

## ***A Multilevel Analysis of a Campus-Community Partnership***

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Historically, engagement between higher education institutions and community organizations has been predicated upon less than equitable relationships. Far too often campus-community interactions have been based upon an expert model with universities and colleges approaching communities as problems to fix. In response, educators have called for a re-examination of the higher education agenda in its community engagement efforts and for a renewed commitment to collaboratively addressing social, civic, and ethical issues (Boyer, 1990, 1996; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Jacoby, 2003). As a result, over the past decade, greater emphasis has been placed upon understanding the nature of campus-community partnerships (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Clayton, Bringle, Senior, Huq, & Morrison, 2010; Sandy & Holland, 2006), specifically the web of relationships that form partnerships and frame civic engagement. And, researchers have called for attention to be devoted to studying the management of partnerships (Babiak, 2007; Babiak & Thibault, 2008; Frisby, Thibault, & Kikulis, 2004; Misener & Doherty, 2012).

Campus-community partnerships focusing on sport and physical activity for children are growing rapidly and have been shown to be effective in promoting healthy behaviors (Toh, Chew, & Tan, 2002; Cameron, Craig, Coles, & Cragg, 2003). These complex partnerships can include universities and colleges, children and families, schools, community organizations, municipalities, and state and federal agencies. Bringing together these often diverse groups can lead to challenges in agreeing on a common language, rules, expectations, and accountability (Parent & Harvey, 2009). However, most publications focused on community partnerships are descriptive in nature sharing best practices and lessons learned. They fall short when it comes to addressing the complexities of collaboration through theory development and analysis of the management of the partnerships (Dotterweich, 2006; Walsh, 2006). McDonald (2005) has pointed out that while partnerships in sport are a growing trend, the surface level benefits of human resources and financial efficiency need to be examined critically, as the promise of a partnership is

### **Abstract**

While greater focus has been placed on understanding the nature of campus-community partnerships, a lack of research exists addressing the complexities of collaboration through theory development and the analysis of partnership management from a multilevel perspective. Drawing from Parent and Harvey's (2009) management model for sport and physical activity community-based partnerships, the purpose of this qualitative study was to examine campus community partnerships from an individual, structural, and socio-cultural level. Results revealed, campus-community partnerships are heavily dependent on multi-level relationships requiring significant time and effort and must be founded upon trust. These findings should serve to add to campus-community partnership literature, while providing service-learning practitioners with insight into "common practices and pitfalls that may assist in" managing "the expectations of all parties involved" (Maurrasse, 2002, p. 137).

not always realized. Analyzing the difference between words and action is crucial at the outset, as the partnership is growing, and if the partnership is stagnating.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Parent and Harvey (2009) proposed a three part model for community partnerships encompassing antecedents, management and evaluation. Antecedents include the purpose of the partnership, the environment surrounding the partnership, both the general (i.e. political, demographic, economic, socio-cultural, legal, ecological and technological) and task environments, and the nature of the organizations involved (i.e., motives, fit, and planning) (Slack & Parent, 2006). In sport and physical activity based campus-community partnerships, purpose is best planned by the community partners and determined by their needs, but instead most partnerships are initiated by the university or college as a result of funding and the accompanying rules, creating a top-down power dynamic from the outset (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Jacoby, 2003). Alternative designs include a reciprocal, or mutually beneficial, relationship, where the driving force is reflected in common interests, objectives and a shared mission and vision (Parent & Harvey, 2009) and a decentralized, or bottom up, partnership where the community partner determines the course of action.

The second dimension of Parent and Harvey's (2009) model, management, focuses first on the attributes of the partnership including commitment to the relationship and its goals, coordination of activities aimed at reaching defined objectives, trust in partners, clear and unified partnership identity, evolution of learning by partners, mutuality or interdependence, creative synergy and staffing. Communication is another aspect of management and is defined by the quality of communication, level of information sharing and degree of participation by partners. Lastly, decision making contributes to management through the effectiveness of the decision making structure in place, means of conflict resolution, balance of power, and formal and informal aspects of partnership leadership.

The last dimension of the model, evaluation, is defined both by the method used (i.e., process, impact, outcome, formative, summative), and the outcome (i.e., level of satisfaction with other partners and the degree of success experienced by the partnership) (Parent & Harvey, 2009). Bringle and Hatcher (2002) proposed that evaluating campus-community partnerships as relationships could elucidate interpersonal dynamics important to intentionally improving alliances among all stakeholders. Investigations into this claim have offered preliminary, positive support (Kezar, 2011; Sandy & Holland, 2006). However, while efforts have been made to analyze community-campus relationships at the individual level, very little research has focused on effectively managing these relationships at the structural and socio-cultural levels (Clayton et al., 2010; Domegan & Bringle, 2010). As such, it appears that insight into the management of campus community-partnerships can be enhanced by applying Parent and Harvey's (2009) model to the individual, structural and socio-cultural levels.

Utilizing a multilevel theoretical framework offers a unique opportunity to gain a more comprehensive and systematic understanding of campus community partnerships as it illuminates the interactive nature between and among partnership properties at different levels (Dixon & Bruening, 2005; Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). Moreover, because organizations are complex, hierarchically nestled entities a contextual perspective is

required to truly understand the nature of relational networks comprising campus community partnerships (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). Multilevel theory can help to illuminate the interactive nature between and among partnership properties at different levels - individual, structural, and socio-cultural (Dixon & Bruening, 2005; Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). Kozlowski and Klein (2000) further contend that a comprehensive understanding of organizations requires an examination of both the top-down and bottom-up processes shaping the inter-organizational relationships. As a result of their study of community-criminal justice partnerships, Jurik, Blumenthal, Smith and Portillos (2000) maintain that “partnership interactions, organizational dynamics, and larger historical-social contexts must all be considered to gain a full picture of the meaning and significance of partnerships” (p. 316). Jurik, et al., (2000) also contend that partnerships are inter-organizational niches through which innovation and change occur. This definition assumes that organizational change is an interactive process which occurs through a both top-down and bottom-up manner. In their investigation of work-family conflict in the sport context Dixon and Bruening (2005) describe the impact of individual behavior on organizational and social level change as occurring through a bottom-up process and organizational and social factors on individual change as a top –down process. Dixon and Bruening (2005) state that “an integrated lens helps uncover the collective action within organizations and societies that ultimately produces change” (p. 247). Thus, the purpose of the current study was to analyze the management of sport-based campus-community partnership from a multilevel perspective. In order to do so, we examined the partnership between a sport-based service-learning program (Sport Hartford) and community organizations in Hartford, Connecticut.

Our research questions were as follows: 1). What role do reciprocal relationships play as antecedents and in the management and evaluation of campus-community partnerships? 2). How can the establishment of trust aid in the development and maintenance of campus-community partnerships? How can social capital be created through trusting relationships? 3).How can evaluation at the individual, structural and socio-cultural levels lead to the evolution of campus-community partnerships? and 4). What challenges exist in managing campus-community partnerships? How can these be overcome?

