Developing a Framework for Understanding University-Community Partnerships

David N. Cox
University of Memphis

Abstract

Partnerships between institutions of higher education appear on the surface to involve multiple members with a common goal or goals. Through HUD's Community Outreach Partnership Centers program, IHEs around the country are working with neighborhood residents, businesses, and organizations to revitalize communities and change the way IHEs relate to their neighbors. These partnerships offer a variety of activities, ranging from social learning networks to business incubators to programs that enhance local development, physical infrastructure, and human capital. While the programs differ, some of the outcomes are similar—improved relationships between IHEs and community residents, business people, and organizations and increased knowledge that the partnerships can be beneficial for all involved.

An ancient Indian fable written in poetic form in the 1800s and called "The Blind Men and the Elephant"[1] comes to mind when contemplating the concept of community-college neighborhood revitalization partnerships. In the poem, paradoxically, each blind man's concept of the elephant is different because each examines a different body part. Each definer was only partly correct and none could capture the synergy that is the elephant. An examination of the diverse partnerships between institutions of higher education and communities raises the same challenge—how to examine the parts to come to an understanding of the synergy of the whole.

On the outside, IHE-community partnerships appear simply to involve multiple members with a common goal. But each member enters the partnership with individual interests that are specific and more important to itself than to others. For example, a common partnership goal may be to produce affordable housing. The community's principal interest is to see that additional housing is built. The IHE partner's principal interest may be to provide practical business and construction experience for its students. A government funding agency may be trying to leverage its investment in community improvement and learn lessons to refine their neighborhood revitalization policies. The dynamic created results in a whole that is, in fact, more than the sum of its parts—synergy.

Such differences are critical to the formation, function, and sustainability of the partnership. Although a common interest may be necessary, only sufficient types and levels of

specific individual interests can create and sustain a partnership. Therefore, only the examination of the range of those individual interests can bring full understanding of the concept of IHE-community partnerships.

Such an examination requires a framework on which to map the parts, see how they function separately, and show how their symbiosis creates a dynamic, working partnership. The next section offers a framework for understanding the common interests and activities in a partnership, particularly a COPC partnership. Then specific individual interests of various partners and others affected by community-IHE partnerships are identified. Finally, we paint a picture of the entire concept—the elephant, as it were—by pointing to articles in this issue that describe COPC partnership activities and contributions—thus bringing the parts into a synergistic whole.

The Basis of a Framework

To create a foundation for understanding IHE-community partnerships, we, unlike the blind men, must define its sections as parts of the whole. Our attempt to examine the integrative framework that supports these partnerships starts with key concepts, which can be found in answers to three questions:

- What types of activities or programs are implemented to improve neighborhoods?
- Who are the parties involved in or affected by those activities?
- What are the individual interests of those parties in the community improvement activities?

Types of Activities

A great variety of activities can be identified if we list program-by-program what community-IHE partnerships do. However, for the purposes of this article we will group like sets of activities to see patterns across partnerships and develop generalizations about their effects and contributions. The purpose of the programs—to effect change in communities—provides a beginning point. To be effective, interventions for change must respond to the sources and causes of neighborhood change.

Several authors have offered explanations of why neighborhoods change (Baer and Williamson, 1988; Downs, 1981; Keating and Smith, 1996). Others have gone further to explicitly link theories of neighborhood change with actions for improvement (Checkoway, 1995; Chaskin and Brown, 1996; Rubin, 1998; Wiewel, Teitz, and Giloth, 1993). In their review of the change literature, Chaskin and Brown suggest three factors as influencing neighborhood change: individual behaviors, broad socioeconomic structural changes, and changes in the networks within which people function. According to the authors, the six dimensions of community that provide the means to affect those factors include enhancing the following:

- Human capital by improving the assets of individuals within a neighborhood, such as skill or knowledge through social services, education, training, and leadership development.
- Social capital through improved interpersonal networks, trust, coordination, and cooperation for mutual benefit.
- Physical infrastructure through improved housing, transportation, and recreational and open space.

- Economic infrastructure in the form of how goods and services are distributed and how capital flows within the community and between the community and the larger environment. Activities may include improved job opportunities and capitalization of private commercial and financial institutions.
- Institutional infrastructure by improving the scope, depth, leadership, and interrelationships of the community's institutions, including public services, nonprofits, and private-sector institutions.
- Political strength by increasing the ability to exert a legitimate and effective voice within and outside the community.

