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Volume 6

Issue 2

Special Issue on Human Rights Education,  
Service-Learning, and Civic Engagement

Article 4

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2011


# The Deliberative School Approach to Human Rights

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## Recommended Citation

Miller, Demond, Jason Rivera & Christopher Gonzalez. 2011. "The Deliberative School Approach to Human Rights." *Societies Without Borders* 6 (2): 68-91.

Available at: <https://scholarlycommons.law.case.edu/swb/vol6/iss2/4>

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*D. Miller, J. Rivera and C. Gonzalez / Societies Without Borders 6:2 (2011) 68-91*

## **The Deliberative School Emphasis of Human Rights and Community-Based Research: Recognizing our Common Humanity, Empowerment and Uplift**

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*Received January 2011 Accepted May 2011*

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### **Abstract**

Over the past few decades, certain currents in higher education have been engaged in a paradigm shift that highlights the importance of civic engagement and experiential learning as means to a comprehensive, holistic education in the service of social change. In this article, we argue that community-based research, as a component of service-learning, constitutes a vehicle through which we can address the topic of human rights—in much the same way as W. E. B. DuBois recognized both universal human rights for all people and case-specific human rights for particular individuals (Elias 2009). To this end, we offer a brief discussion of the basic schools of human rights thought, present two examples, and discuss the potential for community-based research and the Deliberative School in addressing human rights issues within the broad context of social justice. Finally, we examine ways not only to educate and empower university students and local residents, but also how to use community-based research as a catalyst for meaningful advancement of human rights.

### **Keywords**

Community-Based Research, Deliberative School, Empowerment, DuBois, Partnership

Outside of academia, community-based centers have made critical contributions to the conceptualization and conduct of research for the communities they serve (Fals-Borda and Rahman 1991). In the process, they have enhanced the way that academics and practitioners have approached projects designed to benefit communities. The existence of a rich body of literature, combined with the importance of paying careful attention to the particular geopolitical and socio-historical context within which participatory research takes place, have led us to focus on contemporary community-based research by scholars from a diversity of places including countries in the global

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South, along with the United Kingdom and Canada. The conceptual, ethical, and practical issues raised by many organizations (Fals-Borda and Rahman 1991) are key in understanding the dimensions of human rights. Because '[r]esearch has been conducted in ways that systematically exclude some people from having influence and power over the research process' (Fals-Borda and Rahman 1991; Gaventa 1993; Hall 1992; Hatch et al. 1993; Israel, Schulz, Parker, and Becker, 1998; Maguire 1996; Wallerstein 1999), the voices of the very people we attempt to help may never be heard.

According to DuBois' perspective on human rights, society should emphasize and safeguard the rights of all individuals, groups, nations, and international bodies; and these universal or macro-level rights transcend race, class, gender, and other human divisions. Specifically, he called for a global society that respects the rights and freedoms of all the 'great families of human beings' (DuBois 1970: 75). The application of this social perspective is illustrated within the United Nations Charter that 'reaffirm[s] faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small...' (United Nations 1985). According to Elias (2009), much of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights reflects the principles that were pronounced by DuBois. However, since the development of the League of Nations and the United Nations, the application and interpretation of human rights throughout the global human society has varied, which is witnessed by ongoing violations of individuals' and groups' freedoms and access to the means with which people can sustain their own personal well-being.

DuBois' work embodies the full spirit of 'lending voice' to the populations he described by living among the people he observed. He lived for a year among people, '...in the midst of... dirt, drunkenness, poverty, and crime' (DuBois 1968: 195). He admonished social researchers to not only be 'car-window sociologists.'<sup>1</sup> In *The Philadelphia Negro*, DuBois demonstrates his commitment to bringing a scientific approach to the study of communities while spreading cultural identity and social equity (Miller 2009) by explaining 'groups of symptoms, not a cause,... a long historical development and not a transient occurrence' (Zuberi 2004: 148) in the struggle for universal human rights. Hence, in the tradition of DuBois, and the framework

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of the Deliberative School of human rights, residents are afforded the opportunity to ‘give voice’ and engage in constructive practices that ultimately lead to progress as they define progress. The proper measurement and understanding of social conditions among ethnic, social, religious, economic, sexual and other minority groups will provide the rational judgment and social understanding of these groups. In fact, community-based research can be a tool that practitioners within the Deliberative School of thought can employ to help people ‘around the globe become convinced that human rights are the best possible legal and political standards that can rule society...’ (Dembour 2010: 3), and ultimately be adopted by consensus and law as constitutional amendments and universal declarations to ensure human rights for all. We argue that a keen understanding and spreading of social tolerance can come *via* efforts to build on the strengths of research partners that in turn facilitates an environment that engenders trust, mutual respect and a goal of community empowerment enhancing of the lives of others as emphasized in both DuBois’ and the Deliberative School’s frameworks.

