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Research Confronts Equity and Social Justice— Building the Emerging Field of Collaborative, Community Engaged Education Research: Introduction to the Special Issue

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Keywords

social activism, urban, action research, activist scholarship, community partnerships

In an era of growing inequality and persistent racial disparities in education, as well as the increasing dominance of neoliberal policy agendas, education researchers face growing calls for their scholarship to directly confront equity and social justice in education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006). The 2012 annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), for example, had as its theme “To Know is Not Enough” (Ball, 2012) and charged education researchers to increase the relevance of scholarship to improving educational practice and equity and justice in education. Meanwhile, in the published version of his 2013 AERA Presidential Address, William Tierney (2013) argues that producing high quality research, while essential, is insufficient to addressing poverty and educational inequality and calls for scholars to engage directly with those they study.

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Researchers who conduct collaborative, community engaged scholarship (CCES) offer a powerful answer to this call by partnering with community and education activists to create knowledge in direct support of equity-oriented change agendas. In CCES, scholars and a variety of community change agents work together to identify research questions, design appropriate research, collect and analyze data, produce research reports, and design educational interventions and policy initiatives based upon research findings. This kind of research addresses educational failure and inequities as profound issues of racial and social justice for children, families, and communities (Warren, 2014). It challenges the hierarchy of expertise and the hegemony of academic knowledge (Smith, 1999), appreciating the value of multiple forms of knowledge. It recognizes that communities have a need for and indeed a “right” to research (Appadurai, 2006), and realizes the necessity of combining collaborative knowledge production with organizing efforts to build power for change (Oakes & Rogers, 2005; Renee, Oakes, Rogers, & Blasi, 2007; Torre & Fine, 2011).

This special issue includes a set of articles designed to advance the theory and practice of CCES in education research and related fields. CCES has emerged across a range of disciplines and research domains, relying upon different methodologies and ethical frameworks, including participatory action research (Brydon-Miller, 2001), youth participatory action research (Cammarota & Fine, 2008), action research (Greenwood & Levin, 1998; Stringer, 2009), community-based research (Strand, Cutforth, Stoecker, & Marullo, 2003), and other forms of engaged scholarship (Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011) like community-based participatory research (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2011). In this sense, we use CCES as an umbrella term across this variety of approaches. What unites this field, and distinguishes it from other attempts to link research to practice (Coburn & Stein, 2010), is its explicit attention to researchers working in partnership with community, parent, youth, and educator groups pursuing change agendas focused on increasing equity and justice in education (Oakes & Rogers, 2005; Warren, Oh, & Ticken, 2016). We do not limit our focus to research in educational settings; we include education-related research collaborations in community settings as well (Tate, 2012; Warren, 2005).

Despite these centrally important similarities, we call this an emerging field because scholars practicing CCES typically operate separately in their diverse disciplines and methods, with little sharing of best practices in theory and method. Field building requires a collective process of clarifying theoretical premises, addressing ethical challenges, and working toward a shared set of methodological practices. There will always be a variety of ways to conduct CCES, as there are in any field, but a more united field requires the engagement of scholars in a

collective discourse bound by a set of shared understandings and a stronger sense of common identity across the disciplines and practices (Hyland, 2013).

To help overcome the silos and cross-fertilize ideas in this field, this special issue brings together scholars who theorize and practice this approach to research in many diverse ways to address a set of issues confronting the emerging field. The articles emerged from a conference process organized by the Urban Research Based Action Network (URBAN) in 2015 and supported financially by a conference grant from the AERA. URBAN formed in 2012 as an intentionally cross-discipline, cross-issue learning community designed to advance the field of CCES in a variety of ways, helping scholars to build connections across silos, learn from each other, share resources and lessons, build the capacity of scholars to conduct CCES, support early career scholars, advocate for institutional changes within higher education, and build collaborations with education and community activists that democratize knowledge and promote equity-oriented change.

At this conference participants identified and addressed five key issues or challenges facing CCES across disciplines that hinder the advancement of the emerging field. These issues include the following:

- Community engaged scholars face the criticism from mainstream academia that their “advocacy” research is biased and fails the standard of social science rigor;
- Translating justice-oriented CCES to the policy arena requires challenging the hierarchy of academic expertise while negotiating the tensions that arise between university-based activist researchers and their community-based counterparts working in political environments;
- Ethical standards developed for mainstream research are inadequate, or even counter-productive, to CCES that tries to build collaborative partnerships with participants;
- Institutional reward structures in academia fail to support CCES and work against expansion of the field; and
- Early career scholars, and graduate students in particular, face challenges in pursuing CCES, which limits the entrance of the growth of new scholars and new scholarship in the field.

Participants at the conference formed working groups to address these issues.¹ The groups were formed to be intentionally diverse, representing a variety of disciplines and types of CCES practiced, as well as theoretical, methodological, and ethical perspectives. The groups presented drafts of papers and working ideas at the conference and engaged in lively conversation in multiple forms with the larger body, further clarifying ideas

and marking out areas of agreement as well as different perspectives and emphases in the emerging field. Working groups revised their work and developed the articles that appear in this issue.

The organizers of the URBAN conference formed the editorial team for this special issue, with Warren serving as lead editor. Each of the five articles in this special issue addresses one of these challenges. The authors draw upon extant literature, their own theorizing, practice and experience across disciplines and research contexts, and the comments from colleagues in the conference process to produce these articles. Collectively the articles offer a robust argument for the powerful contributions of CCES as it seeks to combine the aims of knowledge production and of social justice activism and to respond to the demands of academic and community institutions in the larger context of systemic inequities and injustices in our educational and social system. In many cases, however, the authors do not seek a singular answer or simple solutions to the questions that are raised; rather, diverse perspectives and enduring tensions can be seen to bring dynamism and vitality to this field-building enterprise.

Although CCES has a long history in education research and in other fields, it may be entering a new moment. The newly created URBAN network, for example, joins a growing number of networks established over the past 15 years and committed to advancing CCES in a variety of forms, including *Imagining America*, *Democracy Collaborative*, *Campus-Community Partnerships for Health*, and the international *Talloires Network*. In other words, scholars are looking to connect across disciplines to identify commonalities and differences, share best practices, and clarify theoretical premises, ethical challenges, and methodological practices. The authors of the articles in this special issue are intensely engaged in this intellectual and activist process and offer these articles as contributions to building this emerging field.

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Note

1. Working groups addressed the first four issues, while the conference as a whole addressed the challenges faced by graduate students and early career scholars.

Two conference participants developed the fifth article in this special issue concerning that topic.

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Is Collaborative, Community-Engaged Scholarship More Rigorous Than Traditional Scholarship? On Advocacy, Bias, and Social Science Research

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Luke Aubry Kupscznk¹, Gregory Squires³,
and Celina Su⁴**

Abstract

Contrary to the charge that advocacy-oriented research cannot meet social science research standards because it is inherently biased, the authors of this article argue that collaborative, community-engaged scholarship (CCES) must meet high standards of rigor if it is to be useful to support equity-oriented, social justice agendas. In fact, they argue that CCES is often more rigorous than traditional scholarship. The authors draw from cases of CCES that they conducted to provide evidence and examples. They discuss the importance of relationship building and trust in addressing the tensions that can arise between the demands of knowledge production and action-oriented social change.

Keywords

action research, activist scholarship, social activism, urban, research methods, community partnerships

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Collaborative, community-engaged scholarship (CCES) faces a number of challenges from traditional social scientists. Perhaps none is more salient, and frustrating, than the notion that there is a trade-off between rigor and advocacy in such research. In our view, rigor and advocacy go hand in hand. No advocacy agenda can be enhanced by research that is not perceived as rigorous. In fact, in some ways, collaborative research can be understood as more rigorous than traditional research approaches and sometimes lead to knowledge that would go untapped in traditional social science approaches.

Nevertheless, marrying rigor with advocacy is not always easy. As practitioners of CCES, we have encountered some important tensions in our work. In this article, we draw from case studies of our own collaborative research to illustrate the rigor of community-based research, to show how it can be more rigorous than traditional, detached research in some ways, and to draw important lessons about addressing the tensions that arise when academics and their community partners seek to conduct rigorous research that supports community-based action.

By CCES, we mean research that is conducted with community or educational activist groups that addresses issues of equity and social justice. Following the Introduction to this special issue, we use CCES as an umbrella term that includes a variety of forms, like community-based research or action research. Although there are a variety of specific research methods used in this type of scholarship, they all embody a set of shared principles (McReynolds & Shields, 2015; Nyden, Hossfeld, & Nyden, 2012; O'Meara & Rice, 2005; Strand, Cutforth, Stoecker, Marullo & Donahue, 2003), including the following: CCES is a collaborative enterprise between academic researchers and community members; CCES validates multiple sources of knowledge and promotes the use of multiple methods of discovery and dissemination of the knowledge produced; and CCES has as its goal not just knowledge production but also social action and social change for the purpose of achieving social justice. In that sense, community-engaged scholars are involved in the work of advocacy for changes in policy or practice.

By advocacy, however, we do not mean advocating *for* communities. Rather, we mean working *with* communities to advocate for change. Successful movements for social justice, however, have always combined building power among those most affected with allies like researchers and many others to create a larger and more powerful movement (Oakes & Rogers, 2005). Research has an important role in creating "knowledgeable power" (Warren, 2014), that is, the power created by community organizing and advocacy efforts that combine grassroots organizing with systematic research and data analysis.

In saying that CCES involves advocacy, we mean that this type of research is designed to advance both knowledge about inequality in all its forms and action to advance equity. In other words, while knowledge production is the immediate goal of community-engaged scholarship, such research is also meant to contribute to the broader movement for social justice.

Rigor Not Advocacy

In our view, the real question to ask when determining the quality and usefulness of CCES, is not whether it exhibits advocacy, but rather, whether it is rigorous—a question for all forms of research. Many forms of research have an outcome of interest to the investigators, and the research findings describe processes that lead to this outcome or analyze factors that produce these outcomes. This is particularly true for policy-oriented research in fields like education. Many education researchers, for example, develop programs and then test them in experimental trials or in other ways (Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy, 2003). CCES is not different in substance from these other forms of research, although it is often seen as different and more suspect as biased (Tittle, 2004).

No research is purely objective. Values and personal standpoints affect all forms of research, as many scholars, whether community-engaged or not, have long pointed out (Collins, 2000; Milner, 2007). Researchers bring underlying assumptions that shape the questions asked, the data considered relevant and the methods used. Researchers have an obligation to identify the biases they bring to their research and take steps to mitigate such bias (Maxwell, 2005).

In our view, the real issue is not whether collaborative community-based research is rigorous but rather how rigor is defined. It is a given that rigorous research should use appropriate and systematic methods, stand up to critique by knowledgeable parties, and consider contrary evidence and alternative hypotheses (Maxwell, 2005). But rigor is often used as a code word for a set of practices that align themselves with detached research, rather than engaged research. As Davies and Dodd (2002) note,

If rigor is understood only in terms of a structured, measurable, systemized, ordered, uniform and neutral approach, then other research methods that allow flexibility, contradictions, incompleteness, or values will always appear “sloppy,” epitomizing everything that is “nonrigor” and therefore lacking in credibility. (p. 280)

Many critics perhaps suspect that this type of research is designed to produce results that “the community wants.” But community organizations have

an interest in the credibility and legitimacy of the research they rely upon to improve their practice or use to advocate for changes in policy or practice. Research that is not credible will not advance their cause; research that proves what they already think will not improve practice. Groups do not learn from research that simply confirms their agenda or justifies their grant proposals. True advocacy research that helps community partners is critical research.

We are not alone in trying to reclaim the concept of rigor so that it applies to community-engaged research. Shor and Freire (1986) argue that the traditional meaning of rigor needs to be redefined, calling for a “creative rigor” that critiques the authoritarian way of transferring knowledge “which mechanically structures education, and discourages us from the responsibility of recreating ourselves in society” (p. 77). Instead, Shor and Freire propose “a creative pedagogy which seeks to reinvent knowledge situated in the themes, needs, and language of the students (and communities), as an act of illuminating power in the society” (p. 81). This notion of creative rigor resonates with the main principles elaborated in other works on CCES like *Community-Based Research in Higher Education* (Strand, Cutforth, Stoecker, Marullo & Donahue, 2003).

We also agree with other scholars (e.g., Fine, 2008; Hale, 2008; Shor & Freire, 1986) who have argued that research can actually be more rigorous when it is engaged because it is accountable to input and critique from a more diverse set of actors—including those both in the academy and in the community. Newer work on “impact validity” raises similar criteria, that research be designed with consideration for its contributions to social and political change (Massey & Barreras, 2013).

Indeed, some types of traditional, detached research have no accountability beyond the individual researcher. While most are accountable to a scholarly community, these scholarly communities can be insular. They may endorse stereotypes that are shared widely within the research community but lack validity in relevant communities. There is a long history of White researchers studying Black communities, for example, and reinforcing stereotypes even though their findings were published in peer-reviewed journals and accepted as rigorous (Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008). Many indigenous scholars critique traditional anthropology and its widely accepted findings for its contribution to colonizing assumptions (L. T. Smith, 1999).

From this point of view collaborative research can be considered more rigorous than more traditional forms because it must demonstrate its credibility to a broader audience that brings a more diverse set of questions and standpoints to bear. In collaborative work, there is accountability to partners and to the demands of practice. In this article, we intend to advance this discussion by elaborating multiple ways in which CCES can be considered

more rigorous than detached scholarship and bring to light new knowledge that would otherwise go unnoticed.

This is not to say that collaborative researchers do not face some tensions between rigor and advocacy. Research is the specialized focus of scholars; community participants have many demands on their time and, in the end, focus on action or practice and getting results (Stoecker, 2012). Activists willing to engage in research see it as important, but as one among many important practices. In addition, community organizations may have an immediate, short-term interest in the publication of findings or accounts that benefit their agenda, and therefore resist research findings that identify weaknesses in their efforts even if analyzing these weaknesses contributes important lessons for improving practice in the broader field of organizing for change.

There may be cases where publishing the results of research may do real harm to community participants. These are difficult ethical issues for community-engaged scholars. However, they are not unique to this research approach. Standard human subjects protection asks researchers to limit harm and gives participants the right to withdraw from research at any time without penalty. If community participants in collaborative research believe the harm is too great, institutional review boards and the ethical obligations of scholars give them the right to withdraw their participation as well. In some cases that could mean the research is not published.

In the following pages, the authors describe research projects that combine rigor and advocacy. They illustrate ways that CCES has led to rigorous research that creates knowledge that supports social action. We then draw from these cases to discuss ways in which CCES can be more rigorous than detached scholarship and draw some lessons for addressing the tensions that inevitably arise when scholars and activists collaborate to build knowledge and advocate for change agendas.

Insurance Redlining: A Strategic Collaborative— Gregory Squires

In 1988, a sales manager for the American Family Insurance Company told one of his agents, in a tape recorded discussion, “Very honestly, I think you write too many blacks . . . You got to sell good, solid premium-paying white people . . . They own their own homes, the white works” (Lynch, 1997, p. 159). This conversation reveals the deep-seated racial bias that existed in the home insurance industry that both motivated me to conduct research in support of antidiscrimination campaigns and, when revealed, helped one campaign win a significant victory in Milwaukee.

Since the late 1970s, I have conducted research on insurance redlining practices, which, in conjunction with the work of other scholars, the organizing activity of several community-based organizations, and creative legal advocacy, has led to some significant changes in the way the home insurance industry serves communities of color. The following pages describe the involvement of collaborative research, organizing efforts, and law enforcement that culminated in a favorable settlement of one lawsuit and set the table for subsequent victories. The context in which the research was conducted—particularly the array of other available financial and non-financial resources—proved to be a key factor in these outcomes. But it was the actions of a variety of actors exploiting that context which produced important transformations in the way this vital financial service is provided in the nation's metropolitan areas.

The American Family Case

My initial foray into the issue of insurance redlining involved a study of the distribution of home insurance policies in Chicago that I coauthored while working for the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (Squires & DeWolfe, 1979). This project was carried out in collaboration with Gale Cincotta and her staff at the National Training and Information Center and National People's Action, which were affiliated community organizations with chapters in cities across the country. The study documented the lack of service provided to the city's non-White neighborhoods. Shortly after release of the report, Cincotta's group won a significant victory: It received a 1 million dollar grant from Allstate Insurance Company to carry out its organizing and community reinvestment activities, culminating its long campaign against the company, of which the Civil Rights Commission report was just one small piece.

I subsequently published several scholarly journal articles as well as industry trade and popular press op-ed pieces on insurance redlining (see, for example, DeWolfe, Squires, & DeWolfe, 1980; Squires, DeWolfe, & DeWolfe, 1979; Squires & Vélez, 1987; Squires, Vélez, & Taeuber, 1991). In the meantime, I moved to the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee and shortly after was contacted by attorneys for the plaintiffs in the case of National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (*NAACP*) v. *American Family* in which the company was accused of redlining Milwaukee's Black community. Residents of those communities had reported several incidents in which they believed they had been denied home insurance policies by the company because of their race and the racial composition of the neighborhoods in which they lived. Insurance redlining became a topic of debate at

churches, within the NAACP and other social justice organizations, and among lawyers who had developed long-term working relationships with these groups on a variety of civil rights issues. These community organizations were out ahead of the academic world in identifying this issue. During my initial meetings with plaintiffs and their lawyers, we sketched out the type of research they might want conducted, identified experts who could carry out the work, and discussed remedial actions they would request. I also coauthored one of the expert reports in which we mapped out the location of American Family's agents, documenting the heavy concentration of those offices in White neighborhoods throughout the metropolitan area. The US\$14.5 million settlement that followed was quite favorable for the plaintiffs. The company committed to open new agencies in Milwaukee's Black community, increase the number of policies it wrote in those areas, provide funds for home improvement and other community redevelopment purposes, increase the number of minority employees within the company, eliminate underwriting guidelines that adversely affected minority neighborhoods, and take other steps to better serve previously redlined neighborhoods (Lynch, 1997). Perhaps more significantly, this case helped create effective networks informed with this new knowledge within and among fair housing advocates (e.g., National Fair Housing Alliance), allies in media outlets (e.g., CNN, *Milwaukee Journal*), scholars who conducted some of the critical research (e.g., George Galster and William Velez), and law enforcement agencies which applied pressure on the insurer (e.g., Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice [DOJ] and some state insurance regulators), all of which led to future research, organizing, and successful legal action.

Keys to the Collaboration

In the 1990s, fair housing organizations across the country conducted their own research into the practices of several major insurance companies and settled favorably administrative complaints that had been filed with U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) against Allstate, State Farm, and other major insurers; they also won an important lawsuit in which a jury found Nationwide in violation of fair housing rules (S. L. Smith & Cloud, 1997). The Clinton Administration had made a commitment to more effective fair housing law enforcement, which facilitated these developments. Redlining has a long history. But circumstances came together to realize important changes in policy and practice during these years, in no small part because of the rigor of the research.

First, while it was evident that the parties to these events were not neutral, the scholars, fair housing advocates, and attorneys who came together all had

shared interests and recognized the importance of rigorous and objective research to achieving their mutual objectives. Given the large financial resources of the industry they were addressing, anything less would have easily been dismissed by the courts and administrative agencies to which the advocates were appealing, and consequently of no value to them.

Second, the positive outcomes clearly depended upon the combination of sound social science research, the systematic knowledge of community organizations and many ordinary citizens, and solid legal expertise. Although generally not formally trained in social science research methods, people who lived and worked in underserved areas provided vital knowledge that brought the public's attention to these issues and served as equal partners in the campaigns.

Marrying rigor with advocacy, however, required shared commitments and trust. All parties in this case shared a commitment not just to understanding the reality of insurance industry practices but also to changing those that were problematic. The resources that all parties brought to the research and the campaigns were aimed at significant transformation in the way home insurers served the nation's metropolitan areas and, for the reasons discussed, they were successful in doing so.

Finally, participants built trust with each other. Community partners would not have shared their knowledge and the researchers would not have invested their time if they did not have faith and trust in each other. These relationships were built over years in which long-term relationships were established among a handful of academics, lawyers, the NAACP, and other similar organizations.

Combining rigor and advocacy proved successful in this case also because of the array of contextual factors that came together. The American Family case was filed in 1990 after more than 2 years of advocacy and investigations and was not settled until 1995. During those years, American Family received substantial negative publicity in local and national media. One CNN feature story presented particularly concrete evidence of racial discrimination to a national audience. Perhaps most significantly, the DOJ, which was conducting its own investigation of American Family at the time, announced in 1994 that it planned to file a lawsuit against the company (Ritter, 1997). With the resources of DOJ added to the mix, the company finally decided to settle.

Rigorous research, organizing, and legal action were all among the necessary ingredients to achieve the strategic objectives. Meanwhile, community organizations placed a research agenda on redlining on the doors of the academic world. Perhaps the most important lesson is that, once again, context matters. But it is also the case that when opportunity knocks, if there is no preparation in the sense of building relationships and trust, that door will not be opened.

Respecting Coproducers of Knowledge—Celina Su

Over the years, I have heard consistent complaints of “research fatigue” from some community leaders. Such leaders stated that they were tired of reporters, academics, and foundation officers conducting “drive-by” interviews, with a set agenda—only to never be heard from again. We were getting diplomas and promotions with these publications, and what were they getting? I have tried to take a different approach, to build deep and sustained collaborations with community organizations and this required open discussion and trust building.

When I approached some community organizations working on education reform in the South Bronx in the early 2000s, for instance, they demanded to know what I might offer in return for their time. I offered to present books on community organizing and lead discussions (without academic jargon), to report back whatever analyses I performed along the way, and to give them opportunities to respond to my findings. Ensuring that my research was relevant to their interests in these ways immediately increased access to and helped to establish trust with these community partners (Jagosh et al., 2012).

I also made a case for why my research would not simply replicate what had already been published. At one organization, board members granted me access because they were impressed with one of my research questions, which focused on an aspect of their work that interested them and that they had not reflected upon before.

These board members also wondered whether, given the fact that most of the books they had read were written by older White men, a scholarly inquiry by a younger woman of color might highlight different insights into their work. It did not seem to me that they held essentialist views on scholars by race (as if White men necessarily thought X, and a Brazilian Chinese American woman like me necessarily thought Y); but rather they thought that our different positionalities (by race, gender, disciplinary training, and other axes of social position) shaped our work (Hale, 2008) and might produce some different findings. In response, I had to articulate potential biases and assumptions in my research early on.

When I think about rigor in my research, I think about the approach I take to collaboration. My analyses remain simultaneously *both* sympathetic with and critical of the community-based organizations and institutions with whom I work. I have, for instance, examined strengths and weaknesses of different strategies with members of a social change organization, ultimately coming to a conclusion in agreement with some members, but not others. Here, I reflect on the ways in which collaborative research efforts helped me gain insights I believe I would not have otherwise.

The Power of Experiential Data

By 2006, I had spent roughly 4 years observing the work of education organizing groups in New York City. I learned that there is more than one way to think about rigor in collaborative research. Experiential data, that is, the experiences of participants in organizing processes, can be powerful contributions to knowledge that creates social change.

For example, at one point, a coalition of more than two dozen youth organizations met with then-Chancellor Joel Klein about the use of force in schools by more than 5,000 security agents and 200 armed officers. The students presented 7,500 postcards signed by fellow students, denouncing the police tactics. They requested data that examined not only incidence rates but also graduation rates. They requested that the administration consider addressing infractions like tardiness via school-based measures, like detention, rather than via the Police Department. When Chancellor Klein repeated his argument that the police were effective, one young woman pleaded, “You keep staring at your piece of paper and referring to questionable ‘data.’ . . . Look up and listen to us . . . We are the data” (Alonso, Anderson, Su, & Theoharis, 2009).

At first glance, city administration data might appear to be neutral and rigorous (partly because of their scale), in contrast to self-interested, “biased,” and specious student observations. By insisting that their experiences embodied data, however, these young people were not just advocating for specific policies or outcomes; in fact, that goal was secondary to their primary claims as legitimate stakeholders in policy and as potential coproducers of knowledge. Statistical data not only abstracted but also distorted their stories. They were not statistics. Their direct experiences mattered and they mattered.

Refining Research Questions and Conceptual Frameworks

Collaborative processes have increased the rigor of my research by revealing the disconnections, omissions, and silences in my case studies, as well as suggesting new lenses to my research. In my work with education organizing groups, for instance, I originally paid attention to the different groups’ arguments for education reform; I did not identify their discursive styles as an important facet of their work. Focusing only on their campaign arguments, the youth activists’ campaign strategies looked quite similar to those of adult-led groups. In discussing findings with these students, I began to see the performative, rather than communicative, aspects of the youth’s work—their attempts to change the roles they were given by popular lines of discourse. The youth were strategic in how they attempted to subvert their assigned roles. Even in their dress, they deliberated when to “perform” the role of the “authentic” inner-city students for photo-ops with elected officials. Such

performative work differentiated the youth-led strategies from the adult-led ones, so they no longer appeared so similar. My finding on the students' counter-scripting and counter-staging came from a collaborative process, in which the youth also interpreted data and gave me feedback on my analyses, illuminating *how* my first comparative analyses did not reflect their lived experience, and helping to reveal what was missing (Su, 2010).

Informing and Improving Surveys and Policies

More traditional studies compare the efficacy of policies established in a top-down manner; collaborative research efforts prompt participants to create testable policy proposals of their own. Interviewees and community members in my study emphasized the extent to which bottom-up data collection is often integral to efforts to discover what works. This kind of collaboration with community partners in quantitative research can make those studies more rigorous and relevant to change agendas. For example, in New York City's participatory budgeting process, local residents help to allocate their City Council members' discretionary funds (Su, 2014). I am a member of the citywide steering committee and research board for this process. We found that constituent input is essential to writing surveys that will actually get distributed and completed, and that will yield useful information. Together we asked, how should we phrase questions so that participants do not fall prey to social desirability bias? Which questions are so sensitive that undocumented immigrants are apt to lie in their answers? The researchers tended to suggest questions that had already appeared on established surveys, like the American Community Survey or the General Social Survey. The other research board members, especially budget delegates and community organizers, helped us to ensure that the survey questions got at the key factors facilitating or inhibiting their work. For instance, one question concerned how participants found out about the budgeting process. The initial draft offered a large number of answer options drawn from the get-out-the-vote literature. However, community activists warned us that the drafted version would turn off voters. They challenged us to not "just accumulate . . . data," but to test specific theories with our questions (e.g., that personal contact matters), and ask respondents specifically about phone trees, door-knocking, and practices we could implement if found to be relevant (Kasdan & Markman, 2017).

Many other experiences in CCES like these have convinced me of two key ways in which community-based research efforts might help to improve research practices and resulting policies. First, participants are able to systematically raise issues of intersectionality, highlighting the particular but patterned experiences of especially vulnerable groups. In my experience,

participants are the first to point out which outreach strategies might not succeed with women from certain communities, or that generic anti-bullying resources for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) youth might not adequately address the needs of youth of color who, compared with their White counterparts, fear police harassment as much as high school bullies.

Second, participants drew deeply upon bodily experiences and local knowledge in the research. Local knowledge consists of alternate, site-specific knowledge that cannot be easily summarized as general principles or transferred to other contexts (Scott, 1998). This knowledge did not replace the researchers' and policymakers' technical expertise, but it complemented it. It also helped to ground so-called "best practices," to adjust policies so that they would not be blindly applied in New York City as they were in places like Louisville or Guadalajara. Beyond the standard ethical protocols mandated by institutional review boards, then, collaborative research also necessitates subtle ethical protocols regarding respect—for different bodies of knowledge, and for potentially different policy implications stemming from the analyses.

Co-Learning Across the Collaboration

In codesigning research that will be useful to communities, we need to be concerned with rigor but also ensure that community members have the skills needed to interpret and use this rigorous research. The youth in the opening anecdote had received training in statistical analysis, governmental policy-making, and education policy, and they could analyze the arguments and methodologies of different studies. Without training, participants can appear to be ill-informed in their conversations with city agency representatives, feel flummoxed by technicalities, and be unable to question the larger regulations and implications of their research.

In these cases, I spent enough time with members to earn their trust, learn how to increase response rates, and acquire a sense of the research questions with which *they* were concerned. I took the time to work iteratively with informants to critically examine my analytical frameworks. Above all, engaging in community-based research has allowed me to articulate and see the potential implications of my research up close, and to be kept on my toes by the research projects' ultimate stakeholders. In this way, I have sought to connect rigor and advocacy in advancing educational and social justice.

Community-Engaged Research With Community Organizing Groups—Mark R. Warren

For most of my career, I have studied community and youth organizing efforts to advance educational justice, racial equity, and community development. I

have often chosen to study relatively successful models of organizing to document and analyze organizing strategies and processes—identifying how the organizers do their work and why, and the results achieved. Most researchers and educators hold deficit views of low-income communities of color, perceive people as passive victims of oppression who need to be helped by professionals, and believe that elites drive social improvement and social change processes. By documenting the struggles of people on the ground, and highlighting the creative and sophisticated strategies groups have developed to organize for change, my research is intended to shift the dominant paradigm toward respect for grassroots leadership. I also believe it is important to analyze these organizing strategies to build theory and practical knowledge about effective ways communities can organize for change.

My approach to community engagement is to collaborate with the organizations I study. I consult with the groups throughout the process—discussing with them research questions, research design, and data collection. I discuss findings and insights with partners and receive their feedback. I share a draft of the written work. I listen carefully to feedback at all stages but, in the end, I am responsible for the content of the final product.

