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The Homelessness Research and Action Collaborative: Case Studies of the Social Innovation Process at a University Research Center

Jacen Greene

Portland State University, jacen@pdx.edu

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The Homelessness Research and Action Collaborative: Case Studies of the Social Innovation Process at a University Research Center

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The Homelessness Research and Action Collaborative: Case Studies of the Social Innovation Process at a University Research Center

Abstract

Purpose

This paper aims to determine whether a combined set of process models for university contributions to social innovation can be effectively utilized to describe how higher education institutions facilitate and disseminate research for social value.

Design/methodology/approach

The author applies Cunha and Benneworth's (2013) social innovation process model, with additions from the Nichols *et al.* (2013) model of campus-community collaboration and the Jain *et al.* (2020) social value framework, to a pair of case studies at Portland State University about research projects on homelessness. Information was gathered through primary sources, observation, and secondary texts.

Findings

Applying the models to the case studies provides additional detail on the types and value of Portland State University's contributions to addressing homelessness through social innovation. The models are found to be effective in describing and providing guidance for social innovation research projects at other higher education institutions.

Research limitations/implications

The models may have widespread applicability in understanding or designing university contributions to social innovation, but additional case studies and analysis are needed

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3 to understand the full range of project types and institutional contexts to which they can
4 be successfully applied.
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8 **Originality/value**

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10 The projects described in the paper's case studies have not been analyzed elsewhere
11 using social innovation frameworks, and are valuable in their own right as social
12 innovations worthy of replication. The findings of the paper extend the applicability of a
13 process model for university contributions to social innovation.
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18 **Paper Type**

19 Case study
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23 **Keywords**

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26 Social innovation, social value, university research, homelessness
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31 **Introduction**

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34 This article explores the ways in which the Homelessness Research & Action
35 Collaborative (HRAC), a research center at Portland State University, engages in
36 activities designed to generate social value by fostering social innovation.
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38 Homelessness is a major issue in the United States, as in many developing and
39 developed nations, and a set of both established and emerging social innovations are
40 utilized globally to prevent and alleviate homelessness. An exploration of the specific
41 ways in which a higher education institution contributes to social innovation is useful
42 both for understanding new approaches to addressing homelessness, and as a model
43 for action-oriented research at other institutions and on other topics. However, no
44 broadly accepted model of this type seems to have been commonly applied in the
45 literature, indicating a possible research gap. To provide an element of comparability
46 and replicability in research on higher education contributions to social innovation, three
47 models are selected based on the comprehensiveness of their combined approach and
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3 applied to the case studies in the article: Cunha and Benneworth's (2013) social
4 innovation process model; the Nichols *et al.* (2013) model of the relationship between
5 community-campus collaboration, knowledge mobilization, and social innovation; and
6 the Jain *et al.* (2020) framework for social value creation. The case studies were
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8 selected from a set of projects due to their similarity to recognized social innovations
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10 addressing homelessness, and because of their emphasis on campus-community
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12 collaboration. Since few other examples can be found of the models applied in this way,
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14 the author also attempts to evaluate the utility of such a mode of analysis.
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17 The article begins with an exploration of homelessness in the United States,
18 along with established and emerging social innovations designed to alleviate
19 homelessness. HRAC's approach to social innovation is situated within the history and
20 definition of the term, with the center following an integrative approach that seeks both
21 to create social value and to restructure societal power relationships to integrate
22 previously marginalized groups. The center's emphasis on working with community
23 organizations as co-creators of knowledge as well as partners in disseminating research
24 and translating it into action is explored as an essential feature of this approach. Two
25 case studies of research on emerging social innovations in addressing homelessness
26 are described using Cunha and Benneworth's (2013) social innovation process model,
27 along with some elements of the Nichols *et al.* (2013) model of community-campus
28 collaboration ~~facilitated by knowledge mobilization~~. The case studies, one on transitional
29 housing "villages" of micro-dwellings for people experiencing homelessness and one on
30 a non-police first response for people experiencing homelessness and/or a mental
31 health crisis, outline HRAC's contributions to each stage of research, evaluation, and
32 dissemination. Different types of social value created by those social innovations are
33 detailed using the Jain *et al.* (2020) framework. The models are found to have
34 applicability outside their original examples in describing the ways in which higher
35 education institutions can facilitate research that creates social value, and the
36 innovations are found to have promise for addressing homelessness.
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Background

The Homelessness Research & Action Collaborative

Portland State University (PSU), located in Portland, Oregon, in the United States, is an urban-serving public institution with social innovation anchored and recognized as an element of its “core purpose” (Elliott, 2013), from the university’s designation as an AshokaU “Changemaker Campus” to its motto “Let Knowledge Serve the City.” The complexity of homelessness, its national and regional scale, and the impact of homelessness on students and community members led PSU to approve the creation of a new research center to focus explicitly on the topic. In late 2017, PSU’s President announced an open, competitive process to fund the launch of new multidisciplinary research centers with the potential for innovative research and positive social impact. More than two dozen preliminary proposals were submitted and presented at a faculty symposium in early 2018, with six selected to move on to the full proposal stage. Two proposals were selected for funding and officially launched in October of that year, including the Homelessness Research & Action Collaborative (HRAC). HRAC was conceived by a team of eight faculty and staff co-founders (including the author) with home departments in six out of PSU’s nine schools and colleges, bringing expertise in architecture, social work, urban planning, literature, public health, psychology, and social entrepreneurship. The title of the center, focusing on both research and action as a collaborative, was meant to emphasize an approach translating knowledge into practice, grounded in a racial equity lens and recognition of community expertise on the topic. Two members of the founding team had experience studying and teaching social innovation, and this was reflected in the center’s proposal, structure, and approach to understanding and addressing homelessness.