### **The Deliberative Perspective on Human Rights**

Arguably, one of the main reasons why the human community has had varied levels of the application of human rights resides in the various schools of thought in reference to the concept of these principles. According to Dembour (2010), the four schools of thought on human rights influence the principles’ application, or lack thereof, within policies that guide human interaction. The four schools of thought that guide academic and political perspectives on human rights include: the Natural, Deliberative, Protest, and Discourse schools. Adherence to any of these perspectives results in varying interpretations of the way humans interact, in addition to the relevance of human rights as a mechanism for influencing a more equitable social environment; however, the most profound way in which human rights can lead to social change is illustrated within the deliberative school’s framework.

Scholars and policymakers associated with the Deliberative School emphasize that human rights are political values that socially liberal societies consciously choose to adopt. Human rights in this sense are not natural to people, and they only come to exist through

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social agreement and institutionalization: 'Over time, a gradual expansion of norms creates institutional structures, leading ultimately to a norms cascade as the ideas of human rights become widespread and internalized' (Merry 2006: 220). In this sense, social change and movements seek to progress social thought and action in such a way that the concept of human rights is, at least, adopted by the majority of society.

According to Moravcsik (2000), societies tend to alter their behavior in response to international law or new international paradigms due to the amount of coercion and or persuasion exerted upon them. However, lasting social change associated with international paradigms has a higher probability of occurring within varying countries when acculturation takes place in reference to the specific ideological perspective in question (Goodman and Jinks 2004). By adopting beliefs and behavior patterns of a surrounding culture into the practices of another (Brown 2000), subsequent integration and institutionalization of international ideologies becomes more apparent. However, when considering the internalization of international ideologies and laws within various cultures, Woods (2010) explains that the norms, and the laws that codify them, are contingent upon each situation. Laws, in and of themselves, do not regulate behavior, which has been the predominant assumption in legal scholarship, but the individual internalization of norms that foster individual and subsequent group behavioral changes (Bicchieri 2006).

The acceptance and expansion of relatively new norms by a culture takes place over time, and is specifically influenced by the environment in which a society exists (i.e., its international relations and domestic social characteristics) and the ideological perspective of its population. If external pressures that create a sense of 'shame' penalize a society for not accepting specific human rights values, then positive public sentiment can be used to encourage pro-human rights attitudes and lasting social change that is more in line with the values and norms of the international community (Cialdini 1984; Petty et al. 1997). Moreover, at the micro-level, social-psychological costs of non-conformity to publicly accepted values and norms also tends to influence social behavior because dissonance associated with an individual's conduct becomes inconsistent with their own personal identity or social role (Turner 1987), leading to feelings of anxiety,

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regret, and guilt (Aronson et al. 2002). When concepts of human rights are exposed to and assimilated into a society's cultural norms and values, these social-psychological influences have observable effects in reference to their infusion into social institutions such as local and national laws and constitutions.

This process of social diffusion has varying levels of success in reference to the acceptance and adherence to human rights concepts. Mushkat (2009) explains that in China, acceptance and institutionalization of human rights concepts through political gradualism is occurring and has the potential of succeeding due to the current social and political circumstances that are present in their society. In other situations, however, social diffusion and social-psychological costs of nonconformity have had negative results in reference to the encouragement of human rights. For example, strategies of social diffusion and nonconformity were used during the Rwandan genocide. According to Des Forges (1999), radio broadcasts directed at Hutus utilized a script that emphasized that everyone was working to find and kill Tutsis and urged listeners to do their part:

“These broadcasts served several purposes: to inform listeners of the behavior of others (other Hutus are killing Tutsis); to inform listeners of the prevailing norms (killing Tutsis is socially sanctioned); and to invoke shame and guilt on the part of those Hutus who were not hard at ‘work’.”

