

Improving the Human Condition: Leadership for Justice-Oriented Service-Learning

Marilynne Boyle-Baise, Betty Bridgwaters, Leslie Brinson, Nancy Hiestand, Beverly Johnson, and Pat Wilson

The Banneker History Project (BHP) reconstructed the history of the Benjamin Banneker School, which operated as a segregated school for African Americans from 1915 to 1951. It was a project in social justice education with community service as its base. Here, the authors provide an insider perspective of group dynamics among core leaders for the BHP. Building relationships, working for social justice, and confronting racism are key themes for the group. Leaders recall moments of discomfort, particularly related to issues of race and racism, and describe ways they worked through them. Based on their wisdom of practice, authors offer suggestions for those who might do similar work.

In this article, collaborative leadership for a justice-oriented service-learning project is described and analyzed. The authors formed the core leadership group for the project. After working together for two years, we wondered: “Why didn’t it fizzle out?” Most of us had participated previously in public projects that seemed vital, yet waned. Leaders lost momentum and efforts languished. Our leadership, in contrast, remained steadfast. Why? For a brief, but significant moment, we took part in a just cause. The cause served as a beacon for us all. As one member of our group put it, “We helped, in a small way, to improve the human condition.”

We provide an insider perspective of group dynamics among leaders for this project. We consider the following questions: (1) Why did we participate? (2) What kept our collaboration going? (3) What challenged our leadership? As part of this consideration, we suggest that three aspects of collaboration sustained us: building relationships, working for social justice, and confronting racism.

THE BANNEKER HISTORY PROJECT

The Banneker History Project (BHP) was a two year effort to reconstruct the history of a once-segregated school in our town and to disseminate the story through a public exhibit. The BHP involved over 100 citizens from age

5 to 85 in investigating and telling this story. University, city, school, and community partners worked together to accomplish the project; our group crystallized as the leadership core. We provide a brief history of the school and of the BHP in order to contextualize our leadership.

The Banneker School operated as a segregated school for African Americans from 1915 to 1951. It served a vibrant black community, drawing students from a wide, geographic area. A common saying was: “If you were black and lived in Bloomington, you went to Banneker.” The school closed due to declining enrollment and to the repeal of a state law requiring segregation. It became a community center that, until 1986, was strongly linked to the Banneker neighborhood and especially to the black community, serving as a social hub. After that time, the city’s Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks) changed the center to appeal to youth and families city-wide, with fee-based programs similar to the local YMCA.

At the time of this study, many of the original African American families in the neighborhood had moved on, and those that remained felt estranged from the Banneker Community Center. Youth of color no longer “grew up” at the center knowing that their relatives had once attended school there. The center’s history as a segregated school was scarcely known. Moreover, single family homes, after being passed down for several generations, were beginning to be sold as rentals for college students. The area, now known as the Near West Side, was in danger of losing its distinctiveness.

Address correspondence to Marilynne Boyle-Baise, Indiana University—Bloomington, Curriculum and Instruction, 201 North Rose Ave., 3210 Wright Education, Bloomington, IN 47405-1006. E-mail: boylebai@indiana.edu

The long-time President of the local NAACP thought the time was ripe to reconstruct the Banneker School story. He wanted to instill pride in the heritage of the school, not only among youth of color but among youth from the Near West Side and beyond. A sizable group of Banneker alumni lived in town, but many were in their late seventies or early eighties. The President hoped to gather their oral histories while they were still living. He worked with the director of the Banneker Community Center to write a proposal for a historical study, making it part of the center's five year plan. Parks, which oversaw the center, and the mayor's office, which supported city efforts to affirm diversity, enthusiastically approved.

The center director invited one of the authors, Boyle-Baise, to facilitate the project. She had ties to the community center, as a partner in service-learning and as a member of its advisory board. For her, the BHP held potential as social justice education with service-learning at its base. She relished the opportunity to be a part of it. Boyle-Baise, the NAACP leader, and the center director gathered an ethnically, professionally diverse leadership group that represented schools for the Near West Side, city agencies (including Parks), and university faculty.

These partners worked to bring the original proposal to life. Two activities were planned: high school student volunteers would reconstruct the school's history, and elementary school student volunteers would study the center's namesake. Both groups would consider effects of racism in the past and ways for citizens to fight racism in the present. Additionally, Boyle-Baise brought prospective teachers into the BHP. As part of an Honors Seminar, preservice teachers from Project TEAM, an enrichment program for future teachers of color, assisted youth with their activities (For an analysis of this aspect of the BHP, see Boyle-Baise, 2005).

