Advancing Racial Equity in the Minneapolis Park System: How Could Organizations with Divergent Goals Work Together?

Teaching Note

"Advancing Racial Equity in the Minneapolis Park System" is a role-play simulation designed to help students understand the challenges in creating a collaborative governance regime when actors involved have different understandings of the core issue. It also helps students understand how complex structural elements underpin systemic inequalities, and then learn strategies to advance racial equity in public service provisions. This simulation is relevant for classes dealing with collaborative governance, public engagement processes, stakeholder involvement, collaborative problem solving, and increasing diversity and inclusion in public policy making.

The simulation includes four different roles from the government and nonprofit sectors, which have very different understandings of what racial equity means for the parks system. The goal of the simulation is to ask students to work collaboratively with other roles to figure out key initiatives to increase and advance racial equity in the Minneapolis Parks System. By going through this simulation practice, students are expected to take a critical approach to view racial equity from the lens of different stakeholders and grasp basic design principles for developing collaborative governance regimes.

Setting up the role play

The instructor should provide a short lecture and presentation about the Minneapolis Parks System, which is included in the background of the teaching simulation. This process should take 10 to 15 minutes. From this historical overview, students will learn the unique features and inherent racial equity problems in the Minneapolis Parks System. The links below provide additional context to the teaching simulation, which can be assigned to students in preparation for this simulation:

- Here is a 10 minute YouTube video about the Minneapolis Parks System's history: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nSjZQHNz8w
- The Park Board published their documentation of racial equity issues documentation on their webpage: https://www.minneapolisparks.org/about_us/racial_equity/
- Parks and Power's host organization, Hope Community, produced this one-minute YouTube to highlight the mission of Parks and Power: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jyogC2_XsnM

Being one of the nation's best park systems (Trust for Public Land, 2019) is a unique advantage of using Minneapolis as the setting of this simulation. The objective is that students understand that even for a high-performing parks system, racial equity problems still prevail. Additionally, systemic issues need effective public engagement processes to bring together different types of stakeholders and jointly design multifaceted racial equity goals. In addition,

the students will experience the complexity of reaching an agreement on how to advance racial equity, a broad and permeating issue, in a group of stakeholders who have important stakes but are committed to different goals and priorities.

Facilitating the In-class Role Play

The instructor should divide the students into collaborative work teams so that each group has at least one representative from each of the four organizations listed below. Each student will have a detailed two-page description of the organization they represent, including their mission, position on racial equity, and documented involvement related to racial equity and the Minneapolis Parks & Recreation Board.

The following are the groups included in the role descriptions:

1) Twin Cities Metropolitan Council
2) Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board
3) National Association for the Advancement of Colored People of Minneapolis
4) Parks and Power

After the role descriptions are handed out and students have read them, the instructor should ask the students with the same role to gather and briefly clarify their group's mission and position on racial equity. After this brief discussion, the instructor should ask the students to form groups with the four distinct roles to perform the key task.

This simulation's key task is to ask students to discuss in their group the following four questions:

1. Define the core problem of racial equity in the Minneapolis Parks System. What are some of the structural elements underneath this issue?

2. What are the areas of consensus between your organization and other organizations? How can you build a consensus and common goal for this collaboration?

3. Should your organization collaborate with other organizations to address the racial equity problem in the Minneapolis Park System? If no, why not? What are your strategies to engage in addressing racial equity problems in the Minneapolis Park System without collaborating?

4. If you decide to collaborate, what should be the roles of each organization? What processes and rules should you follow for collaborative problem solving and decision-making?

Based on the focus of the class, the instructor should highlight different questions for the students to discuss. The instructor should leave sufficient in-class time for students to address these questions. If there is not enough time to present their discussion results, the class can be extended to two class periods. Students can also work in-between two class periods to develop a formal presentation about their solutions. Students are expected to operate on their own to design their decision-making processes and discussion rules in their small groups.

After the simulation, the instructors should ask each group to report out their shared definition, designed collaborative processes, and how they reached the consensus (or not). Then the class can be engaged in a large meta-discussion about what happened in the simulation process and what students learned.

