarely acknowledged aspect of university scholarship is that “it is the good will and approval of our colleagues [in higher education]. . .not that of the [community] affected by our work, that get us ahead” (Caplan & Nelson, 1973, p. 205). Boyer (1990) offers a more contemporary articulation of this concern. He argues that “simply stated, what we have on many campuses today is a crisis of purpose. Far too many colleges and universities are being driven not by self-defined objectives but by the external imperatives of prestige” (Boyer, 1990, p. 55). In the absence of theory however, it can be difficult to ascertain why community views would be valued or not as part of faculty tenure and promotion considerations, or why institutional prestige is healthy or unhealthy. The opportunity to debate such claims whether they are made based on empirical considerations or moral arguments is difficult in the absence of theory. For example, on what theoretical imperative does a university base its engagement efforts with community? Returning once more to Boyer (1990), he describes the bi-directional nature of practice and theory, and discusses values. Boyer proffers a normative claim about university engaged scholarship, arguing that

it should happen for the betterment of society. Such normative underpinnings however are not typically explored in great detail within the engagement literature, thus providing the opportunity for a close examination of claims made about university mission, purpose, and actions. Theory can lend clarity and understanding to the examination of why and how community-university engagement is undertaken. To be specific, when it comes to ethical concerns, and what institutions ought to do, theory can help to clarify why engagement is *being* done in conjunction with why it *should* be done. A disconnection has been previous articulation across normative theory, empirical inquiry, and research (Martineau and Squires, 2012), albeit not within the scholarship on engagement. Sandmann & Kliever (2012) argue that “the focus should be on measuring the substance of partnerships and the degree to which conditions in the social, political, and economic spheres are impacted” (p. 27). But this is not an exhaustive list of why engagement occurs, must less an imperative for why it should occur. One theoretical consideration notably absent from the engagement discussion is the concept of care (Noddings, 1984; Pettersen, 2008), which is also referred to as an ethic of care. A rich description of the theoretical concept of an ethic of care is provided in Chapter Two, including the distinction between caring about, and caring for and with, others.

### Summary and Conclusions

The United States has a rich history of partnering between colleges, universities and communities. Contemporary debate regarding the role and purpose of higher education continues, especially as institutions face the inherent challenge of demonstrating their worth given the current political and economic climate, and for garnering support and funding. During such times when support and funding diminishes and the “uses” (Kerr, 1995) of

universities are examined, contributions to “the public good” (Kezar, Chambers, Burkhardt, 2005) will invariably be raised. As universities respond and redouble their efforts, at the core of institutional purpose is the prospect of embracing community engagement, and the framing of this type of collaboration often draws on the rationale of institutional commitment to the public trust (Kezar, Chambers, Burkhardt, 2005), acknowledgment of university resources (Kerr, 1995), or a return to mission-driven institutions serving communities (Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities, 1999). Of importance are the traditions of university scholarship particularly given the power inherent to this work, including who is involved in research, and who are the beneficiaries of research.

Returning to Boyer (1990), his engagement call focuses on the affirmation of research, but research with a purpose: a scholarship that is “vibrant and more responsive to society’s shifting needs” (p. 74). This perspective remains generative for deep investigation into the engagement between communities and universities, and yet there remains scholarship potential to widen theoretical considerations as to why engagement should occur, interpretations about why it does occur, and perhaps new theoretical frames can lead to new understanding. The opportunity to specifically focus on human relationships, and to do so by considering Care Theory is one such theoretical perspective. Consider that:

The ethics of care places priority on maintaining caring relations that involve attentiveness and responsiveness to the needs of the cared-for. . .it could be argued that for research relationships that are more personal and emotionally involved. . .the ethics of care, or a theoretical perspective more relational in nature, might be more appropriate. (Simpson, 2007, p. 265)

My linkage of historical engagement to traditions of university scholarship through to the novel theoretical perspective of Care Theory does not seem to be a consideration specific to

the scholarship of community-university engagement. Granted, human relationships have been considered by engagement scholars, but organizational theory and related frames have served as the context (Stewart & Alrutz, 2012). Much more on the theoretical perspective of care is reviewed and considered in the next chapter, and I now turn to Care Theory as specifically articulated by Noddings (1984; 2002) to further frame and substantiate the importance of this dissertation.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### Introduction

In the previous chapter I explored community-university engagement and also examined the traditions and significance of university scholarship. Theoretical concepts including normative claims framing engagement were also introduced, and I explained that opportunities remain in terms of understanding how and why engagement occurs, but also the opportunity to differently understand engagement when it is observed and as it is experienced. The selection of Care Theory for the theoretical lens of this dissertation was done for a number of reasons. First, normative examinations of community-university engagement such as an ethic of care are almost non-existent in the literature. Second, previous pilot research which is discussed in Chapter Three led me to consider alternative explanations for the interpersonal dynamics that were a key finding. Third, as other doctoral research has acknowledged (Delane, 2010) our personal and professional experiences bear on our efforts as researchers, and my personal epistemology is no different. My own outlook is very much attenuated to human relationships, human interaction, needs, and all constitute a portion of the prism through which I view the world and how I understand and make meaning.

In this chapter I will further explore theoretical landscapes applicable to engagement including theories specific to knowing and learning, as well as social justice, because the underlying rationale universities extoll for their engagement efforts have been linked to such considerations. A discussion of why an ethic of care is applicable to engagement will also be provided, including a rationale for the use of Care Theory as a conceptual framework

including what new understanding might occur through its application. I will introduce Care Theory including its origins and will then specifically examine an ethic of care as described by Nel Noddings (1984, 2002), including challenges and criticisms. Lastly, I will consider care within scholarship and community-university engagement contexts, including a summary of how care can itself be the context for engagement. One point of clarification: I freely interchange my use of Care Theory and an ethic of care, but both can be taken to mean a reference to the same theoretical construct.

### Theoretical Landscape of Engagement

One of the basic building blocks used to explain why universities and communities meet up with one another has to do with students and student learning. The language for this has varied over the years, from community service and civic engagement, to service learning and community engagement. Researchers have utilized theory to try and understand and explain the dynamics of this approach to teaching and learning, and one example is the employment of activity theory to explore community-based learning (McMillan, 2011). In fact, there are entire toolkits available to faculty interested in creating their own service learning course replete with references to developmental theories which model the importance of abstract conceptualization and active experimentation (Seifer, S., Connors, K., & Community Campus Partnerships for Health, 2007).

Taking a step back, research on college teaching in general has more recently focused on the prominence of personal epistemology, sociocultural activity, and motivation, with large and growing bodies of literature on each of these theoretical constructs (Pintrich, 2000; Rogoff, 1998; Middleton & Midgley, 2002). For clarification:

Epistemology is an area of philosophy concerned with the nature and justification of human knowledge. . .how individuals come to know, the

theories and beliefs they hold about knowing. . . [and how this interacts with] the cognitive processes of thinking and reasoning. (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997, p. 88)

Drawing upon one of these examples, personal epistemology is a prominent trend with many potential applications for college faculty. The application of personal epistemology theory has important implications given that pedagogies, including service learning, seek to promote intentional and personally significant student experiences (Simons & Cleary, 2006; Levine, Fallahi, Nicoll-Senft, Tessier, Watson & Wood, 2008; Frick, Chadha, Watson, Wang & Green, 2009; Lu & Lambright, 2010). Pintrich (1994; 2000; 2004) in particular, has been a prominent contributor to scholarship linking the concept of personal epistemology to teaching and learning, and within higher education contexts.

Such examples within the literature of teaching and learning are not the only means to understand how individuals learn and come to know, or represent an exhaustive framework for the consideration of community-university engagement. As previously noted, higher educational professionals including Boyer (1990) and Sandmann (2003) argue for community-engagement using the normative claim that doing so is for the public good. This however, points toward a critical void in the literature because other normative considerations have to date, not been taken up. Past and present arguments for engagement overlook additional frameworks which can further develop our epistemological and theoretical understanding. Drawing from my own professional and personal experience, I have found public good arguments inadequate in capturing the way in which communities and universities engage with one another. For example, I worked with a group involved with county juvenile justice issues, and on numerous occasions individuals expressed frustration to me about their experiences with university personnel, and the lack of attention

paid to local program evaluation needs. Long stretches of time would pass without communication, consultation on data collection was sporadic, and discussions about data interpretation and the timeliness of report generation were of key concern to community leaders. In short, these community members did not feel their needs were heard.

Theoretical contexts that speak about serving the public good cannot fully describe the nature of these types of interactions. My example while personal, reflects a subjective element that is overlooked, and that is the relational and responsive dynamics of community-university engagement, including the functionality of such dynamics. Current theoretical considerations including the normative claim of serving the public good do not seem to work in situations I and others have experienced because attentiveness to relationships is not addressed.

This is not to say that ethics in general are completely absent from considerations of community engagement. Health care research for example, has discussed models in which community consultation is an explicit part of the research design process (Freysteinson, 2010). The lens of social justice has also served as the framework for engagement with explicit efforts intended to address power inequities and issues of equal access (Chambers and Gopaul, 2010). The lens of social justice offers an alternative view on how best to address societal needs, and how people should be treated. While not the same as normative claims about engagement for the public good, the value and importance of social justice and the fair distribution of benefits as one application (Gostin, 2007), does offer another perspective on engagement. Returning to the example of student service learning, research has found that “students who had increased exposure to community issues through multiple service learning experiences were more likely to be justice-oriented...[thus college



administrators] may consider giving increased support to service learning efforts as justifiable in the face of competing budgetary demands” (Prentice, 2007, p. 272). The normative outlook of social justice is not limited narrowly to applications of teaching and learning in higher education. A social justice framework has also been applied to community-university relationships. Using case study methodology, the study of one partnership noted that without a social justice lens, the maintaining of relationships may be substituted for other university priorities which can include fundraising and building expansion (Patterson, Cronley, West and Lantz, 2012). The conclusion from this study was the imperative to promote equity and address oppressive institutional structures. Yet with the lens of social justice, we cannot know unequivocally about engagement without asking the community for their views. Social justice takes up community challenges and discusses community relationships, but this normative framework does not include an explicit imperative to listen and talk with the community. A social justice lens also does not ask the community if efforts are perceived as functional, successful, or if the community views actions as working. Such questions and concerns leave open the door for other theoretical and normative approaches to be employed, and it is potentially very powerful when the community together with the university determine if the value of engagement has been realized. Thus, there remains much to learn from other theoretical constructs, and Care Theory specifically as the prism for community-university engagement, addresses some of these questions and concerns, and will now be considered, including the rationale for its application with engagement.

### Care Theory Origins

With the publication in 1982 of the book *In a Different Voice*, Carol Gilligan provided

a new and significant perspective on conventional views of psychology, human development, learning, and moral judgment. The novel views proposed by Gilligan and others are an important source of perspective for this dissertation, although before a full theoretical framework is described, the connection between Gilligan and Care Theory is briefly described:

While an ethic of justice proceeds from the premise of equality – that everyone should be treated the same – an ethic of care rests on the premise of nonviolence – that no one should be hurt. (Gilligan, 1982, p. 174)

Utilizing empirical means, Gilligan (1982) argues that in contrast to hierarchical views on human development, women often hold a perspective that does not readily fit such default psychological constructs, and contends that development can also be relational. Borne from this research was the understanding that an ethic of care seeks to sustain human connections, and although gender need not be the sole lens of this worldview, this connection is the fundamental starting point for human lives (Pettersen, 2008; Gilligan, 1982). Gilligan brought forward new insight to human development given the response from people to the needs of others, and this new and novel worldview looked at the tension between rights and care. Pettersen (2008) argues that this move away from binary thinking and reflection has helped to bring psychology and philosophy closer. Such a theoretical frame has important implications for community-university engagement, given that views differentiating rights from care are not explicitly considered or seem to be researched in the engagement literature.

### Care Theory and Nel Noddings

In addition to Carol Gilligan, another key feminist theorist, Nel Noddings, has written extensively about education (1984; 2001; 2002; 2006; 2009) in a manner I would

describe as unique and provocative. For example, she offers that “instead of preaching, exhorting, and threatening, teachers should spend time explaining how they got their education and what it means to them” (Noddings, 2006, p. 202). Noddings is not shy in her critique of the “aims” of education, nor “what our schools should teach” (Noddings, 2006; 2009). Among such varied topics related to education she exhorts an explicit discussion about relational aspects between teachers and students, parents, and students with students. Granted, her focus is the K-12 public school system in the US, yet her critique and descriptions of an ethic of care have parallel possibilities with higher education. In the vein of provocation, Noddings uses family and home metaphors as examples, and does not hesitate to suggest what the “best” homes do, and how they do it.

Set in the context of ethics, philosophy, education, and moral reasoning, care theory is a relatively new concept and although “most people agree that the world would be a better place if we all cared more for one another. . .we find it hard to say exactly what we mean by caring” (Noddings, 2002, p. 11). Nevertheless, there are distinct attributes of an ethic of care. Because of the potential to learn from this paradigm or understand community-university engagement using this paradigm, I focus in particular on the perspective of care described by Noddings. Beginning with phenomenology, by which Noddings means how caring relations are experienced between people, care is not viewed as an isolated virtue, nor a structure, nor even a set of attributes. Rather, Noddings seeks:

A broad, nearly universal description of ‘what we are like’ when we engage in caring encounters. [She is] interested in what characterizes consciousness in such relations, but [she does] not claim to have found an essence or attempt to describe an ultimate structure. . .[because the characterization is] partly constituted by the behavior of the partners in caring. (Noddings, 2002, p. 13)

Stated differently, an ethic of care is about how we relate with others and serves as a defining element of this worldview, and unlike other theoretical considerations such as social justice, the key outcome for Care Theory is the reduction of harm. At times referred to as feminist philosophy (Stanford University, 2013), the use of maternal and mothering examples are often employed to describe an ethic of care. As a contrast, Noddings (1984; 2002) has argued that paternal constructs such as justice and fairness have traditionally dominated philosophy and moral reasoning. Noddings highlights the past and present exclusion of women, offering that “most political philosophy has started with the associations of adult males...who should govern” (2002, p. 27), and instead pivots to a discussion of home and the spheres of homemaking and caregiving.

#### Normative Theoretical Conceptions

An important reason to focus on ontological questions such as our understanding and conception of reality is quite simply because such considerations are overlooked in the literature on engagement. This despite the recognition that “different researchers embrace different realities, as do the individuals being studied and the readers of qualitative study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 18), and that calls to carefully examine methodology, theory and analysis are typical in the literature on qualitative research (Schram, 2006). Care considerations raise important implications for engagement given that ideas about social systems, structures, and norms, are intertwined with how researchers look for indicators that represent theoretical concepts or components (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). To this point, the opportunity to learn from an ethic of care is generated by examining default normative assumptions which are often objective in nature, unilateral, and devoid of interdependent constructs. Set against well-known male philosophers including John Stuart Mill (1863;

2001), and Immanuel Kant (1785; 1997), their discussion of impartiality, objectivity, and universality with respect to philosophy and moral development is very different from an ethic of care. Mill for example, when describing utilitarianism, notes that this “requires him to be as strictly impartial as a disinterested and benevolent spectator” (1863; 2001, p. 17). Yet Noddings argues that “there is no way to rid ourselves of every vestige of the empirical to get at a transcendental or pure consciousness; further, such a goal may not even be desirable” (Noddings, 2002, p. 13). As opposed to generating the most happiness (Mill, 2001) or a Categorical Imperative (Kant, 1997), the morality of care focuses on “. . .the human desire to be cared for. . .” (Noddings, 2002, p. 33). Noddings discounts happiness as “too vague” and too easily abused, and the Kantian separation of moral and empirical selves as “impossible to apply.” Therefore, as opposed to stating “here I am,” an ethic of care begins with “I am here” (Noddings, 2002, p. 227) and Noddings is keen to stress the importance of dialogue.

To be clear, this dissertation is not solely philosophical, but by attending to the array of theoretical frames, including those normative in nature, I offer my explicit attempt to be more clear because the “theoretical framework with which we enter the field is one of the key influences in what we will observe and record” (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011, p. 80). By highlighting an ethic of care as a novel philosophical and epistemological application for engagement, notions such as the sustainability of efforts can be brought forward in a new light. Using this example, the altering of institutions is on the one hand a goal for those undertaking engagement, and using the lens of social justice, public policy change is one call in the literature to bring “broad, sustainable transformation on complex social issues” (Chambers & Gopaul, 2010, p. 67). On the other hand, Noddings and her articulation of an

ethic of care notes the absence of interdependence considerations in policy (2002). She offers for example that “no adequate social policy can ignore the bodily health and safety of its citizens. No good home would allow one of its members to live in misery” (Noddings, 2002, p. 244). When Noddings (2002) talks about social policy, she not only introduces caring as a general approach, she explicitly uses the metaphor of home to highlight aspects not typical considered by other theories which includes listening, persuasion, emotional protection, and responsiveness. Thus, social justice is not able to fully describe and address the full range of engagement considerations, including the use of policy to bring sustainable change. Set in a care context, people need protection, nurturing, and attending to for success. By taking up an ethic of care, communities and universities have a new way to examine if engagement is in fact working. This is a very different normative outlook from policies that often talk of rights, laws, compliance and conformity, and the contrast between justice and care demonstrates what can be learned from Care Theory. Additional applications and rationale specific to community-university engagement will be provided.

### Further Care Specifics

Starting with an encounter between two individuals, consider two friends for example, and how one might coax, encourage, celebrate, and soothe the other friend without expectation that these efforts are somehow repaid. With that said, one critical aspect to an ethic of care is reciprocity, with both the “carer” and “cared-for” offering a specific contribution. This dynamic, however, is not necessarily symmetrical, directional, nor do the roles need to be the same or equal. Reciprocity means acknowledgement according to Noddings, and to demonstrate the dynamics of this compact, she shares:

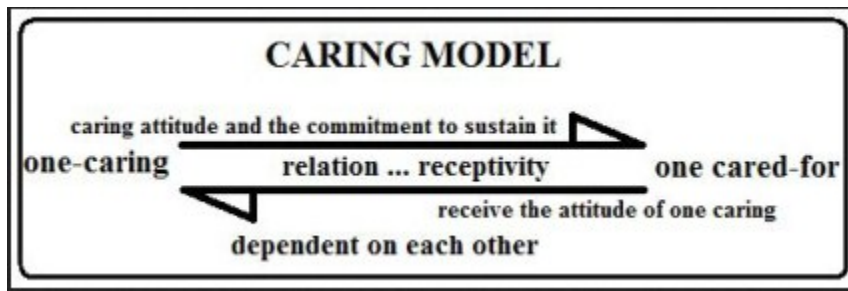
(A, B) is a caring relation (or encounter) if and only if:

- i. A cares for B – that is, A’s consciousness is characterized by attention. . .
- ii. A performs some act in accordance with i), and
- iii. B recognizes that A cares for B

(Noddings, 2002, p. 19)

This scenario demonstrates care in action including the element of reciprocity, because it not only “is very different from starting with a carer’s intention (‘I care’),” but each person plays a role in the establishment of a caring relation, with acknowledgement; the contribution from the cared-for: “B recognizes that A cares. . .” is an essential feature. A view of Noddings Care Model is provided in Figure 1 (Homes to Heal, 2015).

Figure 1. Nodding’s Care Model



It is worth adding however, that:

Moral decisions are, after all, made in real situations; they are qualitatively different from the solution of geometry problems. Women can and do give reasons for their acts, but the reasons often point to feelings, needs, impressions, and a sense of a personal ideal. (Noddings, 1984, p. 3)

Such an explicit acknowledgement of feelings and needs with others is for Noddings (1984) classically feminine. An important, albeit subtle distinction that carries great weight for Noddings, is that her description of care differentiates between caring about another and caring with or for another. Noddings is also explicit that not all women might accept her

views, and also that no reason exists for men not to accept this view either. The opportunity to consider relationships in educational environments is potentially powerful, and rather than using a pejorative to describe my worldview as somehow *subjective*, care theory enables me to positively embrace my personal outlook and epistemology that values an emphasis on relationships and the interconnection between people. In an attempt to draw-in educators, Noddings states:

Thoughtful educators exploring the simple topic of 'home' might begin to worry that it is too controversial a topic. Far from being non-intellectual, non-political, and boring, it is loaded with the possibilities for radical social action. (2006, p. 32)

To expand the description of an ethic of care, Noddings introduces a time component in the form of maintenance of a caring relationship: "monitoring effects becomes especially important as episodes of care are strung together over time" (2002, p. 19). With an ethic of care, there is also direction, with the focus on the "cared-for" primary. The temptation might be to overly focus on the one caring, but the "cared-for" Noddings stresses, is "the site of initial 'vibrations'" (Noddings, 2002, p. 14). Again, there is a keen differentiation between intentions (e.g. "I Care") and caring *about* and *with* others. Two additional tenets underpinning an ethic of care include attention and sympathy. Noddings explicitly notes why empathy, although generous, is not nearly as "feeling with" as sympathy. She argues sympathy in care better captures the state of attention. Specific to attention, "receptive attention – is an essential characteristic of the caring encounter" (Noddings, 2002, p. 17), with a depth to this sympathetic attention that Noddings describes as "engrossment" and is offered by the one caring. To meet individuals in this manner, Noddings illustrates using the following question: "what are you going through?" (p. 14). Using the A/B and teacher-student scenarios, "if B is in pain, A will want to relieve that



pain” (p. 17). These are powerful and daunting considerations for educators and researchers to consider.

Again, an ethic of care as considered from a philosophical and theoretical perspective, and articulated by Nel Noddings, describes the establishment and experience of caring relations between people. There is a nuanced form of reciprocity, and this construct can aid in learning more about engagement that would otherwise be overlooked.

Maintenance of relationships is an important consideration with an ethic of care, along with sympathy and engrossment. Ethical caring can require courage, although “conflict and guilt are inescapable risks of caring” (Noddings, 1984, p.18). There is also the additional challenge of avoiding a self-righteous outlook in how “we strive to meet the other morally [because] everything depends on the nature and strength of this ideal, for we shall not have absolute principles to guide us” (Noddings, 1984, p. 5). Such abstraction can lead to critique of this moral framework, and I attend to those concerns now.

### Challenges and Criticisms

There are indeed a number of charges leveled against Care Theory, and these include the concern that perhaps an ethic of care is too “small scale,” or specific to Nel Noddings perhaps her view is “too extreme” (Rachels, 2010, p. 154). Rachels (2010) argues that a composite moral philosophy might in fact be in order, and that an amalgamation could result that includes a caring outlook. Another lasting charge leveled against Care Theory is the issue of paternalism and under this line of criticism, accusations include servility and unconditional sacrifice (Rachels, 2010). Specific to the first charge of paternalism, this line of critique is often linked to Noddings’ discussion of coercion. The term coercion for Noddings is positive, and is used to describe a process of negotiation, of convincing, and

while Noddings resists prescription, she offers examples such as coercing people to use housing if they cannot provide for themselves and would otherwise be sleeping on the street (2002). Again, noting the bi-directional nature of care, the one-caring attempting to coerce, to convince, can be wrong in her efforts.

Specific to the charge of servility and self-sacrifice, these are charges leveled against not just Noddings, but the construct of an ethic of care. Pettersen (2008) offers a response that describes “mature care” as a midpoint:

Objections see altruistic care as issuing from emotional instability or plain whimsy. I suggest, however that we treat care as a virtue. Care is characterized by, among other things, constancy...mature care [is also] considered to be a developed disposition; it is a mean between two vices. The excessive extreme can be comprehended as selflessness, the deficient as selfishness...mature care...is the mean between too little and too much concern for others (or for oneself). (p. 125)

With respect to the establishment and context of needs, Noddings talks quite explicitly about “self” care, and that this need not be lost in our response to others. She responds that fathers as a class of people have traditionally wielded authority over other’s needs, and that this historical form of paternalism is in stark contrast to “coercion,” which Noddings argues is at times worth risking in caring relationships, in part because it does not dictate needs. As she writes: “. . .coercion used in attentive love really is different. It is open to negotiation, it pays attention to expressed needs even as it presses for inferred needs, and it weighs harms and goods and stands ready to back off if harms threaten to overwhelm goods” (2002, p. 135). Addressing the charge of paternalism, it is essential to understand that Noddings articulation of coercion is very different from its colloquial use and function. In short, Noddings offers that if there is indeed the exercising of control without “attentive love” then yes, allow the charge forward (Noddings, 2002, p. 136), but this type of love cannot be

charged as paternalism if it is attentive in listening, is moved and responds, and takes stock of its own action with regard to the cared-for. These are rather dramatic considerations for both education generally, and university scholarship specifically, and I will address this application shortly. As alluded to earlier, there can also be a misunderstanding that care is only about emotions (Pettersen, 2008), and yet, an ethic of care while at times manifested by expressions, is keenly about reflection and action which helps to differentiate natural care from ethical care. That is, instances of natural care include our spontaneous responses to young children for example, and often require little thinking and reflection when a need is expressed or affection asked. Noddings describes natural caring among family and friends for example (2002). With ethical care, or mature care as it is also characterized, the response to a need can at times entail something that is far from spontaneous: reflection that I must. Such care may not be easy particularly because it asks about the effects of our care.

Another critique specific to care theory is that not everyone has experienced care (Pettersen, 2008), and Zhao (2011) argues that:

The mothering instinct for care cannot be shared by all humans and cannot be expected to be developed in all humans, and therefore, cannot be used to define ethics and provide general ethical guidance. How can we expect our students to develop their moral sense by modeling motherly figures. . .because she has a particular relationship with this particular child that is hers. . .a boy could never care for somebody, even his own mother, the same way as his mother cared for him. (p. 239)

Even though Noddings refutes such charges, offering that the way in which we meet the other is phenomenological, Zhao (2011) finds this response to be an impossible standard. Yet another criticism of care theory as proposed by Noddings is that it is ambiguous and further that exploitation is even a possible outcome (Houston, 1990). While Houston offers fair-minded support for the Nel Noddings' ethic of care in the landscape of moral

philosophy, including how “Noddings insistently reminds us that attention is a moral act” (1990, p. 115), concerns are raised given the contextual and relational tenants under consideration. The chief concern articulated is that the ethic of care delineated by Noddings is “a dangerous one, especially for women, precisely because the ethics can abet exploitation” (Houston, 1990, p. 115). To be specific, if a caring individual is wholly dependent on the ability to care for others, or to be in relation to them, then such a person may opt to remain in a harmful relationship. Noddings grants that yes, the language of caring can be dangerous, however:

[This] description of caring was meant to be a phenomenological analysis of ‘how we are’ *when* we care and *when* we are cared for. It does not divide the world into stable classes of carers and cared for. . .None of us goes through life with an indelible stamp ‘carer’ permanently affixed. . .Properly, caring applies to a relation, and parties in both roles contribute to its maintenance. (Noddings, 1990, p. 123)

There is also the challenge of caring for those near and far from us, and models do describe a differentiated response in that “persons relatively near to us in space and time probably will be more vulnerable to *us* than remote others” (Pettersen, 2008, p. 162; emphasis the authors)

One of the most challenging aspects of Care Theory is the imperative that the “cared-for” receive and acknowledge the care. This need not be explicit acknowledgement, but Noddings encourages a long view on acknowledgement, and that care can mean engaging in a sustained campaign of encounter. Such theoretical considerations have important implications for universities, communities, and their engagement with one another. With this in mind, I turn to care set in the context of scholarship and community engagement.

