

# **Developing Critical Consciousness and Social Justice Self-Efficacy: Lessons From Feminist Community Engagement Student Narratives**

Angela Clark-Taylor

## **Abstract**

As community engagement continues to be institutionalized within colleges and universities, it is increasingly important that it retain its founding mission to prepare engaged citizens to address societal issues and contribute to the public good. Unfortunately, dominant models of community engagement remain charity focused and thereby reinforce social hierarchies that undermine higher education's mission of public good. Though many studies have focused on critiquing charity-focused models of community engagement, few studies offer alternative approaches. Utilizing an intrinsic single-case-study approach, this study investigates what can be learned from the narratives of 12 students in a community engagement program that uses feminist pedagogy. The findings suggest that a feminist approach to community engagement can be a catalyst for students to develop critical consciousness and social justice self-efficacy by addressing issues of privilege and oppression in community-engaged work in ways that current community engagement models have yet to operationalize.

*Keywords:* community engagement, service-learning, critical consciousness, social justice, self-efficacy, feminism

## **Introduction**

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2015) defines community engagement as “the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity” (*para. 14*). Saltmarsh and Driscoll (as cited in *Iverson & James, 2014a*) note that a larger purpose of community engagement is to prepare educated and engaged citizens with strengthened democratic values and civic responsibility. As community engagement continues to grow in popularity and as more institutions engage their students within the community, it is important that engagement be seen not as charity, but as a way to promote education as a public good.

Currently dominant community engagement models are charity focused (*Butin, 2012*). By helping those without—in ways that meet the institution's needs over those of the community—charity-based models of community engagement only further the structural oppression of communities by situating students and institutions of higher education as a privileged class. Though students through these models interact with the community, they also implicitly learn how to replicate hegemonic, racist, classist, heterosexist, cissexist, and ableist systems. Iverson and James (*2014a*) suggest that if feminism is foremost about action, then feminist theories and practices or, more importantly, their intersection in feminist praxis—that is, theory-informed action and reflection (*Stanley, 1990*)—can transform community engagement for all students and institutions by implementing a critical approach to engagement.

This study represents an effort to contribute to the evolving discussion on alternative and critical models of community engagement by providing an example of a feminist model of engagement. I utilized a qualitative, intrinsic, single-case-study methodology (*Stake, 1995*), utilizing a feminist lens, to explore how a group of students came to understand community engagement and the ways that feminism informed and developed their critical consciousness (*Cipolle, 2010; Freire, 1974/2013*) and social justice self-efficacy (*Miller et al., 2009*). Most research on feminist community engagement has been conducted within a single women's studies course. This approach to investigating feminist community engagement has left a substantial gap in the research. My experience constructing and facilitating a feminist community engagement program, open to students from all disciplines, over the course of 2 years provided an avenue to fill this gap in the research by looking at students over multiple years and outside the women's studies classroom.

## **The Purpose of Community Engagement**

Two major themes in the contemporary literature on community engagement include community engagement as an expression of higher education's work in furthering the public good (*Banks, 2008; Deans, 1999; DePrince, 2009; Giroux, 2009; Saltmarsh, 2008; Tierney, 2006*) and providing tools to institutionalize community engagement (*Bringle & Hatcher, 2000; Brukaradt, Holland, Percy, & Zimpher, 2004; Butin, 2006, 2012; Furco, 2002*). The purpose of community engagement is to “enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching, and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the

public good” (*Carnegie Foundation, 2015, para. 15*). Kezar (2005) notes that one of the most substantial ways the public good has been reinvigorated in higher education is through the community engagement movement. Chambers and Gopaul (2008) define the public good as “an aspiration, a vision and destination of a ‘better state’ that we can know in common that we cannot know alone” (p. 61).

For the purpose of this inquiry, this definition best fits the public good as envisioned by scholars and advocates for feminist community engagement and social justice. For this reason I use Cipolle’s (2010) definition of social justice. Cipolle (2010) defines promoting social justice as “contributing to social change and public policies that will increase gender and racial equality, end discrimination of various kinds, and reduce the stark income inequalities” (p. 157).

Within a generation, community engagement has become commonplace in higher education (*Butin, 2012*). With the goal of assisting colleges and universities in “deepening their ability to improve community life and to educate students for civic and social responsibility,” Campus Compact is the only national higher education association dedicated solely to campus-based civic engagement (*Campus Compact, n.d.*). In 2006, over 950 campuses were members of Campus Compact (*Butin, 2006*). Today, Campus Compact has increased to over 1,100 members; it involves more than 1,800,000 students in 6,600,000 hours of work in the community. In addition, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching moved its community engagement classification from a voluntary process to a 5-year accreditation process (*Butin, 2006*). The works of Campus Compact and of the Carnegie Foundation are prominent examples of the growth and accreditation of community engagement within higher education. These initiatives reflect a shift in higher education toward institutionalizing community engagement.

As community engagement is institutionalized throughout higher education and as more institutions engage their students within the community, it becomes important that higher education scholars and practitioners maintain the intent of community engagement to contribute to the public good. Marullo and Edwards (2000) note that “charity refers to the provision of help or relief to those in need” (p. 899). Through charity, institutions with resources provide some of their resources to those presumably without resources. Acts of charity give students the opportunity to work on small problems or give financial support; they can feel momentarily engaged without engaging deeply in communities different from their own. Marullo and Edwards (2000) provide the example of a soup kitchen service project. White and/or suburban middle-

class students in a soup kitchen are there only to serve meals; as they see inner city residents of color utilize the soup kitchen over and over again, they may explain these community members' need for the soup kitchen not as a result of structural issues of poverty, but as a function of their race or urban location. Marullo and Edwards (2000) note that if community members are the driving force for change in their own communities and students and institutions of higher education engage with those residents in service of the community's self-guided goals, then they are more likely to see residents' poverty as an issue of larger structural inequities. Rhoads (1997) and Mitchell (2007) call for models of community engagement that employ a critical lens. Critical service-learning insists that students consider not only how we can help people, but the underlying systemic issues that create oppression (Bickford & Reynolds, 2002). Mitchell (2007) notes that attention to social change, questioning power structures, and developing authentic relationships are additional ways we can make service-learning more critical. This approach is not only more beneficial to the communities being served but also can make students civically and politically oriented, as opposed to charity focused.