When I was at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, I co-led with Karen Mapp a group of 15 doctoral students who formed teams to conduct case studies of six community organizing groups that had achieved significant success in affecting public education in their localities (Warren, Mapp, & the Community Organizing and School Reform Project, 2011). We intended to document the value of low-income communities of color building the power to create equity-oriented change in public education. In contrast to top-down school reform models, we were advocating for the kind of transformational change in public education that would only come with active participation and meaningful roles for parents, young people, and other members of the communities most affected by educational inequities and failures. I think our partners hoped to get recognition and publicity for their hard work from our project. They also hoped to learn new lessons about their organizing because an outside set of eyes examined their work.

What Is a Fair and Balanced Critique?

In our collaboration with the groups, however, we agreed to two things. First, we would start out by understanding their organizing work from their point of view and that their voices would hold a prominent place in our account. But second, we would collect data systematically, gather other points of view and develop our own independent analysis. We would be looking for tensions and unmet challenges in their organizing, believing that a fair and balanced account would contribute knowledge to the broader field of organizing.

When we shared drafts of the case studies, the groups appreciated the research and writing and mostly added information to make the analysis more nuanced and complete. However, the process was not without its tensions; for example, when the team visited Denver for the *Padres y Jovenes Unidos* (P&JU) case. P&JU had said that political education sessions constituted the primary strategy in their organizing approach. However, the team pointed out that, in the five weeklong visits they had conducted over the year, they had never seen the organization hold a single political education session. At first, P&JU organizers reacted strongly, believing that they were misrepresented. The students went back to their hotel room that night and decided they needed to demonstrate their willingness to listen and discuss the issue. They returned the next day and held a series of structured conversations with P&JU organizers and leaders. By the end of the day, a consensus had been reached that, indeed, the group had not emphasized political education that year. However, the reasons had to do with a transition in organizing staff and the inclusion of newer organizers who brought a greater focus on relationship building to the group. The case was revised to represent this more contextualized—and more accurate—critique. Meanwhile, P&JU realized that they had strayed from a key principle of their organizing; the group decided to rebalance and be more intentional to structure political education back into a more central place in their work.

In an earlier study of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) organizing in Texas (Warren, 2001), I reported on the Fort Worth affiliate's effort to build a multiracial organization across African American, Latino, and White congregations and members. The city experienced a racist hate killing and the White murderer was let off with probation. The Black community erupted in protest but the IAF group did not participate in the protest. Black members of the group told me how upset they were about this failure to act and how it represented the lack of a deep appreciation for the African American experience among non-Black members of the organization. White members (including the lead organizer) had a different view: Their organization was not designed to organize quick protests, focusing instead on long-term campaigns to address injustices. I engaged in countless discussions and revisions of the account before it was published in the book. I reported the varying perspectives, but I concluded that the incident portrayed the lack of depth in unity underlying the multiracial relationships in the group—a view that some White participants continued to reject. I went on to discuss how the larger IAF network worked much harder after that incident to challenge White members on issues of race.

Rigor and Positionality

To do community-engaged research, we need to be able to bring our whole selves to the project—our personal experiences, values, and standpoints.

Only in this way can we build deep relationships with folks in the community. They want to know where we are coming from not abstractly but in the concrete experiences of our lives. They want to know “our story” if they are going to trust us with “their story.” It can also be very important if we expect people who are quite different from ourselves to open up and share their stories honestly with us—in other words, to collect rich and accurate data. In the Harvard project, we asked student researchers to write memos reflecting on the experiences and values that brought them to the project and to interrogate their positionality in relation to the research.

This all sounds good on paper but has to be negotiated and figured out in practice. In Denver, Latino students in P&JU had been organizing to improve education at North High School. The school had historically served Denver’s Latino community, but with its 38% drop-out rate had become a potent symbol of educational failure. P&JU youth leaders had conducted a survey that revealed that many Latino students felt that teachers did not respect them. P&JU saw this as part of the long-term history of racism toward Latinos that had kept them poor and disempowered. The group organized a campaign to push for change, which eventually led to a reform committee consisting of teachers, administrators, P&JU organizers, and some students. After a promising start, however, P&JU felt that progress had stalled. They eventually called for a formal reform process that would involve all teachers having to reapply for their jobs; the superintendent of schools agreed and issued the ruling. When the team interviewed the head of the teacher’s union, she was trenchant in her criticism of P&JU on this issue.

What was the Denver team to make of this? They sympathized with the students but had different perspectives among themselves on the issue. One student had been a teacher prior to her doctoral studies and worried that the school had not been given enough time to change. Another student, himself an African American man, had been a teacher but also a youth organizer and identified with the frustrations of the young Latinos. When the team reported back to the entire project, heated discussion continued across all members. I was a parent with children in an urban district frustrated with the racism my children and others experienced and was sympathetic to the students. Others were concerned about a growing movement to undermine teachers unions. We discussed our various standpoints openly and in relation to the case. We reminded ourselves of the purpose of the research—to describe and analyze how P&JU organized and why. In the end, we agreed that we did not have to take a position on the issue. We were telling the story from the perspective of P&JU, focused on explaining the group’s organizing processes. However, to be fair, we did have an obligation to report the opposing point of view from the teachers and we did so.

Negotiating Relationships and Living With Tension

There are many tensions in negotiating collaborative relationships. The most fundamental, I think, concerns management of public image. We have a responsibility to the research community and to the broader public to make a fair and balanced analysis of the group's work. Yet the group's self-interest in our project often lies in the publicity we give it. On some level, "all publicity is good publicity." Nevertheless, if we expose limitations and weaknesses, it might possibly lessen the support they will receive or even give ammunition to the group's enemies. I suppose there is a limiting case where we might discover something so damaging to the organizing group that including it in our published writings would do real harm.

I do not believe these tensions can always be resolved. Scholars are not the same as organizers and do not have the same roles, purposes, and interests. Sometimes, thorough discussion can lead to agreement and consensus on an analysis or interpretation of organizing work. However, we may not always be able to agree. Like many organizers, I think the tension itself can often be a good thing. It can push scholars to deeper and more complex understanding as it did with my IAF and Denver cases; it might push organizers to improve practice as it did in both these cases too.

I have learned that long-term relationship is essential for resolving or living with tensions. I have found that organizers respond when they see that you are in the relationship for the long run, not just to get the data, publish, and run. The IAF organizers appreciated my willingness to stay engaged with them and, as a result, were willing to accept our differences. The trust and relationships we had built with P&JU also mattered greatly to our ability to reach some consensus.

A long-term relationship provides opportunities for each side to benefit over time in many reciprocal ways. I believe this collaborative approach creates better scholarship. I also believe it creates more relevant scholarship as it is more closely attuned to practical struggles for social justice.

Collaborative Research in Boston's Youth Justice Movement—Luke Aubry Kupscznk

Between 2005 and 2008, Boston students and their adult supporters in youth organizing groups joined in a citywide alliance to demand jobs for young people as a way to prevent violence in their neighborhoods. They took measures that included turning their backs on city councilors at a city council meeting and staging a "die-in" on the steps of City Hall. Through these efforts, they won significant increases in city and state funding for youth

jobs. Adult staff members at some of these organizations believe this period is a strong example of the exertion of power by youth and that it helped spur even greater levels of collaboration across youth and adult allies in Boston that continue today.

In what follows, I describe the development and process of conducting a collaborative research project between researchers at the University of Massachusetts in Boston and three of these youth organizations about this high point of the youth justice movement in Boston. I contend that the collaborative nature of this project not only aided in the development of rich research questions and the facilitation of interviews but also added to the rigor applied in analyzing and delivering our findings.

Project Background

During the 2013-2014 academic year, I served as the teaching fellow for a course called The Practicum in Community-Based Research at the University of Massachusetts Boston led by Mark Warren. The Practicum is designed to offer apprenticeship training to PhD students in community-based, collaborative research. Our partner organizations included three youth organizing groups in the Boston area: the Boston-Area Youth Organizing Project (BYOP), the City School, and the Roxbury Environmental Empowerment Project (REEP), a youth-led program of Alternatives for Community and Environment (ACE).

In pursuing a collaborative relationship, we recognized a set of unique challenges as well as possible strengths. Challenges included developing trust between the researchers and our organizational partners as well as determining common goals and methods. Strengths included intimate access to the world of youth organizing.

Designing the Research

While our research team brainstormed possible areas of research at the start of the year, we waited to develop the focus of our study, and the corresponding research questions, collaboratively with REEP, BYOP, and the City School. We began to meet with the adult staff of these organizations: Najma Naz'yat of BYOP, Dave Jenkins of REEP, and Seth Kirshenbaum of the City School. We used these early meetings to discuss, draft, and sign a memorandum of understanding that expressed the obligations of both researchers and organization staff. We viewed this as a vital step in building trust as well as recognizing the potential biases and perspectives of both sides.

These early meetings were chaotic and difficult to keep focused on developing research questions. Najma, Dave, and Seth all have deep passion for the work that they do and they develop ideas faster than they can communicate them. As a research team, we tried to follow the multitude of suggestions, questions, ideas, and recollections that bounced around at these meetings. While our partners were not academics or researchers in an official capacity, they recognized and respected our standards of rigor and objectivity and realized that we would need to focus the project if we were going to be able to study an issue systematically and in depth. Eventually, we settled on a set of possible research scenarios and questions.

Our partners were particularly interested in understanding what created the “magic” of the campaign for youth jobs during the 2005-2008 period. They felt that an especially strong group of youth leaders had brought organizations together and inspired a united and successful campaign to create jobs and curb violence in the city. Our partners wanted to learn lessons from the period’s successes to apply them to the present. Working together with our partners, we honed a set of research questions to meet these goals. We then developed an interview guide that was shared with our partners who provided very useful feedback.

We also collaboratively developed a research plan. Each organization selected 10 youth leaders who had been active during our period of study. Najma, Dave, and Seth contacted these alumni, as well as some key staff at other organizations, and arranged interviews with members of our team. Without this identification and facilitation of interview targets, we would never have managed to schedule all of the interviews we did, much less gain the trust of participants.

We also made sure to interview people with contrasting points of view. For example, some youth organizing groups disagreed on what it means for an organization to be “youth-led.” Our partner organizations held a firm belief that youth should be the key decision-makers, while adults played a support role. However, we intentionally interviewed staff at organizations that disagreed—staff who believed adults should step in if a decision youth made endangered the larger purpose of the movement. In addition, members of our own research team often disagreed on this issue and we had to work to understand one another’s perspective.

Drafting Findings

Throughout the research process, our team met on a weekly basis to code and analyze data, discuss findings, and reflect on interviews. A spirit of collaboration imbued not only our relationship with our partner organizations but also

with one another. Ultimately we had far more data than we could analyze within the yearlong span of our class. Consequently, we decided to focus on three of our initial research questions: How did youth justice groups and individuals come together to form a unified movement? How was youth power and leadership practiced and viewed at the time? What impacts did participation in the movement have on young people? In pairs of two, we drafted sections of the report that corresponded to these questions.

To get feedback on our draft, and to check its accuracy and usefulness, we helped organize an alumni reunion event. We invited all of the participants, our organizational partners, and other members of the community to come and share dinner with us. Afterward, we presented our findings and broke up into focus groups to discuss them. These focus groups helped us to refine our findings in important ways. For example, one alumnus felt that we had inappropriately downplayed the roles of race and class in youth organizing. Consequently, we revised the draft to stress the significance of low-income youth of color, who normally feel they have no voice, speaking up and leading a movement that won millions of dollars in funding for youth jobs.

Countering Marginalization

Throughout the research process, we have consistently asked for feedback and checked for accuracy with our partners and participants in the community. This practice has led to a more rigorous research process. It has produced a database and report of knowledge about youth power that would have otherwise never come to light. Without the reunion event, we would not have emphasized the role of race and class in youth organizing, and highlight what it means for low-income youth of color who are normally silenced to exert voice and power in the political arena. In sum, just as youth organizers are challenging “traditional” power dynamics between youth and adults in the city, our challenges to the more “traditional” researcher–community relationship sought to prevent the marginalization of the community best served by our findings.

Community-Based Participatory Research and Action—José Calderó

The concept of advocacy can have many meanings. For some, it can mean the researcher coming from the outside and using research as a means of advocating for a particular group or population. This can be a disempowering form of research. Another form is one where the scholar works alongside community participants in carrying out research around issues, needs, or

problems that are pertinent to the community. In this method of research, the community participants have a voice in the research, in diagnosing and defining the problem, in carrying out research on the problem, in analyzing the outcomes of the research, and in using the research to present and implement solutions. The latter is the type of research that I attempt to carry out in my work. In much of my research, I ground theory in data collected through participant observation and interviewing, and develop my analysis through the writing and coding of field notes and interview transcripts. My work, however, has not entirely followed the grounded-theory approach, because I have been more than a participant observer in the process. My involvement as a leader in various community, neighborhood, and civic groups has made it impossible for me to be a neutral observer. Gathering data in the dual roles of researcher and activist, however, has provided special insight into activities and trends in the community.

In this type of research, there is a reciprocal process where the researchers and community participants learn about each other and the history, culture, and foundations of the community in which they are both participating. The research is also seen as an avenue for taking research outcomes and using them to implement strategies that can address the issues that the community is facing. This includes a practice where, rather than “expert” solutions being predefined, the results of the research are interpreted and used as guides for action and advancing social change.

For example, I teach at Pitzer College and work with community activists in Pomona, California, a majority Latino and African American city, where a bill, Measure T, was placed on the city’s ballot to replace the elections of city councilmembers by district to at-large elections. Together with Pitzer students, including Jared Calvert and Kathy Cabrera, I worked with councilmember Cristina Carrizosa and other community members to carry out research on the measure and the history of voting rights in the city. The research revealed that Measure T was a sinister attempt by conservative forces, including the police, to turn back the will of the people in Pomona who, back in 1990 (after law suits by the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund and the Southwest Voter Registration Project), voted to scrap citywide elections in favor of single-member districts to bolster minority representation. After the research exposed that the police association had given \$50,000 to efforts to support the passage of this bill and that they were affiliated with a leaflet depicting a White hand extended upward over Brown hands reaching from below, a multiracial coalition of community members and organizations held a press conference, walked door to door, and on election day defeated Measure T and helped elect two supportive councilmembers.

An essential component of this style of learning and research is a commitment to promoting an equal relationship between the interests of the academics and the community participants. Traditionally, academics have had a tendency to “parachute” into a community or workplace for their own research or funding interests without developing the kind of long-term relationship and form of collaboration that it takes to create concrete change. In working to move beyond traditional research models, participating students and faculty collaborate to create what Kenneth Reardon (1998) has described as “social learning processes that can develop the organizational, analytical, and communication skills of local leaders and their community-based organizations” (p. 59).

I have learned that it is essential for faculty members to make a long-term commitment to the sites and communities where they are situated or where they have placed their students. Although students can only commit for a semester or until graduation, faculty participants are in a better position to sustain campus–community partnerships. As these long-term partnerships are developed, students and faculty can become an influential force in their communities. They no longer are placed in the role of travelers passing by. Instead, they see themselves as participants with a stake in the decisions being made.

As research efforts are used to create and change policies, the divide between campus and community is being diminished. Our communities do not see the campus as an island, and, more important, we don’t see ourselves as an island. We see ourselves as an appendage of a larger community.

The participants in the many coalitions and organizations that I have been involved with have not been as concerned with bias in research but more concerned with finding solutions to the many problems that they confront in the community and in the schools. I have been considered an “insider” by these organizations and coalitions, as I usually carry out research in communities where my family lives or where I have established a long-term foundation. By working actively in these organizations and coalitions, I am able to develop an ongoing dialogue with the participants who allow me to serve as both an active participant and researcher. In this dialogue, we not only engage in analysis and reflection but also challenge each other and begin to develop theories and strategies for dealing with the emerging problems they are facing. In my view, these theories are important but mainly when they lead to strategies for change.

As in the Measure T example, a problem was identified that led to research on the forces behind a movement to turn at-large elections back to single districts. As a result of the research, the community participants theorized that the real intent of the measure was to curtail the increasing power of the growing

Latino community and to defeat councilmembers who opposed traffic checkpoints and defended the rights of immigrants. A plan was implemented to hold a press conference, expose the measure as an attack on voting rights, and get the vote out to defeat the measure. The outcome resulted in a defeat of Measure T and a continued voter movement that also elected councilmembers who were more supportive of immigrant rights.

My entry point comes from my activist background. Coming from this background, I work hard to support students who get involved with community leaders and other participants in finding solutions to practical problems in their communities. There are many students coming out of high school these days who have a history of community involvement. The higher education experience can put a damper on their passion. Some of these students have a tendency to turn away from the academy and drop out. I think community-based participatory action and research can make a real difference for these students. I know that it makes a difference for faculty who have come out of an activist history and are trying to find a means to exist in academia without being co-opted and without losing the values that give social meaning to their research or teaching.

Time and time again, I have found that being involved as an organizer alongside the community participants allows me to develop a trust that I would not normally develop as a neutral researcher. In the Measure T example, I had already developed a trust with community members and some councilmembers as a result of being an activist in previous community struggles. This trust allowed for using the research on the origins of district elections in the city as a foundation for developing a plan of action and its implementation.

I combine critical pedagogy, participatory action research, and community engagement as a means of bringing students and faculty together with community-based organizations to work on common issues and to effect social change. These collaborative efforts are examples of policy-making models that go beyond charity and dependence on experts to “get at the root causes of problems, and focus directly or indirectly on politically empowering the powerless” (Morton, 1995, p. 23). The research and learning described here focus on the sources of inequality and what can be done about it. The dominant understanding of inequality tends to blame individuals for their inadequacies. Instead, the practices described here focus on the historical and systemic foundations of inequality and challenge students and faculty to find common ground with community institutions, unions, organizations, and neighborhood leaders to arouse social consciousness and long-term structural change.

Discussion

The above cases demonstrate many ways in which CCES is rigorous and, in fact, sometimes more rigorous than traditional scholarship. First, conducting

this kind of research requires making explicit personal biases and standpoints and considering their influence on the research process. When Celina Su's community partners demanded a clear explanation for the value of her proposed research to justify the time they would spend on it, she had to articulate potential biases and assumptions in the research early on. The efforts of Mark Warren's team to build relationships with community participants required that researchers interrogate their personal experiences and values so that they can "tell their story" to the partners. This process helps to clarify the influence of those experiences and values on the research project and in some ways make it more objective; Charles Hale (2008, p. 11) has called this *positioned objectivity*.

Second, participant contributions often strengthen research design and methods up front. The input from Su's partners helped create a survey for a participatory budgeting process that was more likely to be filled out and include useful information—from undocumented immigrants, for example. Luke Kupscznk's partners shaped the research focus and interview protocols for youth leaders in ways that helped reveal their deeper experiences.

Third, community-based research involves forms of accountability and validity tests to research findings that go beyond peer-review. Warren's community participants questioned him sharply when he shared some initial findings on race relations and that process pushed him to develop more nuanced and complex analyses of interracial unity in organizing processes. Luke Kupscznk's partners insisted on the importance of race and class analysis in youth leadership. Gregory Squires learned that the targets of community-based action bring an additional level of accountability beyond what occurs in typical peer-review processes. When the target of research is a powerful organization, like the insurance company in Squires's American Family expert report, it has the resources to hire its own researchers and mount a media campaign to attempt to discredit its opponents. This threat pushes collaborative researchers to be even more careful about the rigor of their research.

Fourth, collaborative research creates the kind of relationships and trust necessary for valid ethnographic research. Luke Kupscznk's case reveals the step-by-step manner in which researchers on youth organizing engaged with organizers in the design, conduct, and products of the research. This partnership process led to access and trust with young people to be interviewed by the research team so they were willing to open up and tell their stories to university-based researchers.

Moreover, previous relationships of trust often facilitate collaborations in the first place. In the American Family case, the fact that the attorneys had long worked with civil rights groups in Milwaukee on other issues (e.g.,

school desegregation) helped them come together more easily on the insurance case. José Calderón's case also speaks to the value of creating and sustaining long-term relationships of trust capable of producing multiple research-action collaborations.

In the end, CCES approaches can sometimes lead to knowledge that would be overlooked in traditional scholarship. Community activists are often the first to identify critical issues of inequality and oppression because they experience them directly. The results of Squires's research contributed to a larger knowledge base on insurance redlining, which supported subsequent legal actions. While, redlining by home insurance companies was not entirely a secret, little attention was paid to this issue by academics before community organizations made this a public policy issue. Research about this form of redlining developed not out of academic, disciplinary interest but as a result of the demands of community activists to which collaborative, equity-oriented researchers responded. Similarly, Kupscznk and his colleagues would not have identified and studied how youth activism in Boston led to large increases in spending on youth jobs and reductions in violence if community partners with local, contextual knowledge had not raised the issue. Calderón's community partners were concerned with growing attacks on Latino immigrants and called for research and action on Measure T and the suppression of Latino voting rights.

Despite the potential advantages of CCES both for knowledge production and action, tensions can arise in these university–community partnerships. One challenge arises from the different priorities and trainings of organizers—focused on action—versus scholars—focused on research. In Kupscznk's case, researchers faced many challenges in working with community partners to focus research questions. These activists had a deep passion for their work and they “develop ideas faster than they can communicate them.” Many meetings and iterations were required to create a focused research design that would be rigorous.

Perhaps more fundamentally, community activists have their primary accountability to advancing the interests of their constituencies. Scholars have a responsibility to a wider audience, building knowledge in the academic disciplines and in the public sphere. Community organizations are also interested in self-reflection and exploring tensions in their work to learn from them to advance their own practice and to contribute lessons to a larger organizing world. But sometimes, there is tension between short-term and long-term interests. Warren, in particular, faced some of the tensions that can occur when his responsibility to produce independent scholarship clashed with the immediate needs of community participants. Warren revealed weaknesses when community organizations wanted to emphasize strengths at that time.

Throughout the above cases, we learn about the importance of building relationships of trust and mutual respect. These relationships are the foundation for conducting CCES. Even if the tensions identified above can never be fully resolved, it appears that strong, mutually respectful, and long-lasting relationships can create the context for mitigating tensions and allowing both knowledge and action to proceed.

Conclusion

CCES represents a partnership between researchers and community change agents designed to create knowledge that helps to advance social justice. In that sense, it is decidedly not neutral. It critiques systems of inequality and injustice and plays a role in advocacy efforts to advance social change. The best interests of these advocacy efforts lie in conducting rigorous, systematic research that stands the test of critique from experts representing multiple perspectives in the academy and in the community. Many kinds of tensions can arise in these collaborations, including when short-term organizational interests conflict with the long-term needs of the broader social justice movement. In the end, the relationships created through CCES create the space through which to address inevitable tensions and build a larger movement for social justice. It is this larger movement that is the ultimate goal of CCES.

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Promise and Provocation: Humble Reflections on Critical Participatory Action Research for Social Policy

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Abstract

This essay reflects on the promise and challenges of community-engaged, critical participatory action research (CPAR) hinged to social policy in times of racialized state violence and massive community resistance. With cautious optimism, we argue for the potential of CPAR to facilitate more just social policy, by enhancing research validity, policy integrity, and organizing capacity. Drawing on a series of CPAR projects, we also raise a series of ethical, political, and power-laden dilemmas we have encountered in this work and offer, with humility, provisional solutions for advancing activist-scholarship linked in struggle with communities under siege.

Keywords

participatory action research, activist-scholarship, community engaged research, research methods, activism, social, urban, social policy, social justice

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President Trump's plan to deport millions of people appears to be underway. Last week, federal immigration officials arrested more than 600 people at their homes and workplaces in at least 11 states . . . The abruptness of the raids provoked criticism from local officials, including Mayor Bill de Blasio of New York, who vowed to "stand with" immigrant communities. But mass deportation under President Trump will also happen through a more routine policy that is in the mayor's control: endless, unnecessary arrests for low-level offenses, which end up feeding immigrants into the federal government's deportation machine.

—Rahman and Steinberg (2017)

For dispossessed and overpoliced communities, the lofty promises of social policy too often fall painfully short. As public interest lawyers Shakeer Rahman and Robin Steinberg describe, there is a huge, insulting space stretching between even "progressive" policy and everyday life for those they serve: low-income, communities of color routinely and historically assaulted by racialized state violence, savage inequalities, and multigenerational disinvestment. We stare into this abyss when our so-called "sanctuary city" is shattered by ongoing, draconian "broken windows" policing in New York City (NYC); when the Mayor's policing policy imperils the very neighbors he promises to protect.

Working at the activist-scholar hyphen, we venture into this chasm as university-based researchers collaborating with communities and activists to conduct research to fuel policy change. We enter this uneasy space—knowing social policy is so often inadequate—because we believe in the potential of critical participatory action research (CPAR) for narrowing the rift between promise and practice. But we embark with apprehension, attuned to the provocations of this liminal ground. We understand that even massive policy wins (Sanctuary City!) can be undermined by sustained state violence (broken windows policing); we understand why many "on the ground" view policy platitudes as just that.

We write this article to unpack why we believe, when we pause, and how we engage when conducting critical, participatory research pitched toward policy change. Drawing on a long legacy of participatory and community-based researchers, we raise critical, delicate questions born from our collaborative research with those intimately acquainted with structural violence and manufactured inequality. Our projects include CPAR with incarcerated women documenting the impact of college in prison; collaborative research with youth studying surveillance in schools; partnerships with mothers, youth, and other community members in the Bronx investigating aggressive policing; and, a project with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ+) and gender nonconforming (GNC) youth of color, tracing their

desires, strengths, and struggles as they navigate institutional violence and daily precarity.

In the spirit of Ignacio Martín-Baró (1994), our work is guided by the belief that to develop more genuinely “public” policies, research must be shaped by the perspectives and critical participation of the public, particularly those who have paid the most for cumulative dispossession. By critical participation, we mean that those most marginalized contribute distinct knowledge to shaping and implementing research; university researchers work alongside community researchers in design, data collection, analysis, and dissemination. In intentionally diverse research teams that María calls “participatory contact zones,” dialogue and disagreement are greeted as generative as we attend to questions of power, privilege, hierarchy, Whiteness, academic arrogance, and fragile solidarities (Torre, 2005).

But the *critical* in CPAR also signals a larger commitment to challenging prevailing power inequities, within and beyond our research. Relying on critical race, feminist, postcolonial, queer, and Marxist theory, we position our work to make visible and interrogate histories and structures of injustice and resistance (Fine & Ruglis, 2009; Weis & Fine, 2012).

And yet, CPAR is no panacea; its interface with policy is aching with tensions—some existential, some political, and many logistical. Scholars have documented issues inherent in collaborations between academics and policymakers, including conflicts of time, language, and values (Choi et al., 2005; Greenhalgh & Russell, 2006; Nelson, 2013); some have described the precarity of the endeavor as “the tightwire we walk” (Serrano-García, 2013) and “waltzing with the monster” (Shinn, 2007). Engaging in CPAR does not create such challenges, but it insists that we reckon with them, however difficult. In doing so, we believe that there is great potential to enhance research validity, policy integrity, and organizing capacity. And so, we pursue CPAR for social policy because marginalized communities have a right to research and policy formation (Appadurai, 2006), and because we are firmly opposed to leaving policy in the hands of elites and corporate lobbyists. We take the opportunity of this article to be collectively reflexive—and humble—about the challenges we have stumbled into in this work and to share our provisional resolutions and paths forward.

Who We Are and Why We Write

We write as five researchers and activists affiliated with the Public Science Project (PSP), a theory-method-political hub for CPAR conducted by diverse research collectives spanning university borders; we are joined, in the epilogue, by postcolonial scholar Leigh Patel, our close friend and colleague.

Founded at the City University of New York (CUNY) Graduate Center in 2008, PSP is committed to interdisciplinary projects forged at the nexus of critical theory, participatory research, social action, and public policy. Collaborating with community-based organizations, activists, and other community members, our work addresses human rights, public education, and the criminal punishment system. We have focused on increasing access to college while people are in prison and after release; exposing and contesting aggressive, racialized policing practices, including stop and frisk; and challenging harsh school discipline policies in favor of more respectful, restorative, and transformative responses.

Dedicated to documenting what we call *circuits of dispossession and privilege* across marginalized and more elite communities (Fine & Ruglis, 2009), we conduct mixed-methods research with activist co-researchers, work in delicate partnership with government institutions (e.g., facilitating access to study college in prison), and collaborate with community members outside of academia. In addition, we have provided research support to class action lawsuits, and assisted grassroots organizations to conduct participatory evaluations of their advocacy.

We do this work from diverse personal and professional standpoints, with varied experiences of privilege and oppression. We are university faculty and graduate students; we are Black, Latinx, and White; we claim various sexualities and genders. Activists, writers, teachers, and researchers, we are partners and parents, in debt and investing. We have worked as policy advocates, youth workers, nonprofit researchers, community organizers, and public intellectuals; with personal and familial histories of incarceration; educated in public and private schools; conducting research with PSP, grassroots organizations, nonprofits, and government agencies. We all see research as only one part of our larger, multifaceted struggles for justice and transformation. And, as we have engaged in CPAR together and with others, our diverse positionalities have sparked (com)passionate debates, activated embodied fears, and generated mutual teachings.

As the authors of this article, we reflect on our ongoing conversations with each other and our *personal* experiences in this work—but we draw on *collective* projects shaped and carried out by a much wider range of PSP-affiliated researchers.¹ We begin by highlighting the *promise* found at the interface of CPAR and policy advocacy, elucidating the ethical necessity of critical participation in policy research and its strategic, methodological advantages. We then discuss some interrelated *provocations* that arise in this work. We conclude with reflections from Leigh Patel, who writes on a CPAR project interrogating intrauniversity injustice.