## The Application of Care to Community-University Engagement

I have long considered and explored the dynamics of community-university engagement, especially given how much attention and focus is paid to the enterprise of scholarship at colleges and universities (Rosovsky, 1990; Smith, 2008). I remain interested in the ethical implications of research that involves people, particularly given the normative nature of university research. Many colleges and universities procure and invest large sums of money in research endeavors, at times using the argument that “. . .teaching is difficult without the new ideas and inspiration provided by research” (Rosovsky, 1990, p. 84). As an individual working in higher education, gaining clarity with respect to the moral parameters of research that specifically involves people is tremendously important, and yet the difficulty in reconciling community needs with academic requirements of scholarship is cause for concern (Cancian, 1996). A great deal of my angst relates to the inclusion of “community” members in research, and conducting research that is relevant and useful for these individuals, as defined by those same individuals. Consider the discipline of Community Psychology which has embraced an “ecological perspective” that “. . .encourages a search for resources instead of a search for psychopathology. [As an individual trained in this discipline, I have been encouraged]. . .to view others as having strengths that may be put to good use in the service of their own development if resources are available” (Levine & Perkins, 1997, p. 5). Further, Community Psychology also exhorts a “paradigm shift” (Levine & Perkins, 1997, p. 4) which entails a move beyond clinical and individual concerns, but rather considers the fit between people and their environments. In short, the discipline of Community Psychology advances a particular scholarship ethic which has as a goal not only that participants themselves contribute to research, but that such efforts also

have the prospect of improving their lives in the process. I note my worldview in order to more fully address an ethic of care in the context of higher education. Returning to my point about care, scholarship and engagement: I am drawn to research that can contribute to the betterment of communities on their terms, and in doing so, seeks to avoid paternalistic outcomes or disenfranchisement.

So what of the prospect to examine the process of university-community engagement given Noddings (2002) statement that “most of us learn care in homes” (p. 167)? To engage in university research that is understood through an ethic of care may be a more appropriate approach to understanding engagement. The application of Care Theory can offer new insight and fills a void in the engagement literature. While certainly different from the scholarship of community engagement previously framed (Boyer, 1990; Sandmann, 2003), care brings forward new and potentially overlooked and important dynamics including our effect on others (Noddings, 2002). To be explicit, the need, and the response to that need, is brought into focus both from those within the university, including faculty seeking assistance with tenure, and from those in the community, including families seeking assistance with a particular issue or concern. Granted, Noddings is quite explicit in stating that the “process of identifying and satisfying needs is. . .a highly complex process” (2002, p. 66). But to identify need as a starting point for university research is perhaps different from norms that may often begin with a problem statement. Further, the establishment of a research question, or set of questions, as a purposeful effort between faculty and community, has profound implications. To illustrate, consider a university researcher who begins her engagement with community using the stance of “I am here” as opposed to “here I am” (Noddings, 2002, p. 227). This stance invites an open, frank, and potentially attentive

dialogue with possible participants. This is important given the many charges that continue to be leveled at university research: researchers and students come and go; data is only useful to researchers and their peers; researchers just want to publish; universities offer no long-term commitment, and so on. In some parts of the world, the very term “research” has an incredibly long and fraught history with indigenous peoples specifically given the lingering after-effects of Colonialism (Smith, 2008).

Again, the application of Noddings’ care theory is that a research relationship, built from a caring relationship, “. . .requires a contribution from both carer and cared for” (Noddings, 2002, p. 207). Just as important is “a recognition of interdependence [which] suggests the obvious need for appreciative response in both directions” (p. 208). Of course, all of this is bound up by negotiation and the evaluation of needs. Researchers should not impose needs on communities, but they also do not need to accept that communities remain isolated, dysfunctional, or ignorant of the preventive opportunities born from scholarly inquiry. While mutuality may not always be possible, university research driven by care theory acknowledges the essential contributions by participants to the research. Of course, university research should take heed, because an ethic of care:

Demands exquisite sensitivity to cultural differences and power relations, resistance to the temptation to act self-righteously in ‘helping’ others, and recognition of the ever-present possibility that one may do more harm than good. (Noddings, 2002, p. 67)

Lastly, university scholarship and engagement must confront the issue of coercion head-on. In care theory, just as “. . .pain should not be regarded as deserved” (Noddings, 2002, p. 147), so too is research not about the ends justifying the means. Care theory would seem to exclude deception and lying in university research, but more so, it asks for candor in the pursuit of care. It seems incongruent therefore that participants would identify the need

for a study that would require their deception, or one without some benefit. Consider various communities known to university researchers: these might include poorly resourced schools, impoverished neighborhoods, rural locales with alcoholism and domestic violence, or non-profits in need of help with program evaluation. Noddings writes “there are times when, because we are responsible, we must use coercion” and she adds that when coercion is used in the best homes, it necessarily entails negotiation, and the person in control helps the one who is controlled to understand why coercion is necessary, and she negotiates conditions that make the convincing more palatable and more profitable. Applied to university research, an ethic of care may necessitate this conception of coercion, but certainly not in the manner that an Institutional Review Board is accustomed to considering. The coercive element is that research must be brought to bear on the challenges faced by people, and identified according to need. Standards of academic rigor for example might be part of a caring conversation. The essential consideration when set in a context of community-university engagement is that coercion for Noddings represents an invitation to dialogue. She keenly notes that this response “will be circles of support and not of power” (1984, p. 200). Again, such theoretical underpinnings for scholarship, research and community-university engagement are rather different, and such considerations need not only be considered philosophically, but can be explored empirically as well.

#### What Can Be Learned: Care as the Context for Engagement

Lost perhaps in past and present conversations about community-university engagement is the opportunity to include care as an explicit consideration. Care theory provides a promising lens, with my acknowledgement that an ethic of care represents a



phenomenology between people, not inanimate institutions. It is rather convenient to critique university scholarship at the institutional level, and then quickly move the focus toward the effects of caring relationships between people. But the identification and addressing of needs, and the necessity of an interdependent response for establishing and evaluating success, is quite a contrast from the existing scholarship on community-university engagement. Because a bi-lateral hinge is built-in to care, with attention, and the refinement of these relational networks at the fore, new understanding and new learning about engagement represents the promise of this normative outlook. It allows universities and communities to speak, work, and engage with one another in new ways. Particularly when a university researcher begins her own community engagement with “I am here,” there is the potential to create open and engaged dialogue with prospective participants because part of her learning is not only from the data, but from the learning that might result by attending and responding to the needs of her community partners. Thus, the researcher could be viewed as not only a person, but as a representative of her university as well, and those participants in turn are not only individual humans, but representatives of a community. A contribution from each is necessary.

Entities that include universities and communities are of course constituted by people, including their staff, faculty, and residents. One challenge to the application of care with university engagement and scholarship is the human dynamic, no matter if it is individual or institutional. Of course if caring relationships are reciprocal, then by extension, can a university care? The rebuttal may be that only people constitute relationships; only people care. Yet just as a home encapsulates a constellation of relationships, and serves as a repository for those relationships, so too might a university.

Noddings is certainly not bashful in issuing a challenge: “Educators must never forget that our task is to contribute to the development of fully human beings, not merely to provide productive workers for the national economy” (Noddings, 2006, p.218- 219). If philosophy and theory undergirds our work as educators and scholars, care theory is an invitation for academia to consider how we make a difference given that “this movement draws on our phenomenological experiences as related to and always being with others” (Zhao, 2011, p. 238). The evolution however, may be that it is not simply care as the context for engagement, but quite literally, care as the context. Again, bear in mind that as opposed to natural care, ethical or “mature” care is based on reflection of how to act to limit or prevent harm or promote well-being. If there is not only a theoretical foundation, but empirical evidence for the characterization that “I must” (Pettersen, 2008) engage, much can be learned, even if we learn that this type of undertaking is difficult. Perhaps the final question to address is why care about care? Pettersen (2008) draws our attention back once more to Gilligan and her ethical justification that harm can be caused by lack of care and that our ability to respond to needs is through our own learning and experiences. Although Care Theory does not entail an obligation, with home as the metaphor brought forward for consideration, we care because we know and experience care ourselves.

To place an encapsulating point around the theoretical framework of care, such development as Yin (2003) argues, is part and parcel of research design. To actively consider the experience of an educational and research relationship encourages me to embrace my strengths, and to realize being the one-caring can be a valuable educational contribution. I offer this perspective because such deliberate reflection is as much an opportunity for my own self-care, as care about, and with, others. While not always the

case, when I have the sense that concerns are present I have sought to reduce fear with students, faculty, and colleagues with whom I work. Yet I realize too that an ethic of care hinges on the notion of acknowledgement from the “cared-for:” in that sense, I too have had students, faculty, and colleagues seek to reduce my own fears, and it is I who readily acknowledge their care. Such considerations have fundamentally influenced me and this dissertation and I have attempted to make my values and perspective explicit (Creswell, 2007) and to provide an identity (Schram, 2006). A number of theoretical constructs have been reviewed and considered, including teaching and learning in higher education, and social justice specifically. As discussed and described however, opportunity exists to introduce new theoretical considerations such as Care Theory, and given my research questions, this led me to design the study that I describe in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Pilot

With encouragement in the literature to continue the building of an evidence base for the scholarship of engagement (O'Meara, Sandmann, Saltmarsh & Giles, In Press), and qualitative case studies in particular (McNall, Reed, Brown & Allen, 2009), I was able to conduct a small pilot. Initially this study intended to explore the collective efficacy of community-university engagement using semi-structured interviews, participant-observation, and document analysis. An international setting was sought because much of the literature on community engagement appears to be based on US examples. The pilot took place at a Scottish university with specific efforts focused on the work of a research unit based at this university. Over a two-week period in December 2010 and January 2011, I attempted to examine whether the research mission of an institution impacts beliefs about collective efficacy (Goddard, 2002; Goddard & Goddard, 2001; Goddard, Hoy & Hoy, 2004; Goddard & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000; Schunk, Pintrich & Meece, 2008). With approval from the University of New Hampshire Institutional Review Board (granted on 12.3.2010: #5027), informed consent was obtained prior to all interviews, and the interviews included three University employees, including the Director of the research unit, as well as one community partner. I will briefly review excerpts of pilot data including field notes, interviews, and reflections given that this study was an important contributor to the methodology adopted for my dissertation.

## Pilot Data: Selected Jottings and Field Notes

The following is an excerpt from a phone conversation on May 11<sup>th</sup> 2010 with the Centre Director prior to arrival in Scotland:

The Research Centre is in a particularly unstable funding situation. The Centre is funded through March 2011, but the expectation is that staff and operations will generate 80% of income through research contracts. Director expresses view that to a certain extent, there is a lack of institutional commitment, and she is hoping to know the future status and sustainability of the Centre by the end of the year (e.g. when I arrive). The instability in funding has resulted in a number of staff leaving to pursue other jobs.

## Selections from Community Partner Interview

The community partner transcript offered valuable and insightful perspective that aided my dissertation. The community partner I interviewed is the Director of a Policy Unit at one of the regional authorities, although offering more about this person or the governance authority will potentially compromise anonymity. Given the timing of my interview, this person also made the point that keeping the service quality good, while also reducing costs, was essential. Here is what this individual shares about the partnership:

So our contract with [the University] is to get academic support to understand customer preferences; how to engage with people; how to do qualitative and quantitative analysis. . .all of that. So that's been extremely useful, and we have found that working in this way already, although we are only about 6-7 months into the contract, offers far more benefits than working with individual commissions that we would put out to tender, and we would have consultants; not necessarily academic consultants, competing for the work. We have found the quality of the work is more thorough with the University, and also much more affordable. . . .It's very interesting. . .in fact, we have discovered that the survey work we have done to date with [the University] has been about half the cost of what it had been before when we just used to put tenders out and see if anyone wanted to bid for this. Because consultants charge a lot more than practicing academics, so this is a much better deal for us. We get a better quality product for less price. . .

In describing the working relationship between her and the University/Centre Director:

[The Centre Director] is very good at *not* making that distinction between academics know this, and practitioners know that. . .she really gets the whole thing about shared learning, knowledge exchange, and that how there is learning in all those environments, but how do we make that learning as good as it can be, stand up to rigor, and how can we apply good academic techniques into our policy work. . . {Emphasis my own}

When discussing the care involved with that working relationship:

I'll say [to the Centre Director] you know. . .we have to figure this out! And she'll say: you just can't figure that out, it's too hard. I'm like: no there has to be an answer! She is very good about being considerate about what actually is the research question, and let's be clear about our capacity to understand, and that these are complex. . .some of these things are complex social issues, and there isn't always an easy answer. For us sometimes translating that into policy advice for our elected members, when they want to get to the bottom line, a phrase that will sum the whole thing up. . .over an issue that is complex; this is challenging. I suppose when you work in public policy, I find. . .it is a different kind of work that if you are working in an academic institution. We have to work and produce policy briefings very quickly. We don't have time to do full literature reviews; we have to sometimes think on our feet. So sometimes. . .I can sense that kinda clash of we don't have the luxury to be as reflective as we need to be I suppose. But that is just different cultural ways of working.

### Pilot Reflections and Design Implications

Although initially my pilot research intended to focus on the psychological construct of collective efficacy (Goddard, 2002; Goddard & Goddard, 2001; Goddard, Hoy & Hoy, 2004), observations and data collection pointed me toward the relational dynamic between people, and the need to seek a lens to understand this engagement. This finding was surprising and one that ultimately aided and guided my dissertation design and the incorporation of Care Theory. In retrospect, it had become apparent that during my pilot fieldwork in Scotland, individuals were often describing and discussing their human relationships as much as the work of engagement itself. Illustrating the iterative and intertwined process of data collection and data analysis, these surprising results served as a

catalyst for reconsideration, and to my knowledge, the theoretical lens of an ethic of care has yet to be considered with the subject of community/university engagement. Again, I provide pilot detail because the insight gained during this experience was invaluable in the design of my dissertation, and the elements of funding, listening, and relationships were foreshadowed.

### Research Questions

In the tradition of qualitative research, the essential questions that serve as the foundation for this study are exploratory, non-directional, and evolving (Creswell, 2007; Travers, 2004). The research questions are also informed by Care Theory. The specific research questions include how does a self-described “engaged” university center function when viewed through the prism of Care Theory; in the context of an ethic of care, how are engagement efforts undertaken by staff, faculty, and community partners associated with this center; and are there hallmarks from this culture at work that can be richly described? These core questions frame the approach specific to this case study which includes a range of field-based data collection methods, and the framework of Care Theory guides the research perspective that is essential to my stance as a researcher (Hambacher, 2013). As for the delineation of sub-questions and focal points of inquiry, these particularly include the elements that describe an ethic of care (Noddings, 1984; 2002). For example, what are the interactions like between the university staff, faculty and community partners? How do they acknowledge and communicate with one another? Where does that interaction occur? Is there evidence of attention and coercion as described by Noddings (1984; 2002), and how can we describe ways of being with one another and undertaking engagement work? How long have university staff, faculty, and community partners been working with one another?

Is there evidence of sympathy and coercion as described by Noddings (1984; 2002)? Sub-questions include whether and how work and engagement practices are codified, if policies exist, how reports, documents, and web resources capture the nature of the work, and whether the Center operates in a distinct manner. Approval from the University of New Hampshire Institutional Review Board for this dissertation was granted on July 14, 2014 (please see Appendix B)

### The Case Study: The UMass Lowell Center for Community Research and Engagement

The choice of qualitative methods was made in order to address the research questions (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). This methodology is appropriate and applicable for inquiry involving complex dynamics and organizational processes (Yin, 2003). With clear boundaries (Schram, 2006), a case study can facilitate deep understanding (Creswell, 2007), and although often exploratory, they “are the preferred strategy when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (Yin, 2003, p. 1). Appropriateness of qualitative research according to Lofland & Lofland (1995) involves four general principles: the question can be situated in a physical locale; the researcher is interested in social experiences; the research methods are appropriate; and the fact that collection of some quantitative data may even be useful. Notwithstanding the linkage of research questions and research design, critique of case study methodology raises a number of concerns:

The case study has long been (and continues to be) stereotyped as a weak sibling among social science methods. Investigators who do case studies are regarded as having downgraded their academic disciplines. Case studies have similarly been denigrated as having insufficient precision (i.e., quantification), objectivity, or rigor (Yin, 2003, p. xiii).



As a partial rebuttal, Creswell (2007) provides criteria for assessing a sound case study, including a clear identification of the case, a clear description of the case, the presentation of case themes, and the researcher being clear about his or her stance relative to the investigation.

An essential quality with qualitative research is also that it “give voice” to the experiences of participants (Stein & Mankowski, 2004). Case study research is an explicit acknowledgement that phenomena and context are inseparable, as opposed to other approaches that “deliberately divorce a phenomenon from its context” (Yin, 2003, p. 13). Lofland and Lofland (1995) invite an explicit declaration of subjectivity by asking two imperative questions: “first, should this particular group, setting, situation. . .be studied by *anyone?*” and “second, should this group, setting, situation. . .be studied by *me?*” (1995, p. 26, emphasis the authors’). In response, on both counts I offer yes, and will utilize the following section to substantiate those claims.

Yin (2003) offers a specific definition for a case study, which is an empirical inquiry done in real-life contexts:

Case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e., a setting, a context). This typically entails multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes (p. 73).

Utilizing case study methodology, there is the necessity of “bounding” the case itself, and the specific case is the University of Massachusetts Lowell, Center for Community Research and Engagement (CCRE or the Center). This case includes not only the workplace, which continues to be a fertile setting to conduct qualitative research (Hodson, 2004), but necessarily also includes affiliated community partners, university administrators, and

engagement activities that may occur off campus. The CCRE provides the following description of its work:

The Center for Community Research and Engagement (CCRE) (formerly the Center for Family, Work and Community) was begun by UMass Lowell in 1994 to carry out research and action aimed at improving higher education engagement with diverse families, organizations and communities. Over the last decade, we have raised over \$15 million in funding from federal, state and foundation sources. In addition to fund raising, our Center has played a central role in facilitating partnership development and problem solving; have facilitated efforts by schools, police departments, health agencies, nonprofit coalitions and planning offices. (University of Massachusetts Lowell, 2014a)

The Center notes that it “promotes healthy, productive, and sustainable communities” in part through identifying needs, mobilizing resources, and providing research and technical assistance on campus and in the broader community. The mission and set of working principles adheres closely to the definition of engagement supplied by the Carnegie Foundation (2010). The University of Massachusetts Lowell (UML) has previously been the subject of scholarship about engagement practices (Silka, Toof, Turcotte, Villareal, Buxbaum, & Renault-Caragianes, 2008), and in 2009 UML earned the designation as a “Community Engaged” institution from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (University of Massachusetts Lowell, 2014b). Yet, the Center for Community Research and Engagement has never before been the specific focus of research (L. Silka, personal communication, October 21, 2014). CCRE’s longevity and diverse setting however, provides an excellent opportunity to explore and describe engagement with a new view using the lens of an ethic of care.

While formal origins of the Center are a bit unclear, 2014 represents at least 20 years the Center has been in existence. CCRE is a worthwhile case study in part given the length of time they have been active with community engagement and partnering. Further, there

remains much to learn from the efforts by this Center for two decades in an economically and ethnically diverse city. The 2010 US Census data put the total population for Lowell at 106,519, with almost one in four residents falling under the age of 18. While the Caucasian population is still officially the majority at 60.3%, African-Americans represent an additional 6.8%, Hispanic-Latino residents represent 17.3%, and Lowell's well-known and sizable Asian population is 20.2%, respectively. According to the Institute for Asian American Studies at UMass Boston, Lowell has the largest Cambodian population in Massachusetts (University of Massachusetts Boston, 2015). The estimated 14,000-plus Lowell residents of Cambodian descent are also colloquially described as the second-largest enclave in the US after Long Beach, California (Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association of Greater Lowell, 2015).

As for the second question posed by Lofland & Lofland (1995), I am not a stranger to CCRE and UMass Lowell. Granted, it has now been over ten years since I last spent meaningful time undertaking work as a graduate student at the university, much less engaging in work at what was then called the Center for Family, Work and Community. My subjectivity stated so explicitly need not damage my credibility with either the greater academic community, or the Center, or their community partners. Using the metaphor of family, I offer my stance as that of a distant and appreciative relative. I believe I can undertake a case study of the CCRE in part because I can quickly situate myself and understand the work, while also critically examining what it is I hear, observe, and read; as distant relatives are often wont to do. Again, much time has passed, and as I prepared to return to Lowell, I experienced a mixture of feelings that were part excitement, part nervousness, and part trepidation. The Center was a place I knew, but I was unsure of what

such a foundation would offer so many years later. This reflexivity is important, appropriate, and is provided in multiple instances in an effort to demonstrate authenticity. The combination of these points helps to justify the focus on Lowell, the university, and specifically the Center for Community Research and Engagement.

### Fieldwork, Participants and Research Stance

The intention of conducting field-based applied research is to “find out how people made sense of themselves and of their situations” (Korn & Watras, 2009, p. 182). With first-hand exploration, the expectation is of “freshness” when first moving into the setting (Travers, 2004), and it is often important to record promptly. Yet this can be a significant challenge, especially when trying to be unobtrusive. Although difficult to explain, one researcher for example, was unwilling to record field notes and update her journal in front of participants. Instead, she would discretely excuse herself to quickly jot notes in the restroom, or slip out to her car and sit for longer periods, while attempting to not be absent for too noticeable a period of time (Watts, 2011). My approach with note taking varied depending on the setting. In small and informal group settings, I used a small note pad, and made small notes, jottings, to myself for later expansion. In larger and more formal meetings I attended I would use a legal pad to more fully capture what I was observing (please see Appendix A for a Field Note Excerpt). Across all of these settings, I was conscious about the impact of my presence, including my note taking. There were times I could feel my scribbling was standing out, and these examples illustrate the inherent tension that arises between “doing” qualitative research, and “getting” data (Travers, 2004). Early on, my time spent in the field was informal with an explicit attempt at familiarization, and during the early days I tried to listen, not simply capture what I was seeing and

experiencing. It was not that I did not record data, but I did force myself early on to resist trying to so quickly make meaning from that information. Although a great deal of perspective exists as to when analysis can begin, the impulse to wait was also a factor of demonstrating respect and appropriate behavior (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). Staff and faculty associated with the Center are well-versed in research norms and methodologies, and it seemed rude to dive right in with note-taking, given that they recognize and grapple with this very issue given their work with people and organizations in their community.

A Dissertation Log was kept that catalogued my activities, including dates, locations, observation attributes, people interviewed, and research methods employed. A journal is often common with this type of qualitative research, but I opted to use field notes and weekly memo writing to capture personal questions, concerns, reflexive thinking, and choices and challenges related to methodology and analysis. Fieldwork occurred over the course of 19 weeks starting July 16<sup>th</sup> 2014 and concluding November 22<sup>nd</sup> 2014, representing portions of five months and spanning different junctures of the academic year. *In situ* time spent in Lowell included portions of 27 different days, with a total of 260 hours spent immersed in the field. The categorization of this time includes 185 hours of participant-observation, 11 hours of interviews, and 65 hours of interview transcription.

The span of time was not purposefully planned in advance, although I did estimate fieldwork would necessitate upwards of 25 days and over 200 hours to understand the setting, and to have the opportunity to see and experience the same meeting or interaction on numerous occasions. Creswell (2007) describes this process as “saturation” and it is the point at which no new information is being gathered. Two examples point to my recognition of saturation and its application to data gathering. First, a regular meeting of

university service learning coordinators is held, and I attended meetings with this group, which included Robin Toof, on August 5<sup>th</sup> and September 9<sup>th</sup>. These individuals from across the various colleges within UML gather to discuss and share efforts with service learning across the university. In addition to these two meetings, I also attended a third meeting in October which included these same service learning coordinators, as well as a larger cross-functional group of administrators convened by the UML Director of Community and Cultural Affairs. There were similar discussions at all three meetings, and it was from these multiple occasions that my understanding of how students are cared for by the community reached a point of saturation. The second example of saturation is drawn from data collected during interviews. The finding discussed in Chapter 4 about a Then/Now outlook related to two key individuals was discussed in multiple interviews. A faculty member for example in a mid-September interview described Then/Now aspects of the Center, and a similar outlook was echoed by a senior administrator in a mid-November interview. A number of similar discussions during interviews occurring between these two points in time, indicating I had saturation on this particular topic.

Given that the scope of the study was bound by the Center for Community Research and Engagement, I made the conclusion in November about saturation drawing from these and other examples. Member-checking described later also contributed, although candidly, the span of time spent in the field was also modified by personal circumstances.

Throughout the duration of fieldwork I was employed fulltime, and my commute to Lowell required a two hour drive one way.

Over the course of the fieldwork, more than 100 different people were encountered, including community leaders, residents from Lowell and the region, non-profit employees

and managers, as well as UML staff, faculty, and both graduate and undergraduate students. I spent time in ten different UML buildings on both North and South campuses, along with significant time spent at 10 different community settings. I attended over 15 different large and small meetings that included key Center partners and groups such as the Lowell Police Department, the Lowell Community Health Center, and the Lowell Asthma Coalition. I took a campus tour during the Fall Semester Homecoming weekend, and I also spent time in local downtown Lowell businesses (please see Table 1 for a summary of data collection efforts).

Such fieldwork has also been described as a constant process of negotiation (Harrison, MacGibbon & Morton, 2001), and the combination of multiple sources of data and information gathering is often referenced as “triangulation” (Maxwell, 2005; DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). Three methods in particular served as the manner by which perspective on the UML Center for Community Research and Engagement case was built, and such triangulation (Creswell, 2007, Yin, 2003) is standard in attempting to construct credibility. The three methods included a) ethnographic participant-observation; b) collection and consideration of documents, web-based resources, and written materials; and c) open-ended interviews. Each will be described in turn.

### Ethnographic Participant-Observation

Ethnographic research enjoys a rich history and draws from the traditions of anthropological research (Watts, 2011; Zahle, 2012), with descriptions used to detail this approach that include “watchful attention” (Watts, 2011, p. 303), a “way of heeding” (Winchitz, 2010, p. 341), and taking notice “of what goes on” (Zahle, 2012, p. 54).

Table 1. Data Collection Summary

Fieldwork Start: 7/16/2014	>	>	>	>	Fieldwork Completion: 11/22/2014
	Information Source	Interviews	Observations	Documents	
	UML Community Partners	x	x	x	
	UML Students	x	x		
	UML Staff	x	x	x	
	UML Faculty	x	x	x	
	UML Administrators	x	x	x	
	Off-campus settings	x	x		
	On-campus settings	x	x		
	University/ Institutional views			x	
	Campus Tour		x		
Fieldwork Start: 7/16/2014	>	>	>	>	Fieldwork Completion: 11/22/2014



The utilization of participant observation, a key element of ethnographic research, continues to be the focus of widespread inquiry about social practices (Zahle, 2012). Participant observation describes a relatively long-term and sustained relationship in a “natural setting,” and the techniques of investigation are not simply looking, listening, watching, and asking, but doing such things as recognizing “mutuality,” because the researcher is not simply a scribe (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p. 19). As opposed to other methods that include survey research, one argument bolstering ethnography is that it can be better at capturing actual behavior (Hodson, 2004), because self-report can differ from observation of events. Participant-observation with its flexibility also allows for responsiveness to a host of sensitive situations and contexts (Watts, 2011), and can illuminate practical knowledge, values and understandings, which are often tacit (Zahle, 2012). Winchitz (2010) for example, used participant observation to study contexts and language use specifically. Specific to this research, participant-observation was utilized to aid with particular questions and sub-questions. These included, how are CCRE efforts undertaken? What is the culture of interactions between people, and is there evidence of engrossment, or attention paid? Where does the work happen? This method particularly helped to crystalize the longevity finding, and it was from my listening during participant-observation that I was able to attend to this feature.