The following questions can be used to help lead the large group discussion.

1) What were some of the major challenges in your group when designing a collaborative governance process to advance racial equity in the park system?
2) Where did these conflicts come from?
3) What are some of the implicit biases when discussing racial equity?
4) Was it possible to design a collaborative governance process when different stakeholders hold such different views of racial equity?
5) If so, what decision-making or team working rules had your group used?

6) What are your experiences of working with stakeholders in different sectors or different levels of government?

7) What is YOUR understanding of racial equity?

8) What seem to be the most crucial factors in designing effective collaborative governance processes to advance racial equity?

9) Who else should also be at the table?

Suggested Readings before the simulation

Collaborative Governance

Ansell, Chris, and Alison Gash. "Collaborative governance in theory and practice." *Journal of public administration research and theory* 18.4 (2008): 543-571.

Bryson, John M., Barbara C. Crosby, and Melissa Middleton Stone. "The design and implementation of Cross-Sector collaborations: Propositions from the literature." *Public administration review* 66 (2006): 44-55.

Emerson, Kirk, Tina Nabatchi, and Stephen Balogh. "An integrative framework for collaborative governance." *Journal of public administration research and theory* 22.1 (2012): 1-29.

Vangen, Siv. "Developing practice-oriented theory on collaboration: a paradox lens." *Public Administration Review* 77, no. 2 (2017): 263-272.

Citizen Participation and Engagement

Bryson, John M., Kathryn S. Quick, Carissa Schively Slotterback, and Barbara C. Crosby. "Designing public participation processes." *Public Administration Review* 73, no. 1 (2013): 23-34.

Clark, Jill K. "Designing public participation: Managing problem settings and social equity." *Public Administration Review* 78, no.3 (2018): 362-374.

Forester, John. "Planning in the face of power." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 48, no. 1 (1982): 67-80.

Fung, Archon. "Varieties of participation in complex governance." *Public Administration Review* 66 (2006): 66-75.

Hardy, Cynthia, and Nelson Phillips. "Strategies of engagement: Lessons from the critical examination of collaboration and conflict in an interorganizational domain." *Organization Science* 9, no. 2 (1998): 217-230.

Nabatchi, Tina. "Putting the "public" back in public values research: Designing participation to identify and respond to values." *Public Administration Review* 72, no. 5 (2012): 699-708.

Social Equity and Public Service Access

Frederickson, George. "The state of social equity in American public administration." *National Civic Review* 94, no. 4 (2005): 31-38.

Guy, Mary E., and Sean A. McCandless. "Social equity: Its legacy, its promise." *Public Administration Review* 72, no. s1 (2012): S5-S13.

Prottas, Jeffrey Manditch. "The cost of free services: Organizational impediments to access to public services." *Public Administration Review* (1981): 526-534.

Rigolon, Alessandro. "A complex landscape of inequity in access to urban parks: A literature review." *Landscape and Urban Planning* 153 (2016): 160-169.

Consensus Building

Innes, Judith E. "Planning through consensus building: A new view of the comprehensive planning ideal." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 62, no. 4 (1996): 460-472.

Innes, Judith E., and David E. Booher. "Consensus building as role playing and bricolage: Toward a theory of collaborative planning." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 65, no. 1 (1999): 9-26.

Innes, Judith E., and David E. Booher. "Consensus building and complex adaptive systems: A framework for evaluating collaborative planning." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 65, no. 4 (1999): 412-423.

Vangen, Siv, and Chris Huxham. "The tangled web: Unraveling the principle of common goals in collaborations." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 22, no. 4 (2012): 731-760

Tools and Resources for Finding Root Causes and Consensus Building

Fishbone Diagram: https://asq.org/quality-resources/fishbone

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Guide for Consensus Building and Agreement Seeking: https://www.epa.gov/international-cooperation/public-participation-guide-tools-consensus-building-and-agreement-seeking

Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment Tool Kit for Consensus Building: https://www.ccme.ca/files/About/Consensus%20Building%20Toolkit.pdf