During the project's two years, the initial partnership group remained committed to the effort, though the principals and the President of the NAACP took background supportive roles and one faculty member contributed only during Year One. A core leadership team of six women emerged from the larger group. This study focuses on ways in which our group formed, negotiated, and modified our relationships in order to guide the BHP. Our group writes in first person narrative to personalize our account, using "we" to emphasize our collective sense of identity.

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP

Very little is written about collaborative processes among 200 partners in service-learning (Eyler, Giles, Stenson & Gray, 2001, cited in Dorado & Giles, 2004; Cruz & Giles 2000). Cruz and Giles call for inquiry that: (1) focuses on the partnership, (2) includes partners in the research, (3) uses action research, and (4) focuses on assets. We address these factors: highlighting our partner-

ship, studying our actions and reactions, and proceeding from an asset-based community view. This study joins an emerging body of work that places partnerships at the center of analysis (e.g., Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Dorado & Giles, 2004) and that considers collaboratives that do work oriented toward social justice (e.g., Boyle-Baise et al., 2001; Jorge, 2003; Kinnevy & Boddie, 2001).

Bringle and Hatcher (2002) propose that partnerships are like relationships; they must be initiated, developed, maintained, and concluded. In order to foster democratic relationships, partners should communicate expectations, disclose self-interests, identify issues, and set purposes. In order to develop close relationships, partners should share influence, make communal decisions, and depend on one another. Partners should expect rough spots in their relationships and plan to overcome them. Finally, partners should determine ways to dissolve relationships gracefully. As we show, the development and maintenance of a working relationship was at the heart of our leadership.

Dorado and Giles (2004) suggest that paths of engagement mark partnerships over time. In tentative partnerships, members become acquainted with one another. In aligned partnerships, members confront problems, modify aims, and try again. In committed partnerships, members value the partners themselves, even beyond the immediate project. Aligned engagements tend to be short-lived; partners give up or become committed to their effort. Dorado and Giles are unsure why partners become committed. We think the partnership's purpose matters. As we show, belief in the just nature of our work helped us commit to a long-term partnership.

We considered ourselves a community of practice (e.g., Wenger, 1999), which is marked by mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire of experience. Mutual engagement creates relationships among a diverse group of people. Joint enterprise is the result of collective negotiation; often the enterprise is defined and redefined by the group. Shared repertoire is a set of common meanings, stories, and resources that a group develops over time. Wenger notes that disagreements can form in communities of practice, and dissent can reveal greater commitment to the group than conformity. In our case, our community did not come easily. As we show, we struggled to understand different standpoints related to race or profession. We suggest that negotiation strengthened our group.

LEADERSHIP AND RACISM

Cross (2005) challenges educators to address the realities of new racism in their programs and practices. Old racism was a visible system of prejudice and supremacy. Individuals knowingly enacted it, often in physically brutal ways (e.g., de jure segregation, lynchings, etc.).

New racism is an invisible system of dominion and power. Individuals eschew being racist, but racism is built into knowledge, institutions, and social relations in insidious ways (Fiske, 1993, cited in Cross, 2005). Well-intentioned, socially aware professionals can unconsciously maintain racism through easy acceptance of white privilege (Dyson, 2000). Cross urges educators (especially white teacher educators) to be cognizant of racialized relationships: to question who we study, how, from what perspectives, and to what ends. Racial minority groups should tell their own story, helping to construct multiple, complex truths.

The BHP challenged old racism, exposing segregation as a reality in a seemingly liberal, Mid-western, college town. To some extent, a project focused on old racism prodded us to confront new racism. Our core leadership group was comprised primarily of white women, with one woman of color. The larger leadership group was racially diverse and the elders/alumni were all African American. A rich nexus of ethnic interaction allowed the BHP to skirt many pitfalls of new racism. As we show, unconscious racism cropped up time and again. The outcome of our collaboration depended on our willingness to learn from our partners of color.

LEADERSHIP FOR JUSTICE-ORIENTED SERVICE-LEARNING

The BHP was conceived as social justice education (e.g., Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997). It was intended to help youth: (1) develop a sense of social responsibility and personal agency, (2) analyze racism and oppression at individual and institutional levels, and (3) connect social understanding to civic action. In the BHP, students served as historians, as interrogators of racism, and as educators for local citizens. The BHP exemplified many aspects of Wade's (2001) typology of service-learning for social justice. It involved intellectual inquiry and perspective-taking, practiced social critique, demonstrated multicultural emphases, and fostered activism based on equity.

Student participation in real social change, such as building tenant councils, drafting legislation, or protesting injustice, is rare. According to a survey of almost 600 college service-learning programs, less than 1% of service-learning falls in this category (e.g., Housing and Urban Development, 1999, cited in Robinson, 2000). It is risky to involve leaders and students in questioning the status quo—and advocating for change.