Participant-observation totaled 185 hours and represents approximately seventy percent of the fieldwork. It is important to note however, that this effort served as an opportunity to not only hear and read, but to experience CCRE, its work, and the dynamic interactions among people. Many of the written and web-based artifacts, along with interviews, have been used as exemplars to make points, and to craft the findings. This is

not to say that the findings do not derive from participant-observation. It is rather that this part of the methodology provided a context for the other forms of data collection and I have tried to make it explicit in places to ensure that information about context is not relegated too far into the background.

With regard to informed consent, six individuals were approached and asked to consent for me to observe their efforts as part of this research; all six agreed and offered their consent (please see Appendix C for IRB approved participant-observation consent and protocol). These individuals included Dr. Robin Toof (who is often referenced, and is typically labeled as “Robin”) who is the current Center Co-Director, along with five other individuals who work as affiliated faculty or Center staff. Given the interpersonal nature of this particular methodology, as well as the relational focus of the research, informed consent was not simply a given, but seemed to extend beyond obligation to an imperative. This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4. Prior to formally beginning fieldwork, I went to UMass Lowell, and to the Center, to speak informally with Robin and staff. In one way in particular, this seemed important; like a long-overdue small family reunion of sorts. I was warmly welcomed. Once I did formally begin fieldwork, as described in my protocol, the consent process was explicit in that I could not promise true anonymity to the five individuals, and Robin given her prominent role, was told that I could not even offer her the benefit of a pseudonym.

There were a host of individuals who came and went during the time I spent observing, including graduate students, university employees, faculty, post-doctoral researchers, and community members. Yet:

Given the open and public nature of interactions and the duration of much participant observation research, the researcher is likely to come into contact

with a wide spectrum of people, and ensuring that everyone in the setting has an opportunity for informed consent is not practicable because it would be extremely disruptive of the 'usual' workings of the setting. (Watts, 2011, p. 305)

Under these conditions, and in an attempt to not be overly disruptive, I did not seek consent from the people with whom I came into contact during participant-observation. Guiding this practice however, was the outlook that should a brief conversation turn into the promise of further discussion, including most notably an interview, I would seek informed consent. Given the dynamics of this case study, further requests for participant-observation informed consent were not needed. Interactions did lead to interviews, for which a slightly different informed consent document was utilized, and is later described.

Participant-observation was utilized to understand how CCRE engaged work is undertaken, the nature of this work, and specific events such as meetings, visits, discussions with community partners, how these are arranged, by whom, the location of these interactions, if interpersonal dynamics altered in various contexts, as well as tacit and explicit ways in which individuals characterize these interactions. To be specific, the data collection approach during participant-observation utilized informal jottings, field notes, and the generation of weekly memos that attempted to summarize and serve as an early analytic tool. The combination of these efforts built toward a compendium of written information (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). Participant observation was also done with an eye toward organizational and bureaucratic operations, including fidelity to written policies, tacit norms of behavior, how supervision of employees was conducted or not, roles and expectations, the role of graduate students as well as faculty, if there is formal agenda setting and minute taking, and by whom. Participant-observation was carried out in a variety of locations both on and off campus.

### Documents, Written Materials and Web-Based Resources

Artifacts in the form of CCRE documents, including annual reports, program evaluation reports, and related documentation were collected. Much of this material is readily available on the Center's website; for other Center-related and specific reports, Robin Toof provided electronic and paper copies. Specific report and document examples that were gathered include a description of the Healthy Homes program, 5-year Strategic Plan for the Greater Lowell Ex-Offender Reentry Partnership, 2014 TeenBLOCK Program Evaluation Report, as well as local newsletters (e.g. Merrimack Valley Housing Report), and published literature by Center staff and affiliates which includes Toof (2006). Resources and information specific to the university were also collected including budgetary information, strategic planning documents as well as report cards, UML faculty promotion and tenure guidelines, and materials that included a Planning Retreat Presentation issued by the UML College of Fine Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. All told, approximately 50 different reports and artifacts were collected, which does not include the reservoir of information available on many pages of the UML website. In undertaking a holistic case study investigation, descriptive statistics related for example to the UML budget, were considered given their typical incorporation and value (Maxwell, 2005; Lofland & Lofland, 1995), and although this did not represent a substantial portion of the findings, some quantification is provided in an effort to fully round out the case.

### Open Ended Interviews

Supplementing participant-observation and the collection of documents and web materials were a series of open-ended interviews, which is a common and useful practice with qualitative research (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011; Creswell, 2007). The choice to use

open-ended interviews, as opposed to a structured (Seidman, 2006) or a semi-structured interview protocol, has to do with the exploratory nature of my research questions, and because interviews can address the need to consider nuance (Watts, 2011). Prior to each interview, explicit informed consent was asked, and specific to both Dr. Silka and Dr. Toof, I was clear with both, and in-person, that I would not be offering either person confidentiality or anonymity in large part because of how impossible this would be given their respective roles with the Center (please see Appendix D for IRB approved interview consent and protocol). For the other 14 individuals, my process of obtaining informed consent was explicit in that I could not promise true anonymity, but I did commit to using pseudonyms and providing only a general description of those interviewed. An attempt to honor this commitment, for example, is to not reference or identify the specific gender for any of the interviewed individuals when sharing particular comments or their individual perspective. Dr. Robin Toof, the current CCRE Co-Director and longtime staff member was, in the parlance of qualitative research, a key informant (Travers, 2004), and she provided me with essential entry into the field setting, (please see Appendix E for Robin's Letter of Support). Her support connected me to all aspects of the fieldwork, including sending me documents and reports, serving as the primary individual I observed, and she not only suggested individuals for interviews, but also emailed people to offer an introduction and pave the way for my interview requests. An introduction from Robin preceded approximately half of the individuals interviewed. Criteria for considering individuals to interview was first the goal of speaking with a cross-section of individuals including community members, students, faculty and staff who would have familiarity with CCRE. Second, those individuals with significant roles with CCRE were interviewed, and

this necessarily included Robin Toof, but was also the rationale for interviewing Linda Silka.

In total, 16 opened-ended interviews were conducted with each averaging approximately 40 minutes totaling almost 11 hours of audio recording. Each interview was transcribed, and this element represented approximately thirty percent of the fieldwork. The longest interview lasted 73 minutes, and the shortest 25 minutes. I personally transcribed each interview not long after each was completed, and with a rate of approximately 1 hour to transcribe 10 minutes of a given interview, this effort totaled approximately 65 hours. As a form of member-checking, a copy of each transcript was provided to those individuals interviewed; no concerns were expressed by the 16 individuals. During two interviews however, there were occasions where a request from the participant was made to be “off-the-record,” and those portions were redacted from the transcript. Additionally, given the nature of Robin’s role with CCRE, as well as the particular nature of her informed consent, she and I exchanged emails when checking her interview transcript. This is a particularly noteworthy example that captured my feeling of obligation, and moved the informed consent process beyond simply meeting the letter of the approval: with Robin we agreed that small portions of our interview would be excluded from the transcript although none of those edits substantially changed, altered, or otherwise hindered the overall data collection process. Table 2 provides brief descriptive information for each of the individuals interviewed, including their role as well as the length of time they have been involved with UMass Lowell. The definition I used to establish “duration” was the date I was able to determine a given individual began partnering with the university, studying as a student at

the university, or working for the university. This proxy is intended to serve as an indicator demonstrating the length of time individuals have had some interaction with the university.

Table 2. Description of Interview Participants

Interview	Role/Description	Duration of UMass Lowell Engagement
A	Community Partner	8 years
B	UML Faculty & Former Senior Administrator	24 years
C	UML Faculty	9 years
D	UML Faculty	8 years
E	Community Partner	7 years
F	Community Partner	8 years
G	CCRE Employee	9 years
H	CCRE Employee	17 years
I	CCRE Employee	15 years
J	Dr. Linda Silka, Former UML Faculty & CCRE Director	31 years
K	Current CCRE Research Assistant & Graduate Student	5 years
L	Former CCRE Research Assistant & Recent Graduate Student	6 years
M	Former Community Partner	25 years
N	Community Partner	8 years
O	Dr. Robin Toof, CCRE Co-Director	35 years
P	UML Senior Administrator	31 years

Of the 16 individuals interviewed, the majority were women. It was also noteworthy in retrospect to realize that ten of the sixteen individuals interviewed hold one or more

degrees from UMass Lowell. This sample can be described as both one of convenience but also purpose, with the individuals interviewed representing an explicit attempt to gather a cross-sectional perspective of the Center. Past UML student affiliation was not a consideration in advance. In addition to Linda Silka and Robin Toof, those interviewed included four current community partners, one former community partner, three individuals who currently work for the Center in various capacities, a former senior administrator and current faculty member, a senior administrator, two additional faculty members, and two students; one a current graduate student and CCRE research assistant, as well as one recent graduate and CCRE research assistant. No individuals explicitly declined to be interviewed, but one solicitation of a university administrator went unanswered. Another university administrator, despite numerous email correspondences and a visit by me to this individual's campus office, did not yield a suitable meeting time. The particulars of each interview were captured including date, place, length of the interview, as well as the initial request for the individual to describe themselves and their role (e.g. graduate student doing a research assistantship at the CCRE) or involvement with the Center.

#### Data Analysis Process & Protocols

The process of data analysis includes frameworks organized in advance, and yet it is also iterative (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). Using the example of ethnography, interpreting and presenting research results may at best approximate reality (Watts, 2011), and specific to qualitative analysis, there is a large body of literature regarding how to store data, as well as sort, code and ultimately transform the qualitative information gathered (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999). While non-linear, Attride-Stirling (2001) offers three broad stages inherent with qualitative analysis including the reduction of text, exploration of text, and the



integration of the exploration. DeWalt & DeWalt (2011) concur, noting that the analysis of qualitative data entails three sets of activities: data reduction, display, and interpretation with verification. The intertwined nature of qualitative research design, theoretical considerations, and analysis tends to enjoy a process by which categories or some type of organization is developed and using a set of theoretical propositions, are then expounded (Creswell, 2007). For example, codes emerge by comparing events and operations (O'Toole & Were, 2008), and as transcripts are read and re-read a "truth" emerges as part of the intertwined nature of researcher and participants (Stein & Mankowski, 2004). Hodson (2004) offers that one strength with this approach to analysis is that when done over a sustained period of time, a detailed and situated description can result. The theoretical underpinning is important (Schram, 2006), and I do not pretend to have simply been a scribe during the process of fieldwork. Again, because this case study has the prism of an ethic of care, analysis was done primarily utilizing this theoretical perspective. Analysis also attempted to provide coherence while also avoiding claims that could be inferred as causal in nature (Hodson, 2004). The use of thematic networks to systematically analyze qualitative data is part of the broad hermeneutic tradition of interpretation (Attride-Stirling, 2001) that I embrace. DeWalt & DeWalt (2011) share that "developing and applying categories and codes is not an aide to analysis, it is analysis. It is the principal tool we use to build theories and arguments drawn from our data" (p. 196). Lapadat & Lindsay (1999) offer one example specific to interview research where they describe a typical analysis cycle which entails tape, transcribe, code, and interpret.

## Generation and Iteration

To address the research questions, data and information gathered during fieldwork was considered using an emergent stance that utilized indexing and coding. DeWalt & DeWalt (2011) differentiate these terms, with indexing a pre-data gathering undertaking, and coding denoting “the development of categories that emerge from the data” both during data collection as well as post-fieldwork (p. 183). Indexing is a step developed with *a priori* categories, and my indexing drew heavily from an ethic of care theoretical framework (please see Table 3).

As opposed to indexing which has been done in advance, coding draws from the compendium of data sources including jottings, field notes, weekly memos, interview transcripts, the dissertation log, as well as artifacts, web-resources and documents. Drawn together, indexing sets the table, and coding seeks understanding and the formation of interpretations based on data, ideas, concerns, and the interaction between researcher and participants. DeWalt & DeWalt (2011) describe how this process can be both generative and iterative:

The development of codes follows a path of organization, abstraction, review, and frequently, further abstraction and organization. A series of pieces of text are reduced to a few central concepts. However, the richness of the original text is not lost either. The central goal of coding is to make it easier to return to the original text in ways appropriate for building an argument and presenting it to others in as rich a form as possible to do efficiently and effectively. (p. 190)

Care Theory was used as the prism during both data analysis and interpretation, and as part of the coding process, I kept identifiers with selected quotes when pulling substantial and critical portions of transcript text. This included the interviewee (e.g. “E”) to enable basic attribution (e.g. “Community Partner”), as well as the specific page from the transcript.

Table 3. Selected Indexing Elements Identified Prior to Fieldwork

<b>A.</b>	<b>Dynamics of an Ethic of Care</b>
a.1.	Caring Encounters
a.2.	Reciprocity and Acknowledgement
a.3.	Time Quotient and Sustainment
a.4.	Attention
a.5.	Engrossment
a.6.	Coercion
a.7.	Sympathy
<b>B.</b>	<b>Place Characteristics</b>
b.1.	CCRE Offices in Wannalancit Mill
b.2.	North-South Campus/UMass Lowell
b.3.	Lowell Neighborhoods (e.g. the Acre; the Highlands)
<b>C.</b>	<b>Work Elements</b>
c.1.	Grant Writing
c.2.	Program Evaluation

Identifiers also allowed for easy referencing and ease in compilation as I consulted, compared, contrasted, and built toward a case description and specific findings. I have elected to keep these identifiers in the final manuscript.

One obvious challenge to describing qualitative analysis is the creative and involved nature of the work. For example, one researcher provides the following description: “I analyzed the transcription content and coded each according to recurring patterns and themes, a process involving multiple transcript reviews” (Worrall, 2007, p. 8), and yet Zahle (2012) notes, “*how* the method may be used” (p. 51, author’s emphasis) is not described. One specific approach I adopted to contend with these and related challenges was the generation of a codebook which captures my activities specific to the coding process and the evolution of my application. The codebook proved to be essential to the generation of a coherent story related to the research questions and theoretical framing (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

In describing my own “how” specific to the method I used for analysis, I can first share that with documents, field notes and memos, along with interview transcriptions in hand, my first step was to read the book *Comprehending Care* by Tove Pettersen (2008). Before just jumping in to analysis, I wanted to again steep myself in the paradigm of Care Theory. It seemed important to revisit and sit again with my theoretical framework, and this was a book I had not yet read. Having finished the book, I then took the time to review and re-read each transcript in the order in which the interviews occurred. In a second pass through the transcripts, I began making notes and highlighting particular phrases that appeared to be key, or comments and statements that seemed to stand out. Knowing that this description has implicit elements, what “appeared” to be key was built first by referring to my indexed list I created prior to fieldwork. Work elements including grant writing for example were highlighted. After multiple passes through the transcripts, I began to build from my indexing list to a larger, more expansive list of codes. In turn, I added in a review

of my jottings, field notes and weekly memos, crafting what I have called the first coding iteration. I then inlayed documents and observations, and the second coding iteration took shape requiring the addition of codes, and expansion of certain codes when the multiple sources were viewed in combination, and as I provided organization. By this point I was utilizing a computer to capture these choices and code developments, and the underlying mapping was also contingent on the theoretical lens of an ethic of care. The computer allowed for ease of movement, organization and clustering. In the past, I might have relied on index cards, or hand-written methods to manage the process. With basic word-processing software, the ability to handle, edit, shape, and develop is less cumbersome, and multiple versions can be saved for further comparison.

From indexing, which prior to fieldwork posited 15 different topics and sub-topics, coding during and after fieldwork resulted in 23 topics and sub-topics in the first iteration, to over 50 topics and sub-topics by the second iteration (please see Appendix F for First and Second Coding Iterations). Third and subsequent iterations evolved into what were not simply themes but rather a set of structured findings. I offer that a more complex way to describe this outcome is as Yin (2003) writes: through pattern matching, explanation building, using an aspect of time-series analysis, and my combined efforts to identify the most significant aspects. A given researcher considers basic themes, groups them together to form organizing themes, and finally global themes provide a whole, with the use of web-like maps as a metaphor to depict this process. While I am not able to provide a map, I do offer a metaphor for my own process of analysis. My approach to analysis would be akin to approaching a large swimming pool. The pool and the water represents the compendium of data gathered about the case; the Center for Community Research and Engagement.

Analysis begins by first wading into the water, then tentatively treading water, and ultimately trying to swim through, on-top, under, and with, all of the information gathered. Making sense, or analysis, came once I spent considerable time swimming around. The final description, including the suite of findings, can be thought of as lane lines: helpful in a pool, and one way to navigate, but not something that can totally define the water, or to be specific, the case itself.

Throughout this iterative process, I fully acknowledge the joining of methodology and craft (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999), and using interview data in particular, I examined and scrutinized transcripts over and over, which stands in opposition to an assembly-line approach of taking what was “gotten” and quickly turning it into a product. Overarching my approach to data analysis was the pursuit of understanding, in as much as this is possible given the socially-constructed nature of the field setting. To this point, in analyzing the different data sources, I looked at whether consistencies seem to exist, but also sought out counter-conclusions or alternative conclusions (Maxwell, 2005), including whether and if a description of CCRE engagement did not meet the spirit or essence of an ethic of care. My field notes and jottings attempted to capture tinges of social desirability (Anyan, 2013), be they mine or others. This reflexivity is also addressed in in Chapter 4.

#### Power, Trustworthiness & Reflexivity

Given the immersive aspect of qualitative research, personal dynamics that include the research-participant relationship presented a live set of challenges. If questions of validity loom for quantitative research, questions of credibility are at the heart of qualitative research. The following is an excerpt from the weekly memo I wrote about my initial efforts to conduct the informed consent process during the week of 7/14 through 7/19:

Robin in particular (and unexpectedly) was the one person that really voiced some concern. I stressed to the others upon receipt of signed [consent] forms the item about ending at any time – people tended to smile, nod, but given the work they do, are perhaps a little desensitized. Back to Robin – her concern had to do with possible disparagement...and [redacted]. I was a bit surprised. . . to have a moment without clarity so quickly, gave me pause, and frankly, I did what is perhaps my natural instinct – I offered reassurance. In this case, to Robin, I felt compelled to reassure her (well beyond any language, or process, or sentiment expressed in the consent letter) that I would be “highly consultive” with her. I was most certainly not expecting to grapple with a ticklish item so soon into my field work.

This situation and encounter typifies why much about qualitative research credibility has been written and debated. For example, Creswell (2007) discusses standards of credibility and dependability, and Schram (2006) talks of integrity and trustworthiness. Across such criteria is a basic hallmark, which is a willingness to offer reflection; for the researcher to disclose who I am, my approaches, and with intentions and uncertainties examined. Such reflexivity is viewed as essential (Watts, 2011) to building credibility, and for others to trust in the findings of my study and because of the trove of ethical questions, both anticipated and unexpected that can arise. Time and again researchers are urged to write explicitly about personal values, history and social status (Stein & Mankowski, 2004), and considering and explaining personal bias is now something that need not be “controlled for,” but by including, can in fact bolster integrity (Maxwell, 2005). As an example, even with audio recordings in hand, the challenge of selective observation is not eliminated, and in general,

there is the difficulty of converting oral communication and interaction into written form, which Lapadat & Lindsay (1999) argue cannot be done without consequences. In this example, transcripts can even reify positions during interpretation, creating all the more onus for reflexivity.

Prior to fieldwork, I had girded for possible power imbalances that might have substantial implications, and I considered how I would address those issues. Such difficulties are well documented when participants agree to share (Harrison, MacGibbon & Morton, 2001) and the power may often be in a state of continuous negotiation. As an example that proved powerful, as the interviewer I had power in forming the agenda by way of the line of questions, but the interviewee also had the power to rebuff my questions and could end the interview at any time (Anyan, 2013). In these ways, power can be bi-directional, and as described by Simpson (2007) typologies used by some to describe participant/observer orientation can be graduated, could be described as developmental, or can be positioned as “being with” rather than “looking at.” One standard research stance with qualitative research, and participant-observation in particular, is to be unobtrusive. By no means however, is there an attempt to shrink from the fact that I will have had an impact as the researcher. But the paradox can be that I as the researcher do become less and less obtrusive, and “may dissolve into onlooker status,” and ethical concerns with this invisibility may grow larger (Watts, 2011, p.303). Recognition of my identity and the many “selves” I embody in the field (Harrison, MacGibbon & Morton, 2001) is important as part of this case study, and they included student, researcher, parent, and higher education professional to name a few, all layered in many different ways by the situation at hand. Going into fieldwork, there was an almost impulsive instinct to declare my demographics:



that I am a heterosexual, Caucasian, male, and in terms of systematic socio-economic implications, I was feeling the need to acknowledge that such personal attributes have bearing and provide advantages. With that said, in a city as diverse as Lowell, and with the gender dynamic I experienced in the many meetings I attended during fieldwork skewing heavily toward female, I came to quickly realize that being a white male did not seem a particularly helpful position from which to build trust. It was not that I felt different; it was more I had forgotten what it was to think about these things, and to feel that type of thinking. Living in New Hampshire, one of the least diverse states in the US, and also one of the most advantaged by many socioeconomic measures, I had lost some of that attention to my many selves.

Two instances in particular during my fieldwork demonstrated that despite my outlook that an easy and innocuous presence might be possible, others affiliated with CCRE certainly had their own views. I came to realize that my job, the position I held as a professional, was something of a source of curiosity. I came to learn that one CCRE employee asked Robin when was I going to talk about my work, and to paraphrase, didn't I have some "high 'falutin' job?" Being somewhat surprised, I realized that I could not just simply check my professional persona in the parking lot and exist as a graduate student, forgetting of course that with a few clicks on a computer, my bio is readily accessible. This was further confirmed when during fieldwork I needed to come right from a set of work meetings to the Center, and I was wearing a suit. I don't know how to exactly describe the reaction, but it certainly felt like I was a bit exposed. Being a male in such formal attire felt very much out of step with the decorum of the office. Those working at CCRE seemed to see me in a different light that day in particular, and I wonder if that had undertones or

implications. I of course revealed myself to be one of “those administrators” who very obviously might be shielding who he really is, albeit at a different institution, and in a different state. This remains a particularly strange point of reflexivity for me because I see my work as a community college administrator and my dissertation topic as fairly distant from one another. Granted, working in academic affairs means I understand certain pedagogical efforts such as service learning, and I also can appreciate the time and effort needed to see through institutional initiatives. But personally, I have tended to squirrel away my graduate student interests, and sequester those from my professional responsibilities. I have always seen my interest and scholarship specific to community-university engagement as separate from my actual career, but given my worldview, it has been interesting to consider that this might be a difference without a distinction. With this context offered, I turn to a discussion of the variety of approaches used to engender confidence and credibility for the insight, findings, and interpretations I offer.

It very much is my hope to broaden the conversation about community-university engagement to explicitly include the relational aspect of this work between and amongst people. I earned my Master’s degree from the University of Massachusetts Lowell, and was also a Research Assistant at CCRE for a semester in the spring of 1999 when it was then known as the Center for Family, Work and Community. I believe that colleges and universities have resources and capacities that can be brought to bear on much more than the teaching and learning endeavor, and I witnessed such work during my time in Lowell. In addition to buildings and campus spaces, faculty and student intellect, knowledge, skills and talents have a tremendous capacity to address community needs in the quest to better lives and the lived experience. The action on my part comes from the community need

element as opposed to the question a researcher poses. This distinction is of value to me. Whether or not this outlook is in fact an ethic of care is all the more reason for empirical exploration. But to be clear, I am not undertaking participatory action research, so even with efforts like member-checking, I too did not include participants in the crafting of my questions, in the design, nor the choice of research methods or data analysis (Anyan, 2013), which would seem a paradox. In this way, as the researcher I maintain a type of privilege and authority in the form of interpretation and presentation (Stein & Mankowski, 2004) and in so doing, offer an example of how it is “impossible to create a research process that completely erases the contradictions in the relation between researcher and researched” (Acker, Barry and Esseveld, 1996, p. 80). Given the theoretical perspective of this study, I did remark to Robin at one point during fieldwork that I was trying to be an actual speaking human being. To be sure, roles can be illusions whether the researcher is participant-observer, advocate or evaluator, or the participants are informants or friends. Stein and Mankowski (2004) suggest “that researcher and participant bring a desire to contribute something meaningful to the research endeavor and both risk honesty and vulnerability in their respective roles throughout the research process” (p. 32). With this in mind, I will now speak to efforts to build credibility with participants, and for the voracity of the case study findings.

### Credibility

The explicit use of member checking (Maxwell, 2005) was incorporated in particular to build trustworthiness and accuracy. Again, all interviews were transcribed, and those transcripts were shared with each interviewee. Particularly with transcription, there can be an imperative to not only acknowledge the co-construction of a conversation, but to ask via

member checking if the transcript is accurate. I was prepared to hear concerns and to consider remedies. Particularly with case study research, use of member checking techniques with participants is viewed as critical (Creswell, 2007). This work did not result in questions or concerns expressed by those interviewed, nor was there a request to clarify particular comments.

On January 22, 2015, I also held a macro member check with five CCRE staff and affiliated faculty which included Robin Toof. As part of informed consent, I had promised to take an hour to discuss and debrief early findings, particularly as they relate to structural and operational data collection and analysis of the case study. This debrief was an attempt to open the door to questions about interpretation, and I was prepared to hear not only disagreement or dislike about my stance and methods, but also my initial analysis and findings. On the other side of this forum, I found it to be a clarifying experience. In fact, I heard a form of validation for the main findings presented, including the view from community partners about their work with undergraduate students, as well as the uniqueness of the Community/Social Psychology program. Some clarifications were provided, including how CCRE staff at times provide facilitation and technical assistance beyond the timetable of a particular grant. There were also some concerns raised, and questions were posed. Specifically, it was important for one of the individuals that I not romanticize the relational aspect of the work, and how there very much can be power and leverage differences between the university and sub-grantees. This individual also added that relationships need not only be thought of as person to person, but person to non-profit organization. Another individual was keen to talk about the theoretical lens, and asked when care theory did not hold with my findings. I would not characterize this macro

member-check as a like-dislike type of scenario. I did feel pressed, and I also felt a degree of stress being on the spot, while also trying to be open to critique. I did not feel defensive, but instead rather keen to describe how I gathered and developed the findings.

Robin was also a point of conversation given the findings, and I can only guess if it placed her in a difficult position. One small way I tried to honor my commitment during informed consent was to email her in advance with a copy of what I would be presenting at the debrief. As I wrote to her, I did not want her to feel blindsided. Lastly, I was asked why I was interested and had pursued this case study. While I did hope to proceed “unshackled” as implored by Peshkin (1988), in terms of credibility that can be framed by member-checking, it did provide a measure of reassurance that at the conclusion of my debrief, CCRE members asked if I would consider coming back again and talking more about my findings.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

#### Introduction

In the previous chapters I considered various theoretical frameworks applied to community-university engagement and justified care theory specifically as the lens for my study methodology. In this chapter I explore and describe the Center for Community Research and Engagement and do so through a generative process of analysis. Findings include a context for the Center description, core Center efforts and the project-orientation of such work, relationships at the center of CCRE efforts, as well as a number of other cultural considerations that are intertwined with what the Center is and how it functions, including aspects of funding, tenured faculty, and undergraduate and graduate education at the university, and the changing university itself. Throughout, I describe the findings using Care Theory given that this theory is the framework for analysis and interpretation.

Part of the iterative aspect of developing findings from this research has included working to unpack what the Center “is,” what it does:

It’s sort of a natural; it’s not surprising that a Center like this would emerge at UMass Lowell. It’s a very UMass Lowell kind of thing. (C, p. 9)

It’s so hard to describe. . .we’ve been asked this many times: how did your relationship begin, or how are the researchers able to embed themselves. . .it’s just been so organic. . .just natural. (E, p. 2)

Robin Toof touched on this similar and prevailing challenge, stating:

I do know there’s something about the Center. . .it’s hard for me to tease it out; like what is it. . .I mean, we learned so much about how Linda [Silka] worked within the community, and how her ability to listen and make connections with people. . .she’s just the most amazing model.