(Des Forges 1999, as cited in Woods 2010: 61)

As the Rwandan example illustrates, social diffusion can be designed and manipulated to constrict or enable the flow of information (Woods 2010); however, it illustrates how powerful acculturation and internalization of norms and values is in reference to practicing the concepts of human rights. Although in this case, acculturation occurred in the conceptually opposite direction from human rights; similar social diffusion techniques can also be used at the local level to foster appreciation of human rights and their subsequent institutionalization into political structures.

The development of constitutions that reflect the acceptance of human rights concepts not only illustrates the acceptance of these concepts internally within a nation, but also the legitimization of

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dominant international views within specific cultures and societies (Boli-Bennett and Meyer 1978). However, when states adopt international views or paradigms that do not fit their local needs or norms and values that they have not been acculturated to, application of these principles becomes ineffective or even dysfunctional (Goodman and Jinks 2004). In this way, forcing the application of human rights upon a culture not socially or psychologically acclimated to such a change has the potential to result in either failure or empty rhetoric because there is not an acknowledgement of subtle social-psychological dynamics that are emphasized within the Deliberative School of thought on human rights. According to Ignatieff (2000), there should be less intervention, not more, into the affairs of other nations based on human rights:

‘As the West intervenes ever more frequently but ever more inconsistently in the affairs of other societies, the legitimacy of its rights standards is put into question. Human rights is increasingly seen as the language of a moral imperialism just as ruthless and just as self-deceived as the colonial hubris of yesteryear’  
(Ignatieff 2000: 299)

By intervening into the affairs of other countries on the basis of human rights, cultures that have not yet accepted the norms or values synonymous with human rights are forced into the practice of accepting principals that they may not agree with. Moreover, they may even be more opposed to accepting these principals specifically because they are being forced upon them.

For example, gender equity is widely accepted and promoted throughout the West as a concept that advances societies not only socially, but economically. Within popular media and policy discussions, the treatment and subordination of women in other cultures is viewed as a sinister practice, and a point on which many believe humanitarian intervention should occur. However, Margalit and Halbertal (1994) maintain that in societies where religious organizations determine that women should occupy a subordinate place in society, and this station is accepted by the women in question, there should be no reason for Western nations, or any others, to pass judgment on the grounds that human rights have been violated. Implied

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within human rights themselves is the notion that groups that do not actively persecute or harm themselves or others should enjoy as much autonomy as the rule of law allows (Kymlicka 1995). The values and norms that have developed over time and are accepted by the members of the society are how they view the rights of their citizens to be, and are justified within the framework of human rights law to practice such behavior. If these types of cultures are to change in a way that is more synonymous with the way in which the *West* defines human rights, it must do so over time and in such a way that the members of that society begin to internalize new values and norms and subsequently manifest these concepts in their own institutions. However, this can only be done, and/or stimulated by outsiders, with a firm understanding and appreciation of the community and social dynamics indicative to each culture.

One of the fundamental concerns to which human rights relies on is a substantiated evaluation of the situation in which people live in order to base any manner of judgment. Human rights doctrine, in its most conventional usage, seeks to enable and empower individuals and communities in ways that are sustainable and equitable. Without understanding the dynamics of human interactions and social change processes, discussions and policy tools used to advance human rights becomes more rhetorical than practical. Therefore, human rights policies that fail to address the social, economic and political variables that influence human rights violations simply change the nature of the problem as opposed to solving it. Moreover, Woods (2010) maintains that legal scholars have yet to attempt to integrate social situations as a component of international law application at the local level. Therefore, in order for human rights policies to be more beneficially constructed, community-based research, aimed at understanding the various social inputs of human behavior, must be considered. By emphasizing and encouraging the diffusion of human rights concepts, as illustrated by the deliberative school of thought, societies throughout the world have a greater potential of enacting policies that contribute to social change and the acceptance of human rights principles built on a collaborative community-centered understanding of human rights that leads to policy formation and implementation.