As leaders of the BHP, we found ourselves in such a position. We aimed to inform—and change—public opinion. Justice meant telling a story of marginalization that had been overlooked and mostly forgotten. We had to dare to discuss local institutional racism. That the racism happened in the past and that our work righted a past wrong, probably lessened the daring needed. We

could hold ourselves at a distance from troubling times. Still, as we show, leadership for justice-oriented service-learning necessitates questioning your own and others' perceptions.

SELF STUDY

This study describes our collaboration during Year Two of the BHP. Our actions and reflections demonstrate participatory action research, a cyclical process of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting undertaken collaboratively by stakeholders for immediate, practical purpose (Stringer, 1997, 2004).

We used non-interventionist, naturalistic means to capture our ordinary actions (Stake, 1995). We videotaped meetings of our group and took field notes; videotaped public activities in which we participated; and collected our e-mail communication. Near the end of Year Two, Boyle-Baise interviewed each of us for 45 minutes to an hour, via a standardized, open-ended interview (Patton, 1990). She asked us to recall our motivations and expectations, to describe our challenges and accomplishments, to consider the impact of social justice on our leadership, and to offer insights to others. She transcribed these interviews and shared them with us.

We thought the interviews captured our individual views, but overlooked the communal nature of our partnership. We sought a more dialogic form of documentation (Marcus & Fischer, 1986). We conducted two, informal conversational interviews (Patton, 1990) as a group, lasting about 1½ hours each. We responded to a set of issues that we jointly developed in advance. We asked ourselves: Why did we do things? Toward what ends? and With what results?

Our self study was situated within a larger study of the BHP. As part of that study, ethnographic data was collected from all participant groups. In Year Two, our work focused on high school students; we helped them complete their inquiries in teachers, students, and curriculum at Banneker. Transcription of their interviews was significant for us. Their comments about our leadership caused us to confront our shortcomings and to rethink our actions. Data from meetings mid-year reveal a crisis overcome.

Boyle-Baise analyzed these data. She used an interpretive lens, teasing out categories of meaning that seemed important (Atkinson & Hammersly, 1994). She used line-by-line analysis to identify major themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and constant comparison analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to compare our positions across interviews and to suggest multiple meanings. She reviewed data from meetings and e-mails to compare our words to our actions. She created an "analysis outline" that identified major themes from the data for us. Each of us responded in writing to this analysis. Our responses were incorporated into this report.

PROFILES

The core leadership team was comprised of one African American female and five European American females. This group was supported by a wealth of people of color and local residents. Among the larger leadership team, one third was people of color, and several members were from the Near West Side or were longstanding leaders there. Further, the core group represented diverse organizations, all central to the effort.

Pat

I am a white, female, with 30 years on the job as a social studies teacher, community volunteer, and adjunct university instructor. Issues of social justice are foundational to my reasons for teaching. My involvement with Habitat for Humanity allowed me to see the potential of engaging young people in endeavors that seek to improve the human condition. My experience with Habitat attracted me to the BHP.

Betty

I am an African American female who is a lifelong resident of this city. I grew up on the Near West Side, near many Banneker School alumni. As an adult, I served as interim director of the Banneker Community Center. I participated in the BHP because I wanted to be certain that an accurate depiction of the town's black community was shared and understood.

Lynne

I am a white woman who has been teaching for over 20 years. I am a teacher educator and a social studies educator. I think community service is a wonderful tool to bring citizenship education to life and to teach preservice teachers about assets in communities unlike their own. Based on my previous work with service-learning on the Near West Side, I was invited to participate in the BHP. I saw it as an opportunity to respond to a genuine, local request, grounded in social justice.

Nancy

I am a white woman who went to a mostly black high school during times of unrest in the 1960s. In my high school, all sorts of things broke down because of race. I wanted to see what happened when this group of high school students realized they could know something about racism in their community that had never been taught in school. Also, I am the city's historic preservation officer. My professional agenda is to preserve old buildings. I was hopeful that the project might eventually publicize the true significance of Banneker School.

Leslie

I am a white woman in my early thirties. I was the new program facilitator at the Banneker Community Center when the project began. I looked forward to participating in the project as a learning experience for myself. I have lived in Bloomington all my life, but I did not know about the history of the Banneker School. I did not feel like a role model; instead, I thought I would learn along with the high school students. It was risky for me to participate. I had not been here that long; many black residents thought the Banneker Center was more connected to their community in the past. I took the risk, but personally and professionally it was challenging.