Homelessness in the United States

Homelessness in the United States is driven by a complex set of interrelated factors, but multiple studies have shown a strong link between the affordability and availability of housing and rates of homelessness (Quigley and Raphael, 2001; Yu, 2018; Glynn and Fox, 2019). Lower vacancy rates, fewer affordable housing units, and rapidly rising

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3 rents, especially when coupled with lower median incomes and higher rates of
4 economic inequality, are predictive of increasing rates and counts of homelessness
5 (Ibid). Non-economic factors linked to homelessness in the U.S. include systemic
6 racism and other forms of prejudice, criminal convictions and incarceration,
7 interpersonal violence, and untreated or inadequately treated mental illness and
8 substance abuse disorders. Roughly 26% of individuals experiencing homelessness in
9 the U.S. are estimated to have a severe mental illness, and about 35% may have a
10 substance abuse disorder, although these rates are lower among people experiencing
11 short-term homelessness and higher among those experiencing chronic homelessness
12 (SAMSHA, 2011). Homelessness is tied to both previous and future incarceration, as
13 individuals with a record of incarceration are less likely to obtain a job or secure
14 housing, placing them at higher risk of homelessness, while individuals experiencing
15 homelessness—especially those with a mental illness or substance abuse disorder—
16 are much more likely to be arrested and incarcerated (United States Interagency
17 Council on Homelessness, 2018). Domestic violence survivors are disproportionately
18 represented among women with children experiencing homelessness (Henry, 2018).
19 Among youth, those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, those who
20 are unmarried and parenting, or those who have previously interacted with the foster
21 care system are much more likely to experience homelessness (Ibid). Both economic
22 and non-economic factors driving homelessness are either caused or worsened by
23 systemic racism (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2019; Paul Jr. *et*
24 *al.*, 2019), resulting in a disproportionately higher rate of homelessness among
25 communities of color, especially Black and Indigenous populations (Henry *et al.*, 2020).
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43 An estimated 568,000 people across the United States experienced
44 homelessness in a single night in 2019, with just under two-thirds of them staying at a
45 shelter or in transitional housing, with the rest unsheltered or staying in a place “unfit for
46 human habitation” (Henry *et al.*, 2020). This total was based on a national “point-in-time”
47 count mandated by the federal government, with individuals experiencing unsheltered
48 homelessness counted on a single night in late January by trained volunteers,
49 employees of nonprofit service providers, and government officials. The count is often
50 supplemented by data from shelters and transitional housing. Each point-in-time count
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3 is managed by a regional “continuum of care”, a set of local government agencies and
4 nonprofit service providers within a specified geography, as a requirement for receiving
5 federal funding to address homelessness. Although the point-in-time count is supposed
6 to use a standard definition of homelessness set by the US Department of Housing and
7 Urban Development (HUD), differences in methodology, survey instruments, data
8 analysis, training, and staffing result in significant variation in accuracy and
9 completeness between continuums of care, undoubtedly missing a large number of
10 people experiencing homelessness (Schneider *et al.*, 2016; Glynn and Fox, 2017).
11 Complicating this total is the fact that the definition of “homelessness” set by HUD is
12 different, and more limited, than that used by other organizations and federal
13 departments to measure homelessness. Under the HUD definition, nearly 16,000
14 people in Oregon experienced homelessness on a single night in 2019 (Henry *et al.*,
15 2020), although the state only had enough shelter beds for roughly half this population
16 (Technical Assistance Collaborative, 2019). With a total population of 4.2 million (United
17 States Census Bureau, 2019), the state had both one of the highest overall rates of
18 homelessness and one of the highest rates of unsheltered homelessness in the nation
19 by this count (Henry *et al.*, 2020). However, other studies have shown even higher
20 numbers for Oregon, including one by HRAC that estimated 38,000 people experienced
21 some form of homelessness in the Portland Metro region alone in 2017 (Zapata *et al.*
22 2019).

39 HRAC, Social Innovation, and Homelessness

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41 While the meaning of the term “social innovation” is contested (Ayob *et al.*, 2016) and its
42 usage in higher education has evolved over the past few decades, HRAC seeks an
43 integrative role in building on sometimes-competing traditions in the field. Recent usage
44 of the term “social innovation” has fallen into two trends: one applying a “utilitarian”
45 definition that focuses on the overall benefits to society, and another, more “radical”
46 definition that emphasizes engagement with previously marginalized groups to
47 restructure power relationships (Ayob *et al.*, 2016). The utilitarian definition prioritizes
48 widespread, positive outcomes and novelty, such as “the creation of new ideas
49 displaying a positive impact on the quality and/or quantity of life” (Pol and Ville, 2009, p.
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884) or “a novel solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than existing solutions and for which the value created accrues primarily to society as a whole rather than private individual” (Phills Jr. *et al.*, 2008, p. 36), but either remains agnostic as to the process involved or draws on approaches linked to social entrepreneurship. The utilitarian lens was emphasized in a number of early social innovation/impact/entrepreneurship centers across higher education institutions worldwide, likely because many of the first centers were formed in business schools and followed pedagogical approaches that drew heavily from entrepreneurship theory (AshokaU, 2014; Austin and Rangan, 2019; Brock and Steiner, 2009; Ditkoff *et al.*, 2017). The radical definition is rooted in the history of social movements, with an explicit focus on meeting human needs that are not yet, or no longer met, by markets or government. This is done by expanding the capacity of and access to resources by previously excluded groups in a way that increases social inclusion and changes power relations (Moulaert *et al.*, 2005). The process is more important than the product in this approach, with novelty de-emphasized. Social innovation pedagogy in some higher education institutions has recently begun to shift towards an approach that integrates the radical and utilitarian approaches, for example as representing different levels of positive systems change (Kim, 2015) or by emphasizing “innovations that are both good for society and enhance society’s capacity to act” (Murray *et al.*, 2010, p. 3). This synthesis also reflects a broader shift in academic and practitioner discourse on social innovation (Ayob *et al.*, 2016).¹ HRAC follows the growing integration of the radical and utilitarian approaches by seeking to “identify innovative ways for communities to prevent and resolve homelessness through structural and institutional changes and individual interventions” (Zapata *et al.*, 2018, p. 3). The prevention and resolution goals are rooted in the utilitarian tradition of social innovation, while the structural and institutional changes, informed by engaging communities of color and individuals with lived experience of homelessness, reflect the more radical tradition.

¹ Although infrequently referenced in social innovation research, Paolo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000) foreshadowed this integrative approach by outlining a precursor to the “Human-Centered Design” strand of design thinking (now deeply linked to utilitarian approaches) and embedding it in a process of social inclusion of marginalized groups through restructured power relationships. His definition of “praxis” as “reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed” (p. 127) also reflects an integrated definition.