The Promise of CPAR

The Right to Research: The Ethical Necessity of CPAR for Social Policy

Arjun Appadurai (2006) argues that communities—particularly those most disenfranchised—have “a right to research.” Rarely granted freely, many activist communities have fought for this right: Gay men reclaimed HIV/AIDS medical trials through the ACT UP movement (Halcli, 1999); indigenous communities have demanded community approval and ownership of research (Smith, 1999); and disability rights activists have insisted “nothing about us without us” (Charlton, 1998).

This nonnegotiable radically changes who guides research, whose expertise is recognized as legitimate, who uses and controls the data. It changes who gets paid, speaks for the work, and has veto power over what goes public—all key considerations for decolonizing research (Smith, 1999). With project teams made up of both university-trained and nonconventionally trained researchers, we hold “research camps” to pool our distinct knowledges and learn what each other knows best (Torre, 2009). When investigating aggressive policing, members bring in research papers, news articles, memories of being stopped and frisked, hip hop lyrics, music, stories of relatives murdered by the police . . . Together, we build a dynamic library of our sources.

At their best, CPAR teams work across difference, with those most marginalized driving decisions about research questions, methods, analysis, research products, policy demands, and actions (Stoudt et al., 2016; Torre, Fine, Stoudt, & Fox, 2012). These ethical, epistemological, and political commitments grow out of our engagement with Latin American critical community research (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Freire, 1982; Lykes, 2013; Martín-Baró, 1994; Zeller-Berkman, 2014); North American traditions of action research (e.g., Kurt Lewin, see Cherry & Borshuk, 1998); critical feminist, race, and decolonizing literatures (Anzaldúa, 1987; Chataway, 1997; Harding, 1994; Hill-Collins, 1986; hooks, 2015; Smith, 1999); and recent writings on impact validity (Massey & Barreras, 2013). Our attempts are always works in progress, iterative and evolving.

Our ethical responsibilities radiate to the communities with whom we collaborate beyond the university (recognizing of course that the university is itself a community made up of so many intersecting constituencies). But these responsibilities also reverberate inward, in our commitment to challenging academic traditions: the positivist notions of objectivity, expertise, and neutral distance that have long dominated social science and

evidence-based policy (Greenhalgh & Russell, 2006; Martín-Baró, 1994; Nelson, 2013). Through our activism, labor organizing, critical scholarship, and administrative engagements, we contest the ongoing neoliberalization of the academy, the chilling of intellectual freedom, and hegemonic views of expertise and Western, Whiteman knowledges that reign within the university (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014; Fine, 2017). Instead, we claim the tradition of CPAR as a rich (even if recessive) strain of critical social science as an alternative path forward (Fine, 2006; Torre & Fine, 2011).

Finally, we take seriously our location at a public university, believing that knowledge production is a public good that should support and enrich communal life. In this spirit, PSP is designed to pierce the membranes that separate—but should join—the academy and social movements defending the “right to the city” (Harvey, 2008).

Methodological Assets of CPAR for Social Policy

Like all deliberative dialogues across power lines, vigorous debate about critical research among differently positioned people is a delicate process, sometimes clumsy and contentious. But in privileging multiple forms of expertise, CPAR also results in better thinking, more relevant research data, and more direct paths toward transformative change (Guareschi & Jovchelovitch, 2004; Torre, 2005). This section describes two key methodological strengths of CPAR as a framework for policy research: enhanced construct validity, by clarifying the complex shape of the “issue” under study (Torre et al., 2012), and fortified impact validity, or the potential for research to fuel social change (Massey & Barreras, 2013).

Strengthening construct validity through critical participation. In our work, we have repeatedly seen how critical participation—of those most affected by social policy but typically excluded from its formation—changes the shape of the very issue we are researching. Consider *Changing Minds* (Fine et al., 2001), a participatory evaluation of college in prison conducted by women in prison and from the outside—and a precursor to and foundation for PSP. When President Clinton made incarcerated people ineligible for Pell grants in the 1990s, college programs in prison plummeted from 350 programs in 1994 to eight in 1995. At Bedford Hills Correctional Facility in New York State (NYS), women in the prison organized with community allies (college presidents, church groups, activists, politicians) and successfully resurrected their college program. Unsatisfied with this localized and fragile win, however, the women sought out a program evaluation,

hoping to build an empirical argument for reinstating Pell grant eligibility for people in prison.

Invited as the evaluator, Michelle suggested that the research be conducted by a participatory team spanning prison walls. The collective included several women from the “inside” at Bedford Hills—who either took a master’s-level research methods course taught in the prison by CUNY doctoral students or were otherwise instrumental to the college program—and some women from the “outside,” including María, Michelle, and a few other CUNY researchers. The “inside/outside” division remained stark, but other synergies emerged: Some in the collective were involved in grassroots advocacy; some were mothers; some spoke Spanish as their first language; some were raised in poverty, some with wealth; some had confronted serious health issues; some held multiple degrees, some had just begun college while in prison. Meeting every other week for almost four years, these connections grew and complicated, as the team documented the broad and deep impact of college in prison.

The study included an analysis of recidivism outcomes for program participants—a key concern of most politicians. Produced by the NYS Department of Corrections at the request of the research collective, the analysis revealed remarkably low recidivism rates for the 274 college participants tracked over a decade: For those with some college, 7.7% returned to custody over a 36 month follow-up period compared with 29.9% of those with no college (Fine et al., 2001). But the women in prison knew the effects were still wider reaching than reduced recidivism, and they illuminated other complex dynamics that unfold in the shadows of incarceration.

In the participatory contact zone of the hybrid research collective, the women in prison argued that the research should demonstrate how college at Bedford Hills permeated many other aspects of life: discipline, children’s education, and interactions on cell blocks and in the yard. With this enhanced understanding of the construct “college in prison,” the collective expanded the evaluation to track the many capillaries of the program. And so the research team interviewed participants’ children, corrections officers, participating university faculty, community volunteers, and incarcerated women not engaged in the program; assessed disciplinary records; and followed up with women post release and their employers. The collective heard,

From a *Correction Officer*: Now that there is college in prison, there are fewer fights at night; instead of arguing they are doing homework.

From a *14 year old daughter* of a woman with a sentence of 20 years to life: Now that my mom is in college, on trailer visits, all she wants to talk about is homework, what books she is reading and poetry!

From a woman sentenced to 25 years, not in the college program: At night, the women will knock on the walls to ask “how do you spell rehabilitation” or “do you have Alice Walker’s book?” We have a Walker and a Foucault “study group” on the yard.

These and other findings demonstrated that college was not simply an add-on, but a catalytic intervention throughout the prison, infusing interactions with corrections staff and families; vibrating in recreation time and late night conversation; echoing in letters with professors and calls with children (now dominated by homework talk). College in prison also traveled onto college campuses where some women enrolled after release; and college in prison provided an opportunity for the women to “complete something in a life of incompletes” (Fine et al., 2001). Bolstered by the improved construct validity made possible by critical participation, the study not only documented the remarkable quantitative reductions in recidivism and associated tax savings, but also the more qualitative, holistic changes: the tectonic shifts in prison culture set in motion by the college program, with aftershocks traveling across generations and zip codes, beyond the prison walls.

From research to action: Enhancing impact validity. CPAR not only strengthens construct validity but also what Sean Massey and Ricardo Barreras (2013) call *impact validity*: “the extent to which research has the *potential* to play an effective role in some form of social and political change, or is useful as a tool for advocacy or activism” (p. 616). We believe that critical participation is a key strategy to maximize the likelihood that scholarship transforms into action, facilitating the movement of research findings into policy and organizing efforts. Across varied projects, we have worked to bring data into the streets, community meetings, city councils, courtrooms, and state legislatures. In our collaborations, research and action are rarely sequential steps, but necessarily simultaneous and entangled, cumulative and reinforcing.

To provide one example, Brett and María sit on the steering committee of a coalition of community organizations fighting discriminatory and abusive policing in NYC, Communities United for Police Reform (CPR; <http://changethenypd.org/>). In this partnership, CPR’s pulse on upcoming legislation and organizing has helped PSP prioritize and frame research questions on policing. For instance, through working with CPR, Brett was aware of a burgeoning campaign to decriminalize certain low-level offenses (e.g., public urination, littering, riding a bike on the sidewalk), which guided the launch of the Discretionary Arrests Research Project (DARP). The study documented experiences of people who were arrested for particular low-level offenses, when police could legally choose to fine them for these infractions instead

(Jashnani, Bustamante, & Stoudt, 2017). By launching DARP alongside the decriminalization campaign, PSP enhanced the likelihood that organizers could mobilize the results for immediate legislative advocacy. For instance, with CPR guidance about policy timelines, the DARP team created a brief report immediately before a key legislative session.

Much like using a theoretical framework to contribute to an existing body of academic literature, these collaborations provide policy frameworks to place our research in dialogue with upcoming policy, legal, and activist agendas. As “streamlining” into policy struggles increases the *potential* for our work to have an impact on the issue at hand, impact validity increases.

Provocations in the Space Between CPAR and Social Policy

Even as we believe in the ethical, theoretical, methodological, and political benefits of CPAR, we are also well aware of the ethical binds, political dilemmas, and frequent ruptures in these fragile relationships. CPAR engaged with policy advocacy gives rise to what Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) calls *choques*—the tensions, contradictions, or oppositions that result when multiple identities inhabit a single body; migrating this concept into CPAR, *choques* arise as varied perspectives collide and conflict in the participatory contact zone of a research collective (Torre, 2005; Torre & Ayala, 2009).

By design, these research spaces are fraught, as we collect and interrogate portfolios of evidence across power differentials and divergent experiences. We engage in dialogues that are uncomfortable, even improbable: Why would communities long colonized and brutalized by the State, corporations, and “science” trust researchers or policymakers to work in solidarity with them? Why would researchers admit that our expertise is hugely limited and partial, or even colonizing? Yet, participatory contact zones are simultaneously liberatory, as they facilitate democratic theorizing, collective data gathering and analysis, a serious reframing of today’s problems, and imagining transformations to policy for what should and could be (Stoudt et al., 2016; Torre, 2005).

We reflect next on two realms of tension, or *choques*, that we have encountered in CPAR pitched toward organizing and policy transformation: (a) the constraints of narrow “policy windows” and (b) the delicate balance of academic privilege and activist solidarities. In each domain, we describe specific “speed bumps” and some of the hopefully “good enough” passages we have attempted to move us forward (Luttrell, 2000).

Tension 1: The constraints of narrow policy windows

Policymaking is guarded closely by those in power, frequently inaccessible to activist-scholars, usually out of reach for the broader public. Occasionally, however, fleeting opportunities arrive when “policy windows” (Kingdon, 1995) crack open: a grassroots campaign gains national momentum, a class action lawsuit is filed, political leadership changes, a community tragedy (and ensuing outrage) makes the news, or relationships between activists and empathic officials come to fruition. When a policy window opens, we are sometimes invited or inspired to race through—with evidence—before it slams shut: before the news cycle diverts attention, the political opposition organizes, or your new ally loses power. The threat of “now or never” looms large.

Others have described the conflicting relationships that policymakers and researchers have with time: Policymakers demand immediacy, researchers demand . . . as much time as it takes (Choi et al., 2005; Shinn, 2007). This tension is heightened for activist-scholars living on both sides of the hyphen: CPAR requires sustained presence and patience to build trust and facilitate iterative and collective knowledge building. When a policy window opens, critical researchers have little time but much to do: check in with allies, decide if and how to introduce evidence, meet with policymakers, strategize so collaboration does not degenerate into collusion, check power relations within the research team—all while taking to the streets in protest. And sometimes we cannot do it all; research meetings are canceled for last-minute direct actions, we fail to produce research products for next week’s community hearing, the research team cannot assemble in one place to make quick but still collective decisions.

But policy windows are not just temporally narrow (“Limited Time Only!”). They are frequently also narrow in imagination, with political openings accommodating only the most slender policy solutions: uncontroversial and uncreative, incremental or even neoliberal. Below, we elaborate on inter-related dilemmas that arise when we attempt to take advantage of these slivers of political opportunity.

Winnowing wicked problems into tame policy. When ephemeral policy windows open, researchers are often asked to share a single thread of the larger research story—an advocacy “script” of sorts—to assure that at least one message (however incomplete) slips through. Organizers ask for “stories” or “data” to support well-rehearsed lists of demands. Or, lawyers building a class action lawsuit seek evidence to prove that “extra learning time” is a civil right. A well-intentioned legislator seeks “expert” advice on college in prison. The desired solution is simple and straightforward, but often inadequate given the scope of the problem. Such sanitized policy stories constitute what

Horst Rittel and Melvin Webber (1973) call “tame” problems: contained and isolated, receptive to remedy or intervention. Yet, Rittel and Webber note that most policy issues are not tame, but “wicked”: entangled and intractable, with myriad origins and mutations. As activist researchers, we agree: We know that the problems of capitalism, racism, sexism, xenophobia, and grotesque inequality gaps are unlikely to be “solved” by a single policy intervention. And, yet, we still often stay up all night with our community allies to complete our analyses and produce the policy documents.

When we wade into these murky waters, our research collectives spend hours debating: Politically, should we tell an oversimplified story? Ethically, can we tell any story but the full story? Should we offer data that advance incremental wins or hold out for transformational change? Will more training for police-employed “school safety agents” (SSAs) interrupt the school-to-prison pipeline, or reaffirm the place of law enforcement in schools? Will college in prison for “nonviolent offenders” eventually increase access for all, or just reinforce false and harmful distinctions between “violent” and “nonviolent”? Moving toward “good enough” (but never adequate) policy recommendations (Luttrell, 2000) requires painful decisions among a community of researchers, only some of whom are directly affected.

Wicked problems and tame solutions haunted the Bushwick Action Research Collection (BARC; <http://bushwickactionresearch.org/>), an inter-generational collaboration between Make the Road New York (MRNY) and PSP that set out to study harsh school discipline policies in NYC (Cahill et al., in process; Matles et al., 2015). One of MRNY’s policy goals—one PSP supports—was the removal of SSAs from schools. But when we solicited the perspectives of our youth co-researchers, we learned that they were somewhat equivocal about SSAs, with views spilling over the boundaries of the tidy advocacy script. Some young people railed against abusive SSAs while others described them as the only caring, even familial adults in school—often women of color from similar neighborhoods as the students (unlike most teachers). Some in the research collective worried that any apparent defense of SSAs could obscure structural critiques, others feared the loss of employment for these women. The group questioned each other: Would removing SSAs do harm, if some students see SSAs as their only adult allies in school? But also, does the relatable adult need to work for the police?

And so, the collective tried to complicate the “tame” policy solution. To this end, the team pivoted toward another policy window, just beginning to crack open: a mayoral initiative to expand community schools in NYC (Office of the Mayor, 2014). Building on ongoing MRNY advocacy in this arena, the research team reframed the findings within the more holistic community schools campaign—making it possible to call for the removal of

SSAs without eclipsing the importance of having adults in schools who are from the same neighborhoods and share history with the students. Such agility was made possible by MRNY's expansive activism, enmeshed in multiple policy struggles—but it was also the result of a serendipitous, but not necessarily replicable, political moment.

Problematic “justice narratives.” Sometimes “tame” policy solutions take shape as predictable, flawed, and even disturbing “justice narratives.” We describe three such narrative tendencies below—emphasizing damage, focusing on “populations,” and stratifying “deservingness”—with some provisional strategies for navigating these conflicts.

Centering damage. A common strategy in legal advocacy and grassroots activism is to provide evidence of *harms* committed against a particular group and then lobby for remedies for that specific harm. In so doing, however, we often render the “victims” as “broken” or damaged. *Brown v. Board of Education* may be the most vivid example of “damage” evidence (Black children's alleged internalized self-hatred) admitted into court in exchange for “justice” (school desegregation; Fine & Cross, 2016). As critical researchers, we are familiar with and highly skeptical of this strategy. At best, it has limited capacity to inspire meaningful change (Cross, 2003; Fine & Cross, 2016; Smith, 1999; Tuck, 2009). Documenting damage spurs remedies to “help” injured individuals via social services or compensation, but rarely challenges the violent structures and dynamics that caused the harm (Martin-Baró, 1994); this trend has accelerated with the neoliberal professionalization of social justice work (Fabricant & Fine, 2013; Patel, 2014; Spade, 2015). At worst, damage narratives reproduce stereotypes used to justify continued subjugation of marginalized groups (Smith, 1999; Teo, 2010; Tuck, 2009) and further legitimate the role of “professionals” who are usually White.

Yet, documenting the scars of injustice is still an indispensable tool to mitigate daily suffering as we struggle toward large-scale transformation. And so we use the dual lens of *critical bifocality* (Weis & Fine, 2012) to catalog not only wounds but also resilience and resistance; to not only chronicle lives but also contextualize them. We design research to trace *circuits of dispossession and privilege* (Fine & Ruglis, 2009) to understand how individual pain (and privilege) unfolds amid histories of structural violence, oppression, and power. And we crosshatch complex stories of harm with tales of survivance, desire, and demands (Fine & Cross, 2016; Tuck, 2009; Vizenor, 2008). We hope such research lays the groundwork for immediate redress of the symptoms of systemic injustice (e.g., racial disparities in school suspension), without losing sight of the causes (e.g., criminalization of youth of color, divestment from public education).

An emerging example of navigating this contentious territory is seen in What's Your Issue? (WYI; <http://whatsyourissue.org/>). This national participatory research project was born from the observation that most (of the already limited) national studies about LGBTQ+ youth had majority White samples and primarily documented damage: bullying and assault, low self-esteem, homelessness, depression, and suicidality. Partnering with nine locally rooted community organizations throughout the country, PSP launched WYI to document the dreams, desires, and priorities of LGBTQ+ and GNC youth of color to support local and national advocacy based on more than “what’s wrong” (Torre, Fine, Cabana, & Frost, 2018).

While all involved want to decenter damage, many young people and organizers still seek better information about suicide, police violence, bullying, housing insecurity, and the betrayals of family and State. Thus, when María and Michelle momentarily considered “leaving out” survey questions on bullying and suicide, youth co-researchers were adamant about including them alongside questions about activism, relationships, desires, and coping. Although “damage” stories are deeply flawed, overly simplified and romanticized “resilience” stories are equally troubling. Lives caught in the crossfire of structural injustice are a complex blend—of course—of pain and struggle, wounds and resilience, resistance and despair (Gordon, 2008). As the research progresses, the WYI team plans to leverage the findings to support LGBTQ+ and GNC youth organizing demands that build on their strengths, address daily experiences of injustice, and call for change that prevents—rather than simply reacts—to such violence.

Focusing on unidimensional identities, obscuring structural forces. Many injustice narratives emerge from research and advocacy for particularly vulnerable groups: girls and women; LGBTQ+ and GNC people; Black youth; those who are formerly incarcerated, undocumented, or Muslim . . . This approach may be considered strategic as (seemingly) discrete groups of constituents make for tidier stories to squeeze through narrow openings in policy discourse. But as Du Bois (1899) recognized in *The Philadelphia Negro* over a century ago, focusing on “The Negro” keeps our scholarly gaze on the effects of injustice, while distracting us from the causes; the structures, histories, and policies that produce oppression and privilege too easily disappear (Stoudt, Fox, & Fine, 2012). Furthermore, such unidimensional notions of identity (“The Negro”) can obscure a more intersectional reality—both limiting our understanding of the nature of power and injustice, and restricting our imagination for new solidarities or forms of resistance (Hill-Collins, 2015).

But we still sometimes participate in group-focused research. On its face, WYI is akin to “population research,” diverging from our preferred focus on

structural dynamics and circuits. To give room for the desires, dreams, and demands of LGBTQ+ and GNC youth, the WYI team decided there is utility in placing their bodies at the center—bodies so often marginalized, silenced, and pathologized in social science. Recognizing the challenges of this approach, however, the collective engages it with two commitments.

First, the WYI team is working to unravel how the marginality and structural injustice faced by LGBTQ+ and GNC youth is the result of a heteronormative culture that rejects them. Mounting research demonstrates that queer and GNC young people are disproportionately suspended from schools, pushed into the juvenile justice system, and exiled to foster care or homeless shelters (Birkett, Russell, & Corliss, 2014; Chmielewski, Belmonte, Stoudt, & Fine, 2016; Irvine, 2010; Payne & Smith, 2012). Actively guarding against suturing these negative outcomes onto embodied genders or sexualities, there is a WYI commitment to theorizing how systemic precarity derives from pervasive homophobia and heteronormativity—not from “being” LGBTQ+ or GNC.

Second, the project embraces intersectionality. WYI recognizes that these young people are not only queer or GNC. They are also Black, migrants, dancers, scholars, siblings, workers, partners, dreamers, and more, with many accompanying strengths and struggles. WYI youth co-researchers have also made it clear that they refuse to be confined by social science categories, defining themselves more dynamically (“I am *not* gender nonconforming, I am a woman born as a male”; “I am race fluid”). So, the WYI team is working to simultaneously attend to and destabilize identity markers like race, gender, sexuality, (dis)ability, class and immigration status—and all of their intersections.

To summarize, while we have serious concerns with population-based research, we also honor the desire to document collective struggles and forms of resistance. And, we understand that the law has carved out some “suspect categories” that can be litigated for immediate, even if minor, relief. When we engage such projects, we attend carefully to the wide variability within groups, vibrant intersectionality within persons, and structural betrayals that accompany group membership(s). Thereby the “group” becomes relational and dynamic—rather than isolated and static—as we unravel the essentialist trappings that sometimes “stick” to the category.

Stratified justice: Policy for the “deserving”? Another common policy strategy is to seek fast, “easy” justice for the most “deserving” few, while others are (perhaps inadvertently) represented as “not-as-deserving.” We witness the triaging of justice across many social movements with advocacy prioritized for cisgender lesbians and gays who marry, over trans people; undocu-

mented students, before their kin working in the kitchens; people convicted of “nonviolent” charges, but never those labeled “violent.” Advocates and policymakers often justify this tactic with the hope that small “wins” will accumulate into long-term justice for all. But this strategy dubiously relies upon deciding—and dividing—who is (un)deserving of immediate justice (Patel, 2016). We resist research that supports *stratified justice*. An essay by Sonia Sánchez Carmen, Diego A. Hernández Arellano, and Eric Nava-Perez (unpublished) sketches these “deservingness” dilemmas in immigration struggles, asking organizers not to settle only for the rights of “dreamers” if it shuts out those family and community members consigned to the fields, backrooms, and detention centers. We work hard to refuse complicity in the stratification of justice . . . but, at times, painfully, our work has been co-opted to facilitate just such divisions.

Tension 2: Navigating academic privilege and activist solidarities

We turn to the tensions of differential privilege and respect accorded to members of the research team. While we try to contest power dynamics among us, that doesn’t stop people on the outside from relying on the academics, patronizing community members, privileging Whiteness/maleness/academic credentials, or trivializing the collaboration (Kelman, 1972; Paradis, 2000; Smith, 1999; Tuck, 2009). Those of us in the academy are often in a position to leverage ties to university administrators, funders, bureaucrats, and politicians; sometimes, we gain access to resources and policymakers generally out of reach for broad swaths of the public. And, no small matter, most of us in the academy are “read” as White, granting us another form of illegitimate privilege. The question for diverse research teams is how to “work” these dynamics within and beyond the research collective.

In *Changing Minds*, we strategically used our privilege for multiple ends: Michelle regularly met with the prison Superintendent alone, shielding the incarcerated women from an extreme power imbalance; María and Michelle met with the NYS Legislature’s Black and Latino Caucus to learn how the research could best influence state policy. With most of the women now released, the research collective travels together and the formerly incarcerated women lead presentations while “allied researchers” step back. But this dance is not always graceful as the group tries to fight the choreography of power and privilege, sometimes stumbling over the mutual insistence of “no, you talk first,” disrespectful audiences, or elitist definitions of “legitimacy.” When we present our research in communities of color, however, many of these power dynamics are reversed: Whiteness and multiple degrees become understandably suspect and we must be vouched for by a respected community member—trust may or may not follow.

As activist-scholars, we are always strategic about how we introduce our collaborations into policy conversations. We intentionally disrupt traditional notions of expertise, with one of our team's nonconventionally trained members as our spokesperson in policy sessions: a young person, a formerly incarcerated researcher, a mother who had been video-recording stop and frisk for years before ever working with academics. Sometimes, our collectives decide collaboratively (often driven by community co-researchers) that it is tactical for the most prestigious university researcher to speak first. For instance, when Michelle suggested that the author list for *Changing Minds* be alphabetized, the suggestion was appreciated—but firmly rejected. The women at Bedford Hills felt that The Graduate Center affiliation would only help get the report read if Michelle and María were at the top of the list.

These discussions about leveraging power and privilege happen inevitably on what Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2007) would call “tricky ground.” Below, we elaborate on five related tensions that we have encountered in our precarious entanglements with powerful policymakers and state institutions.

Hegemonic hierarchies of expertise. Academic training, credentials, university appointments, and research data lend academics a form of hyper-legitimacy—bound up in Whiteness—routinely denied to the community-based researchers (Chataway, 1997; Kelman, 1972; Smith, 2007). Keenly aware of this dynamic, community activists often seek partnerships with universities, strategically exploiting this perceived expertise to expand the impact of their advocacy—and simultaneously (hopefully) challenge the boundaries of accepted expertise. Yet, if we do this, we must be cautious—and creative—to avoid reproducing hierarchies of knowledge. How might leveraging our power simply reify our status over community members when we are invited to closed-door meetings with policymakers or asked to speak as an “academic expert”? How can we disrupt systems of exclusion and privilege in inventive ways, pushing for change that would contest current power structures?

While some hopeful ideas have emerged in PSP projects, these are never settled questions; Brett, María, and Cory have seen this unfold in the Morris Justice Project (MJP; <http://morrisjustice.org>), a CPAR project that investigated aggressive policing in the Bronx in collaboration with Bronx residents (Stoudt et al., 2015). MJP is committed to having both community and university members of the research team present at academic conferences, like the American Psychological Association (APA) Annual Convention (Stoudt & Torre, 2014; Stoudt et al., 2015). And yet, when the majority Black research team arrived to speak at APA—dressed in t-shirts reading “WHY DO I ALWAYS FIT THE DESCRIPTION?”—they were stopped and interrogated by hotel security (Stoudt et al., in press). Brett and María then leveraged their

academic privilege, including ties to the renowned psychologist William Cross who had invited the group; the MJP team soon received apologies from hotel security and the CEO of the APA. But the incident reminds us that as we work to upend traditional hierarchies of expertise, we still exist inside powerful structures constantly reproducing the very injustices we are contesting.

Internal power dynamics. It is not enough to be concerned with how external actors understand the power dynamics. We must interrogate power and privilege within our research collectives, attuned to power disparities based on academic credentials, but also dynamics tied to race, gender, sexuality, class, (dis)ability, immigration status, and their intersections (Guishard, 2009; Torre, 2005). Given the commitments of CPAR, we try to build in processes and pauses for collective reflexivity, dialogue, and debate. But we are not always successful, and sometimes the tensions fester and explode.

Returning to our example of Changing Minds, after 18 months of data collection, it was time for coding the massive piles of interviews the research team had accumulated. With no place to secure the confidential transcripts at Bedford Hills, the CUNY researchers held them and began analysis. When they returned with coded transcripts seeking feedback from their co-researchers in prison, they heard,

Judy Clark: So we do all the data gathering and you do the analysis? Doesn't seem very participatory!

Rightfully challenging the process, Judy showed how this “efficiency” was infused with hierarchy and exclusion. Attempting to course correct, the CUNY researchers carried the interview data back and forth to the prison over the next few months so that the analysis could be conducted by the *entire* research team, together.

Such power struggles are not only waged across the university–community divide, however. In one project focused on the challenges and gifts of long-termers returning home after prison, formerly incarcerated women on the research team felt the formerly incarcerated men were ignoring gendered aspects of their experience. While the men used lots of air time (with wonderful conversation), the women sometimes felt silenced. The women made us pause to remind the men that their experiences were not universal. An ultimately “friendly” but initially delicate moment, the women demanded acknowledgment of their distinct, gendered experiences in prison—and within the research process. Creating space for such internal disagreement is essential, as Umi Kothari (2005) has highlighted how power differentials

between university and community-based researchers—but also *among* community-based researchers—are easily reproduced in participatory projects.

In our projects, we work actively to establish “good enough” levels of trust across borders of difference. Together, we share biographies of wounds and triumphs; we discuss which stories shall remain sacred, not for dissemination; we seek out a common language; we all ask “naïve” questions and check our assumptions. Founding member of PSP, Madeline Fox, introduces performance as an embodied strategy for collective exploration of research team dynamics, as well as to facilitate participatory analysis of the data (Fox & Fine, 2014). Embodied performance provides an opportunity for the collective to illuminate injustice that can otherwise be difficult to see or name, because it has seeped under the skin, or there is no shared vocabulary, or the weight of internal power relations continually presses down. In the participatory contact zone of CPAR collectives, we carve out space for challenges, confusion, and hurt—buttressed by unexpected synergies, laughter, joy, and imagination (Torre, 2005).

Hitchhiking on dominant discourses. Sometimes, policy windows open at a discursive slant that is “palatable” to those in power, but unsavory to activists and critical researchers. We might feel ethically compromised if echoing dominant discourses are the price of admission to a larger policy conversation. For instance, after the Changing Minds analysis found that college in prison leads to substantial decreases in recidivism, the research collective was encouraged by the NYS Legislature’s Black and Latino Caucus to incorporate the argument: “*And it saves money!*” The recidivism reductions were large enough that they would offset college costs and still generate overall cost savings—a persuasive argument for policymakers most concerned with the bottom line. The group debated this cost-benefit approach, with some researchers uncomfortable about reducing lives to dollar signs and reinforcing stereotypes about the “danger” of people leaving prison. Eventually, the collective moved forward with a cost-benefit analysis on the advice of the Caucus. These legislators were adamant that documenting “tax savings” and “public safety impacts” of college in prison would be essential in garnering interest from rural and suburban colleagues—whose constituents were more likely to be White and conservative, and less likely to be incarcerated. The findings were politically compelling: If a third of adults incarcerated in NYS in 2000 participated in college, tax dollar savings could amount to US\$150,000,000, which could be reinvested into social programs to *prevent* incarceration (Fine et al., 2001). And yet, the research collective remained skeptical of these discursive practices—even while using them—which prioritized saving money over enhancing lives.

