

## Learning How to Teach Poverty

*A Case for Community of Practice*

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### Abstract

Recreation students today need to be prepared to engage in the topic of poverty as a social justice issue affecting our communities, yet many instructors do not have the tools to effectively teach this complex topic. One way instructors might learn how to engage students with poverty is through an interdisciplinary community of practice (CoP). Some disciplines, such as social work, centralize poverty in their curricula (e.g., Davis & Wainwright, 2005), giving them expertise recreation faculty might use to inform their teaching practices. On the other hand, many recreation instructors have unique pedagogical skills (e.g., simulations; Barney, 2012; service learning; Tobias, Powell, & Johnson, 2010; civic engagement; Biaett, 2011) that might improve others' understanding of how to teach poverty. This paper presents a case study in which a CoP was formed around the practice of a poverty simulation. From this case the authors offer several recommendations for ways recreation instructors might gain from and contribute to a CoP that focuses on teaching poverty.

**Keywords:** *poverty; Community of Practice; faculty preparation*

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## Introduction

The recreation field is not often considered at the forefront of the war on poverty, despite the many ways professionals and scholars today actively address poverty in their work. Land managers (i.e., public park supervisors, see Scott, 2013; Scott & Munson, 1994), recreation agency administrators (i.e., programs for people living in homeless shelters, see Harrington & Dawson, 1997; Trussell & Mair, 2010), youth development professionals (i.e., youth program facilitators, see Frazier, Mehta, Atkins, Hur, & Rusch, 2013), and those in the tourism industry (cf. Scheyvens, 2007) intersect with poverty in important ways. Despite limited scholarship documenting how recreation affects the larger issue of income inequality, descriptive reports documenting the salience of recreation in the lives of those experiencing poverty (e.g., Trussell & Mair, 2010; Klitzing, 2004; Harrington & Dawson, 1997) point to the ways recreation professionals should be prepared to actively address poverty and income inequality in their work.

To assume this role, recreation professionals must be prepared to go beyond passively intersecting with poverty in the field. Godbey (2006) outlines several recent trends such as rapidly changing demographics, decreases in public funding, and a wholesale shift in social values that will demand that recreation professionals become increasingly proactive in our service and programs. Public parks and recreation managers, for example, are looking for ways to increase access for poor people and ensure safe and welcoming programs (Scott, 2013). Practices such as these require an awareness of poverty that goes beyond recognizing poverty as a problem; they require professionals have a deep personal orientation to poverty and its root causes. Scholars advocate for the importance of poverty education in professional preparation programs such as nursing (Massey & Durrheim, 2007), teacher education (Milner & Laughter, 2013), and social work (Adedoyin, & Sossou, 2011); thus, recreation faculty, in preparing undergraduates for a similarly human services field, might consider effective ways to foster this level of understanding.

Unfortunately, there are several factors that challenge the extent to which recreation instructors centralize poverty in their curricula. Most immediate among these factors for some faculty is simply lack of motive. The prominent accrediting bodies in recreation-related undergraduate programs (i.e., NRPA, ATRA) do not require students to gain competencies specifically related to poverty, and, with an increasing eye toward “academic professionalism,” few departments include content beyond the accreditation mandate (Dustin et al., 2011). On the other hand, the Council on Accreditation of Park, Recreation, Tourism, and Related Professions (COAPRT), a prominent accrediting body among parks, recreation, and tourism departments, recently shifted accreditation focus from explicit competencies to student learning outcomes in the effort to provide increased flexibility in curriculum design (Blazey, 2014). The 2014 Revised Standards now include several opportunities for recreation programs to address poverty and related issues of social justice, such as in teaching historical foundations, designing programs for a diverse clientele, and managing programs to meet changing social and economic needs (COAPRT, 2014).

This shift in accreditation focus might encourage some recreation departments to integrate poverty and related social justice topics into their curriculum; however, given this accreditation tradition, some recreation faculty may not have learned *how* to teach about poverty prior to teaching in the field. Nursing (Massey & Durrheim, 2007), teacher education (Milner & Laughter, 2013), and social work (Adedoyin, & Sossou, 2011) programs are more likely to centralize poverty in their undergraduate and graduate

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programs, allowing teaching faculty to feel more comfortable teaching these topics as faculty. Recreation faculty, on the other hand, might not feel as prepared to engage students in this deeply complex topic. Biaett (2011), for example, depicts students' struggles when given an assignment to interview a low-wage worker. Teaching about poverty in an effective way demands active cognitive, social, and emotional engagement, higher order tasks that Bickmore (2005) calls "difficult citizenship education." Given these factors, poverty is not central in many parks and recreation programs, and many of today's teaching faculty lack the training necessary to effectively teach complex processes related to poverty.