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3 Which type of “good” or “value” is created by social innovation is not always
4 made fully clear in the literature on the term itself. Jain *et al.* (2020) define four
5 categories of social value based on interviews with different categories of stakeholders:
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- 8 1. *Action-driven social value*, where “the creation of social impact [appears] to be
9 central to the activities performed”, and in which “social value is very much
10 related to the people in society, as opposed to the environment or economy” (pp.
11 879–880).
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- 14 2. *Outcomes-driven social value*, which comprises two oppositional perceptions,
15 with a “radical” approach in which “caring for people and the environment is
16 central to social value creation” and a “pragmatist” approach that “concentrates
17 on the measurement of social impact and social value” (pp. 881).
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- 20 3. *Sustainability-driven social value*, which emphasizes “that social, environmental
21 and economic values all contribute towards sustainability through social value
22 creation” (pp. 881).
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- 25 4. *Pluralism-driven social value*, driven by social values “which are distinct for every
26 individual”, and “influenced by a number of factors (internal and external) that
27 guide and influence an individual’s decision to create positive or negative social
28 value in society” (pp. 881).
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34 HRAC leans towards the last definition, as demonstrated in the case studies that follow,
35 because center leadership recognizes that social value may mean different things to
36 various groups, and that certain types of value creation may destroy value for others.
37 Approaching value creation from the perspective of various stakeholder groups,
38 especially those who have experienced marginalization or oppression, is therefore
39 essential throughout the research and dissemination process. This approach is heavily
40 informed by HRAC’s interactions with a wide range of stakeholder groups.
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43 HRAC’s engagement with stakeholders follows the model described by Nichols
44 *et al.* (2013), in which knowledge mobilization practices support campus-community
45 collaboration that drives social innovation. This model adopts the definition set by
46 Curwood *et al.* (2011, p. 16) of “community-university partnerships as collaborations
47 between community organizations and institutions of higher learning for the purpose of
48 achieving an identified social change goal through community-engaged scholarship”.
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3 Such collaborations typically revolve around research projects that incorporate
4 Community-Based Research or Community-Based Participatory Research methods
5 focused on ethical engagement, community participation, actionable findings, and clear
6 benefits to the community itself, and can be constrained or enabled by institutional
7 structures and practices (Nichols *et al.*, 2013). HRAC reflects this approach by creating
8 a “research center driven by community voice and community-based research where
9 faculty, students, and staff collaborate to conduct relevant and meaningful
10 interdisciplinary scholarly activities in partnership with the broader community” (Zapata
11 *et al.*, 2018, p. 2). Under the Nichols *et al.* model (2013), knowledge mobilization by the
12 university further supports and enables such collaboration by creating stronger links
13 between community beneficiaries and policymakers who are able to act on the
14 knowledge co-created through that collaboration. Positive social change in the shape of
15 social innovations may then be generated through this process.

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17 While Nichols *et al.* (2013) describe the emergence of a social innovation through
18 campus-community collaboration, Cunha and Benneworth (2013) detail a
19 complementary model of university contributions to social innovation. They describe a
20 seven-stage process with potential university contributions at each stage from
21 researchers, students, facilities, employees, financial resources, and managers. In the
22 first stage, *idea generation*, “co-creation” similar to that described by Nichols *et al.*
23 (2013) is a recommended approach for developing new concepts. In the second stage,
24 the *creation of an experimental space*, universities may create a plan for implementation
25 and build a coalition of interested stakeholders. In the third stage, the *demonstrator*, an
26 innovation is piloted and evaluated for feasibility. The first three stages describe a
27 nonlinear *creating loop* that may be repeated multiple times before a successful
28 innovation is developed and demonstrated. If it is, the fourth stage, *decision to expand*,
29 is launched in which a plan is made for whether and how to scale up the innovation. In
30 the fifth stage, a *support coalition* is formed to further refine and advance the innovation.
31 The sixth stage, *codification*, establishes a set of guidelines for adapting and replicating
32 the innovation through other organizations and in other locations. An *upscaling loop*
33 comprises this stage and the previous two stages. The final stage is diffusion
34 throughout broader society. Again reinforcing the campus-community collaboration and
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3 knowledge mobilization emphasis of Nichols *et al.* (2013), Cunha and Benneworth
4 (2013) insist that “the involvement of beneficiaries² in different stages of the process is
5 of paramount importance in order to the solution proposed be successful.” Successfully
6 creating and maintaining collaborative relationships among those developing the
7 innovation, navigating complex networks of stakeholders, and maintaining open
8 approaches are also essential for success throughout the process. HRAC follows these
9 principles and clearly engages in both the generation of new social innovations, the
10 *creating loop*, and in the evaluation and dissemination of “knowledge to area, state, and
11 national decision-makers and leaders, informing local and state decision making about
12 policy and programs to support those experiencing homelessness now and prevent
13 homelessness in the future” (Zapata *et al.*, 2018, p. 3), the *upscaling loop* and diffusion.
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22 HRAC has a goal and strategy of pursuing an integrated approach to social
23 innovation that marries the “radical” and “utilitarian” definitions, and the specific process
24 by which HRAC pursues that strategy is well described by a combined framework of the
25 Nichols *et al.* (2013) model and Cunha and Benneworth (2013) model. However, this
26 alone is not enough to ensure successful social innovation research, evaluation,
27 refinement, and dissemination. The organizational structure of the research center was
28 also carefully designed to support these efforts, matching what Kannampuzha and
29 Hockerts (2019) would describe as an *organizational social entrepreneurship* model
30 within a university setting.³ They describe this model as “a formative construct
31 composed of social change intentions, commercial activities, and inclusive governance”
32 (p. 311). Social change intentions are realized through the “creation of market and non-
33 market disequilibria through the discovery of opportunities to generate social impact and
34 the promotion of these practices among an organization’s peers and the sector in
35 general” (p. 299), an approach founded in entrepreneurship theory and linked closely to
36 the stated purpose of HRAC as described above. The commercial activity element
37 reflects an earned income strategy in “which an organization engages in commercial
38 operations to meet its social mission by generating revenues through the selling of
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54 ² Including stakeholder individuals, organizations, and governments.