These six dimensions provide a framework for organizing community-IHE partnership community improvement activities. For example, each COPC site addresses a minimum of three separate policy areas, such as housing, education, health, economic development, job training, or leadership development. Any COPC site's activities will involve one or more of Chaskin and Brown's dimensions of community. A job-training program would address human capital in a neighborhood. Putting the program in place may involve redesign of the community's institutional infrastructure through new collaboratives among public, private, and nonprofit service providers. Obtaining support for the program may require development of political strength to communicate the community's preferences. New relationships generated among job training participants and between training providers may result in trust, coordination, and personal capacity contributing to social capital.

Chaskin and Brown's framework can thus be used to describe the range and level of activities at any given community-IHE partnership site. It can also be used to describe, sum, and compare activities across the partnership sites. Doing so provides a first step toward understanding the scope of community-IHE partnership contributions.

The Parties Involved

Three sets of parties may be involved in or affected by a community-IHE partnership and its efforts. One set involves neighborhood residents—the people who live in the communities and the associations they form to represent neighborhood interests. Other stakeholders located within a neighborhood may include businesses, religious institutions, absentee property owners, schools, and social service agencies. The second set involves the IHEs in the partnership, including community colleges, 4-year colleges, and universities whose focuses span the undergraduate and graduate, public and private, religious or secularly supported, or teaching and research-focused IHEs. COPC IHEs may be located within, adjacent to, or at some distance from the partner communities. The third set involves other stakeholders that are not located in the neighborhood. At the local level, this set will commonly include local government leaders, nonprofit service agencies, and developers. At the State and Federal levels, it will include State and regional development agencies, Federal departments such as HUD, and national foundations.

The presumed shared goal among the partners is to improve the physical, economic, health, and social well-being of a given community. However, differences among the partners may take two forms—preferences for different policies or programs or differences among partners specific to their groups' or institutions' interests.

Policy-programmatic differences arise over choices about how to accomplish neighborhood improvement. One policy choice, for example, may follow from how the community defines improvement. To some, success in community improvement occurs when the life opportunities, physical well-being, economic circumstances, social networks, and political

efficacy of the persons living in the community at the beginning of the improvement effort are better after the interventions, regardless of where they are living afterward. *Success* is defined in terms of individuals, not the physical area of the neighborhood. To others, success is tied to place. If conditions are improved for persons living in the targeted neighborhood after the effort, it was a success regardless of whether those were the persons in the neighborhood at the beginning. *Success* is defined in terms of the conditions of the people living in the area, not whether it improved conditions for original residents of the neighborhood. A community improvement policy choice is whether to focus activities on individual residents or on a specific neighborhood regardless of the effects on current residents (Gyourko, 1998; Legates and Hartman, 1986; Schill and Nathan, 1983).

Another policy choice over which differences may arise concerns the dimension of community on which to focus to bring about change. Some may favor human and social capital interventions emphasizing educational and social services. Others may prefer working on economic and physical infrastructures targeted at job creation or housing redevelopment (Goetz and Sidney, 1997; Gyourko, 1998; Stevenson, 1999). Still others may prefer to focus on political capital and institutional infrastructures, not only increasing political capital among neighborhood residents but also restructuring IHEs to be more open to communities (Price, 1973).

Group or institutional differences refer to interests specific to a partner or others affected by a partnership. As an example, neighborhood residents may wish to have a service provided in the neighborhood regardless of whether the service is provided by an IHE, a nonprofit agency, a public agency, or the private sector. They just want the service. Similarly, a local government partner may add to the service level in the community, but it may not matter which sector or agency provides the service. An IHE may want to provide students with opportunities to apply classroom instruction, but it may not matter in which neighborhood the students gain the experience. Each group or institution favors neighborhood improvement. Each may agree on preferred policies and programs to achieve improvement, but some of the benefits from the partnership may be specific to individual partners. As a result, gains or impacts from the partnership may vary from party to party.

Identification of these group or institutional differences is critical to developing a full understanding of the breadth and contributions of community-IHE programs, including COPC-type partnerships. A partner's decision to participate may depend on meeting interests specific to that partner's group or institution. While a potential partner may favor the broader purpose of a group, if the specific individual incentive to join is not great enough, the partner will not join (Laumann, Galaskiewicz, and Marsden, 1978). As a consequence, one must see the range of those interests to understand the whole of partnership's contributions. The framework for understanding the whole is built on both the shared and separate interests of partners and those affected by the partnerships.

Neighborhood Residents and Stakeholders

Given the breadth of issues within a neighborhood, the interests of residents and other direct stakeholders are not likely to be monolithic (Goetz and Sidney, 1997; Gyourko, 1998; Stevenson, 1999). However, in regard to the COPC program, there is a set of common expectations about two aspects of community improvement: resources—the financial, physical, and human resources used to bring about change—and process—how those resources are assembled and applied.