Community of practice (CoP) offers one potential solution to the dilemmas associated with teaching poverty as a way to build expertise by engaging with colleagues in other academic disciplines. In this paper, the authors describe the concept of CoP (Wenger, 1998) and how the authors used several tenets of CoP to inform our teaching about poverty. Specifically, the authors used a poverty simulation as a foundation from which to build a small interdisciplinary CoP that helped the authors better understand how undergraduates learn about poverty. With this case study as our framework, the authors argue that small CoPs that are formed "from the ground up" can be powerful resources for improving the ways we prepare undergraduates to address poverty in the field.

## Background

### Communities of Practice

Founded on the tenets of social learning theory, CoP assumes that people are social beings and learning is the result of the iterative interactions with others in the domains in which we live (Wenger, 1998). From this perspective, learning as "social participation" is not just a result of interacting with others, but also the process of constructing shared meaning around the practices the members in a given domain hold in common. Community, then, is the interplay between individual learning and community development. As described by Wenger (2000), "[CoP] combines personal transformation with the evolution of social structures" (p. 227). The successful combination of the personal and the social is both process and product of a community of practice.

Based on these principals, CoPs include foundational features that, together, represent "a group of people who share a concern...and learn how to do it better by interacting regularly" (Wenger, 2011). These features are numerable given the diverse applications of CoP. (Cox [2005], Johnson [2001], and Amin and Roberts [2008] all provide comprehensive reviews of CoP applications related to teaching). What follows is an outline of four features that were particularly salient to the experience described in this paper.

The first feature is the inductive, rather than deductive, way CoPs form. CoPs almost necessarily accidental because they start first with the linkages people make when they share some degree of affinity (Wenger, 2000, 2011). For example, nurses who eat lunch together and share thoughts about their nursing practice form a CoP based on their lunchtime bond rather than from a formally designated assignment. Second, CoPs emerge from sustained and ritualistic interactions between a somewhat consistent yet fluid membership among a group people. The group, regardless of their number, must feel a sense of togetherness; however, membership is not rigidly defined. The third feature includes what the group does to further their professional knowledge. Wenger (2000) calls this the community's practice. Resources, professional competencies, terminology, and the overall process of

learning represent the nutrients that elevate a community from simply a group of people with a common interest to a CoP. The fourth CoP feature of interest to this case study is that CoPs often (but not always) include a dynamic among members akin to an apprenticeship. Informal relationships between experienced and novice members are important to the CoP because these relationships fuel the practice. Mentorships, explicit or implicit, transmit the community's practice over time regardless of the flux of membership (Wenger, 2011). Wenger's (2000) example of nurses sharing a daily lunch routine illustrates the features related to formation, membership, practice, and apprenticeship described above, particularly the informal and fluid membership through which the practice of knowledge creation emerges.

With respect to teaching specifically, CoP has particular promise for learning how to teach difficult concepts such as poverty. Scholarship on teaching suggests that peer-based learning is a widely used mechanism for teacher preparation (Borko, 2004); however, the extent to which this method effectively prepares teachers to teach complex topics such as poverty may depend on the nature of the relational context. Hargreaves and Dawe (1990) describe peer-to-peer learning as a spectrum that varies between "collaborative culture" and "contrived collegiality." The difference between these poles is who initiates the peer-based learning. When faculty initiate the learning relationship, they contribute to an overarching collaborative culture. Contrived collegiality, in contrast, is less likely to effectively promote professional development (Sherer, Shea, & Kristensen, 2003). Based on these authors' exploration of teachers' experiences within these contexts, they contend that an overarching collaborative culture, which is characterized by authentic relationships initiated and sustained by individual faculty, were more effective and sustainable than contrived collegiality, which is initiated at the administrative level for the purpose of transmitting technical knowledge.

One common approach to professional development in higher education is the faculty learning community (FLC). Many FLCs are initiated by administrators, though, suggesting that these opportunities might perpetuate contrived collegiality rather than build a culture of collaboration. Furthermore, preparing teachers to teach difficult topics, such as poverty, likely requires a system of peer learning that is grounded in ongoing dialogue and trust (Bickmore, 2005); therefore, in order to effectively prepare teachers to teach difficult topics such as poverty, CoPs are more likely to be successful if they are allowed to emerge informally rather than from a formal approach.