### **Literature Review**

Increasingly, scholars have begun to acknowledge the importance of developing a theoretically based understanding of inter-organizational relationships (Brinkerhoff, 2002; McDonald, 2005). Researchers have shifted attention from outcomes associated with inter-organizational initiatives to inquiry of characteristics connected to developing healthy, mutually beneficial partnerships (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Frost, Akmal, & Kingrey, 2010; Misener & Doherty, 2012).

In the educational literature, partnerships between higher education institutions and local communities have been re-examined through a relationship-centered lens. For example, Bringle & Hatcher (2002) described campus community partnerships as analogous to interpersonal relationships ~~that~~ which has offered insight into aspects associated with initiating, developing, maintaining, and dissolving inter-organizational relationships. Subsequent studies involving the topic of service-learning programming as a form of community engagement have explored the nature of campus community

partnerships from various vantage points, including community partner perspectives (Sandy & Holland, 2006), organizational culture's impact on partnering (Kezar, 2011), and differentiating transactional and transformational qualities in partnerships (Clayton, et. al., 2010). Much of the educational literature has yet to include a managerial perspective in its understanding of cross-sector partnerships.

The overall dearth in research investigating organizational dynamics and management of inter-organizational partnerships has also resulted in a limited understanding of sport and physical activity based community partnerships (Parent & Harvey, 2009). Campus-community partnership, in particular, have taken advantage of the potential upside sport-based programming can offer. Recent studies provide support for the health and socio-emotional well-being (Barber, Eccles, & Stone, 2001; Fredericks & Eccles, 2006) and educational benefits (Cooper, Valentine, Nye, & Lindsay, 1999; Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003) related to sport participation and physical activity. However, as in previous studies, these investigations focused on outcomes rather than an evaluation of the partnerships as the unit of analysis.

## **Method**

### *Setting*

Sport Hartford, founded in 2003, is a sport-based campus civic engagement program that connects university students, faculty, and staff with Hartford, Connecticut, United States of America to children and families around positive life choices. The program is housed within a sport management program located in a school of education at a nearby university. The unique role Sport Hartford has played in the community is forming and facilitating partnerships around education and health. As extreme poverty and limited educational options have been shown to be social determinants of health, Sport Hartford operates its programming in a neighborhood where the median income level is the lowest in the state of Connecticut and less than 20% of adults have a high school diploma. Specific to children's health and wellness, the neighborhood ranks among the lowest in the City of Hartford (American Communities Survey, 2010; Hartford Health Equity Survey, 2010; Kneebone & Garr, 2010).

As part of a larger study, we examined the management of two Sport Hartford's programs, the Boys' and Teens' Programs, for the purposes of analyzing the management of a campus-community partnership using Parent and Harvey's (2009) three-part model. During a three year span (2008-2011), Sport Hartford ran an after-school program, the Boys' Program, for early adolescent males (ages 9-13) at a Hartford recreation center (Hartford Rec). The Boys' Program used two 2-hour sessions per week for 24 weeks (two 12-week sessions) where staff (i.e., university faculty and students) and participants collaboratively planned and implemented a sport and/or physical activity session, an interpersonal skills lesson and a nutrition lesson with its participants.

The Teens Program, an offering of Sport Hartford designed for high school students connected to Sport Hartford and its community partners through previous program involvement, paired university undergraduate and graduate students with high school teens to provide academic mentoring and expose them to life-choice and professional options after high school graduation. Each session of the program consisted of academic mentoring as well as nutritional instruction and a physical activity

component. The academic portion featured a study hall during which the participants received both individual and group tutoring. Academic workshops were preceded by physical activity sessions that were chosen by the students, and followed by a nutritional component in which the participants and mentors worked together to prepare a family-style dinner utilizing healthy ingredients.

#### *Data Collection*

Data for the study were collected from multiple sources, thus allowing for data triangulation (Patton, 2002). Data from the Boys' Program included individual interviews with the participants (8) and their parents at the 12- and 24-week marks to gauge their thoughts on the program. In addition to the data collected from the participants and their parents, weekly program records and staff meeting minutes were utilized to inform the study. Data from the Teens' Program included individual interviews with the 21 teens who participated over the course of two and a half years of the program's existence. Additionally, data were gathered through communications with community partners, staff reflections and field notes (i.e., weekly program records and staff meeting minutes).

#### *Data Analysis*

All Boys' Program data (i.e., interviews, field notes, and program meeting minutes) were loaded into NVIVO 9 qualitative data software. Two members of the research team, who were Boys' Program staff, deductively coded the interviews independently (Patton, 2002) based on the existing framework of Parent and Harvey's (2009) model. A multilevel approach was utilized in order to capture the complexity managing campus-community partnerships on individual, structural, and socio-cultural levels (see Dixon & Bruening, 2005). For the Teens' Program, data (i.e., interviews, field notes, communications with community partners, and program meeting minutes) were coded by the program director, who was not directly involved in operating the weekly sessions. Following the initial round of coding, the program director shared the data with the two graduate student program coordinators. One student graduated after the first year, but the second student remained consistent. The graduate students offered comments on the coding and adjustments were made accordingly. Field notes were generated by the same graduate students as well as three other college student mentors. The program director again coded the notes using a similar process. The use of multiple researchers in analyzing the data proved effective as it allowed for investigator triangulation (Patton, 2002).

## **Results**

Since it is difficult to present the entirety of the data, we selected quotes that typify the management of the campus-community partnership between Sport Hartford and community organizations in Hartford, Connecticut. Results are organized around the three parts (i.e., antecedents, management, evaluation) of Parent and Harvey's (2009) management model for sport-based community partnerships. In addition, a multilevel analysis (i.e., individual, structural and socio-cultural) of each component of the management model is provided.

#### *Antecedents*

**Individual Level.** To recall, the first component of Parent and Harvey's (2009) model is the antecedents of the partnership. Analysis of the data revealed two individual

level factors served as key antecedents to the formation of the campus-community partnership: the individual motivations for entering the partnership and individual complementarity and fit of stakeholders.

*Partner motives.* An analysis of individual participants in the Sport-Hartford programs revealed diverse motivations for entering into the partnership. For example, adolescent males were motivated to join the Boys' Program because it provided opportunities to "play games that (they) don't play in school like flag football, hockey and soccer." With respect to the Teens' Program, Charlie and Julia, co-directors of Committed People for Youth (CPY), the community organization partnered with the program, initially approached Sport Hartford and suggested beginning to brainstorm on a program that would serve the teenage population who had graduated from other Sport Hartford programs. Likewise, Sport Hartford program staff desired to continue working with teens they had gotten to know but who were now too old for its other programs. As a result of the mutual motivation by individual campus and community partners, the Teens' Program was formed.