Neighborhood residents commonly see community-IHE partnerships as the source of a range of resources. One is a product of the broader purposes of IHEs: to create, disseminate, and preserve knowledge for the improvement of society. By acting those roles,

faculty members, students, and staff of IHEs become repositories of knowledge and expertise useful for community improvement. Neighborhood residents and stakeholders enter COPC partnerships to gain access to that important human resource (Feld, 1998). Another resource may be found in the size of IHEs. In many instances, IHEs have become important economic entities within their locality and region. For example, Philadelphia's three largest private employers are the University of Pennsylvania, Temple University, and Thomas Jefferson University (Cisneros, 1996). IHEs are among the largest employers in nearly all metropolitan settings. As a consequence, IHEs are a potential resource for jobs for neighborhood residents and a source of purchasing power for business stakeholders. A third resource is the capacity of IHEs to provide development and technical assistance funding for neighborhoods. In some instances, IHEs are direct sources of funds for community improvement, serving as developers or providing capital for development (Berens, 1996; Cisneros, 1996; Farrish, 1994). In other instances, IHEs help to produce financial and technical resources through the capacity of faculty and staff to locate or compete for grant funding to be used for community improvement, such as in the COPC program. Finally, IHEs are respected in the broader communities in which they are located. That respect translates to access to governmental and private agencies, which provides an avenue to resources. Through partnerships with IHEs, communities may share in that access to gain resources.

Process—how the resources are brought together and applied—focuses on power and governance relationships within community-building partnerships (Innes, 1996; Potapchuk and Polk, 1994; Rosaldo, 1993). For much of the 20th century, the characteristic relationship between outside organizations and residents of distressed neighborhoods was one of expert-subject or expert-client. That was especially true in relationships between IHEs and communities. Faculty and staff from IHEs assumed the role of experts. Residents of the neighborhoods were either subjects of IHE research or clients for instruction or service (Hackney, 1986; Harkavy and Puckett, 1991, 1992).

Several factors have changed those expectations. Dependency patterns imbedded in expert-client relationships have been identified as a cause for failures in national neighborhood development policies (Marris and Rein, 1982). IHEs have come under criticism for their isolation from issues of U.S. urban communities and their expert-based approach to neighborhoods (Boyer, 1990; Lynton and Elman, 1987). Neighborhood residents have rejected their needs-based dependency role. (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993). And at times, as IHEs have expanded, they have encroached on low-income neighborhoods, displacing long-term residents, disrupting social networks, and leading to resident resistance (Price, 1973).

Each factor has led neighborhood residents to seek more involvement in community improvement efforts that affect them. Community-IHE partnerships provide a means for that involvement. In the type of partnership sought by COPC, neighborhood residents are active participants, not just clients, in all phases of community improvement efforts, including the design, choice, and implementation of programming. That involvement produces two important substantive products: programs and actions responsive to neighborhood resident preferences and involvement essential to increasing resident social, economic, and political capacity (Putnam, 1993). Increased effectiveness and capacity produced by the partnerships are in the clear interests of neighborhood residents.

Institutions of Higher Education

The University and the City: From Medieval Origins to the Present, Thomas Bender (1988) notes contrasting relations between IHEs and their surrounding communities. At times, IHEs have been defined and sustained by the urban dynamics that surround them.

At other times, urban development has threatened their very stability and survival. Those contrasts are a help to understanding the interests of IHEs in community-IHE improvement partnerships. On one level, the partnerships can be seen as a response to very practical and immediate threats and opportunities. On another and perhaps more fundamental level, the partnerships serve the interests of IHEs through their effect on how IHEs perform their role in society.

When participating in a partnership an IHE's practical and immediate interests are to protect its surrounding environment, expand its funding, and develop continuing political and social support of its institutions. Ira Harkavy and others claim that the conditions of cities where many IHE campuses are located may be the most pressing problems facing the institutions. As Harkavy (1997) states it, "Simply put, 'higher eds' cannot move (as more mobile institutions have increasingly done) to escape the poverty, crime, and physical deterioration at their gates." That deterioration threatens the core of the institutions. IHEs adjacent to declining neighborhoods or located in metropolitan areas with substantial deterioration find it harder to recruit and retain students, faculty, and staff. The costs of creating safe islands amid social disorder continue to rise. The viability of IHEs declines in response to the decline around them. Some IHEs enter into partnerships to improve adjacent and metropolitan conditions for the specific, individual reason of protecting themselves (Cisneros, 1996).