Research co-optation. With concerns about the (mis)use of our research hovering, it is critical to consider strategies to ensure that our findings will be handled with integrity. Others have written about the omnipresent threat that research evidence will be co-opted by policymakers: used naively, decontextualized for their own ends, or even manipulated to amplify injustice (Nelson, 2013; Serrano-García, 2013; Shinn, 2007). To minimize (but never eliminate) this threat, we spend time in each CPAR project trying to anticipate and subvert the policymakers who might shoplift convenient findings (e.g., “Some students want School Safety Agents!!”) before discarding all the rest (e.g., what they really want are adults who have similar backgrounds in schools, not police).

We are also wary of seemingly more benign (mis)uses of our research. A few years after the publication of the Changing Minds report, members of the research team attended a meeting of advocates, researchers, and practitioners hosted by the Ford Foundation and the Gates Foundation, both considering a massive investment in college in prison. There, the foundations attempted to use the findings to support philanthropic investment in a national initiative for computer-based college curriculum in prison. The research team dissented: “But at the core of the Bedford Hills college program was the leadership and participation of the women!” “Close relations between faculty, writers, artists, volunteers, tutors, community members, librarians . . . who built the college culture—that’s what made the difference—not just the delivery of curriculum online.” In the philanthropists’ hands, the rich, collaborative culture of college in prison grew anemic, reduced to online courses from disembodied academics. No touch, no participation, little engagement. And yet—maybe? absolutely?—better than no college.

Research is always at risk of being appropriated to support dominant interests, tweaking rather than transforming existing arrangements. Thus, it is essential to deliberate within the collective about how findings should be used ideally, and how they are likely to be misused. We must also facilitate easy access to and use of our research products for community-based organizations and activists, never granting policymakers monogamous access to our results.

This tension of possible misrepresentation and exploitation is particularly important given the political capital that policymakers stand to gain from acting as if they solicited the full “participation” of community members in decision making. Bill Cooke and Umi Kothari (2001) have written eloquently on the potential “tyranny” of participation; they reflect on claims of international development organizations that “third world” communities have “participated” in their endeavors, without recognizing

that limited access to international capital elicits a deeply coercive brand of participation. It is essential to guard against such co-option and dilution of participatory processes, ever vigilant against compulsory or tokenistic participation exploited to solidify policymakers' continued legitimacy to make decisions (Cooke & Kothari, 2001).

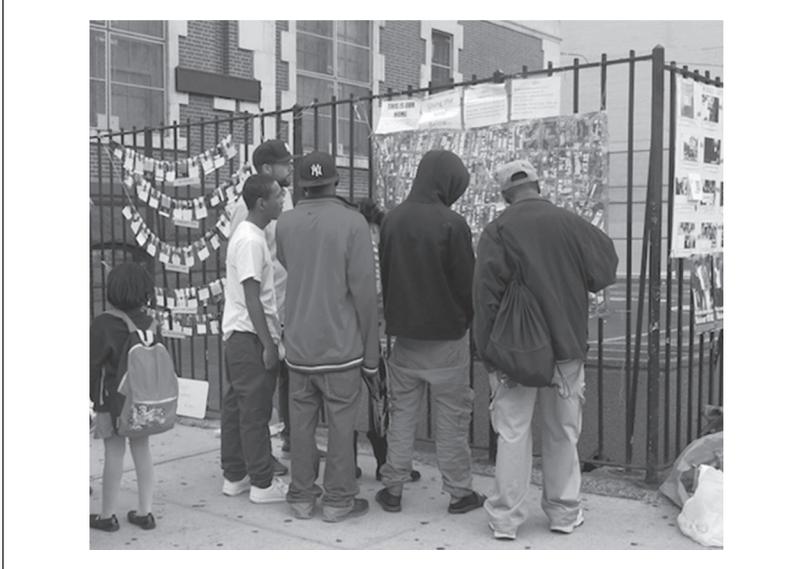
We would be wise to learn from Jodi Melamed's (2006) writing on "official anti-racisms," by which the language of anti-racist struggles is used to bolster neoliberal structures, diverting from activism for genuine societal transformation. Research collectives need to consider the following: How do we prevent the co-optation of our projects when working alongside those in power? How might we, as critical researchers, contest this shapeshifting coloniality, laying bare these narratives and the hierarchies they reproduce? And how do university researchers avoid playing midwife to illusory participation "by the people"?

Narrowly defined audiences of policy research. The findings of policy research have traditionally been thought of as evidence to be handed off (and up) to those who *make* policy—rather than those *most affected* by policy. With the intention of informing decision making, researchers interested in policy change spend significant time cultivating the trust of elected officials and government administrators, writing white papers, and considering how our research coincides with upcoming legislative priorities. In CPAR for social policy, however, we see policymakers as only one (and never the sole) audience for our findings. Always aware of and attentive to power lines that are dangerous to cross—but more dangerous to avoid—we believe these multiple audiences are particularly important given the many limitations of policy as an avenue for change. Knowing that policy windows may never have enough room for us to tell the full, wicked stories of our participatory research, we make sure to find alternative spaces for these stories to breathe, ones that accommodate their complexity and generosity.

So in our work, we seek to democratize not only knowledge production but also its distribution and ownership. Multilayered dissemination is central to our work, as we create products with and for numerous audiences and circulate our materials in varied formats: social media, legal documents, community organizing pamphlets, academic articles, theatrical performances, Op-Eds, and street art.

The MJP research team, for example, used multiple strategies to move their project findings into the world. Capitalizing on moments of access to those in power, MJP shared findings directly with candidates during election season town halls, and attended an invitation-only meeting held

by the NYC police commissioner with a range of community members and organizations. At the same time, the collective developed a strategy—what they call “sidewalk science”—for sharing research findings and conducting additional analyses in the same streets where the original data were collected (Stoudt et al., 2015; Torre, Stoudt, Manoff, & Fine, 2017).



During sidewalk science, MJP members asked passerby to help the research team make sense of the data via ongoing collective, community analysis. The team also shared research findings via nighttime projections on the side of buildings with the Illuminator (<https://youtu.be/mliuIS-C2hJk>) and via pocket-sized handouts, buttons, stickers, and t-shirts. MJP members also registered voters and spoke about proposed police reform, linking the research to broader political empowerment—a critical expansion on what it means to conduct “policy research.” More recently, the team of community-based researchers around the neighborhood with the phrase “This is not a broken window,” above a collectively written paragraph unpacking the policy of broken windows policing and a website link. All of these strategies grow from the belief that policy issues are public issues, and we should engage public science for, with, and by communities under siege (Torre et al., 2012).



We have reviewed, and reflected upon a series of delicate tensions that erupt within university–community projects, particularly CPAR projects for radically redesigning social policy with long marginalized groups. We turn, in our epilogue, to another angle of activist-scholarship: a study designed from within the university, on the university as a racialized colonial project. In this instance, as told by Leigh Patel, the tensions of research on injustice within the university fester not “out there,” but “in here.” We end with this story because it is a reminder that there is radical reconstruction work to be done within our own house, the very one we call the academy.

Epilogue

Unsettling the False Borders Between the Community and the University

In the spring of 2015, dissatisfied with institutional response to the ongoing state violence on Black peoples, a group of graduate students at Boston College (now named Eradicate #BostonCollegeRacism), undertook a task that rippled in many different directions. Their initial self-designed task was to speak aloud the realities of institutional racism in a format other than the ubiquitous open letter.

These emerging social scientists conducted a great deal of archival and interview-based research into the history and contemporary structure of institutionalized practices on that particular college campus. They produced two infographics that presented their research and several recommendations for addressing institutionalized racism. (Visit the *Eradicate#BostonCollegeRacism* website to view the infographics at <http://bostoncollegeracism.tumblr.com/Infographics>)

The students then faced a series of administrative hurdles and obstacles, because as a self-formed, heterogeneous group in various tracks and points in their studies, they were neither of the two configurations that the university recognized: official student groups nor academic course groups. Not fitting into either of these options for institutional recognition meant that the group was, in essence, stateless, from the view of the institution. One tenured administrator told some of the student organizers, “But you’re not a real group” out of frustration of how to direct their request to post the infographic. Another asked the group if a “revise and resubmit” loop of feedback could be instigated retroactively for their research product. Statelessness scrambles the frequencies of legitimacy.

As with all instances of statelessness, this situation drew into relief the parameters drawn by the state, in this case an institution of higher education, to confer and oversee legitimacy (Cacho, 2012) through categories. Social categories, ranging from race, class, gender, ability, to designations of community and university work to sort and facilitate shorthand understandings. This is both essential in making meaning and in the specific context of ongoing coloniality, deleterious in metering out belonging, opportunity, obstacles, and dispossession. Social categories cannot be separated from the fundamental colonial quest of stratification, the baseline pursuit of coloniality (Wynter, 2003), and one that’s been most successfully wrought by Eurocentric colonization (Battiste, 2013). Moreover, universities and their cultural practices of research are deeply situated within a

sociopolitical reality of formal research being part of Eurocentric epistemological dominance. This means that “the community” is dialogically and conceptually made into reality by its contrast, “the university.” Part of the rupture created by these student activists was that this time, the community was the university. The state faltered in seeing itself through its administering of categories.

How, then, can categories of community, university, student, administrator, activist, observer, categories themselves, be unsettled? The work of the student activists at Boston College, and elsewhere, particularly in this social movement moment of Black Lives Matter and the Dream Defenders, reminds us that unsettling categories and hierarchies of social groups is part and parcel of unsettling the present from its past. Pragmatically, both of these groups have unsettled the past bodily through protest as well as textually across media channels.

Arjun Appadurai (1996) asserts that media and migration are the two most consistent ruptures of nation/state order. Part of the challenge, then, for anti-oppressive research is to hear the moment when Eurocentric colonial categories and metrics are applied to discipline border crossing groups into the prevailing social order. How can research, the pursuit of knowledge, listen to examples that border cross and seek the rupture of social categories? How can it create structure to allow for the movement across structure? How can those who have been shaped by institutionally invested definitions of research hear the epistemologies when they speak them? The explorations in this article present some of the complex ways that knowledge, like learning, are far from perfect but contain within them the ever-present possibility to collapse categories and unsettle epistemic borders.

Appendix

Public Science Project Leadership

Director & Co-Founder: María Elena Torre

Co-Founder: Michelle Fine

Associate Director: Brett G. Stoudt

Associate Director of Institutes: Madeline Fox

Participating Researchers in Referenced Projects

Bushwick Action Research Collective: Anonymous youth co-researchers from Make the Road New York, Caitlin Cahill, Jaritza Geigel, Sarah Landes, Amanda Matles, Talia Sandwick, Brett G. Stoudt, and María Elena Torre

Changing Minds: Kathy Boudin, Iris Bowen, Judith Clark, Michelle Fine, Donna Hylton, Missy, Migdalia Martinez, Melissa Rivera, Rosemarie Roberts, Pam Smart, María Elena Torre, and Debora Upegui

Discretionary Arrests Research Project: Priscilla Bustamante, Gaurav Jashnani, and Brett G. Stoudt

Morris Justice Project: Anonymous, Ayana Bartholomew, Paul Bartley, Fawn Bracy, Hillary Caldwell, Lauren Dewey, Cory Greene, Jan Haldipur, Prakriti Hassan, Scott Lizama, Einat Manoff, Freddy Nova, Nadine Sheppard, Brett G. Stoudt, María Elena Torre, and Jacqueline Yates

What's Your Issue: Emerson Brisbon, Allison Cabana, Michelle Fine, David Frost, María Elena Torre, and Community CPAR teams in Boston; New York; Jackson, MS; New Orleans; St. Louis; Detroit; Tucson; Seattle; Los Angeles

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Andrew Cory Greene is a formerly incarcerated co founder and organizer with How Our Lives Link Altogether! He is also a 5th year PhD candidate in Critical Psychology at The Graduate Center, CUNY where his/our research justice efforts engage in Radical Healing and youth community organizing as a praxis of Human Justice. Cory attributes his work, motivation and success to his son's existence.

Leigh Patel is a writer, sociologist, and educator. In addition to her work in the academy, she is a proud board member of the Education for Liberation Network. Prior to working in the academy, Leigh was a 7th grade language arts teacher, journalist, and state-level policymaker.

María Elena Torre, PhD, is the founding Director of the Public Science Project and faculty member in Critical Psychology and Urban Education at The Graduate Center, CUNY. She has been engaged in critical participatory action research nationally and internationally for 20 years with communities in neighborhoods, schools, prisons, and community-based organizations seeking structural justice. She is co-author of *PAR EntreMundos: A Pedagogy of the Americas* (Peter Lang Publishing, with Jennifer Ayala, Julio Cammarota, Melissa Rivera, Louie Rodriguez, and Margarita Berta-Avila).

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Brett G. Stoudt, PhD, is an associate professor in the Psychology Department with a joint appointment in the Gender Studies Program at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, as well as the Psychology Doctoral Program at The Graduate Center, CUNY.

The Ethical Stakes of Collaborative Community-Based Social Science Research

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**Ronald David Glass¹, Jennifer M. Morton²,
Joyce E. King³, Patricia Krueger-Henney⁴,
Michele S. Moses⁵, Sheeva Sabati¹,
and Troy Richardson⁶**

Abstract

This multivocal essay engages complex ethical issues raised in collaborative community-based research (CCBR). It critiques the fraught history and limiting conditions of current ethics codes and review processes, and engages persistent troubling questions about the ethicality of research practices and universities themselves. It cautions against positioning CCBR as a corrective that fully escapes these issues. The authors draw from a range of philosophic, African-centric, feminist, decolonial, Indigenous, and other critical theories to unsettle research ethics. Contributors point toward research ethics as a praxis of engagement with aggrieved communities in healing from and redressing historical trauma.

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Keywords

research ethics, action research, activist scholarship, activism, social, urban

Introduction

Ronald David Glass

This multivocal essay collects brief engagements with complex ethical issues raised in collaborative community-based research (CCBR). The contributors constituted the Urban Research-Based Action Network (URBAN) Ethics Working Group, which I had the honor to organize and chair.¹ We critically engaged the ethics of CCBR, examining the very possibility of an ethical dialogue among us and the viability of ethics as traditionally understood. The reach of critical and decolonial theories and the long-unanswered challenges raised by feminist and African-centric theories disrupt core principles of institutionalized research ethics, the foundational disciplinary assumptions that separate ethical and epistemological matters, and the well-established university commitments to upholding academic freedom in exchange for disinterested scholarship that remains neutral in the public sphere. These disruptions touch our own sense of self, our understanding of our roles and tasks as engaged scholars, and our ethical responsibilities in our research and professional practices. Scholars who want their research to contribute to the formation of both a more just university and a more just society will be enriched by the dialogue that follows.

The ethical stakes of CCBR encompass far more than the practices highlighted by the research ethics regimes of institutional review boards (IRBs). As many critics have pointed out, IRBs consider the principles of respect, justice, and benevolence largely within biomedical and objectivist models of research, and focus on narrow domains addressed in transactional exchanges (such as to secure informed consent, or to assure anonymity and confidentiality). Concerns about the content, scope, and effects of the IRB ethics regimes, as well as about the role of research in reproducing the status quo of a wide range of social, economic, and political injustices, have led some scholars to position their work in and with aggrieved communities. These engaged scholars deploy research in collaborative struggles for justice.

That is, CCBR within the social sciences has been offered as an ethical, epistemological, and political corrective to traditional research practices. It aims to be in relation with and responsible to specific communities, contexts, places, and peoples. CCBR research agendas (from question definition to methods design, to interpretation and analysis of data, to dissemination of findings) emerge from within affected communities and is intended to

support actions directed at making material changes in the unjust conditions of daily life. This research methodology is not committed solely to expanding the archive of the academy and advancing the careers of researchers. Similarly, this research approach seeks to go beyond understanding the damaging effects of injustice (Tuck, 2009), and instead prioritizes knowledge production and mobilization that illuminates the core sustaining practices of aggrieved communities that enable them to resist and redress structurally produced inequities.

However, this framing of CCBR as an ethical corrective to traditional social science is dangerously close to a claim of exceptionalism, to setting up CCBR as an ideal research methodology. Still, the ethical and social justice intentions of CCBR cannot address the complex ethical questions at the core of social science disciplines' knowledge-production practices themselves, or the questions that arise because universities legitimate knowledge in ways that perpetuate epistemic injustice (Glass & Newman, 2015; Newman & Glass, 2014). Nor can CCBR avoid the ethical entanglements produced by the legacies of the social sciences that are complicit in promulgating "truths" that rationalize the appropriation of land and the formation of racial and gender hierarchies, or that rationalize the K-12 ranking and sorting practices that produce and maintain ideologically tainted identities and inequitable social and economic opportunities.

Given the fraught history that produced IRBs in the first place, the limited reach of the ethics codes of professional associations meant as IRB supplements, and the persistent questions about the ethicality of research practices, a group of University of California scholars organized a system-wide research program initiative in 2009, the Center for Collaborative Research for an Equitable California (CCREC), that made the elaboration of an ethics for CCBR a strategic project.² My role as the Director of CCREC, as well as ongoing collaborations with members of the Ethics Working Group, also entered into our engagements with the URBAN efforts to organize an interdisciplinary field of research that was ethical, collaborative, community-based, and oriented toward justice-driven action.

Our Working Group dialogues intentionally did not elide our differences of race, gender, class, age, or language nor did they presume a need or desire to find a unified voice, position, or theoretical framework for addressing the ethics of CCBR. Still, we write from some common ground, as university-affiliated scholar educators committed to the pursuit of justice, and to the critical enactment of the disciplinary practices we inherit and uphold. We are also committed to honest self-reflection about the ethical contradictions and tensions that inhere within our own lives and practices. We write as scholar educators reimagining the praxis of ethical research in the social sciences,

without righteousness or certainty, yet resolute in our transformative understandings and aims.

Jennifer Morton leads our discussion with a frank examination of the inter-/intrapersonal, ethical, and epistemic challenges of the Working Group's interdisciplinary dialogues, and how these provide insight into the ethical dimensions of university researcher and community collaborations. Joyce King reminds us that often we get ensnared in contradictions and dilemmas when ethical issues are framed through the university's embrace of the Western tradition, but these problems can recede when we draw our conceptual resources from more expansive philosophical roots. She demonstrates how African Kemetite traditions make clear that to be ethical, our research must be responsible and accountable to the knowledge assets and needs of particular aggrieved communities.

Patricia Krueger-Henney cautions social science researchers, whether or not they work collaboratively with aggrieved communities, that ethical and epistemological questions that get framed in binaries constrain how the ethical gets conceptualized and enacted. Krueger-Henney closes with provocative questions that remind us to attend to the ethical significance of the broad web of relations of our work, no matter how we may define or situate it. Michele Moses helps us think more deeply about with whom and how our research is ethically responsible and accountable, and her close focus on a particular case involving the ethical dimensions of data interpretation and analysis makes both the material and interpersonal urgency of these theoretical considerations felt. Dissent, disagreement, privacy issues, refusals, and other charged ethical dynamics are routinely part of collaborative knowledge production.

Sheeva Sabati interrogates the charged dynamics within efforts to institutionalize CCB, and surfaces ongoing tensions within critical interdisciplinary fields to caution us about the limits of institutionalization. Sabati uses decolonial engagements with the ethics of research to point toward powerful interventions that challenge universities to take broader responsibility and accountability in relation to the full range of social, cultural, and political effects of their disciplinary practices. Troy Richardson stands in the nexus of university and Indigenous histories and knowledge systems and grapples with the ongoing traumas that occur in this ethical and epistemological site, with its entailed returns to previous traumas and its opportunities for critical and transformative understandings. Richardson concludes with the truth that the ethical brings to the fore the burden of being human, and in this sense, the ethics of research calls us toward an understanding of healing. This understanding of healing enables us to more effectively take the burden of being human seriously in the ethical–epistemic intersections of research.

These provocations should not leave us discouraged, but rather should open us up to deeper possibilities for critically engaging with the ethics of our own particular research praxis. As feminist philosopher Maria Lugones (2003) aptly writes, “we risk our ground as we prepare our ground, as we stand on a ground that is a crossing” (p. 33). I invite readers to join us in this space of risk, in a fertile crossing of possibility.

The Ethical Challenge of Collaborative Community-Based Research

Jennifer Morton

We make moral trade-offs every day. We sacrifice time with our families to advance important career goals. We resign ourselves to intrusive airport security checks to travel safely. In education, these sorts of trade-offs are widespread. More students per classroom cuts down on staffing costs, but increased class size reduces the amount of time a teacher can spend focused on each child. A community might shift funds to provide increased social services by reducing the resources available for students in schools. Some trade-offs clearly exceed the limit of moral acceptability. But, often, we do not even notice we are in a morally compromised position: We fall prey to thoughtless complicity or resigned passivity. It is only when others challenge us to think critically about why we do what we do, how we do it, and where we do it, that our moral limits get tested.

Our Working Group was tasked with thinking through these ethical challenges as they manifest themselves in the work of CCBR; interestingly, working within our group itself became a kind of ethical challenge. Every member of the Working Group came to the table having approached ethical questions for different reasons, in different ways, and in different places. Working together from such a divergent set of starting points was much more difficult and complicated than some of us thought it would be. Our working process itself embodied the difficulty of finding a common ground as our intellectual tools and concepts were steeped in the power hierarchies and academic traditions that had marked and shaped each of us. Our experience working together came to be a microcosm of the larger and more complex ethical challenges that confront researchers who want to work collaboratively with members of the community.

I came to this project as a philosopher trained in an analytical tradition. I am interested in clarifying the ethical and moral questions that underlie much of the empirical social science work done in education. My method is to carve out relevant distinctions and bring to light normative questions that are

being overlooked. I write within a philosophical tradition that is best described as Anglo-American. It is a tradition in which women and people of color are appallingly absent. I am both. I also work in a large public university with an incredibly diverse student body. I often experience the gap between the tradition in which I work and my lived experience. However, this Working Group really pushed me to pursue questions about why I was exploring ethical questions in this way, within this tradition, and in the particular academic circle that I inhabit.

At first, the questions I was being asked were difficult for me to grapple with because I did not understand them. The first challenge we confronted, and which CCBR faces, is that of translation. Some of the language in which the Working Group's questions were framed seemed to me obscure and unhelpfully burdened. The language I used, on the contrary, struck some others in the group as equally burdened by an oppressive tradition and a "clarity" that they perceived as deceptive and distorting. Before we could even get at the ethical dilemmas underlying the tension within the group, we were stuck on figuring out what language to use in asking the relevant questions in a way that would bridge the gulf between our backgrounds and perspectives. Choosing the terms in which we would conduct our dialogue itself became an ethical minefield, which we never completely succeeded in navigating.

What the process did do is give us a window into the deeper underlying tensions that the discussion regarding language was unearthing. How could we collaborate across such different starting points, in particular, when some of us saw those starting points as essentially tied up with nonnegotiable ethical commitments? This is, in a deep sense, the question of collaborative research. Most of us frame and articulate our starting points from within the practice of our academic disciplines. Even when we push those boundaries, we understand them from within a particular shared disciplinary framework. Translating our concerns into a different framework could lead to distortion and, in some cases, to what we regard as an unacceptable ethical compromise.

It is evident that the ethical challenges confronting researchers engaged in this kind of work with nonacademic communities is even more difficult than the one we confronted talking across academic communities in our group. It is the hope of CCBR that those frameworks can be brought together in productive ways. However, this assumes that these frameworks are to some extent commensurable. Perhaps most problematically, it assumes that bringing them together is something we ought to do. One reason for doing so is epistemic—we want knowledge that encompasses more viewpoints. The other is ethical—we want to advance the political or ethical goals that we share with community members. But both of these goals raise questions about our epistemic and ethical limits—whether collaboration results in what we regard as an epistemically distorting or ethically compromised position.

The biggest challenge, and one that confronts collaborative researchers, is that those of us within the academy exist within an institutional and intellectual tradition that has often oppressed and exploited vulnerable communities. Our work, no matter how committed it is to social justice and to advancing the empowerment of those communities, is shackled by the institutional and intellectual constraints of where it is done. CCBR researchers are pushing against the seams of the academy, but are still doing this work as university researchers. This is itself problematic to some communities.

Some members of our Working Group provocatively raised the question of whether even in doing CCBR work researchers were still implicated in the framework against which they were pushing. To my mind, a perhaps more telling question is whether CCBR is the most ethically apt way of pursuing CCBR researchers' goals: truly collaborative knowledge production, social justice, equity, and so on. Some of us end up pursuing these goals within the academy because we are already in the academy, but that is not a very deep justification; it is simply an explanation of our circumstance. Perhaps, that is as much of an answer as some of us can give.

If we want a deeper answer, the question we need to ask is, "Why do this work within the university at all?" One answer that suggests itself is that because financial, intellectual, and political power for knowledge production disproportionately resides within the university's walls, the only way to harness power back to communities outside of it is to wrest it from within. This is a familiar line of argument. If we find this line of response unsatisfying, which many do, we should note that the alternative is to do this work outside of the confines of the academy. But this would undermine the very idea and promise at the center of CCBR: namely, that working at the perimeter of the university's boundaries can allow this work to transcend the limitations of working squarely within those boundaries. If CCBR is to be a viable project, we have to wrestle with the question of how much we can do while still working within an institution that is in many ways ethically compromised, and most importantly, we have to identify the ethical boundaries of this kind of work.

Collaborative Community-Based Research (as-Pedagogy) in Ethical Solidarity With My People: Beyond the "Science of Oppression" for the Benefit of Humanity

Joyce E. King

Since my first participatory research study—my undergraduate sociology honors thesis engaged Black high school students, teachers, and parents in a collaborative investigation of alienating schooling—I have continued to

organize collaborative research-as-pedagogy empirical inquiries informed by the community-minded ethical tenets of the discipline of Black studies and African-centered theorizing (King, 1992; King, Goss, & McArthur, 2014; King & Mitchell, 1995).

As an activist scholar, my research inquiries have served simultaneously as sites of memory (*lieux de mémoire*) and as forms of pedagogical activism in solidarity with my community (King, 1992). My scholarship embodies both an ethical conviction and an epistemological achievement—I do not see such research as a dilemma or abstract philosophical quandary. Indeed. As a Black scholar, my moral obligation is to produce knowledge with, about, and for the benefit of my people’s constant struggle against what Jacob Carruthers critiqued as the “science of oppression” and the “master’s mentality” it produces. Carruthers, a scholar of Kemetic (ancient Egyptian) texts and African-centered theorizing and methodology, does not reject modern sciences but urges us to understand where “the European scientific project” came from and “what it has done to us and humanity” more generally. He extends this point in his seminal analysis, *Intellectual Warfare*:

... it is necessary that human beings, like the Creator, give life and power and health [to everybody]. . . We should examine everything that we do by that command. If our actions support life and power and health, then they are right. If not, then we ought to stop that line of action. (Carruthers, 1999, p. 294)

My conviction that ethical solidarity with my community is fundamental undergirds African-centered praxis in education and research (King & Swartz, 2016). With roots in African philosophical tenets dating to ancient Kemetic texts, in this praxis “there is only what is right and what is in the interest of harmony in the community” (Asante, 2000, p. 41). Thus, my approach to CCBR is “always already” aligned with my vocation as a Black scholar (Derrida, 1974; Kassam & Tettey, 2003). Both have benefited from the community-minded ethos of Black studies (Mazama, 2003), the African theory of knowledge, and Pan-African liberation ideology (Cabral, 1973; Fanon, 1963; Nkulu-N’Sengha, 2005). Vincent Harding (1974), the late eminent historian and scholar of religion, poses the fundamental question of the vocation of the Black scholar in a special *Harvard Educational Review* monograph, “Education and Black Struggle: Notes from the Colonized.” Harding framed his response with Mari Evans’s poem, “Speak Truth to the People”:

Speak the truth to the people
Talk sense to the people

Free them with reason
Free them with honesty
Free the people with Love and Courage
and Care for their being
Speak truth to the people
It is not necessary to green the heart
Only to identify the enemy
It is not necessary to blow the mind
Only to free the mind . . .

I am painfully aware that my doctoral students typically are not connected to the Black/Pan-African intellectual tradition—from W. E. B. DuBois and Carter G. Woodson to Cheikh Anta Diop, Frantz Fanon, Amié Césaire, C. L. R. James, Paul Robeson, and Sylvia Wynter (Ambroise & Bröeck, 2015; Wynter, 2007, 2012) to name a few. Nor are they aware that “collectivism” or *Ubuntu* (“I am because we are, therefore I am.”) defines African Indigenous philosophical frameworks and values—from ancient Kemet to contemporary Afrocentric education and theorizing—and provides an epistemological alternative to the “science of oppression” (King, 2016; Kunnie, 2006; Swanson, 2009).