*Partner complementarity and fit.* When examining partnership antecedents on the individual level, concerns of complementarity and fit existed with respect to the maturity of participants and training and expertise of staff members. For the Boys' Program, maturity referred to the age and social development of the participants. Boys needed to be between the ages of 9 – 13 years old to participate in the Boys' Program because the program staff wanted to ensure that the physical and social maturity levels of the participants were relatively similar. Thus, individuals younger than this age group were not officially admitted into the program and youth older than this age group were directed to the Teens' Program.

As with the Boys' Program, individual maturity levels of Teens' Program participants were also an antecedent to the formation of the program. From the outset, the teen program was established to focus on assisting participants in successfully managing high school and progressing into higher education. Community partners and Sport Hartford staff agreed that the youth needed to be old enough and/or mature enough to participate in the program. Sport Hartford staff made it clear that they wanted "to make sure [the program] did not become too young" (5/7/2010, Staff Meeting Notes) or create too wide of an age range to where programming would be difficult to plan that addressed the needs of all program participants.

From the university side, individual fit was a concern as staff members needed to possess the knowledge, skills and abilities to manage the day-to-day operations of the programs. Prior to becoming staff members, individuals completed a service learning course in which they learned about the Hartford community and the community partners, while also competing at least 40 hours of civic engagement in Hartford. Moreover, staff members were required to attend a multi-day workshop/retreat in which responsibilities and expectations of staff members were discussed. Furthermore, one Boys' Program staff member was formally trained by an AmeriCorps coaching program and he brought his training to the rest of the staff. Through these courses of action, staff demonstrated the knowledge, skills and ability (i.e., fit) required to be members of the Sport Hartford staff.

Structural level. Consistent with campus-community partnerships (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Parent & Harvey, 2009), Sport Hartford staff and community

organizations met to discuss the partnerships that resulted in the formation of the Boys' and Teens' programs. During these initial meetings, a number of antecedent factors were considered including the purpose and governance of the partnership and the fit of the partners.

*Project purpose.* During the initial meetings between campus and community partners, the purpose of the proposed partnership had to be determined. Based on the environmental antecedents identified on the socio-cultural level (see below), each party agreed the partnership should be guided by four tenets: (1) academic opportunity and excellence, (2) exposure to varied sport and physical activity, (3) healthy nutrition, and (4) relevant and transferable life skills (e.g., respect, communication, leadership, etc.).

*Complementarity and fit.* Prior to the start of the partnership, each partner had to demonstrate structural suitability, or fit. From the perspective of the Hartford community partners, Sport Hartford was considered structurally suitable to conduct an after-school program for a number of reasons. First, Sport Hartford had an established relationship with Hartford Rec, as well as the greater Hartford community (see Bruening, Dover, & Clark, 2009). Next, Sport Hartford had previously demonstrated the ability to acquire the necessary resources (e.g., money, staffing, curriculum) to conduct an effective after-school program (see Bruening et al., 2009).

Finally, Sport Hartford was considered appropriate because it would be able to leverage local university students and student-athletes as role models and mentors, thus distinguishing it from other potential after-school programs provided in the Hartford community. For the Teens' Program, Sport Hartford had preexisting relationships with participants through other Sport Hartford programming, which was one determining factor in initiating the program. Sport Hartford desired, as did its community partners, to create a continuum of programming from kindergarten to college in same neighborhood.

From the perspective of Sport Hartford, Hartford Rec was considered an appropriate partner because the two entities already had an established relationship. And, the Teens' formation was a collaborative effort of Sport Hartford and its community partners. The community partners served as a resource for Sport Hartford staff with their insight into teens and their family situations based on long standing relationships. These partners also offered discussion and guidance to Sport Hartford staff and provided physical space for the program to operate.

*Partnership planning.* Partnership planning between the campus and community partners, as the final structural level antecedent, was comprised of several different components including the type of partnership, the creation of roles and responsibilities and the development of policy, norms and guidelines (Parent & Harvey, 2009). Although planning in many campus-community partnerships is initiated by the campus entity, the creation of the programs and their structure was a collaborative effort between Sport Hartford and the community organizations (e.g., Committed People for Youth, Hartford Rec). For example, rather than taking a top-down approach, the weekly meeting time of the Teens' Program was decided by both organizations by evaluating their existing programming and their understanding of the schedules of the teens, and then deciding upon a mutually agreeable time. A similar process occurred with the Boys' Program and Hartford Rec. Boys' Program staff and Hartford Rec administrators met to discuss the scope and relationship of the partnership. In order to ensure its interests would always be considered, Hartford Rec asked to have one of its staff members participate in the

day-to-day delivery of the program, to which the Boys' Program agreed. In doing so, Hartford Rec believed the power dynamics of the partnership would be more balanced.

**Socio-cultural level.** In addition to antecedent causes on the individual level and structural, certain socio-cultural factors serving as precursors to the campus-community partnership were identified. In particular, the neighborhood environment motivated campus and community entities to pursue a partnership.

*Environment.* As previously stated, an organization's general environment can facilitate the formation of a partnership (Parent & Harvey, 2009). When examining the demographic and socio-cultural environment of Hartford, campus and community partners recognized a number of community needs. First, education was an issue of concern as Hartford's public schools have a 42% high school graduation rate. In addition, Hartford was an open choice district meaning that students could apply to attend schools outside their neighborhood. Often, students would change schools without consistent access to guidance and mentorship. Finally, many teens lacked a strong family presence to provide educational guidance. As a result of all the above factors, campus and community partners believed there was a need for programs that reinforced the necessary skills to navigate high school successfully, as well as provide access to mentorship on the college application and selection process.

In addition to the educational needs of the Hartford community, the health of its residents was a concern. To address the rising obesity rates in the city, community partners acknowledged the need for programs that provided youth with nutritional programming and healthy snacks at every session. Many of the participants, and their parents, cited the nutritional focus of the program as one of the reasons why they attended and encouraged attendance. For example, one parent noted that while many after-school programs encouraged sport and physical activity, most did not incorporate nutritional programming, which made Sport Hartford a more attractive option to her.

The last environmental factor that precipitated the formation of the campus-community partnership related to safety in Hartford. As well as providing educational guidance and physical, nutritional and interpersonal programming, the Sport Hartford programs also sought to provide a safe environment during the after-school hours. One parent, who had three of her sons as participants in the programs, wanted her sons involved because she believed it would provide them with an opportunity to be outside of the house, in a safe environment. According to this parent, one of her biggest fears was losing her sons to the "streets" (e.g., drugs and violence) and she viewed their joining the program as a means of preventing that from happening.

## **Management**

Consistent with the management model for sport and physical activity community-based partnerships (Parent & Harvey, 2009), data were also coded to illuminate the factors that influenced the management of the partnership between the Sport Hartford and the community partners.