## **Feminist Community Engagement**

Feminist community engagement is only a small piece of the larger body of work that exists on community engagement. Most of this work focuses on the use of critical pedagogy (Bisignani, 2014; Mena & Vaccaro, 2014; Seher, 2014; Verjee & Butterwick, 2014), internship programs (Bennett, 2002; Price, 2002; Tice, 2002), linking the use of a feminist label to identity or activism (Downing & Roush, 1985; Moradi, Subich, & Phillips, 2002; Yoder, Tobias, & Snell, 2011), and online education efforts (Cunningham & Crandall, 2014). More importantly, little research exists on feminist community engagement outside the silo of gender and women's studies (Bricker-Jenkins & Hooyman, 1986; Iverson & James, 2014b). Gender and women's studies scholars have focused primarily on theoretical and pedagogical considerations (Bubriski & Semaan, 2009; Naples, 2002; Trigg & Balliet, 1997), including scholarly analysis of pedagogy (Agha-Jaffar, 2000; Bricker-Jenkins & Hooyman, 1986; Washington, 2000), participant self-analysis (Bennett, 2002; Price, 2002), and student learning outcomes in gender and women's studies courses (Peet & Reed, 2002; Williams & Ferber, 2008).

## Feminism as a Tool to Transform Community Engagement

Building on the work of feminist community engagement scholars in gender and women's studies, I propose that a critical feminist lens may help mediate the dominant charity-focused models of engagement in higher education and provide an example of how to implement social justice focused programs that address critical societal issues and contribute to the public good. Border crossing between feminism and community engagement (*Shaaban-Magana & Miller, 2014*), as well as between the community and campuses, takes a relational and reflexive approach, using consciousness raising and disruptive pedagogy to subvert the dominant charity-based model of community engagement (*Iverson & James, 2014b*). Feminist scholars use border crossing as a framework for working across difference in both theory and practice. Critical race feminists and critical whiteness studies utilize this approach to illuminate the interconnectedness of racism, sexism, and classism that replicates the dominant model of community engagement (*Mena & Vaccaro, 2014; Verjee & Butterwick, 2014*). By drawing attention to the implicit and embedded narratives in community engagement, critical race feminists expose how the depiction of the engaged student as the well-to-do white male providing acts of charity to save poor men and women of color upholds that status quo for those students who participate in this model.

Rather than converting students to a particular ideology, "feminist pedagogies have advocated for transformation of the traditional power dynamic of the classroom that positions the instructor as the sole expert and unquestioned authority in the room" (*Bisignani, 2014, p. 97*). Influenced by Freire's (1970/1999) resistance to the banking method of education and Hooks's (1994) call for meaning-making among students and teachers in the classroom, feminist community engagement is able to work toward deconstructing these hierarchies. This method of co-mentoring and reciprocal teaching not only disrupts the hierarchy in the classroom but also works to "disrupt dichotomous notions of gender, race, class, sexuality, ability and other social factors and to illuminate the power dynamics inherent in the creation of meaning" (*Seher, 2014, p. 119*). Through raising awareness and professional role modeling, feminist pedagogy can be a powerful tool in any arena (*Seher, 2014*). Mentorship not only from instructors, but also from community partners and peers, can bring great value to student learning. Modeling of feminist identities can facilitate students'

experimentation with activism and social justice (Clark-Taylor, Mitchell, & Rich, 2014).

These approaches are an important reminder that good community engagement is about helping our students see their potential to be agents of social change (Cunningham & Crandall, 2014). Feminist community engagement is uniquely situated to push this dialogue forward. Though it is clear that the mission of gender and women's studies influences feminist community engagement, it is also clear that there are many benefits of utilizing feminism as a tool to transform community engagement throughout higher education. These benefits include critical consciousness (Cipolle, 2010; Freire, 1974/1999) or students' deeper awareness of their own privileges, relating to others, a critical understanding of social issues, and hands-on experience working for social change.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Though there are many types of feminism or feminisms (Hart, 2006), they share the following beliefs: (a) that sex and gender inequities exist; (b) that these inequities are socially constructed (they are not natural or essential); (c) that these inequities should be eliminated through social change; and (d) that other similar power and inequity systems exist in other forms of difference, including race, class, citizenship, sexual orientation, sexuality, and ability (Allan, 2010). I approach this work as a critical constructivist and use a bricolage of feminist thought as a theoretical frame in which to explore student experiences of feminist community engagement. Bricolage uses multiple and at times contradictory theoretical perspectives to create more complex understandings that are fitted to the particular study context (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014; Kincheloe & Berry, 2004). My emerging bricolage, introduced more commonly by contemporary feminist thinkers (Baumgardner & Richards, 2005; Heywood & Drake, 1997; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1983; Walker, 1995), draws on woman of color feminisms (Collins, 2010; Lorde, 1984; Tong, 2014); it employs critical feminist theories of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991), standpoint theory (Collins, 1990; Harding, 1987), and feminist concepts of power (Allan, 2010; Foucault, 1982) in an attempt to consciously work for the inclusion of diverse voices within feminist research.

Mann (2013) notes five areas of overlap within intersectionality, standpoint theory, and concepts of power, including (a) having a shared grounding in a social constructivist view of knowledge and therefore the relationship between knowledge and power; (b)

understanding the erasure of voices within feminist movements and seeking to give voice to nondominant groups; (c) agreeing that there are no universal experiences and that research is not value neutral; (d) recognizing that individuals construct knowledge and discourse and also are constructed by them; and (e) pointing to multiple and not always traditional sites of knowledge production.

This study employs a bricolage of feminist thought to draw on the commonalities in multiple feminist theoretical approaches to investigate individual meaning-making; however, it also draws on the uniqueness of each approach to make sense of experience across individuals, to investigate power relationships, and to seek transformation and social change. Few studies have employed this approach, and all draw on many different scholars (*Pitre, Kushner, Raine, & Hegadoren, 2013; Safarik, 2003; Sprague, 2005*). Pitre et al. (2013) note that “a critical perspective permits an examination of human action and interaction in dialectic relationship with social structural constraints” (p. 121). Change can therefore be obstructed by structures of power and domination. The critical researcher then investigates reflexive practices and personal meanings within individuals’ symbolic worlds that seek to transform oppression (*Pitre et al., 2013*). Pitre et al.’s (2013) lens pays particular attention to how aspects of personal identity, such as sex, gender, race, class, sexual orientation, ability, and other axes of difference, are exploited to remove individual and collective agency. An important tension is worth noting. As feminism is historically rooted in gender (*Allan, 2010*) as its primary lens, it may be hard to reconcile feminism’s emerging theories that focus on employing an intersectional lens (*Collins, 2010; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1983*). It is with this critical intersectional lens (*Crenshaw, 1991*), feminist concepts of power (*Allan, 2010; Foucault, 1982*), and lived queer (*Abes, 2009; Self, 2015*) and antiracist white feminist activism (*Linder, 2015*) that I approach this work, using a bricolage of feminist theories and lived experiences. Because sociopolitical contexts are rapidly changing and informing feminist theories, I found it unrealistic to apply only one theory, but instead found common ground in intersectionality (*Crenshaw, 1991*), standpoint theory (*Collins 1990; Harding, 1987*), and theories of power (*Allan, 2010; Tong, 2014*). As feminism seeks to raise collective consciousness and transform personal and political realities (*Naples, 2003*), I believe feminism has grown and can continue to grow in this direction.