It is also relevant to note here the idea that our field currently faces a "crisis of identity" (Henderson, 2010). While this crisis might further complicate how and what recreation faculty should be trained to teach, it also represents an interesting opportunity for CoP. According to Wenger (2000), members' ability to suspend their respective identities "opens up [their] identities to other ways of being in the world" (p. 239). This is not to suggest that recreation faculty stand to benefit from CoP only because our own identity is insufficient; rather, the CoP thrives when members are not so deeply entrenched into their own ideologies that they cannot enter into a learning relationship with others. From this perspective, the case study presented here illuminates the ways recreation faculty are uniquely positioned to use CoP in order to inform their teaching about poverty.

## Case Study: An Interdisciplinary Community of Practice

### Formation

The CoP described here consisted primarily of the first author, a junior tenure-track faculty teaching in a traditional recreation department, and the second author, junior tenure-track faculty teaching social work. The two authors were the nucleus of a more expansive CoP that included faculty who teach in the areas of social work, education, and communication. Not surprisingly, the CoP began with a “You struggle to effectively teach students about poverty? So do I...” conversation over lunch at a new faculty orientation. The authors did not know at the time that this conversation would blossom into what the authors would eventually call the Poverty Project, but, in hindsight, the affinity the authors shared for engaging students in issues related to social justice was the first of many ingredients that ultimately contributed to a fruitful CoP. Wenger’s examination (1998) of CoPs among nurse practitioners found that lunchtime conversations, which were characteristically informal yet ritualistic, were rich in the sharing of the nurses’ experiences and knowledge. Like the nurses Wenger describes, our meeting began in a professional context (new faculty orientation) but was driven by a more personal connection (interest in teaching about poverty).

The nature of the meeting was, at the time, the beginnings of what might simply be considered collaboration. The campus, like most, promotes interdisciplinary collaboration and offers opportunities such as new faculty orientation in order to foster collaborative connections. To collaborate, though, is simply to share or combine resources toward a common goal and, while this is a means valued in higher education, collaboration, especially institutionalized collaboration, might limit the extent to which faculty learn from one another (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990). Interestingly, the authors faced many barriers to collaboration on the campus, including an internal research grant application that prohibited joint proposals. Formalized efforts to foster faculty collaboration are rare on the campus and are not explicitly rewarded in the tenure review process. So, while many institutions encourage faculty to collaborate, especially across disciplines, a top-down approach seems to be limited and might not yield lasting benefits for faculty (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990). In contrast to this approach, the ground-up nature of the connection allowed the authors to form a community rooted in their shared affinity for teaching about poverty.

At the core of the project was a poverty simulation, specifically *Welcome to the State of Poverty*, an experiential learning exercise designed by the Missouri Association for Community Action. The simulation is a three-hour event for 60 to 90 participants. At the start of the simulation, participants assume the role of an individual experiencing poverty; then, following an orientation to the rules of the simulation, participants are tasked with navigating a fictitious town over the course of four 15-minute “weeks.” During their month in poverty, participants must pay their bills, feed their family, keep or secure employment, attain medical care, get their children to school, and keep their home safe. The simulation is known to sensitize students to the structural barriers that keep people in poverty (Vandsburger, Duncan-Daston, Akerson, & Dillon, 2010; Steck, Engler, Ligon, Druen, & Cosgrove, 2011) and foster a sense of empathy toward poor people (Bowman, Bairstow, & Edwards, 2003; Nickols & Nielsen, 2011).

## Membership

Within a month of meeting, the authors successfully secured competitive funding to purchase the poverty simulation. The authors knew little about the simulation and even less about the ways the authors would implement the simulation on a campus where the authors were both newcomers, so the authors began by identifying stakeholders to engage in the project. Through informal networks, the authors contacted two senior faculty known to do work related to poverty on the campus and, over breakfast this time, the four of colleagues began to chart a strategic plan for the poverty project. At this meeting, the authors identified several additional faculty members with similar interests; the authors contacted each one and soon after convened the first advisory group meeting. This group, which included each author's respective deans, faculty teaching in recreation, social work, education, and communication, and even a former city mayor, brainstormed ways to implement the simulation and agreed to meet periodically over the course of the project. From these initial meetings emerged an interdisciplinary group interested in engaging students in meaningful learning experiences that foster a deep understanding of poverty and its related issues.