Harding (1974) asserts that the Black scholar’s vocation—“our calling”—is to speak truth to the people first “concerning themselves . . . to open to the people the lives and struggles of our ancestors” (p. 9). The truth speaking that illuminates “our present condition” is “beyond abdication” to mainstream assimilationist institutional and professional norms that uphold the American myth of inclusion or the “European scientific project’s” claims of a cultural universalism and objectivity. There can be no “talking sense to the people unless the enemy is clearly identified” (p. 14). Yet the enemy is also often *within us*, given the ways we have been (mis)educated to fit within the system and its episteme. Community knowledge “born of struggle” against epistemic injustice (de Sousa Santos, 2014) and Harding’s call to our vocation remain touchstones for me.

I am reminded of a recent research experience with such truth speaking, this time in ethical solidarity with parents and teachers (King et al., 2014). My doctoral students and I developed an after-school program, the Songhoy Club, for African American middle school students using a pedagogical framework from the “Nile to the Niger to the Neighborhood.” Students learned about their heritage by studying the language and culture of the classical West African Songhoy civilization; they learned about “our condition”

and the enemies of Black well-being. The club doubled as a pedagogical lab where we engaged in participatory research conversations with the parents about culturally authentic assessment: What should students know, be able to do, and be like (Rochester Teacher Center, 2007)? We discovered that students were reading *Nightjohn* (Paulsen, 1993), an adolescent historical fiction (also a Disney film). The narrator, an enslaved girl about 12 years old, opens the novel by announcing that she is waiting for her turn to go to the “slave-breeding shack.” When we learned that 11-year-olds attending our club had read the book in school the year before, we were troubled. This surfaced an ethical question about what and how to teach middle schoolers about the historical facts of the American “slave-breeding industry” (Sublette & Sublette, 2015); we resolved that question using the emancipatory praxis of Afrocentric research-as-pedagogy. Teaching about slavery is fraught with damaging pedagogy and content (King, 1991, 1992; Thornhill, 2016). We convened a research workshop with Songhoy Club parents to discuss the curriculum, analyze the materials, and learn what the parents knew about this aspect of our historical struggle, what they thought about teaching this history, and what they would consider as developmentally and culturally appropriate. The parents articulated clearly what their children’s *teachers* should know, be able to do, and be like to teach this content in a beneficial way. Thus, the Songhoy Club was also an inquiry site for generating new knowledge with and for the benefit of Black children and their parents about what parents know and believe is best for their children morally, academically, and culturally. This mutual and reciprocal learning also informed our pedagogy as well as the doctoral students’ dissertation research.

The Songhoy Club is one CCBP-as-pedagogy space in which my students and I study and apply in our research the community-minded ethical tenets of Black studies and African epistemology. As Carruthers (1999) has suggested, we are replacing the “science of oppression” with a “methodology and metaphysics that restores the world and gives light to everybody” (p. 294). No dilemmas or quandaries here. Indeed.

Unraveling Binary Logics of Ethics and Ethicalities for Collaborative Community-Based Research

Patricia Krueger-Henney

In these ongoing times of anti-Black racism and state-sanctioned White supremacy (Salaita, 2016), many critical social sciences researchers are intentional about finding a “right way” of doing research that can contribute to social change. They intend their studies to lessen the pathologizing of

targeted communities as “damaged” (Tuck, 2009), and they often conduct research outside the academic industrial complex to maximize community-centered input. They recognize that multiple sociopolitical crises in systemically underresourced communities have guided critical research designs that make visible profit-driven interests behind institutionalized forms of violence and oppression (Buras, Randels, & Salaamya, 2010; Klein, 2008). Some researchers want to go further to insure that the ways they collect, analyze, manage, and disseminate data are informed by critical, more inclusive, participatory, and public-centered logics.

CCBRs are frequently identified as knowing how to assemble ethically grounded research that traces structures and patterns of socioeconomic disparities in spaces and places of everyday life from the “grounds up” (Charmaz, 2014). Nonetheless, I plead the following caution: Placing research ethics along the fault lines that separate “right” from “wrong” disables broader considerations about what constitutes ethics and ethicalities in academic research.

My experience has been that too often terms such as “collaborative” and “community-based” function much like tropes rather than more deeply informing critical ethics talk in many areas of the social sciences. More serious engagement would encourage researchers to build less hierarchical relationships with their research participants, to make transparent all inquiry steps and protocols, and to transgress traditional ontological binaries that separate the individual researcher who “knows” and the so-called participating “nonexpert human subject.” Mutually respectful research relationships are the imagined guide between communities and universities, and it is in this light that CCBRs could be read as believing their scholarship as the only ethically “right” way to do research.

Other times, I notice a kind of arrogance among CCBRs, such as in the paradigm battles pitting quantitative and qualitative study designs against one another (Feuer, Towne, & Shavelson, 2002). Quantitative studies tend to have a “bad rep” among critical qualitative researchers because they often position the researcher as a neutral outsider who produces expert knowledge with what is extracted from the communities she or he studied and then accumulates accolades for rigorous research. Furthermore, scholars who excavate colonial and White settler traditions in social sciences research highlight physical and emotional injuries many communities endured when coerced into research participation (Battiste, 2016; Chilisa, 2011). Research survivors also note that study participants often did not have access to the data collected from them and were kept uninformed about whether or not the research “done to them” left permanent damage to their bodies or their lives (Skloot, 2011). Current ethics talk among CCBRs often fails to come to grips with these

histories and ongoing practices, at times leaving them in silence, or externalizing them as violence and coercion, doing research the “wrong” way.

These and other methodological atrocities committed by individual-centered research projects, whether quantitative or qualitative, both make visible and normalize inquiry traditions that fortify linear research ethics codes that see conduct as “right versus wrong.” It thus can seem that CCBR wins the ethics battle easily, and its victory appears justified, unavoidable, and common-sense as its research logics can be read as having less dispossessing power. CCBR appears to be the “more ethical” alternative for social sciences research.

This “right versus wrong” duality continues to be the preferred intellectual space from which social science researchers name and debate the controversies around research ethics and ethicalities, thus continuing to severely limit ethical research pedagogies and praxes whether or not one buys into CCBR. The dichotomizing master narrative of ethical duality produces epistemological limitations, and ossifies the ontological violence of academic research. It also perpetuates unequal and oppressive research relationships between the university and communities.

Although inviting community members into academic research projects is meant to help research ostensibly break free from its settler colonial origins (Patel, 2015; Smith, 1999), CCBR scholars are also guilty of strengthening the right–wrong binary. But I argue that it is essential to remember that even ethical codes of conduct that guide CCBR remain hinged onto brutal knowledge-production practices for as long as their critical and socially liberating methods stay away from naming structures of racist and heteronormative patriarchy (Harding, 1998).

Moreover, claims of being “collaborative” and “community-based” can seemingly exonerate community-engaging and participatory researchers from having to question the extent to which their academic labor is mining knowledge from communal spaces and appropriating it for sole authorship of their research findings. CCBR, similar to a cataract lens, also can cloud epistemological perceptiveness and disable recognition of the destructive forces behind linear and binary logics. Let us be clear, choosing to step into the position of researcher asserts that other people’s social realities are researchable! There is a need to investigate multiple forms of ethics and the sociopolitical forces behind them.

I conclude by raising a series of questions elided by research binaries of right/wrong and good/bad and silenced by dominant codes of ethics and notions of ethicality: What questions must we ask to weaken the single narrative of ethical research codes of conduct? Why do examinations of “ethics” and “ethicality” circulate back to already existing discourses of ethics? What

social order is maintained by not cutting the umbilical cord between critical ethics talk and what we already know about doing “ethical” research? Who benefits from this ethics talk? What unfamiliar ethical grounds are we maintaining in our blind spots as a result of not letting go of what we already know? What other types of ethics talk are advantageous and to whom? Which ethics fail to materialize and why?

What are the ethical consequences of not acknowledging that academic knowledge production is an extended manifestation of White settler colonialism? How do conversations about ethics change when justice-driven CCBR scholars decide to walk away from standardized ethics talk? What sacrifices are researchers willing to make in the name of reimagining and reinventing ethical codes of conduct for social justice research? How can ethics talk conjure passion, stamina, and mobilization among scholars for creating codes of ethics for social justice?

To whom are we ethical? Who is implicated in our research actions other than the university and ourselves? Who and what is our research responsible for?

Who Is This Research for? Troubling What Is “Ethical” in Community Organization–Researcher Relationships

Michele S. Moses

Ethical questions are central to *all* social science and humanities-oriented research, and this of course includes CCBR (Brydon-Miller, 2012; Walsh, Hewson, Shier, & Morales, 2008). To illustrate some of these questions, I examine the specific complex relationships and tensions that emerged between academic researchers and community organization staff members within a recent collaborative project, focusing herein on the ethical dimensions of data interpretation and analysis.

How can university-based researchers sustain democratic approaches to research and ethical relationships between the researchers and the community organizations with which they collaborate? How do competing knowledge claims complicate these matters? My research team and I collected and analyzed data in collaboration with the staff of an educational outreach program aiming to mitigate educational inequalities and expand opportunities to low-income students, most of whom are also students of color, recent immigrants, and emergent bilingual students. This organization had requested assistance in assessing whether it was meeting its aims. During the 2-year study, we relied on three key principles of democratic theory and collaborative research—inclusion, dialogue,

and deliberation—to develop the research design (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996; House & Howe, 1999, 2000; Young, 2000). Our approach was cooperative, and the research team and staff formed close relationships, regularly sending email updates and meeting face-to-face; however, the organization preferred a limited role in the research itself, so the project was not fully “community-based participatory research” (Minkler, 2005).

The research team shared plans for data analysis and identified emerging themes within the data in draft findings reports. The sociopolitical context of education reform, ostensibly far removed from the program offices, seemed to influence staff members’ reactions to our initial qualitative findings. As we encountered resistance to some of the themes emerging from the data, we needed to balance our analytic resources with the expertise of staff members. For example, we noticed that in interviews the staff repeatedly stated that a major program aim was to close achievement gaps, and several staff members explained that their program provided low-income students with experiences and knowledge that middle-class students regularly got. In the first (of the four) draft findings report, we identified achievement gaps as a dominant theme and wrote further that the data revealed “an emphasis on middle-class socioeconomic values and practices” (Moses, Leonardi, Wiley, & Milbourn, 2013, p. 4). For instance, one senior staff member said that a program goal is “getting [program] students side-by-side their [nonprogram] peers” and “teaching them middle-class culture” to “help students succeed within that middle-class culture” (Moses et al., 2013, p. 9). At our meeting to discuss the draft report, that staff member worried that some of our quotes of her were not an “accurate reflection of what I think. . .” and she felt “uncomfortable with the theme of saying that the kids kind of need to learn a middle-class culture.” She went on to say, “I know I said that, but on paper I am uncomfortable with it” (Moses Field Notes, June 12, 2013).

This situation presented the university researchers with a challenging ethical issue. We wanted to honor what our community partner felt was a more “accurate” reflection of her beliefs, and we also wanted to honor our commitment to providing evidence-based findings that could help the staff improve their work with students who often bump up against institutions and systems that disadvantage them and discount their cultures and the assets within their communities (Yosso, 2005). Zembylas (2015) notes that “ethical violence” can result from causing discomfort in an effort to challenge “normative practices that sustain social inequities” (p. 163). Although this violence can (and should) be minimized, it likely cannot be avoided completely when research has social justice aims. We wanted to minimize any symbolic violence to our community collaborators, and yet we wanted to provide the organization with the data for which they had partnered with us.

We also noticed that young adult volunteers working with program students from new immigrant communities would predominantly conceptualize educational barriers as residing *within* the students' families. When our fourth draft findings report highlighted and named this perspective as deficit-oriented, our interpretation faced immediate resistance. My research notes from that meeting recorded that the volunteer coordinator "was 'irritated' by the report—couldn't put a finger on why" (Moses Field Notes, May 14, 2014). Although staff members recognized that young adult volunteers sometimes characterized the students and families in problematic ways, they did not believe the volunteers had said and done what we had observed. The lead staff member insisted we had taken the volunteers' words and actions out of context.

My research team and I were taken aback by the staff members' reaction to the idea that their volunteers had deficit perspectives on the students and their families. All along the way we had shared our field notes and interview transcripts and codes with them. How was it that we university researchers saw something in the data that those closest to the program did not see in the same way? We should have expected that program leaders would feel protective of volunteers, and indeed, the volunteer coordinator explained to us that she thought of the young adult volunteers as a secondary population served by the program. We also should have expected "insider-outsider tensions," (Minkler, 2004, p. 688) characterized by differing interpretations of data and how to proceed within the organization. So, we questioned our own interpretations, and wondered if our community partners would dismiss or take up our findings and suggestions.

More key questions emerged: How do we engage ethically with community partners who may sometimes be resistant to university researchers' interpretations of data and work to understand and negotiate the resistance? When there is dissent over our equity-oriented interpretations of our community partners' equity-oriented practices, how do we balance the simultaneous aims of strengthening the organization's equity practices and of honoring the (dissenting) voices? Attention to these issues is essential if we as education researchers are to understand how to go about meaningful, ethical collaborative practices with/in community organizations (Su, 2010).

The Ethical Dimensions of Institutionalizing CCBR as a Field of Study

Sheeva Sabati

Many scholars illuminate the possibilities of CCBR through their deeply grounded community partnerships. Exemplars in this work include projects

that mobilize participatory, broad-scale data collection toward iterative policy wins (e.g., Waheed et al., 2015), research collaborations with young people as grassroots education and activism praxes (e.g., Cammarota, 2007; Ginwright & James, 2002), and research publications that carefully engage the complexities of representation (e.g., Fine & Torre, 2006; Nagar, 2006). Such projects embody epistemological critiques of traditional modes of social science research and also mobilize knowledge-production processes toward more socially just realities. Similarly, the series of URBAN conferences that brought us together to help solidify CCBR as a field of study might itself be understood as an important maneuver toward more ethical research. This institutional-level work is particularly urgent for students and educators coping with neoliberal reforms that accelerate the privatization of higher education (Bousquet, 2010; Newfield, 2008) and underscore the settler colonial entanglements of U.S.-based universities (Wilder, 2013).

Yet the project of institutionalizing a field of study and solidifying a knowledge formation within the academy is by no means ethically neutral, even and especially when animated by “social justice” promises. What are the theoretical and political anchors that animate different visions of “social justice” and that guide the ethical commitments of various communities of practice? How do these parameters shape negotiations of not only the ethical values that should guide research, but of the forms of justice we are working toward?

To consider CCBR as a field of study, it requires that we consider how we define CCBR as a community of practice. This itself is an ethical question. Too much openness about what can be considered CCBR—who practices it, how they practice it, with whom it is practiced, and for what ends—risks positioning this research in ways that continue to support inclusionary projects that flatten and incorporate ethically salient material differences. These differences—*the who, how, with whom, and for what*—matter; the engagement of these differences is precisely how we might begin to understand “ethics” within research, as what differentiates one epistemic position from another.

Although CCBR reflects a democratizing stance toward processes of knowledge production, community collaboration does not in and of itself transform our research practices. For example, CCBR does not offer a theoretical framework that historicizes the colonial entanglements of social science research (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012) and might even distract researchers from analyzing how their projects reify colonial logics or relationships. Scholars Eve Tuck and Monique Guishard (2013) examine how the “overemphasis of the specialness of PAR” functions to obscure “the racist-classist-paternalistic language, practices, and group dynamics of positivistic research and bioethics” that may still

persist within collaborative forms of inquiry (p. 15). To counter the empty signifier of PAR, they articulate a specific approach to participatory research that is guided by a *decolonial* ethics, rather than an ethics of research merely based on participation. That is, they unpack how status quo research, even participatory research, may uphold racialized, settler colonial logics and relationships. As a starting point then, it is crucial to explicitly surface the theoretical frameworks embodied in our work and not take for granted what terms signify. Through such nuance we can begin to understand, trouble, and mobilize not only contrasting forms of knowledge production and ethics but also potentially competing struggles for justice.

By nuancing the question of what the terms of CCBR mean, we might think about how the naming of a field has ethical significance in both its openness and in its specificity. What are the root causes of the ethical quandaries of research that CCBR methodologies surface? (How) does building a field around CCBR (fail to) address them?

Numerous genealogies of anticolonial scholarship interrogate the ways in which academic knowledge production is entangled in the historical and present-day practices and effects of (settler) colonialisms (Lowe, 1996; Lugones, 2007; Quijano, 2007; Wynter, 2003). Indeed, students and scholars alike have long challenged the overrepresentation of Western genealogies of thought in the humanities and social sciences that then create various “critical” knowledge formations as sites of contestation within the academy (Ferguson, 2012). The student movements of the 1960s and 1970s called out the traditional academic disciplines for systematically producing and replicating social hierarchies along lines of race, gender, sexuality, language, and nationality within both scholarship and the university structure itself. These activists fought and won important struggles to establish new fields of study, such as Black studies, ethnic studies, Chicano/a studies, women and gender studies, and to establish many related institutionally specific formations.

Despite the substantial ethical shifts and political gains, some scholars have since argued that the institutionalization of these critical fields diverted the transformative potential of their connected political movements (Ferguson, 2012; Lowe, 1996). Furthermore, the critical knowledge formations remove the ethical responsibility of universities to address racialization, gender inequities, and histories of colonialism within the broader curriculum, and reify social critique as the primary form of redress to material harms, all while upholding the status of a prominent institution of social stratification—the university (Chiang, 2009; Mitchell, 2015).

In this way, we might think about how institutionalization mirrors a logic of inclusion or equity. In the case of CCBR, we might question how the university is simultaneously called upon as a means for achieving social justice

and yet remains complicit in producing those same injustices. To merely define CCBR in terms of increased access into existing institutional structures cannot be adequate for efforts seeking either to understand the conditions that produce and maintain injustice or to disrupt them. I am not suggesting that we should give up on spaces such as universities or projects such as institutionalization. These possibilities and tensions are co-imbricated, and are part of the complicated work of transforming social realities. Yet, “equity” cannot adequately serve as the end point of our analytic lenses within institutions as they already exist, or as a long-term vision of “social change.” Rather than seeking to build social justice through inclusionary projects, we must dismantle the systems that produce these injustices.

If CCBR purports to disrupt the ways in which knowledge is traditionally produced within the academy, might collaborative researchers have an ethical responsibility to engage the colonial histories and materialities that condition knowledge production within the university? How might this lead to a responsibility to call out the deep imbrication between academic disciplines, institutions, and coloniality? Such questions are crucial to thinking about the understandings of “social justice” and the theoretical anchors of collaborative research. Without a commitment and strategy to unsettle the university as we know it, even the field formation of CCBR risks reinscribing the very structures and logics that legitimate the social violences that this approach to research espouses to disrupt. I hope to provoke conversation, ongoing reflection, and action: What might it mean to build a field that is critical of the very space, academic context, and conditions it is also trying to gain access to?

Ethics, Epistemology, and the Burden of Being Human

Troy Richardson

My comments start with a phrase from Gayatri Spivak (1999) that gestures toward the difficulty of the task to which our Working Group dedicated itself—thinking through the relation between ethics and epistemology in research contexts. In a passage where Spivak is interrogating the “native informant” within the works of Kant, Hegel, and Marx, she writes of ethical responsibility as “a burden of being human” (Spivak, 1999, pp. 4-5). My discussion here will plumb the meaning of Spivak’s discussion of ethics as burden for generative guidance for researchers working in or with communities with which they also identify in a range of ways. For those of us who identify with those with whom we conduct research on pressing topics—women who research sexism, Indigenous scholars interrogating dispossession, for exam-

ple—we may too rarely pause to reflect on the residue of the “native informant” or its variants as the time and space of the ethico-epistemic.

Taken as a wry comment, Spivak (1999) seems to be highlighting her own situation as an Indian woman encountering the Vedic and other minoritized intellectual and philosophical traditions of India in Kant, Hegel, and Marx. How does she experience the “native informant” who assisted in such research, making available to them this body of work? Is it a case in which the native informant, despite all attempts otherwise, is held up as the “primitive” foil to the civilizational projects of reason, law, freedom, and indeed education? The “native informant” located more broadly in the tradition of anthropological and ethnographic research has similarly served the interests of a research community, despite any efforts to engage as intellectual equals. Rather such engagements tended toward the nonnative researchers’ primary concern for access to difference. If this is a fair reading of Spivak, one interpretation of ethical responsibility as a “burden of being human” for the “native informant” is the burden of being caught in the legacies of this philosophical overdetermination. That is, the research context served as the site through which the Native becomes a human, assuming greater and lesser forms of assimilation to the Kantian, Hegelian, or Marxist formulation. For Spivak, the native informant as *researcher* bears a complex responsibility to both interrogate and employ this burden of the colonial/modern authorship of *humanitas*. Could her notion of burden be understood phenomenologically as the inescapable time and space of the ethico-epistemic situation of research as the colonial/modern moment of native navigations of *humanitas*?

Spivak (1999) then may be saying, given these legacies of research in the making human of the native other, these colonial residues crisscross the site of “native researcher” in such a way that the ethico-epistemic situation is one burdened with responsibility as well as trauma. In this reading, trauma complexly organizes the emergent possibilities for the ethico-epistemic orientation of the native researcher. Would it be too difficult to pose the question of the ethico-epistemic researcher as continually emerging in the revisitation of trauma? If so, Spivak’s phrasing, “ethical responsibility as the burden of being human” can be interpreted as the weight of responsibility for an ethico-epistemic self in a continuing return to sites of trauma. Part of the trauma is, I am suggesting, the historical residue of research as the uneven moments of inhabiting *humanitas*.

Recognizing the difficulty of responding to this burden and trauma, Spivak (1999) goes on to criticize two responses that she sees as taking place among contemporary researchers she characterizes as Third Worldist academics. First, Spivak criticizes a too easy reactionary vanguardism, by which she means those academics who assert and/or describe their communities through

the language of a utopic past and whose work seeks to restore that society to that past. A reactionary stance is formulated through the belief in a mythologized, precolonial past that was better than modernity. Linked together with the term *vanguardism*, which is to say counterhegemonic, Spivak is rejecting the academic posture of revolutionary as irresponsible. For Spivak (1999), a critical view of history involves a rigorous interrogation of, for example, gender relations that can easily call into question claims for precolonial utopias or their use as a basis for a revolutionary project.

Spivak (1999) can also be read as equally discouraged and opposed to Third Worldist (and by extension “Native”) researchers who enact victimry. Indigenous scholar Gerald Vizenor (1994) has discussed victimry as any argument that draws upon representations of Native Americans as the “absolute victims of modernity” (p. 145). This too is in the family of reactionary academic stances, but Vizenor should not be understood as saying that Native peoples have not been and do not continue to be victimized. Victimry, as Scott Lyons (2010) points out, “risks ethnic fundamentalism” (p. 98). Spivak seems to be arguing against resistance as reactionary and for resistance as responsibility to this complexly formulated native humanity as it has historically (and perhaps still) emerges in and through sites of research. For me, these reactionary stances are due in part to the crisscrossing of trauma in the very site of research. Spivak (1999) is not using the terms or language of healing in her interrogation of the time/space of the ethico-epistemic researcher, but I think she can be read as alluding to possible moments of well-being for her “native informant/researcher.” For her, it is clear that the reactionary vanguard or victimry stances not only foster willful misreadings of history but indicate something like an inappropriate, yet perhaps understandable response to trauma.

Recalling these discussions I began to consider the ways in which trauma crisscrosses the time/space of the “native researcher” and how to reconsider or reframe the question of the ethico-epistemic. Staying within the conversations of our Working Group and this revisitation of Spivak, I wondered how useful it could be to engage with the historian Dominick LaCapra.

LaCapra (1984) can be understood as recognizing trauma as an ethico-epistemic situation important to trajectories of historical research such as Holocaust or genocide studies. I am not suggesting here that all research, educational, or otherwise, is engaged with sites of trauma. But I am trying to engage with the question of the researcher as an ethico-epistemic formulation in a research site already informed by—but not exclusively defined by—trauma. On one hand, the researcher is assimilated to the “Native” to *humanitas* through the norms of Western-derived philosophical and social scientific concepts and modes of research. On the other, the CCBR scholar works in

contexts of and driven by the actual “content” of communities that continually experience dispossession, racism, sexism, and so on.

LaCapra’s (1984) thoughtful considerations on transference may be helpful for native researchers and CCBR scholars more broadly in navigating this site and analyzing the reactionary modes of scholarship that Spivak (1999) and Vizenor (1994) critique. LaCapra (1984) writes,

I use “transference” in the modified psychoanalytic sense of a repetition-displacement of the past into the present as it necessarily bears on the future. “Transference” is bound up with a notion of time not as simple continuity or discontinuity but as repetition with variation or change—at times traumatically disruptive change. Transference causes fear of possession by the past and loss of control over both it and oneself. It simultaneously brings the temptation to assert full control over the “object” of study through ideologically suspect procedures that may be related to the phenomenon Freud discussed as “narcissism.” (p. 296)

A more traditional conceptualization of transference defines it as an inappropriate redirection of an emotion, usually negative, from one person or situation to another. This is often discussed in terms of the repetition and overlaying of difficult childhood events onto inappropriate contexts. But here, in the context of the ethico-epistemic moment of the native informant and colonial/modern research, LaCapra (1994) can further warn against reactionary vanguardism in terms of the effort to assert full control or mastery over the disrupted time and space of the self. For example, the dissonance of inheriting the site of research as an inauguration of the native (informant) into *humanitas*—the very site of the native informant, Spivak (1999) seems to say, contends with a fear of a loss of control as researcher by a perceived overdetermination of history. To respond with a reactionary project and thus assert full control of the past, present, and future through suspect thinking is, on LaCapra’s reading, narcissistic.

As I noted above, by deploying the term *responsibility*, Spivak can be read as offering a way forward that shows fidelity to the difficulty of the task. This responsibility occurs by taking seriously the burden of inheriting a research past that denied humanity to natives, or at best grudgingly to a few, other than propertied, heterosexual, Christian males. Responsibility as an unflinching, rigorous fidelity to this repetition or past in the present of research would acknowledge and work through the crisscrossed nature of associated trauma as best as possible. The ethico-epistemic is then not mastered or arrived at via the assertion of full control. This means something like being attentive to moments of transference in research situations not only as the possibility of

redirecting negative responses in research sites and the ethico-epistemic situation, but also as the basis for suspect forms of scholarship that may be invested in researcher narcissism.

Spivak's ethical burden is then also a critical embrace of research not as reactionary vanguardism but a reinterpretation of Western intellectual traditions in the space of one's training within *humanitas* as researcher and native informant. Finally, bringing Vizenor's (1994) notion of survivance as more than mere survival or persistence into conversation with burden as responsibility and critical attention to transference, it seems important to emphasize a project of well-being for researchers in returning to research sites crisscrossed by trauma. Between Spivak, LaCapra, and Vizenor, the time/space of research is an ethico-epistemic matrix crossed by trauma that calls for a responsible and committed working through of the residues of colonialism with others; a working through that is not mastery over, but a working with.

The Ethical Stakes in CCBR Contact Zones

Ronald David Glass

The ethical stakes of CCBR in the social sciences are high. From critical perspectives, the ethics of research reaches far beyond the realms typically marked out by IRB review processes and their ethical and epistemological biases and limits. Rarely do typical courses meant to prepare researchers for their professional lives address these issues. The critical and engaged perspectives offered here reveal that the ethics of research opens up a "ground that is a crossing" (Lugones, 2003) that, like all crossroads, is a risky place of opportunities and dangers. The opportunities beckon toward putting the power of research to work in the interests of aggrieved communities and justice for all, joining critical traditions that persist. The dangers are real and evident in the actual fraught relationships, suspect methodologies and epistemologies, and limited effects of our most ethical efforts; the historical constraints of our disciplines and institutions remain. In the crossroads, the truths are less certain, the traumas hauntingly enduring and deep. Lugones recognized the risks in the fertility of the "ground that is a crossing," and this creative intersection has animated many engaged scholars pursuing CCBR just as it has the discussions of the Working Group.

Mary Louise Pratt (1991) recognized that these "contact zones"—in the context of what scholars later described as "coloniality" (e.g., Quijano, 2007)—necessarily also embodied multiple forms of violence and injustice, and were legitimized in the dominant culture by the state and church institutions, including colleges and universities. So, as CCBR seeks to build a community of practice that embraces the ethical as a mode of engaging trauma

and healing, it will require researchers to abandon notions of ethics as a purified or righteous position, or a destination in and of itself. From the dialogue you have read, I would argue that in the crossings and contact zones of the ethics of research, we find our ground in questions and ways of being that are both urgent and abiding. This gives us a way to both move and remain centered, to make the ethics of research an ongoing praxis.

I believe the members of the Ethics Working Group make such a praxis central to their own work. We are interested in building an inter/national discussion of the ethics of research in relation to these deeper layers whose questions disrupt traditional university understandings of the ethical and epistemic intersections of social science research. We are interested in building “communities of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991) in which researchers seek to hear and respond respectfully and with critical care to the voices, truths, and visions of communities long marginalized in the dominant world as well as in research. These are matters that must become deeply woven into our community life as researchers committed to engagement with communities of residents and citizens long aggrieved.

We believe that all researchers, CCBR or otherwise, have a responsibility to ethically interrogate what they and their institutions and disciplines have inherited, and continue to embody, deservedly or not. The praxis of the ethics of research calls for each of us to bear the ethical and epistemic burdens of our humanity, however traumatized, broken, and ignorant we may be and necessarily are. It also calls for each of us to bear the burdens of our choices, of our creative options. This work must be done together; ultimately, this is what drew us together into this particular dialogue. In the midst of disagreements and agreements, we agree that an inter/national dialogue is important for extending opportunities for CCBR work in colleges, universities, and communities.