My use of a feminist bricolage sought to reveal how personal, symbolic, structural, and ideological contexts affected the understanding and meaning-making of individuals, thus giving a voice

to traditionally silenced individuals (*Sprague, 2005*). Case study as a methodological and analytical tool fits within this bricolage approach exceptionally well, with its clear focus on how participant storytellers view their agency in the world, how power and alienation limit knowers, and how individual resistance and emancipation can create social justice (*Safarik, 2003*).

## Methodology

Case study as an analytical tool fits well within my feminist approach to this study, as both the program in this study and the study design are informed by their unique context. Flyvbjerg (*2011*) defines a case study as an “intensive analysis of an individual unit as a person or community stressing developmental factors in relation to environment” (*p. 301*). Stake (*1995*) would refer to this as a “bounded system” (*p. 2*). This study employed a single-case-study methodology (*Stake, 1995*) and focused on the phenomenon of the Summer Internship in Feminist Community Engagement (SIFCE) program. The study is unique in that it does not focus on more than one entity or common event occurring over different time periods. In that it focuses on a specific phenomenon rather than seeking generalizations, it is intrinsic (*Stake, 1995*). My interest in this case is based on both its particular nature and its uniqueness in speaking to the concept of feminist community engagement. Finally, it is also a pragmatic case in that this study is guided by focused questions that influence the approach to data analysis (*Stake, 1995*). Starting with intrinsic single-case studies, Stake (*1995*) notes that we must see the importance of one story and not compare but merely seek to know this particular case more deeply. He describes how sometimes that case chooses us; for instance, when a teacher decides to study a phenomenon or a student experience in their classroom (*Stake, 1995*). As the creator and facilitator of the SIFCE program, I found that this approach resonated with the goal of this study. This study was guided by the following questions:

1. What can we learn from student experiences within a feminist community engagement program about feminism as a means to foster students’ critical consciousness and social justice self-efficacy?
2. What can student experiences within a feminist community engagement program tell us about feminism as a theoretical and practical tool to move the dominant community engagement model of charity toward a social justice model?



## **The Case: Summer Internship in Feminist Community Engagement**

The SIFCE program was created and conducted at a private, research-intensive university in the northeast United States that is located in a postindustrial city with a long history of feminist activism. The program was created at the university at which I worked as a coordinator of the Gender and Women's Studies Center (GWC). The SIFCE program, open to all undergraduate students, combined a professional internship experience with guest speakers, field trips to historic sites, and readings and reflections on feminist community engagement. The program's combination of academic, experiential, and professional experiences was meant to inspire and equip participants to become stronger, more prepared leaders for social change. The community partners were selected based on their preexisting relationships with the GWC program. The only requirement of the community-based organizations was that they provide participants with a feminist-identified supervisor.

The participants worked 20 to 25 hours per week at their internship sites. In addition, participants met throughout the week for workshops, discussion of readings, and to hear from guest speakers. Participants also used this time to reflect on their internships. Field trips were arranged to local historic sites that helped participants to learn about the long history of feminist community engagement in the area. As the facilitator, I also kept in touch with the community-based organizations and site supervisors at least biweekly.

Each year participants completed internships at different sites across the city; however, they also shared time living and learning together within their cohort. Several of the community-based internship sites were the same for the 2014 and 2015 cohorts; the only two participants who shared a site were Mason and Denise. For a point of reference on shared classroom experiences, Abigail, Olivia, Ava, Lea, Stacey, Denise, and Mason were in the 2014 cohort, and Emma, Tanvi, Tom, Aiden, and Deanna were in the 2015 cohort. In addition, participants came from different majors across the university, but I believe it is important to note that four out of the five 2015 cohort participants were women's studies majors or minors, with the fifth participant completing a senior project in women's studies. I believe this difference in previous exposure to feminist thought shaped the way that participants talked about their experience. This is reflected in the participant table and discussed within the findings.

## Sample

The sample selected for this research was composed of pre-existing data, consisting of 12 undergraduate student applications, reflections, in-class assignments, and evaluations gathered from two SIFCE cohorts from 2014 and 2015. The 12 students in the summer program were selected through an application and interview process conducted by both university staff and community partners. In the application, students identified past volunteer, work, and academic experience in addition to providing an essay on what they hoped to gain from and bring to the program. Only one applicant was turned away due to lack of funding; one applicant chose not to accept a place in the program, and one student received a national social justice related internship and participated in only part of the program. Participants were recruited into the study in August 2015 after their completion of the summer program. Written consent from each student participant was required and collected as directed by Institutional Review Board protocol. The resulting 12 student participants came from majors across the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences and were interested in learning more about feminism and community engagement. Not all students identified as feminists. For a summary of participants, internship sites, cohort year, and self-reported demographics, see Table 1.

**Table 1. Study Participants at a Glance**

Name	Cohort	Internship site	Major	Self-described identity
Ava	2014	LGBT community center	Bioethics	Krio-American woman, straight, middle-class, grew up in the Western U.S., youngest of three sisters, raised by a single mom
Olivia	2014	Domestic violence shelter	International relations/ prelaw minor	Queer, white, gender-queer, feminist, sexual assault survivor, who comes from a middle-class Christian family in a rural community in the Northeastern U.S.

