Whitely: A True Community

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Abstract

This Honors Thesis project was completed as a collaborative effort from three Honors College students who had participated previously in an immersive learning experience through the Teacher's College. This thesis illustrates Whitely, an exemplary community in Muncie that, despite several biases and stereotypes, has overcome many obstacles and hardships. Drawing upon the knowledge and perception the three students had gained from working in the Whitely community, they created a video. Through this video, the goal was to capture the opinions and experiences of Ball State students and members of the Whitely community. The history of the Whitely community is also explored as well as the reasons that biases and stereotypes may have developed, and the video explains how the Whitely community plans to eradicate them.
Acknowledgements

The three Honors students would like to thank the Whitely Community members for welcoming us into the community and providing us with an increased understanding of how a community works together in order to overcome prejudices. There were several members from the Whitely Community that took their time to answer our questions and share resources with us to create this project. The creators of this Honors Thesis would like to extend a special “thank you” to Wilisha Scaife, Michael Long, Mary Dollison, Cornelius Dollison and the Buley kids for agreeing to interview with us and sharing their community with us. Thank you also to the Ball State students who interviewed with us: Emilie Carrison and Emily Young. Finally, a special “thank you” goes to our advisor through this project, Eva Zygmunt-Fillwalk. We appreciate her willingness to provide guidance, encouragement, and support for this thesis project.
Author’s Statement: Allison Carr

I became intrigued with the Whitely community after participating in an immersive learning semester through the Ball State Teacher’s College called Schools within the Context of Community (SCC). This semester involved spending time in the classroom and community of an urban area that had been labeled with stereotypes such as high crime, a predominantly African American population, and low socioeconomic status. Growing up in a rural farming community with very little diversity, I was shocked by my limited understanding and pre-conceived mindset. During my semester in SCC, I took part in a variety of experiences such as a poverty simulation, courageous conversations, community walks, and church services that allowed me to understand the people who lived in this community. The prejudices and stereotypes I unknowingly embraced were a barrier to my growth and development until I was able to combat them from the core. After working in a community that so avidly demonstrated a willingness to grow through their many goals and plans, I desired to become a supporter and benefit to the community in any way that I could. When presented with the prospect of continued work in and for the Whitely community, I eagerly accepted the opportunity. Recognizing the strong stereotypes and biases held about this area and the negative perceptions that so many people in Muncie held about the Whitely community, I sought for an opportunity to change these and eradicate these beliefs.

Understanding the stereotypes that I held about the Whitely Community before I was immersed in it allowed me to understand other people’s beliefs and prejudices. Through this thesis, I sought to create a video that would allow people to take a glimpse into the community and understand that the community is more than its social economic standing. The Whitely community is full of hard-working and passionate people. They have a goal in mind, gather the resources they need, and work hard in order to achieve all that they desire. I have seen this characteristic in a variety of ways throughout the Whitely community, especially in accordance to the goals implemented by the Whitely Community Council. The Whitely Community Council has established seven goals for their community that work to enhance the community. The first of these goals is beautification. The community attempts to cultivate a physical space that reflects Whitely’s vibrant energy by performing a number of activities such as neighborhood
clean ups. The second goal is safety in which Whitely hopes to advance a neighborhood security strategy that improves well-being and confidence of residents. The third is education. Education is a very important goal for the Whitely community as they hope to instill the values of learning and wellness into each individual and family. The fourth goal is work where Whitely hopes to foster the entrepreneurial spirit of residents. The fifth goal, pride, states that the community hopes to develop and commemorate a clear sense of community. The sixth goal, resources, hopes to formalize the procedures that ensure fiscal responsibility and accountability while pursuing diverse funding opportunities for initiatives designed to meet community needs. The last goal is marketing. Whitely hopes to illustrate the activities and progress underway for Whitely residents and Muncie at large in order to reinforce the Council’s mission and build momentum for the future. These goals illustrate the hardworking and passionate individuals that fill the community of Whitely.

In order to establish these goals, the Whitely community is a very close-knit community that holds the motto, “It takes a village to raise a child,” very seriously. The parents and grandparents of the children join together with other community members and form relationships in order to create effective after school programs and activities that help the children. They also create effective programs and resources for all ages: children, adults, and seniors. Through these programs the community becomes even closer-knit and they share with each other their expertise and resources in order to ensure that everyone has a chance at succeeding. Because I witnessed these values and more in the community during the time that I spent there, it was important to me to create a project that would share with others a glimpse into this amazing, passionate, hardworking community.