55 ³ Kannampuzha and Hockerts (2019, p. 292) emphasize that organizational social entrepreneurship “is a
56 process that can take place in *any type* of organization”. [Emphasis in original.]
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3 goods and services on private and public markets” (p. 299). Although HRAC’s formation
4 and first few two years of operation were funded through a mix of internal grants and
5 external donations, the center’s funding strategy is reliant on earned income through
6 government contracts for research, program evaluation, and other services. Inclusive
7 governance under this model is defined “as the degree to which stakeholders and
8 specifically beneficiaries are included in decision making, particularly pertaining to
9 decisions about the social mission and use of profits generated” (pp. 300–301). HRAC
10 includes individuals with current or past lived experience of homelessness on its board,
11 engages them as co-researchers on projects (see case studies following), and
12 prioritizes funding and collaboration with other organizations and researchers doing the
13 same. The research center thus utilizes an organizational social entrepreneurship
14 model to propagate social innovations under an integrated definition of the term. Social
15 innovations are identified through community-engaged scholarship supported by
16 knowledge mobilization, with HRAC evaluating, refining, building support for, codifying,
17 and disseminating those innovations in line with the Cunha and Benneworth (2013)
18 process model.
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31 Research on homelessness includes a number of social innovations that have
32 been explicitly linked to the integrated definition offered by Murray *et al.* (2010, p. 3) as
33 “innovations that are both good for society and enhance society’s capacity to act.” The
34 “Housing First” model, which places people experiencing homelessness into service-
35 supported housing that does not require meeting specific conditions to enter or remain,
36 is recognized by EU service providers as a “mature social innovation” (FEANTSA, 2012)
37 and has been adopted as official government policy in the United States (Henry *et al.*,
38 2020). “Assertive Community Treatment”, which pairs social workers with medical and
39 mental health experts in mobile service delivery teams, has likewise been described as
40 an important social innovation in addressing homelessness (FEANTSA, 2012; Hazel
41 and Onaga, 2003). Two emerging social innovations in addressing homelessness that
42 have been refined, evaluated, and disseminated by HRAC meet the integrated definition
43 listed above: the “villages” model of emergency transitional housing, and the “street
44 response” first responder framework. The remainder of this paper will provide a case
45 study of each innovation using the Cunha and Benneworth (2013) model and the
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3 Nichols *et al.* (2013) model to describe how HRAC facilitated research on each and
4 translated that research into actionable data disseminated through academic and non-
5 academic networks. The types of social value created are then defined using the Jain *et al.*
6 *et al.* (2020) framework.
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10 11 12 Methodology

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14 Most proposed models of university contributions to social innovation that were
15 identified in the literature had either not been tested against actual higher education
16 programs or projects, or were only applicable to purely instructional programs (not
17 research). The Nichols *et al.* model (2013) was found to offer a way to describe the
18 emergence of a social innovation through campus-community collaboration, but lacked
19 definition on prototyping, refinement, and dissemination. Cunha and Benneworth (2013)
20 outlined those elements missing in Nichols *et al.* (2013), but lacked some clarity on the
21 role of knowledge mobilization and campus-community partnerships in creating or
22 identifying a social innovation. These two models used in concert with Jain *et al.*'s
23 (2020) definition of specific types of social value deriving from the successful
24 implementation of a social innovation were selected as a promising approach (see
25 Figure 1). Used in concert, they addressed all stages of a social innovation from idea
26 development, through refinement, to dissemination and value creation. Neither the
27 Nichols *et al.* model (2013) or the Cunha and Benneworth (2013) process model seem
28 to have been broadly applied in the literature, and it became apparent that the
29 combined approach could potentially be utilized to help other higher education
30 institutions map and define their contributions to social innovation. Per Yin's (2018) case
31 study framework, a theoretical proposition was developed that applying these models to
32 relevant case studies could enable an analytic generalization of their utility in describing
33 other higher education contributions to social innovation.
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49 To identify relevant case studies, 15 active or recently concluded HRAC research
50 projects were evaluated to determine which, if any, fit the Murray *et al.* (2010) definition
51 of social innovation and were related to specific social innovations linked to
52 homelessness in the literature. Two projects were identified which met the required
53 criteria and included enough data to perform an analysis: the Kenton Women's Village,
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3 a transitional shelter approach for people experiencing homelessness; and the Portland
4 Street Response, a non-police first response model for individuals experiencing
5 homelessness and/or a mental health crisis. Multiple sources of evidence from Yin's
6 (2018) framework for case study analysis were used: documentation (emails, project
7 management files, photographs, video recordings, survey data, interview summaries,
8 news articles, opinion pieces); semi-structured interviews (of researchers, conducted in
9 person and by email); direct observation (of researchers, some participants, and some
10 research activities); participant observation (of colleagues involved in the projects);⁴ and
11 physical artifacts (micro-shelters and villages). Survey data reviewed by the author
12 comprised 184 individual responses gathered in-person from people experiencing
13 unsheltered homelessness for the Portland Street Response project and nine individual
14 responses gathered in-person from clients of Kenton Women's Village. Semi-structured
15 interviews were conducted with five of the primary researchers. Researcher and
16 participant observations were unstructured and held across multiple settings. The ways
17 in which the additional data analyzed by the author were initially collected by project
18 researchers are described in more detail in the section following. These data were
19 utilized to develop a description of each case and to match specific stages or elements
20 of the projects against the combined social innovation process model described above,
21 where applicable (see Table 1).

37 Case Studies

41 Transitional Housing Villages

43 The villages model describes a group of related practices across the United States
44 designed to supplement traditional, mass shelters for people transitioning out of
45 unsheltered homelessness. They typically include separate, individual units ranging
46 from a canvas sleeping shelter to a "tiny home", coupled with a communal space that
47 provides kitchen, laundry, shower, and toilet facilities. Nearly 100 such villages are
48 either operational or planned across the United States (Evans, 2020). In Portland alone,
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55 ⁴ The author was not involved as a primary researcher on either project used as a case study in this
56 article.