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### **The Potential for Community-Based Research in Addressing Human Rights**

One strategy of gaining an understanding of human rights that leads to policy formation and implementation that is in line with both DuBois and the Deliberative School is Community-based research (CBR).<sup>2</sup> CBR is collaborative, change-oriented research that engages faculty members, students, and community members in projects addressing community-identified needs (Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, and Donohue 2003; Puma, Bennett, Tombari, and Stein 2009). The community-based research process is participatory by nature and can afford residents the opportunity to 'give voice' and engage in constructive practices that ultimately lead to progress as it is defined by the community. Research comprises a group of projects that will be the most helpful for a specific community; the community members become 'co-pilots' and have an impact on reaching the goals set forth in community-based research projects. Involvement, vested interest, and commitment of community members are required in order to meet the goals of community-based research. CBR can take on a variety of forms such as evaluation models, *participatory evaluation*<sup>3</sup> (see Patton 1997; Stoecker 1999) or *empowerment evaluation*<sup>4</sup> (see Fetterman 1994a; Fetterman 1994b; Stoecker 1999; Puma, Bennett, Tombari, and Stein 2009) to help guide the communities or community organizations through the evaluation process. Wandersman, et al. (2005: 28) defines empowerment evaluation as 'an evaluation approach that aims to increase the probability of achieving program success by (1) providing program stakeholders with tools for assessing the planning, implementation, and self-evaluation of their program, and (2) the mainstreaming evaluation as part of the planning and management of the program/organization.'

Evaluators serve a role in being a facilitator, a friend, a coach, and an evaluation expert during the CBR project. Fetterman (2005: 12) claims that 'when evaluators have a vested interest in programs, it enhances their values as critics and evaluators. They will be more constructively critical and supportive of the program because they want the program to work, that is, to succeed.' The participatory evaluation approach can be a vehicle through which communities become further engaged in other social processes (e.g., political, cultural, and economic development) that can serve their interests.

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Innovative strategies have emerged to build viable research partnerships that maximize the research goals within a specific community. According to the website of the School of Public Health at the University of Washington (Seattle), in order to achieve viable partnerships, the following principles help guide the development of research projects involving collaboration between researchers and community partners, whether the community partners are formally structured community-based organizations or informal groups of individual community members:

(a) community partners should be involved at the earliest stages of the project, helping to define research objectives and having input into how the project will be organized; (b) community partners should have real influence on project direction--that is, enough leverage to ensure that the original goals, mission, and methods of the project are adhered to; (c) research processes and outcomes should benefit the community. Community members should be hired and trained whenever possible and appropriate, and the research should help build and enhance community assets; (d) community members should be part of the analysis and interpretation of data and should have input into how the results are distributed. This does not imply censorship of data or of publication, but rather the opportunity to make clear the community's views about the interpretation prior to final publication; (e) productive partnerships between researchers and community members should be encouraged to last beyond the life of the project. This will make it more likely that research findings will be incorporated into ongoing community programs and therefore provide the greatest possible benefit to the community from the research; (f) community members should be empowered to initiate their own research projects which address needs they identify themselves.

(University of Washington n.d.)

Even though CBR may result in a beneficial change, a substantial amount of time and energy is needed. Community-based research is time-consuming and filled with challenges as local commu-

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nities and their outside research collaborators navigate difficult ethical and practical terrain, addressing issues of power, trust, race, ethnicity, racism, research rigor, and often conflicting agendas (Chavis, Stucky, and Wandersman 1983; Cornwall and Jewkes 1995; Stringer 1999; Green and Mercer 2001; Maguire 2001; Reason and Bradbury 2001). Both the researchers and the members within the community need to remain on the same page throughout the process. Collaboration, building and sustaining trust among partners engaged in CBR holds immense potential for addressing social problems, assessing and building on the strengths of stakeholders, creating knowledge and mobilizing change either through action or policy formation.

One way to promote trust, even when stakeholder agendas compete, is through the utilization of reflexive inclusion (Miller and Rivera 2006). Reflexive inclusion is the involvement of community constituents and stakeholders in the development of policies that directly affect their daily existence. Community-based research is fundamental to the success of this process in that policy development and actions are based on continuous examinations of the past and present in order to distinguish 'good' community knowledge and practices so that future policy decisions are not made out of the context of the individual culture of the community (Lhulier and Miller 2004). According to Lhulier and Miller (2004), community-based research involved within the process of reflexive inclusion directly involves community members by educating the public, empowering them to give a voice to issues, and placing them at the center of the decision making process by establishing a symmetrical understanding of the positive and negative community policy and action decisions.