**Individual level.**

*Identity.* The first individual level attribute managed by campus-community partners was organizational identity. An examination of the data revealed that each partner recognized the key to effectively managing the program was being able to identify the needs of the participants, and then tailor the program to address those



needs. The “identity” of its participants argued for the Teens’ Program to address certain topics (e.g., dating), but the age discrepancy (14-18) between individual members resulted in variance in maturity levels. In turn, the relative youth of some teen members repeatedly impacted the program’s direction and focus. For example, 14 year olds were not ready for the college application process sessions and struggled with sessions on relationships, dating, and sex. In contrast, 18 years olds were in a different place. As a result, adjustments had to be made by staff. One adjustment they made was being more selective of the teens allowed to participate in the program. When Youth Corps, another neighborhood program for youth, asked if some of its older kids could join the teens, the maturity issue was reinforced: “[we] have tried to include them in our activities, but often times the kids are much younger than our group, [and] do not want to participate in the activity that we are offering” (5/3/11, Program Meeting). In this manner, the programs became more discerning as to who was allowed in as participants.

*Learning.* Organizational learning is another partnership attribute that must be managed in order to have a successful campus-community partnership (Parent & Harvey, 2009). While organizational learning is usually thought of taking place on a structural level, results from the current study indicate that it also took place on the individual level. As the programs grew from their initial formation, partners began learning about one another as individuals. For example, a few participants in the Boys’ Program noted how they taught staff members about aspects of their lives and culture: “We teach Ronnie a lot of stuff because Ronnie don’t know a lot of stuff” (Tyreek). Likewise, staff members made similar statements as they indicated that over time they not only received insight into the lives and culture of the participants, but they also learned more about themselves. Through the partnership, staff members noted feeling a sense of value and consequence when working with the youth.

*Commitment.* Another individual level attribute of the partnership managed was commitment. This attribute refers to partners being willing to exert effort in order to make the partnership work (Parent & Harvey, 2009). As programs entered their second year, the community partners and Sport Hartford staff discussed casting wider net for participants. For the Teens’ Program, it was clear that where the students attended high school had an impact on their interest in the program. However, where the teens lived and the other activities they were involved in increasingly impacted their commitment to participating in the program. Teens’ Program staff members managed this threat to commitment by emphasizing active recruiting and more contact with its teen members between meetings. Staff members were made aware of who could attend each week and made the teens aware of the upcoming week’s agenda so that they (i.e., the teens) knew what to expect. In this way, the teens would be more inclined to attend despite the distance to the program or other competing activities.

Likewise, Boys’ Program staff members also perceived some boys as not being committed due to their inconsistent attendance. When asked why their attendance was not as frequent as it once was, the boys cited conflict between the participants causing them to no longer want to attend the program. These conflicts most often occurred during the sport and physical activity portion of the program. When asked what they thought about the other participants, frequent comments by the boys included “some are pains in the neck,” “some of the other kids don’t know how to act in the program,”

and “sometimes they’ll just try to fight you.” Specifically, the comments were directed at two individuals. To manage this issue, staff members reminded the individuals that to be a part of the program meant being committed to program goals including respect and conflict resolution.

Finally, commitment by Sport Hartford staff members affected the management of the campus-community partnership. Over time, it became clear that the more Sport Hartford staff members made a commitment to putting in the extra effort to make the programs work, the stronger the programs became. For example, some Teens’ Program staff made efforts to build a strong community among program by supporting participants who were involved in other activities. One way this was accomplished was by the staff taking the teens to watch the sporting events of their peers in the program. Many times the staff and the teens would grab dinner afterwards, thus extending their time together and opening up more opportunities for the mentor relationships to grow. Structural level. The structural level factors managed during the development of the campus-community partnership included synergy, commitment, mutuality, and staffing. In addition, the structure and leadership of decision making were also managed during this phase.

*Synergy.* Partners who do a multitude of activities together maintain and develop stronger relationships than those who do not (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). For the Boys’ Program, synergy was best exemplified in the types of activities in which the youth participated. Although a few boys expressed that the sports kept them coming back to the program, others indicated that it would be boring “if we played (sports) all day long.” To this end, these boys maintained their relationship with the after-school program because of the “nutrition facts,” “food lessons,” and the “field trips.” In addition, the parents appreciated that the program helped “kids out to be respectful” and “show[ed] them teamwork.” In this way, the program made use of the participants’ and staff’s perspectives, knowledge, and skills to create a holistic program.

The data also revealed instances where the campus and community partners extended their efforts beyond the original scope of the partnership to take on synergistic initiatives. In one instance, campus and community partners elected to participate in a local neighborhood cleanup initiative. In another instance, both programs participated in an annual literacy campaign in the Hartford schools. In this manner, both programs grew beyond their respective scopes to include other projects, thus developing synergy and strengthening the campus-community partnership.

*Commitment.* Just as commitment was managed on the individual level, it was also managed on the structural level. For the Teens’ Program, the ability to build and maintain the relationships necessary to survive in its original form became a challenge, but the challenge was managed in a variety of ways. In 2010-2011, the staff instituted a policy where each staff member took on a “case load” in terms of being responsible for communication with a small group of teens and becoming “more in tune with their preferences and their lives” (2/2/11, Program Meeting). This enhanced the ability to implement the program and increased participant access to the lessons learned in the program.

*Mutuality.* To recall, mutuality refers to interdependence between partners such that each seeks to maximize benefits for each party while fulfilling partnership objectives (Parent & Harvey, 2009). Mutuality was managed in Sport Hartford’s commitment to

upholding its mission statement as it sought to achieve the campus-community partnership objectives. As stated in the Sport Hartford mission, quality and enduring relationships between mentors and mentees, or right relationships, were central.

Facilitating a structure in which youth and mentors developed strong relationships increased the youth's social capital as the Sport Hartford staff went out of their way to introduce the teens to new people in other community organizations and on the campus. And, the right relationships between the teens and Sport Hartford staff also demonstrated an increased understanding of others. Community partners took note of the extent of these relationships, as evidenced from this observation of a Committed People for Youth volunteer:

Last Saturday Kenny and Donald from Sport Hartford and members of the university basketball team spent the day. What was really interesting for me was to listen to the trash talking that goes on. Kenny and Donald and our teenagers know each other well enough at this point that they really go after each other verbally, all, of course, built around earning and receiving each other's respect. I think it is great to see the level of friendship and respect that can develop around a pickup game of basketball. And it's not just the players on the court, the other people sitting around the edge of the court freely exchange comments and participate in this social drama as well. (4/13/10, Communication with Community Partner)

*Staffing.* The next partnership attribute managed by Sport Hartford concerned its approach to staffing its programs. Success of a given partnership ultimately resides with the program's staff (Parent & Harvey, 2009). At its inception, Sport Hartford initiated relationships in the community without any funding. Instead, it established with partners what the community needs were and what type of program would best address those needs. However, the development and maintenance of these relationships, and programs, were closely tied to the ability to garner financial, and therefore human, resources necessary to operate the programs. The Boys' Program began by leveraging university funds with a federal matching grant focused on nutrition and physical activity. Resources for staff salaries, supplies, and transportation were provided through this source. And, during the 2009-2010-academic year, funding from the City of Hartford became a guiding force in program planning and evaluation of the Teens' Program. A small grant that assisted in operating expenses also directed Sport Hartford to design the program with measurable outcomes that aligned with the City's goals for its teens in terms of academic, health and social enrichment. Through the grant dollars, Sport Hartford was able to acquire the staff needed to operate towards accomplishment of the campus-community partnership's objectives.