Name	Cohort	Internship site	Major	Self-described identity
Mason	2014	Justice and legal advocacy organization	Political science	Straight, white, cis-gender woman, anarchist, feminist, working-class, raised locally by her father, transferred from local community college
Denise	2014	Justice and legal advocacy organization	English/history	Lesbian, feminist, white woman, middle-class, grew up in a suburb of the local community
Abigail	2014	Homeless youth shelter	International relations/history	White woman, straight, upper-middle-class, who grew up in the Western U.S. and is a member of an athletic team
Lea	2014	Girls' charter school	Psychology	Black disabled female with cerebral palsy and autism, Nigerian, grew up in the Southern U.S.
Stacey	2014	Reproductive health clinic	Public health	Undocumented immigrant, Mexican-American, cis woman, straight, working-class, feminist, who grew up in a suburban area outside a major urban area in the Midwestern U.S.
Aiden	2015	Reproductive health clinic	Public health/women's studies	Cis-gender, demisexual, white, lower-middle-class man who grew up in the Northeast but went to high school in the Southeast, feminist, sexual assault survivor, struggles with an eating disorder
Tanvi	2015	LGBT community center	Evolutionary biology/women's studies minor	Queer woman, third-culture kid, Indian American who grew up both abroad and in the Western U.S., middle-class, feminist

Name	Cohort	Internship site	Major	Self-described identity
Tom	2015	Justice and legal advocacy organization	Music/ political science	Straight, cis, upper-class, able, White male, grew up in local community, parents are doctors, twin, feminist
Deanna	2015	Post-abortion talkline	Women's studies	Puerto Rican woman, straight, who grew up "poor" in Puerto Rico, the Southern U.S., and in a major urban area in the Northeastern U.S.
Emma	2015	Human trafficking court	Public health/ women's studies	White, Jewish, lesbian, upper-middle-class, grew up in Midwestern U.S. suburb, feminist

*Note. All participant demographic information here is self-described and from participants' first program reflection. Some identifications, particularly as a feminist, shifted during the program.*

## Methods of Data Collection

Throughout the program students were required to submit reflections on their experiences in the community and in the cohort. These reflections served as the main source of data for this study. Reflections were used to focus on student learning and development throughout the program, as opposed to post program interviews where students may reflect on their continued growth after the program. Students in the 2014 and 2015 cohorts were provided the same seven prompts throughout the program. All 12 students completed all seven prompts. Prompts for these reflections asked students to explore their positionality, privilege, and views on feminism, activism, and social change. The prompts also asked them to learn the history, organizational structure, and funding sources of their internship sites. They were asked to explore how their organizations handle racial and other inequities on site and with the populations they serve. The final prompt asked students to reflect on their overall experience in the program. Additional documents were collected, including participants' applications submitted for the program and weekly evaluations on program content and facilitation collected throughout the program. Two workshops each year included student activities that yielded additional documents, which were collected at the end of the sessions.

## Methods of Data Analysis

The qualitative analysis in this study consisted of three essential steps: preparing and de-identifying the existing data used in this study; using thematic analysis to code the participants' reflections in order to analyze the data; and preparing a final report that included building a detailed description of the case, constructing student profiles and a participant table, and outlining the findings through themes. When coding data, Stake (1995) suggests a process of alternating between trusting coding and trusting initial observations; however, as Yazan (2015) notes, Stake provides little guidance on how to balance the two aspects of the process. Here I drew on Yin's (2011) work, making sure my theoretical framework, the theoretical underpinnings of the program, and the data gathered were aligned to answer the questions posed in the case. I then attempted to construct a chain of evidence (Yin, 2011). To build this chain of evidence, I employed emergent coding. Saldaña (2010) notes that codes are an exploratory problem-solving technique. The coding strategy I used was a two-part comparative process. In the first part of the process I became familiar with the data through coding for recurring language, symbols, and other salient emergent details. Throughout second-cycle coding I focused on building categories and themes that arose from the data (Saldaña, 2010).

## Trustworthiness Strategies

The highest level of trustworthiness was attempted in this research study, with particular attention paid to credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Shenton, 2004). To increase credibility, I utilized a methodology that acknowledges the insider role of the researchers to put the data in a deeper context. This was important to my role as the creator and facilitator of the feminist community engagement summer program. The methodological process in this study was intended to understand student experiences and meaning making in the context of a feminist community engagement program. Case study and feminist approaches to research make space for the researcher to explore and express their positionality (Nagar & Geiger, 2007) and connections to the data and participants. As the preexisting data in this study came from a program that I facilitated, it was important to have a methodology that made use of this connection, which in another context would have been a limitation. It was also useful to have a smaller sample size and the in-depth data needed to study this kind of phenomenon (Maxwell, 2005). Multiple data sources were used for comparison across data sources. Stake (1995) and Creswell (2007)

note that triangulating data by using multiple sources of evidence lends credibility to research findings. Looking at themes across two different groups of students increased dependability in the data and transferability of the findings (Shenton, 2004). In addition, I presented the findings of the study to eight of the 12 participants. The purpose of this presentation, often called member checking, was to increase the credibility, reliability, and confirmability of the findings (Creswell, 2007). During this presentation, participants were encouraged to give feedback. Findings were fleshed out in partnership with participants in this meeting. Participants who were unable to attend were provided the presentation and findings as a document and were able to give feedback via e-mail. An anonymous electronic survey was also provided to all 12 participants to solicit feedback.

## Findings

In presenting the two central themes from this study, I attempt to honor the authentic experiences that participants conveyed and the collective meaning we came to through our discussion of the findings. The first theme, the importance of feminist community in critical engagement, includes the subthemes of the value of multiple sites of support, building bridges across difference, and the connection between feminism and action. The second theme, examining feminist identities, includes subthemes of developing a feminist identity, struggling with feminism's contradictions, and choosing your own path.

### **The Importance of Feminist Community in Critical Engagement**

Participants defined the feminist community within the SIFCE program as being made up of the cohort of participants in the program, the community organizations in which the participants served, the historic sites they visited, their site supervisors, the program facilitator, and guest speakers. Feminist community activities were defined as reading and reflecting on feminist literature, discovering new language, hearing new ideas, writing to the facilitator, learning feminist history, connecting with community members, dialoging with the cohort, listening to others in the cohort, mentoring, taking action, and having real-world experiences.

**The value of multiple sites of support.** Being connected to and supported by two or three components of the SIFCE program enhanced the value of the feminist community for the participants.

This does not mean that participants did not find value in all the components of the SIFCE program, but instead that in addition to finding value overall they found support in particular areas of the program. The areas were slightly different for each participant. For instance, Aiden noted: “My supervisor was always extensively supportive and compassionate about my desire to learn.” Yet he was also inspired by the historical field trips and how they humanized historic figures for social justice. He wrote:

Being able to stand in the same room that Harriet Tubman once stood, look over the bed in which Susan B. Anthony slept, and walk through the house in which Matilda Joslyn Gage lived was life-changing to say the least. It helped me realize that these women were not supernatural figures detached from the everyday masses; they were regular people just like me, who did extraordinary things because of their unbreakable will and fierce determination to achieve social justice.