Community-based research can be implemented in a multitude of ways in order to help communities deal with various human rights. According to Budd Hall (1992: 22), 'participatory research fundamentally is about who has the right to speak, to analyze and to act.' Although often and erroneously referred to as a research method, CBR and other participatory approaches are not methods at all but orientations to research. Central to CBR and related approaches is a shared commitment to consciously blurring lines between the 'researcher' and the 'researched' (Gaventa 1981: 19) and 'the strengthening of people's awareness of their own capabilities' as researchers and agents of change (Hagey 1997: 1). As Green and Mercer (2001:

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1926-1927) suggest, CBR has affected a change in the balance of power so that 'research subjects became more than research objects. They gave more than informed consent; they gave their knowledge and experience to the formulation of research questions.' It is important that the two sides collaborate in such a way that allows the research process to be completed effectively. The willingness of the community to get involved and share distinctive details and experiences not only aids the researchers, but, in fact, helps the community as a whole. These actions highlight the importance of CBR and assure that all measures are taken in improving the community.

In many cases the CBR model can be modified and implemented as a form of service learning that combines community service with that of a classroom curriculum. This unique hands-on approach allows participants to play a direct and impacting role in their community as well as attain the gratification of civic participation. The connection between the classroom and real-life experiences that community members endure enhances the level of personal development within the community as a whole as well as the personal development of students. Additionally, service learning provides an opportunity for involved participants to feel a sense of accomplishment thus encouraging confidence and empowerment that has the potential to result in new community leadership regimes and governance structures. All members receive a chance to contribute rather than just watching a select group make all the decisions. After the service project is completed, members are given time to reflect on the project, which is crucial in summarizing the process from beginning to end.

### **The Deliberative Approach to Human Rights and Community Based Research in Practice**

CBR has the advantage of providing students with the opportunity to use the research skills they have learned (Strand et al. 2003); moreover, when done well, the research can directly support community change objectives (Marullo et al. 2009). This process can help chart a new course, controlled by the residents of the community in the study area. For the purpose of this study, a brief case of a collaboration of the researchers and Parkside Business and Community in Partnership, Inc. (PBCIP) will be presented. With over a twenty-year

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history of residents fighting the decline in the Parkside Community of Camden, New Jersey, PBCIP continually fights, on local and national levels, to enhance the quality of life and promote a sense of self-determination. Their struggle began as an organized anti-drug march that led to a community-wide meeting to explore long term solutions to neighborhood blight. This meeting subsequently resulted in the formation of PBCIP as a 501C(3) non-profit organization. Today, the organization takes a holistic approach by integrating commercial revitalization, housing and quality-of-life initiatives in order to restore, rather than replace, the neighborhood. Its members are building a vibrant neighborhood through advocacy, collaboration and commitment to quality education, mixed income housing and commercial development, guided by sustainable practices to achieve a green community. The case detailed below, offers a glimpse into the opportunities that a deliberative approach to human rights and community-based research can provide for students, faculty and community residents.

### **Community-Initiated Projects**

Community-initiated projects formed when PBCIP desired the skill sets of university groups, composed of students and faculty. Expressing an interest in a partnership, we worked to build a relationship in such a way that a community assessment project could enable community members to obtain data about their community and learn from the experience of student participants. In 2003, approximately five years prior to the invitation for a collaborative community study, 600 community residents participated in a community planning process to create a neighborhood comprehensive strategic plan led by PBCIP. The community-approved plan reflects the needs and desires of the residents and addresses housing, economic development, open space, education and overall quality of life. During the Fall Semester 2008 (for a project that would commence during Spring 2009), the faculty members were contacted by PBCIP to partner and complete a door-to-door community assessment survey to assess progress toward its community strategic plan. For the students, they would have a chance to work with scales and indexes constructed to measure a variety of quality of life and neighborhood satisfaction concerns. PBCIP would benefit from the student participants and neighbors joined to