*Decision making.* Finally, when examining the management of the partnership data identified ways in which the partnership encouraged bi-lateral influence and consensual decision with participants and their families were crucial to both programs' development. Sport Hartford staff agreed that it was "clear that more interaction with the participants and their families outside the regular weekly meetings has aided in relationship development and the duration and strength of those relationships" (6/30/11, Teens' Field Notes). One way in which this was accomplished was by creating a structure in which community partners felt respected and empowered to share in programmatic decisions.

Rather than a Sport Hartford-driven relationship, the participants in the Boys' Program noted how they contributed to the day-to-day operations of the program. Among their contributions, the participants stated they had influence over the sports/physical activities played, the snacks eaten and the field trips taken. For example, during the second year of its existence, the Boys' Program was housed in a local school while the recreation center (Jackson Center) was being renovated. When the time came to decide whether to stay at the school or go back to the Jackson Center, some participants and parents believed that the program should leave the school and return to the Jackson center. The Boys' Program staff considered the suggestion and went on to implement it as the program relocated to the Jackson Center during its third year of operation. The same type of decision making process occurred for the Teens' Program when it came to planning topics for weekly sessions and field trips. In this manner, decision making between staff, participants and their families facilitated the development of the campus-community partnership.

Socio-cultural level.

The needs of the community emerged as the central socio-cultural factor that influenced the management of the campus-community partnership. As Sport Hartford began to learn more about the community's identity by being immersed in it, opportunities arose for synergistic collaboration and increased trust between partners.

*Synergy.* Many parents were not comfortable with their children walking home after program meetings because of the neighborhood in which Sport Hartford operated. In addition, a lack of access to transportation was also reflective of the socio-cultural makeup of the neighborhood. Using a synergistic process, campus and community partners collaborated as to how to best address this dilemma. Solutions included having staff members walk home with participants who lived close by or setting up carpools for those living too far to walk. When asked to speak on this matter, one parent had the following to say: "It's too dark for Larry to walk home on these streets after the program so I appreciate (the Boys' Program staff) making sure he makes it home" (Larry's Mom).

*Identity.* The socio-cultural makeup (i.e., identity) of the Hartford neighborhood also presented an opportunity to manage trust as the partnership allowed for an environment in which its participants were temporarily safe from outside influences. Although the participants did not expressly call Sport Hartford a "safe haven," they acknowledged that being at the program kept them out of trouble. Most parents commented that the Boys' Program brought their sons safety and stability in an environment not known for those two qualities. As one parent expressed, "even if it's only two hours a day for two days a week, I don't have to worry about them" (Kendrick's Mom). The Teens' participants shared that their parents echoed this sentiment in that their main concern was "where (their) kids are and who they're with." To this end, the parents believed that "as long as I know (my kids) are at the Jackson Center with the program, (then we're) fine" (Darren's Mom). As such, the value derived by the parents from the campus-community partnership was the peace of mind of not having to worry about their children when they were involved with the campus-community partnership.

## **Evaluation**

After its three years of existence, the relationship between the Sport Hartford Boys' Program and the recreation center was restructured such that the Boys' Program

was no longer a stand-alone after school program at the center. Instead, the Boys' Program was combined with two other after school programs operated by Sport Hartford – one of which operated at the Jackson Center and the other of which operated at a neighborhood school. And, also in its third year of operation, the Teens' Program was restructured. The program retained monthly meetings while initiating a program at the neighborhood high school in which students were enrolled in a college credit bearing course. Data revealed that evaluation of individual, socio-cultural and structural level factors were influential in the decision to restructure the campus-community partnership. Each level, with its respective factors, is discussed below.

Individual level. Evaluation of the campus-community partnership on the individual level revealed that a decrease in lack of personal commitment contributed to the need to restructure the campus-community partnership. As the Teens' Program evolved and Sport Hartford staff attempted to identify a meeting time that allowed for maximum attendance, the teens' level of interest, as well as competing interests made these decisions complicated. The teens did not have an abundance of time outside of the school day to commit to the program and their extracurricular activities often conflicted with opportunities for the Teens' Program to convene. As such, inconsistent attendance made continuing the program in its original form difficult. Sport Hartford staff began to understand that it might be the case that some individuals might no longer be meeting the expectations set forth by each partner. And, staff realized that when this occurs, the relationship should be discontinued or restructured (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002).

Relying on college students, even graduate students, in key staff positions led to many transitions in leadership for Sport Hartford as well. The graduation of original program leaders in both programs, the promotion of the Teens' program's new leader into a new position in Sport Hartford, and the inability to hire a replacement for the leader of the Boys' Program all contributed to the restructuring of the programs. The individual commitment of these individuals in developing the programs were unmatched by those who followed them. New staff members did not possess the same abilities to be flexible and incorporate the youth into decision making roles as well as work in true collaboration with the community partners.

Also, an inability to see long term payoffs of mentoring youth led some student staff and volunteers to treat the program as just a job. As a result, some did not put in the time and effort necessary for the program to succeed. When asked at a program meeting, "What is happening within the group that is making participation poor?" the staff responded with revealing answers in terms of their own commitment to making the program. As the notes continue, the program coordinator asked the rest of the staff to "continue to push ourselves to have a clear understanding to what it is we want to do." She went on to ask each member of the staff to write a short definition of what they believed the Teens' Program mission to be as a starting point for planning and executing programming. She felt strongly that the staff was not all on the same page with goals for the program and its participants. (11/17/11, Field Notes)

Structural level. Evaluation of structural level factors revealed that over time, partners were not fully satisfied with one another and some partnership objectives were not being completely fulfilled. As a result of this evaluation, the relationship between Sport Hartford and its community partners was restructured to better meet the project

outcomes. Specifically, results indicated that staffing, funding and facility challenges were factors that precipitated the restructuring of the campus-community partnership.

First, after having three years of consistent staffing, a portion of Sport Hartford's federal funding was cut. Sport Hartford had its largest staff expansion in 2009-2010 so not only did this reduction in funding prohibited Sport Hartford from replacing staff members lost to graduation, it prevented Sport Hartford from staffing its programs as heavily as it had done in the past. While the inability to implement programs due to staffing shortages played a critical role in the reformation of the two Sport Hartford programs, access to facilities also impacted restructuring decisions.

