

SOCIAL POLICY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Application for Liberal Arts Research Collaborative

Submitted by:

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Engaging Social Policy at the Local Level

National policy is often created without understanding all the consequences at the state and local levels, including the effects of policy on families, youth, and all of us. Using a social justice framework, we seek to understand how institutions are often structured to generate profit or reinforce the status quo rather than equitably serve people. Our projects are united by asking questions about the effects of policy on marginalized and vulnerable communities, particularly with regard to class, race and gender. As researchers who are invested in our projects, we are personally affected by the current policies and hope that the results will be of benefit to improving negative impacts of them in our communities. We understand these policies as intrinsic to basic human rights. Using data, we seek to bring to light issues that get framed through a dominant narrative in order to better understand and serve those who have been relegated invisible and the most affected.

Guided by feminist research methodology, we propose to develop relationships with local community partners that inform our research – the way we ask questions and develop answers to those questions. Primary methodological procedures across teams are informed by social scientific research methods. While overlap exists between our methodological approaches, each team is engaging in separate processes to gather and analyze data. Whether it is through engagement with scholarly literature, analysis of legislative policy, and/or counterstorytelling (Solórzano and Yosso 2001), we will utilize a “Grounded Theory” approach to allow theory to emerge from the data and to develop our research findings (Glaser and Strauss 1965; Glaser and Strauss 1967). Through our collective work, we anticipate learning from each other effective strategies for generating policy recommendations that can be shared with our community partners.

A LARC grant provides the unique opportunity to collaborate across disciplines and engage in dialogue about access to social justice and the implementation of public policy. Working in a community of researchers strengthens everyone’s work because it brings new perspective and approaches to the issues. Collaboration thus becomes a demonstration of the value of interdisciplinarity in the liberal arts context. To foster interdisciplinary dialogue, our research community will create a shared space for students based on a specific schedule where they can access professors and each other, as well as any other necessary research materials. We plan to hold weekly meetings, which will consist of the following activities: discussion and presentation of research findings pertinent to the larger discussion of social justice and the impact of policy; discussions of shared readings that will strengthen our larger understanding of advocacy and perspectives on policy; and site visits to community organizations or agencies that will allow us to see implementation of policy at the local level. Our work as a research community will strengthen our individual research and reinforce the “social” in social science knowledge creation.

Timeline

Tasks and Events	Dates								
Information and Organization Meeting	February 2012								
Willamette Academy Site Visit	April or May 2012								
Research, Analysis, and Writing	May 29 th to July 27 th 2012								
	Weeks								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Sharing Research Plans and Development									
Read and Discuss Select Literature									
Site visits									
Writing and Sharing Research Papers									