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3 villages range from completely self-organized and self-built communities on previously
4 underutilized land to rigorously planned facilities run by a service provider on
5 government, church, or nonprofit property. HRAC co-founder Todd Ferry, an architect
6 specializing in public interest design, led or contributed to efforts to design and build
7 several villages in the Portland region intended to serve individuals transitioning from
8 unsheltered homelessness to permanent housing. The process of designing, building,
9 evaluating, and scaling one such community, the Kenton Women's Village, clearly
10 demonstrates HRAC's integrated approach to social innovation and the ways in which
11 that approach aligns with the Nichols *et al.* (2013) and Cunha and Benneworth (2013)
12 models.
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20 The impetus to design and build the Kenton Women's Village came from the City
21 of Portland's declaration of a state of emergency on housing and homelessness in
22 2015. In response, Ferry and collaborators convened people experiencing
23 homelessness, advocates and service organizations working with them, and people
24 who had designed and built their own village on underutilized land in a series of design
25 "charrettes" to brainstorm solutions—the *experimental space* according to Cunha and
26 Benneworth (2013). Designers and architects were brought into a later convening,
27 working directly with beneficiaries to co-create designs for attractive, livable personal
28 dwellings that drew from the experience of those who had created their own villages.
29 These buildings were called "Personal Occupancy Dwellings" (PODs), individual
30 sleeping structures with a design that facilitated quick construction and enabled
31 expedited or reduced site review and permitting because they lacked internal plumbing
32 and were small enough to be transported by flatbed truck. The PODs were an example
33 of social innovation arising from a campus-community collaboration supported by
34 knowledge mobilization, in line with the Nichols *et al.* (2013) model for innovation
35 generation, and the design coalition explicitly focused on expanding participants'
36 capacity to act. Following this initial design effort, 14 different models were constructed
37 using materials and labor donated by local architecture and construction firms. The
38 designs were exhibited inside Portland City Hall and the PODs were displayed in
39 downtown Portland to build support for the project. The PODs were then placed in a
40 location determined in partnership between city government, the local neighborhood,
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3 and the university—the *demonstrator*. At the demonstrator site, the PODs were
4 organized in an open area, giving it the appearance of a small village, and paired with a
5 larger structure that provided meal and hygiene facilities. This communal service center
6 for the village was also designed by Ferry and his colleagues. A nonprofit service
7 provider delivered essential services for the residents, who were all local women
8 transitioning out of homelessness.
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13 In the first three years of operation, Kenton Women’s Village placed 39 women in
14 permanent housing, with none of those placed returning to homelessness. This
15 demonstrated the success of the model and enabled what Cunha and Benneworth
16 (2013) term the *decision to expand*. Ferry then helped expand on the original network of
17 stakeholders and beneficiaries to build a larger *support coalition* for the effort to scale
18 up. The village was moved to a more suitable location and nearly doubled in size, using
19 three models of PODs selected through an evaluation of the original structures by
20 residents and designers. During the same period, working through HRAC, Ferry
21 secured a research grant to enable *codification* of the lessons learned from the Kenton
22 Women’s Village in a guide for other organizations and communities. The guide would
23 be based on interviews and surveys of residents not only from the Kenton Women’s
24 Village, but also other local villages utilizing different designs, governance, and
25 services. This approach would enable a set of best practices to be developed and
26 shared through *diffusion* of journal articles, community presentations, and free online
27 materials. Throughout all stages of this process, beneficiaries were closely engaged
28 and a complex, collaborative network of agents and stakeholders was fostered and
29 maintained. These elements were critical for the success of the innovation, reflecting
30 Cunha and Benneworth’s (2013) process model.
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45 Kenton Women’s Village generated two types of social value as defined by Jain
46 *et al.* (2020). Government funders and nonprofit service providers sought *pragmatist-*
47 *outcomes-driven social value* (Jain *et al.*, 2020) defined through metrics including length
48 of stay, service utilization, housing placements, and returns to homelessness, by which
49 the project was defined as a success and identified for expansion and replication
50 (Catholic Charities of Oregon, 2021). Beneficiaries and HRAC sought *pluralism-driven*
51 *social value* (Jain *et al.*, 2020) by designing the village in concert with those who had
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3 experienced or were experiencing homelessness. These designs focused on creating
4 differentiated living spaces that reflected individuality and dignity within a larger setting
5 designed to foster a sense of community and belonging. To help understand this value,
6 Todd Ferry and his team surveyed nine village residents in the summer of 2019 using a
7 range of questions that covered personal opinions and individual satisfaction with
8 specific elements of the village. The results showed that eight of the respondents were
9 satisfied or very satisfied with their PODs, none were dissatisfied with the village, and
10 illustrated specific areas of value for some: “my first interaction with a person in the
11 neighborhood was ‘oh that’s great, welcome to the neighborhood and I hope things go
12 well there’. And that he’d heard good things about the village itself. And I was pretty
13 much blown away”. (Petteni and Leickly, 2020).
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23 Portland Street Response

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25 In many cities across the United States, police are called to deal with “unwanted
26 persons” or in response to an individual who appears to be experiencing a mental
27 health crisis. These calls disproportionately target people experiencing homelessness,
28 increasing the likelihood they will be arrested, convicted, and incarcerated, creating a
29 criminal history that limits future access to housing and services. Between 2013 and
30 2018, “unwanted person” calls to the emergency 911 number in Portland rose 64%, to
31 more than 29,000 calls a year, and typically resulted in the police being dispatched to
32 address the concern (Shepherd, 2019). In Portland, 52% of all arrests in 2017 were of
33 people experiencing homelessness, even though they made up less than 3% of the
34 overall population (Woolington and Lewis, 2018). These disparities led to a campaign by
35 a local nonprofit newspaper and advocacy organization, Street Roots, for a non-police
36 response to such calls based on a long-standing model from Eugene, Oregon (Green,
37 2019). Under that model, Crisis Assistance Helping Out On the Streets (CAHOOTS), an
38 unarmed team of two, a medical professional and a mental health expert, are
39 dispatched to address 911 calls about people experiencing homelessness, a mental
40 health crisis, or public intoxication (Ibid).
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53 To adapt this model to Portland, Street Roots worked with HRAC to create a
54 coalition of local government agencies, service providers, advocates, and researchers,
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3 forming an *experimental space* under the Cunha and Benneworth (2013) model. While
4 other parts of the coalition examined potential costs and program logistics, Street Roots
5 and HRAC coordinated a multi-stakeholder subgroup to create and deploy an in-person
6 survey to better understand the needs and desires for such a program among people
7 experiencing homelessness. The research effort was led by Dr. Greg Townley, an
8 HRAC co-founder and associate professor in community psychology. He and a group of
9 service providers, advocates, and PSU students designed the survey with input from
10 people who had previously or were currently experiencing homelessness, while also
11 training them to conduct surveys as co-researchers. This was an example of utilizing
12 knowledge mobilization in support of campus-community collaboration and of growing
13 the capacity of participants. Because of their expertise, access, and trust in the
14 houseless community, these co-researchers were able to locate and engage people
15 currently experiencing unsheltered homelessness in a way that facilitated a greater
16 number of respondents and higher survey completion rates than usual. As one co-
17 researcher who was experiencing homelessness at the time explained, “It is important
18 to get the word from the streets. The homeless community has more trust with other
19 members of the homeless community than with the housed community” (Townley *et al.*,
20 2019, p. 10). The survey results were analyzed by HRAC, with a final report prepared in
21 coordination with the rest of the coalition for distribution to media, policymakers, and the
22 general public (Ibid).