The Boys' Program staff and Sport Hartford directors learned from the time the Jackson Center was closed for renovations that operating out of a school had its advantages in terms of attendance of the youth and the added presence of school staff. As a result, the staff felt more connected to what the youth were doing in school and had more communication with their teachers. However, issues related to access and the ability to implement the programs arose when the Jackson Center re-opened. Due to its renovations and upgrades, the center was in high demand. Instead of having the entire gym to operate its programming out of, as was the case prior to the renovations, the recreation center only allowed the Boys' Program to operate out of a portion of the gym. The limited space severely constrained the program from engaging in the types of physical activities that the boys had become accustomed to (e.g., full-court floor hockey, soccer). When asked if they would rather be at the elementary and middle school and have an entire gym to themselves or be at the recreation center and have only a section, all but Jason indicated that they would rather be at the school with an entire gym.

In addition, there was not a clear channel of communication between the community recreation center staff and the Boys' Program staff. On a number of occasions, the Boys' Program staff found out at the last minute that they would not be able to operate the program on a given day due to the center being used for other events. This left the staff the task of calling the students' respective schools to inform the boys that the program was cancelled for the day. Over time, the Boys' Program staff grew to be unsatisfied with its partnership with Hartford Rec. Likewise, Jackson Center staff expressed displeasure when Boys' Program staff members would fail to inform them of upcoming field trips. On one occasion, a grandmother, unaware that the program had a field trip that day, came to the Jackson Center looking for her grandson. Not knowing about the field trip either, Jackson Center staff had no answers as to the whereabouts of the grandson.

Eventually, Sport Hartford addressed the tension with the Jackson Center by restructuring its staff responsibilities and the programs themselves. Programming began each day at a school with academic enrichment, a nutrition lesson and snack, and then the Sport Hartford staff walked the youth to the Jackson Center for swimming and other physical activities. In this manner, the program was not solely operated out of the Jackson Center and better communication was required to coordinate visits to the center, when the visits occurred.

For the Teens' Program, implementation was limited without having the structure of a school in which to house the program. In fact, scheduling and the availability of the teens led to dissolution of teen program as it was known and reformation of the program

into a college credit bearing course at a local high school. In the spring of 2012, Sport Hartford restructured into a monthly workshop series. The teens assisted with Sport Hartford events for the younger children including the sport and nutrition clinics and the literacy workshops funded through the City. Sport Hartford also worked with a neighborhood high school to offer a credit bearing course for 20 sophomores that mirrored a course at the university entitled "Health and Education in Urban Communities" and incorporated a community service aspect. This course allowed for a more structured means of building relationships with teens and eliminated many of the challenges Teens' faced previously with transportation, attendance and interest.

In addition, as the program staff changed, so did the quality of relationships between mentors and mentees. Some new staff did not take advantage of the structure that provided an opportunity for additional interaction with the teens. In fact, some fell into a routine of doing the bare minimum to keep the program functioning. Staff meeting discussions turned into list of reminders for certain staff members who were not pulling their weight. Resistance was felt by program leaders when new ideas were suggested that would entail more time and energy on the part of the staff. A list of such reminders composed the agenda and discussion at a meeting mid-way through the spring of 2011 as program leaders encouraged the staff of how important it was "to come together and refocus" (3/16/11, Program Meeting). The leaders reminded the staff of the need to accomplish the simple tasks of "returning emails, updating [the website], [and] actively working to make the group better by being more efficient with our time spent in Hartford and also in planning." Lastly the leaders asked the staff to make a stronger effort to [be] deliberate in our actions to get the results we are looking for" with the teens (3/16/11, Program Meeting).

When approached by the Sport Hartford staff, both CPY and Youth Corps understood that a new direction was necessary. All parties valued the partnerships and did not want the barriers to operating the Teens' Program to cause the partnerships to dissolve. The partners were willing to aid in providing opportunities for less frequent, but still quality, interactions and sessions between Sport Hartford staff and teens that had been part of the program. In the spring of 2012, Sport Hartford operated monthly workshops rather than weekly programming. The partners also provided open space for Sport Hartford staff to meet individually with teens between monthly workshops to assist with building and maintaining relationships, despite the program moving into a new phase in its evolution. CPY and Youth Corps also continued to partner with Sport Hartford on field trips to colleges and other enrichment opportunities for teens.

Socio-cultural level. Consistent with the other components of the partnership, evaluation on the socio-cultural level revealed that community needs impacted the decision to dissolve the two programs in their original forms. Specifically, families moving out of the neighborhood, competing programs, and participants experiencing peer pressure to engage in other less structured activities initiated discussions between campus and community partners as to whether the partnership was achieving its purpose.

Although the program operated as a safe haven for its participants, the Boys' Program saw a few participants move away from the neighborhood due to parental concerns over frequent violence. For example, Fernando recalled the times in which he would hear gun shots in his neighborhood, followed by police and ambulance sirens: "I

hear the shootings and then the police and ambulance come... I get scared because (the gun shots) come out of nowhere.” For this reason, Fernando’s mother decided to move her family away from their neighborhood. Fernando’s mother was appreciative of the Boys’ Program and was pleased that her son was having fun at the program, but she stated that the gun violence had become too much and she wanted to raise her kids in a safer environment.

Some competing needs among partners also surfaced from time to time. The participants in the Teen program were being pulled in many directions by community organizations almost competing for their time and attention because the teens had so many needs. In the Teens’ program year-end meeting, a stated need for improvement in communication “especially with Charlie and Julia,” (CPY co-directors) signaled that changes were necessary (5/7/10 Field Notes). The Sport Hartford staff also realized a need for a “better agreement of the role of the Youth Corps kids” who joined the program during an intense recruiting effort prior to the second year of Teens’. The staff recognized that the Youth Corps “staff ha[d] been very supportive and accommodating” and was determined to figure out a way to have the kids who frequented Youth Corps programming become involved in Teens’ (5/3/11, Program Meeting).

Neighborhood socio-cultural norms were also reflected in the youth themselves. While operating at the community recreation center, “coolness” became a reason for boys to stop participating in the program. As the boys grew older, the “cool” thing to do at the recreation center was to play basketball with non-program members instead of being involved with the Boys’ Program and learning about life skills and nutrition. In their interviews, a number of older boys (ages 12 – 13) mentioned that they felt social pressure to hang out with their peers instead of kids who were younger than them (program participants’ age ranged from 9 – 13 years old). Over time, the social pressure led the boys to disengage with the program. In this manner, numerous socio-cultural factors precipitated the restructuring of the campus-community partnership.