I have learned so much through my immersion and observation of the community that has truly affected me both personally and professionally. Personally, I have come to the realization that community is so much more than simply a group of people living in a certain geographic location. It is a group of people that work together in order to achieve common goals. I have witnessed this in the Whitely community and believe that my community can be similar to this if certain characteristics of the Whitely community are applied to my own community at home. I
think that it is important for me to take what I’ve learned here and instill these ideas and characteristics in my community at home. Coming from a much smaller town than Muncie, I believe that it is definitely achievable. I just need to keep in mind the Whitely community and the characteristics that I have observed and experienced here and realize how I can implement those same qualities in my own community.

Professionally, this information that I have learned will benefit me in the classroom and in my interactions in my future school. Through this semester, I have learned the importance of community and how immersing yourself in the community surrounding the school can truly promote the effectiveness of the teacher. Through this semester, I participated in a variety of community events and I learned a great deal about the community, the people, and the children. With this information I was able to reach my students and create exciting, engaging lessons in which they were more motivated to learn. In my future career I plan to immerse myself in the community surrounding my school, even if I do not live there. I plan to get involved and understand how the community works and functions as well as determine the dreams and goals of the community. With these goals and dreams in mind, I will better be able to evaluate and understand how my role as an educator fits into this community and how I can truly benefit the whole.

All of the information that I learned during my involvement allowed me to understand that the prejudices and discrimination that is held about the Whitely community by outsiders. My desire was to share this information about the Whitely community with those outside on the Ball State campus and surrounding areas in Muncie. We decided to do this by creating a video that documented interviews of community members and non-community members who have been immersed in the community. We began the video by recounting the history of the Whitely community. The history of the Whitely community lends some insight to the prejudices of being predominantly African American because of the founders, as well as being low socioeconomic because of the loss of business and industry. We followed the history by incorporating interviews with two students from Ball State University. One student grew up in Muncie with prejudices and stereotypes about the Whitely community. She also participated in Students
within the Context of Community and realized her prejudices through the program and has since changed her beliefs. Another student is not from the Muncie area originally, but lent her insight into why the community has these stereotypes and how her prejudices and beliefs about the community changed as a result of being immersed in the community. Finally, we included interviews of members from the community that break the stereotypes and work to inform people outside of the community that there is more than meets the eye. The community members’ passion about their community is evident in the interviews and our hope is that viewers will feel the passion and become encouraged to get to know the community and become involved. In the video we listed and explained the seven goals of the Whitely Community Council in order to illustrate that the community is hardworking and is taking steps themselves to diminish the prejudices and stereotypes that are evident. Through this video we hoped to encourage students to not only get involved in the Whitely community, but with any community or person, to understand that there is more than meets the eye. We hope to challenge their prejudices and stereotypes they may hold about not only Whitely, but any other community or individual.

My initial role in this project was to assist organizing and creating an outline for our project. I then helped formulate questions and conduct interviews of the Buley children and Whitely community members that disprove the prejudices about the community. I also took over the role of finding the Whitely community goals and determining the accomplishments the Whitely community has made in reaching these goals.
Institutional Review Board

DATE: August 14, 2013
TO: Eva Zygmunt-Fillwalk, Ph.D.
FROM: Ball State University IRB
RE: IRB protocol # 134221-6
TITLE: Schools Within the Context of Community
SUBMISSION TYPE: Continuing Review/Progress Report
ACTION: APPROVED
DECISION DATE: August 14, 2013
EXPIRATION DATE: August 13, 2014
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

The Institutional Review Board has approved your Continuing Review/Progress Report for the above protocol, effective August 14, 2013 through August 13, 2014. All research under this protocol must be conducted in accordance with the approved submission.

Editorial Notes:

1. CR approved.

As a reminder, it is the responsibility of the P.I. and/or faculty sponsor to inform the IRB in a timely manner:

- when the project is completed,
- if the project is to be continued beyond the approved end date,
- if the project is to be modified,
- if the project encounters problems, or
- if the project is discontinued.

Any of the above notifications should be addressed in writing and submitted electronically to the IRB (http://www.bsu.edu/irb). Please reference the IRB protocol number given above in any communication to the IRB regarding this project. Be sure to allow sufficient time for review and approval of requests for modification or continuation. If you have questions, please contact Sarah Ryle at (765) 285-5052 or sgryle@bsu.edu.
Works Cited

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