Though Ava worked well with her site supervisor and enjoyed the reflections, her two areas of greatest support came from the community at her internship site and the SIFCE cohort members. Ava noted: “Getting to hear the stories of people within the LGBTQ community (most notably the stories of those who are transgender) really stirred something in me. I’ve done so much reflecting this summer. . .” For Ava this experience, combined with the cohort discussion model, was particularly meaningful:

I’m very thankful for this experience and being able to explore feminism and meet with such great minds in readings and in person. It’s amazing to me how invigorating it can be to be in the company of like-minded people, but also be able to challenge one another. Confrontation can be healthy and argument and debate is what helps us to grow.

In the end these sites of support helped participants to balance expectations and challenges they may have faced from other areas of the program. For instance, Denise, Mason, and Lea at one time or another struggled with feeling that they did not fit in within the cohort. Their strong ties to their site and site supervisors helped them to still find value and meaning within the program. In addition, Denise found the readings and reflections to be an outlet, and Mason developed a mentoring relationship with the program

facilitator. In contrast, Abigail and Emma struggled with their site and site supervisor and leaned on the cohort, the reflections, the facilitator, and in Abigail's case the program readings for support.

**Building bridges across difference.** The feminist community and the differing areas of support provided participants with tools to navigate tensions that arose from differences in feminist beliefs, values, and experiences both at their sites and within the cohort. Participants investigated privilege and oppression deeply within the program and related their learning in part to feminist theories of intersectionality, but also to a larger extent to their experiences of reading, reflecting, and listening to the groups they interacted with in their self-described feminist community. These experiences included not only understanding the interlocking system of privilege and oppression, but recognizing how both sameness and acceptance of difference could build community. There was also a deep acknowledgment of how feminism failed or succeeded in providing inclusive representations of difference.

Many of the participants struggled to get this process started. Emma, a women's studies major, noted how difficult talking about privilege was outside the classroom, stating:

I never anticipated struggling to write a short personal reflection on privilege. I practically studied privilege for four years, and it is one of the most popular topics of casual conversation among my peers, friends, and even family. I realized, though, that it is easy for me to talk about privilege when I'm thinking about policy and politics abstractly—[in] intellectual spaces where I'm not required to investigate or interrogate my own experiences.

Students' ability to confront their privilege began with an examination of their Whiteness. Mason noted:

Many of my other privileges stem from this one since it opens doors and honestly gives me a completely different world to work within. I am often ashamed of my social whiteness, wanting so badly to know what it is like to not be white. I want to understand on a real and deeper level just how much skin color effects [*sic*] people and when you come from the upper side of things it becomes harder to understand and [you are] mostly



dependent on finding that understanding through the [sic] experiences of others.

Mason started from a place of guilt but through experiences at her site, in-class readings, and discussions with her site supervisor and the cohort, she began to think of ways to challenge her own beliefs and improve her actions. She wrote:

To fix this it has to be everyone's responsibility to learn and be empowered to react to difference in a better way. I feel it in myself and hate the discomfort and uncertainty[;] I try to hide it, remember what I have seen others do in similar situations or quickly place myself in their shoes to judge my own reactions and I am sure more often than not I fail at getting it right but I try. I am not really sure how to handle these moments. These readings help tackle that.

Olivia sought to use her Whiteness to create space for the voices of communities of color, noting:

Being white gives me the power to challenge racism and be heard by people who won't listen to non-white people. If they are willing, I can also direct people to listen to the experiences of non-white people themselves, rather than to me.

In contrast, Tom sought to position himself as an ally and a partner to those in communities different from himself. He wrote:

My place as a white, straight, cis, upperclass, never systemically discriminated against being means I have much to learn from all others in the movement, at all times, and many more instances of privilege checking to undertake. I welcome this with open arms, and hope that I only get better at supporting the movement and morphing the system.

Participants who identified as queer or as persons of color looked toward feminism to be inclusive of their multiple identities. They questioned feminism's gender lens and challenged themselves, their peers, guest speakers, and their site supervisors to think beyond gender when discussing difference and inclusion. Stacey noted:

I for one do not live my life as a genderless (although I recognize some people do), anonymous person in the same way that I don't take off my Latina hat[;] they are all a part of me that influence every aspect of my life and not necessarily in positive ways and there has to be that explicit recognition in feminism too, both individually and as intersecting parts of my identity.

Deanna struggled with similar feelings and shared how the feminist community within SIFCE helped her to process larger tensions in the campus community. She wrote:

The SIFCE program has definitely showed me how much larger feminism can go and that feminism recognizes that EVERYONE is affected by these inequalities. Many of my papers and conversations with my close friends have always been about my concern with Latino/Hispanics never being recognized in the struggles that people go through. It always seemed to be about white and black people, there were [sic] no in between. Many of the topics, discussions and every argument on campus never have anything to do with Latinos/Hispanics. There never feels like there is a unity at the university with Hispanics/Latinos and Black People . . . "The Minorities." And it has clearly been stated, argued and been a constant mini war of hatred and misunderstanding between the Hispanic/Latino participants and Black participants. It has always upset me. I like that SIFCE program included us . . . used articles that showed that we go through things as well . . . these past years have been very frustrating with the lack of recognition of us as people as well.

A tension that became apparent as students worked to gain a deeper awareness of privilege and oppression was the persistence of gaps in knowledge. Ableism and how it operates in feminist communities became a trigger for many students to evaluate and explore these gaps in their knowledge. For example, Denise wrote:

It was uncomfortable for me to be confronted/confront myself during these readings with what I have discovered/admitted to myself my thinking around disabilities has mostly been so far. I think I have always thought on some level that disabilities are in a different category

than gender, race, sexual orientation, and class (not that any of these categories are the same, but disabilities always seemed even more removed from these, at least in terms of my way of things [*sic*] about them). The reason for this divergence in perception on my part has been, I think, that I always assumed there was something *actually* “wrong” with people with disabilities in a way that is not the case for people of different genders, races, etc.