Like neighborhood residents and stakeholders, IHEs are continuously in search of money to carry out their activities. Partnerships provide a platform to coordinate comprehensive approaches to community improvement. As a result, governmental, foundation, and business funders have increased the number and amount of funds available for community improvement efforts involving partnerships. Entering partnerships with communities provides IHEs with access to funds, some of which are awarded by competition, which tends to make IHEs more competitive. The COPC program is an example of such resources.

IHEs are dependent on external constituencies for students; placement of students; outlets for their outreach and research; and instructional, research, and outreach funding. The partnerships not only connect the IHEs to distressed communities for these purposes, they can help to build trust and goodwill with other constituencies, such as elected officials, business people, and citizens concerned and affected by the urban conditions that the partnerships seek to address. Out of that trust and goodwill come support in the form of enrollments, placements, and funding, particularly for state-assisted IHEs. Community-IHE partnerships, therefore, can be useful for IHEs as a means of generating political and social support.

Partnerships serve IHEs through their effect on two fundamental IHE purposes: the creation and dissemination of knowledge. The notion of reciprocity is central to COPC and all community-IHE partnerships. IHEs are informed and assisted by communities and their stakeholders and, reciprocally, communities and their stakeholders are informed and assisted by IHEs. Community-IHE partnerships can fundamentally reshape IHEs and the role they play in society.

A history of exploitation, unequal access to information, and other challenges can make obtaining valid, reliable information about socioeconomically distressed communities difficult (Ahlbrandt, Charney, and Cunningham, 1977; Rosaldo, 1993). Traditionally, persons selecting the information to be collected and subsequently interpreting it have been from outside those communities, especially IHE faculty members and students.

Stereotypes and social distance can alter what is observed, how it is interpreted, and what is produced as knowledge—resulting in partial or misleading knowledge.

Effective partnerships involve interaction. Community-building partnerships begin with collective definitions of the issues, collective searches for information, and collaboration in selecting and implementing solutions. Each party to the partnership is an important source for stimulating questions, participating in information gathering, and selecting and applying the solutions. As a result, by their very operation, community-IHE partnerships answer the question of the purpose of knowledge: Knowledge is to be created that is useful for community improvement as defined by the partners.

In an effective partnership, individual members contribute to information and analysis required for the creation of new knowledge. Through trust, information may become available that would otherwise be overlooked or not forthcoming, partners may choose to provide free information for which they would otherwise charge, and the sharing of information may eliminate duplication in collecting and analysis. The result is more information and better knowledge at a lower cost.

Products of an effective community-IHE partnership, however, are improved communication from the ongoing sharing of ideas and information and improved trust from collaboration among community residents. Ongoing and face-to-face interactions in the partnerships can help to reduce stereotypes that serve as barriers to communicating, sharing, and interpreting information. Residents and IHE faculty and students become better able to understand each other's interpretations of the meaning of information and what is important to one another. In many settings, collaboration in the partnerships has resulted in information to be defined, collected, and interpreted by community partners that would otherwise not be available or used. The consequence has been new insights and knowledge useful for community improvement (Hyland, Cox, and Martin, 1998; Reardon, 1998).

The IHEs' purpose or performance does not include being judged by some measure or sense of short-term usefulness of the knowledge they create for society (Bush, 1990; Stokes, 1997). By another view, the purpose of knowledge created and disseminated by IHEs is to contribute to the well-being of society (Bender, 1988). Creation and dissemination is guided by what is considered useful. A measure of an IHE's success is the clearly discernible contribution of the knowledge it creates and disseminates to the improvement of the community.

Applied research and knowledge focuses on the practical. What are real-world opportunities or problems? What works in treating them? Research questions are inspired by needs and opportunities identified by community and society. Usefulness is the criterion for guiding and assessing applied research and knowledge. The focus of knowledge produced is on what works.

Community-IHE partnerships are primarily seen as contributing to applied research and knowledge. Usefulness drawn from the interests of the participating partners guides the questions and resulting knowledge. Left with this understanding, community-IHE partnerships are of particular interest to IHEs or the parts of IHEs principally concerned with applied research and knowledge. A recent reconceptualization of the distinction by Stokes, however, points to a broader interest by IHEs (Stokes, 1997).

Tracing the history of scientific discovery, Stokes identifies four types of research and resulting knowledge. Two are the traditional types, basic and applied, and basic research relates the results back to theory. A third type, investigator curiosity, is guided by and

informs only the investigator. The fourth type points to the broader interests of IHEs in community-IHE partnerships.