Bev

I am a white woman who has worked in community service for 15 years. Now, I direct adult and family services for the city. Programs at the Banneker Community Center are part of my responsibility. This project allowed the center to be seen in a positive light. One day, I was at Banneker and a brother and sister came in and reminisced about their days at the center. Their mother had gone to the school. There was passion in their eyes and hearts. Seeing that got me hooked. I was even more motivated after we met the high school students. This project gave me a chance to help them understand how to make a difference in their community.

PERSPECTIVES AND PRACTICES

In this section, we discuss three aspects of collaboration that emerged from the data: building relationships, working for social justice, and confronting racism. We include a number of stories in our narrative as they represent critical moments and invite deep reflection on our partnership and project (Schwartz & Alberts, 1998).

Building Relationships

At the end of our first year together, we presented our work at a conference. Each of us spoke about her role in the BHP. When Bev spoke, she said that our collaboration was "all about relationships." Six people, who had not worked together before, grew to depend upon one another as a leadership force. How did we develop a sense of *esprit d' corps*?

We had different perspectives related to our varied institutional identifications. Some of us were linked to Banneker as a site for preservation, others to its vitality as a community center, and others to its educational value. At the outset, Lynne asked us to "lay our cards on the table," or to share what each of us expected from the project. As examples, Lynne needed to write about the BHP to sustain her position at a research university. Bev

needed to raise the public image of the Banneker Community Center as part of her role in Parks. Bev asked us to identify skill sets that we brought to the BHP. As examples, Nancy and Betty were able historians, and Pat was well-connected to high school student volunteers. Bev told this story:

When city and community representatives come to the table, they describe their skill sets and offer resources to get the job done. When university people come to the table, they suggest ideas or theories to think about the job. At our first meeting, Lynne wanted us to consider aims and intentions for our work. I wanted to focus on getting the job done, but later I realized that this was Lynne's way of getting the job done. Later, Lynne started talking our talk. She realized she had certain skill sets too; developing ideas or leading research. We counted on each other to do the things we do best. Explicit and direct consideration of what we were getting into and why served us well.

Betty noted, "The thing I really appreciated is that we stated honestly what we needed. We really did listen and work through that." She added, "No one did the power game." By this she meant that no one tried to control or direct the project. Instead, as Pat said, "We appreciated our talents, strengths, and skill sets, and moved forward using them." We expected each other to do what each did best.

We also realized that we "sank or swam" together. The BHP was public property from its outset—born in discussions hosted by the mayor—and expectations for it ran high. No one wanted to fail to complete the project. No one wanted to quit first, letting other participants down. Leslie said, "The challenging part is not letting down. I was not going to be the one who stopped when all of you put in your free time. I didn't want to let the students down or the Banneker alumni down."

High school students were the central focus of our interactions. About 25 students each year participated voluntarily in the BHP for no course credit. Many joined the effort in order to right a wrong in their own community (Boyle-Baise & Binford, 2005). They did most of the work of historic reconstruction under our guidance. Our primary space for meeting with students was the "Friday Seminar," a bi-weekly time set aside within the school day for extra-curricular activities. During Year One, we used the Seminar to prepare for and conduct oral histories of Banneker School alumni. During Year Two, we used the Seminar to plan for and report on field research into aspects of the school and to check findings with an advisory group of alumni.

Only Pat and Lynne were teachers by profession; for the rest of us, teaching was a novelty. We were uncertain about what high school teaching entailed. Nevertheless, we decided to teach as a team, using our varied talents to organize lessons, invite guest speakers, or plan

group-building exercises for students. We spent hours planning Seminars, in person, by e-mail, and telephone. This process was taxing. Partly due to the challenges of collaboration and partly to our lack of teaching expertise, it took a lot of planning time for a little teaching time.

Unfortunately, Seminar was an elastic school hour; easily replaced by other school activities or utilized to make up school work. Students might be called to the auditorium for yearbook photos, or they might trickle into Seminar after their completion of make-up tests. These disruptions often caused us to revamp activities or to reduce reflection. Bev recalled, Seminar "wasn't a sit down and be ready kind of class. It was too casual for Lynne, especially, as a college professor." We worried about lost teaching time. We feared that students' grasp of social justice might be fragmented and their commitment to the BHP might wane. Bev noted,

We knew that the key to success for the BHP was the kids buying into it. I think they did, but more focused time would have connected them more. They walked away with an understanding of social justice in their own community, but with more time, reflection would have been more powerful.