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comprehensively assess a large community area within six weeks. The residents had an opportunity to understand the data and be part of the analysis of the data. Camden has experienced major economic dis-investment and demographic changes that are only beginning to be ameliorated. The de-industrialization, political corruption, change in the residency rule, rising taxes, declining school performance and economic conditions, and increasing crime and poverty have all interacted to form part of the picture of what is currently the city of Camden. Recently, however, there have been some positive signs of growth in the neighborhood and city. Some of the greatest concerns facing the city are high unemployment,<sup>5</sup> poverty,<sup>6</sup> property abandonment, high incidents of crime and drug-related activities, low educational attainment levels, and low civic engagement. Crime, vacant lots and buildings, poverty and negative perception currently characterize the city, and it has regularly been ranked one of the ‘most dangerous cities’ in the United States by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.<sup>7</sup> With all of these considerations, the research team was formed to administer the survey. PBCIP had a vested stake in obtaining the data. The data collected would 1) evaluate objectives listed in the community’s neighborhood plan; 2) measure any success toward meeting the goals of their neighborhood plan; and 3) seek future grant assistance for key issues identified in their neighborhood plan including blight and urban decay, unemployment, and affordable housing.

After meetings among the research team, the strategies for sampling, data gathering (qualitative and quantitative measures) and data analysis were agreed upon and implemented. Because community colleagues, who consisted of a team of residents, had varying levels of understanding of the research process, we walked them through the process step-by-step and included them in all key decisions of the research design. The community residents advised the research team of areas where extra security was needed and of houses sampled that were identified as problem houses by the city police. Because many of the community residents were part of the data gathering process, they also helped the non-community resident establish a legitimate presence in the neighborhood and build a sense of trust as a *quasi-inside* agency. In addition to their contribution to the research endeavor, PBCIP has, since our collaboration, implemented their own strategies for developing instruments and implementing and analyzing commu-

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nity quality of life surveys. PBCIP and residents are empowered to 'tell their own story.' This CBR collaboration worked for the improvement of the quality of life in the neighborhood and the increase in the PBCIP's organizational capacity, sharing joint responsibility for designing and conducting the evaluation and putting the findings to use as part of a shared decision-making, deliberative process for achieving a more equitable society through capacity building. This collaboration also placed value on the information and experiences of local partners as part of the data interpretation and evaluation. Such trust and mutual understanding resulted in skills enhancement for the students and capacity building for PBCIP staff and community members in order to conduct their own evaluations through the appropriate tools and conditions, thus resulting in the increased ability to respond to challenges. Genuine community partnership, trust and relationship building are at the heart of the approach (Israel et al. 2005; Christopher et al. 2008; Miller et al. 2011). By engaging in CBR initiatives that are transparent in nature, developing social capital among community members and other stakeholders, and communicating project outcomes to local policy/decision makers, PBCIP now has an additional venue to address critical needs and use information to chart Parkside Community's destiny.

### **How are Human Rights and Community-Based Research Related?**

The fundamental assumption that underscores the method of community-based research and the philosophical orientation of the Deliberative School of thought is the notion that human rights are the result of a knowledgeable, empowered citizenry that, over time, will lead to the universal dignity and empowerment of all persons. This holistic view of humanity and fundamental human rights can only be fully understood via a phenomenological standpoint, which is close to constructivism and critical theory. Such perspectives are employed by sociologists (Guba and Lincoln 1994; Djuric 2009: 542), and human rights scholars that study the social worlds and everyday lives of members of a community. By stressing the need and commitment to active engagement of community members as equal partners with academic researchers at every stage of the process (Djuric 2009), not only bridges gaps between science and practice (Morrissey et al.,

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1997; Djuric 2009), but also brings a knowledge-base to people who are often viewed as less powerful and often disenfranchised. The CBR approach additionally addresses the development of relationships based on mutual trust and respect in such a manner that, according to Djuric (2009: 543), 'work in tandem to ensure a more balanced set of political, social, economic and cultural priorities.' The resulting research satisfies the demands of both scientific research and community citizens (Hatch et al. 1993), and provides a way for researchers and community members to work together to define a problem, take action, and evaluate their work' (Kelley 2005; Djuric 2009: 543). It is important to include different interest and social groups to maximize data quality and minimize the intrusion of research activities (Schell and Tarbell 1998). While these partnerships are not always easily forged, they are founded on the principle that community members can provide more accurate information, knowledge, and understanding about their way of life and daily challenges than outside academic researchers (Smith 1998; Baker et al. 1999; Djuric 2009).