Stokes' fourth type, *use-inspired basic research*, involves both theory and application. Projects or policies are shaped by the needs and opportunities within communities. As such, they become interventions. A purpose for projects and policies is to learn not only whether they worked or failed, but why. These are the lessons learned from applied research. Lessons become useful when they can be applied at other times or in other places. Answers to questions about whether or how a project or policy worked require concepts and relationships generalizable across time and space (Rose, 1991, 1993). That requires theory. Use-inspired basic research thus gives rise to the development of theory. Rather than separate types of research and knowledge, use-inspired basic research creates both applied and basic knowledge (Innes, 1995).

The engaged nature of community-IHE partnerships involves a highly interactive process between community residents, stakeholders, and IHE faculty and students. The actors are involved in defining and addressing selected issues—answering the question of whether the selected solutions did or did not work. The partnerships, therefore, become a source to spur and support use-inspired basic research. Since it addresses the development of theory, use-inspired basic research provides a means for involvement of the range of disciplines and units within an IHE, those focusing on application and those seeking to develop theory. As a consequence, the partnerships provide a means for more broadly engaging IHE resources in addressing community issues while simultaneously providing a rich resource for accomplishing a basic purpose of IHEs—the creation of knowledge.

An immediate impact on content is how the partnerships influence what is produced as new knowledge. Partnerships give access to new information, lead to the creation of useful knowledge, and contribute to applied and theoretical knowledge. Doing so affects what is produced as knowledge and is available for dissemination.

IHEs disseminate knowledge through a variety of venues, including formal degree programs; continuing education courses; workshops and symposia; publications in the form of books, journal articles, reports, and other writings; and technical assistance. Interaction characterizing effective community-IHE partnerships affects the content, processes, and audiences involved in the dissemination of knowledge.

However, the availability of knowledge is not sufficient to ensure that it will be disseminated. The content of the curricula of degree programs or other offerings represent what faculty members and other designers of content deem relevant and important. One effect of community-IHE partnerships on dissemination is on the choice of what is included in the curricula. Interactions with community inform IHE faculty members and curriculum designers about issues important to community that can lead to the development of course and program content relevant to addressing those issues. Firsthand experience with what works and what fails is invaluable for selecting effective course and program content (Adams, 1991).

Processes of dissemination affect pedagogy, how IHEs go about teaching, how students and other audiences learn, and, as a result, what is learned. Working directly with community partners exposes faculty members and students to the knowledge, experiences, and values of persons outside of the formal classroom. Exposure to different life experiences and circumstances, different values, and different expectations broadens students' and faculty members' understanding of community and its issues (Markus, Howard, and King, 1993). Working with community takes students and faculty members outside of the

formal classroom. Moving outside the classroom produces different relationships between students and faculty members. No longer the sole source of information for students, faculty members must develop new methods to guide discovery and learning. By facing real-world problems firsthand, students are encouraged to discover the interrelationship among issues and solutions that overcome the fragmentation of knowledge produced by IHEs structured around disciplines (Kolb, 1984). By definition, the partnerships require students and faculty members to collaborate with community residents and stakeholders. Doing so teaches project collaboration and collaborative learning (Campus Compact, 2000; Kupiec, 1993).

A more fundamental effect occurs when the partnerships affect students' and even faculty members' views of themselves and their relationship to society. Firsthand experiences of engagement contribute to an understanding of the interrelationships and connectedness of all in society. The compartmentalized and disciplinary separation within IHE programs of study can make that interrelatedness difficult to communicate and understand. The experience for many involved in the partnerships has been to produce a lifelong social commitment to address issues of community and especially the issues of distressed communities (Dewar and Isaac, 1998).

The recipient of the knowledge and how that knowledge is communicated determines the audience. The reciprocity within community-IHE partnerships engages IHEs with new audiences for knowledge dissemination. The exchanges offer neighborhood residents and other stakeholders as new audiences for dissemination of knowledge, which can be especially important to residents of distressed neighborhoods who may have been less likely to attend or otherwise be connected to IHEs. It can also expand the audience for IHEs by giving them direct access to community policymakers and the range of partner providers.