The advisory group was not CoP per se, but more of a group of people with a common interest. While this larger group shared many valuable ideas and resources during the formal meetings, the authors now recognize that the CoP ultimately emerged from the repeated and unintentionally ritualistic interactions between the two authors. From the beginning, the authors dedicated two hours each week to discussing the project and their respective teaching practices. In coffee shops, pubs, and living rooms, the authors met regularly to share ideas and make plans for the project. Members of the advisory group would join in the practice by meeting with the authors periodically; the authors became a nucleus around which members of the community moved. Interestingly, despite efforts to include a breadth of stakeholders in this project, the CoP remained small. Time constraints are a common barrier to collaboration in general; in the experience of the authors, the realities of heavy teaching and service loads prevented many potential stakeholders from actively engaging in our CoP. Given these somewhat natural safeguards, the authors, somewhat accidentally, engaged a small but fluid membership that would later prove optimal for the CoP.

## Practice

From these somewhat organic origins emerged a practice that later became the central function of the CoP. Practice, in CoP, includes the beliefs, behaviors, and artifacts the community actively shares throughout their routine interactions (Wenger, 2011). More important, though, are the ways the practice fosters knowledge, which, to Wenger (2000), is the result of individuals' competencies expressed through the social system. Practice, then, are the mechanisms through which knowledge is generated, transmitted, and adapted to reflect the shared values of the CoP. From this perspective, the authors generated the knowledge base of the community through three distinct practices: the poverty simulation, personal caring, and habits of accountability.

The poverty simulation, which was described earlier, galvanized the practice in several ways. First, it required the authors learn how to implement the simulation. The product came with detailed materials that required the authors to read and discuss their application on campus, and, through these processes, the authors engaged in a shared learning experience. From this, the simulation also helped the authors to delineate roles within the CoP. Learning how to implement the simulation illuminated the authors' individual learning styles, which informed how the authors divided work. In this case, the authors found their styles different

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yet complimentary as learners and, later, as co-producers of CoP. By way of example, one of the authors is a big thinker and constant consumer of new books and journals on teaching and learning. The other of the authors is a planner and very detail orientated, keeping them on task with details and logistics. Finally, the simulation became an identity for the CoP; it gave the authors purpose and direction that characterized the work not only for the authors but to those outside of the CoP. A CoP's identity, to Wenger (2001), requires individuals to suspend individual identities and the simulation, in this experience, was a powerful source of our practice.

Given its demonstrated effectiveness, the simulation was used to anchor the larger exploration of *how* undergraduates learn about poverty. To do this, the authors facilitated the simulation for several different student groups between fall of 2013 and spring 2014. Approximately 500 students from a variety of majors (predominately recreation, social work, nursing, health promotion, and education) participated in the simulation during this time. Also included in the project was funding for two student research teams—one each spring semester. Both teams, comprised primarily of social work masters students, assisted with implementation of the simulation and initiated an action research project to explore students' learning processes before, during, and one month following the simulation. The student research team generated research questions, interviewed students, and analyzed data to be used to inform how faculty teach about poverty. Also contributing to the Poverty Project was the Advisory Group. Members met once a semester to brainstorm ideas, support implementation of the simulation, and assist in strategic planning. CoP was not an explicit aim of the advisory group nor of the project coordinators; rather, CoP emerged through the myriad relationships that were built over the course of the project.

The partnership quickly expanded beyond the simulation itself. In the process of learning about the simulation and making plans for its implementation, the authors slowly and, again somewhat unintentionally, began to forge a caring connection. Caring is not commonly included in definitions of collaboration nor is it central to institutional efforts to promote collaboration. A CoP approach, in contrast, assumes a level of personal connection that goes beyond task-driven compatibility. In this experience, what started as an affinity for engaging students in issues related to poverty grew into a caring connection through regular yet authentic interaction. Over time the authors shared more and more about the authors' identities as a recreation professional and a social worker, about the experience of being new faculty, and about their personal lives. The authors did not know the important function these personal connections served, but the authors now know that from this place of personal connection came trust, openness, and eventually, a sense of care for one another and for the work.

It was this two-dimensional care for one another and for the work that fostered accountability, the third key element of the practice. Accountability, as it relates to productivity, is a recommended practice for anyone working toward a goal. This notion of accountability simply implies that goal-directed humans accomplish tasks simply to avoid negative consequences or achieve desirable ends. Our practice of accountability was driven by a deeper sense of commitment; one that, the authors now recognize, was grounded in personal caring. Block (2009) connects caring to accountability within communities by claiming that accountability emerges naturally among individuals who care for one another within a community. From this place of care, the authors did not hold one another accountable as much as the authors energized in each other a personal desire to accomplish

tasks for the good of our community. Accountability, then, moved our work forward and, together with the simulation and our efforts to build caring connection, became the practices around which our CoP's knowledge emerged.