Analysis also included pushing against such tacit views to further understand why people do the work, and why their efforts are done in the manner observed or described.

### The UMass Lowell Center for Community Research and Engagement

#### A Context for Description

The UML Center for Community Research and Engagement does have a physical location; it is not simply a website with a virtual presence. Now sited on the second floor in Mahoney Hall, this building was constructed in 1960 and during the initial weeks of fieldwork was undergoing renovations and remodeling. The Center has what I offer is a typical academic office space. There are five small offices for various Center staff complete with desktop computers in each, a small break room that has a copier/printer, as well as a round table used for ad hoc meetings or by those taking a break or using the space for lunch. On this table for a portion of my fieldwork was a book titled *Building Our Way Out of Crime: The Transformative Power of Police-Community Developer Partnerships*, published in 2012 and authored by Bill Geller and Lisa Belsky. Outside the office suite hung two large posters. These appeared to be items presented as posters at what I would guess to be an academic gathering, and were now hung for posterity in the hallway. Each delineated the Center mission, and also described various research initiatives, “what we do” and different community partners. What caught my eye was the Wordle in the center of each poster. At the center of both Wordle images was a single, unambiguous word: “community.”

Within the office suite there is also an area labeled the Student Lab, and this space contains four desk-top computers along with a round table and a water bubbler. This space in particular was observed to be the domain of the various graduate students. My reactions to this “new” space were mixed given what I had previously experienced with the Center.

For a number of years, CCRE was located close to downtown Lowell in what I can only describe as a spectacularly renovated mill building. The Wannalancit Mill had aged wood floors, wide-beamed timber framing, and soaring ceilings. I'm not certain of the square footage, but this space was large, and to me it always felt special and unique. The floor plan was expansive, complete with couches, and the layout had the feel of openness, with huge windows. Within the former office in the mill was a large conference room; large enough to host some of my graduate seminars. In contrast, the current CCRE office felt exceedingly cramped. There would not be room for a couch, and the offices, a defining space in this new suite, were the domain of their inhabitants. I observed at most four or five huddled individuals in the break room, but any grouping larger would require use of a conference room in another part of Mahoney Hall.

The following is an excerpt from the weekly memo I wrote about the first week of Fall Semester:

Two observations about the atmosphere as I stepped back onto the UML campus with the Fall Semester in full swing. South campus was filled with students, and the energy and excitement seemed markedly different from just a couple of weeks prior. The CCRE office did not seem by outward appearances to be impacted – [this CCRE individual] sounded as though they was advising students ...I asked [this other CCRE staff member] about “Carla” and came to find out that she is a faculty member...I continue to try and grasp the notion (and difficulty) of continuity in engagement across an entire university. And this was only the topic of service learning. It seemed aesthetically helpful to have seen CCRE during the summer, and now during



the Fall Semester...the fact that “community” does not experience such seasons, and their needs remain constant whereas the university ebbs, flows, in its own needs and desires.

When I asked during interviews for individuals to describe the Center, there was a good deal of common ground, including the following:

If I think back to when. . .I started at the Center, I saw it [CCRE] as a place where people from the university came together to do research that involves community members. . .if I had to put it in a nutshell, I would say we do research in the community with the aim of benefitting the community, not just ourselves as researchers. (Community Partner, G, p. 12)

I always understood the Center for Community Research and Engagement to be a location where professors and communities, or researchers and communities, could interact in meaningful ways to effect community change. (Former UML Graduate Student, L, p. 3)

I would describe the Center as an outreach arm of the university. Trying to sort of build those connections between the university and the community. . .just sort of that partner that’s there to work with other organizations to support them. (Center Employee, I, p. 2)

It’s a research center that values community-involvement, which I think makes it very different. . .CCRE is how the university is showing that it cares about the Lowell community... I see it as, as a bridge between the university and non-profits within the community, where the university is trying to bring its resources to the community; the community can in turn help out the university. (UML Graduate Student, K, p. 3/6)

In looking at these descriptions, and in attempting to organize a Center description, it became more and more clear that many people spoke about CCRE in the present, but importantly, also the past and where the Center had been, and work and projects that had been done previously. As an example:

I think the Center for Family, Work [and Community] as it started out, was really important for the university at the time when we didn’t really focus enough on the humanities, social sciences, as much as we do now. But I thought it gave a really good base for the researchers there, and that we were bringing the kind of work collaboratively, interdisciplinary, to generate some

important research that I think has really contributed to the well-being of this community. . . I think importantly, it helps solidify our engagement in a very meaningful way in this community. (P, p. 1).

This idea of a Then/Now evolution in describing the Center seemed to require further attention, and the notion of context, specifically the Center's history, combined with changes in the City of Lowell, as well as the changing university, proved essential to a description. On multiple occasions, in multiple settings, and by many people, these elements, and this context of Then/Now, was readily discussed. Hand-in-hand, the university as well as the Center have changed over the past seven years starting around 2007 which notably was the time when a new Chancellor began at UMass Lowell. From the very obvious name change of the Center itself, to its location, the positioning of the Center within the university, and how the Center is led, the rather dynamic changes during this period of time have also coincided with substantial student growth at UML, along with a move from Division II to Division I collegiate athletics. Table 4 provides a snapshot of key Center and UML characteristics from 2014, as well as prior to 2008, which in addition to the arrival of a new Chancellor, was the year Dr. Silka went on sabbatical, ultimately retiring in 2009.

Table 4. Key Past and Present Center Characteristics

Prior to 2008*	Present (2014)
<i>Center Title:</i> Center for Family, Work and Community (CFWC)	<i>Center Title:</i> Center for Community Research and Engagement (CCRE)
Total UML undergraduate/graduate students (2007) = 9,415	Total UML undergraduate/graduate students (2013 est.) – 14,002
University Athletics: Division “II”	University Athletics: Division “I”
Center Director was a tenured faculty member with direct oversight and leadership	Center employs a Co-Director model; one individual is staff, the other a tenured faculty member with tertiary involvement
Center physically located in a renovated mill building proximate to downtown	Center physically located on (South) campus
Large federal grants including GEAR UP, as well as HUD, serve as a major underpinning for multiple Center efforts and initiatives	One element of the Center continues to garner HUD funding, but GEAR UP not awarded, and this element of the Center now lacks a large federal grant for the first time in over a decade
Primary UML graduate programs providing CCRE research assistants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Community/Social Psychology</li> <li>b) Regional, Economic and Social Development</li> </ul>	Primary UML graduate programs providing CCRE research assistants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Community/Social Psychology</li> <li>b) Work Environment</li> <li>c) Peace and Conflict Studies</li> </ul>
Center unbound by College or department	Center resides within the UML College of Fine Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

To understand the Center, and to describe its work, is to grasp the leadership legacy of Linda Silka and the continuing leadership of Robin Toof. These two individuals in particular helped shape the Center I observed during fieldwork. Dr. Linda Silka, now a retired Professor, is the former Center Director, and Dr. Robin Toof, the current Center Co-Director, remains a full-time staff member at the university. To aid in setting the context, here spliced together, is a view on not simply the genesis of CCRE, but the origins of relationships and personal dynamics that help define it:

Former Community Partner:

Ed Davis [former Lowell Police Superintendent; then later Commissioner of the Boston Police Department] was Captain of Police; he had been charged with looking for grants and things like that for the [Lowell] police department...Ed had some kind of relationship with Fred Sperounis who was a Vice Chancellor at the time...maybe they just knew each other from around town or whatever. But Ed had gone to Fred because he was at the university and said, you know I gotta write these grants, blah, blah, blah, and Fred said, you should call the people over at the Center; Linda Silka. (M, p. 3)

Linda Silka:

...And then you know, Lowell started to change. I mean, it just started to change and all of a sudden it was this place that was diverse, and the students who were starting to come to campus were different, the issues in town were different, and Fred Sperounis [former Executive Vice Chancellor]...called me in and said, Linda, we want you to think about changing the direction of your career. You can continue to publish, to write books, or you can think about the fact that we need a different kind of social and community psychologist, and we need to create this center that would, you know, it would build on some of the HUD funding...but it would basically be a community-university partnership, and bring in lots of different people around the university, and he said, this is completely different from what you've done.

Former Community Partner:

So Ed approaches Linda and becomes exposed to not only evaluation, but also things around organizational change, organizational development...so we worked with Ed [and Lowell Police Department] for a number of years around grants. We also worked with them on a major project which was community surveys...he [Ed Davis] sort of was transitioning from Captain, to

Interim Policy Superintendent around this time, '94...it's important because the relationship part of this...we are really starting to become much more connected. (M, p. 3)

In her own words, Linda Silka describes the “then” of the Center, and the invitation that was placed on the table:

I finished my Ph.D. when I was 26 years old; from the mid-West; got hired at University of Lowell 1978 and they hired me to be an experimental social psychologist. They hired me to be a person who does basic research because they didn't feel they had a lot of capacity in that area and so I came in really, as somebody who was completely clueless about how to work with anybody except other academics. Completely clueless. ...So, I thought about it [the proposal from the then UML Vice Chancellor]; I thought, you know I had started to work a lot with the Cambodian community at that point; that sounds really interesting to do. And that was so different from my training. I mean, when I was; the Ph.D. that I did at the University of Kansas - they said don't do anything applied; you're here to learn advanced research skills. Then you can do the easy stuff, which is the applied stuff.

This amalgamated take on the origins of the Center foreshadowed a great many of the findings in this study. The subjects of funding, faculty roles, relationships and longevity along with many other descriptors and cultural considerations are all critical to understanding how context is important to a Center description.

In talking with Linda, who worked for UMass Lowell for over 30 years and was the Center Director for 15 of those years, she noted key principles that guided Center work, including:

We didn't think we had the answer to questions, even though sometimes we did have the answers.

We're going to listen to people; we're going to talk to people; we're gonna do kind of interesting things, but we're not going to tell people what to do, but sometimes we have to tell people what to do, so we're going to do it in a way it looks like we're not telling people what to do.

Getting out. . .not assuming people are going to come to campus.

Sometimes they [community partners] want the university to be the university. . .they'll say, we need you to get the funding so we can do so and so kinds of things.

While one comment in a lengthy interview, the statement from Dr. Silka about having to tell people what to do sometimes is a small example of what Noddings might consider coercion. Dr. Silka's language was carefully considered on the day we spoke, and her intent seemed to hint at dialogue and conversation with community about what to do. As Noddings (2002) writes, when we coerce as part of care, it entails explanation followed by negotiation. This small comment from Dr. Silka would seem to be a modest example.

Whether these principles might also be described as values or perhaps ethical guidelines, the time came in 2009 when Dr. Silka formally retired for the Center to begin a new "now" period. Shared by one individual during their interview:

I'm not sure of the exact time table, but in terms of the name change [to Center for Community Research and Engagement], we just sort of did it. . .our Dean said that's fine. So I think that sort of helped us, I mean [the former name] Family, Work and Community is just so all encompassing. I don't think the type of research and engagement we do is different, but it [the name] gives a bit more focus I think to the mission. It's more focused on, not the content of the research we do, but. . .in whatever the particular context might be. (C, p. 2)

Linda when interviewed, also intimated her hope for the transition, offering that "we need institutions to be able to have people who have been in one role, and move into another role; for people to accept that, or to understand that, and treat people with dignity and understand their leadership." To an extent, such hope has been borne out given the assessment from one UMass Lowell senior administrator who shared that "I have very high regard for Robin, who I think is a tremendous leader and I look at that Center as an example of how she's transitioned that Center as the university has evolved" (P, p. 1). From 1994 until 2010, Robin was the Center Assistant Director, ascending to become the

Co-Director in the Fall of 2010. In her own words, Robin describes the Center, and its work:

I just start with the overarching thing is we develop partnerships between the university and the community; we bring the community to the university, the university to the community; we work on projects together. And they're like [when people inquire], well what do you mean? What are some examples? And then I have to try and think of some examples that sort of highlight the ideal, you know, like ideally it's when a professor wants to do something in the community, they approach us because they know that we have connections to people in the community. We know different community organizations and we can kind of be a bridge between, and be the boundary-spanners. . .but not everything we do is like that, so it's just so, it's hard.

Robin, having provided continuity after Linda's retirement, and with multiple other faculty Co-Directors during the span of 2010 through the Fall of 2014, offered her own outlook on the principles that continue to guide Center work:

Community need: I mean, we work with it all the time with faculty or doing service learning. . .what they're supposed to do too is really reacting to a community need. Not, you know: we know the answer and the whole save the day thing too.

We listen to people and try to be a partner with them as opposed to, you know, work with them, beside them and work together, as opposed to. . .judging or going off on our own direction or trying to get out of what we want to get out of it.

It's the way we do things here. . .I don't know what it is. . .being kind to people. . .there's just something about it that we learned from Linda and we learned from Community/Social Psych. . .you know, just very asset-oriented and strength-based.

What the Center is, and perceptions of this entity, do not enjoy complete unanimity of opinion. For example, during one interview an individual noted "somewhat of an urgency" to the work at the Center, and for some individuals, budgetary concerns levy a constant degree of concern, and at times, even anxiety. This contrasts with the view from another individual that: "now I look at it [CCRE] as just a unbelievably thriving Center and

that it's very cutting edge and doing really important breakthrough work for us in the community." There is a tug and pull between how things have been in the past, and how things are now. Additional perspective includes:

CCRE Employee:

I think that there's ways that having a faculty person...a tenured faculty person, gives a little bit of security or what have you. I mean, the dynamic is change. It used to be that Linda [Silka] was a little bit more the big thinker and would drive a lot of the direction. Robin [Toof] was always the hands-on; she was definitely as long as I've been here, you know...the heart and soul of the Center... so [now]...I could see her [Robin] being, see her role being really difficult because she's kinda trying to do both roles and that's hard...it's not easy for her. (I, p. 6-7)

This is not exactly evidence of a counter-example, but as divergent perspectives occurred, I attempted to record them accurately and to ensure their inclusion. In comparing Center characteristics and work principles identified by both Linda and Robin, and returning again to considering the Then/Now spectrum, despite some dissonance in perception, there appears to be continuity in the independent and contemporaneous outlook provided by both Linda and Robin. These include the focus on stance with the community that includes listening and responding to needs; needs identification often being defined by the community; and the university by way of the Center facilitating resources to address community needs. Further, more detailed views on how such actions are undertaken, are described in greater detail later in the Chapter.

### Context and Care Theory

Attending to context for a description of the Center for Community Research and Engagement mirrors the manner by which Noddings (2002) describes caring encounters. With the emphasis on the phenomenological underpinning of care, Noddings often uses the term "encounter" to frame the interaction experience between people. It invites



consideration of past and present experiences, which again mirrors, the Then/Now context of the Center for Community Research and Engagement. Noddings also argues that with care, place has meaning, and “a home must, of course, give shelter from rain and cold, but it must also provide a refuge from danger, humiliation, worldly stress, and the struggle for recognition” (Noddings, 2002, p. 150). Places shape us and our identity, but importantly, we are products of encounters and responses within these settings. The findings around CCRE context, including how individuals describe what the Center was, is, and their sense of place and identity, is a key example of how this cultural consideration can be understood through an ethic of care.

#### Service Learning and Care of Students

Significantly, at some point prior to Linda Silka’s retirement, Robin’s position was “hard-lined.” This was a term used on multiple occasions referring to the fact that this position, Robin’s position, was no longer contingent on grant funds and was now part of the budget specific to the College of Fine Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (FAHSS). The position however, now has duties that not only include CCRE Co-Director, but Robin also serves as the Director of the Service Learning and Community Co-Op Resource Office for the UML College of Fine Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. The service learning component includes supervision of a three-quarter time staff member and interaction with other UML service learning professionals that coordinate on behalf of other UML Colleges.

Robin shares:

There’s a lot more different things that I’m involved in and are asked to be involved in, or frankly, I’ll volunteer to be involved in...they’re interesting projects...it’s working with people I like to work with.

To this point made by Robin, pedagogy appears to bend more and more at UMass Lowell toward service learning and is broadly touted on the UML Academic webpage as their “distinctive focus on learning through experience.” As a former administrator described, “the idea was to get students to work in the community, more than, you know, working a soup line or doing photocopying.”

This expansion of the teaching and learning sphere into community settings, has meant Robin, and therefore CCRE, not only works outwardly on engagement efforts with community, but she and the Center also work inwardly to organize and facilitate intra-institution efforts that involve faculty and students. Robin provided a nuanced perspective: “we do have faculty knocking on our doors looking for service learning connections [but this] is very different than community scholarship.”

Again, service learning in particular seems to be an approach, a pedagogy, on the ascension at the university with a reach that now very much touches CCRE. As opposed to the default assumption which is that of a university helping the community, there was evidence gathered during fieldwork that the inverse was occurring. Community partners in particular expressed their willingness to address the learning needs of students even as they acknowledge the burden at times of this care. To illustrate, a Community Partner shares:

We have a lot of work-study students that come from the university and end up participating as volunteers...it's been a really awesome partnership and I'll be totally frank in saying: it's not always the case working with university students...I've had plenty of instances where students get involved and you know, sometimes they don't even know how to send emails...we'll get some professor saying hey, we've got these students that need x, y and z hours, and I'm like, that's gonna cost us way more than we're gonna get back. People are like, hey, can I send ten kids over you know, for an hour at this time? ...I'm like, it would take a lot of work for us to create something for them to be involved in. (N, p. 7)

At one of the meetings I attended during fieldwork, one of the UML Service Learning Coordinators queried “how many hours does the community spend educating our students?

I would like to see the university value that.” Robin bound both views together:

Our partners put a lot of work into having students...some have figured out how to get what they need out of the student without it being such a burden, but yeah, certainly...you end up with a student that can be a really big burden...some of them are easy and some of them aren't.” Sharing her view about student learning and the current UMass Lowell Provost [Dr. Ahmed Abdelal], Robin notes: “I do know that students are really important to him, and that having students placed into community organizations is really important to him...opportunities for students to come out of their experience here with some real-life skills.

Codified in university policy, an artifact illustrating this focus on the pedagogy of applied learning is what UML describes as the “Service-Learning Course Attribute Policy” (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. UML Service-Learning Course Attribute Policy

**University of Massachusetts Lowell**  
**Service-Learning Course Attribute Policy**

In order for students to make more informed choices when selecting courses, courses and/or sections can now have a “service-learning” attribute in the course catalog or in the course Topics section in ISIS. This attribute will also allow students to have this noted on their transcript.

**Service-Learning Course Attribute Criteria**

For an undergraduate or graduate course to bear the Service-Learning attribute, *service* and *learning* must be integrated in order to enhance both. The following are the baseline criteria to be designated as a service-learning course. Individual colleges/schools/programs may have additional criteria.

- Service*: Students will provide a service to non-profit entities such as schools, government or community agencies or individuals collaborating with one of these parties.
- Clear linkage between the service and course learning goals*: Students will use knowledge from the course to provide the service.
- Preparation for service*: Students will be appropriately prepared for the service they will provide (examples include skill acquisition, dress and behavior codes, cultural context, special circumstances, consideration of user-needs, etc.)

Framed using baseline criteria, this type of coursework requires students to provide a service or collaboration, but again, community partners are realistic about how this is not exactly reciprocal:

I think that everyone has really good intentions. . .and they always say, we want to do what is most beneficial to you. . .I totally appreciate that, and that's great that everyone comes with that intention. But at the end of the day. . .the students coming in are sometimes; they're undergrads. . .undergrad students when they're here for like two-three hours, you know. . .makes it challenging. That's when sometimes I think, as much as you want students to be really truly engaged in the community, the two to three hours a week, or even six hours a week, is not ideal for the community setting. . .you want me to be honest and say, how helpful or useful. . .it sometimes more for the benefit of the university than it is for us. . .as a community service agency that is also tight on budgets. So for every hour I'm spending with that undergraduate student, that is one hour less I'm spending on something I'm supposed to be doing. . .it's like more time. That's the only thing: you want to partner; want to be just as good of a partner back. (A, p. 6-7)

The finding related to students and service-learning is important to include for a few reasons. To begin, it was during participant-observation that this notion of students, and by proxy the university, began to coalesce as the recipients of care. Everywhere on campus, in UMass Lowell literature, and in conversation after conversation, the focus was on what students were doing in the community and in applied settings. Further, this focus now squarely touches CCRE because of Robin and her oversight of Service Learning for the College of Fine Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. Lastly, so often I observed service learning to be conflated as community engagement, and yet I came to learn that although “students will provide a service to non-profit entities,” the direction of care did not always flow in that direction.

### Student Service Learning and Care Theory

In what is perhaps the strongest finding that illustrates the bi-directional construct of an ethic of care, service learning was not viewed as particularly reciprocal in the eyes of the

community, and yet, the community offered their care of students, and by proxy, the university. This finding was somewhat unexpected given that a default rationale in higher education is for students to experience the “real-world,” and to do so by aiding community. This finding, with care theory as our prism for understanding, urges a new consideration of reciprocity. The idea of reciprocity need not be quid-pro-quo or transactional, but by simply acknowledging care, Noddings (2002) offers that care can be established. The university as an institution is fairly silent about acknowledging the care of its students by the community, but findings indicate university staff and faculty provide that voice. Noddings (1984; 2002) specifically describes acknowledgement and uses this distinction to separate caring-about from caring-for or with: “caring-about is empty if it does not culminate in...relations” (p. 24). The finding related to service learning illustrates a move by the community beyond caring-about to caring-for and an ethic of care represents a novel way to interpret such a finding.

### Additional Considerations

To paraphrase different individuals commenting on centers at UMass Lowell, CCRE isn't two people getting together and calling themselves a center, and it isn't something that is only virtual with affiliated faculty. With that said, in providing context for a description, it became very clear during fieldwork that a CCRE office was not something overtly relevant or pertinent to the community. If meetings occurred, they happened at community locations and it was obvious that this has been the approach for quite some time. Often framed by CCRE affiliated people in terms of grants or projects, one UML faculty member observed:

Centers are just very different from academic departments. They don't have the same institutional structure around clear line of authority, and set roles

and things that have to be done. I think that's true of any interdisciplinary – anything that's a program. . .it's its own sort of thing that makes it a little hard to wrap your brain around it as an organization. (C, p. 7)

To illustrate this point, a comprehensive description of CCRE is not so straight-forward; it is “different,” and has what could be described as a federalist structure and composition.

There are not regular staff meetings, and aside from rare consultation on a specific project, grant, or initiative, there are two entities within CCRE that rarely co-mingle. Two individuals in particular, Robin being one, are the Principal Investigator or lead facilitator for their suite of projects and grants, often serving as the primary grant author, key supervisor of other staff or students, and essentially project manage the effort. For one of these entities, there is consulting and partnering with organizations that include the Lowell Police Department. For the other entity, in the words of one CCRE employee, “Healthy Homes is the home visit, environmental assessment and education thing. That's its own project.” These two individuals, and two suites of projects, do not work together in a formal sense, do not share a supervision structure, do not budget together, and yet the thread of community and engagement does seem to provide a binding agent. Drawing from an ethic of care, one metaphor to describe this arrangement is more like that of an extended family living together in a multi-level house. Separated by different floors in the home, nevertheless CCRE is a family of sorts, relatives of a kind, living different lives under the same roof. One comment on this dynamic came from a CCRE employee:

It's kind of funny. . .[we] like have a wall between us. Even though their services are really valuable, we don't actually interact with them very much. . .we did ask for help once. . .[but] I don't know of any other collaboration that we've done with each other. . .we all know, and we all joke about it. So it's not weird, but it's funny to me that we don't utilize each other more. I don't know; we're all just so like, in our own zone. . .we probably should convene sometimes and just update each other...there's values that we all share. (G, p. 6, 12, 14)

Context for a Center description that includes relationships and values is important because the nature of the work is “very project-based” and “very ad hoc” as was described on multiple occasions. There is a tremendous amount of nuance to what is done by the Center, and the surface has only been scratched with respect to how that work is done. An effort to summarize is done here looking to the words of interview participants for description:

CCRE Staff Member:

Occasionally a friend will ask what do you do? And I’ll just explain, I do home visits; I go out in the community and assess the environment of people or kids with asthma, or elders with asthma” [. . .and later this individual offers that] “we’ve presented our results. . .we’ve published an article with the results from our first program. (G, p. 7)

Community Partner:

For me, what I have found is that they’re good about utilizing language that people understand. Like a normal person, not the evaluator person. Yes, they have their – how they connect – whatever the word terminology is: like, triangulation. But that’s more like, the official proposal thing that we may send off. . .but anytime we send out executive summaries or infographics, or anything like that, it’s very clear and people understand the data. (A, p. 4)

Community Partner:

The degree to which you can fully evaluate the change to a neighborhood; there’s so many competing factors and what changes your economic and social indicators. . .I think that they’re [CCRE] trying to work creatively to figure out how do we measure the true impact of this ‘cause I think we all know and have a faith that there is a positive impact. The way that you quantify and show that is a lot harder. . .I think they’re trying to be diligent but it’s not like there’s a template for this stuff. (N, p. 3)

Home visits as a part of action research, attending to language usage, and seeking creative approaches to community evaluation efforts is not just the work of CCRE, it is how this work is viewed that carries resonance for an ethic of care. Drawing from the metaphor Noddings (1984) offers specific to circles, as we move outward in our encounters, “we are

guided by...how we feel, what the other expects of us, and what the situational relationship requires of us” (p. 46). Noddings works in effect to describe the essence of our obligations to others, and how it is not simply our individual assessment of our actions. Context for understanding the Center for Community Research and Engagement is framed by the importance of many perspectives including the Then/Now from Linda Silka and Robin Toof, the family climate within CCRE itself, along with new elements such as UML service learning. The notion of people and projects sharing a community focus is perhaps the most elemental manner by which to describe the Center today, and the many people and partners involved. With the lens of care however, it also involves “stepping out of one’s own personal frame of reference into the other’s...but we act not to achieve for ourselves a commendation but to protect or enhance the welfare of the cared-for” (Noddings, 1984, p. 24). With such considerations of context and care, I now turn to core center efforts to provide further description of CCRE.


### Core Center Efforts

With context in hand for a Center description, there remains the question of what exactly CCRE does, who does it, and how people go about this work. To illustrate, one artifact collected during fieldwork describes the involvement of CCRE with the Lowell Police Department on a local crime prevention initiative (see Figure 3). The Center partners with Lowell Police as their Local Action Research Partner (LARP), and a community partner shares:

Everyone is required to have a LARP, that’s what we call them: Local Action Research Partner. So they’re [CCRE] our LARP. I feel like we use them really well; like you know, they trouble shoot issues on reports, they’re always trying to help us make our programs better. (F, p. 3)



Figure 3. Research Partnership Example: CCRE and Lowell Police Department



**Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Program**

**Site Snapshot: Lowell, Massachusetts**

**Lead Agency:** City of Lowell Police Department

**Target Neighborhood:** Centralville

**Research partner:** The University of Massachusetts Lowell

**BCJI Grant Year/Category:** FY 2012 Planning and Implementation.

Created under President Obama and his Administration's larger national [Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative](#) efforts, the Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation (BCJI) launched in 2012 and was created to develop and implement place-based, community-oriented strategies to transform distressed communities into communities of opportunity.

**Neighborhood Profile:**

In 2012, the City of Lowell Police Department received a Planning and Implementation grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to assist the Centralville community carry out core BCJI initiatives. The City of Lowell is made up of 11 distinct neighborhoods. The Centralville neighborhood in particular, home to about 10,000 people, has been struggling with high unemployment rates, an exorbitant number of foreclosures and a disproportionately high level of crime. In fact, current data demonstrates that only 64% of individuals living in Centralville over the age of 16 are employed and twenty-two percent of the foreclosures in the City of Lowell occurred in Centralville, the highest percentage of any neighborhood in Lowell.