One Friday, after learning Seminar was cancelled, Lynne's frustration hit the breaking point. She was ready to call a halt to the whole project. Pat talked with her at length, helping her see the serendipity of high school and assuring her that the students were learning a great deal about racism in their town. Pat helped Lynne approach Seminar more flexibly. We started calling each other on Friday mornings, checking whether Seminar was "on" or "off." The situation came to be taken humorously, as demonstrated by a story that Pat shared:

One Friday, Seminar was not scheduled, yet a small group of alumni showed up, eager to delve more deeply into the previous week's discussion of local segregation. I telephoned Lynne from my classroom phone. "Lynne," I whispered, "get over here, the elders are here." "No," Lynne replied, "Seminar is off. They can't be there." "I know that," said Pat, "but they are sitting in front of me nonetheless." Lynne dashed to school and barely made [it to] what turned out to be one of the most powerful classes of all. And, it was totally unplanned!

As the leadership team surmounted the frustrations and celebrated the joys of joint teaching, we came to know and count on one another. Team teaching was team building. Our partnership was shorter than some in the service-learning literature, but the intensity of team teaching, under public scrutiny, toward a just cause developed a sense of spirit, strength, and determination among us.

Working for Social Justice

Pat often talked about her commitment to "improving the human condition." However, making this commitment into a reality was challenging. "Chat all you want about saving humanity; it is easy to be an armchair liberal. We had to allocate our own precious time. We had to face issues." Alternatively, for Leslie, social justice was a "whole new concept." The BHP "opened my eyes to how I can take an active role in improving life for people in this community." Bev recalled, "What stood out was that, no matter where we came from, we were all very passionate about this project." Nancy said, "What impressed me about the BHP, from its outset, was our absolute consensus that it was a significant and worthy undertaking."

Leslie noted, "Students were the driving force behind our work, determination, and flexibility." Students' engagement in the BHP spurred our own. Betty put it into words, "The students were very interested in the project and so hard working that their energy was inspiring."

Nancy thought we had a "kind of fearlessness" about jumping into things that might engage and educate students. For example, we invited Banneker alumni to the Friday Seminar. They answered students' questions about their lives "back in the day" of segregation. Their tales were gripping and enlightening. Nancy recalled:

The people we invited to Seminar, we couldn't predict what would happen. That was what I respected. We gave real experiences to kids, and that just continued. It sometimes reached an exponential level. I thought this is real stuff. That's why I stayed in.

Action research was at the heart of our leadership. We created a lot of the project as we went along. Betty said, "[We] painted the train while it was moving." We interviewed students as part of the larger BHP inquiry and then studied their responses. Mid-way through the year, students clearly were disgruntled; they wanted more direction for their field research and more specifics about the BHP exhibit. Some of their interview responses were critical. Reading them was a jolting experience. We regrouped, re-consulted with students and then re-planned activities for the second semester accordingly.

Pat said, "Modification is *huge*. We deliberately reflected on the land mines and bear traps and rallied to find solutions to problems. I think that is rare, leaders just don't do that." Moreover, Betty recalled, "We did it over and over again." Why did we confront situations that were personally trying? Why didn't we walk away from problems? We were pulled in and along by a just cause. We were fortunate to see immediate impacts of the work on people, especially students, around us.

The following story represents the best of our work for social justice. It is about an African American youth

who transformed from a disaffected to a vitally engaged student. It is told collectively because it was jointly perceived as a treasure for the project:

Bev: The students thought they were just learning about the history of the Banneker School, but when they opened the door, social justice came in too. I can hear it when I listen to Andrew. He sounds so much different than he did a year ago. He is attuned to local racism.

Nancy: It was great for me to see someone like Andrew. He saw the local community with totally new eyes.

Lynne: I remember when we announced our first field trip. He laid his head on the desk. He did not seem very interested. Then, by second semester, it was hard to keep up with his excitement.

Pat: He began to talk to other students about activism. He had been a disengaged student up to that point. He has a real passion for issues of race now. He wants to know what happened in the past and where we are going in the future.

Betty: I talked to Andrew's father in a casual conversation. He said, "I had this quiet little mouse, all of a sudden, he's a man talking about social issues." It doesn't get any more powerful than that.

Confronting Racism

Betty's role was pivotal to our understanding of local racism. Nancy described it: "Betty's participation challenged our worlds." Betty saw herself as "wedded to truth" and was not afraid to challenge positions that partners took. The following story captures Betty's introduction to Lynne. Betty recalled:

I went to an open house one Sunday afternoon at Banneker because the local president of the NAACP called and asked for my help. He wanted me to get people who went to Banneker School to come to an open house to plan a reunion. I learned much later that the open house was not organized to help plan a reunion, but to introduce Leslie as center director. Lynne was there to greet people, as part of the Banneker Advisory Board, not as part of the Banneker History Project, but since a lot of school alumni were there, she was asked to get up and explain the Project. I thought: "Who is this woman? She will never get that project done with those leaders." One person of color was not from this neighborhood, the other one was born after segregation ended! I asked some pretty tough questions. To my surprise, Lynne did not get defensive; instead, she invited me to participate in the project.