Overall, exploring these gaps in knowledge became very fruitful for students to expand both their understanding of others and their definition of feminism. For Denise this proved very helpful. She wrote, “I wonder if disability theory has something more unique to offer feminism and feminist thinking.” In the end all the participants came to the conclusion that there was always more to learn and ways for feminism to expand through the differences within the group.

**The connection between feminism and action.** Participants noted the importance of action to feminism and the confidence feminist thought gave them to have what they called “real-world experiences.” Denise shared, “I feel a little better equipped to face the professional/nonprofit world now, and like some areas of work are not as sealed off to me in terms of experience and knowledge as I did before this internship.” In addition, participants credited feminism for not only providing them with real-world experiences, but experiences working for social change.

All participants noted the strong connection they felt between feminist theory, feminist community, and feminist action. All participants except for Lea noted that action is required to truly be a feminist. Lea expressed that though the connection between theory, community, and action were strong in feminism, it remained largely an ideology for her. Overall, participants felt compelled by the connection between these ideas to define what action fit them best, understanding that feminist action can take many forms depending on both the individual and their beliefs. For example, Aiden noted that feminist values of ending oppression were explicitly tied to action for him, writing, “Rejecting privilege in both racism and ableism requires constant awareness, action, and activism.” For Abigail, engaging in action while learning about feminism helped her to reconceive the type of action she would work toward in the future. Abigail reflected:

Seeing and articulating these things I feel about the Shelter would have been so much more difficult had I not learned everything I did from the SIFCE program. I was able to see these problems, and then connect them to readings about the nonprofit industrial complex. I was able to see how feminist ideals regarding representation and alternative models of leadership were relevant to a Shelter which doesn't have obvious connections to feminist issues. I was able to recognize deeper parts of patriarchal hierarchy than I was before. I was able to define exactly what set me on fire about youth advocacy, and I was able to see why my particular passion didn't fit in at the Homeless Youth Shelter. I was able to see what I wanted different, and I was able to see better where I want to go in my life to continue this work.

Ava expressed a similar sentiment, noting that participating in feminist action through nonprofits did not mean that was the only way to act. Ava noted that we can define this action for ourselves, writing:

I've gone from being unsure of my feminist powers to being positive that I was born a feminist. It is funny though that I've never doubted that I was into human rights (all for them) and I've always known that I loved activists, but I wouldn't call myself one. I thought that to be an activist meant to have a career in activism. Well guess what? I think that's a pretty rigid and limiting way to think of activism. I am an activist. I think I always have been and I know I always will be. This is because I recognize injustice and I speak up about it and find how I can help to negate it.

Ava's experience also showcases how feminist action gave her the efficacy to believe she could make change. Tanvi seconded this thought and went on to describe feminist action as a tool to make change. Tanvi noted:

I think I always knew that to be an activist required some understanding of what the current situation is, but I can now see it as an integral part of activism and active feminism. Being a feminist activist, to me at least, means applying not only feminist ideology, but feminist practices and methodology in your activism

work. I don't want to imply that activism is strictly the nitty-gritty, hitting the streets and directly organizing the community type of work, though it definitely can be. I think activism is broader than that[;] it's an effort to shift a societal way of thinking, that can be carried out on many levels and by many means. Feminist activism and leadership then becomes a particular way to approach carrying out this change.

Finally, experiencing and reflecting on feminist action inspired participants to gain a deeper understanding of the role that power plays in feminist action. Stacey began to see through her experiences that in feminist activism the community being served should have the power to guide decisions for how best to take action. She wrote,

It seems obvious that organizations should be started by the communities they . . . are supposed to benefit. They know the best what is needed, they have great insight and existing community relationships and in general it seems to be really helpful with messaging. I think feminism is very drawn to this idea that people know what they need better than others and they have the capacity to express those needs and the way to go about filling those needs and should have a great part (if not all) of the decision-making power, and that credit should be equitable.

## Examining Feminist Identities

Many participants entered the SIFCE program identifying as a feminist and wanting to gain experience in feminist community engagement. Other participants joined to explore community engagement through a feminist lens. At the end of the program not all participants changed how they identified, feminist or not, but all participants engaged in a deep examination of feminist identities and how this related to their own identity.

**Developing a feminist identity.** Four of the participants entered the program identifying as feminists. For example, Tom, Olivia, Stacey, and Emma came from backgrounds that included previous feminist work. Emma noted, "I considered myself a feminist activist before I began the SIFCE program. Participating in the program affirmed my feminist activist goals, but did not change my

thoughts about feminist activism.” Aiden, Denise, Mason, Tanvi, and Abigail described the SIFCE program as affirming their feminist identities specifically in relation to moving past the label of feminism to believing that feminists must act for social change. For example, Abigail stated:

I absolutely consider myself both a feminist and activist, and I did previous to my time at SIFCE program as well. Now I'd say I have a greater insight into the way in which I am a feminist and activist, since I have learned a handful of alternative ways to being both of those things. I now have an even greater emphasis on the value of listening and of a plurality of voices when leading or being an activist. I am much more aware of ways that feminist leadership has been limited or misinterpreted, and I am much more equipped to behave in a way that I believe will help the feminist movement to grow and become more inclusive and comprehensive.

Deanna and Ava described the experience in the program as a definitive moment in understanding that they were indeed feminists. Ava wrote:

And as cliché as it sounds, I kind of even feel like a different person. My mind has been opened to a lot and I feel as though I am ready to begin to tackle issues of social change in a hands on way.

Not all participants at the end of the program identified as feminists. For example, Lea believed there was a line between activism and feminist, and saw feminism as only an ideology. This was not surprising, since Lea did not feel affirmed in a feminist identity, and she did not connect her activism to feminism. Through an exploration of feminism Lea was able to define what feminism did and did not mean for her. She wrote:

I don't identify as a feminist because feminism isn't something one does, but an ideology/theory that one believes in. I can't act like a feminist or do something as a feminist whereas activism is something I can do and not really an ideology I believe in. I can consider myself an activist simply because I make it my duty to bring awareness to issues (mainly disability) that others don't consider or think about and try to do actions that would

help make the environment around me and others more accessible since society is built for the able-bodies [*sic*]. In the activist instance, I am actually doing something and not just believing strongly in a certain ideology.