The struggle to make the truths of long-aggrieved communities matter in the public sphere has entered a particularly imperiled time. As a Working Group, we remain committed to working with our communities to conduct research that mobilizes knowledge so that it can speak with ethical, epistemic, and political force. We also remain committed to opening wider spaces for this work in disciplines, professional associations, colleges, and universities. We invite the readers into this work with us.

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Co-Constructing Knowledge Spheres in the Academy: Developing Frameworks and Tools for Advancing Publicly Engaged Scholarship

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Abstract

Publicly engaged scholarship (PES) has emerged as a powerful force, yet institutional policies and cultures have often inhibited its acceptance in the academy. This article considers the benefits of PES for higher education as well as the obstacles to its enactment. It identifies the college level as a critical site for change and offers a rubric for institutional change agents to use to assess support for community engagement at the college level and identify avenues for further progress. The authors also grapple with tensions inherent in promoting PES at institutions that have historically served as agents of domination and oppression.

Keywords

action research, activist scholarship, publicly engaged scholarship, public higher education, programs, activism, social, urban, social

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Publicly engaged scholarship (PES) has emerged as a powerful force within the academy. PES challenges dominant notions and hierarchies of knowledge production, calling for institutions of higher education to establish reciprocal partnerships with communities to advance equity and justice. Some universities have made significant changes to support PES while others have maintained dominant norms and practices. PES advocates within universities have few tools with which to assess progress and identify levers for cultural and institutional change. In this article, we consider the dynamics of institutional change concerning PES and offer a rubric that advocates can use as a tool for assessment and change at the college level.

The authors of this article are members of a working group on Institutional Supports for Community Engaged Scholarship (ISCES) established by the Urban Research Based Action Network (URBAN). ISCES members include faculty, administrators, and students. We study and seek to understand the evolution of American higher education and its role in society. We are especially sensitive to the academy's complicated history of providing access while promoting exclusion and pursue our work mindful of the myriad tensions regarding PES.

To be sure PES is a potentially transformative force, however, when engaging with our colleagues, we see a hunger for deeper critical examination of those tensions. This article unpacks some of these tensions but focuses on the development of a rubric to engender greater clarity about the significance of PES for 21st-century institutions of higher education and to provide a tool for institutions to activate strategic planning toward change.¹

The Importance of PES

The movement for PES in the academy is grounded in the belief that it is in fact possible to bring transformative change to bear on a deeply embedded, traditional paradigm of knowledge making. This traditional paradigm, intensely positivistic and academy centric, initially gained momentum and authoritative stature through the American adoption of the German university model, beginning with the founding of Johns Hopkins University in 1876 (Clark, 2006). By the late-20th century, with the research university established and the passing of the cold war, the entrepreneurial, privatized, neoliberal university emerged with a large focus on science development and technology transfer (Dolgon, Mitchell, & Eatman, 2016; Giroux, 2002). This revolution was grounded in the ethos of universities as centers for expert knowledge where solutions could be found for public problems, albeit primarily problems with implications for immediate economic growth and which did not disrupt the status quo.

More recent demographic shifts in higher education, including increasing numbers of women, veterans, and students of color, as well as increasing numbers of faculty and staff of color, call for institutions to rethink the purpose of higher education and the ways in which they operate so that they can protect the futures of those who have been historically and systematically excluded (Lewis & Cantor, 2016). The manner in which institutions address the challenge of retaining underrepresented students, faculty, and staff indicates the degree to which they are truly invested in the formation of institutions that are inclusive, engaged, and a reflection of the diverse American public.

Many scholars have responded to changing demographics within higher education as well as the contemporary demands of societies to address challenging issues of inequality, environmental degradation, and democratic exclusion, among others, by developing less hierarchical and more cooperative forms of scholarship, what we are calling PES. J. A. Saltmarsh and Hartley (2011) refer to these scholars as having a “presence” that challenges universities to change in ways that reflect the new reality—in curriculum, pedagogy, and research—and rethink the overall purpose of higher education. They report the findings of a survey conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute that shows the widespread nature of engagement. In the 2013-2014 survey, 48.8% of faculty from all undergraduate campuses responded that they collaborated with the local community in teaching and/or research; at public campuses fully 50.4% of faculty engage with the community. Meanwhile, 51.1% of tenure-track faculty, 52.4% of women faculty, and 55.2% of Hispanic faculty conduct some form of PES. Moreover, the proportion of faculty indicating community engagement in their teaching and research has increased from a decade earlier, and this increase can be found in all types of higher educational institutions, at all faculty ranks, and in both male and female faculty members from all racial/ethnic groups (J. A. Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011).

Scholars of color have historically been at the forefront of PES, as many do not see a stark division between their role as faculty members and their membership in communities of color. Rather, their scholarship informs community-based movements as those movements inform scholarship. Indeed, many scholars of color place their community commitments at the forefront of their work to combat historical marginalization (Dolgon et al., 2016; Evans, 2009; Morris, 2015; Sturm, Eatman, Saltmarsh, & Bush, 2011).

While large numbers of faculty have moved to practice PES in various ways, institutions of higher education have typically lagged behind in supporting and rewarding such approaches. Academic disciplines continue to hold up disconnected or, so-called pure, forms of research and are suspect of

community-engaged scholarship. Tenure and promotion guidelines reward traditional research while counting PES as community or public service, not scholarship. Nevertheless, many campuses are reconsidering and revising reward structures to provide recognition for new forms of scholarship, including PES (Ellison & Eatman, 2008; Freeman & Aloschen, 2009; A. J. Kezar, 2012; K. O'Meara & Rice, 2005; Working Group on Evaluating Public History Scholarship, 2010). Advocates for advancing PES in the academy, therefore, could benefit from a tool to help assess the current state of support for PES at their institution and potential avenues for change.

The Community–Academy Exchange for Knowledge Making

In terms of institutional recognition, PES has taken hold first in teaching and service and only more recently in research. The cultural ethos of higher education has relied on the role of the faculty in the classroom to serve as a leader of the institution and one of the key producers of knowledge. Institutions have historically identified the classroom as the center for knowledge exchange—generally, a top-down knowledge transfer. Recent thinking has expanded the source of knowledge generation, to include varied institutional settings outside the academy. Nancy Cantor (2010), for example, has pointed to the importance of anchor institutions and third spaces where a, “vision of universities as civically-engaged anchors, by definition, expands campus boundaries by drawing upon multiple communities of experts from different sectors of our society—academic, corporate, non-profit, governmental, cultural, and community” (p. 2). These settings have implications for the sites and sources of knowledge creation, the structure of higher education and its relationship with other educational systems, and the pathways individuals travel throughout their educational and career journeys. The rise of service-learning in college classrooms starting in the 1990s constitutes one of the key results of this move toward PES (J. Saltmarsh, 2005).

Community–university partnerships are a second way in which PES has grown within higher education institutions (Eatman, 2012; Saltmarsh et al., 2009). Researchers often point to the significance of community–university partnerships in the pursuit of a democratic, inclusive purpose for higher education (Eatman, 2012; Ellison & Eatman, 2008; Saltmarsh, Hartley, & Clayton, 2009). These partnerships have most typically involved service projects, where university faculty, administrators, and students collaborate with community-based organizations in the provision of a variety of service or development activities. However, they increasingly include research, involving the co-construction of knowledge, policies, and practices with communities.

Eatman (2012) has shown that PES research has taken hold especially among graduate students and early career scholars who find in it a framework for addressing what many see as the hyper traditional, gatekeeping, and often limiting aspects of American education. His research reminds us of the potential that PES represents to

1. Acknowledge an increasing number of people who perform engaged community work in both higher education and other institutions of the larger society;
2. Open up a discourse about how PES evokes a continuum of scholarship from traditional to engaged scholarship; and
3. Develop a more sophisticated understanding about the “thoughts, needs, functions, and goals of those who use these approaches as critical in sustaining the development of knowledge generators and disseminators in the academy” (Eatman, 2012, p. 27).

Scholars who study the epistemology of knowledge making suggest that PES is in a third stage of development within higher education characterized by the integration of engagement across faculty roles. In other words, faculty members increasingly integrate PES in their research, teaching, and service (Colbeck, 1998; Tierney & Perkins, 2015).

As PES increasingly encompasses the work of the university and its faculty in all areas—teaching, research, and service—advocates for PES require tools to assess more comprehensively institutional arrangements and supports.

Conceptualizing Community-Engaged Scholarship and Organizational Change

The ISCES working group used CMAP, a web-based collaborative concept mapping tool, to capture our inquiry process and generate ideas toward the construction of an assessment tool or rubric. We developed a concept map (see Figure 1) as a mechanism to hone questions and explore interrelationships among the key questions and themes. The concept map is fluid because we recognize that a range of institutional elements is critical for change. We believe that institutional change should follow from a vigorous examination of current resources, the progress that has already been made, and the conditions that seem propitious for further changes. The concept map serves as a reference guide and also a way to illustrate connections among important elements affecting change. After accounting for resources and collecting information about opportunities to conduct engaged work, we asked what

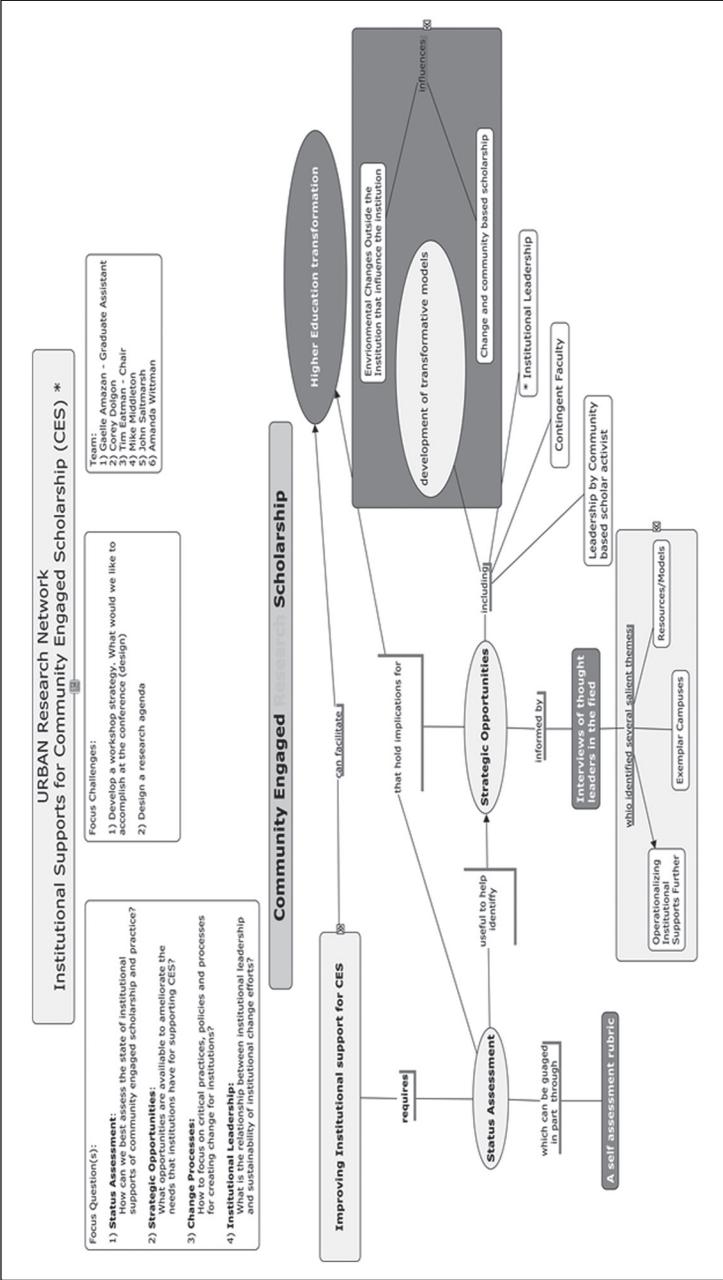


Figure 1. Concept map of focus questions for ISCES working group.
 Note: ISCES = Institutional Supports for Community Engaged Scholarship; URBAN = Urban Research Based Action Network.

specific mechanisms are required for institutions to make changes to either establish or improve their current community-engaged resources. We agreed that leadership support is necessary for any significant institutional change to occur.

This process of inquiry and conversation led us to recognize the need to advance an assessment tool as a critical contribution to move the field of PES forward. Two members of the working group originally developed the rubric (Saltmarsh & Middleton, 2015). The team refined the rubric to incorporate elements of the concept map with the goal of collecting and organizing institutional information for use to drive institutional change. More importantly, we intend the rubric to serve as an instrument for exploring the question of what tools institutions can use to conduct self-assessments and analyses of institutional values.

Organizational change theory (Cuban, 1988; Eckel, Hill, & Green, 1998; Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Tierney, 1988) suggests that institutions must experience significant transformational changes in structure and culture for PES to succeed. Eckel et al. (1998) suggest these changes require “major shifts in an institution’s culture—the common set of beliefs and values that creates a shared interpretation and understanding of events and actions.” Transformation, they argue, “(1) alters the culture of the institution by changing select underlying assumptions and institutional behaviors, processes, and products; (2) is deep and pervasive, affecting the whole institution; (3) is intentional; and (4) occurs over time” (Eckel et al., 1998, p. 3). Applied to PES, change theory can allow us to better identify innovative practices that shift epistemology, reshape the curriculum, alter pedagogy, and redefine scholarship through institutional reward policies that shape cultures within the academy.

A guiding question for our working group was, “What are the ways in which institutions can support PES at the college level?” In response to this question, the working group explored three angles of inquiry: (a) defining PES and illuminating the benefits to higher education institutions, (b) examining how historical campus norms and structures contradict and inhibit PES, and (c) identifying the change processes needed to support and advance PES.

Defining PES and its Benefits to Higher Education Institutions

Public engagement in the context of this inquiry refers to college–community relationships grounded in the qualities of reciprocity, mutual respect, shared authority, and co-creation of goals and outcomes. Such relationships are by their very nature trans-disciplinary, and asset-based, embracing and legitimizing non-elite knowledge produced outside of universities. Trans-disciplinary

and asset-based frameworks and approaches affect both pedagogy and scholarship. They also inform an organizational logic such that colleges will need to change their policies, practices, structures, and culture to enact engagement and support scholars involved in community-engaged teaching and learning and community-engaged knowledge generation.

This framing of engagement aligns with the definition provided by the Carnegie Foundation for their Elective Community Engagement Classification:

Community engagement describes the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.

The purpose of community engagement is the partnership of college and university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good. (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2015, p. 2)

Scholarship is publicly engaged when it involves reciprocal partnerships and addresses public purposes. It is characterized by creative intellectual work based on a high level of professional expertise, the significance of which can be validated by peers, and which enhances the fulfillment of the mission of the campus, college, and/or department (Academic Review and Engagement, 2013; Doberneck et al., 2010; Ellison & Eatman, 2008; Gurgevich et al., 2003; Stanton 2008). PES meets the standards of research when it involves inquiry, advances knowledge, is disseminated, and is open to review and critique by relevant academic, community, or professional peers. Publicly engaged research conceptualizes “community groups” as all those outside of the academy and requires shared authority at all stages of the research process, from defining the research problem to choosing theoretical and methodological approaches, conducting the research, developing the final product(s), and participating in peer evaluation. In our view, research is publicly engaged when faculty, students, community-based organizations, government agencies, policy makers, and/or other actors collaborate to identify areas of inquiry, design studies and/or creative activities, implement activities that contribute to shared learning and capacity building, disseminate findings, and make recommendations or develop initiatives for change.

PES not only meets but also often exceeds the knowledge production demands of scholarly work because both its research and application embrace complex social, political, environmental, educational, and health issues with the collaborative expertise of university experts and community experts. This convergence between traditional academic expertise and community-based experience and leadership produces the very innovative and valuable knowledge that changes the world. Those who study “wicked problems,” for example, have argued that they will be solved only through interdisciplinary and collaborative models of inquiry (Warren et al., 2014).

Finally, PES contributes to the broader goals of higher education to serve its public purpose, helping all of its members to contribute to civic life and social responsibility. In particular, PES can open up and widen out spaces for faculty, staff, students, and community partners to engage with social justice theory and action (Fitzgerald, Burack, & Seifer, 2010).

How Campus Norms and Structures Inhibit PES

Despite the benefits of PES to higher education, dominant norms and structures within the academy inhibit PES in many ways. First, academic culture prioritizes research that is conducted in isolation or at a distance from participants and is published in traditional academic venues like peer-reviewed journals. These journals often do not publish the results of PES. Meanwhile, the publicly oriented products of PES, like research reports or policy briefs, typically do not count for tenure and promotion. Furthermore, PES takes more time than traditional research because of the need for relationship building and the producing of products relevant to community partners, and that additional time is not accounted for in tenure clocks. All these factors discourage faculty from conducting PES or relegate PES solely to the realm of public or community service (Warren et al., 2014). Meanwhile, most PhD programs do not offer training to the new generation of scholars in PES, limiting its expansion (Warren, Oh, & Tieken, 2016).

Change requires, as noted above, transformation in structure and culture. Advocates, therefore, need to examine the dominant and normative culture of academic spaces that inhibit PES. Such inquiry processes provide knowledge and tools that change agents may employ to facilitate change within that institution’s cultural context (A. J. Kezar, 2014). Tierney (2008) writes that culture in an institution is illustrated through the shared beliefs held by actors in that institution. Culture in this view also includes the context with which those shared beliefs are understood. Tierney (2008) argues that institutions struggle with transformative institutional change because they lack understanding of their institutional culture. A. J. Kezar (2014) argues that

institutional change agents must understand the context of the institution they are trying to change and implement strategies that are consistent with that context. Each campus exhibits unique features, and successful change agents are able to identify and respond to the particular cultural nuances of their institution.

PES and Public Engaged Scholars as Change Agents

As universities begin to support PES, they create the conditions for further change. First of all, they place the university into a new relationship with communities. Community change agents develop a measure of voice in the affairs of the institution and often advocate for continued change. Meanwhile, PES scholars themselves often emerge as institutional change agents.

Yet PES scholars may not hold institutional leadership positions. Indeed, O'Meara, Eatman, and Peterson (2015) argue that institutions need to be mindful of the organizing practices that include some at the expense of others, and to avoid maintaining those inequalities. Collins (1994) refers to the dangers in the credentialing processes of the academy and the ways in which they must fulfill the epistemological criteria of the contexts in which they are developed. Knowledge claims made within these contexts are usually consistent with these criteria. The exclusion point is critical for facilitating transformative institutional change in that knowledge generators who keep the public good and community at the center of their work will be critical in cultivating the academy to do the same, helping to avoid excluding community ideals. When scholars in the academy control the knowledge-validation process, they can unintentionally suppress knowledge generated outside of the academy. The proposed rubric can serve as a practical tool for institutions to recognize some of the spaces in which engaged scholars have been excluded and by extension, have excluded community members who contribute to and benefit from such scholarship.

Institutional change may come in fits and starts. It is important that PES advocates modify poorly conceived change initiatives by inviting feedback and clarifying and affirming criticism. This will allow for alignment toward more generative models of change. There should be a sense that PES is providing transformational leadership. This leadership is collaborative, involved with individuals in decision-making, oriented toward serving a common purpose, uses reciprocal communication, focuses on the productive use of power, and supports followers' development and growth. This is what we should offer in our relationships with community and how we should bring our approaches back to the campus.

A College-Level Assessment Rubric

Our working group took the approach that the more we know about the ways in which institutions are able to support PES and the scholars within institutions who are conducting that work, the better we can articulate the contributions institutions can make outside the academy. In addition, the more institutions support PES and the people doing that work, the more institutions would change from within. This line of inquiry led our working group to revise and incorporate an assessment tool developed by Saltmarsh and Middleton (2015) into our work to facilitate the ability of institutions to examine their PES practices.

Even while change agents advocate for university-wide changes to support PES, it is important to recognize the significant variation in public engagement and quality of that engagement that typically exists across a university. The argument can be made that the unit of a school or college within the university should be developed as the locus of faculty and student engagement. Colleges or schools within a university often have their own well-developed mission and goals embracing public engagement, can be seen as laboratories for trying new ideas, pathways, or strategies for engagement, and have their own natural disciplinary-related base within the community for engagement.

While the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification is intended to provide institution-wide assessment, the self-assessment rubric developed by Saltmarsh and Middleton focuses on the college level; therefore, there is particular emphasis on the core academic activities of teaching and learning and scholarship. For many colleges, the academic culture, and the incentives for faculty conveyed through that culture, emphasizes the importance of scholarship and creative activity. While there is a wealth of literature on institutionalizing community engagement in higher education (Furco and Miller, 2009; Saltmarsh, et al., 2009; Sandmann, et al., 2009; Warnick, 2011; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008; Wergin, 2006), and there is also a body of literature on institutionalizing community engagement in an academic department (Aminzade & Pescosolido, 1999; Battistoni, 2003; Kecskes, 2006 J. Saltmarsh & Gelmon, 2006), there is little available literature on institutionalizing community engagement in a college or school within an university (Dana & Emihovich, 2004).

In developing the rubric, Saltmarsh and Middleton (2015) adapted a number of components from K. A. O'Meara (2016) and drew significantly on research from the widely known rubric developed by Furco (2002). O'Meara's focus is on engaged scholarship, and focuses on certain components, such as "networks and peer support," and then creates an inventory of practices that

can be checked off for the “department, college, or university” (p. 106). O’Meara’s work opened the way for thinking about specific practices in a college. The Furco rubric has been used in the field for years, and is grounded in research literature about institutionalizing service-learning at a college or university. For our purposes, we revised and extended it to be relevant to all aspects of PES in research, teaching, and service and to identify practices in a college within a university—again, focusing on the college level. The assessment rubric examines the organizational components at the college level that support community engagement to create a culture of engagement in a college. It offers an organizational assessment for supporting and rewarding PES for the purposes of self-assessment and strategic planning for a college.

Eight Dimensions of Assessment

The self-assessment rubric contains eight dimensions, each which includes a set of components. The dimensions of the rubric identify broader strategic areas while the components within each dimension indicate activities that are aimed at operationalizing the dimensions. Ewell (1997, 1998) has written that to achieve transformative organizational change, what is needed is a systematic approach to change, which means working on multiple components of an institution simultaneously. To achieve the institutionalization of community engagement into the culture of a college, multiple actions in multiple areas need to be attended to at the same time. There is no single intervention that will create an organizational environment where engaged scholars will thrive. So we recommend that change agents examine policies and processes in all eight dimensions.

Leadership and Direction

The literature (Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2012; Fitzgerald, Bruns, Sonka, Furco, & Swanson, 2012; Hudson, 2013 A. Kezar & Maxey, 2013; J. A. Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011; Sandmann & Plater, 2009) on community engagement emphasizes the importance of leadership in supporting community engagement. At the level of the college, this means that leadership by the dean (and associate deans) and department chairs is critical. This can be achieved more quickly and reach greater depth and pervasiveness if the individuals who are hired into the positions of leadership have some background in community engagement, and if the job descriptions for hiring the dean and chairs include criteria around community engagement. Regardless of previous experience, it will be important to have leadership

Table I. Dimensions and Components of the Rubric.

Dimension	Components
I. Leadership and Direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiring criteria for dean and chairs • Leadership development opportunities for dean and chairs • Faculty council that meets regularly and advises college decision-making on engagement and resources • Advisory Leadership Council that includes community partners, faculty, staff, and students
II. Mission and Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulation in mission and vision statements • Definition of community-engaged scholarship • Strategic planning • Alignment with institutional mission • Alignment with educational innovations • Alignment with accreditation • Alignment with complementary strategic priorities (i.e., diversity, inclusion and equity; student success; engaged learning through high impact practices) • Funding priority
III. Visibility and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positioning engaged scholarship on the web, via YouTube clips, in college and department publications, and reports to executive administration • (faculty) Hiring—job descriptions that emphasize community-engaged scholarship • (students) Recruitment and admissions criteria that are explicit about valuing community engagement • Membership and participation by dean, chairs, faculty, staff, and students in networks focused on advancing community engagement
IV. Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College awards for community-engaged scholarship • Engaged department award • Annual faculty activity report—Data collected on PES • Annual faculty activity reports that allow faculty to get credit for mentoring for PES • A place for PES in official college CV form • Merit pay criteria that recognizes PES
V. Rewards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PES is valued in promotion and tenure: via definitions of scholarship, criteria, documentation, peer review • Community engagement included in evaluation criteria for term contracts for NTT faculty • Sabbaticals—PES encouraged for sabbaticals • Post-Tenure Review—PES and teaching and learning valued in post-tenure review criteria

(continued)

Table I. (continued)

Dimension	Components
VI. Capacity-Building Infrastructure for Support and Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative assistance—Staffing to support community engagement • Dedicated operational budget • Assistance developing partnerships, memoranda of understanding with community partners • Faculty development programs for integrating community engagement into scholarship and teaching • Training for personnel review committee members on evaluating community-engaged scholarship • Formal and informal mentoring programs • Stipends or course release for seeding engaged research or course development • Structured opportunities for faculty to connect with community partners • Writing retreats and assistance finding places to submit PES for publication • Assistance with grant-writing to support community engagement • Conference support for faculty and graduate assistants (in addition to faculty development resources for disciplinary conferences)
VII. Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interfacing with other engagement units on campus • Data collected and assessed on faculty engaged scholarship • Data collected and assessed on community-engaged courses • Data collected and assessed on community engagement learning outcomes • Data gathered and assessed on community perceptions of partnerships • Measures established and data gathered and assessed on community impacts • Interfacing with institutional research to draw on campus data that will assist with assessment of community engagement (e.g., NSSE results, HERI faculty survey)
VIII. Curricular Pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community engagement in the curriculum of majors and graduate programs • Community engagement in college minor • Community engagement graduate certificate • Completion of a CE minor or graduate certificate appears on the official transcript.

Note. HERI = Higher Education Research Institute; NDDE = National Survey of Student Engagement; NTT = non tenure track; PES = publicly engaged scholarship.

development opportunities for the dean and chairs so that they remain current on developments in the field, on best practices, and on how to exercise leadership from the top that builds leadership from the bottom. The leadership in the college can be fostered by the faculty governing body, which may establish a standing community on community engagement to provide guidance for the college on advancing community engagement. The administrative leadership (dean and chairs) of the college is also in a position to model collaboration by establishing an advisory council for the college that includes among its members the dean, a representative of the chairs, faculty, staff, community partners, and students. By intentionally building community engagement into the mode of leadership in the college, it will not be person-dependent and has a greater likelihood of being deepened and sustained.

Mission and Vision

In order for community engagement to be central to the culture of the institution, it will need to be clearly articulated in the mission and vision of the institution. It is difficult in mission-driven institutions to advance any activity that is not clearly aligned with the mission. Furthermore, if those in the college do not see community engagement as in their own self-interest—in advancing the mission, in improving teaching and learning, and in doing more meaningful and impactful research—then it will be difficult to view more community engagement as more than a peripheral activity. It will also be important, more at an operational level, to have a clear and conceptually concise definition of community engagement. This is important so that it is clearly understood what is, and what is not, considered community-engaged scholarly work. With a clear mission and definition, then the goal is to align the work of community engagement in the college with the larger institutional mission, with accreditation standards (like demonstrating contributions to the public good) with other institutional innovations (like improving teaching and learning), and with other institutional priorities (such as increasing student and faculty diversity, or increasing student persistence and graduation rates). If community engagement is positioned as core to the work of the college, then college and institutional fund-raising will be explicit about seeking grants and donors that will support the work.

Visibility and Communication

When community engagement is part of the identity of the college, it is made visible both internally on campus and to external stakeholders. It is positioned in a way that tells the story of the college: in data, in reports, and in

narratives about the work of students and faculty. It is part of the way the college expresses its values about knowledge production and applications for recruiting new faculty and developing students' general education goals. It is part of the way that it markets itself to parents, guardians, and students, indicating what can be expected in the educational experience for students. As a way of striving toward greater excellence in community engagement, the leadership in the college shares its work with others and learns from others through national and international networks focused on community engagement in higher education.

Recognition

The next dimension, recognition and rewards, represents the concrete expression of the value of community engagement in the college. We distinguish between recognition and reward because recognition is more structural, and typically easier to implement. Rewards are associated with cultural change, and present greater obstacles for implementation because cultural change is much more difficult and takes more time to achieve. Of course, structural changes are related to cultural change, but often campuses conflate the two, aiming for structural change as the goal instead of using structural change to change culture. Recognition includes awards and the prestige and visibility that come with them. College documents can encourage community engagement by including it as part of annual faculty reporting and by encouraging mentoring as an activity valued by the college. Tying merit pay to community engagement also signals the importance of community engagement as faculty work valued by the college. Recognitions are not a substitute for rewards but can serve as an important complement to them.

Rewards

The policies and criteria that constitute the basis for the review of faculty for tenure and promotion are artifacts of the core academic culture of the college. The guidelines for faculty review express a common set of beliefs and values as well as underlying assumptions, epistemic orientations, and common interpretive frameworks. Often guidelines are not explicit, allowing the culture to operate outside of the codifying of expectations. Yet, a disincentive is created when there are not explicit incentives for faculty to do community engagement as part of their faculty roles. Furthermore, when the culture of faculty work positions community engagement as work that is understood as only to be included in the faculty's service role, there is no reward for conducting PES to generate knowledge or in teaching and learning. Reward

structures that explicitly articulate community-engaged scholarly work across the faculty roles create a process of fairness for faculty who identify as community-engaged scholars. The goal is to establish guidelines and a culture that recognize community-engaged scholarship and allow community-engaged scholars to thrive and excel, not to merely survive and delay PES until after promotion. Making community-engaged scholarship explicit in rewards policies for tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty is a matter of fairness, not an attempt to devalue the work of scholars who do not employ collaborative and participatory epistemological approaches to research, creative activity, and teaching and learning.