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The survey team collected 184 responses in the summer of 2019, representing roughly 9% of the people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in Portland according to that year’s point-in-time count.⁵ Survey findings demonstrated that people experiencing homelessness welcomed a police response to theft or violence, but felt that a different approach would be more effective for mental health crises, overdoses, or camping/sleeping complaints (Ibid). They overwhelmingly wanted mental health professionals and social workers to be part of the response, and indicated a strong preference for them to provide food and water, basic medical and hygiene services, and referrals to other services (Ibid). Unarmed responders in outfits and vehicles that were

⁵ Author’s calculation based on local point-in-time counts for that year.

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3 visually distinct from the police were also desired (Ibid). HRAC and the rest of the
4 coalition presented this feedback to local policymakers and shared it with the media,
5 resulting in extensive news coverage. As a result of that effort, the City of Portland
6 authorized “Portland Street Response”, a one-year pilot in a single neighborhood—what
7 Cunha and Benneworth (2013) refer to as a *demonstrator*—with evaluation and possible
8 expansion to follow. The pilot team will comprise an emergency medical technician, two
9 community health workers, and a mental health therapist (City of Portland, 2021). In
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11 2020, a decision to expand the pilot was made before the program officially launched,
12 partly as a result of protests against racism and police violence in Portland and across
13 the nation that demanded reallocation of police budgets to social services. HRAC was
14 contracted to provide an evaluation and expansion review of the expanded pilot.
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23 HRAC’s evaluation was designed to measure two types of value that Portland
24 Street Response might create: *pragmatist-outcomes-driven social value* (Jain *et al.*,
25 2020) desired by the City and measured through changes in police dispatch, service
26 access, and similar outcomes with clear metrics and associated cost savings; and
27 *pluralism-driven social value* (Jain *et al.*, 2020) that HRAC, advocates, and individuals
28 with lived experience outlined in the recommendations and framing of the original
29 survey report. The individual experiences and satisfaction of individuals who had been
30 the subject of an “unwanted persons” or 911 call were built into the evaluation, in the
31 hope of understanding whether and how Portland Street Response was creating value
32 for them. This approach was illustrated by a respondent quote highlighted in the survey
33 report: “When stepping into a situation [...] keep an open mind. There is always more to
34 a story/situation than what you first see. Don’t assume or judge, ask questions, ask
35 what they think would resolve the problem the best” (Townley *et al.*, 2019, p. 27).
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46 Discussion