### **Apprenticeship**

Apprenticeship also became a critical strategy for our work together. The concept of apprenticeship has many connotations, and, like accountability, is considered very differently from a CoP perspective than from the perspective of organizational productivity. Wenger (2011) conceptualizes CoP based on classical conceptions of apprenticeship, which he describes as a bi-directional relationship that uses a "living curriculum" to transmit knowledge from a master to an apprentice (p. 4). Unique to this conceptualization are the ways in which this living curriculum promotes ongoing learning among masters and novices alike, an equalizing process that sustains the community's practice (Wenger, 2000). From this perspective, apprenticeship is a fluid practice in which both master and novice benefit. In our experience, these roles changed form and function throughout our work, commonly in relation to nature of our practice.

The authors have already described how the simulation was a practice in which the authors were both novices, but it also became a lens that illuminated great differences in our respective experiences teaching about poverty. Social workers interact daily with the policies and terminology associated with poverty, so terms like "EBT" and "TANF" are commonly understood. Many recreation preparation programs do not centralize poverty so, from the beginning of our work, the lexicon of poverty alone provided clear opportunities for apprenticeship. Teaching methods common to social workers represented a similar opportunity for apprenticeship. Techniques for teaching about poverty, such as how to create class norms that promote open and critical debate, are central topics among social work educators and, in general, a social work approach to poverty effectively fosters poverty-related empathy (e.g., Weaver & Yun, 2011).

Somewhat surprising, though, were the ways recreation pedagogy further enhanced our understanding of how students experience poverty during the poverty simulation. The experiential learning component of the poverty simulation provided an opportunity to share this pedagogical practice commonly used in recreation classes. By way of example, as packaged, the simulation includes a script for the facilitator to use when orienting participants to the simulation; however, the script was primarily a set of instructions for the simulation. To better promote transfer from the simulation experience to participants' behaviors and beliefs, the authors used Gass and Priest's (1993) concept of isomorphic framing to adapt the script. This is a technique used to engage participants in a metaphoric learning experience, such as a simulation, by framing the experience using the metaphor itself. Instead of introducing the simulation by saying, "You are going to navigate a hypothetical month in poverty," the facilitator said "Welcome to Anytown, U.S.A. Your task for the next month is to pay your bills, keep your family safe, and try to get ahead." Experiential learning techniques such as isomorphic framing are common in some recreation curricula and were one way the recreation perspective proved valuable to our community's practice.

A second opportunity emerged from the game-like nature of the simulation. Many of the features of the simulation, such as fake money, stuffed baby dolls, and a town criminal, lend to a sense of play among some participants. One student, for example, stuffed his jacket under his sweatshirt to represent his role as a pregnant woman. The original simulation script



encourages participants to avoid play-like behavior, encouraging them to take seriously the role while navigating the simulated month in poverty. The authors tried to minimize this game-like feel by adapting the script; yet students' tendency toward these behaviors persisted so much so that the authors began to question the role of play in the simulation. Traditional conceptions of play contend that play affords a release from real-life roles that in turn fosters deep engagement. Ann Darling, at a recent keynote address to the 2014 Academy of Leisure Sciences Teaching Institute, suggested play is a promising approach to undergraduate education. From this perspective the authors are beginning to examine the way play might actually foster learning in the poverty simulation. Apprenticeship, through these opportunities, emerged as a bidirectional exchange of common social work and recreation pedagogies and, in doing so, served as the living curriculum for our CoP.

### Challenges and Implications

The case study described here depicts a community of practice that extended our understanding of how undergraduate students learn about poverty. The authors focused on four specific features of community of practice that were particularly instrumental to our learning: inductive formation, ritualistic interactions, practice, and apprenticeship. The features in this case enhanced our experience with CoP; however, CoPs may be susceptible to interpersonal processes that may limit the extent to which individuals gain from their membership. Wenger (2002) contends that the very qualities that make communities optimal contexts for learning also make them susceptible to negative interpersonal dynamics. Given the ways CoPs engage both positive and negative interpersonal processes, some argue (e.g., Roberts, 2006; Handley, Sturdy, Fincham, & Clark, 2006) that CoP, in general, is not an effective approach to learning within an organization. In the following section, the authors outline three specific challenges, power, insularity, and size, and suggest implications for recreation faculty interested in engaging in CoP to inform how they teach about poverty.