**Struggling with feminism’s contradictions.** Participants struggled with historic racism and ableism within feminism and how this intersected with feminism’s cause to dismantle privilege and oppression. For example, Abigail described it as a struggle that led to a wake-up call not to accept feminism without critical examination. Abigail wrote:

My autodidactic investigation of feminist issues online is essentially the only segue I had into understanding other systems of oppression and control. And the way that I initially found them is through criticisms of the feminism I so dearly loved. (“What do you mean feminists are racist?” “What do you mean feminists are transphobic?”) I have had such little contact with people not from my same social positioning, that it’s been a *lot* [*emphasis added*] of reading to understand the things I do about communities I’m not a part of. But at least I have that to wake me up periodically from the illusion that I have everything figured out.

Olivia shared a similar experience. In discussing how she worked through this tension, she wrote:

Considering ableism is challenging for me largely because it’s new. I had been aware of the need to provide accommodations for people who are differently-abled/disabled, but it wasn’t until last semester that I began to see it as a mindset that needed to be changed. After the initial conscious-raising breakthrough, I had to begin taking apart my own negative attitudes, recognizing ableism in public, and working to not ignore the people who it affects. And because this is so new to me, it takes me much longer to break down the problem than it does for sexism, which I’ve been thinking about for a while.

All of the participants struggled in particular with ableism. In the end, the consensus was that feminism must expand to be more inclusive of other identities and conscious of all other oppressions as they overlap with gender. Stacey described this, saying,

“If feminism is in fact about equal opportunities, then we do need to acknowledge the intersection between gender and disability.” Though this was the overall consensus, not all participants in the end could reconcile these tensions. Lea, for example, investigated feminism and used a feminist lens throughout the program, but in the end could not claim a feminist identity. She wrote,

I can't seem to bring myself to like feminism. From my understanding, feminism doesn't seem to take an intersectional approach because it is mostly focused on gender issues and discrimination while forgetting about others who face other modes of oppression. Feminism always seems to assume that all identified-women face the same issues and doesn't really take into perspective that some of these issues are privileged and not faced by all. For example, some disabled females do not perceive (and the rest of society) themselves as sexual objects and thus it becomes hard for them to advocate for gender equality/sexual discrimination if they are rarely seen as victims of gender inequality.

Participants also struggled with the liberal feminism of some of the community organizations that were part of the SIFCE. These organizations were criticized for working within existing structures so deeply that they reinforced structural inequity and for taking positions that were less radical in their activist efforts than participants expected them to be. Emma shared:

I'm struggling a lot with my site. It's not that I dislike my co-workers or that I don't have the skills to complete the tasks assigned to me, but that my values and positions are in opposition to the ideological mission of the organization. I expected my site placement to have a social justice mission, but I'm not convinced that advocating for a fundamentally racist, sexist, classist, and ableist criminal justice system is in line with social justice ethics.

Emma's internship site, the human trafficking court, worked to keep individuals accused of prostitution out of jail by connecting them to a court-ordered rehabilitation program. Emma struggled with this decriminalizing approach as opposed to an approach that legalized prostitution. Emma wrote, “The idea of making change institutionally constitutes activism, but policing sexuality and



choices, to me, does not align with what I perceive to be feminist values of bodily autonomy and sexual liberation.”

**Choosing your own path.** At the end of the program all participants engaged in a deep examination of feminist identities and how these related to their own identity. There was an agreement among all the participants that, feminist or not, they could choose their own path. In the end all but one participant claimed a feminist identity, and all participants described community engagement and action as important aspects of their identity. Though there was agreement in the naming of these identities, there was difference in how participants envisioned carrying them out.

Aiden, Olivia, Mason, Abigail, Tanvi, Emma, Denise, and Deanna noted that they would continue to do feminist work in their careers in the future. Ava described that she was not sure she wanted to work in the nonprofit sector on graduation, but did believe she would continue to work for change and that her feminism would guide those choices. Tom noted a similar feeling. Although he did not rule out not-for-profit work, he was sure he could continue his feminist work, writing, “I am confident enough to know that I will contribute to feminist efforts wherever I end up.” In contrast, Emma spoke very strongly about finding an institution or program whose radical approach matched her own. In addition, how feminism was put into practice in their lives was described slightly differently by each participant. These differences ranged from taking a grassroots activist approach to working in education, research, and health care. Deanna described this, writing:

I do believe that I am a Feminist Activist. As mentioned earlier, I may never stand up to a huge crowd about a certain situation but I know how to use my resources of being more intimate with people that I know through one on one conversations and also the organizations that I am part of in order to get my voice and ideas heard.

Finally, Lea, who did not claim a feminist identity, was still able to envision a path of working for change in the future. Lea wrote:

The activism I plan on doing once I graduate is to teach younger participants to question and fight for the social injustices they and the rest of the world face. I can do this through coaching debaters and also working with my patients to help be their advocate if they need one.

## Discussion

Participants' experiences demonstrated their development of a deeper awareness of self, a deeper and broader perspective of others, an awareness of social issues, and seeing one's potential to make change or social justice self-efficacy (Cipolle, 2010; Freire, 1974/2013; Miller et al., 2009). Students began from a place of self-exploration and from speaking from their standpoint of difference or their particular lived experiences as they related to the larger sociocultural groups that they belonged to. Yet they mostly focused on power differentials and experiences that oppressed them and had little knowledge of the experiences of others.

As they began to share and listen to each other's experience and investigate how power operates in their lives and the organizations they were serving, they began to build a deeper awareness of themselves and others. Cipolle (2010) stressed the importance of understanding and examining whiteness in this process. Starting from the assumption that feminism brings only a gender lens, many participants were inspired by the notion of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) and how all aspects of our identity contribute to our understanding of difference, oppression, and privilege. Intersectionality was especially important in helping white participants in the cohorts begin to understand privilege and oppression. For this to happen, it was important for students to take a deep reflective approach and to challenge themselves, their peers, and instructors not to oversimplify intersectionality or co-opt it as a theory of "everyone is different in some way." Intersectionality must stay rooted in a lens to look at systemic oppression's effect on individuals who embody multiple marginalized identities. This is particularly relevant for Black women, whose experiences in the justice system were the catalysts for the development of this theory (Crenshaw, 1991). Participants who were confronted with organizations that served communities they were not a part of developed relationships with people who were different from themselves and learned to build bridges through the interconnectedness of working to end oppression. Being confronted with new information that overlapped with existing knowledge of self and others helped participants in that space to develop an understanding of why they had been resistant to social justice in the past. Thus, they developed a deeper understanding of themselves and how they create knowledge.