Capacity-Building Infrastructure for Support and Sustainability

While more and more faculty coming out of graduate school and into the professoriate have had some experience with community engagement and are more experienced with collaborative knowledge generation, many faculty have not been exposed to community engagement as part of their professional preparation or socialization in their discipline. To be able to practice community engagement, faculty will need to develop the capacity to integrate it into their core academic work. The more opportunities there are to participate in faculty development related to their discipline, the more beneficial it will be to faculty. While the campus as a whole may have a coordinating infrastructure that offers faculty development for community engagement, the college should explore whether that infrastructure is adequately meeting its particular needs. The closer community engagement capacity building is to the culture and activities of the college, in areas like mentoring, training for personnel review committees on evaluating community-engaged scholarship, and grant seeking and writing support, the more the college can support PES in its work.

Assessment

Institutions measure what they care about. If the college values community engagement, and if it models best practices of community engagement, then there will be multiple mechanisms for systematically assessing its results and outcomes. Assessment can reveal how deep and pervasive community engagement is in the college. It can demonstrate how it affects student learning. It can help to determine how community partners perceive the engagement of the college and attempt to understand what difference the college's engagement is making in communities. Assessment is an essential means for understanding impact and for improving practice.

Curricular Pathways

A central way that community engagement affects the academic experience of students is through its incorporation into the curriculum. When community engagement is part of the college's identity and culture, there should be opportunities for every student to have community engagement as part of courses in their undergraduate major or graduate program. There can also be opportunities for undergraduates to complete a minor or earn a certificate in community engagement as a way of doing more in-depth community engagement as part of their academic study. Similarly, graduate students across the college could earn a graduate certificate in community engagement by following a set of learning activities that deepen their knowledge and skills as engaged scholars; such a certificate can enhance employment opportunities post graduation. In all cases, there should be clear pathways through the curriculum for students at any level to pursue and deepen their community engagement through their coursework.

Each of these eight dimensions of college engagement intersects with, reinforces, and enhances the other. The rubric as a whole is designed to allow colleges to assess the cultures, structures, policies, and practices that can be implemented to advance community engagement as a core academic identity. College-level engagement is a complement to individual faculty engagement, departmental engagement, and institutional engagement, and when done well, can enhance all of these. As an inventory of engagement in the college, the rubric makes visible architecture for community engagement, and provides a blueprint to guide the college in building, deepening, and sustaining community engagement.

Using the Rubric

The importance of assessing institutional supports sheds light on the ways PES pushes against traditional models of reward and support in the academy. PES requires different logistics, structures, and spaces to be effective, yet many institutions have not changed their institutional supports to acknowledge these differences. This rubric identifies some of the practices that can be seen as shifts that respond to the different needs of PES scholars. In turn, the sum of these shifts may push the overall institutional transformation that some in the field are hoping for. This effort to align and amplify concepts and tools demonstrates the collaboration and community-building dynamic that PES characterizes.

Currently, four campuses across the country are piloting this rubric anonymously. At each of those campuses, a single college is using the rubric for the

purpose of self-assessment, reflection, and planning. A working group within each college has the task of determining the progress of the college along each component of each dimension. The rubric directs the working group to identify the stage (Emerging, Developing, or Transforming) that best represents the current status of the development of programs and leadership for community engagement. Once the current status has been established, the working group then identifies evidence supporting this status in a corresponding indicators cell of the rubric. An example of one dimension of the rubric is provided in Table 2.

The rubric is one tool, among many available for campuses that are intentionally working to institutionalize PES. In this case, it is aimed at the college level with a university (unlike the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification that aims at the institutional level; the Kecskes, 2006, assessment that aims at the departmental level; the center's inventory that aims at community engagement centers, Welch & Saltmarsh, 2013) that allows faculty, staff, administrators, and community partners to understand the extent to which structures, policies, and supports are in place at the college level to sufficiently advance public engagement. The rubric, allows for examination of organizational change within a college designed to assure that community engaged scholars are being supported by the organizational system and not struggling against it.

Camps Within the Movement

In the course of discussions and explorations about institutional change to support community-engaged scholarship within the URBAN network, there emerged a nuanced but pervasive divide that may best be described as camps within the movement. The camps represented different positionality and historical consciousness that shaped a personal and social relationship to higher education. The camps did not constitute factional opposition, in the sense that they were not in conflict with one another or in open opposition. The camps disagreed about their commitment to organizational change for PES within higher education institutions. Both camps shared certain assumptions: that all educational work is political and value-laden, that education is a space of politics, and that democratic practices and market logics are fundamentally opposed to one another. Beyond these shared assumptions, what emerged as the "organizational change camp" focused on the need to develop strategies to disrupt dominant structures within institutions. For what emerged as the "social justice outside the university camp," community engagement has thrived when it is practiced outside of the traditional structures and practices of the university, which institutionalize a legacy of oppression, injustice, and

Table 2. Sample dimension of the rubric.

COMPONENTS	STAGE ONE <i>Emerging</i>	STAGE TWO <i>Developing</i>	STAGE THREE <i>Transforming</i>	INDICATORS
Articulation in Mission and Vision Statements	Community engagement does not appear in the mission and/or vision statements of the College.	Community engagement appears in the mission and/or vision statements of the College but it is framed in ways that do not reinvigorate the work of the college or advance high quality community engagement.	Community engagement is clearly framed in both the mission and vision statement of the College such that there is not ambiguity as to its place as a commitment of the College.	
Definition of community-engaged scholarship	The College has not adopted a single, operative definition of community engagement to guide policy or practice.	The College has adopted a definition of community engagement that is vague, creates confusion and does not provide guidance for policy and practice.	The College has undertaken an inclusive process for arriving at a widely accepted and clearly understood definition of community engagement that guides the way that policies, structures, and practices are operationalized in the College.	
Strategic Planning	There has not been a strategic planning process in the college to identify community engagement as a College priority.	The strategic plan of the college has not clearly set forth community engagement as a priority and/or has not provided a framework for how community engagement advances the mission of the College.	The strategic plan of the college clearly and unambiguously prioritizes community engagement as one of the ways in which the College fulfills its mission.	

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

COMPONENTS	STAGE ONE <i>Emerging</i>	STAGE TWO <i>Developing</i>	STAGE THREE <i>Transforming</i>	INDICATORS
Alignment with Institutional Mission	In the event that the Campus mission includes community engagement, the College mission does not connect to it or align with it.	In the event that the Campus mission includes community engagement, the College mission suggests complementarity but does not provide a framing for how the College helps to fulfill the Campus mission.	The College mission and Campus mission are closely aligned in ways that reinforce a commitment to operationalizing community engagement as a way to advance institutional mission.	
Alignment with Educational innovations	As the college undertakes innovation in teaching, research, creative activity, service, and other institutional commitments, there is not consideration of how community engagement can contribute to those innovations.	As the College undertakes innovations in policies, structures, and practices, the ways in which community engagement can serve as a catalyst for deepening innovation is typically an afterthought.	Educational innovations are examined through the lens of community engagement so as to understand synergies and to maximize the ways community engagement can deepen innovation.	
Alignment with Accreditation	Program accreditation and processes do not account for community engagement practices and assessment for accreditation does not systematically capture community engagement data.	Accreditation processes inconsistently align with community engagement commitments and there is some alignment of assessment data for community engagement and for accreditation.	The College integrates the systematic assessment of community engagement with the data collected for accreditation so that accountability and quality improvement are maximized.	

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

COMPONENTS	STAGE ONE <i>Emerging</i>	STAGE TWO <i>Developing</i>	STAGE THREE <i>Transforming</i>	INDICATORS
Alignment with complimentary strategic priorities (i.e., diversity, inclusion and equity; student success; engaged learning through high impact practices)	The College is pursuing multiple strategic priorities but is not explicit in examining the connections between them.	The College recognizes that community engagement has some relation to commitments to diversity and to achieving student success goals, but has not operationalized the connections.	The College has made specific connections related to policies, structures, and practices that support community engagement and the ways in which they advance diversity, inclusion and equity goals, student success goals, and/or improved student learning goals.	
Funding priority	Support for community engagement is not reflected in the operational budget of the College or in the fundraising priorities.	There is inconsistent and uncoordinated funding for community engagement through operational monies in the College and inconsistent and uncoordinated efforts at fundraising for community engagement.	The operational budget of the college reflects clear and targeted funding for community engagement on an ongoing, reliable basis and community engagement is a fundraising priority for the College.	

racism. For the second camp, there is little interest in trying to change the campus, as any efforts are likely to be drawn into practices that reinforce this legacy.

The social justice camp carefully surfaced a difficult reality about the work of scholars who identify their scholarship as “engaged” or “activist” and who view the university as an institution of oppression that fuels wider social injustices. Gilvin, Roberts, and Martin (2012), assert, for example, “Even the most well intended invocations of ‘community’ are frequently bound up in coercive, violent, and capitalist power” (p. 11). For many of these scholars, often from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups and women, their goal is to direct their intellectual and institutional resources to addressing social injustices in local communities. They do not position themselves as part of change effort within higher education, partly because they do not see their work as reforming institutions of higher education. There is a historical relationship to institutions of higher education, not unlike that which Moten and Harney (2004) captured when they claimed that “the only possible relationship” of the “subversive intellectual” to “the university today is criminal one . . . to sneak into the university and steal what one can” (p. 101). Resistance to a stakeholder relationship comes from the concern that the university will appropriate and corrupt these scholars’ social justice work, following the academy’s past record of exclusion, oppression, and injustice. Thus, within the URBAN network, there was nuanced orientation that distanced activist scholars from community engagement, service-learning, and wider claims toward an engaged campus because such efforts could appear to serve as cover for the ways in which the university was part of a wider social culture of injustice and, thus, part of the problem. The politics of activist scholarship invoked collaboration with those in local communities but resisted the politics of scholars being collaborators with the university.

For the organizational change camp, represented by our working group, we do not claim that PES is a panacea for the challenge of institutional transformation or that it would in and of itself overcome the very real history of universities as engines of exclusion and oppression. Rather, we argue that despite the complex history of higher education, PES may nevertheless facilitate opportunities for institutions to contribute to social change and social justice. These institutions can do so by centering publicly facing scholarship and research practices that engage reciprocal partnerships between the community and the academy. There are existing avenues within institutional structures to practice this kind of scholarship, and doing so brings many benefits of PES to colleges, universities, and academic communities, as well as to communities outside of the academy (Eatman, 2012; Post, Ward, Longo, & Saltmarsh, 2016).

Some working group members, while deeply invested in transformative institutional change, nevertheless shared concerns about spending time advocating for PES at institutions instead of supporting the political work with communities that is necessary for change. They acknowledged cases where the academy has made social impacts, but shared skepticism around the significance of the impacts that came from the academy. We are intrigued and compelled by a profound paradox about American higher education, which exposes and interrogates the long history of colleges and universities serving as instruments of racial discrimination (Campbell, 2014; J. A. Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011). Historically, higher education has reified, through a variety of gatekeeping practices, the status quo at the expense of traditionally underrepresented people (J. A. Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011). Conventional, oppressive frameworks of what counts as knowledge and more importantly, who counts in the knowledge production regime, allows for a gestalt within the academy normalizing privilege for a few at the expense of many. The academy refined ideas surrounding White supremacy and the subjugation of non-White peoples (Wilder, 2013). And yet, at the same time, there is evidence that these very institutions have also served to create important spaces for critical social change (Campbell, 2012).

Both moral and intellectual integrity invite us to be mindful of the important social and economic position the academy has played in devastating oppressed people in the Americas (Campbell, 2012; Wilder, 2013). And yet with a critical sense of prophetic hope, we advocate for publicly engaged academic work conducted by publicly engaged scholars in the spirit of Ellison and Eatman's (2008) claim that it includes "different forms of making knowledge about, for, and with diverse communities" (p. 6). Even as we examine institutional supports for PES, the primary focus of this article, we are careful not to promote dominant culture ideology and practices; rather, we seek to challenge the reality of oppressive institutional structures that create barriers to the aspirations of community-engaged scholars. These same structures also challenge the healthy manifestation of reciprocal benefits between community and campus. In addition, our rubric, as a measurement tool, might serve to reify the dominant culture ideology that Eatman (2012) argues is rampant in higher education institutions. Consequently, the authors are mindful of the technical, moral, and epistemological tensions of measurement and have kept those tensions in mind when refining and recommending processes for implementation of the rubric. By using PES as the means through which institutional and community cultures connect, the rubric may aid in adopting change strategies that will benefit schools and colleges.

Conclusion

Examining higher education's complex history as it relates to community-engaged work helped our working group to understand how conventional knowledge spaces are formed and maintained. Understanding PES and the scholars conducting that work helps us to understand that there are people in the academy who are committed to challenging those conventional knowledge spaces and constructing new contexts. While we learned about the encouraging nature of PES for some in the academy, we also learned that PES has served to manipulate community residents in the name of objectivity and scholarship. We also learned that tools, such as a rubric, can sometimes be used to simplify and minimize complex issues. Those who suffer the most tend to be community populations who could benefit from PES. Our hope is that the rubric will be used as a transformative tool that can help institutions understand how they may better support PES and, by extension, communities who could benefit from university partnerships.

Publicly engaged scholars are pursuing engagement as perhaps the best way of advancing knowledge to fulfill the democratic purposes of higher education. They are collaborating with community partners for the purpose of addressing and solving global social challenges as they manifest locally. It is essential for institutions to identify the extent to which they support such scholarship and therefore support the reciprocal, democratic purposes of higher education by virtue of institution–community collaboration. In the end, tools such as the rubric described here can assist institutions in facilitating the kind of transformational cultural changes needed in higher education.

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Note

1. It is important to note that different terms have been used to frame engagement—the most common pair engagement with civic, public, and community. Which framing is used often depends on the institutional, disciplinary, and historical contexts from which engagement has emerged on campus. For the purpose of defining “engagement,” we consider “public” and “community” to be interchangeable, although for simplicity we use the term PES in this article. In our

view, PES highlights the importance of political and democratic participation as a central purpose of higher education.

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The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: An Autoethnographic Journey on Doing Participatory Action Research as a Graduate Student

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Van T. Lac¹ and Michelle Fine²

Abstract

The lead author documents the promises and pitfalls of doing critical participatory action research (PAR) as a graduate student within traditional institutions. This autoethnographic essay captures the vulnerabilities of the first author as she reflects on the human work that draws her to PAR, details the tensions that surfaced in the daily practices of doing PAR with youth, and addresses unforeseen hurdles that emerged from the ethics review board and the university–school partnership. The piece concludes with an epilogue from Dr. Michelle Fine, a senior scholar in the field of critical PAR, as she responds to the concerns raised in this essay.

Keywords

participatory action research, autoethnography, graduate education, research methods, activism, minoritized students

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Introduction

The inspiration for this article emerged from a conversation I had with Dr. Michelle Fine over lunch after a talk she gave at my university. I had met Michelle once before at an invited Urban Research-Based Action Network (URBAN) conference the year prior. During our initial meeting, I shared with Michelle my ideas and plan for a participatory action research (PAR) project with youth for my dissertation that upcoming year. Perhaps Michelle picked up on my mixed cocktail of enthusiasm, naïveté, and borderline romanticism of PAR at the time; a year later, as I sat across from Michelle, I was consumed with a very different set of emotions over my experiences with PAR. Subconsciously perhaps I sought Michelle, a respected senior scholar in the field of critical PAR research, to seek forgiveness or repentance for my missteps and mistakes in my current PAR project. After elaborating for 15 minutes about the challenges I confronted as a graduate student attempting PAR for my dissertation, Michelle looked up from her garden salad, casually glanced at me and said, “You need to stop feeling guilty about all this. Maybe you should write about it.”

This article explores the challenges I experienced as a graduate student attempting to do PAR with young people. As I sift through the scenes, the emotions, the hurdles during our PAR project that have left an indelible mark in my memory, I employ autoethnographic writing to think deeply about my experiences as a PAR facilitator. In Ellis’s (2013) piece, she illustrates the power of *autoethnographic life review*, detailing pivotal life events and its impact on her. She concludes the following:

Writing to inquire into the meanings of experience requires revision after revision, until the author has examined events, feelings, and thoughts in as deep and thorough a way as possible. The result of multiple revisions is an evocative literary story, the crafting of which leads to more insight and possibilities for incorporating these events into living, communicates these experiences evocatively to readers, and leaves open the possibility that they might consider and reconsider their own lives in light of what they have read. (pp. 43-44)

In divulging my vulnerabilities as a PAR researcher, I utilize writing as a form of inquiry to unearth the tensions, wrestle with the challenges, and embrace the possibilities of doing PAR. In addition, I write this autoethnographic piece to invite other PAR scholars to bond with me over our common experiences while also commiserating over the particularities of our stories, perhaps surfacing deeper reflections, insights, and critiques that could shape how we approach this work.

Sectioned off into three parts, I write about the “good” parts of PAR, specifically working with youth, noting students’ sociopolitical development

and the ways I grew because of this work I did with young people. For the second portion, I focus on the “bad” I encountered, such as the tensions that surfaced in my daily practices working alongside secondary students as their facilitator and teacher. The last portion of my reflection highlights the “ugly” parts of conducting PAR within a traditional institution, specifically, how issues regarding participation and autonomy affected the context of my work. Michelle closes this article with an epilogue as a senior scholar reflecting on the challenges I have disclosed as an emerging scholar entering the field of PAR.

What Is PAR?

PAR has gained traction in recent years within the field of education (Irizarry, 2011; Kirshner, Strobel, & Fernández, 2003; Ozer & Douglas, 2013; Tuck, 2012; Yang, 2009a); however, practitioners and activists utilizing PAR in fields such as sociology (Hall, 1992; Stoecker, 2003), psychology (Lewin, 1951), and development (Rahnema, 1990) span decades of research all over the globe (Fals-Borda, 1987; Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Freire, 1970; Gaventa & Horton, 1981). Misperceived as a methodology or series of methods, PAR can encompass a range of qualitative and/or quantitative methods, depending on the research needs of a given context (Cammarota & Fine, 2010; Hall, 1992).

PAR represents an epistemology concerned with democratizing knowledge and yielding power to ordinary people as they seek justice regarding social issues that directly affect their lives. In traditional research paradigms, the university researcher represents the expert who enters oppressed communities to mine for data and research *on* oppressed groups; however, within a PAR paradigm, rather than being the objects of research, members of marginalized groups research *with* university researchers, community organizers, or educators, often steering the direction at every stage of the research project (Fine, Torre, Burns, & Payne, 2007). In PAR, researchers engage in a critical inquiry cycle where participant researchers identify an issue, collect data on the issue, and then implement collective action (McTaggart, 1997).

Various iterations of PAR have surfaced since the onset of its application. In teacher education programs and among classroom practitioners, teacher action research represents a form of research that honors the lived experiences of educators engaged in critical inquiry into their own practice (Bates & Pardo, 2010; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2009; Pine, 2008). Community-based action research involves local community-based organizations or organizing groups working alongside concerned citizens and university researchers to address pervasive social issues in the

community (Stoecker, 2003; Warren & Mapp, 2011). PAR projects can represent the intergenerational work between individuals who cut across race, ethnicity, gender, class, or sexual identity (Fine et al., 2004; Torre, 2005); however, a body of research exists dedicated to youth participatory action research projects (YPAR) where youth take center stage in leading the research project (Cammarota, 2008; Kirshner & Pozzoboni, 2011). PAR comprises a set of guiding principles that shape how scholars and activists approach research alongside oppressed communities. Although PAR entails a range in guiding principles, Kirshner (2010) offers a few key principles that guided his work with youth: (a) young people participate in every step of the research process, from identifying the issue, developing the research tools, to implementing an action plan; (b) students identify social issues that directly affect their own lives, from school closures to racialized tracking in schools; and (c) youth researchers develop critical perspectives and learn to denaturalize the conditions that shape their oppression.

Background on Teachers for Tomorrow (TFT)

As a doctoral candidate, I joined a steering committee to diversify the teacher workforce in a neighboring metropolitan school district called Pine Grove School District (PGSD) located on the west coast. In partnership with the local university, PGSD sought to close a disparate opportunity gap between Black and White students through a multipronged approach; one lever of this initiative focused on promoting the teaching profession among students of color in the district called TFT. In the spring of 2014, the steering committee for TFT invited all freshmen in PGSD who fit most of the following requirements to apply for the program: (a) come from a low-income background, (b) represent a historically marginalized group, (c) have at least a 2.7 grade point average based on the first semester of their freshmen year. Fifteen students applied and 11 students were selected for TFT's first cohort. Students entering TFT also participated in a college access program that offered summer enrichment opportunities and tutoring support year round. A TFT scholarship fund was created with the intent of financially supporting students who matriculated to the state's flagship university.

I worked for TFT as the curriculum developer, research facilitator, and teacher while still in graduate school. I envisioned running this program while also conducting a PAR project as a part of my dissertation. As a programming requirement for TFT, students participated in a 3-week institute for 3 hr each day during the summer. I developed a curriculum adopting a critical race pedagogy (Lynn, 1999, 2004) that involved students studying how race and class shape the opportunity gap in PGSD. During the school

year, students engaged in a PAR project studying highly effective teachers in racially diverse classrooms. Students across three high schools identified an effective teacher at their school, observed the teacher for roughly 7 weeks, interviewed the teacher, and conducted a classroom survey for the class observed. The culminating event for the PAR project entailed a presentation to school and community leaders at the end of the school year.

In the next section, I delve into the good, the bad, and the ugly of this work and address the following questions: Why am I drawn to PAR? What are the tensions that surfaced for me while engaging in PAR with youth in daily practices? What role did traditional institutions play in constraining our PAR work?

The Good: Learning From Young People

My journey as a PAR facilitator and scholar started a long time ago before I became a graduate student. As a Southeast Asian student from a working-class, immigrant family attending Oakland public schools, I experienced firsthand the savage inequalities pervasive in underresourced and dispossessed communities (Kozol, 2012). Keenly aware of educational inequities as a senior in high school, I committed to dedicating my life's work to equity and social justice. Prior to graduate school, I worked for 8 years as a high school English teacher in Richmond, California, a low-income community compounded by economic blight and negligent public policies. The surrounding environment proved a mismatch for the tenacious, brilliant, and determined students I met during my tenure; my students truly were roses growing in concrete (Shakur, 2009). Stifled by accountability measures and high stakes testing, I left the classroom and entered graduate school to pursue a PhD in education, hoping to make a difference in other capacities. Graduate school alone proved a hollow existence at times. Insulated in my academic bubble, I yearned for opportunities to connect with young people again. When the opportunity arose to work with a group of minoritized high school students and conduct a PAR project, I seized the chance to have my research converge with my continued desire to work with youth.

Documented in the literature, scholars highlight the potential sociopolitical development that youth researchers experience through YPAR projects (Cammarota, 2008; Morrell, 2004; Rogers, Morrell, & Enyedy, 2007; Sánchez, 2009). Based on anonymous feedback from students and their own testimonies, I found tremendous personal fulfillment knowing how our work had affected them. As a class, we engaged in intense work studying how race and class shapes educational outcomes in Pine Grove; students wrestled with the notion of institutionalized racism and the role our government has played

throughout history in shaping policies that systematically subjugate the rights and opportunities for people of color, even to this day (Lac, 2017). I relied heavily on a dialogical approach to teaching, giving students opportunities to process ideas, and talk through their thinking (Freire, 1970). The curriculum I developed alone could not guide my students toward a path of praxis; a mosaic of dialogue, exposure to critical texts, and students' self-reflections were the cornerstones of this PAR project.

Toward the end of our first year together, as students and I discussed the action steps of our research project, several youth researchers mentioned, unsolicited, the ways their participation in PAR deeply influenced and shaped the ways they thought about social justice issues. Students appeared eager to share their newfound knowledge with teachers, parents, and peers through the development of various products, such as a website, videos, and workshops. One student mentioned how she wanted to share with the world what she has learned in this program. Witnessing my students' eagerness and excitement to take action based on our research project and what they had learned brought me immense joy. A student chimed in and said, "It's all because of you, Ms. Lac. I had no idea about these issues before but you really brought this to my attention." Comments such as this happened few and far between during our year together; however, they funneled warmth and meaning into the core of why I do this work.

I am drawn to PAR because my work with youth anchored me in the pragmatic realities of life for young people in a way that empirical studies and academic texts in graduate courses could not. On our seventh day together, I had a warm-up activity called *Roots and Leaves*, an activity designed for students to learn more about one another. The activity involved students diagramming a tree and labeling the leaves with their interests and hobbies; deep in the roots, students could share their dreams, background, or anything that was not obvious to people. I shared my leaves about enjoying running, yoga and poetry, and then I talked about my roots, such as my dreams of becoming a professor one day. I asked every student to share only content they were comfortable disclosing. I noticed that with each student who presented, the description of their roots and leaves became more personal, intimate, and vulnerable; some students started talking about deeply personal problems related to family and traumatic experiences tied to poverty. Every student had been moved to tears by the end of the activity. Humbled to be in this space, the narratives I heard in class reminded me that young people harbor different lived experiences and realities. Admittedly, the fact that I assumed that high-achieving, self-motivated youth in TFT from Pine Grove were somehow immune to trauma represented a misstep in my thinking. I walked away from class that day humbled at the courage, humility, and rawness I witnessed,

reminded of why I appreciate working with young people. That particular class session reaffirmed for me that teaching and learning, even in an YPAR context, requires authentic and critical care (De Jesús & Antrop-González, 2006; Roberts, 2010; Valenzuela, 1999). Above all, this session reaffirmed for me that transformative educational experiences represent acts of love and that young people yearn for opportunities to talk about their lived experiences in nurturing and caring environments (Freire, 1970).

The Bad: Tensions That Surface From Daily Practices

Considering my lack of experience facilitating PAR coupled with my consumption of radical, creative, and impactful PAR studies, I entered this project with a naïve and unrealistic set of expectations for my students and myself (Fine et al., 2004; Fine et al., 2007; Poon & Cohen, 2012; Torre, 2005; Tuck, 2012). The cornerstone of PAR work rests on exercising reflexivity for all parties involved, the youth and the adult (Hawkins, 2015; Langhout, 2006). Sparse in the literature, university researchers rarely write and make public the day-to-day challenges of conducting PAR with young people (Cahill, 2007; Nygreen, 2009; Van Sluys, 2010). In my research memos throughout our PAR project, a few key tensions surfaced: negotiating student autonomy in daily practices and what counts as quality research with youth.

Student voice and autonomy. My experiences as a high school English teacher teetered between being both helpful and harmful during this PAR project. As a classroom teacher, I exercised a firm but fair approach to teaching and classroom management, setting high expectations for all my students while engendering a critical care in my classroom (De Jesús & Antrop-González, 2006; Roberts, 2010; Valenzuela, 1999). In my tenure in Richmond, I rarely sent students out of class. I adopted an authoritative rather than authoritarian approach to my pedagogy; students appeared receptive and responsive to my structured classroom.

This skill set that I developed as a teacher proved a disadvantage, at times, for me during the course of this PAR project. Young people seek to exercise autonomy by having choice in their learning experiences; however, schools often represent a mismatch between what students need and the opportunities they actually receive (Eccles et al., 1993). PAR projects enable students to have increased levels of autonomy and influence over certain facets of their learning; for example, often in PAR, students play a central role in determining the direction and course of the research project (Ozer & Douglas, 2013; Ozer, Newlan, Douglas, & Hubbard, 2013; Ozer & Wright, 2012). Youth appreciate that these PAR projects offer contrastingly different experiences

compared with regular school (Cahill, 2007; Sánchez, 2009; Van Sluys, 2010). University researchers appear cognizant not to assert their power and authority, so that student voice and autonomy can flourish, a model distinct from traditional teacher-and-student relationships in schools (Kirshner, 2010; Nygreen, 2009).

Mindful of the tensions that have surfaced for PAR practitioners in the extant literature, I sought to engender an environment that honored the voices and experiences of students while trying to manage some of my teacher instincts that might impinge on this process (Cahill, 2007; Nygreen, 2009; Van Sluys, 2010). In our weekly sessions after school, I quickly recognized that my students needed opportunities to learn in active and creative ways after a long day of sitting in classes at their respective high schools. I intentionally set up an environment where there were multiple opportunities to interact in pairs, small groups, and as a whole class. However, there were a few class meetings where I had a lot of information to pass onto students, and the only way to communicate this information efficiently would be a direct lecture. During one such class session, I covered theoretical frameworks with students and relied heavily on a lengthy lecture to do so. I had too many items on the agenda and wanted class to operate with expediency. As we only had 2 hours and would not be meeting again for several weeks, I felt pressed for time. Ten minutes into the lecture, I noted a low energy in the room punctuated by several students with their heads down looking disinterested. Rather than acknowledging this moment, I entered into a trite secondary lecture about a person's body language and the importance of this work. In short, it was not my proudest moment as a PAR facilitator, perhaps even altering somewhat my relationship with a few students for having seemed more preoccupied with fulfilling my agenda rather than reflecting on why students appeared indifferent to the lesson. Upon reflection later that evening, I recognized that completing the items on the agenda at the expense of my students' experiences in the PAR project was selfish on my part in the grand scheme of the project.