## **Discussion**

### **A Multilevel Perspective of Campus Community Partnerships**

The nature of inter-organizational relationships involving campus community partnerships (i.e., community sports programs) can more adequately be understood through the use of an integrated, multilevel analysis. Like any relationship, campus community partnerships are complex and dynamic, operating as part of a larger system. In this study Parent and Harvey’s (2009) three-part model for community partnerships was enhanced by viewing the Sport Hartford collaboration not only from an individual level, but also from a structural and socio-cultural perspective. By examining the antecedents, management and evaluation of Sport Hartford at each of these levels, our approach is consistent with other research in the sport domain recognizing that “while single-level perspectives have some explanatory value, alone they cannot adequately address behavior in organizations and social contexts” (Dixon & Bruening, 2005, p. 246). As such, we aimed to move beyond the surface level benefits and challenges of the partnerships to focus on management aspects (Dotterweich, 2006; McDonald, 2005; Walsh, 2006).

### **Reciprocal Relationships**



Research has demonstrated that while identifying relationship antecedents and initiating the subsequent planning of a partnership is best when the community partner(s) takes the lead, most campus-community partnerships are managed with a top-down model governed by the university, its funds and its rules (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Jacoby, 2003;). However, a reciprocal, or mutually beneficial relationship, that emphasizes common interests, objectives and a shared mission and vision (Clement, et al., 1999; Parent & Harvey, 2009) can also be effective, and in the case of Sport Hartford, allow for change that can assist in sustainability. Bringle and Hatcher (2002) recognized that mature and committed campus-community partnerships contain bi-lateral influence where each partner is able to inform the decisions and outputs of the other. During its lifespan, Sport Hartford has found this two-way exchange to be beneficial as, unlike most partnership theories, it acknowledges the role of people, and personal relationships, as central to the management of inter-organizational relations (Hutt, Stafford, Walker, & Reningan, 2000). The Sport Hartford Boys' and Teens' Programs were born from community needs and discussions between campus and community leaders around those needs. Funding and its related rules then followed, but these were not antecedents that drove the partnership formation. Campus and community leader investment grew over time to the point where the management of the partnership was grounded in trust between individuals that were able to creatively solve funding barriers and find ways to operate within the rules of partner agencies.

Management and evaluation can also be approached with reciprocity as a central operating tenet. As seen by the Boys' Program moving to a different facility following the suggestion of Jason, the decision making in the campus-community partnership was not one-sided. The move would not have taken place had the Boys' Program staff not frequently asked for feedback from the boys and their parents. Thus, for a campus-community partnership to truly have bi-lateral influence and consensual decision making, campus partners must be willing to seek out the perceptions and preferences of the partners as doing so is a key component of evaluating program effectiveness, and thus good managerial practice.

#### Trust and Social Capital Creation

The current study demonstrated the importance organizational trust plays in developing and maintaining campus-community partnerships. As Frisby, Thibault, and Kikulis (2004) identify, trust is key in successfully relationship management. In addition, cross-organizational communications and collaborative leadership styles allow for flexibility in operating campus-community partnerships and resolving conflicts when they arise (Child and Faulkner, 1998; Harrigan, 1995). As a partnership grows, so too should trust between the partners (Slack & Parent, 2006). This was not the case for the campus-community partnership between the Boys' Program and Hartford Rec. Specifically, the trust between Sport Hartford Boys' Program and Hartford Rec. diminished as staff members of each partner failed to communicate timely information (e.g., Jackson Center availability, upcoming field trips). As a result of the decrease in organizational trust between the campus and community partners, the campus-community partnership was restructured such that Sport Hartford used other facilities for its after school programs. The relationship between Sport Hartford and Hartford Rec lacked a personal aspect, and thus trust. In this manner, the current study highlighted

the importance of organizational trust in campus-community partnerships as without it, the quality of the partnership suffers.

The partnership with CPY involved frequent interaction between the leaders of both organizations including discussions on directions for the program. On the other hand the interactions at the Jackson Center were between the center frontline staff and Sport Hartford leaders. And, although relationship and trust building often rests with those who are actually implementing the programs (Waddock, 1998), the lack of transmission of goals and priorities from Hartford Rec leaders to Jackson Staff members created barriers in program delivery. Discussion with leaders of Hartford Rec occurred only a handful of times each year and those leaders did not frequent the Jackson Center while Sport Hartford was operating. Supervisory staff at the center, one individual in particular, did not buy into the reciprocal potential of the partnership and did not make efforts to integrate Sport Hartford into the Jackson Center. This disconnect was the source of most of the challenges that arose in the partnership clearly reflecting the lack of a common framework and incompatible values leading to unclear and sometimes absent communication channels (Frisby, Thibault, & Kikulis, 2004).

As Babiak (2007) outlined, organizational leaders have an integral role in decision making and commonly identify those individuals within partner organizations who are trustworthy and thus should play key parts in the formation and maintenance of partnerships (Gulati and Gargiulo, 1999). These interpersonal relationships, sometimes pre-existing and foundational to the initiation of a partnership but also able to be formed through the process of partnering, can facilitate greater trust and better communication between partners (Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1996; Spekman et al., 2000).

Social capital builds over time as relationships develop and relies on active involvement of all organizations in a partnership (Putnam, 2000). As such, social capital tends to develop where there is effective communication, cooperation, and further collaboration (Doherty & Misener, 2008, p. 117). These characteristics are more likely to lead to trust, reciprocity and cooperation, all consistent with the components of social capital (Putnam, 2000)

#### Evaluation and Evolution

Focusing on the relational aspects of partnerships and the function of accrued social capital among individuals in partnering organizations, or that which is still to be accrued, rather than strict economic benefits, allows for evaluation to occur on multiple levels. Evaluation-driven learning and the subsequent improvement, or evolution, of programs can benefit all partners (Surko, 2006). And, as we have established, examining partnerships at the individual, structural and socio-cultural levels is essential given the complex nature of the campus-community relationship.

Drawing on equity theory, campus-community partnerships in which one partner is perceived to be over or under-benefited (i.e., inequitable) should result in a strain on the relationship (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). In the current study, one example of inequity that came to light through evaluation at the individual level was when certain staff members for the Teens were perceived as not "pulling their weight." Likewise, on the structural level, Sport Hartford perceived itself to be under-benefited by the lack of communication by Jackson Center Staff. As a result of these instances of inequity, as well as others, strain was introduced into the campus-community partnership and Sport Hartford and the Hartford community partners were left with the decision to either

attempt to restore equity or move to dissolve the partnership (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). However, results from the current study revealed that rather than outright relationship dissolution, the campus-community partnership was restructured, or evolved, when inequity was perceived by campus and/or community partners

While most examinations of organizational change have focused solely on environmental factors (Slack & Parent, 2006; Parent & Harvey, 2009), our multilevel analysis of the individual, structural and socio-cultural level factors which triggered change in the campus-community partnership between Sport Hartford and Hartford community partners aligns succinctly with Pettigrew's (1987) contextualist approach. The contextualist approach to organizational change emphasizes the interrelated role of individuals, the environment and the organizational structure in shaping the change process (Pettigrew, 1987). In light of the contextualist approach, the current study revealed how multilevel factors are interrelated and can affect, or cause, organizational change.