Partnerships can increase an IHE's ability to reach new audiences by connecting them to new media and networks of communication. Information in any setting flows through formal and informal channels. Formal channels for dissemination within a community may include workshops, the distribution of reports, distribution of newsletters, and presentations at community meetings. Informal channels involve the pattern of interpersonal connections and communications within a community. Community-IHE partnerships improve the opportunity for IHEs to disseminate knowledge by improving their access to both channels. As partners, IHEs become regular participants and contributors to formal channels offered through community partners such as newsletters, reports, and workshops. Neighborhood residents active in the partnerships are commonly active participants in informal community networks. Access to those residents through the partnerships provides IHEs an entry point for dissemination through those networks (Brown and Nylander, 1999).

The impact of the partnerships on the creation and dissemination of knowledge leads to a broader contribution to IHEs. As noted, IHEs have been criticized for their failure to address issues confronting U.S. urban communities (Bok, 1982; Boyer, 1990; Lynton and Elman, 1987). Part of that criticism centers on the type of research and knowledge IHEs have been creating (Harkavy, 1997). Other criticism concerns the relevance of IHE curricula and the range and diversity of audiences to whom they regularly disseminate knowledge. The challenge has been how to get IHEs to redirect those efforts.

The partnerships encourage creation of information whose purpose is to be used to treat community conditions. They expand IHE faculty and student involvement in applied research through use-inspired basic research. With that expansion comes pressure to develop faculty tenure and promotion systems to recognize and reward that involvement

(Elman and Smock, 1985; Glassick and Schomberg, 1993; Lynton, 1995). The partnerships encourage adoption of curricula and training to address community issues. They foster new methods for engaging students and reaching new and more diverse audiences. As a consequence, the partnerships are an important force for helping IHEs to become more socially relevant. In so doing, they help IHEs better achieve their mission and purposes in society (DeMulder and Eby, 1999; Potter and Chickering, 1991).

Other Stakeholders

Development patterns for an urban area are a response to a constellation of factors including global, national, regional, as well as local forces (Bingham and Mier, 1993; Lauria, 1997). Likewise, development patterns within an urban area are a response to external and internal forces that may vary from place to place (Mollenkopf, 1983; Swanstrom, 1993). As a result, a number of other actors may be involved in or impacted by community improvement efforts at any given time or place.

Certain players are common to most neighborhood improvement efforts. At the local level they include local government leaders, nonprofit service agencies, developers, and local foundations. At the State and national levels they include State and Federal Government agencies, national foundations, and an array of professional and neighborhood development associations.

As with neighborhood residents and IHEs, many of these other actors are also seeking additional resources in the form of funding and technical assistance to support community improvement activities. Partnerships help to produce resources by reducing duplication and costs, improving access to funding for comprehensive efforts, and leveraging additional resources. By joining a partnership, members may acquire resources that would otherwise need to be purchased. Students enrolled in courses or seeking practical experience are a source of talented, low-cost labor. Technical assistance costs for other partners may be lowered by in-kind contributions of faculty and student time as a part of IHEs' regular instructional, research, and outreach budgets.

Many funders at all levels—Federal, State, and local—favor the comprehensive efforts at community improvement that partnerships can provide. Entering a partnership helps actors to gain access to those resources. Funders seeking to support neighborhood improvement can require partners, including IHEs, to contribute resources to compete for and receive their funding. As a result, the partnerships become a means to leverage and thereby increase the reach of their resources.

The COPC program provides a classic example. Applicants, required to match every Federal dollar received with 50 cents of their own resources for research and 25 cents for outreach, receive a bonus in competition if they exceed that rate of match. The result has been to produce more than 1 dollar of match for every Federal dollar, more than doubling (from the Federal perspective) the amount of resources committed to community improvement efforts.

Getting various governmental agencies and other providers to join a collaborative is often one of the greatest barriers to effective, comprehensive community-building efforts (Agranoff, 1991). Duplication, competition, and turf issues are common among agencies whose help is needed to develop neighborhood resident capacities. IHEs are less frequently seen as competing providers. Thus they can mentor the interests of others by serving as more neutral conveners of the partnerships.

IHEs also have special capacities and expertise found in IHEs. The role of many partner agencies is to fund changes in the physical aspects of community such as building or renovating housing. These agencies often have less capacity and expertise to deal with the human resource, social, and political capacity aspects of community building. In contrast, those aspects are often IHE strengths. The partnerships thus serve the interest of others by providing a means to combine complementary strengths.

A third contribution specific to IHEs is their role in creating and disseminating knowledge. The responsibilities and resulting interests of many partners in community improvement efforts extend beyond any specific neighborhood. Local government leaders and agencies want to take lessons learned from one neighborhood and apply them to others. Local, State, and Federal Government leaders and agencies look at the results of interventions at one site for guidance in designing policies and programs for others. Foundations and other funders also look to experiences at one site for policy guidance at others. Information generated by the partnerships combined with the evaluation and analytic capacities of IHEs create an important source for creating and disseminating policy relevant knowledge (Rose, 1993). Including IHEs in community improvement partnerships helps to give policy leaders access to these resources.