The Lowell Police Department (LPD) believes that the disproportionately high number of crimes in Centralville is fueled by the City's drug problem. Also impacting Centralville's high crime rate is the disproportionate number of ex-offenders returning to the Centralville neighborhood from incarceration each year. Youth violence has also become an increasing concern in the neighborhood.

**BCJI Project Goals:**

Through the BCJI grant, the LPD will implement the Centralville Friends for Improvement, Revitalization and Enforcement (C-FIRE) project to address the multifaceted issues impacting Centralville. The LPD will partner with the local neighborhood association group, the Parks and Recreation Department, the Lowell Public School System, the Career Center of Lowell, the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Lowell, United Teen Equality Center, International Institute of New England, the Coalition for a Better Acre, Greater Lowell Technical High School and Mill City Grows on this project.

The C-FIRE project will focus on enforcement, prevention, intervention and revitalization efforts. In an attempt to reduce the crime in the neighborhood, the LPD will implement evidence-based hot spot policing activities, as well as conduct home visits to recently released ex-offenders to increase their awareness of services available to assist them in their transition from incarceration to the community. To address the juvenile-related issues, project partners will provide supervised activities for neighborhood youth and offer them positive opportunities, wraparound services and

This example provides a helpful illustration of how CCRE is at the nexus of many moving parts. With this grant, the City of Lowell received federal funding via the US Department of Justice for an intervention with a specific neighborhood. Lowell Police is the City

authority that will oversee the intervention, and in turn, the Department turns to CCRE to facilitate the evaluation component which entails not only outcomes and summative work, but formative and process elements as well.

When it comes to core efforts, drawing on the CCRE/Lowell Police partnership and many other examples, there appear to be five particular areas defining what exactly the Center does, and how the work is done: Needs Assessment, Facilitation, Technical Assistance, Grant Writing and Funding Procurement, as well as Program Evaluation and Action Research. I will consider each in greater detail.

i) Needs Assessment

Describes a Community Partner:

So the University [CCRE] has been a longtime partner with us...so anything from an annual report around a specific program...we every once in a while do a community assessment; they'll help with the interviews, the stakeholder interviews and stuff like that. (A, p. 1)

Offers a UML Faculty Member:

We're not all PAR [participatory action research] folks. I'm not a PAR; I don't give my transcripts back. . .or they don't help me write. . .but. . .you have to start with some sense of an identified, organic, community need. I think everybody sort of actively affiliated with the program [CCRE] feels roughly the same way. (C, p. 8)

Drawing an excerpt from a Lowell housing need study conducted by the Center in 2002, one of the framing questions posed as part of the assessment was “who are the owners of rental housing today, and what are the characteristics of these owners relative to the units they own?” While needs assessment was not the largest action in the portfolio of efforts undertaken by CCRE, it was described and discussed on a number of occasions both within the university and between CCRE and community. I found a number of mentions in the weekly memos I generated for myself, and to cite one example, during participant-

observation a faculty member in early August made an appointment to meet with Robin. This woman was looking to start up her own university center, and had needs in the form of how to structure the unit, what resources could Robin suggest, and who within the community could Robin connect her. This example personifies not formal needs assessment, but the everyday needs that university staff and faculty face in their work together.

ii) Facilitation

As shared by a Community Partner:

I constantly email Robin [Toof] or Melissa [Wall] and say, here's what I'm thinking about the agenda, what do you think? Should we go there, should we go there? If this gets off track, can you help me bring it back? So they kinda help facilitate. You know, we have a lot of strong personalities in our various groups, so sometimes things get off track. . .they have facilitated tons of conversations for us. . .I feel that they are really good at bringing it to a level that the partners and myself understand. (F, p. 1)

Offers a UML Faculty Member:

One of the things I've always appreciated about CCRE and about Robin is that I've never felt like they've tried to define very narrow boxes around what community-engaged research means, or what service-learning means. . .[and] the majority of my interactions with them has been around teaching more than around research. . .one of the things I've always appreciated about them is that they know all of those things. . .and I think they are expert at those things, *and* they see the value in things that aren't in that narrow little box. Both on the research side and on the teaching side. . .that for me has made them a really valuable resource around campus (emphasis the individual's). . .I have been trying to work with community partners who need surveys. . .Robin and her crew over there have been really instrumental in helping me set up those partnerships. (D, p. 1-2; emphasis the individual's)

As described by Robin:

Just being able to manage community-based projects in a way that builds bridges between the university and the community. . .I do think that's one of our strengths. . .the ability, the fact that we can manage a project. People don't think about that.

Efforts specific to facilitation seem to be an overlooked skill set at an institution of higher education. This was purely a default perception on my part, and based on fieldwork it became clear that facilitation is a unique and difficult skill practiced by many at CCRE. The following is an excerpt from a weekly memo I wrote around the tenth week of fieldwork:

I had to really push myself; force myself to find a way to see the work of [CCRE Staff that focused on Housing and Asthma]...In attending the Asthma Coalition, there are small points of observation, including if you didn't know what it was, or where it was, finding that small conference room tucked off, would seem an impossible task. There is an element of very local, very ground-floor effort and conversations, even with the wide array of participants (nine community organizations present). [This CCRE Employee] in particular, was clearly the facilitator, and there seems to be that need for facilitation and organization. The sentiment: "trying to make sure 'they' know what others are doing; asthma is a huge issue. . .no reason there can't be two groups working on it. . ." This amalgamation (in any community) that combines interventions, organizations, research and people – my view: takes time, not easy work, and infrastructure and inter-personal structures are so difficult to get in place.

During participant-observation I was able to attend and observe gatherings like the Lowell Asthma Coalition which included almost ten different agency representatives as well as members of the community. It was clear that CCRE was leaned on by those attending to organize the agenda, keep the conversation moving, and provide follow-through on actions

to follow. As I wrote in my field notes, the requirements of facilitation seemed never ending, and efforts to improve communication were a constant need.

### iii) Technical Assistance

Two Community Partners share:

They're able to really get down with all the partners and drill down and teach them how to create a logic model, get the goals and objectives, understand that they need to be quantifiable, and you know, everything that goes along with that. I mean that has been a huge help. (E, p. 3)

One of the really helpful things that they've done is they've created quarterly reports for me on the . . . grant. . . then like, there's a lot of follow-up. It's not just, here's the report template. . . it's, here's the report template, we'll meet with everyone with you and talk about the report, then we're available for training and technical assistance, like all the way through. Then we'll look at them every single quarter and see what makes sense and they like after one year, if the data doesn't make sense, then we're gonna come back. . . there's just like continuous follow-up. They don't do things just to do things and say like, check. (F, p. 10)

Describes a CCRE Staff Member:

We've done community workshops where we just do a Powerpoint and we talk about asthma and your home environment and people have asked to have that. . . Or if they want to enroll in our program but they're not eligible, then I'll say hey, we're going to have workshops coming up and I'll take their name and number and let them know. People generally respond well to that. (G, p. 7)

### iv) Grant Writing and Funding Procurement

A particularly notable area of CCRE work, and as previously indicated, grants have a long legacy at the Center. One example provided by a member of CCRE offers "most of what I do now relates to housing and health; I've obtained a lot of grants from Housing and Urban Development [HUD], the Office of Health Homes and Lead Hazard Control." As offered by the CCRE website, "over the last decade, we have raised over \$15 million in funding from federal, state and foundation sources."

I witnessed the arc that at times represents the funding push at CCRE. Just prior to the start of my fieldwork, CCRE had submitted a proposal seeking a third installment of GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) funding, a federal grant opportunity through the US Department of Education. Unfortunately toward the end of my fieldwork, CCRE learned they did not receive this funding. I spoke with Robin about this particular funding effort on a number of occasions, given the need for such external funding and implications for CCRE staff. To more specifically delineate grant awards to CCRE, please see Table 5 for a selection over the years.

Linda Silka shared “the COPC [HUD-funded; Community Outreach Partnership Center] grant really helped and then we started getting some pretty massive grants...so we had, probably ten years of large-scale funding...we were constantly trying to figure out how to keep our central focus, but find funding and opportunities.” While difficult to provide a comparison or contrast, my impression is that for a Center oriented toward the non-profit community as well as social endeavors, the amount of grant funding obtained is not insignificant. Robin offered during participant-observation that perceptions vary, and with the Humanities for example, a \$5,000 grant is viewed as a rather large sum of money. This is in stark contrast to other enclaves at the university, which includes grant fund securing by the College of Engineering for example. Bridging 2005 to 2009, the National Science Foundation awarded over \$1 million for the SLICE (Service-Learning Integrated throughout a College of Engineering) initiative. While context and perceptions may vary, the finding with this research is that grant awards to CCRE have been consistent over the years, and procuring such funding remains vital.

Table 5. Selected Grant Awards: Center for Community Research and Engagement

Year(s)	Funder/Grant	Amount
1996	US Department of Housing and Urban Development Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC)	\$399,987
2001-2003	US DHHS/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (via Lowell Community Health Center)  Cambodian Community Health 2010	\$156,000
1999-2004	US Department of Education  Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP)	\$4,700,000
2002	US Department of Housing and Urban Development  COPC/New Directions	\$150,000
2002 2004 2005	US Department of Housing and Urban Development  Community Development Work Study Program (CDWSP)	\$90,000 \$90,000 \$90,000
2005-2011	US Department of Education  Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP)	\$3,475,200
2004-2009	The Nellie Mae Education Foundation  Partnerships for College Success	\$750,000
2009	US Department of Housing and Urban Development  Healthy Homes Demonstration Grant Program	\$875,000
2010-2013	US Department of Commerce  Lowell Internet, Networking and Knowledge (Broadband)	\$783,000
2013	US Department of Housing and Urban Development  Healthy Homes Technical Studies	\$749,999

v) Program Evaluation and Action Research

The Center website notes their extensive experience with evaluation, and often this work is done in partnership with Lowell-area non-profits, or of programs and initiatives created and led by these organizations. This work varies from evaluation initiatives aimed at reducing teen pregnancy and assessing crime reduction and evaluating a pilot ex-offender reentry program (University of Massachusetts Lowell, 2014c), to interviewing community development corporations about the foreclosure crisis. The “action” aspect of this core work is also fairly tacit, and not always obvious or explicit by the ways CCRE discusses the work. What became apparent during fieldwork was that the action element was often that CCRE was not doing research on community, but so often the stance was to do research *with* community. A CCRE Staff Member commented, “the partners we work with get the need, and the value, of evaluation.” The following selections also offer different views on this particular CCRE core effort.

UML Graduate Student:

Up until this point I have done community-based evaluations, qualitative. So mostly interviewing: interviewing various community members to evaluate different. . .programming. . . we were collecting interviews with various community members, members of other organizations. . .I got to work with other graduate students, with alumni of the program, and we developed the interview protocol and went out and I was speaking with some pretty big community players in Lowell. (K, p. 2)

CCRE Employee:

I do mainly evaluation work for the Center; I work with various community partners to evaluate different projects. . . a lot of times as evaluators, you know, I think. . . people can see you as the auditor kind of role. So sometimes they appear a little adversarial. They think you’re there to highlight everything you’re doing wrong. But generally speaking, I think you know, we maybe since we’ve had relationships with a lot of the community partners in Lowell, that that doesn’t happen. (I, p. 4)

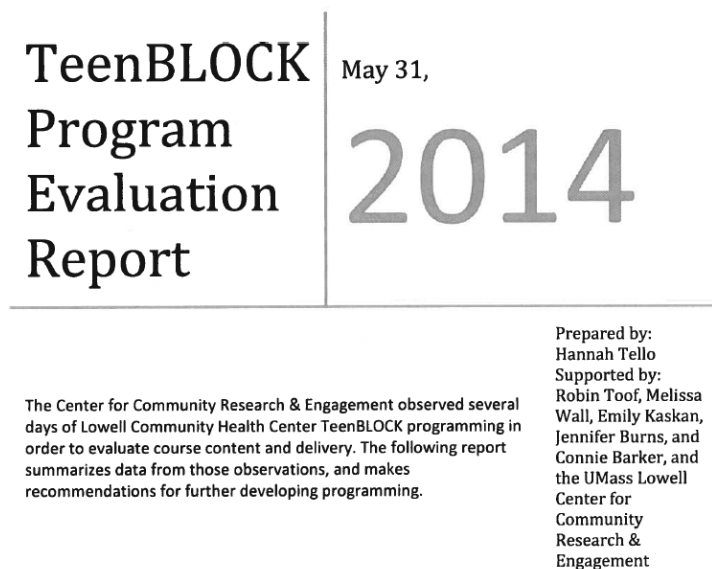


CCRE Employee:

I mean, we've done some action research. . . I think it was a study of housing, kind of the housing situation within the City at the time. . . there was a low vacancy rate, a lot of pressure, housing pricing and rentals going up, and issues of affordability. So that I think, we had an advisory committee and it included a lot of the advocates around the City, so you know, what came out of that [research] was some kind of tool, as well as a message, you know, about the realities of housing and the need for affordable housing. I would consider that action research. (H, p. 3-4)

There is a certain dynamic, a fluidity, to the evaluation and research conducted by CCRE. During the meetings I attended as part of participant-observation, the conversation between CCRE and community partners clearly built from a base of familiarity in that I could not discern a formality or rigid set of protocols. The discussion was more oriented toward action and hands-on problem solving. I could not find evidence of a rigid agenda, and minute taking as well as turn-taking during these conversations, were absent. Such meetings also tended to not be particularly long; there was a specific reason for the meeting, for example, an upcoming report (please see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Example CCRE Evaluation Report



Of particular interest to observe was the approach taken by Robin when I returned on a couple of occasions from program evaluation meetings. She was keen to debrief with the CCRE employee I attended the meeting with, and it appears that a keep-a-finger-on-the-pulse approach was how Robin was attempting to remain both with the employee she supervised, as well as with the partner relationship. As a final note, Center staff and affiliated faculty do have a number of publications that also capture their research efforts, and two examples include Turcotte, Alker, Chaves, Gore, & Woskie (2014) as well as Grigg-Saito, Toof, Silka, Liang, Sou, Najarian, Peou, & Och (2010) and Toof (2006), and they also have their own research references they utilize to build the rationale for their work (Goodman, 1998). Bundled together, the five core Center efforts are represented by Needs Assessment, Facilitation, Technical Assistance, Grant Writing and Funding Procurement, along with Program Evaluation and Action Research.

#### Core Center Efforts and Care Theory

Given the research questions and framing concepts of community-university engagement using an ethic of care, the way in which core efforts are undertaken can be considered not only as engaged, but as caring for and with. As noted previously, an ethic of care is empty if it does not culminate in relationships. This is not simply a prescription, but an invitation to step “out of one’s own personal frame of reference into the other’s...[and in doing so] we act...to protect or enhance the welfare of the cared-for” (Noddings, 1984, p. 24). The finding of core center efforts on the part of CCRE can be more clearly understood when set in the context of caring relationships, because the finding was not just that core efforts like facilitation and program evaluation were done. Core efforts were found to be undertaken in response to needs, and by a desire to protect and enhance the welfare of the

greater-Lowell community. I now further examine findings specific to the relational aspect of the Center for Community Research and Engagement which further develops this finding.

### The Prominence of Relationships

The Carnegie Foundation offers that “community engagement describes 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 for the Advancement of Teaching, 2010). Talk of mutuality and reciprocity begs the question: who defines the meaning of these terms? What is the nature of these relationships? It became clear during fieldwork that the work of community engagement “doesn’t just happen magically” as one individual offered, nor can it only be defined and described by the university. One Community Partner offered, it is “building trust on both ends. . .I definitely see it as relational work...demystifying and translating between the academic world and communities because there are these whole different cultures, these whole different vocabularies, these whole different timetables, these whole different, you know, everything” (D. p. 10). The following is an excerpt from the weekly memo I wrote around the week of 9/23 through 10/1:

I traveled over to Lawrence [Massachusetts] with Robin; her involvement continues an interaction that began a number of years back, and extended involvement beyond Lowell. The [Lawrence] Mayor’s Health Task Force continues to meet, and again, just in looking around the room, it is dominated by the presence of women: of the 25 people attending, 17 were female. Robin

greeted warmly upon arrival at the Lawrence Senior Center, and as she offered later, it is refreshing and nice to receive a hug – that for her is very unusual in professional settings. Robin is a member of the research sub-committee, and this has only a peripheral relationship to her current role with CCRE. Attending this meeting were a number of representatives from local social service organizations (hospitals, YWCA, YMCA). Interesting that the two post-doc researchers from UML were also in attendance; certainly not something on behalf of UML that was coordinated or strategically considered in advance.

It is almost impossible to consider core CCRE efforts devoid of the relationships that underpin such work. Time and again when asked, people associated, affiliated, or working for the Center, talked about the relational aspect of the work. In a most interesting way, it was one of the UML graduate students that captured these interactions in a way that made me particularly pay attention. This individual shared that “they [Robin and another employee] do all the tough work.” In response I asked “what do you mean by that?” The reply was emphatic:

Talking to people...no I'm being facetious. But like, reaching out and forming these actual relationships with community members and earning the trust of various organizations and new ones. So that's what I consider the tough work; building the reputation of the Center within the community.

Building on this concept that relationships require hard work, I sought to build a deep and rich cross-section of perspectives on the relational nature of CCRE, and the following was shared very specifically about the Center:

#### Community Partner:

It's very collaborative because people do know each other and they have strong working relationships, and I think that makes a huge difference...the inclination is always – are there opportunities for partnership? How many letters of support [for a grant application] can we get? I didn't realize there was another way to do it, right? And so like, so when I came...we have a Boston office, and working with people that work in the Boston community and seeing the difference...their initial reaction is...how do we keep a secret! ...I don't think they're meaner people; it's just that's probably how they learned, right? ...In the short run sometimes you know, you don't get as much funding, you slice the pie more. But in the long run, it [collaboration] makes for better service to the community. (N, p. 5)

#### UML Faculty Member:

Honestly, it goes back to the core relationships because Robin also had that relationship. . .years ago. So it wasn't like she was new. . .and I don't really know all the details before I got here, but it boils down to I believe the relationships. . .so if you would take that person and plop them out and stick somebody else in there, that maybe wouldn't kind of be a good fit; then that would probably be the demise of the relationship. . .I do really believe that it comes down to the actual people that are actually doing the work and the respect between all parties, and to be open and honest. (E, p. 6)

#### Former Community Partner:

It was like they believed in the partnership and everything about it. You do work that you don't get paid for; you show up to meetings that are at night or on the weekends; you do all of these things because it's the right thing to do, as opposed to being motivated by very narrow grant guidelines, or grant budgets, or things like that. . .you just show up when you need to show up. . .you do it because you have relationships, you believe in the work that needs to be done. (M, p. 4)

#### UML Graduate Student:

Lowell's a really interesting place, and there's this core group of community partners that are on every grant that know each other really well, and thankfully CCRE has managed to now be one of those people that is kind of always at the table for those kinds of things...but whenever I was talking with other people about like, who they want to work with, it was always like – you have to work with Robin...she's like this, I don't know, she's like the lynchpin of all these you know, connections and the Center...because the community groups are really strapped for time to worry about writing the report...they have really limited staff. (L, p. 4-5)

Community Partner:

Sure. . .I would say obviously it helps that we are contracting [with CCRE], but if we weren't contracting, I feel like our relationship is such that they always kinda want to better the community. I would have no problem calling Robin or Melissa and saying, best practices on x? . . .I feel like we have been in the trenches together like getting a lot of these programs off the ground that we have like a really great relationship. . .I would say that they are really invested in the community. . .they really kinda go above and beyond their basic, - oh, we're just getting paid to do this, so we're going to this meeting: I don't feel like it's like that for them. (F, p. 3)

The language used by many to describe the Center and CCRE work is noteworthy. Terms like honesty, belief, showing up: this is the language helping to describe the essence of the work. The engagement literature often discusses reciprocity, and so too does Care Theory. But the findings indicate, in a way similar to the argument from Noddings (1984), a distinction in that a caring relationship with reciprocity is not contractual. This responsiveness in the form of reciprocity “contributes to the maintenance of the relation and served to prevent the caring from turning back on the one-caring in the form of anguish and concern for self” (Noddings, 1984, p. 74). A subtle, but important analytical point with the findings is that reciprocity around CCRE entails a contribution from both the one-caring and the cared-for. Critical as well to the nature of these relationships also appeared to be two additional factors: longevity and attention paid, and I will now discuss each in greater detail.

### Longevity

Returning to the convenience sample of 16 interview participants, this group of individuals represents a long-time period of interaction with the university and between the university and community. Examples of this history and durability include the following views:

Community Partner:

I think once you start a project with them, it becomes; you build a rapport so that it's easier just to keep working with them on those particular projects. . .because they do our site-specific evaluation and have had a long history with components of our program, it really helps because they have the bigger picture. . .so for ease in regards to knowing, they truly understand what we are trying to accomplish. . .we communicate all the time. It isn't like we only talk when we need something from them. So it's more like both of them [Robin, Melissa] are very engaged with other components of the community, so they're constantly not only at the table for whatever reason. . . (A, p. 2-4)

UML Faculty Member:

I think that the long-standing relationships are an important part. . .people, community organizations, by and large know who we are; they know who to call. . .so it goes both ways: sometimes community organizations come to us, but other times faculty come to us saying we want to work with an organization. (C, p. 2)

Community Partner:

The only way I can explain how it [community partnering/engagement] happened is the longevity of their relationships. . .it just happens over time. . .and I've seen this in other places. . .if you try to throw a researcher in. . .and just say go, that's not going to work. It needs to be a common ground, and mutual understanding, respect for each other's work. . .you just can't expect that to happen like that overnight. (E, p. 2-3)

CCRE Employee:

I've had a relationship with people and I'm known in the community. . .new partnerships can be messy, and challenging, and difficult because people have . . .different priorities. . .I came in [to CCRE] with my own community connections. . .I came from the community I would say, so from my perspective this [the work] is how it should be. . .I've lived most of my life [in Lowell]. (H, p. 7-8)

Even with the methodological limitations from this approach to sampling, a cross-section of views helps to capture the importance and value of longevity, not just the fact that on its face, longevity has happened. To be specific, it would be overly simplistic to offer that on average across the 16 individuals, they had over 15 years of interaction with UMass Lowell.

On the other hand, their combined perspectives push toward an interpretation of longevity as an important underpinning to relationships. This finding of longevity is important when viewed through the lens of an ethic of care and Noddings (2002) not only emphasizes the monitoring of the effects from caring, she offers that “an ethic of caring strives to maintain the caring attitude” (1984, p. 105).

### Listening and Attention Paid

Nested within the dynamic of relationships, and in addition to the element of longevity, aspects of listening and paying attention seemed to also be noted and were a source of particular comments from those I spoke with and observed during fieldwork. Previously I described how for Linda Silka and Robin Toof the notion of listening, and in particular the approach to listening, was expressed as an important value by both individuals to the work of CCRE. This aspect of Center work was also evident when I observed Robin interact with staff and graduate students, and it also quite frankly, was how Robin and CCRE staff interacted with me. During fieldwork individuals would express concerns or identify a need by others. For example, a former CCRE community partner stated “you know, like Lowell PD, and the Health Center, two of I think their biggest partners: they have new needs and different needs, and they only have so much capacity.”

Individuals also described how the Center works to understand concerns or needs:

The relationship makes it more meaningful, for sure. I’m sure Melissa can probably tell you, there’s times when I’m like, Melissa, don’t even get me started. I’ll sit here, and *literally* we’re talking. I don’t feel like I’m in an evaluation meeting. We’re having a conversation and we talk about gaps, and needs, and you know, how do we fit that, and we can’t do everything, and all this other stuff. It’s real conversation. They both just genuinely listen and take it in from the person who is the provider. . . people will give you information if they trust you. I think a lot of times some will think of evaluators, and they are here to evaluate us, and how we’re doing, and how we’re not meeting our goal or something. . . the ones that get it are curious



about pain, or suffering, for our community. (A, p. 10; emphasis the individual's)

Noddings (1984) further expands on the concept of engrossment by emphasizing that in caring, the one-caring is present, is receptive, and is embedded in the relationship. Other scholars such as Pettersen (2008) further expand our understanding of communication with respect to care by focusing on the decision-making qualities of listening. With CCRE, a finding was the almost legacy-like attribution to their approach with being receptive and listening to one another and to community. It certainly was not a foreign concept that CCRE engage with community in this manner, or that individuals were not conscientious about the importance of their stance. Shares a CCRE employee:

I have a little bit more of a visible role then when I first started...I definitely feel like you develop those relationships over time, and you know, I do, we at the Center, you know, pass down from Linda [Silka] to Robin [Toof] to me: we really try to engage in community-based participatory research. So really, truly, seeing the value of our community partners, and so I don't go into a situation where I try to say, this is what the research says. Or this is what we're gonna do. I try to go in there and really listen to them and try to really convey that I'm there to listen to what they have to say, and to try to work together to help. (I, p. 3)

Buttressing these assertions, one senior university administrator observed: "I think Robin's done a nice job. . .that's why I said it always amazes me, her capacity to sit and listen to the community, non-profits, and hear what their need is and then kind of identify a way of engaging" (P, p. 11). To offer an important distinction, Noddings (1984) is keen to note that engrossment need not be understood as only an emotional endeavor. Feeling, yes, but as she clarifies "we are in a world of relations...the receptive mode seems to be an essential component of intellectual work" (p. 34). Examples of the intellectual side of care involving CCRE include the following:

A Community Partner in responding to whether difficult conversations occur:

I've had tough conversations [not with CCRE, but sub-grantees]. . .like what may not be working. . .but I feel like I can totally trust [CCRE with this information]. I mean, obviously there are some things that are confidential that I would never share, but then there are some things you know like, oh this partner is giving me push back. . .I feel totally fine telling them things. . .they do the process evaluation [of this agency]. So they will go to my partner meetings, and then they will ask the partner: like how's it going. . .? . . .I'm always a little bit worried, but they [CCRE] present it in a way that it's never personal. . .they give me. . .suggestions; . . .they definitely phrase it in a way that you're not like, I, wow, like, I totally stink at implementing that. You feel like, oh, okay, this is constructive criticism. (F, p. 3)

A Recent UML Graduate Student describing a peculiar situation that arose:

This was kind of an interesting example...as a practicum student: so we were writing up the evaluation and so we write up the evaluation and typically what we say is this is the evaluation and we're going to send it to the funder, here's your copy. So we sent that off to...my [site] supervisor, who got it and edited it! And they were like minor things, but she just like changed a piece and sent it back...so it was an interesting thing because editing the evaluation that we were hired to write is, could, potentially be really problematic. But I ended up having a good enough conversation with [the site supervisor] the next day...I said, you can't edit the evaluation! And she immediately went, oh my god, I didn't even think of that! So there were some times where you get so comfortable with each other that you really feel like you're being collaborative on things, when in reality there is an authority for the final word, and because the relationship is so good and they're so communicative, I think sometimes that's blurred. (L, p. 6)

### Relationships and Care Theory

Returning once again to the Carnegie Foundation (2010) definition which highlights reciprocity, findings from fieldwork invites a distinction between caring-about community and care-with communities. Similar in nature to the term engrossment (Noddings, 1984; 2002) used to describe a deep commitment to reducing harm, elements of this construct were found in terms of the longevity and maintenance of CCRE relationships, as well as the listening and attention paid between CCRE affiliates and community. Noddings (1984), in contextualizing an ethic of care, discusses how “at bottom, all caring involves engrossment.