## Reconceptualizing Critical Consciousness and Social Justice Self-Efficacy

The process of developing critical consciousness (Cipolle, 2010; Freire, 1974/2013) appeared to work in tandem with the culminating stage of social justice self-efficacy (Miller et al., 2009), or believing in your ability to create social change. However, social justice self-efficacy (Miller et al., 2009) became both a culminating stage (though often revisited) of critical consciousness development and a motivator to learn how to employ social justice. This does not mean that all participants decided to work in feminist community agencies or identified as feminists in the end, but by the end of the program, all had developed some level of social justice self-efficacy, or the confidence and belief that they could effect social change. In addition, like many theories in action, participants' experiences showed that critical consciousness (Cipolle, 2010; Freire, 1974/2013) does not appear to happen as a linear process. Instead, critical consciousness appeared to be a cyclical process. Once students had gone through one cycle of the process (developing a deeper awareness of self, others, social issues, and seeing their agency to make change), at their point of entry, they continued to cycle through at varying levels of complexity in their awareness of self, others, and social issues. In addition, it did not appear to be a one-time process, but a continuous process that was sparked by the knowledge they had gained through feminist pedagogy to employ a reflexive praxis in their social justice work.

### Feminism as a Catalyst

Overall, findings indicated that feminism was a catalyst in participants' development of critical consciousness (Cipolle, 2010; Freire, 1974/2013) and social justice self-efficacy (Miller et al., 2009) in three ways: (a) by inherently embracing constructivist ideas, feminism is not disrupted by many epistemological and ontological lenses, but instead allows participants to learn about themselves, others, and social issues through the sharing of those different perspectives; (b) the intersectional approach of feminist frameworks can expand our ability to address understandings of privilege and oppression within these growing understandings of difference; and (c) feminism can expand our ability to understand systemic issues and give us the confidence to understand that we have agency and can access power with and through collective community-based work to make societal and institutional change.

Participants were able to learn and discuss different ideas, beliefs, and experiences around feminist community engagement. All the participants noted this exploration of feminism as important to their growth. These experiences helped participants develop from a space where one way of coming to knowing or being was ideal toward a space where multiple ways of knowing and being were embraced. Theory, action, reflection, or the praxis (*Stanley, 1990*) aspect of feminism and feminist community engagement allowed them to construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct their ideas about feminism, social justice, and their role within it. You don't have to be a feminist to investigate feminism for deeper critical learning. Perhaps for some participants any critical lens can aid in the development of critical consciousness or social justice self-efficacy. It is unrealistic to think that all participants will have the same outcomes or embrace the same ideologies. Overall, an intersectional approach to feminism can expand our ability to listen to others' points of view as well as our ability to address issues of privilege and oppression.

### **Implications for Practice**

A critical lens, such as feminism, should be used in current community engagement practice to improve program pedagogy. Positionality (*Nagar & Geiger, 2007*) is extremely important here because, as the students noted, it began the reflective process. Faculty, staff, and community partners should not only think about positionality themselves but should share their experiences with participants as a form of role modeling. Participants in the program noted that role modeling of how to interact in antioppressive ways in community engagement was an important part of their experience. Community experiences should be immersive and meaningful as well as including multiple pedagogical tools. Praxis is most successful when it combines theory-informed action, hands-on work, and reflection. Institutions can make their public good mission explicit through community engagement initiatives that employ a critical social justice focused lens as opposed to a charity lens. Findings from this study point to feminist community engagement as one such critical approach to engagement.

Participants in this case study who weren't going to continue to work in nonprofits still wanted to incorporate social justice into their "traditional" career or life in general, and therefore they found the program useful. Perhaps women's center and feminist academic programs should be used differently, based on the realization that they can serve participants who do not necessarily

identify as feminists. These sites could offer a required course on diversity or community engagement in addition to gender or women's issues. Centers could provide feminist leadership development for the campus in addition to women's leadership development. Therefore, with the growing demand for campuses to be more culturally responsive, institutions could benefit from offices already implementing feminist community engagement on and off campus. Feminist offices on campus, women's centers, women's studies programs, and women's research institutes—if they are even available on campuses—tend to be underfunded and understaffed, having little collaboration with leadership and community engagement offices, even though women's studies was on the forefront of developing community engagement pedagogy. Institutions should consider better staff, budget, and collaborative support for these programs. Finally, on a systemic level, accreditation policies and funding bodies should change their language and funding streams to emphasize not altruistic service, but social justice based community engagement such as feminist community engagement.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Deep exploration is important within case study research; consequently, one limitation of this study is the lack of data from the community-based organizations that played an essential role in this program and are major stakeholders in community engagement. In addition, the utilization of a secondary data source with 12 participants to represent the entire population sample can be seen as a limitation. At the same time, utilizing intrinsic single case study methodology for this project helped to show the importance of understanding this unique phenomenon. Previous research in this area was conducted with participants specifically in gender and women's studies courses. This study may be able to significantly expand the research in this area by representing participants across disciplines and across a 2-year period.

Many directions are available for future research in this area. Scholars should continue to explore the connections between critical consciousness, social justice efficacy, and feminist praxis within community engagement. Furthermore, we must begin to conceptualize these theories from a life course perspective as opposed to a one-time or linear perspective. Conducting longer term, more in-depth, or larger scale studies may aid in this work. It would be informative to interview participants and community partners or to conduct mixed-methods studies that employ the social justice self-efficacy scale (Miller *et al.*, 2009). Topics of interest that could

be explored include feminist community engagement facilitator experiences with feminist pedagogy; participant experiences and programs at multiple institutions; differences in outcomes for participants who identify as feminists and those who do not identify as feminists; exploration of programs that utilize feminism but not explicitly; and institutional and policy support for feminist community engagement programs.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, a feminist lens on community engagement within higher education can destabilize the dominant discourse within the field of community engagement. Feminist community engagement has the potential to create a stronger connection for social justice practice in community engagement in line with a public good mission of higher education. Reflecting on and making meaning of real-world experiences in feminist community engagement and examining feminism as an identity helped to foster not only participants' critical consciousness, but also their social justice self-efficacy. Feminism can transform community engagement for all students and institutions away from charity-based models and toward a social justice model. The intersectional approach of feminist frameworks can expand our ability to address issues of privilege and oppression in community-engaged work in ways that current community engagement models have yet to put into practice.

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## About the Author

**Angela Clark-Taylor** is the Rochford Leadership Initiative Faculty Fellow at the University of Redlands. Her research employs a feminist lens to examine the relationship between universities, communities, and students. She received her Ph.D. in education and a graduate certificate in gender, sexuality, and women's studies from the University of Rochester.