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50 Cunha and Benneworth’s (2013) modification of the social innovation process to focus
51 on the contributions of higher education institutions provides a useful framework for
52 mapping specific projects and outlining next steps, without having to (perhaps
53 awkwardly) adapt other frameworks with a focus exclusive to business, nonprofit, or
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3 government processes. One of the downsides to this model, however, is a lack of detail
4 on the ways in which the “coalitions” of university and community partners are formed
5 and how they contribute to co-creation with beneficiaries. This gap is neatly filled by the
6 Nichols *et al.* (2013) model for campus-community collaboration supported by
7 knowledge mobilization, which provides additional clarity and guidance on the creating
8 loop of the Cunha and Benneworth (2013) model. Coupling the two provides a
9 comprehensive guide to a community-engaged process of social innovation research,
10 evaluation, and dissemination by higher education institutions. To date, the process
11 model has typically been cited in other papers only as a reference in developing new or
12 highly modified university social innovation models and frameworks, rather than
13 applying it to existing cases to evaluate its utility (Anderson *et al.*, 2019; Kumari *et al.*,
14 2019). Using it to analyze social innovation case studies at institutions beyond that in
15 the original article helps to outline how and when the framework can serve as a useful
16 tool to understand or plan projects. HRAC’s efforts to foster social innovations to
17 address homelessness, as detailed in the pair of case studies above, align well with the
18 posited joint model and provide evidence for the utility of this approach in guiding and
19 understanding research for social change at higher education institutions (see Table 1).
20 This is likely due in part to the research center’s stated goals in furthering an integrated
21 model of social innovation, a multidisciplinary approach that facilitates collaboration with
22 multiple types of stakeholders, and an organizational social entrepreneurship structure.
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38 Beyond its utility as a descriptive tool, the combined model also provides
39 guidance to higher education institutions on designing effective research and
40 programmatic contributions to social innovation. Using it in this way can point towards
41 potential university contributions that may have been overlooked in past steps, and
42 offers guidance for planning next steps in the development and diffusion of a social
43 innovations. For example, in the creating loop for both Kenton Women’s Village and
44 Portland Street Response, faculty contributed research guidance; students provided
45 research support and design expertise; other university employees helped secure
46 funding, facilitate engagement, and manage projects; and managers offered support
47 and helped build coalitions. However, university financial resources were typically
48 deployed only to support university stakeholders (although outside funding was used to
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3 support community stakeholders), and university facility usage was often limited to
4 university employees. Considering how the university might deploy its own financial
5 resources, or leverage outside resources, in support of community partners has already
6 led to changes in the ways in which HRAC supports village projects in the upscaling
7 loop. Usage of university space was also considered, if it could be done so in a way that
8 engaged vulnerable community partners as equals, made them feel safe and
9 welcomed, and did not add undue travel burdens. HRAC was also working to build a
10 more effective platform and systems for disseminating findings in the diffusion stage,
11 with direct financial support for outside partners engaged in diffusion.
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19 Cunha and Benneworth state that “a new [social innovation] solution is only
20 diffused if it is adopted through a larger portion of the society and helps to solve a large
21 social problem” (2013, p.14). To do so, research findings and data need to be spread
22 not only through traditional academic networks in support of future research and
23 evaluation, but also to: journalists who can publicize a concept; practitioners who might
24 utilize the solution; advocates who can push for its adoption elsewhere; funders with the
25 ability to support widespread implementation; and policymakers who can build the
26 solution into governmental programs and policies. The coalition building elements of the
27 social innovation process become essential here, creating a pre-existing network for
28 disseminating findings that should already incorporate all of these stakeholders. For the
29 villages concept, HRAC has disseminated early findings through museum exhibitions,
30 workshops, public presentations, news interviews, and social media, and additional
31 campaigns are planned in support of the comprehensive practitioner guide currently
32 being developed. One important channel has been the Village Coalition in Portland, a
33 group of nonprofit service providers, advocates, social enterprises, government offices,
34 and HRAC students and faculty that has provided input and support for the project but
35 also serves as a way to quickly and effectively distribute findings across multiple
36 stakeholder types. For Portland Street Response, which has relied on social media,
37 news articles, and government testimony to share preliminary research findings, the
38 coalition of organizations that performed the initial study will likewise be an essential
39 mode of disseminating findings from the pilot evaluation. This group also included
40 government agencies and elected officials, nonprofit service providers, advocates, and
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3 researchers from HRAC. Other higher education institutions could follow this model to
4 build similar types of coalitions in the early stages of social innovation projects. These
5 networks create benefits throughout the social innovation process, by helping to surface
6 promising innovations, supporting refinement and evaluation as co-researchers, and
7 amplifying the resulting findings as a proven innovation moves to scale, making it more
8 likely that a social innovation will generate lasting impact. They also support innovations
9 that aim for *pluralism-driven social value* creation by recognizing and uplifting multiple
10 viewpoints while building the capacity of community actors.
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17 The street response and villages model both hold promise for helping to address
18 major gaps in preventing and addressing homelessness. A villages-based approach to
19 providing emergency or transitional housing for people currently experiencing
20 homelessness is faster to permit and build than a traditional shelter; alleviates the
21 significant shortage in shelters and transitional housing for people experiencing
22 homelessness in the United States; may be more acceptable to local residents and
23 businesses (which will be studied more as part of HRAC's current research on the
24 topic); offers greater flexibility in governance models, including self-governance; and
25 facilitates greater social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic than shelters, which
26 have been forced to radically redesign their layouts and processes to meet new health
27 requirements. The street response model of providing service connections along with
28 medical and behavioral care in response to people seemingly experiencing
29 homelessness or a mental health crisis, rather than dispatching armed police, reduces
30 the chance of escalation leading to police violence; offers the potential for more
31 effectively connecting people experiencing homelessness to essential services and
32 care; and lowers the odds that someone will receive a ticket, citation, or arrest that
33 would adversely impact their ability to access employment and housing.
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41 The positive social impacts created by each innovation reflect different types of
42 social value under the Jain *et al.* typology, with various coalition stakeholders seeking or
43 emphasizing different values. For example, government agencies in these coalitions
44 have typically sought *pragmatist-outcomes-driven social value* by using metrics that
45 enable measurement, reporting, and accountability. For villages, these often include the
46 number of people placed in transitional housing, the length of their stay, how many were
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3 moved into permanent housing, etc. as a way to begin understanding the impact of the
4 innovation on reducing unsheltered homelessness. For Portland Street Response,
5 these metrics are still being defined but will likely include such items as the number of
6 calls directed to the service, average response time and length of interaction, and what
7 the outcomes of those interactions were (service referral, medical assistance, etc.).
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9 While these are important elements of projects with government agencies, and useful in
10 securing their funding and support for specific innovations, higher education institutions
11 can play an essential role in emphasizing the creation of *pluralism-driven social value* in
12 social innovation projects. In HRAC's case, this is done through an emphasis on racial
13 equity and engagement with people who have lived experience of homelessness as co-
14 researchers, seeking a definition of social value based in the experience of marginalized
15 and oppressed identities, and an understanding of historical and current inequities.
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19 In both cases presented above, the type of social value desired was defined
20 early in the research project and refined throughout a process which sought to
21 determine whether that value would be created, how to maximize such value, and how
22 to disseminate findings in such a way as to ensure that value persisted when the
23 innovation was adopted elsewhere. A similar approach could be used for social
24 innovation projects at other higher education institutions, utilizing the combined process
25 model and engagement types listed here to map out specific steps to creating the
26 desired value. Further research is needed to confirm if the combined model can be
27 effectively applied to projects seeking differing types of social value, focused on issues
28 beyond homelessness, or in institutional contexts with cultural or structural barriers to
29 campus-community collaboration and engagement with multi-stakeholder coalitions.
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31 However, the previous application of the constituent elements of the model to projects
32 and contexts different from those described here demonstrates a flexibility for each that
33 may carry over to the combined framework.
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50 Conclusion

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52 Existing models of the ways in which higher education institutions contribute to social
53 innovation are not fully descriptive of the entire process from idea inception through
54 value creation, especially when a specific type of social value creation is desired at the
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3 outset. A model which emphasizes the deep community-campus engagement entailed
4 by such an approach needs to explain *how* a campus-community collaboration can give
5 rise to a new or adapted social innovation; *what* steps the campus and its partners
6 should follow in validating, refining, and disseminating that social innovation; and *which*
7 types of social value are created at the end of process—the ultimate goal of the
8 innovation itself. The Cunha and Benneworth (2013) process model provides an
9 effective mechanism for understanding the ways in which higher education institutions
10 can facilitate the development of a social innovation. This model emphasizes the
11 importance of co-creation with beneficiaries and the formation of multi-stakeholder
12 coalitions, both of which are expanded on by the Nichols *et al.* (2013) model of
13 knowledge mobilization practices supporting campus-community collaborations for
14 social innovation. The forms of social value created through a successful social
15 innovation process can be understood using the Jain *et al.* (2020) framework which
16 recognizes different types of value based on stakeholder experiences, perceptions, and
17 expectations. All three models have elements which support an integrated definition of
18 social “innovations that are both good for society and enhance society’s capacity to act”
19 (Murray *et al.*, 2010, p. 3), the approach embraced by HRAC in its formative documents
20 and supported by its organizational structure.
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34 This combined approach potentially provides comparability between social
35 innovation research projects of different types and at different institutions, enabling a
36 broader understanding of the ways in which higher education institutions can develop,
37 evaluate, and disseminate social innovations. It also offers guidance on developing an
38 effective process for action-oriented social innovation research, aided by a focus on
39 beneficiary engagement and community co-creation that offers promising potential for
40 creating a desired type of social value. In the case studies analyzed here, the proposed
41 model was used to understand a university contribution to social innovations for
42 addressing homelessness with a goal of *pluralism-driven social value*. However, the
43 constituent models were not designed with homelessness or a specific type of social
44 value creation in mind, and the joint model is not limited to that issue or type of value.
45 Applying the combined model to higher education social innovation research on other
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3 issues, and in differing institutional contexts, would help to further define and extend its
4 applicability and utility.
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6 The case studies and combined model described here offer a pathway for higher
7 education institutions to contribute to lasting, positive social change. Such change is
8 clearly needed when so many people experience homelessness each day around the
9 world. The social, economic, and human toll of homelessness is shocking on a societal
10 scale and heartbreaking on an individual level, and the economic crisis precipitated by
11 the COVID-19 pandemic has made it even worse. Higher education institutions have a
12 unique role to play in addressing such issues through research, knowledge mobilization,
13 and coalition building in support of developing new approaches or spreading proven
14 solutions. HRAC was created to contribute to the prevention and alleviation of
15 homelessness by fostering and disseminating promising social innovations, including
16 (but not limited to) the street response and village models. The frameworks and models
17 applied in this paper offer mechanisms to enhance that mission and thereby potentially
18 make a critical difference for some who are experiencing or facing homelessness,
19 generating social value in the ways that matter most to them.
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Figure 1: Integrated Process Model of Social Innovation at Higher Education Institutions