The engrossment need not be intense nor need it be pervasive in the life of the one-caring, but it must occur...my first and unending obligation is to meet the other as one-caring” (p. 17). Attending to the effect overtime of care efforts is a critical hallmark of an ethic of care, and findings suggest that the intention of CCRE has been, and remains, very much an interest in maintaining relationships. This finding importantly was not only stated by CCRE itself, but by acknowledgement by those being cared-for as well.

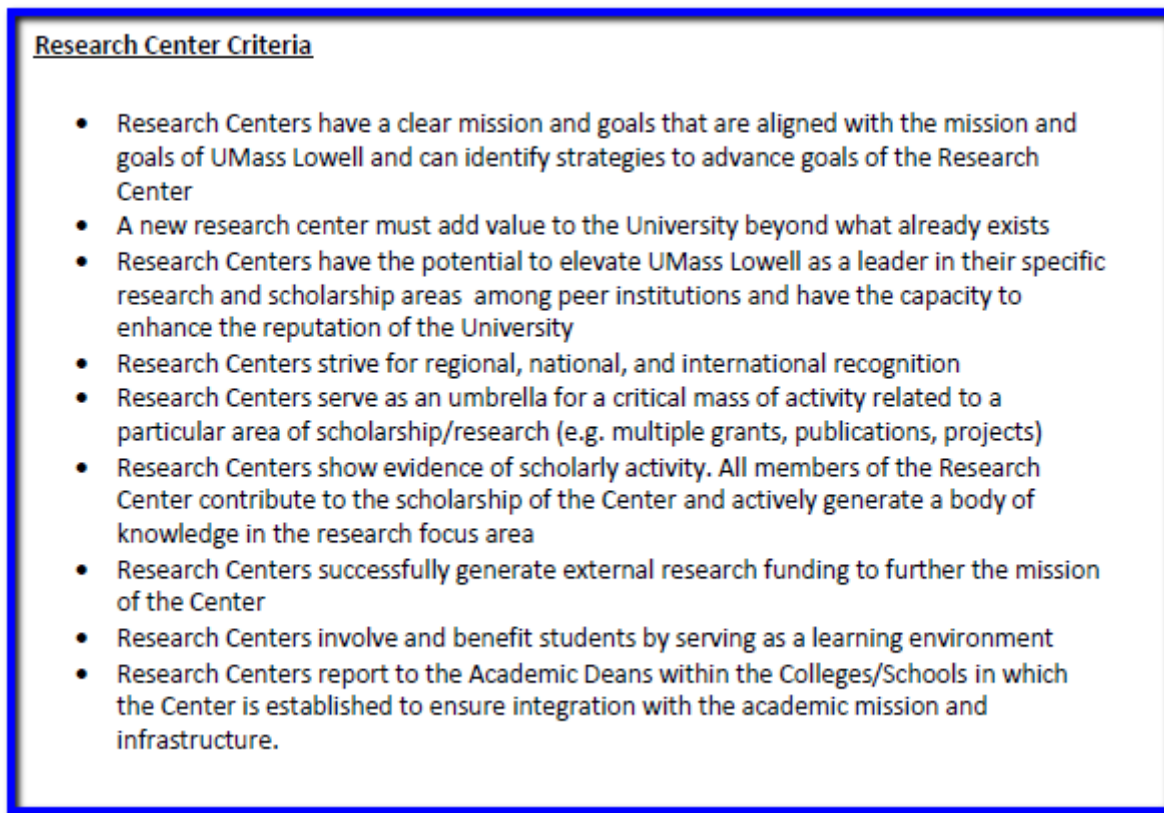
### Additional Cultural Considerations

Having explored the context essential to understanding the Center for Community Research and Engagement, as well as describing core center efforts, and the relationships that underpin the work, there remain four additional findings that came forward during analysis. Considered together, funding, the graduate program in Community/Social Psychology, tenured faculty, and a changing university, represent a suite of additional cultural considerations that cannot be separated from the Center and its work. I will consider each in turn.

### Funding

One of the criteria for any designated Research Center at UMass Lowell is the ability to “successfully generate external research funding.” This and a suite of other criteria help to define a Research Center at the university (please see Figure 5). Other obligations include the submission of an annual report due to the College Dean and the Vice Provost of Research, as well as every three years each Research Center is reviewed by the UML Research Center and Institute Advisory Committee along with the Academic Dean and Vice Provost of Research, respectively. Granted, the Center for Community Research and Engagement has a documented record of successful external grant awards, and yet, the topic

Figure 5. UMass Lowell Research Center Criteria



of funding was ever present, and perspectives varied. Specific to the Center, and staff in particular, with the exception of Robin, all of the work, and all of the personnel, are subject to external funding.

Shares a UML Faculty Member:

So is there ever going to be a budget for sustaining multiple staff? Probably not. I mean it would be helpful if the university could see more of it [CCRE work] as an investment that could pay dividends. You know I think more and more in higher ed there's just this entrepreneurial idea that people will be self-sustaining. . .they'll give you some money at the beginning but eventually you need to sustain this yourself. So that certainly adds pressures and uncertainties. (C, p. 3)

Speaking to the ad-hoc and project-based nature of CCRE work, it was not surprising that one CCRE employee noted that “my path has followed where the funding opportunity is often” (H, p. 7). A pragmatic outlook, during participant-observation in particular I was

able to sense that it was a project, an initiative, a discrete grant that seemed to help define what a given individual was working on.

A CCRE employee shared another aspect of external funding:

I mean with the grant funding...they're shorter cycles, so you know, years back we would work on a seven-year grant, a five-year grant, a ten-year grant, and now they're like year-to-year...it makes it really difficult...it makes it so you can't just, you know, you can't just do your work; you have to always be worried about where that's coming. (I, p. 4-5)

This undercurrent of concern around funding and job security was a reluctant topic at times for individuals, but it did come up in interviews and during observation. Robin, bringing forward again the aspect of Then/Now, discussed how things are changing at CCRE specific to external funding. As previously identified, one aspect of the Center continues to receive large federal grants, while another element within the Center is currently without; sustaining itself to the degree possible on consulting and contract work with community partners. She shares:

It is different because right now, all of our work [for this aspect of CCRE]...all of it is contracted...in the past we've had our own grants...we're the masters of own work plan and you know...it's different when you have your own grants and you're running the show, and it's yours, and you're hiring out people and doing things. And right now, that's funny, we don't; David [Turcotte] does; has his own grants and so it's, he's the master of what he's doing...[but] we're on the treadmill.

Community partners were also not shy about sharing their views on funding as it relates to the Center as well as the university. Shares one Community Partner:

If they [the university] fully-funded a Center that was not responsible for finding new ways to fund its own mission...they [that Center] could be more pivotal in creating and facilitating...I think that they just get involved in a bunch of grant things because they've got to fund their mission...the university...you'd think that they would want to invest in that. (N, p. 12)

This same individual understood the need for the Center to find creative ways to fund itself, but interestingly, took the university to task for the portion of each grant received by the Center:

They [CCRE] do a lot of grant writing to support their programs and sometimes you have to apply for things that people are funding...[but] I'm not sympathetic to the overhead that the university takes off. I mean, they may probably have an onus...I don't know if it's 40[%] or whatever; it's some astronomical amount of money that comes off the top of every grant. (N, p. 6)

To that point, the UMass Lowell Office of Research Administration describes what is referred to as "indirect" costs which are approved by the UMass Board of Trustees along with the US Department of Health and Human Services. A key detail not lost on community partners, UMass Lowell notes that for an indirect cost which can consume up to 51% of a given grant, 41% goes to the Office of Research Administration, 12.5% to the Stabilization Fund, 7.5% to the Provost, and 4% to the designated Dean. The University provides the following description and rationale (University of Massachusetts Lowell, 2014d):

The Board of Trustees of the University of Massachusetts continues to provide incentives to faculty to encourage research activity. The indirect cost rate is a percentage of Modified Total Direct Costs negotiated and approved by the Department of Health and Human Services. This means that when proposals for grants and contracts are submitted through the Office of Research Administration, a percentage is added to the dollar value of the direct costs requested in the grant (not counting any equipment cost included in the grant proposal). At the time the grant is received, the monies from this indirect cost charge (51%) are divided." (University of Massachusetts Lowell, 2014d)

Across multiple forums, as a participant-observer in many conversations, and during interviews, various perspectives on funding were discussed and debated, with the subject of university overhead an item observed and discussed in interviews. A recent UML graduate

student who has since graduated with a Master's degree in Community/Social Psychology provided what might be considered a justice outlook when it comes to funding:

If you can't deal with that [a grant-dominated funding environment], it's so not for you. If you're gonna work in non-profits or at community research centers, this is the work. It is the lifestyle, and part of your job will be writing for your job. That's part of it. I think that the only way, the only thing you can do, is just be really transparent about how difficult that can be. (L, p. 9)

Yet demonstrating how complex, convoluted, and nuanced the topic of funding represents, this same individual uses the language of care to encourage a reduction of harm outlook:

I just don't think that the university understands that good work can't happen when so much of that time is allocated to being distracted by the fact that your team might completely be eliminated...I think we have to start with a really clear vision and strategic plan so that we define the value of our work. (L, p. 9)

Funding in particular seemed to engender the most justice-oriented outlook during fieldwork, and in this way, was more often the counter-example that did not match an ethic of care outlook. Again, Noddings (1984, 2002) offers that care seeks to reduce harm, and asks after our effects with others. A former Community Partner shared:

I get all day long that there are a million priorities...but you just have to make choices, and if this is one [CCRE] of those priorities then it gets funded. Now I can only imagine that you know, to fund the Center through the operating budget is gonna cause a lot of trouble...but that's on leadership. (M, p. 11)

A senior administrator at UML noted how very different budgeting is at the university:

Now the way that we do the budget is much more transparent and holistic in the sense that first of all, we look at our strategic priorities through the UMass Lowell 20/20...one of our important strategic imperatives is around community engagement...so naturally a Center like [CCRE] has great strategic importance to us, and so the funding from the Center took on more and more importance. (P, p. 3)

And yet, the same individual notes that despite the transparency, priorities, and the strategic importance of the Center for Community Research and Engagement, a justice, not care outlook, defines this individuals' assessment of the UML budget:

You have to support yourself, that's just the bottom line, and that's true of this whole campus now...I mean, there's not, there's no no-brainers anymore in higher education and I think the mistake that a lot of traditional institutions have made, and a lot of institutions continue to fail to see, and don't embrace, is this idea that everything is tenuous. So everything is on the table. A public university like us; we have to survive on our own...everyone is feeling that pressure. (P, p. 4)

In looking to university documents to more fully understand budgeting, priorities, and how the institution allocates resources, additional information was sought to help triangulate the views heard during fieldwork. For example, the FY 2014 Operating Budget is a public document (University of Massachusetts Lowell, 2014e), and includes broad statements such as “the University of Massachusetts Lowell is a major research public university committed to excellence in teaching, research and community engagement.” The challenge however with this and other available documents, is to hone in on the financial commitment to community engagement. As an example, in a review of FY 2013-FY2014 budget descriptions, a number of highlights are provided, including enrollment growth, and facility improvements (see Figure 6.). Even with a forecasted deficit of over \$6 million dollars for FY 2014 that will be funded by accumulated surpluses, the institution notes its previous investment in faculty: 83 tenure and non-tenure track between FY 2011 and FY 2013, as well as the intent to hire 31 new faculty during FY 2014.



Figure 6. Example Language from Current UMass Lowell Budget

Campus investments of more than \$26 million from FY2011 through FY2013 have been targeted at activities that improve the overall quality of academic programs and enhance the entire student learning and living experience, such as:

- Supporting Enrollment Growth, Campus Expansion and Financial Aid:
  - New tenure track and non-tenure track faculty;
  - Support for faculty and student work including smart classroom upgrades, lab equipment investments and library materials;
  - Critical staff hires in growth impacted service areas such as admissions, financial aid, international student support;
  - Transportation system improvements;
  - Public safety investments including police equipment upgrades, emergency phone, blue light and security camera upgrades;
  - Information technology including academic computing, network support, audio visual and video conferencing upgrades, training, document management and workflow systems to improve processing efficiencies.
- Operational and Service Improvements:
  - Facilities renewal including repairs, academic office renovations, energy efficiency and space inventory system upgrades, planning, project management and building and operational service improvements;
  - Human resource and research administration investments.

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FY 2014 University Operating Budget – T13-034

- Student Affairs, Athletics and Recreation:
  - Funding for student activities, counseling, veterans, disability and diversity services.
- Fundraising, Marketing & Branding:
  - Annual fund and development support;
  - Marketing and web development investments.

That being said, the ability with such budget documents to evaluate the assertion of “community engagement” is exceedingly opaque, and the statement of revenues and expenditures for the Lowell Campus being what they are limited my ability to identify engagement. For example, “Public Service” is a listed expense, and the FY 2012 actual expenses were approximately \$1.8 million dollars, representing a fraction of the over \$300

million in operating expenses for the university. The referencing of this particular budget line would seem to be an inadequate indicator of community engagement. Three other large budget allocations include “Instruction,” at over \$100 million in actual operating expenses for FY 2012; “Research,” at just under \$37 million in actual FY 2012 expenses; and “Institutional Support,” at over \$39 million. But within each of these figures, the ability to discern a relationship to community engagement was not possible. Over a three year period from FY 2010 to FY 2013, the total number of unrestricted and restricted faculty and staff at the university rose 13%, and from an actual Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) employee total of 1,397.2 in FY 2013, UMass Lowell was projecting an additional jump over 7% to 1,502.5 for FY 2014. Again, it is difficult to translate what, if any, impact such allocations and investments mean for community engagement, and if such engagement is also experiencing a similar increase either quantitatively or qualitatively. To be succinct, the UMass Lowell budgets do not address engagement per se despite language prioritizing this work in key institutional documents.

Looking to such documents, the university not only provides public budgets, but UML also recently embarked on a strategic planning process dubbed “UMass Lowell 2020.” This includes capital programming out to FY 2018, and reports are generated on Pillars of Excellence, with a specific committee for Economic Development, Entrepreneurship and Corporate Relations, of which Robin Toof is a member. To date, the Report Card provided by the university specific to this focus, which is “Leverage Our Legacy and Our Place” offers a single indicator: Alumni Giving. This one metric was provided for 2012, 2013, and 2014, but again, does not offer an indicator, or a description, specific to community engagement. Robin and I would occasionally speak about budgets,

and she shared that CCRE does not have a neat and tidy budget under which a comprehensive dollar amount can be identified. At one point she held a sheaf of papers and shared that these “ledgers” were the combination of budgets that must be managed at any given time. Such an elusive picture of where dollars live, how they are allocated, and what money is spent on a given initiative, was difficult to determine from CCRE on up to the university as a whole. The very real considerations of funding are difficult to reconcile with an ethic of care. Noddings has considered the issue on a personal level noting that “everyone wants to make enough money to live comfortably” (2006, p. 198), but she critiques hierarchical views of occupations. Set in an ethic of care, Noddings (2006) frames making a living as an example of interdependence, and that the setting of expectations should be done cooperatively. In essence, income is framed not as a rung on a ladder but a connection that fuses occupations together with what Noddings calls “personhood” (2006, p. 223). Findings from this research, although granted they were opaque specific to engagement and funding, did not seem to mirror a care approach by the manner in which budgets were presented, or resources allocated. Certainly the ethical grounds for these choices were elusive.

#### The Thread of Graduate Education: Community/Social Psychology

The long-standing connection to the UML Master’s program in Community/Social Psychology was a steady theme noted during fieldwork. Linda Silka taught courses for this program and Robin Toof herself was a graduate of the program. On numerous occasions both referred to this program and CCRE still hosts a number of graduate students from “CSP” as research assistants. One of the current graduate students shared:

Usually I say I work for Robin Toof, and people know. That has been my experience...the next question is usually are you in the CSP [Community

Social Psychology] program? ...one thing I've really enjoyed about working with them is that I do like to voice opinions and I do feel that those opinions are heard...there are times where I felt very comfortable going to Melissa and Robin with just suggestions on other things I want to do here and experiences that I want to get here, and they've been very receptive...so they do cater to the education of the grad students working with them. For example, just the other day I was talking to Robin and saying like, it would be really great if I got more experience with publishing and you know, writing manuscripts.

While impossible to assign causality to the impact of the Community/Social Psychology program heard during interviews and observations, it is important to note this attribute.

Shares a current CCRE staff member:

What we do is 100% Community Psych in action. That we absolutely do value diversity, or we use a strengths-based perspective; value you know, collaboration and community-based participatory research. (I, p. 5)

Providing a small, but possibly powerful anecdote, graduate students in the Community/Social Psychology Master's degree are required to complete a core course entitled "*Advanced Community Dynamics: Lowell.*" On its face, I offer that focusing on a community in this fashion with a particular graduate course is rather unusual. First, no other graduate program at the university provides such a specific and defined consideration of the City of Lowell. Second, in taking a cursory look at other northeast programs set in small or mid-sized cities, the uniqueness of the UML program is further bolstered. For example, Penn State-Harrisburg offers a Master's in Community Psychology and Social Change, but does not appear to explicitly focus on Harrisburg, PA proper in required coursework. The same holds for the University of New Haven and Sacred Heart University which respectively offer a Master's in Community Psychology and a Master's in Applied Psychology (Community Psychology concentration). Neither appears to explicitly focus on New Haven, CT or Fairfield, CT respectively, in the manner of the UMass Lowell program.

The undercurrent of this program also came up during participant interviews, with one of the community partners sharing about a recent graduate:

She actually started as a student. . .and that was like a really strong point when we hired her because we knew all about her, she knew the players, she had really good understanding of the project already. (F, p. 2)

The finding regarding the impact of the UML Master's program in Community/Social Psychology need not be viewed as ancillary or superfluous given the lens of Care Theory. Noddings (1984) has noted that institutions, or in this case, institutional programs, can also impact the development of ethical ideals.

### The Dynamics of Faculty

During fieldwork, I attended meetings with Robin that included Dr. Charlotte Mandel, the UML Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, as well as Paula Haines, the UML Director of Assessment. One project in particular, funded by the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, demonstrates yet again the rather complex role Robin plays in threading together community, experiential learning, faculty and an outward university stance. Once again, on behalf of CCRE Robin is doing this work as a staff member. While UMass Lowell has sought to incentivize tenure-track faculty in particular via mini-grants to facilitate student service learning in courses (please see Figure 7), it is Robin as neither a fellow faculty member nor an academic administrator who is helping to champion such efforts.

Figure 7. UML Service Learning/Faculty Mini-Grant Detail

### Service-Learning Faculty Mini-Grants

We are pleased to announce a new round of service-learning grants available to UMass Lowell faculty, made possible by a MA Board of Higher Education Vision Grant. We invite proposals under this competitive request process from university faculty from any & all colleges/schools who are interested in integrating or enhancing service-learning in a course for Spring 2015. The grant ends June 30, 2015; therefore can only offer grants for courses being offered in Spring 2015. This year the grant also requires time dedicated to assessment of the program. Please read below carefully and let us know if you have any questions. Thank you!

**Due by 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, November 16, 2014**

Grants will be announced no later than December 5, 2014

**What is Service-Learning?**

Service-learning is defined here as "a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities," ([www.servicelearning.org](http://www.servicelearning.org)). Research indicates that it serves as an effective motivational tool, increases student and faculty engagement, and enhances understanding of course concepts (Zlotkowski 1998). Service-learning incorporates, as a part of an academic class, structured time for student reflection and connection of the service experience to course learning objectives.

**What are the grants for and what types of projects are of interest?**

These small grants support faculty efforts to integrate or enhance service-learning in their courses. Projects of interest will:

- Partner with a community-based organization (including faith-based and non-profits with 501(c)3 tax-exempt status or local governmental agency).
- Clearly help students achieve course learning objectives.
- Enhance the capacity of community organizations to serve the needs of their local communities.
- Serve as models for other faculty interested in using service-learning as an instructional pedagogy.

The inclusion of Robin with UML Service Learning Faculty Mini-Grants illustrated how the topic of faculty, and specifically tenured-faculty, is something that is both highly relevant for CCRE, and a highly complicated and difficult dynamic. Returning to the Then/Now paradigm, Linda Silka was a bulwark for many years specific to the notion of whether and how faculty were involved in the Center. In short, her very position as a tenured full Professor ensured a direct linkage to UML faculty. But as a current UML faculty member explained "so [nearly] everybody

who's there on a daily basis has the designation of staff; mostly working on specific projects where their role is pretty delineated on a project or projects. So [tenured] faculty involvement is sort of peripheral" (C, p. 4). At times, strong opinions were shared about faculty, and those were positioned as the reality of such roles, or at times, that the needs of faculty may work against the needs of the community. One Center employee explained:

Generally anything I do has some community partners and some applied aspect to it. It's not theoretical research. . .but [talking about faculty]. . .it's changed on some level. . .the reality is people, you know, it's all driven by publications, tenure. It's driven by your specific disciplinary niche and what you know; how it's viewed academically. . .demonstrate that they should get promoted and get tenured, and based on publications that end up going into kind of exclusive academic journals that are only read by a small group of people that don't have, most, I shouldn't say always, but the majority of cases don't have a lot of impact outside of the academic work. (H, p. 5)

Robin also shared the complex nature of faculty involvement with CCRE:

[CCRE is] trying to figure out our identity right now 'cause it's very important to the university...a Center is really embedded in the main technology of the university, which is the faculty, and faculty research. We struggle with that to make our connection with faculty...before it was Linda [Silka]. Linda was our strong – it was her thing – and it had legitimacy based on her as a [tenured] faculty member...so I think about it a lot...how do we maintain legitimacy and fit.

To a large extent, the divide between tenured faculty and university staff was the most obvious power dynamic identified during fieldwork and was a surprise. Often, the default assumption about power differential is that it exists between the university and the community. To be sure, there were contrasts in terms of faculty/administration, staff/administration, university/community, and community/faculty. While I sought to actively resist the urge to create dichotomies, again, the hierarchy and authority separating

faculty/staff was something others gave particular note. A former UML Administrator and current Faculty Member shared:

My sense was that there was a period when for a couple of years, between say 2011, 12, 13, something like that, and the future of the Center was problematic. Robin, who I love dearly and is really good. . .didn't quite have the standing. . .she just finished her Ph.D. I think, although she is terribly experienced and mature about the work she's been doing with the community. . .[but] I think the Center, despite its commitment to the community, and equality, and egalitarianism at certain levels, couldn't help but reflect the fact that faculty are treated differently than staff. . .My sense was the staff were nurtured and mentored in a way [by Linda Silka] that was really important. I mean they could never become faculty members and it would always be that kinda hierarchy. . .but they weren't treated as staff and they were integrated very much into the process. . .the staff were always at the table. (B, p. 3-4)

A former Community Partner discussed:

So you know, universities, colleges, tend to be staffed by faculty who have to meet certain requirements and the kind of need that exists [for communities] isn't necessarily on the list of faculty requirements...when you have a center like the Center, it's staffed by people who are not; who don't have to fulfill those specific traditional academic requirements and that's why that can happen...I see a lot of faculty who will like work with students on a community project...that might be one attempt to fill a need. But it's kind of shallow...it's like a one-semester kind of gig and there's only so much; you can't go very deep with the community organization...on the other hand, [Robin as staff] she's also free to do certain kinds of things that you can't do when you're faculty, right? ...So I think that on the one hand she's inhibited; on the other hand she's got freedom that she doesn't have to, you know, fall into that traditional academic stuff...but if she's constrained by an academic culture that values tenured faculty, and she doesn't have the right kind of faculty member [as a partner or Co-Director], then that also gets in the way of the Center being able to really reach it's potential. (M, p. 6)

Again, this dynamic, which can quickly devolve into a staff/faculty dichotomy, is a particularly complicated topic. Robin was candid and realistic about her role in particular, sharing "every time someone throws something out there, I think oh my god, that's just an interesting topic. I'd love to take that on and research, but that's not my role. I'm not a



faculty member; I can't just pick whatever I want, research it, and write grants and write papers about it." Others observe this reality as well. A current faculty member shared:

So once Linda left; like Linda was kind of a key senior faculty member who gave the Center I think a real identity with the faculty. . .so I think their current struggle is figuring out how to be more than just a kind of intermittent resource for faculty, but to systematize their connections to faculty more. . .I think when most people think of the Center they still think Robin, you know what I mean? . . .she's the one I call if I need something. . .they're getting a lot of pressure to include more faculty and that's not a bad thing. . .it's just how to do that I think – it's not exactly a tension, but I think it's a challenge that the Center faces. (D, p. 5)

Granted, there was also the outlook that the Center can be a facilitator for UML tenured faculty, and might even round out rough edges:

What community partners don't want is to be exploited; you know, so there is not relationship and trust, and so I think that the Center...does provide a support for faculty to engage with the community...I think that the Center as a conduit, is a good idea, because the last thing you want is some rogue faculty member out there taking advantage of a community organization...I've had this experience...the community looks at the university and generalizes that there are you know, faculty who don't really have a vested interest in the community. (M, p. 10)

Looking at faculty from an ethic of care outlook suggests that needs must be considered and acknowledged. The reality faced by tenure-track faculty is that they too are not impervious to a unique set of needs. To this point, a description of those needs and the push and pull process with community was provided by a current UML faculty member:

. . .What happens is through graduate school and your first job pre-tenure, it [working with community] gets squeezed out of you because you're told you're supposed to publish, and you're supposed to publish in x journals. . .so right now I would say our institution is in this place of kind of being in the squeeze. . .I think that our institution is in a place where there's multiple pressures pulling in different directions. So this whole push to sort of raise our research profile, pulls toward publishing in top-notch peer-reviewed journals. . .if I know the Dean or the Provost or you know, are going on and on about service learning, but ultimately if I don't have six publications in peer-reviewed journals, I'm not gonna get tenure. . .[so working with the community], it's a nice side thing. It's not the real thing; the real thing is do

you have these publications, and if you're a nice person and a community member on the side, that's fantastic. . .often getting tenure is freeing: it allows us to do many more things. . .if people haven't had sort of the life sucked out of them by the tenure process. . .I mean, once you have tenure, like honestly. . .you can do whatever the hell you want. (D, p. 6-11)

During fieldwork, I also sought out university policies and documents related to faculty involvement with community, and specifically if and how this engagement is encouraged or incentivized. Quite literally for the cadre of Assistant Professors seeking tenure and promotion to Associate Professor, institutional encouragement or incentives to serve the community are almost invisible. The Tenure and Promotion Guidelines for example (please see Figure 8) note that "service" will be "considered primarily on the basis of its benefits to the University" with far more focus and emphasis on research and instruction that looks inward.

Figure 8. Statement on Service from UML Provost's Tenure and Promotion Guidelines

4D Under the section on service:

In general, service will be considered primarily on the basis of its benefits to the University of Massachusetts Lowell. Letters from a candidate's department may discuss this category. Service expectations for promotion to Associate Professor are more limited than those for promotion to Professor. In general, for promotion to Associate Professor, a candidate is expected to collaborate with colleagues in departmental functions and, where appropriate, in professional activities and on departmental committees. The emphasis during the probationary period is on the full development of research/creative and instruction accomplishments. Major service roles are not expected at this stage.