Lynne remembers the event this way:

I was standing at the guest register, handing out cookies. I started thinking, "Most of these guests are the alumni we want to interview; I wonder why?" Pretty soon, the guests sat down at the table in the center's kitchen. One

woman asked: "When is the meeting about the reunion going to start?" The organizers of the event, Bev and Leslie, were taken aback; they did not know that the President of the NAACP had invited alumni to discuss a Banneker School reunion. Bev asked me to speak, impromptu, about the Project. I looked at the alumni in their Sunday best. I looked at myself in a polo shirt emblazoned with the center's logo. I thought, "I could not look any whiter if I tried." I did my best, but I stood out as a white professional from outside of the neighborhood. Then, one guest started to critically question the capability of the leaders to investigate the Banneker story. I was surprised to hear her describe the NAACP leader as a "brought on." Though he had lived in the city for 40 years, he was not reared around Banneker. Alternatively, this guest described herself as growing up across the street from the center and once serving as its interim director. I immediately extended an invitation for her to join the BHP. Before she left that day, she agreed to do so!

Subsequently Betty and Lynne met for hours at a time to discuss the investigation of the BHP, talking at length about race, racism, and the Near West Side. Betty explained that the neighborhood had been besieged by researchers, often college students, who investigated a bit of the area's story and then moved on. Frequently, they failed to talk to local people, especially black residents, about their history. Lynne did not want the BHP to perpetuate more of the same. She asked Betty to serve as her research colleague, finding funds to partially support her time. Lynne gained Betty's expertise, and Betty gained formal recognition for her contribution. We crossed boundaries of race, background, and profession to invest in one another.

Nancy and Betty negotiated similar boundaries to work together. Betty was an insider to the Near West Side neighborhood and black community. Nancy was an outsider and a city staffer who unintentionally carried some of the baggage from previous power struggles between the city and the Near West Side. Their first meeting was contentious; they disagreed publicly on a point of history. Nancy recalled the encounter in this way:

In my role as the city's historic preservation officer, I am often called on to make presentations. Usually, these are non-controversial histories of buildings in town. People are interested, but not particularly involved. Most residents of this town are not native, with little family history beyond the current generation. I stepped into controversy by assuming the usual reception. I did a slide show on the Near West Side, and I was challenged by a Banneker neighbor about bathrooms for homes. She wanted to correct the misperception that homes did not have indoor plumbing. My point was that few homes built during this time originally had bathrooms, as few had more than 1200 square feet, but all had gracious front porches on which to socialize. These seemed like facts to me.

Nancy felt besieged. Her professionalism as a historian was under fire. What she considered objective fact,

Betty considered subjective interpretation. Worse, Betty found Nancy's interpretation demeaning to the neighborhood. In fact, Nancy had spent considerable time investigating history of the Near West Side in order to challenge a common perception that it was the "poor, Black side of town." The tension was palpable and, for Nancy, painful. Nancy decided to pull back from the BHP, giving less of herself to the project. Interestingly, Betty served as one factor that drew her back to a central, leadership role.

Betty remembered the occasion differently, as the following story shows.

Very early on, Nancy gave a presentation to students about the buildings on the Near West Side. She said many homes did not have indoor plumbing. A few homes had outdoor facilities, but not all. Residents were very proud of their homes, and some black families passed them down for generations. I questioned her about her conclusions. I probably was not very diplomatic, but I am wedded to the truth about the black community.

Lynne asked me to work with Nancy to get multiple perspectives on the Banneker story. I invited Nancy to my home, and we sat around the dining table. I asked her, "where do you get your information?" She said she read articles and deduced the truth. I showed her some articles on the first African American employed at Showers [a local furniture factory]. I told her that calling Mr. Deal by his first name did not seem racist, but it was an affront. I told her that it was not only that he worked at Showers, but where he worked. He did not build furniture; he worked in the packing room. We met again at Nancy's house and, later, for dinner at a restaurant.

Nancy came to see me as a resource. She said, "do you mind if I send you e-mails with questions?" I was happy to help. I was nervous at first, but after our first meeting it was fine. Eventually, Nancy shared her office at City Hall with me during Black History Month. She continued to work with me to get the story about Mr. Deal straight. She did more than I ever thought she would.