Perhaps in isolation the individual, structural, and socio-cultural level factors would not have been enough to warrant the restructuring of the campus-community partnership. However, results from the current study illuminated how evaluating the interplay of these multilevel factors precipitated organizational change. The current study advances the sport management literature by highlighting the utility of moving beyond environmental factors when considering organizational change within campus-community partnerships and within sport organizations. The current study deviated from prior research in that organizational change was not seen as "a move between two destinations" (e.g., from a top-down partnership to a bottom-up partnership) but instead was a "transformation, akin to a discovery process, involving the interaction between" individual, socio-cultural and structural level factors in structuring change (Slack & Parent, 2006, p. 27). In doing so, the "historical, contextual and processual nature of change" was revealed, thus allowing sport managers the opportunity to discuss the interrelated role of multilevel factors in shaping the evolution of the campus-community partnership (Girginov & Sandanski, 2008, p. 22).

#### Managing Challenges

Denner, Cooper, Lopez and Dunbar (1999) noted that three primary challenges to developing and maintaining campus-community partnerships relate to problems of organization and management, disparate goals and differing priorities. Each of these challenges was present in the current study and had to be managed in order to sustain the campus-community partnership between Sport Hartford and the various Hartford partners (e.g., Committed People for Youth, Youth Corps, and Hartford Rec). With respect to the Teens' Program, both internal and external organizational and management challenges occurred. Externally, program attendance waned as teens had other obligations, most notably extracurricular activities. Internally, organization and management issues were present as data for grants were not properly documented and staff members were not as committed as necessary. For many campus-community partnerships, these internal and external challenges would be enough to cause the dissolution of the relationship but that was not so in the current study. Rather, the partners restructured the relationship into a more fitting form.

One factor that can sustain campus-community partnerships is when both partners are committed to achieving long-term change in the community (Barnes,

Altimare, Farrell, Brown, Burnett, Gamble, & Davis, 2009; Maurrasse, 2002). Sport Hartford, Committed People for Youth, and Youth Corps were committed to providing Hartford teens with the opportunity to enhance their education. As a result of this commitment, the partnership was sustained when challenges surfaced and the program was restructured to work more efficiently and more effectively. Likewise, collaboration and shared decision making are additional factors that are able to sustain campus-community partnerships when challenges develop (Barnes et al., 2009). Open and honest communication between the campus and community partners in the current study resulted in each acknowledging the need for a change in the structure of the Teens' program. Joint decision making occurred as partners provided an equal voice as to what the change should and how it should be implemented. As a result, the restructuring of the Teens' Program, and by extension the restructuring of the partnerships, was not met with resistance, as often is the case with organizational change (Jones & George, 2011).

With respect to the Boys' Program, challenges of differing priorities and disparate goals appeared to exist between the program and Hartford Rec. In terms of facility usage, the Boys' Program found its time in the center being supplanted by other programs and activities indicative of a revived emphasis on more engagement in the community on the part of the Hartford Rec. Although most universities and community programs have overlapping goals, which often include building their community (Maurrasse, 2002), it is the task of the partnership to define these goals and develop ways to build common ground and negotiate differences (Denner et al., 1999). In this manner, stronger efforts could have been made by Sport Hartford Boys' Program staff members to clarify their goals and Hartford Rec's goals for the partnership before moving back to the recreational facility. In doing so, each partner would have had clearer expectations, thus increasing the opportunity for a sustained and successful partnership (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002).

Yet another challenge to the campus-community relationship is poor communication (Cone & Payne, 2002). With respect to the partnership between the Boys' Program and Hartford Rec, both partners were guilty of poor communication. While Hartford Rec could have done a better job of communicating changes in facility usage well in advance, Sport Hartford could have done a better job of communicating upcoming field trips, as well as the utility of the after-school program. Doing the latter (i.e., advocating for the efficacy of the program) could have eased the tension that occurs between campus and community partners when research findings are not made available detailing how the partnership is advantageous (Cone & Payne, 2002). While keeping individual-level data confidential (Denner et al., 1999), Sport Hartford could have made the findings of the interviews with the participants and their parents accessible to Hartford Rec. In doing so, Hartford Rec would have known how the partnership was beneficial (Cone & Payne, 2002) and might have been more accommodating.

### **Implications**

Before entering into a partnership with a community entity, service-learning practitioners should consider the reasoning. What motivations exist (e.g. economic, political, social, etc.) for entering into a campus-community partnership? Who or what is

the catalyst for the partnership? Is it internal or external? Knowing the driving force(s) behind the campus-community partnership will eliminate certain potential community partners from consideration (Parent & Harvey, 2009; Slack & Parent, 2006). Moreover, prior to entering into a campus-community partnership, service-learning practitioners are advised to evaluate the strategic and cultural fit of the potential community partner (Child & Faulkner, 1998), keeping in mind that fit can change over time as was the case in the current study. Effective partnerships are learning-based so practitioners must use all available information to make a judicious decision as to entering into a campus-community partnership (Slack & Parent, 2006).

In addition, service-learning practitioners can better manage campus-community partnerships by making their research findings accessible to community members—both sharing the results and in a format that is easily understood (Cone & Payne, 2002; Denner et al., 1999). In doing so, the utility of the campus-community partnership will not be questioned, as seemed to be the case with Hartford Rec and the Boys' Program. Finally, as community partners have voiced their opinion on the importance of the strength of relationships when attempting to overcome partnership challenges (Barnes et al., 2009), practitioners are advised to make proactive efforts to maintain relationships with community partners even if programming does not operate year round. In doing so, the relationship will strengthen, thus allowing practitioners to be manage challenges.

### **Conclusion**

In an age in which institutions of higher education are being encouraged to align with community efforts to collaboratively address civic, social and ethical issues of the day (Boyer, 1990, 1996; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Jacoby, 2003), it has become increasingly important for more studies to contribute to the knowledge of campus-community partnerships by outlining the history of relationships with the community (Cone & Payne, 2002). Research of this kind will offer a better understanding of the role that higher education can play in nurturing partnerships (Cone & Payne, 2002). With the current study, we attempted to provide the evolution of the campus-community partnership from a multilevel perspective. Campus-community partnerships are heavily dependent on multilevel relationships (e.g. individual, structural and socio-cultural levels) require significant time and effort and must be founded upon trust (Maurrasse, 2002; Parent & Slack, 2006). Results from this study should serve to add to campus-community partnership literature, while providing practitioners with insight into “common practices and pitfalls that may assist in” managing “the expectations of all parties involved” (Maurrasse, 2002, p. 137).

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