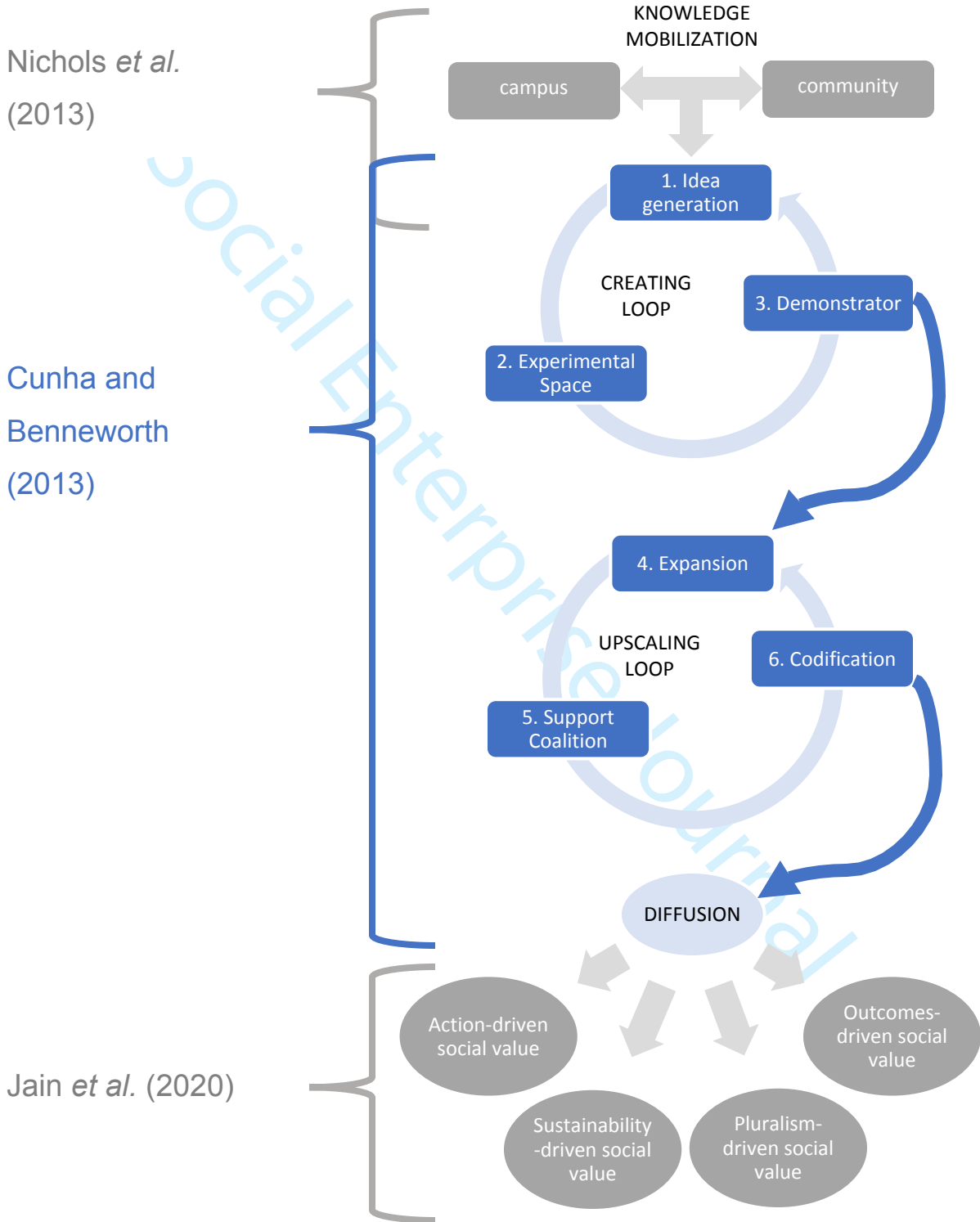


Table 1: HRAC Case Studies and the Cunha and Benneworth Social Innovation Process

Cunha & Benneworth Social Innovation Process Stages		HRAC Villages Project	HRAC Street Response Project
Creating Loop (including knowledge mobilization)	Idea Generation	<i>External</i>	<i>External</i>
	Creation of Experimental Space	Formed government/neighbor/provider/donor coalition	Led research coalition that helped facilitate program approval
	Demonstrator	Led design/build process for several villages	Presented evidence to local government, will lead evaluation
Upscaling Loop	Decision to Expand	<i>External - multiple independent villages launched across region</i>	<i>External - pilot scaled up in response to community input</i>
	Support Coalition	"Pilot team" formed at HRAC	Restructured research coalition
	Codification	Grant received for codification & scaling research	Planned evaluation of expanded pilot
Outcomes	Diffusion	Early findings shared, developing diffusion plan for best practices	Developing diffusion plan