For Leslie, Betty's longevity with the center highlighted her own lack of experience. Leslie functioned as program facilitator for the center of the present, not of the past. Betty's deep ties to the Banneker community made Leslie's links seem superficial by comparison. Leslie told this story:

There I was, on a panel with past directors for the Banneker Center. I was supposed to talk about Banneker as a historic place. I felt like such an idiot! I had only been director for six months. I knew what was written about the center, and how it functioned now, but nothing about its past. People were critical about the center. They thought it was not as open as it used to be. I started to wonder how the old and new could come together. Betty said to me: "You can help people see why the center changed, you can figure out why Black neighbors say the center is

no longer 'our' center." This project was very beneficial for me and the center. I now have communication with people I would not normally know. They can help me figure out how to welcome them back to the center.

These moments were uncomfortable, prodding us to face our assumptions about race. As Nancy recalled, "I'm used to doing pat performances. This was not artificial; it was pretty bare. That made it valuable to me, but it was not comfortable." Leslie recalled, "I've lived here for 30 years, and I didn't have a clue about racism. Here I was, helping to tell the story of the black community. It was risky for me." In our final conversations, much to Betty's surprise, we admitted that we had been afraid of her. Betty pushed us to look hard at ourselves, to question our whiteness, and to recognize our potential to misrepresent the history of Banneker School. Betty educated us about local racism, and, in so doing, reinforced the value of the BHP.

REFLECTIONS

In this section we consider our original questions: Why did we participate? What kept us going? What challenged our leadership?

The Call of Service

Each of us had a background in public service. We were teachers, social service providers, city staffers, and community activists. We believe that our lives are enriched by service, and we expected youth to be similarly engaged by public work. We shared an ethos of working collaboratively, for the greater good, despite tribulations. We did not play the power game, at least partly because we saw ourselves as service providers, not as power wielders. There is something to be said for an ethic of service; it can be a sustaining force.

We made a personal and a public commitment. We volunteered our time freely. Our efforts were sanctioned by our jobs, and some of us received time off (mainly to teach the Seminar) because the cause was locally celebrated. Perhaps the project did not fizzle out because we could not let it. There was a lot at stake. No one wanted to let the others down. No one wanted to let the project down. For us, the project was vital and worthwhile. The BHP allowed us to participate in righting a past wrong. We regarded the project as an example of significant public work.

The Pull of Just Cause

Our collaboration did not occur in the abstract; we collaborated about and for something. A previously silenced history of school segregation clearly needed to be

told. The social significance of the effort captivated us, bringing us into the project and then keeping us there. Pat said, "We helped the community hear voices silenced for 50 years. We knew the voices needed to be heard. When things got dicey, we clung to that."

Collaboration around social justice required us to confront racism. As Dyson (2000) and Cross (2005) suggest, well-intentioned professionals, like us, unconsciously support racism by failing to recognize our own privilege. In our case, we failed to recognize how little we knew about the Banneker neighborhood and how easily our actions could misrepresent it. Thus, Lynne was startled to learn that well-known, local black leaders did not necessarily represent Banneker alumni. Additionally, Nancy was surprised to learn that factual history to her was subjective history to others in the black community. The white members of the team needed to work closely with members of the Banneker neighborhood, with people like Betty, in order to recognize and challenge our presumptions.

This project was made (and saved) by elders/alumni who allowed us to document their tales of school segregation. We cannot overstate the need to spend extended time in a situation in order to identify and tap into local knowledge holders who are pertinent to the project's aims. We had to dig deeply to find people who actually experienced segregation; individuals were scattered throughout the area, and few held public leadership positions. Snowball sampling (e.g., Jorge, 2003), in which one participant suggests another, helped us find respondents not easily accessed through any one organization.

Once identified, we should have incorporated the elders into our core leadership team. We invited them to serve as visiting co-teachers, helping students sharpen their findings, but their leadership role was temporary and partial. Power needs to be shared all around in efforts to serve for just cause. As Cross (2005) suggests, a "flip in gaze" (p. 270) is called for; groups studied, observed, described, or assisted need opportunities to act in projects on their behalf.

Students' passion about improving the human condition sustained our efforts to work hard for the project. With the exception of Pat, who had witnessed student commitment to Habitat for Humanity, the rest of us were amazed at the seriousness with which student volunteers approached the work. Most of them genuinely wanted to make a difference in their hometown. We were continually reminded that students participated in the BHP for its own sake—not for course credit. The construction of the exhibit was a powerful trigger for students, and, in turn, for us. Their ideas drove the exhibition, and we facilitated their efforts. There were glitches and frustrations; some students worked harder than others, but for the most part, students' engagement in the project fueled our own.

The Development of Close Relationships

Our collaboration was a relationship, marked by phases of initiation, development, maintenance, and dissolution and by paths of tentative, aligned, and committed engagement, as Bringle and Hatcher (2002) and Dorado and Giles (2004) describe. But it was not stages of leadership that characterized us. Instead, it was the emotional, personal, and social act of relating that defined us. We had to find ways to develop, nurture, and sustain a working relationship. It was harder than we ever imagined. We struggled to maintain a working relationship regardless of distinctive personalities, diverse backgrounds, different organizations, and varied expectations.