### **CBR and Human Rights Issues**

Entities that adhere to the Deliberative Framework emphasize the need for social change as a mechanism for a society to enhance efforts to curb social injustice and promote equitable political structures and representation. According to this theoretical perspective, nations seeking to jump start humanitarian agendas in other nations that are not specifically nurturing of the concept believe that the best way to enact social change and ideological shifts is from the top-down. Teachers, researchers, scholars and applied practitioners in universities, community-based organizations and NGOs at the local level can build momentum for the expansion of norms that create institutional structures and bring about a cascade of ideas leading to the widespread internalization of human rights issues. The ability of NGOs to influence government action towards progressive social change requires the support of the citizenry that they are attempting to aid. In this regard, community-based research approaches can be used to empower citizenry at the community-level.

In order for social change to occur in a way that promotes human rights, forms of audible (Gabel 1984; Pieterse 2007) expression must be given to citizens so that their ideas of self-determination are

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preserved. For Post (2006), self-determination requires that people have the warranted conviction that they are engaged in the process of governance. When there are inequalities present within society, either in reference to political or social capital, individual development of a sense of self-determination is blocked (Miller and Rivera 2008) thereby, detrimentally affecting people's trust in government institutions. Community-based research initiatives develop social capital within communities thereby instilling a sense of self-determination among the citizenry. According to Lin (2001), social capital enhances community actions because there is a flow of information that allows people and groups to be exposed to opportunities, experiences, and alternate points of view that may not have been otherwise available. Community-based research fosters this relationship by bringing researchers and community members together in order to develop community actions that are both seen as beneficial to the community and that build social ties between both groups. This group collaboration has the ability to exert greater influence on the agents who are critical in making policy decisions (Miller and Rivera 2008).

Stimulating social change at the community level in reference to advancing human rights concepts is further enhanced by community-based research in that it aids community members in the development of their community's orientation. Through the researchers' interaction with the community and the community members' interaction with each other, social cohesion develops. This social cohesiveness includes a recommitment to organization and willingness to help improve the group, and an expression of the group's leadership to work with the leadership of the broader society (Denhardt and Glaser 1999) in an effort to advance the rights and interests of the community members. Community-based research encourages and empowers communities to voice their concerns to their respective government, especially in reference to human rights, to broader international organizations, that have the ability to place pressure on human rights violators. Although communities may need to seek aid when human rights violations occur, the development of grass-roots initiatives that have the potential to be forged through community-based research should be of prime concern.

In situations where grassroots initiatives have emerged among the population of a nation, social contracts in the form of national

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constitutions have been revised in various ways in order to go beyond minimal conceptions of human rights (Blau and Moncada 2007).<sup>8</sup> The revision of government sends a clear message to the world because it is backed by the population of the nation, even if it is only by the enforcement segments of the population, that human rights concerns and violations will not be tolerated and that the concepts of human rights are/will be institutionalized. When countries look to other nations like the United States, which is virtually the only country in the world that has a constitution that does not secure any economic or social rights for its citizens (Blau and Moncada 2006) and that regularly exempts itself from the applicability of human rights treaties through such legal procedures as reservations, understandings, and declarations (Venetis, n.d. as cited in Blau and Moncada 2007), they invite other actors to perpetrate human rights violations. Moreover, when there is reliance on international legal proceedings to deal with human rights violations, courts often take the perspective that violations occur momentarily and can be resolved through adjudication (Koskenniemi 2002; Engle 2006; Hagan and Levi 2007). Therefore, methods for encouraging community-based research approaches into government processes and institutions should be explored so that communities can begin to better position themselves in their respective political landscapes.