Putting the Parts Together

Unlike the blind men, who each examined a part of the elephant without benefit of sight and compiled their findings into a complete elephant, we have the opportunity to move from the parts to an understanding of the whole of IHE-community partnerships—to the significance of specific individual interests.

Although a common interest in community improvement may be necessary, it is not likely to be sufficient to bring about or sustain a partnership. The conditions to do so are found in individual interests in the partnerships specific to potential participants.

Neighborhood residents are interested in access to financial, technical, and political resources and also in processes that include them in decisions affecting them and their community. Some IHE are immediately interested in improvement of the areas near their campuses, access to additional funding, and increased political and social support. However, their more fundamental interests concern the impact of the partnerships on the IHE's ability to perform its role in society. Partnerships help IHEs in their role of creating knowledge by improving available information, encouraging the creation of useful knowledge, and supporting the creation of both applied and theory-based knowledge. Partnerships also help IHEs to disseminate knowledge by their effect on the content of research and curricula, on pedagogy, and on the audiences for dissemination.

The full impact of effective community-IHE partnerships is a transformation of IHEs' role in society. Through their research and outreach, IHEs become more responsive to the issues and conditions of their communities and society. The reciprocal relations within successful partnerships help to produce engaged citizens, faculty members, and students, thereby contributing to civil society and democracy. Like neighborhood residents and stakeholders, community-IHE partnerships can help obtain and leverage resources for others who have a stake but are not located in a neighborhood. IHEs are useful as neutral conveners for the partnership. The partnerships also help to give access to IHEs' capacity and expertise to support the human resource, social, and political capacity aspects of community building and develop information needed for policymaking.

Two final points should be noted. First, there are many interests and dimensions to every partnership. Second, the partnerships are about change for neighborhoods. Closer

examination shows that partnerships involve change for all of the partners. In successful partnerships, neighborhoods are places to lead more secure, healthier, and satisfying lives, IHEs produce more outreach and knowledge useful for improving neighborhoods and for supporting a more democratic civil society, policy leaders gain in the knowledge of how to extend those effects, and all of the participants partnerships become part of the community—each part comes together to describe the elephant.

Applying the Framework to COPCs

This discussion began with two purposes. One was to add to the literature on community improvement partnerships by describing activities, outcomes, and analyses produced by HUD's COPC program. The other was to offer a framework to better understand the range and impact of community-IHE community improvement partnerships. The articles in this volume were selected from submissions from COPC sites to provide those descriptions and afford an opportunity to apply the framework.

In their articles, Lee Benson and Ira Harkavy describe the impact of the partnerships on the role of IHEs in democratic society, and Wim Wiewel, Frank Gaffikin, and Michael Morrissey discuss structuring IHEs to meet responsibilities in the formation of urban policies. They then address policy focuses of the COPCs at each institution—education for Benson and Harkavy and housing for Wiewel and colleagues. The subsequent series of articles describes programs, interactions within partnerships, and the impact of the partnerships at 11 COPC sites. Victor Rubin then provides an overview of progress on evaluation of the partnerships and their contributions to our understanding of community improvement.

Just as the blind men could "see" only a part of the elephant, no view of a single COPC site fully communicates the full scope of the partnerships. However, placing the contributions from each site within the proposed framework helps the reader to see the whole. Although no single site focuses on all of the dimensions of change described by Chaskin and Brown, all dimensions are found across all of the sites—Benson and Harkavy through partnerships with K–12 institutions; Kenneth Reardon through leadership training; and Alice Schumaker, B.J. Reed, and Sara Woods through family support services and their description of efforts at enhancing human capital.

The very act of entering and working to sustain the partnerships involves all COPC sites in the development of social capital: Richard Kordesh, through the development of social learning networks; Marc Smith, through the use of arts; and Robert H. Wilson and Miguel Guajardo, through interventions that reduce social distance, provide examples of strategies enhancing social capital. Many sites seek improvement in physical infrastructure in partner neighborhoods. Larry Keating and David Sjoquist; Jerome Lieberman, Jerry Miller, and Virginia Kohe; and Wiewel and colleagues offer examples of community-IHE partnerships addressing housing needs.