The literature on collaboration skirts issues of relating; it needs to get more personal, more cultural, more conflictive, and more dangerous. We need to ask: What does it mean to develop and sustain personal, cross-cultural relationships among leaders for justice-oriented service-learning projects? Such projects are not easy; as we have shown, issues of injustice can spill over from the service project to the leadership team, pushing leaders themselves to change. We have tried to write such a contested narrative. We did not slight our conflicts, but truthfully, they did not overwhelm us. Most of us were mature women who were willing to compromise for the sake of the work.

The notion of a community of practice (Murrell, 2001; Wenger, 1998) seemed to suit us best. An ideal of equal partnership was our beacon; we understood that none of us could accomplish the project alone. We brought different perspectives, skills, and resources to the table, creating a synergy that sustained our collaboration. We also developed a shared repertoire, especially of stories, that helped us learn about one other, recognize our strengths, and laugh at our shortcomings. Additionally, as Wenger (1998) notes, dissent can represent intense commitment to a community of practice. In this light, Betty was the BHP's most ardent supporter.

Our experience suggests several avenues for future research. Researchers might examine the ways in which an ethic of service drives leadership for civic projects. They might consider the extent to which leaders' commitment to improving the human condition can sustain long-term collaboration. They might look closely at the impact of new racism on justice-oriented service-learning and leadership thereof. And, they might study the passion and pathos that can characterize collaborative relationships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Although one case is not generalizable to another, we hope our experiences spur discussion. We offer the following recommendations for "doing" justice-oriented

service-learning in a spirit of community with others who might follow.

Identify tasks that are just and worthy. Social justice tasks, that in some sense improve the human condition, can motivate long-term commitment. However, acting for justice requires asking tough questions related to culture, power, racism, and representation. Participation in social justice projects can be an occasion for serious self-reflection. Work in this kind of context can be personally as well as professionally challenging.

Invite leaders who are committed to service and who bring unique skills and resources for leadership to the project. Look carefully for leaders from grass-roots groups who can bring unexpected skills and connections to the work. Include people from the groups served in the core leadership group, blurring the line between "server" and "served" and bringing issues of equity to the forefront. Develop a mixed group of leaders who share a common passion for the project.

Focus on building relationships. Consider collaboration as working relationships among people, as well as across organizations. Think about tending to collaborative relationships like nurturing a friendship. Plan to communicate honestly and actively, over time, with partners as colleagues and friends. Envision your leadership as a community of practice. Negotiate ideas and meanings central to the project. Develop a shared repertoire, including ideas and practices for social justice work. Consider dissent as an act of the utmost communal regard.

Engage in formal processes of action/reflection. As this process underpins service-learning, so it can inform service leadership as well. Leadership for justice-oriented service-learning is risky for everyone involved—those who facilitate a project and those who share their life concerns. It involves continual attention to issues of equality and representation. Working with groups, students and elder citizens alike, necessitates sensitivity to new ideas, ongoing concerns, and momentary discontent. Ongoing modification of plans should be seen as healthy, rather than as harmful.

CONCLUSION

When we first decided to reflect on our leadership, we asked why someone might want to read about us. Leslie said, "Why not use our experience as a guide for others?" Betty said, "Let's try to explain what it is like to work for social justice." Lynne said, "I think we need to talk about dealing with our own diversity and our different expectations, to get down to the nitty-gritty." We hope that our recollections suggest what it is like to work for social justice from inside a service-learning partnership. We also hope that our experiences will foster more dialogue about leadership for justice-oriented service-learning.

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Marilynne Boyle-Baise is a professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Indiana University—Bloomington. Her areas of scholarly interest include service-learning, social studies, and multicultural education.

Betty Bridgwaters is a professional staff member at Indiana University. She lives across the street from the former Banneker School, and she was once interim director of the Westside Community Center (housed in the school).

Leslie Brinson is the Program Facilitator for the Banneker Community Center. As a result of the Banneker History Project, she helped spearhead the opening of a county library branch in the Center, named for two long-time teachers at the former school.

Nancy Heistand is the Program Manager for Housing and Neighborhood Development for the city of Bloomington, Indiana. She is responsible for preserving many historic buildings in the Banneker neighborhood.

Beverly Johnson is the Director of Adult and Family Services for the city of Bloomington, Indiana. She has worked in social services for 15 years.

Pat Wilson is the Social Studies Chair at Bloomington North High School. She is the director of the school's Habitat for Humanity chapter. She has been teaching for over 30 years.