#### Challenges

Power is the first factor that can negatively impact CoP, and there are several factors that can promote power differentials in this context. Members' levels of expertise, involvement, and organizational influence present opportunities for some members to exert power over other members (Roberts, 2006). Apprenticeship might be problematic in this way; although apprenticeship, from a CoP perspective, can also balance power over time through the bidirectional exchange of knowledge (Wenger, 2000). Our status as new, junior-level faculty afforded the authors relatively similar levels of involvement and organizational influence; the authors actually sought out others with organizational expertise and influence to augment our limited time on campus. This allowed the authors to develop a shared identity representative of our practice rather than any hierarchically defined roles. This also forced the authors to look towards what Wenger (1998) refers to as the boundaries of CoP—the boundaries between what the authors knew and did not know, between our community and those outside of our community. Interacting at these boundaries is critical to leveling power dynamics that might arise within the master-novice relationship characteristic of CoP.

Working at the boundaries also functions to address a second common challenge: insularity. Isolating ourselves within small communities, whether formal communities

such as academic departments or informal communities is problematic although prevalent in higher education (Schneider & Shoenberg, 1999). Similarly, in CoP, insularity prevents the expansion of knowledge and evolution of the community (Roberts, 2006). Maintaining fluidity at the boundaries between a CoP and the larger context is one way to prevent insularity because, at the boundaries, “competence and experience tend to diverge” (Wenger, 2000, p. 233). This was precisely our experience. Our new faculty status made the authors acutely aware of the boundary between our burgeoning CoP and the larger context of our departments, disciplines, and university.

Boundaries are also relevant to a CoP’s size, which is a third common challenge. Like the other features of CoP discussed here (e.g., formation and practice), the number of members of a given CoP is necessarily fluid. Wenger (2000) explains that CoP should have a “critical mass,” as a CoP too large would tend toward diffusion and one too small would tend toward insularity, yet the ideal number depends on the CoP’s practice and membership. Roberts (2006), however, calls for more explicit parameters for size claiming that the number of members, whether too great or too few, strongly affects the form and function of all other CoP processes. Our CoP was admittedly small; two members are hardly more than a collaborative pair. However, Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002) suggest that a small CoP can mitigate limitations related to its size by inviting different levels of participation. The authors did this through our work with both our student research team and our Advisory Board.

### Implications

Parks and recreation educators can apply several features of this case to our efforts to prepare undergraduate students to engage meaningfully with poverty in their future work. Teaching poverty is a complex process that is difficult for many educators; CoP is one way recreation professionals might learn about effective teaching practices used in other disciplines such as social work. Recreation faculty interested in learning ways to effectively prepare undergraduates to engage with poverty should consider CoP is a mechanism for building and transmitting pedagogical practices.

Recreation faculty should also consider concrete projects such as the poverty simulation as a foundation for CoP. Our data show that the simulation provided a meaningful learning opportunity for students on our campus. “Engaged learning opportunities” such as the simulation can be powerful pedagogical tools for developing students’ interest and participation in critical social issues (Nagda, Gurin, & Lopez, 2003). More broadly, though, the simulation provided an explicit practice around which to build CoP. Parks and recreation educators are uniquely positioned to implement engaged learning opportunities such as a simulation given our expertise in program planning and experiential education.

In summary, CoPs represent an opportunity for parks and recreation educators to prepare our students to become central stakeholders in addressing poverty in the field. Poverty is a deeply complex topic that is difficult to teach, but fields such as nursing, teacher education, and social work have adopted ways to effectively teach poverty in undergraduate curricula (Massey & Durrheim, 2007; Milner & Laughter, 2013; Adedoyin, & Sossou, 2011) and recreation is similar to these fields in its human services dimensions. Parks and recreation educators need to prepare undergraduates not only to provide programs and spaces for individuals experiencing poverty, but to engage in discussion about poverty and those affected by poverty with a deep understanding. Dustin and his colleagues’ (2011) call to “rise above the limited perspectives of academic specializations in the search for a

broader and more integrated understanding of the world” demands recreation educators seek innovative ways to contribute to and benefit from other disciplines. CoP is the ideal context in which to explore how the authors might best prepare our students for “difficult citizenship” so they might effectively address poverty in their work.

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