The ways in which community-based research can be integrated into society vary. From a governmental point of view, community-based research can be integrated into a community's decision-making process by promoting reflexive inclusion, which includes transparency, sustainable equity, and a results-based culture that involves community members in the process of needs assessment, policy development and oversight (Miller and Rivera 2006). The idea of reflexive inclusion places the responsibility of the development of culturally acceptable human rights concepts and frameworks in the hands of the community and the government in charge of making sure that policies are implemented effectively. Alternatively, when governments are not open to changes in decision-making procedures, community-based research can be integrated into the higher education curriculum (Rivera and Miller 2009). It is hoped that when college students are incrementally exposed to human rights issues early in their careers, they will influence the professional organizations and

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civic institutions they later enter. This diffusion of respect for human rights throughout society results in the incremental integration into private and public spheres. The incremental integration of human rights issues accentuates the broader social acceptance of human rights emphasized in the Deliberative School. Furthermore, only through acceptance by the broader society, and subsequent institutionalization in the global community, will the promotion and enforcement of human rights become possible. Community-based research brings us closer to that end, closer to an understanding of others, and closer to a larger understanding of humanity—a society without borders.

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## Endnotes

1. The term "car window sociologists" refers to sociologists who, while attempting to understand the African Americans in the South, spent a few leisurely hours on holiday or vacation riding in a Pullman (railroad car) through the south and never going into the neighborhoods or communities yet describing the community and its inhabitants (see: Green and Driver 1978).
2. Some scholars use the term Community-based participatory research (CBPR) to denote the heavy reliance of community members. For the purposes of this article, we consider community-based research as going beyond simply conducting research in a field location and involving the impacted stakeholders. Therefore we are not making a distinction at this time.
3. The principles of participatory evaluation can be summarized as follows: (a) involve participants at every stage of research process; (b) make sure the participants own the evaluation; (c) focus the process on the outcomes the participants think are important; (d) facilitate participants to work collectively; (e) organize the evaluation to be understandable and meaningful to all; (f) use the evaluation to support participants' accountability to themselves and their community first and outsiders second, if at all; (g) develop the evaluator role as a facilitator, collaborator, and learning researcher; (h)

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- develop participants' roles as decision makers and evaluators; (i) recognize and value participants' expertise and help them to do the same; and (j) minimize status differences between the evaluation facilitator and participants (Patton 1997; Stoecker 1999).
4. The principles of empowerment evaluation are as follows: improvement, community ownership, inclusion, democratic participation, social justice, community knowledge, evidence-based strategies, capacity-building, organizational learning, and accountability.
  5. The unemployment rate for Camden is 11.8% -- far above the state average of 8.4%. These numbers are more frightening when only 49.4% of adults 18 or older were reported in the labor force.
  6. Based on 2006 data from the United States Census Bureau, 44% of the city's residents live in poverty, the *highest rate in the nation*. The city had a median household income of \$18,007, the lowest of all U.S. communities with populations of more than 65,000 residents, making it America's poorest city. Additionally, the per capita income is \$9,815, and the median family income in Camden City is \$24,612, compared with \$65,370 in New Jersey. 22% of Camden families earn less than \$10,000 per year. There are 29,769 housing units within the city of Camden, and many of the units are substandard.
  7. In 2009, Camden had the highest crime rate in the US with 2,333 violent crimes per 100,000 people while the national average was 455 per 100,000. (Christian Science Monitor, 2010, <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Latest-News-Wires/2010/1123/Most-dangerous-city-survey-names-St-Louis-Camden-Detroit>)
  8. Blau and Moncada (2007: 381-382) mention labor rights in Brazil and Jordan, indigenous peoples' rights in some Latin American nations, housing rights in South Africa, healthcare rights in Finland and Mozambique, and minority rights in Poland and Italy.

### **Acknowledgements**

The authors wish to express their gratitude to Mrs. Marianne McCulley for her assistance and the anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments in the preparation of this manuscript.

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*African Americans and Community Engagement in Higher Education: Perspectives of Race in Community Service, Service-Learning, and Community Based Research* (2009) with Stephanie Evans, Michelle Dunlap and Collette Taylor, *Hurricane Katrina and the Redefinition of Landscape* (2008) with Jason Rivera, and coeditor of *How Ethnically Marginalized Americans Cope with Catastrophic Disasters: Studies in Suffering and Resiliency* (2010), *Community Disaster Recovery and Resiliency: Exploring Global Opportunities and Challenges* (2011), and *Comparative Emergency Management: Examining Global and Regional Responses to Disasters* (2011) with Jason Rivera.

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