On the subject of faculty incentives and rewards, a variety of perspectives captured the interest and challenges of CCRE work with tenure-track faculty. Shares one individual about the reality faced by UML faculty:

I think when it comes right down to it. . .you chose a faculty member on scholarship, teaching, and service. . .service on this campus...faculty are not stupid: they recognize all that's gonna count is primarily publications and

research money. . .It's probably no accident there are more senior faculty involved [with community engagement efforts] at the very small proportion than junior faculty because we don't have to worry about publication and tenure, so we can do whatever we want. (B, p. 7)

Another UML Faculty Member noted the following:

Of course sometimes, not sometimes, a lot of times, the needs and interests of the two sets of stakeholders are different. Because the community organizations aren't necessarily interested in research, and sometimes the faculty aren't necessarily interested in the service piece. (C, p. 2)

This outlook was substantiated by others and during other portions of fieldwork. In talking with one individual, they noted that "the kind of person, faculty member. . .who is drawn to the Center for whatever reason, comes with their own particular reason: a particular commitment to social justice, philosophy that undergirds their work that they bring to the Center." There was a tacit view that UMass Lowell should keep trying to involve faculty in community engagement, but some views I perceived to be fairly jaded. One individual for example commented: "if that intrinsic value is there, most universities including this one, have got paths and some people that those folks can find. But it's more they're searching with a GPS to find their way to that, as opposed to it's a map in front of them to go." Looking at all possibilities, including documents, artifacts, university policies, and web-based resources, some institutions may have turned to fundraising to encourage faculty-community engagement. In reviewing for example, the modest list of endowed professorships at UMass Lowell, there does not appear to be a community focus, with the seven listed endowed professorships instead specifically focused on engineering and technology.

Although previous literature has prominently discussed the role and importance of faculty to community-engagement, findings suggest not only a complexity, but an ethic of care also would seem to encourage a deeper understanding of faculty. Pettersen (2008) describes care as the place between selfishness and selflessness. Faculty certainly understand the requirements of their job, and must attend to a particular set of obligations including scholarship. Although mutually beneficial efforts such as faculty and community partner co-production of knowledge has been considered (Hutchins, Lindenfeld, Bell, Leahy and Silka, 2013). Theorists encourage an ethic of care to be considered not as a prescription, but as a virtue (Pettersen, 2008) and with this in mind, it would seem to invite a careful and caring understanding of faculty needs. This a new and promising finding for the scholarship of engagement to consider.

### A Changing University

It would be glaring if a case study of a research center at UMass Lowell did not include a description of the changes occurring at the university itself. As framed earlier, much at the university has changed since 2008, and much of this evolution can be pegged to arrival of a new Chancellor, former US Representative from Massachusetts, Martin Meehan. Over the years, the presence of Chancellor Meehan at UMass Lowell has been described in local and regional media as a transformative leader (Lowell Sun, 2012) who has remade the university (Boston Globe, 2012). With almost \$600 million in capital projects, Chancellor Meehan's hallmark has been the building of buildings (Boston Business Journal, 2013) in particular. A cross-section of views helps to illustrate just how intertwined CCRE is with the university, and how inescapable the subject of change and Chancellor Meehan is currently at UMass Lowell.

Describes a UML Faculty Member:

There's a part of this university's mission and its history of being a positive partner in the community that is part of what attracted me here, and I'm invested in all the hoopla about raising our rankings in US News and World Report. . .I don't disagree with any of that stuff; I don't think any of it's bad: I mean we've hired a ton of new faculty; we've gotten a ton of new buildings; there's a lot of great stuff happening here. It's really important to me personally that the mission of the university get preserved and I think the Center, CCRE, is an important piece of that. (D, p. 3)

Observes a Community Partner:

Mostly, I'm thrilled by what's happening...it's kind of easy to like poke fun and make caricatures of Marty [Meehan; current UML Chancellor]...whether that is or isn't true, he's incredibly effective at what he does and you need somebody that's effective and I think that the direction the university is going is great. (N, p. 8)

Perspective rendered by a CCRE Employee:

The profile of the university is much higher and I would say the image of the university in the community is better for many reasons, but I don't know if that's gonna continue because at some point the university's gonna infringe. . .it's great because we're getting students out into the community and they're renting apartments from landlords and all of this stuff, and as soon as the economy starts to get stronger, there's gonna be push-back because it's then it's gonna be seen that the students are driving up the housing costs, and you know, traffic is becoming difficult. . .there's too many students and too many employees. (H, p. 10)

Shares a Community Partner:

From my experience as both a resident, and a community person in all different respects, I feel like there's always been that sentiment, of like really being a community-based university. Do I feel it's becoming more academic? A little bit, yes. I know that sounds weird because a university should be academic. I think that as they are trying to higher their standards for learning and research and becoming published, there is more pressure. . .to do lots of research. . .I do get, more recently, I feel like I get approached more about projects. Which is not a bad thing, but is kinda like, I don't know how many surveys my youth can take. . .There are new professors coming in and they have all this experience and they see the assets, the strengths, that we have and what we can offer. But sometimes when the same people are tapping you all the time, you're kinda like, I don't want to be mean, or I don't want to say no. (A, p. 7)

A UML Graduate Student:

There is also an incredible tension from the university expansion. Like the space we're in now [the new University Crossing building] is a brand new space; we have totally messed up traffic; we have destroyed parking for people who live in this neighborhood ...[yet] if you understand the history of where we've come from, if you remember like your family not wanting to visit you because they didn't want to come into your neighborhood, or if you remember, you know, like not being allowed to walk two blocks to the bus because it's not safe, then participating in a way that's meaningful...is a drive for I think a lot of people...I was offered a job in Boston and for about triple what I'm making now, and I was just like, I just don't care about Boston, I want to work in Lowell! (L, p. 7)

Notes a UML Faculty Member:

You know, I think that there is a lot of frustration with the pace of change in Lowell and it seems like the university is the only body, the only entity, doing anything to move Lowell forward at this point. There hasn't been a whole lot happening, particularly in the neighborhoods, since I've been here. . .so I think there are plenty of people, I don't know the percentages, who are happy to see UMass Lowell take the lead, intentionally or not. . .but as more and more buildings get built, and neighborhoods start to gentrify, I imagine feelings will start to change. (C, p. 5)

A Faculty Member puts it succinctly:

If you're talking about institutional structures, and institutional structures that can impact. . .I think people are smart enough to see that the institutional... people are smart enough to see through rhetoric. So if the institution doesn't put its money where its mouth is, people don't buy in as much. So I think that right now is kind of a test time to see. (D, p. 12)

It is indeed an interesting time in the history of UMass Lowell. Taken together, funding, tenured faculty, the Community/Social Psychology program and the changing university provide an essential context for the Center for Community Research and Engagement. As prominently noted, extracting CCRE from these cultural considerations risks losing the essence of the Center. While change is not always about trajectory, it seems from fieldwork that elevation for both the Center and UMass Lowell are intertwined.

## Extending the Family

It is perhaps a given with the size and scope of UMass Lowell that the Center for Community Research and Engagement is not the sole source of engagement with community. A senior administrator commented “how you define community engagement...there are many layers, and in-roads to a university. So...I don’t know that one Center can do all that...I think we continue to have multiple entry points [for the community] and I think that’s healthy in some ways. In other ways, to be honest, I would love to see some of that work be more centralized...it still feels like it [community engagement] would benefit from having more synergy” (P, p. 8). Perhaps the contribution from others is not encroachment on the mission of CCRE, but it simply means more people helping, and the metaphor of family is extended to that of a neighborhood. One prominent example that came up regularly during fieldwork was the initiative called DifferenceMaker. This effort in particular was the focus of multiple meetings I attended with Robin that focused on branding this and related initiatives and seeking to provide continuity.

Described as a program, DifferenceMaker “sponsors specific programs and activities that support students in solving big problems through innovative and entrepreneurial action...[and] provides training, mentoring and other resources to UMass Lowell students who wish to address social, environmental and economic problems in our community.” This initiative cropped up time and again, and of note is not only the social element to the program which invites overlap with the mission of CCRE, but the umbrella for DifferenceMaker is the UML Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, which describes itself as offering “students and faculty of all disciplines the opportunity to work together to develop innovative and entrepreneurial solutions to the major problems facing our

community, the region and the world.” Not only does this Center focus on “community,” it does so university-wide, cross-discipline, and not insignificantly, is led by an Associate Vice Chancellor, all of which contrast to CCRE which is now College-based, focused therefore on the disciplines within that College, with reporting that moves up through Assistant Deans.

I think DifferenceMakers is another profound opportunity for us to organize students...how do I identify a creative solution...it's even more so if you're going into social services...the question is what do you bring to the table to intervene and promotes people...you're there to think about how to make a difference. That's what DifferenceMakers is all about. (P, p. 8-9)

Again, the reality is perhaps that an extended system of interdependency exists between various aspects of the greater Lowell community and different elements within the university. The finding that a single unit in the form of a center cannot possibly negotiate all of the needs and relationships in retrospect would seem to be a given. In addition to DifferenceMakers, a second more modest example of extended family includes a note in the UML Graduate School of Education Strategic Plan published for FY2014. Included under the heading of “Opportunities” was the development of a program evaluation center, which during participant-observation was a point of discussion for CCRE given that they do this work already. The University also sponsors a Center for Women and Work, a Toxics Use Reduction Institute, a Center for Industrial Competitiveness, a Center for Public Opinion, the Lowell Center for Sustainable Production and a Peace and Conflict Studies Institute. Compounding the complication is that UMass Lowell also has a Community and Cultural Relations Office, which positions itself as helping the university build and maintain relationships in the public and private sectors. With each of these examples of extended family, a stated goal, or portion of a given mission statement, speaks to involvement with



Lowell and the surrounding community. But community contributions to the university are not acknowledged, and the manner by which relationships are maintained are difficult to discern, if at all. To conclude, it is unclear if more hands helping UMass Lowell engage with community is cause for encroachment on the mission of CCRE, or again, these are simply more hands helping with engagement efforts.

### Interpreting Cultural Considerations through Care Theory

Fundamentally, “unlike many other ethical theories, the ethics of care does not have conflict solving as a major focus. Its chief concern is the prevention of conflicts” (Pettersen, 2008, p. 85). Such an outlook is a key reason why data analysis and interpretation of findings using Care Theory can offer new understanding of engagement. Clearly conflicts do arise with respect to CCRE: funding is an ever-present concern, faculty are a point of discussion, and the University of Massachusetts Lowell is a changing and evolving institution. Tension is perhaps an inevitable element of all community-university engagement, but there are multiple responses as indicated by the findings. The Community/Social Psychology program for example trains individuals to focus on strengths and matches parts of the Care Theory construct. Care theory also explicitly discusses needs, which sheds new light on the requirements tenure-track faculty experience, and how to interpret faculty actions or inactions. Such cultural considerations viewed through the prism of care gets to the heart of what Noddings (1984) notes about such thinking: “an ethic of caring is a tough ethic. It does not separate self and other in caring...everything depends, then, upon the will to be good, to remain in caring relation to the other” (p. 99/103). This is mirrored by the finding that care as voiced by a graduate student is the “tough work.” The difficulty however, is in understanding such findings as

Noddings would encourage; as care that serves ourselves and others. This is indeed difficult and tough.

### Summary

To summarize, context for describing the UML Center for Community Research and Engagement seems to necessitate a Then/Now understanding of past leadership from Dr. Linda Silka, and current leadership from Dr. Robin Toof. Further generation of what the Center is and does include core center efforts that includes facilitation, technical assistance, grant writing and program evaluation. Other findings include the cultural contributions of funding, tenure-track faculty, the UML Community/Social Psychology graduate program, and a changing university. With that said, intertwined throughout is perhaps the most salient, and essential quality of this particular case, and that being the dynamic of relationships. These relationships, which were found to be long-term with listening and attention key elements, appear inseparable from the core center efforts. Viewed through the lens of Care Theory, these findings point to the many aspects of an ethic of care which can be understood as prominent characteristics of the Center for Community Research and how the Center is an entity at the nexus of how relationships are experienced by a multitude of people.

### Reflexivity and Related Considerations

While not a counter-argument to the set of findings, there were individuals who shared quite freely their suggestions and unprompted recommendations for how the university in particular could do things differently or better.

One of the CCRE community partners for example, described the following:

I guess one thing that I wish the Center did do, or the university did do more, is facilitate you know, when you're looking for work study students, you often

times have to go through every different department or different professors. There's no centralization and so if you don't have personal relationships, than you can't access those resources...if professors aren't willing to embed in the community, they end up doing a Google search and that's not the best opportunity...I'd almost prefer people like Robin and David [Turcotte from CCRE] that know the community to funnel kids...we could have a single point of contact...I don't even know. But I know Robin...I almost feel like the relationships could be leveraged...to an extent they [Robin et al] do that, but to a great extent, the university is a great big monster. (N, p. 11)

The challenge with any and all of these individualized suggestions and comments was to not treat them individualistically and overemphasize how qualitatively speaking, the outlook was shared by others. At the same time, the fact that CCRE was at the core of the suggestion was itself something that nested within the larger body of findings. Positioning the Center as a home, there is some dissonance between the exterior, both with the university and the community, and the interior, across the staff and affiliated faculty, with the identity and mission of the Center. Perhaps not surprisingly, like many families, the appraisal by a distant relative of your home is very different from the assessment by the family themselves when sitting in the living room talking about who, why, how much things cost, and what the future holds. Indicative of this challenge, Robin at one point during a conversation about university strategic planning shared:

We were brainstorming other indicators...indicators that would get at that community thing. It's just like, everyone, when it comes to community, it's not easy to pick out the quantitative. You know? Everyone wants a quant...you can't pick out what do you want; do you want the number of dollars spent on – even that's really hard...how much money have we brought in, and put out into the community on the grants that we do? ...or, people that, that end up hiring for their non-profit...it's not easy...you can maybe come up with a list of all the people you partnered with, which we all do.

Again, during participant-observation, Robin and I had occasion to talk often, and so many of those discussions flowed around and across much of the landscape that is part and parcel of the Center, including the many other entities at UMass Lowell that engage with

community. While it is “impossible to create a research process that completely erases the contradictions in the relation between researcher and researched” (Acker, Barry and Esseveld, 1996, p. 80), part of my reflexivity with this point about extended family, but also all findings, is to share how dependent I was on the inclusion from others, and the access, particularly by Robin, that was provided to me.

During fieldwork, there were times it was easy to just be a person and give up the work of researching, and instead enjoy the company of others. In fact, during fieldwork, two staff members were pregnant and due within a few weeks of one another, and a joint baby shower was held for them. There were certainly other instances in which the warning from Stacy (1996) about lives as data seemed inescapable. There was proud and joyful sharing, like the community member who shared how a number of UML professors attended his wedding. Another community member offered after our interview concluded that she was pregnant, and keenly, one of the first people she shared the news with was a staff member at CCRE. But there were also difficulties shared about livelihoods, and people, and concerns. For example, a woman cried as she shared the health status of her children with a CCRE employee. Another person shared how she was laid-off because grant funding was interrupted, and how “my job security is always kind of up in the air.” As the researcher, it was almost strange at times to be thinking about my thinking, as someone is in turn, describing tensions and conflicts, including:

Internally you’ve got the medieval structures of the universities, which are hierarchical. . .you’ve got the pressure that comes in through the university which is basically absorbed internally, because that’s all the status and prestige thing, right? (B, p. 7)

At a few turns in this study, a couple of different individuals asked for a description of my research. For a few individuals, I perceived their surprise that I seemed to be casting such a

wide net. As Lofland & Lofland (1995), argue, individuals certainly have good reason for asking about this intrusion into their work and even personal lives. The most pointed inquiry I received was posed this way; “what are you going to do with this John?” As much as I thought I was prepared for such a question, I don’t know that I found my answer sufficient. I did offer what I thought was a reassurance that this case study was not meant to be evaluative in terms of performance. I also felt it difficult to capture in a concise response what I knew would take many pages of writing to describe. Candidly, if this was difficult, I did find the notion of participant, in the participant-observer paradigm to be difficult. As I wrote in a weekly memo, as I continued to try and push myself to be curious, I also found I had to work at not sitting coldly behind a veil of pseudo-objective silence.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

#### Revisiting the Research Questions

At the heart of this study was the question *how does the Center for Community Research and Engagement at the University of Massachusetts Lowell function when viewed through the prism of Care Theory?* Related questions included how are engagement efforts undertaken by staff, faculty and community partners, and are there hallmarks from this culture at work that can be richly described? Other questions framing the research include what are interactions like between people; how do they acknowledge and interact with one another, and what dynamics can be discerned and described? The findings from this study offer a new and novel contribution to the theoretical development of community-university engagement by specifically utilizing an ethic of care as the framing perspective. This study also partially answers the call for more scholarship on engagement and contributes by deepening our understanding of community-university engagement by describing the complexity of human relationships that underpin this work.

#### Reexamining the Engagement Landscape

Within the engagement literature, existing theories, philosophical perspectives and rationales usually include encouragement for scholars to consider the consequences of their work (Boyer, 1990), using research for the public good (Sandmann, 2003; Kezar, Chambers, Burkhardt, 2005), and serving communities sympathetically (Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities (1999)). Recent scholarship on engagement has begun to use theory to frame and conceptualize community-university engagement and this has included place-building theory (Kimball & Thomas, 2012) and social justice constructs

(Chambers and Gopaul, 2010). More often however, community-university engagement scholarship has focused far less on theoretical considerations and has often focused on the role of faculty (O'Meara, Sandmann, Saltmarsh, & Giles, 2011; Austin & Beck, 2010; Townson, 2009). In addition to public good arguments, another rationale used to explain why universities and communities engage is for student learning. Be it service learning, civic engagement or community engagement, researchers have utilized various theory to describe the dynamics of this approach to teaching and learning (McMillan, 2011; Seifer, S., Connors, K., & Community Campus Partnerships for Health, 2007).

When it comes to philosophical and ethical matters, what institutions of higher education do, or ought to do, with communities remains an area for development. Such development can be aided by empirical studies such as this case study. Specifically, theories can help to illuminate not only why and how engagement is being done, but also address the imperative as to why it should be done. As previously articulated, Gilligan (1982) provided a new perspective on conventional views of psychology, human development, learning, and moral judgment which came to be known as Care Theory or an ethic of care. An examination of the community-university engagement literature finds concepts of Care Theory and related considerations notably absent. Noddings (2002) offers that it makes sense to study human experiences both empirically and philosophically, and in essence, that was the aim of this dissertation

This case study builds on each point of reference, and as Boyer (1990) argues for the examination of our human relationships, with this study there is now a rich, detailed, and discerning example to consider. The frame is that an ethic of care can be considered as inseparable from the engagement context. If in the past “most people agree that the world

would be a better place if we all cared more for one another. . .we find it hard to say exactly what we mean by caring” (Noddings, 2002, p. 11), then this case study of the UMass Lowell Center for Community Research and Engagement brings meaning to such an abstraction. This research helps to demystify, in small ways, what exactly engagement, when framed as a form of care, can mean. Stated once again, the connection between communities and higher education reflects longstanding histories, and colleges and universities have been called upon to serve, or they themselves have often been catalysts of change (Simon, 2010). Such long-serving tendencies to seek solutions and provide resources to their communities continues to be a contemporary purpose of universities (Lucas, 1994; Michigan State University, 2014), with the findings from this study inviting a new discussion. Universities in particular, both public and private, continue to seek reinvention, and engagement is now often at the core of institutional purpose. The current study points to the essential characteristic that any encounter, such as one between two people, or between an institution and a community which are defined by their people, can start by first considering human interaction and our relational engagement with one another.

#### Engagement as Care; Care as Engagement

With a rich and detailed description of the UMass Lowell Center for Community Research and Engagement, as well as context for that engagement, it is clear that reciprocity is fundamental, and this finding of engagement as care and care as engagement is rather novel. The finding that the Center is not a stagnant, inert, or inanimate structure, but rather an entity with a Then/Now history, shaped by faculty and staff alike, and impacted by the move at UMass Lowell toward service learning are powerful considerations. Understanding this context draws fresh and renewed consideration that reciprocity is not



transaction when viewed through an ethic of care. As much as the Center for Community Research and Engagement, and thus UMass Lowell engage and care for their community, there is also the finding that the university, and students in particular, are cared for by the community, even though this aspect of the relationship, this reciprocity, is not so often trumpeted or explicitly acknowledged. Findings from this research point toward CCRE staff understanding and offering acknowledgement of care received from the community, and in turn they too have been acknowledged by their community partners for the care they provide. Given the many publications issued by UMass Lowell, it is clear that the institution argues it contributes to Lowell and the greater community. But findings indicate it is often left to individuals to reciprocate such acknowledgements of the care the university in turn receives from the community. I note again, that an explicit response from both parties is for Noddings (1984; 2002), an essential quality to care and our relationships.

As for other constructs that define an ethic of care, the least discerning element from research findings was the notion of coercion. As described, this concept is again rather different from colloquial usage: for Noddings (2002), coercion is about negotiation, and in that process, attention is paid to needs both expressed and inferred with weight given to harms and goods, with a calibration as those fluctuate. There was some evidence of underlying tension regarding difficult subjects, and people telling people things they did not want to hear, particularly as it relates to funding and budget. The notion of difficult conversations was not invisible, and yet there was an absence of more systematic conversations that Noddings would describe as coercive. Given the intra-university dynamic, there appeared to be an absence of difficult conversations or of negotiation internally, and that may be due to my presence as a researcher. Given that coercion as

understood in the context of care is again about negotiation, even with CCRE now located under the College of Fine Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, there did not appear to be a forum to negotiate needs. With the imperative for external funding for example remaining dominant, there did not appear to be choices or discussions about this challenge in a manner that was characterized as caring.

Externally however, there is evidence that CCRE has a particular way in the form of core center efforts in which challenges and difficult subjects are very much negotiated. Drawing from the legacy of the Community/Social Psychology graduate program, it is the idea that when working with community partners, “strengths” are critical to shaping conversations and work such as program evaluation. There is however, what appears to be a purposeful approach in which coercion is the work of encouraging improvement, helping to make progress, and being a help with that process no matter the length of time. In short, needs are negotiated, even as CCRE staff work to preserve the integrity of their work as evaluators and researchers, and in that regard they work to ensure their community partners understand those needs. This is an important way to frame the essence of negotiated coercion when competing needs arise: community realities vis a vis academic obligations.

Returning to internal considerations, with the Center’s own needs in terms of funding pressures, job security, and the university’s understanding of CCRE, findings indicate at times more of a justice orientation, as opposed to care. Tove Pettersen (2008), uses the term “relational ontology” to stress a particularly important dimension of an ethic of care, which is connectedness (p. 34). This connectedness as argued by Pettersen (2008) links human relationships and well-being in a “mature” form of care that is neither fully self-sacrificing nor totally selfish. This research demonstrates that community-university

engagement when framed as care, need not receive the pejorative label of emotional work. In the words of one participant, it is the “tough work,” and it takes a will to see through. Yes, it very much entails relationships, and those relationships are not devoid of an emotional contribution, but there is a thinking and reflective quality to the relationships. As far as the application of theory, Pettersen (2008) states that “the relational ontology of the ethics of care is based on empirical observation and people’s actual experience...not speculation or abstract ideas...regarding human nature” (p. 114). This research has attempted to make this translation, and with new understanding of longevity, attention and listening, and needs, community-university engagement practices can be expanded to include such essential human interactions.

### A Multifaceted Culture

Findings paint a clear picture that segments of the non-profit community in Lowell have specific needs in the areas of facilitation, technical assistance, grant writing and program evaluation. Such core center efforts are a key finding and it is important to note not just that CCRE did these things, but it was very much the manner by which they were done. As opposed to doing the work because of care “about” organizations and community non-profits, findings around CCRE indicate the work was very much a “for” and “with” endeavor, and also one that had been practiced and honed over a long period of time. This is illustrated by the work that is done, including needs assessment and facilitation as examples, but also the fact that such work has been undertaken for many years and entails acknowledgment, attention, and listening. Noddings (1984) parallels these findings in her theoretical conception of care arguing that “caring requires engrossment, commitment...must meet the proximate other as one-caring” (p. 112). Demonstrating the

relevance using an education setting, Noddings shares her own description of how to meet another as one-caring:

Let's concentrate...my student, my colleague...he is also the one who must be brought into proximity if I would transform my caring about into caring for. If I care about students who are having difficulty with mathematics, I must do two things: I must make the problem my own, receive it intellectually, immerse myself in it; I must also bring the student having difficulty into proximity, receive such students personally. These two facets of my concentration will inform each other...to teach involves a giving of self and a receiving of other. Further, and especially, as one-caring I have a special obligation to maintain and enhance the ethical idea of the cared-for...we must together consider what is right-in-this-case (p. 113).

This example would seem to mirror the ethic practiced by those affiliated with the Center for Community Research and Engagement. As the findings indicate, there is bi-directionality to the engagement, with community and university faculty and staff receiving one another with the roles of one-caring and cared-for not static or one-directional.

Findings also indicate that this culture of engagement, this understanding of Center functionality, cannot be done without the inclusion of other considerations. Specifically, the Community/Social Psychology program offers a disciplinary foundation that is long-term with staff at CCRE having graduated from this program, past and present faculty affiliated with CCRE having taught in this program, and graduate students from this program continuing to fill the roles of part-time research assistants at the Center. This is perhaps one of the more unique and unusual findings from the study. There is also the complex topic of tenured-faculty, and in many ways, this group of people are in a very difficult position. Viewed as privileged, faculty in particular working toward tenure have the profound obligation of self-care in the form of tenure achievement and thus career certainty. While engagement implores faculty to bring their talents and skills to community, findings suggest that many pre-tenure individuals must focus instead on singular acts that

include publication, which using the lens of Care Theory can be appreciated, supported, and the need is certainly not lost on community partners.

A final important contribution to the culture of work at the Center for Community Research and Engagement was the very dramatic changes underway at the university itself. UMass Lowell has been indelibly marked by the arrival of Chancellor Martin Meehan in 2007. Having never worked previously in higher education, the appointment of Congressman Meehan was atypical and arguably unconventional for a university the size of UMass Lowell. With that said, physical changes to campus are impossible to miss, and the investment in particular to capital improvements, including renovated and new buildings are discussed by many inside and outside the university. The corresponding changes to university enrollment over the past seven years, as well the move from Division II to Division I athletics, also seems to influence the culture of CCRE in ways difficult to quantify because in part, these are some of the dominant university narratives. There is also the matter of many hands engaged with community, not only the Center for Community Research and Engagement. Findings point to other university entities, centers, institutions, and people doing work with community framed as engagement. The DifferenceMaker initiative in particular is an important finding because it was referenced on multiple occasions in multiple forums, by multiple individuals. It helps to illustrate that other entities aside from CCRE are viewed as engaging with community, and the fact that it lives under a senior administrator not bound by College or discipline was a point of discussion.

### Limitations

To be sure, qualitative research does not neatly fit with theoretical analysis (Korn & Watras, 2009), and with this case study viewed through the prism of Care Theory, it may

also ultimately be a limitation to fully describe and illustrate through analysis and findings, the nature of community-university engagement. This is not an attempt to be relativistic, but to appropriately acknowledge how process ebbs and flows, and how participants, contexts, and situations move and respond, shift and evolve. After all, “where the researcher is the ‘instrument’ and the ‘objects’ of research are human beings” (Watts, 2011, p. 310) the ability to clearly connect methodology and epistemology is perhaps always a challenge.

There is also the outlook offered by feminist researchers (Stacy, 1996) that conventional research can be particularly exploitive. Ethnography in particular which utilizes intensive participant-observation and draws upon empathy, connection, and concern, might yield a comprehensive cultural account, but fieldwork informants share lives, loves, and tragedies, which in becoming our data, can create the possibility for a “more dangerous form of exploitation” (Stacy, 1996, p. 90). Qualitative research, with a great deal of intimacy and the quest for mutuality in the researcher/researched relationship, was indeed a challenge. These very much are people’s lives, and data is the grist of their personal and professional experiences. It is difficult to make this admission. It is easier to be cavalier with data gathering as a noble undertaking, but a true limitation in the spirit of an ethic of care is that my own ability to reciprocate is severely limited. There is an irony to this: my study researched engagement while not actually utilizing a methodology that was engaged. To be clear on this point, my efforts as the researcher was not engaged scholarship, but rather research on engaged scholarship. I did not craft my research questions or design the methodology in consultation with the Center for Community

Research and Engagement, and I did not proceed with questions of need from the Center, but from my own set of research questions.