Enhancement of a neighborhood's economic infrastructure is often closely associated with efforts to improve its human and social capital. Burton V. Dean, Jerome Burstein, Linda J. Woodsmall, and Judith C. Mathews, through a business incubator, and Loomis Mayfield and Edgar P. Lucas, Jr., through an attempt to link an IHE's hiring and purchasing practices to a neighborhood partner, provide descriptions of targeted economic infrastructure efforts. Because effective reciprocal relationships are at the core of COPCs, all sites are concerned with enhancing institutional infrastructure to create and sustain the partnerships. Keating and Sjoquist in describing a multi-IHE partnership, Golden Jackson and Ronald B. Meyers writing about restructuring an IHE to improve relationships with a neighborhood partner, Smith describing enhanced Community Development Corporation

capacity, and Wilson and Guajardo outlining the development of local government capacity provide examples of improvement of community and IHEs.

Finally, enhancement of human capital, social capital, and institutional infrastructure combine to increase the political strength of residents of a neighborhood. However, Benson and Harkavy's discussion of the contributions of the partnerships to civic capacity and a democratic society; Reardon's and Wilson and Guajardo's descriptions of the mobilization of residents to become active in community politics; and Wiewel and colleagues' discussion of the benefits and dilemmas of partnerships address practical means and implications of developing an effective voice within and outside of neighborhoods.

These articles all offer examples of the individual interests identified among participants in the partnerships and a menu of types of technical assistance provided by IHEs. Jackson and Meyers as well as Wiewel and colleagues offer examples of IHEs providing additional development funding through IHE foundation dollars and other sources. Reciprocity and social capital are important to these partnerships, making the articles a rich source of information about the processes of involving community residents and building partnerships. Keating and Sjoquist, and Reardon, provide extensive discussions of those processes, while insights from Jackson and Meyers show the need for IHEs to learn to become effective partners. As generators of resources, the partnerships met the practical interests of IHEs. However, Benson and Harkavy, Jackson and Meyers, Reardon, and Schumaker and colleagues describe how neighborhood conditions adjacent to a campus or pressure by public funders to be responsive to community issues led to the creation of partnerships with particular communities. Examples of the development of use-based basic knowledge can be found in Jackson and Meyers' treatment of conflict resolution among organizations, Kordesh's testing and modifications to social learning network theory, and Reardon's creation of a developmental model for university-IHE relations and adaptations of Kolb's experiential learning process.

The articles are replete with examples of new forms of dissemination. Dean and colleagues, Reardon, and Schumaker and colleagues provide extensive accounts of involvement by students in partnership activities. Smith, as well as Wilson and Guajardo, describes how relationships within the partnership led to access to new and diverse audiences.

Experiences and analyses presented in each of the articles offers insights for policymaking. Benson and Harkavy along with Wiewel and colleagues describe structural changes required for IHEs to become more effective and responsible contributors to informed urban policymaking and civic society. Lieberman and colleagues outline recommendations for improving intergovernmental and agency approaches to housing programming. Finally, Stanley Hyland and Rubin discuss the challenges and opportunities associated with evaluation of community-IHE partnerships. In each case, the authors demonstrate the potential for the partnerships to contribute to improved practice, theoretical understanding, and informed policymaking for improving our Nation's communities.

Author

David Cox is director of the Center for Urban Research and Extension at the University of Memphis, where he is a professor in the division of public administration. In 1998–99 Cox served as the director of the Office of University Partnerships for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. His research, outreach, and publications have centered on issues in urban governance and strategies for interorganizational collaboration. As a result, he has extensive experience with higher education-community partnerships for community development. His work has been supported by a number of agencies

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Note

1. It was six men of Indostan
   To learning much inclined,
   Who went to see the Elephant
   (Though all of them were blind),
   That each by observation
   Might satisfy his mind.

   . . . . .

   The First approached the Elephant,
   And happening to fall
   Against his broad and sturdy side,
   At once began to bawl:
   "God bless me! but the Elephant
   Is very like a wall!"

   . . . . .

   The Third approached the animal,
   And happening to take
   The squirming trunk within his hands,
   Thus boldly up and spake:
   "I see," quoth he, "the Elephant
   Is very like a snake!"

   . . . . .

   The Fifth, who chanced to touch the ear,
   Said: "E'en the blindest man
   Can tell what this resembles most;
   Deny the fact who can
   This marvel of an Elephant
   Is very like a fan!"

   . . . . .

   And so these men of Indostan
   Disputed loud and long,
   Each in his own opinion
   Exceeding stiff and strong,
   Though each was partly in the right,
   And all were in the wrong!

   —From "The Blind Men and the Elephant,"
   by John Godfrey Saxe (1816–1887)

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