Lofland & Lofland (1995) counsel what they term “enmeshment,” and although this outlook entails a degree of tension, worthwhile and rich qualitative data comes from intimate familiarity and actual face-to-face interaction, and acknowledgement of this tension is essential. I note my own thinking because admittedly, such omissions can be viewed as undermining the quality and rigor of the research. With qualitative research, questions of rigor arise and are typically couched in terms of trustworthiness (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999). Yet my efforts, nor statements of personal value or outlook, need be viewed as messy or in need of “bracketing” because there are no easy claims with research (Harrison, MacGibbon & Morton, 2001). With qualitative research there is also the inability to replicate, although that is typically not a standard for this type of research (Creswell, 2007). Other limitations include the constant of wanting or needing more time spent conducting fieldwork, and this is almost an inevitable limitation. Certainly an ideal scenario would have been a longer period of observation and the conducting of more interviews with university administrators in particular. Although the voices and perspective of administrators were included, it could have been more extensive despite my efforts and the challenge of logistics.

#### Implications for Promising Practices in Community-University Engagement

Other doctoral dissertation research employing qualitative design has utilized an assertion approach for framing the results of data analysis, including the identification of important elements needed to build student-teacher communities of practice which can support changes in identity and performance (Delane, 2010). Given the prominence of Care Theory in conceptualizing my dissertation and serving as the prism for data collection and

data analysis, I have opted to remain with this lens in offering implications based on my findings which include promising practices for community-university engagement. First, I will consider approaches to the imperative underpinnings of engagement. I will then turn to descriptions of the “best homes” which Noddings (2002) has keenly described, and will do so with an eye toward engagement practices. I will then conclude with recommendations including future research possibilities.

One senior administrator at UMass Lowell noted a common refrain: “community research and engagement – I think we should and could take a more determined look at what the needs are in the community and avoid doing a lot of what I call the, you know, clean the canal projects...they’re fine, but it’s not what we could and should be doing” (P, p. 11). To be sure, universities would like to go beyond service, but an implication from this study is the difficulty in expanding an understanding to the university writ large, particularly given the difficulty posed by an ethic of care. Care is not so much an approach as it is an experience and set of relationships that are formed and maintained over time.

At a more macro level, because the examples and metaphors used to describe an ethic of care often focus on children, as well as the context of primary and secondary schooling, this has a particular implication for community-university engagement. To be sure, other considerations were discussed most notably by Linda Silka, and her views on Cooperative Extension for example, provided a perspective about functionality within universities. Dr. Silka shared:

So people will say, isn’t this just about what Cooperative Extension does? And it’s very hard to be able to say in certain ways to people: Cooperative Extension is really important with what they do, and yes, it’s true that some of the work on you know, urban engagement is built on that model. But there’s also some things Cooperative Extension hasn’t been able to do...there are still problems to be solved.



As colleges and universities all across the United States continue to contemplate and develop their role and understanding of their purpose, it should not be overlooked that care and relationships with community can be a prominent effort of such engagement. Perhaps the framework for higher education is not only engagement as a public good, fostering citizenship, addressing community challenges, and contributing to public policy. Such positions serve more as a justice-focused outlook, and this study offers a different view on engagement: that our understanding of relational aspects seems imperative, and has not to date been a prominent consideration. Again, findings from this case study point to something in particular with UMass Lowell and its community:

Lowell is like a really big little town in some respects...once you get into these networks, you know everybody. You all see each other at the same events, and everybody calls each other about the same grants, and the community, especially in the non-profit world, is you know, it's pretty tightly knit. I think that we're much more collaborative than other communities; similar-sized communities (N, p. 4).

Universities often position their rhetoric as a question of role, obligation, or historical commitment, but an ethic of care asks about the lived experience, needs, and acknowledgement from two parties. It is the “with” in tandem with “why,” that has perhaps been missing from the discussion of engagement. This research offers that community-university engagement is potentially, and fundamentally, relational when there is listening, concern, attention paid, and a response to care assuming one is also providing self-care. Funding it seems, is a particularly fragile dynamic, and given the findings, raises a number of questions, including why it is not a particular fit for ethic of care considerations. Findings do suggest that just as the university by way of students and faculty can care for the community, in turn the university, including students and faculty, can be the recipients of care from their community. This interconnection was not lost on one individual who noted

“the extent to which the university pays attention for example, to housing, or crime in Lowell, it recognizes every time there is a shooting in Lowell, enrollment goes down. It hasn’t recognized that enough, or that the viability of the community would be important to the university viability” (B, p. 10). Yes, the interconnectivity between university and community is rather complicated and showing vulnerability on the part of a college or university may be deemed anathema, antithetical, or politically naïve, hallmarks perhaps, of the masculine, pseudo-objective, and long-term social and cultural norms, of higher education.

### The Best Homes and the Best Engagement

In *Starting at Home*, Nel Noddings is fond of describing what the “best homes” do with regard to relationships, and I offer that based on the findings from this study, there are a number of implications to consider. To begin, a parallel between the theoretical vision for the “best” homes could be done with the “best” community-university engagement. It is important to first note that Noddings (2002) writes “when I discuss ‘best homes’ . . . I will always argue that some practices are better than others because they produce demonstrably better effects in societies . . . transformed by a public recognition of the importance of caring” (p. 176). Similarly, taking nothing away from good universities, and strong discipline-oriented research, the findings from this study might provoke similar discussions. Noddings (2002) once again argues that “care theory. . . asks after the effects on recipients of our care” (p. 30). With findings in hand from this case study of the UML Center for Community Research and Engagement, the future examination of engagement practices might also explicitly consider Care Theory, although not simply as an outlook or an aspiration. Depending on the unit of analysis, always pushing to ask after the effects of “our care” can

be the commitment from individual university staff or faculty, a Center, a discipline or department, as well as an institution itself. Noddings (2002) notes the following when it comes to the “best” homes:

- The best homes...understand that caring involves responding as positively as possible when addressed (p. 219).
- The best homes...remain open to the possibility that the most powerful adults...should not decide for all the others exactly what constitutes happiness (p. 182).
- The best homes reject ruthlessness and greed at every level, but they do not necessarily reject competition entirely (p. 212)

This exercise could also be done for the “best” community-engaged colleges and universities with the starting point being an examination of the nature of relationships. Is care a response? Is that response to need positive? Is there an active effort to reduce harm? How long after need is understood does the one-caring ask after their effects with the cared-for? Is there a rejection of greed, and attention to tendencies toward competition or prestige-seeking? Noddings (1984) cautions that “for the one-caring and the cared-for in a relationship of genuine caring, there is no felt need on either part to specify what sort of transformation has taken place” (p. 20). Therefore, the best community-university engagement can be understood to be an obligation that is bi-directional and interdependent, not necessarily the elevation in university status.

The notion of CCRE as a home is not foreign, and home was a metaphor utilized by multiple individuals during fieldwork, noting that “I think we’re trying to move. . .to have more of a permanent structure put into place where it’s more of a home; it’s more a resource

not just for the individual research project, but for faculty growth and development, finding like-minded people.” Perhaps the best community-university engagement has to do with establishing and maintaining such an outlook, which is to say, how we are with one another, with attention paid to the dynamic of needs, and our responses to those needs. The best engagement might not simply provide a well-known door for community members to access in support of their needs. Rather, the identification of a community door need not be done because caring relationships result from terms not dictated by the university. As was a finding with CCRE, discussion of needs and the resulting work, often occurs off-campus, in living rooms, and in the offices of local non-profits. The best university engagement could also seek people who participate in research to not just be informed, or merely consenting participants, but to share responsibility for the process and the results, with research only proceeding that articulates a benefit to participants themselves. But to the point Noddings (2002) makes about coercion, this is an outlook in need of negotiation. University faculty often have the requirement of scholarship and publications, and the imperative to co-create could produce harm. Findings from this case study however, point to CCRE as an example of an approach that employs shared responsibility. The best university engagement does not treat the resulting outcomes as products to be compared and contrasted across and between schools, colleges and departments, and the competition to publish in prestigious journals or produce a high number of publications, be they journal articles or book chapters, recedes. Further, the best community-university engagement does not simply have a cadre of faculty and staff engaged in research with community partners, but demonstrates an ethic of care that carries across the body of work in which reduction of harm is prioritized and care is

viewed as a virtue. Such an outlook is discussed and considered openly given past concerns on the part of faculty regarding reward and compensation structures (Austin & Beck, 2010).

Lastly, the best engagement establishes trust between university faculty, staff, and community partners because all feel the needs of each other. The best university engagement can ensure the scholarship endeavor, but potentially sustains commitments beyond the bounds of any particular research study. Granted, university research like ethical caring, is in part consultation with an ideal, but, the best university research “. . . recognize[s] that the ideal remains under construction and that it is not always easily accessible” (Noddings, 2002, p. 108). This is indeed delicate and sensitive work, and in demonstrating such implications, I seek to illustrate the difficulty of such an approach to engagement.

### Conclusions

While the Carnegie Foundation definition can provide a starting point for community-university engagement with its reference to reciprocity, it is clear that such a definition, can, or perhaps at the best universities, should, be determined by people in relation to one another. Given the findings from this study and the implications from Care Theory, the philosophical and rational arguments offered for engagement can be reconsidered going forward. References such as the *Handbook of Engaged Scholarship: Contemporary Landscapes, Future Directions* (Fitzgerald, Burack & Seifer, 2010), describe the building of an engagement culture, and although “faculty development opportunities can help faculty members become more aware of what the scholarship of engagement means and ways to incorporate it into their work,” it is not simply a matter of offering a series of workshops or seminars (Austin & Beck, 2010, p. 241). As articulated by the findings of this

study, faculty are not the only university representatives, or perhaps given their own needs, even the best positioned representatives to develop an ethic of care with community. Staff at universities warrant consideration, just as universities based on this study might be encouraged to consider if or how they acknowledge that their students are the recipients of care. This study offers a contrast to existing theoretical considerations of engagement, which have built foundations of understanding from theories of social-justice, organizational change, and place-building because the invitation from Noddings (1984; 2002) is to consider how we are with the other and if our actions result in caring relationships. Clearly this case study of the UMass Lowell Center for Community Research and Engagements lends a useful perspective.

To conclude, one UML faculty member stated “I’m invested in [CCRE] existing, and I’m invested in it having a home and having a place” (D, p. 3). Again, the tough work of building and constructing relationships might be a hallmark of the best community-university engagement. While perhaps difficult to envision much less replicate, engagement as care involves longevity, attention and listening, assessing needs, and acknowledgement. While findings are less clear on the element of coercion, engagement as care also necessitates difficult conversations and negotiation which are the ways Noddings (2002) describes her phenomenology of coercion. For both communities and universities, this relational and connected understanding can provide a strength and a reassurance to both, but that need not necessarily be the goal; simply reducing harm is incredibly valuable to both. A willingness by both community and universities in their own way to reflect and purposefully act in a caring manner is truly the reciprocity described generally by many,

although the experience and relationship, the care for one another, while perhaps the dominant feature of engagement, is so often excluded from consideration.

### Recommendations and Future Research

It would be easy to prescribe for universities in particular, their adoption of care as the lens to view their work with community. Admittedly, this would be a mistake, and would undermine the notion that people and entities must arrive at their own assessment of what is valuable, express their own needs, and wrestle with the distinction between caring about and caring for or with one another. I can recommend however, that researchers, faculty, staff, and administrators consider care as a way to examine their work with community, and how the dynamics of relationships might alter or influence all facets of scholarship and engagement. As an empirical conclusion with a novel theoretical underpinning, an ethic of care and the findings from the case study of CCRE, helps our understanding of engagement, and perhaps bring new empirical perspective to why engagement is done in a caring manner. Granted, before proceeding with actual scholarship, conversations between the university and community may be required as a way to assess needs, understand concerns, and begin the process of reducing harm. This may be viewed by some as decidedly unscientific and unscholarly, but is that the hallmark of a drive on the part of colleges and universities toward prestige? While not actively explored by this study, future research could examine if institutions of higher education feel pressure to move toward “higher” levels, and if for example, there is perhaps a systematic relationship between Carnegie designation of engagement and certain institutional characteristics that might include endowment. Given the concerns raised in this study regarding funding, such insight could be helpful. Cumulatively across 2006, 2008 and 2010, the Carnegie

Foundation designated a total of 311 US Colleges and Universities with its Community Engagement Classification (Carnegie Foundation, 2013). Writing about the Carnegie initiative, Driscoll (2008) notes that “the classification framework for community engagement has achieved its intention: to respect the diversity of institutional contexts and approaches to engagement, to encourage a reflective inquiry and self-assessment process that is practical and provides useful data, and to affirm good work while urging even better” (p. 40). At no point does it appear that an ethic of care has been a lens used for such an assessment. In contrast, the prevailing shift may be the move toward the seeking of status and rank on the part of universities, and this may, or may not, be helped by a focus on engagement, much less care. While speculative, it remains the case that much more research specific to the work of community-university engagement, as well as entities such as the Carnegie Foundation, will be beneficial. As the authors from one recent study stated:

It is our hope that this study becomes one of many similar studies that begin to build a base of empirical evidence regarding the benefits of community–university partnerships and the features of partnerships that contribute to these benefits (McNall et al, 2009, p. 327).

I echo this hope: namely that a case study of the UMass Lowell Center for Community Research and Engagement will deepen our understanding of community-university engagement, that Care Theory be considered as a theoretical framework, and that the complexity of human relationships underpinning the work of engagement not be overlooked, underappreciated, or otherwise excluded from consideration.



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APPENDIX A

(2)

2:00 pm  
 Drive to Lawrence District Court - Vanessa meeting with  
 Scholar Site Supervisor  
 → Sophie CJ student (\*)

Does "Gene" Musgnay  
 Assistant Chief Probation Officer  
 His comment of/about the student:

"She is good enough to  
 send (to Drug Court)  
 by herself"  
 "she harasses me"  
 (with a smile on his face)  
 "she does everything"

He is  
 retiring next  
 year after 25 yrs  
 ↓  
 Sustained - macro  
 + micro  
 Legacy / CORE?  
 He states that it is most  
 important that students  
 been something and he  
 makes sure PD have them  
 do things. "I can always  
 get someone to push a  
 button"

→ very compatible at  
 seems providing student opportunities

Looking around - very few white faces in court  
 - we walk by/through security - cell phone  
 University label?  
 White?  
 own dress?

people like to help students - no illusions that students are  
 necessary helping them  
 Gene's view - he is the help/service

(\*) Vanessa → multiple verbal acknowledgment/appreciation (recipient of case) (\*)  
 thanks

APPENDIX B

University of New Hampshire

Research Integrity Services, Service Building  
51 College Road, Durham, NH 03824-3585  
Fax: 603-862-3564

14-Jul-2014

Cook, John B.  
Education, Morrill Hall  
PO Box 816  
Wolfboro, NH 03894

**IRB #:** 6039

**Study:** Care and the Dynamics of Engagement: A Community/University Case Study

**Approval Date:** 09-Jul-2014

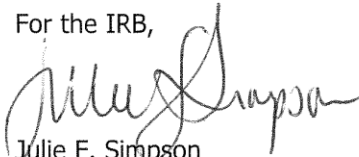
The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) has reviewed and approved the protocol for your study as Expedited as described in Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 46, Subsection 110.

**Approval is granted to conduct your study as described in your protocol for one year from the approval date above.** At the end of the approval period, you will be asked to submit a report with regard to the involvement of human subjects in this study. If your study is still active, you may request an extension of IRB approval.

Researchers who conduct studies involving human subjects have responsibilities as outlined in the attached document, *Responsibilities of Directors of Research Studies Involving Human Subjects*. (This document is also available at <http://unh.edu/research/irb-application-resources>.) Please read this document carefully before commencing your work involving human subjects.

If you have questions or concerns about your study or this approval, please feel free to contact me at 603-862-2003 or [Julie.simpson@unh.edu](mailto:Julie.simpson@unh.edu). Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence related to this study. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

For the IRB,



Julie F. Simpson  
Director

## APPENDIX C

July 2014 [Consent/Participant Observation]

Dear Participant,

I am a graduate student in Education at the University of New Hampshire in the United States. The purpose of this letter is to inform you of a research study I am conducting, and to kindly ask for your participation. I am asking that you grant me permission to observe your efforts as a staff member, or affiliated faculty member, of the UML Center for Community Research and Engagement. My intent is to attend and observe staff meetings, Center and community and events and presentations, and when feasible, when CCRE staff/faculty meet with other university administrators, community partners, and when they otherwise gather or conduct work related to the Center. My observation data will be combined with other interviews and data, analyzed, presented at conferences, and published as part of my dissertation as well as in peer-reviewed journal publications. I anticipate not more than 20 individuals will be the focus of observation.

The study itself focuses on universities and their partnerships with local communities, and I am seeking to explore the nature of these relationships. I anticipate observing for the equivalent of 20 work days, and I ask that you grant permission to observe you and your work for the duration. I will report your perspective using a pseudonym [NOTE: two specific exceptions, and it will be clear that this assurance is not possible] although UMass Lowell and the Center for Community Research and Engagement will be specifically identified in my dissertation and in any subsequent publications or presentations. Therefore please know that you may be recognized by individuals familiar with the organization, so I cannot pledge anonymity. I anticipate risk to be minimal but as part of this research, there may be damning perspectives shared specific to individuals, the Center for Community Research and Engagement, or even the university, and there may be a small risk to your reputation. Please know that your participation is voluntary; you can stop observation at any time and without any penalty, and if you are a UMass Lowell employee, such refusal will not have any negative effects on your employment.

Given this particular methodology, if you decline or refuse consent, I will continue to attend CCRE staff meetings, but not individual/supervisory meetings, or small discussions occurring between you and community partners or university officials. I will be sure to respect this choice, and again, will not seek to observe individualized work, and in group meetings I will not record observations specific to CCRE faculty/staff who refuse or do not consent to participate in the study.

Note that I will not audio record my observations, and I will hold a debrief with CCRE staff/faculty to present preliminary data findings for critique and comment. Specific to data collected from observation, including field notes, aside from me, only my Dissertation Chair and Committee will have access to the data from this study. With that said, under rare circumstances such as a legal proceeding, others may have access to data. My files and observation data will be kept on my password protected computer. I do not expect great benefits to you as a result of participation, but you are aiding the work of a graduate student, and this study may help universities and communities work more effectively. This study can also contribute to a body of knowledge regarding university engagement by particularly introducing a novel theoretical perspective.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to follow up with me at any time, and I will also gladly provide you with a copy of the final manuscript. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject you may contact Dr. Julie Simpson in UNH Research Integrity Services at 603-862-2003 or [julie.simpson@unh.edu](mailto:julie.simpson@unh.edu) to discuss them.

Sincerely,

John B. Cook

(email): jcook@ccsnh.edu

(cell): 603.651.6100

---

Signature of Consenting Participant

---

Date

### **Observation (Field Notes) Protocol**

Date:

Time/Duration:

Location/Physical Setting:

Participants:

Core Questions:

- Engagement when viewed through the prism of Care Theory?
  - How are engagement efforts undertaken by staff, faculty and community partners?
  - Hallmarks from this culture at work?
- 

### ***Descriptive Notes***

Prompts:

Who and how

Behavior (care, attention, sympathy, etc.)

Use of language (how, when)

Interactions/communication (verbal/non-verbal)

Power (how expressed, by whom)

Setting dynamics



Personal dynamics/relationships

Sequence of events

Unplanned/unexpected

Particular comments/quotes

*Reflective Notes*

Prompts:

Notes to self

Me in the setting

Reflexive thinking

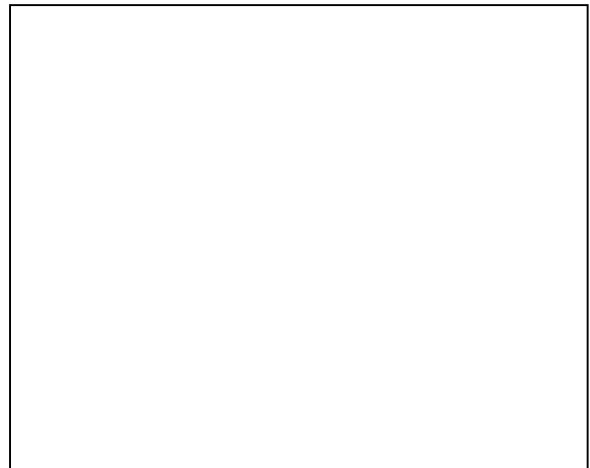
Challenges

Choices

Questions/concerns

Methodology

Early analysis

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the student to write their reflective notes in response to the prompts listed on the left.



## APPENDIX D

July 2014 [Consent/Interviews]

Dear Participant,

I am a graduate student in Education at the University of New Hampshire in the United States. The purpose of this letter is to inform you of a research study I am conducting, and to kindly ask for your participation. I am asking that you grant me permission to sit and interview you in person about university and community interaction, and to allow your responses to be combined with other interviews and data, analyzed, presented at conferences, and published as part of my dissertation as well as in peer-reviewed journal publications.

The study itself focuses on universities and their partnerships with local communities. I am seeking to explore the nature of these relationships; there are no right or wrong answers. Rather, I am intent on understanding your experience and perspective. I anticipate that this interview will take approximately 60 minutes, and you are most welcome to end our conversation at any time. I anticipate not more than approximately 20 individuals will be interviewed.

I also ask that you grant permission for our conversation to be audio recorded. Please note that I will supply you with a copy of the transcribed interview as a means to check with you regarding accuracy. I will report your perspective using a pseudonym, as well as your organization, [NOTE: two specific exceptions, and it will be clear that this assurance is not possible] although UMass Lowell and the Center for Community Research and Engagement will be specifically identified in my dissertation and in any subsequent publications or presentations. Therefore please know that you may be recognized by individuals familiar with the organization, so I cannot pledge anonymity. I anticipate risk to be minimal but as part of this research, there may be damning perspectives shared specific to individuals, the Center for Community Research and Engagement, or even the university, and there may be a small risk to your reputation. Please know that your participation is voluntary; you can stop the interview at any time and without any penalty, and if you are a UMass Lowell employee, such refusal will not have any negative effects on your employment.

Aside from me, only my Dissertation Chair and Committee will have access to the data from this study. With that said, under rare circumstances such as a legal proceeding, others may have access to data. Once I personally transcribe the interview, I will erase the audio recording, and responses will be kept on my password protected computer. I do not expect great benefits to you as a result of participation, but you are aiding the work of a graduate student, and this study may help universities and communities work more effectively. This study can also contribute to a body of knowledge regarding university engagement by particularly introducing a novel theoretical perspective.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to follow up with me at any time, and I will also gladly provide you with a copy of the final manuscript. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject you may contact Dr. Julie Simpson in UNH Research Integrity Services at 603-862-2003 or [julie.simpson@unh.edu](mailto:julie.simpson@unh.edu) to discuss them.

Sincerely,

John B. Cook

(email): jcook@ccsnh.edu

(cell): 603.651.6100

---

Signature of Consenting Participant

---

Date

### **Interview Protocol**

Date:

Time/Duration:

Location/Physical Setting:

Interviewee:

Interviewer:

Brief introductory statement once informed consent has been given (*to be read*):

Again as noted in the informed consent document, my name is John Cook, and I am a graduate student at the University of New Hampshire. I am conducting research for my dissertation, and I am exploring how universities engage with communities. In particular, I am curious about the nature of this work and about relationships. I would again like to ask for your permission to record our conversation, and I am more than happy to provide you with a final copy of my study. As also noted, I will be sharing a transcript of our conversation with you, and hope that you would work with me to check it for accuracy.

Q1. Would you first start by describing who you are, including aspects that are personal or professional that you think are important?

Prompts:

Job/Title

Biographical detail (e.g. long-time Lowell resident)

Q2. Would you please describe your interaction with the Center for Community Research and Action?

Prompts:

What is the work? How is it done?

How did this come to be?

Who do you work with?

How would you describe the Center?

Who decided/decides and how?

How long have you been doing this?

Particular/noteworthy aspects or difficulties?

Personal dynamics/relationships (aspects)?

Q3. Is there a particular example you could share that illustrates how you interact and engage with the Center for Community Research and Action?

Prompts:

Seeking specifics/dynamics

What for them is noteworthy?

Is this a typical or unusual example?

*Thank you for taking the time, and I very much appreciate your participation*



APPENDIX E



Mahoney Hall  
870 Broadway Street, Suite 212  
Lowell, Massachusetts 01854  
tel: 978-934-4678  
[www.uml.edu/research/CCRE](http://www.uml.edu/research/CCRE)

*Center for Community Research & Engagement*

March 28, 2014

John Cook  
Doctoral Student  
University of New Hampshire

Dear John,

It is with pleasure that I write this letter in support of your proposed dissertation research titled *Care and the Dynamics of Engagement: A Community/University Case Study*. My involvement with the Center for Community Research & Engagement spans since its inception over 20 years ago to the present. As the Co-Director, I am able to provide access to documents, strategic plans, media reports, program and research reports, various CCRE meetings and my long-term institutional memory. I am happy to suggest others that could be interviewed such as students who have been involved with the Center, community partners, and knowledgeable administrators and professors. Further, I will welcome you to any CCRE-community partner meetings or CCRE internal and external presentations/workshops/events that are appropriate for you to attend in order to obtain the data you are seeking for the case study.

I look forward to this engagement and am excited to read the results of your research.

Sincerely,



Robin Toof, Ed.D.  
Co-Director

## APPENDIX F

### **Coding (First Iteration)**

A. Longevity

B. Funding

Grants

Budget

C. Faculty

Rewards-Tenure

Teaching

Status/Power/Priorities

D. Relationships and Needs

Candor/Trust

Needs/Listening

Appreciation

Concern/Relationships

Showing Up/Approachability

E. The University/UML

DifferenceMaker Initiative

F. Student Piece

Care/Community directed toward UML

G. CCRE Description

Linda Silka/Context

Robin Toof

Grad Program: Community Psychology

Strengths

**Coding (Second Iteration)**

A. Longevity

Sustainment (Ethic of Care)

B. Funding

Grants

Budget

Indirect cost share/UML OSR

C. Faculty

Rewards

Tenure as Need

Teaching

Status/Power/Priorities

D. Relationships and Needs

Candor/Trust

Needs/Listening

Appreciation

Concern/Relationships

Showing Up/Approachability

Within CCRE

Caring Encounters (Ethic of Care)

Engrossment (Ethic of Care)

Acknowledgement (Ethic of Care)

E. UML

Change and the Chancellor

UML DifferenceMaker Initiative

Who engages community and how/conversation

Robin/Pull toward academic work - assessment

F. Student piece

Service Learning

Community Partner Outlook (Care of Students/UML)

Complexity of Students/Colleges

Reciprocity (Ethic of Care)

G. CCRE Description

Linda Silka/Context

Robin Toof

Grad Programs: Community Psychology

Strengths

Former graduates/working in Lowell

Values

Tacit

Showing Up/Approachability

The “do”

Grant Writing

Needs Assessment

Facilitation

Research

Program Evaluation

Intervention Services

Two entities within

Federalism? Family?

UMass example

Mahoney Hall/Existing Offices

Key Partners (LPD, LCHC, CBA)

APPENDIX G

Care Artifact: Note from Robin Toof to John B. Cook

I might not get here until  
12:30. I am over @ CW  
basement of Coburn. Feel  
free to come over there. I am  
sure Meg would love to see you.

This doc  
is unlocked

Robin

(7.29.2014)