In seeking a democratized classroom, my work with young people fluctuated between students shaping classroom norms and expectations to my role as the teacher intervening at important junctures. The individual youth researchers in our cohort of 11 quickly grew into a tight-knit family soon after our summer institute. Consequently, a casual and comfortable vibe became the norm for our weekly research team meetings. At the start of the spring semester, we began analyzing our data, occupying the computer lab on the university campus. With a large conference room for us to congregate, we began to refer to this space as our "kitchen table." During several consecutive meetings, I noticed students on their cell phones while we talked about

important matters at the table. In other instances, even during check-in as classmates shared about their day or an idea that arose during data analysis, I noticed multiple side conversations from students, particularly from two young men who were buddies and often chose to sit next to one another. If these two students were in my classes in Richmond, I would have nipped it in the bud right away and made them switch seats. However, as a PAR facilitator, I toiled with this scenario, wondering how to approach this conundrum. Clearly, I did not want to repeat a lecture from Ms. Lac about the importance of attentiveness. Instead, I wanted students to recognize that having side conversations or being on cell phones could be counterproductive to our work together. I was particularly sensitive to certain students not feeling heard in this space precisely because of these distractions or distracters.

I decided during our next meeting to bring it up with the whole group, merely sharing with students my observations and highlighting why these issues could pose a problem for our group and dynamic. As an outgrowth of this conversation, the youth researchers set up norms for the ways we interacted and operated in the computer lab, one norm being that no cell phones were allowed at the kitchen table, although students could take them out at their computer stations during breaks. I determined, as the teacher, that the two friends simply should not sit next to each other at the kitchen table, and that resolved most of the issues regarding side conversations. Some might interpret this decision on my part as my infantilized treatment of students; perhaps liberal educators and critical pedagogues might judge this action as being too authoritarian. However, in my mind, establishing a space for democratic practices does not mean the adult facilitator excises their role as the adult responsible for creating a nurturing and supportive environment for all students (Freire, 1970; Yang, 2009b).

Quality research and the lives of young people. As students started the data collection phase of their research project, I often questioned my role in providing technical knowledge to them and whether our work represented high-quality research. PAR scholars emphasize that participant researchers should be equipped with the technical knowledge to conduct research alongside university researchers; facilitators of PAR spend weeks and months training students on research skills to safeguard against uneven power dynamics (Fine et al., 2004; Morrell, 2004; Torre, 2005). In my work with students, I struggled to determine the appropriate depth and degree of training I should provide in preparation for our research project (Schutz, 2007).

Despite 3 years of intense graduate course work on qualitative research methods, I still felt much like an apprentice researcher when I started this PAR project with students. I did not have the luxury of a team of graduate students

nor university faculty to co-teach this program with me. To buffer against my own misgivings and gaps in my knowledge about research, I leaned heavily on a supportive network of professors and colleagues who conduct qualitative research doing PAR in the field. Questions continually surfaced for me as I tried to bridge the pedagogy of teaching research methods to a group of high school students. For instance, how could I explain theoretical frameworks in an accessible way without undermining my students' capabilities? In terms of resources, I could not use the research texts I encountered in my graduate courses and pass them along to my students, especially considering the density and depth of the readings. I often found myself toiling for days or weeks on how to convey to students particular research concepts in palatable ways. Doing PAR can serve as a double-edged sword at times: as PAR insists that researchers account for the context-specific nature of the work, PAR scholars denounce proscriptive approaches to curriculum or guides (Cammarota & Fine, 2010). As a result, I had to piecemeal how to approach research with youth based on the scant literature available, such as addressing bias in the data analysis stage (Kirshner, Pozzoboni, & Jones, 2011) and the degree of technical knowledge required for students to adequately conduct research (Schutz, 2007).¹

I also found myself recognizing how my position as a dissertator contrasted in distinct ways from the responsibilities my youth researchers had as high school students, surfacing tensions on how research responsibilities in our project would be fulfilled. As a graduate student, my full-time job entailed training and preparing to become a university researcher and professor. The daily routines of my high school students consisted of attending classes, completing projects and assignments, and more than half of my cohort participated in time-consuming extracurricular activities such as sports and music. For their YPAR project, students determined that two researchers at each high school would observe the identified effective teacher once a week; through class observations, students were expected to generate field notes. I talked to students about classroom observations in addition to the form and function of field notes; students practiced how to take field notes (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2011). I suggested that students write up their field notes the day of a classroom observation. Students immediately expressed concerns because some students did not have access to the Internet at home; we then agreed on submitting field notes the following day at school.

Stoudt (2007) writes about having flexible protocols in his research work with young people, mindful that rigidity can silence student voice or undermine the quality of data collected. I wondered at which point does this flexibility compromise the integrity or authenticity of the research? In the span of our 3-month observation on effective teachers, I rarely received field notes within

24 hours of a classroom observation. Most classroom observations took place on a Wednesday and field notes were typed up over the weekend. I had a few field notes submitted several weeks late. I found myself, at times, texting students reminding them to submit field notes. My role as a PAR facilitator with youth quickly became a bounty hunter of field notes as well. As I feverishly texted multiple students about their field notes, I wondered, “Is this what other PAR facilitators have done, too? Am I the only one? If not, why hasn’t anyone acknowledged the unglamorous part of PAR work with youth?”

Being well-versed in PAR literature served to inspire me at times while it concomitantly set up unrealistic expectations for my own work with youth. In Morrell’s (2004) book, he documents a multiyear experience working with high school students on PAR; the author notes the amount of time students dedicated to their research work outside of school transcribing data, producing short films, or building their PowerPoint presentations. Compared with Morrell’s work, the question crossed my mind, perhaps unfairly, “What were we doing that made things so different?” With the exception of a long workday strategically held over spring break, most of our work and research took place during our weekly seminars with limited time spent outside of school. We never burned the midnight oil. If anything, I sought to make this research project as manageable as possible for students, even transcribing teacher interviews myself because I knew this would be a time-consuming task. I recognized that my time with students was scarce and wanted to maximize class time on intellectual and analytical work rather than transcribing.

Juggling the tensions of this work in theory and practice, I discerned early on in the YPAR project that engaging youth holistically—acknowledging their lives and experiences outside of TFT as well—was my number one priority. A handful of my students struggled with personal issues. Several experienced unforeseen deaths in their families during the course of our first year together; many also took on part-time jobs to help support their families financially. I determined within weeks of starting our research project that my role, first and foremost, should be to support students in the different facets of their lives, not just in terms of research. One of my priorities as a PAR facilitator was ensuring my students felt supported and cared for as human beings. The research remained secondary: I could not in good conscience fixate on missing research deadlines at the expense of their well-being.

The Ugly: Constraints of Working Within Traditional Institutions

Working as a PAR facilitator and researcher within a traditional institution surfaced immense friction and stress at times. Particularly, the institutional review board (IRB) posed several challenges that limited the

degree and nature of my students' participation in our research project. Concurrently, the university–school district partnership that oversaw the operations of our program also participated in unforeseen ways that shaped the direction of our research project. Unbeknownst to me entering this project, I did not envision these entities functioning as a veiled hand in molding the trajectory of our research project and the degree of participation of my students.

Issues with the IRB. Youth researchers presenting at national conferences and coauthoring publishable articles represent a common occurrence in the PAR literature (Camarota & Fine, 2010; Irizarry, 2011; Morrell, 2004; Oakes, Rogers, & Lipton, 2006). I entered the project assuming that I would strive to co-author some writing with my students and share our work at research conferences as well. However, the school district and university ethics review board imposed major hurdles in the degree my students could share their own research to academic communities. Boser (2007) writes about the lack of understanding or misconceptions some IRBs have about PAR. She details the incongruence, at times, between the positivistic epistemology IRB tends to adopt, viewing and measuring objectivity in terms of the distance between the researcher and participants.

After submitting an IRB application through my institution, staff members at IRB raised concerns about the nature of our research, and I requested to meet with them. During our meeting, IRB representatives informed me that I am prohibited from using any data collected by minors because their work represents a liability. The ethics review board, in other words, cannot trust data that minors collect. The IRB representative, at one point, mentioned that I could not use the data that I had minors collecting for me. This statement made me sound like an opportunistic researcher, sending out my youth researchers to collect data for *my* research project. Resoundingly, this representative seemed unaware about the nature of PAR, namely, that my students and I were working collaboratively to develop this research project. Our YPAR study did not represent my project but my work alongside young people. Furthermore, with the “unreliable data” collected by youth researchers, IRB informed me that I was barred from writing alone *or* with my youth researchers on our research project. The school district's ethics review board made similar mandates, albeit while sounding a bit more innocuous. They sought to protect the identity of youth researchers as minors, and having them write or publish their work could put students in a vulnerable position, especially considering the sensitive nature of studying teachers in our school district. Hence, it was the school district's view that their participation in the

project as writers and producers of knowledge on the research project would pose greater harm than good.

YPAR in a university–school district partnership. PAR projects can be situated in highly contentious spaces, studying issues that have direct recourse on youth researchers and participants. Oakes et al. (2006) document the backlash students received in conducting PAR at their schools, raising concerns about how racialized tracking impinges on the opportunities for students of color at their high school. As PAR seeks to disrupt the status quo and the social issues directly affecting oppressed populations, the nature of this work necessarily includes degrees of tension and conflict. However, I did not expect the root of resistance in our PAR work to stem from the partnership that supported our program.

My students and I spent our summer institute studying the PGSD; we sifted through countless pages of statistical reports on attendance, behavior, graduation rates, and standardized test scores. I shared with students a non-profit report recently released that detailed disparate data across multiple well-being measures for Black and White residents in the community of Pine Grove, including rates of incarceration and poverty levels. PGSD implemented a new approach to behavior across the school district, in the 2014 to 2015 school year, steering away from zero tolerance policies and toward more restorative practices and interventions in response to misbehavior. We reviewed multiple news articles that surfaced the same year in Pine Grove highlighting how the new behavior policy, when implemented in practice, created major concerns from teachers and staff. At the end of our summer institute, students determined that they wanted to investigate the new plan for behavior in our school district. Notably absent from the discourse on the discipline gap in PGSD at this time were the voices and perspectives of students. My youth researchers wanted to use the PAR project to capture the experiences of their peers in the school district as the new behavior plan determined adult responses in their classrooms, hallways, and cafeterias.

I assumed, naively, that documenting the perspectives and experiences of students in PGSD would represent an informative research project with a utility that could shape how teachers and staff approach issues related to discipline in school. Within the first few weeks of meeting in the fall semester, the direction of our research project came to a screeching halt. After multiple meetings with individuals from the university and the school district side, I confronted a growing narrative of overall resistance to our research project. Pine Grove, as a city, consists of multiple stakeholders who have a strong presence in city government and influence in the school

district; these entities include a powerful teachers' union, a vocal and empowered middle-class consisting mainly of White parents, and a contentious school board. With the implementation of a new behavior program, PGSD operated under a microscope in the community; various stakeholders seized on every opportunity to critique any missteps the school district might make. Given the high profile nature of TFT, individuals from both institutions warned me about the potential implications of this research project, the fear being it might unearth unsavory findings about PGSD, and in turn, provide fodder for local stakeholders to use against the school district. I also heard from both sides of the partnership that studying discipline would be nearly impossible given the political nature of the topic in the community. Consequently, the school district's ethics review board would never approve a research project of this kind.

Initially, I was baffled by the backlash in response to our research topic, the resounding message being to protect the image of PGSD. I wondered what PAR scholars such as Michelle Fine, Ben Kirshner, or Ernest Morrell would do in my situation. As I was not an esteemed tenured professor who could wield power and influence in this moment, I had to assess my situation. I was a graduate student positioned near the bottom of the hierarchy who relied on funding from this partnership to pay my bills and subsist. Would this context be the best space to put up a fight? I also recognized that this was not a decision to make on my own; my students would be involved and implicated if we somehow moved on with this research project. I thought about the possibility that our research could tarnish their opportunities as students in TFT, positioning them as pariahs in the Pine Grove community or making enemies out of our current advocates. I found myself resenting being in a context that made me second-guess my work and decisions. PAR scholars note the importance of accounting for context in a given research project; however, I did not expect the context to curtail the research agenda for my students.

After consulting several PAR scholars, I concluded that I should be candid with my students regarding our scenario. I understood that I had a moral responsibility to students to be upfront about our given context; it was not up to me to be the gatekeeper of information. More importantly, this scenario could also serve as a teachable moment to students: the quest for social justice often engenders existing and working in uncomfortable and contentious spaces (Cammarota & Fine, 2010; Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Morrell, 2004; Oakes et al., 2006). Our third class into the semester, I outlined to students the reality of our work given the context, their position as students in TFT, and my own concerns as an employee for the program. Rightly so, students expressed anger and frustration over the response to our research project.

They were infuriated that the voices of students regarding discipline or any issue in this school district would be perceived as a threat to the image of PGSD. By the end of our discussion, we determined that we would not pursue discipline explicitly as our research topic; however, we wanted our research to contribute to improving PGSD, especially as it related to the lived realities of Black and Latino/a students in the district.

The following class, I brought in an article titled “Discipline or Punish: Some Suggestions for School Policy and Teacher Practice” (Yang, 2009b) hoping that it could trigger some ideas for our research project. The author contends that there are two types of discipline: Discipline 1 focuses on containing and controlling bodies whereas Discipline 2 represents a rigorous training of a craft that can lead to transformative possibilities, a form of discipline that athletes and musicians endure. Yang (2009b) contends that in the most effective classrooms he has studied teachers nurture Discipline 2 in students. He refers to this space as Classroom X where the teachers strive for constant reflexivity in their own practice to set high expectations for all students, rarely removing students from class, and work with a cross section of students. Classroom X refers to a highly context-specific space, temporally and spatially unique. After reading the article, students seemed intrigued by this classroom and wanted to find if these classrooms existed in their schools.

The partnership imposed limitations on the scope and nature of my students’ YPAR project, forcing us to make compromises. So, students continued to study discipline, but we reframed discipline as praxis (Yang, 2009b) and embarked on a journey to create meaningful research experiences with the intention of sharing findings of Classroom Xs with teachers and administrators in the school district.

Final Thoughts as an Emerging PAR Scholar

Given the challenges I have documented in this piece, I continue to believe in the principles of PAR. My complicated relationship with PAR can only be paralleled to my perspective on motherhood. Beyond labor and delivery, motherhood entails some unglamorous aspects of parenting: second-guessing the decisions you make regarding your child and enduring unrealistic standards imposed upon you by societal norms of good mothering. Dirty diapers, spit up, and sleepless nights aside, I chose to be a mother again and gave birth to my daughter after I completed data collection for my dissertation; similarly, as a scholar, I still choose to continue the line of inquiry centered on PAR. I liken both endeavors to *human work* or as Maguire (1987) articulates,

From the outset I admit that I was never a detached social scientist. The process of doing participatory research was emotionally engaging and exhausting. I spent time with the project women and their children; I got involved in their lives. I cared about them, laughed with them, cried with them and worried with them. . . . In part, participatory research forces us as researchers to question our roles in the world. Participatory researchers must “be with the people.” (p. 9)

In my work this year in PAR, I have entered my students’ lives not just as their facilitator but also their teacher, their friend, and their second mom. They invite me to their recitals, volleyball games, and cultural events. I hurt when they experience loss or suffering; I celebrate when they have reached a milestone. I fully intend to be a part of their lives far beyond this research project and this teacher pipeline program. Perhaps this is the *human work* that draws me to YPAR and anchors me to the meaningful parts of research, despite the bad and the ugly that also accompanies this work.

My renewed commitment to YPAR is also firmly rooted in witnessing the transformative growth of young people in TFT who engaged in critical youth research. In their study of Classroom X, students learned what it took to be an educator for equity and justice, such as prioritizing building relationships as a classroom teacher and rejecting logics of deficit and merit to explain societal inequities (Lac, 2017). Historically and presently, vulnerable and marginalized communities are continually under siege across this country. I hope that my student researchers have acquired the analytical tools to deconstruct, debunk, and critique the racist, sexist, xenophobic, and homophobic policies and rhetoric that permeate their daily lives. As practitioners, researchers, and scholars seek impactful ways to resist and take action in these scary and uncertain times, I cannot think of a better form of resistance than to work alongside and with young people for social justice and educational equity in the form of YPAR.

Stitched into this autoethnographic journey are my personal triumphs along with the professional indignities of doing PAR with youth in traditional settings. I wrote this piece, perhaps, for self-indulgent reasons as a therapeutic outlet to make sense of my experiences. Circling back to Ellis (2013), the author declares, “Autoethnographic life review makes me think about the principles to which I might rededicate my life” (p. 44). Parallel to Ellis, I penned this autoethnography because I have an obligation to engage in critical praxis (Freire, 1970), a core principle to being a critical PAR scholar. This means sometimes unmasking the hypocrisies of doing PAR within traditional institutions, and at other times, it means admitting my vulnerabilities as a teacher, scholar, and activist in doing this work. Rather than hiding behind a veiled romanticism regarding PAR, I invite readers and PAR scholars alike to

examine the raw, unabashed reality of engaging in and with communities in social inquiry. Perhaps to be in constant toil and rumination remains the only way to recenter and rededicate us to our work, particularly as PAR surfaces contradictions and hypocrisies at the same time that it is enmeshed in them.

Epilogue by Michelle Fine

Van has crafted a stunning and entangled research story, one that dives into the responsibilities, reflections, dilemmas, and delights of social inquiry, made only more intimately entwined in PAR. Typically researchers banish these reflections from the journal-bound research stories we tell. By convention, researchers hide beneath a white cloak of objectivity and distance, rarely hanging around long enough to hear what people really think of the work. Some “confess” at the end of their lives, or in a footnote or later admissions but rarely in the moment.

But Van was in deep relation with her students, her co-researchers, the project, and her university. She pursued her work assuming the university’s stated commitment to public scholarship and deep participation to be solid; and she was surprised—tackled I might say—by the IRB refusal to respect her co-researchers as she did. Van speaks truth for all of us struggling to engage deep reflexive inquiry with communities under siege, working from institutions busy branding (and protecting) themselves in times of widening inequality gaps, contentious lawsuits, and neoliberal blues.

Van attributes her stumbles to lack of experience, but I would say no—I attribute her confessed stumbles to her brilliance, reflexivity, care, and profound sense of bearing wit(h)ness. Inquiry is a relational project rooted at the treacherous intersections of power and vulnerability; public schools and public universities are today engaged in a radically defensive and often conservative project of covering their liabilities, promoting narratives of “progress” and “equity” and avoiding conflict. As a consequence, both schools and public universities are simultaneously fetishizing “engagement” and throwing up barriers to deep, reciprocal, and respectful solidarities across our borders; thereby silencing critical scholars and youth/educators/activists with the courage to speak both desire and dissent. PAR is not the only research site in which these contradictions and contestations flare, but it is a site in which our deep desires for critical public scholarship come up against the banal hypocrisies of neoliberal public institutions. PAR researchers, dedicated to critical reflection, embody the obligation to speak these speed bumps aloud.

Although I could engage each of the technical difficulties that Van lifts up, it is probably more sensible to recognize that these land mines can be found

at all universities and public schools with local variation and a relentless defensiveness, perhaps even more so at private institutions! They probably must be resolved institution by institution, although we should gather at critical community and professional gatherings (including URBAN, American Educational Research Association [AERA], International Congress on Qualitative Inquiry, and Ethnic Studies) to pry open these dilemmas and generate “good-enough resolutions” written in pencil.

But for now, I would end with a thank you. Carry on, Van, with your gifts and talents—chronicle the stumbles, the barriers, the stunning moments, and fracture points, where participatory research reveals the braiding of structural violence and radical possibilities. This is your gift to your baby, and her generation, who will need lanterns in dark times to light the way toward liberatory practices of teaching, research, organizing, and crafting policy.

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Note

1. Since my work on this project, resources have become more available to the public, such as <http://yparhub.berkeley.edu/>.

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Michelle Fine is a distinguished professor of Critical Psychology, Women's Studies and Urban Education at the Graduate Center, CUNY. Author of more than 15 books and over 100 articles. Fine is currently involved in "national conversations" with Muslim American youth and a national participatory project designed by and for LGBTQ youth of color – including a subsample of Muslim American youth. In November, her newest book, *Just Research in Contentious Times* will be published by Teachers College Press.

Book Review

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Drame, E. R., & Irby, D. J. *Black Participatory Research: Power, Identity, and the Struggle for Justice in Education*, edited by Elizabeth R. Drame and Decoteau J. Irby. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2016, 205 pp., \$100.00 (hbk). ISBN 978-1-137-46898-7.

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Black Participatory Research (BPR) is unapologetically by and for Black scholar-activists. As such, it is a critical addition to the literature on participatory action research (PAR), and essential reading for all collaborative, community-engaged, and antiracist education scholars. For Black readers, this book provides long-awaited recognition and exploration of the unique challenges and opportunities associated with conducting participatory research alongside coresearchers with whom you share a fundamental aspect of identity and experience: Blackness. For White researchers, reading this book presents a unique opportunity to experience, for a mere 189 pages, what it is like to read something that is not written with you in mind. And for everyone else, this book provides a taste of what it might look and feel like to decenter Whiteness in education research—an arguably essential practice in the struggle for justice.

This volume definitively topples long-unspoken assumptions in the field of collaborative, community-engaged research. Namely, the book pushes back against the idea that “multiracial research teams are best suited to advance research that disrupts White supremacy” (p. 7). Through numerous examples, the authors demonstrate that research for racial justice does not require any White people to be in the room. At the same time, the authors problematize a second assumption that Black researchers and Black communities are automatically a *perfect fit* (p. 181). Although taking seriously the potential power of Black solidarity, the book makes clear that shared racial identity is not a sufficient criteria for assessing whether a researcher and a community will be a “good match” (p. 181). Third, and perhaps most significantly, the editors of this volume challenge the fundamental insider/outsider assumptions at the heart of PAR literature. Participatory research approaches (in contrast to traditional

approaches to social science research) insist that marginalized communities have valuable knowledge and skills to contribute to the work of investigating and solving the problems that directly affect their lives. Therefore, a substantial body of work explores questions of how professional, “outside” researchers conduct research *with* rather than *on* members of marginalized communities. These community “insiders” are often assumed to be Black and Brown, while the “outsiders” are overwhelmingly assumed to be White. This book’s authors reject that assumption.

In so doing, the book effectively eschews the anxieties of White researchers, carving out much-needed space to explore the unique questions, dangers, and promises of professional Black researchers working with and for Black communities. Unburdened from the task of unpacking the traditional White outsider/Black insider dynamic, the book’s authors were free to explore questions such as follows: What are some of the opportunities and pitfalls associated with the role of the *bridge* between “White-dominated institutions and marginalized Black communities” (p. 1)? How might Black professional researchers work our outsider within (Collins, 1986) status to leverage institutional resources for the liberation of all Black people? How do we pull the plug, when it is clear our Black bodies are being used to facilitate the extraction of stories about Black suffering to be used in White people’s PowerPoint presentations? How do other axes of power, privilege, and oppression intersect with racism and operate within Black–Black research partnerships? What are some of the ways that our own racial identity development as Black professional researchers might manifest in our relationships with community-based research partners? What practices could we engage in to facilitate our own liberation and process and heal from the racialized harm that we experience while researching?

All of these are essential questions that have had little to no consideration in the participatory research literature, until now.

In the book’s introduction, the editors outline the breadth and depth of racial injustice in urban education. From there, they present a definition of BPR, a form of PAR in which traditionally trained Black researchers co-construct knowledge in partnership with Black communities toward the goal of addressing these inequities. Beyond the shared racial identity of the project’s research team, this approach to participatory research is grounded in the epistemological commitments of Critical Race Theory. More specifically, in this form of participatory research, race is understood to be a social construct (rather than a biological or otherwise essential human characteristic), and racism is understood to be a system of power and oppression that is foundational to American society. Like other forms of PAR, reflexivity is an essential component of the research process. And in the words of Drs.

Decoteau J. Irby and Elizabeth R. Drame, “this book is an artifact” of that process (p. 187). Throughout the book, the authors share with the reader reflections on their own assumptions and values (self-reflexivity), as well as critical interrogations of their relationships with other members of the research team (*interpersonal reflexivity*). Altogether, their stories urge a *collective reflexivity* (p. 4), prompting readers to think critically about the ways power and identity play out in education research more broadly.

The rest of the book is organized into three parts, each exploring these complexities of power and identity as they played out in different BPR projects—one in New Orleans, one in Philadelphia, and one in Dakar, Senegal. Each of these three case studies is organized into three chapters, beginning with an introductory chapter that provides the reader with background information on the sociological, historical, and policy context in which the BPR project was situated. This chapter also provides an overview of the project’s methods, including a description of the research team, data collection methods, and timeline. The two chapters that follow each background chapter present reflections written by Black project researchers, both professional and community based. In the words of the editors, these chapters reveal the projects’ “hidden transcripts” (p. 179).

The first case, “Dark Waters: Navigating the Ripple Effects of Education Reform on Black Children in New Orleans,” describes a large-scale PAR project that took place in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. The project was initiated by a diverse coalition of nonprofit organizations that came together to advance the shared goal of public education reform. The group partnered with Dr. Drame to utilize participatory research as their community engagement strategy. The “purpose of this program was not only to seek out key stakeholders’ opinions about quality public education, but also to stimulate the engagement of these stakeholders in dialogue and policy action” (p. 29). Over the course of several years, the research team conducted interviews, focus groups, and surveys with hundreds of community members. As the professional Black researcher associated with the project, Dr. Drame contributes a chapter that explores the ways that her social location—as an “expert,” a Black woman, and an outsider—shaped the research process. She reflects on the ways that her status as a traditionally trained academic lent her credibility with White partners, while her racial identity helped her to build trusting relationships with Black partners. In addition to Drame’s reflections, Deirdre Johnson-Burel—a native New Orleanian, a Black woman, and the group’s executive director—contributes a chapter. Her account provides another perspective on the role of the PAR project in catalyzing change in her community.

The second case, “All-Out War: Fighting Against the White Appropriation of Jailed Wisdom” describes a short-lived university-community

collaborative research project that took place in the Philadelphia–New Jersey–Delaware region. The project engaged formerly incarcerated school noncompleters in an investigation of the root causes of Philadelphia’s “drop-out crisis” (p. 77). This project was dreamed up by two White researchers—the first with a connection to a major university and the second with a connection to a for-profit prison company. These two White researchers recruited Dr. Irby to lead the study, and he, in turn, recruited Dr. Lynnette Mawhinney (a Black colleague and chapter author) to join the research team. The project consisted of 15 in-depth life history interviews and a series of iterative focus groups. Unfortunately, it did not make it past the initial pilot study. Dr. Mawhinney’s chapter discusses the events that led up to the project’s termination and explores the concept of *active nonparticipation* as a resistance strategy (p. 183). In this case, the Black professional researchers employed several different tactics to sabotage the study to “diminish the exploitative treatment of the participants and [them]selves” (p. 107). One of those participants, Mr. Gerald Bolling, authors the third chapter. His reflections analyze the macro- and micro-power dynamics of the project. In Mr. Bolling’s words, “we can never underestimate the importance of who’s in charge” (p. 98).

The third and final case is titled “Eradicating the Waste: Challenging Western Education Dominance in Postcolonial West Africa.” This project’s research team consisted of 10 international middle schoolers and their teachers. Together, they engaged in a multiphase PAR project promoting sustainable development and environmentalism in Dakar, Senegal. One highlight of this case is a chapter co-written by three of the project’s youth researchers. They discuss tensions between the members of the research team, their fellow students, and their teachers, concluding that, in the end, “[the research team] couldn’t help change peoples’ lifestyles because they never wanted to take responsibility for their actions” (p. 156). In the chapter that follows, Dr. Dominique Duval-Diop reflects on the ways her own biases affected the research process. Through this self-reflexive critique, she highlights the reality that Black professional researchers are capable of perpetuating oppressive systems and she urges the reader not to neglect the hard, but essential work of “look[ing] inward” (p. 178).

Throughout these candid reflections, gaps emerged between the lofty ethical and theoretical commitments of critical race theory and PAR and the actual implementation of the projects they described. For example, in all three cases, community-researchers express ambivalence over the projects’ modest outcomes. In the words of Mrs. Johnson-Burel, “I can point to a few solid policy wins . . . however, there is still significant ground to cover” (p. 51). This is not to say that the projects were unsuccessful, but only that what emerges from

these accounts is the reality that PAR is no silver bullet for educational inequity. As another example, in only one case was the project initiated by community members. The other two projects were heavily steered by the interests of the professional researchers, who recruited participants with a clear picture of the topic, research questions, and methods already in mind. And based on the chapters written by the community researchers they recruited, it is unclear whether these areas of interest would have emerged organically had community-based coresearchers been engaged in the research process from the very beginning. Gerald Bolling's chapter, for example, seldom references school noncompletion. Instead, his analysis focuses on the challenges of reentry and the broader work of criminal justice reform.

These gaps provided valuable insight into the very real challenges of alternative, emancipatory approaches to education research. Altogether, what emerged is a realistic portrait of what it looks like when Black researchers employ the tools of participatory research toward struggles for social justice and Black liberation. These accounts lay bare the jagged imperfections of praxis, and are perhaps more useful to emerging researchers than the glossy, round-edged theory that is often found in textbooks. The examples of BPR presented in this book are honest, sobering, and beautiful.

Irby and Drame open the book with a statement about their shared commitment to self-determination as Black-identified researchers. This book is an expression of that commitment. Before embarking on their respective projects, they "had no examples of the critical reflexivity required to heal [them]selves from *researching while Black* (as researchers and Black folks)" (p. 5). There was nothing in the literature that addressed "the race-specific issues [they] experienced" (p. 5). Faced with this gap, they put together a volume that provided the very examples they needed. As a Black doctoral student, embarking on a PAR dissertation project, I am grateful for this contribution. Before this book, I too was facing the paucity of examples of Black-BPR to learn from and wrestle with. I could not see my concerns, questions, struggles reflected in the PAR literature and I questioned whether my research really belonged under the umbrella of collaborative, community-engaged education research. Not anymore.

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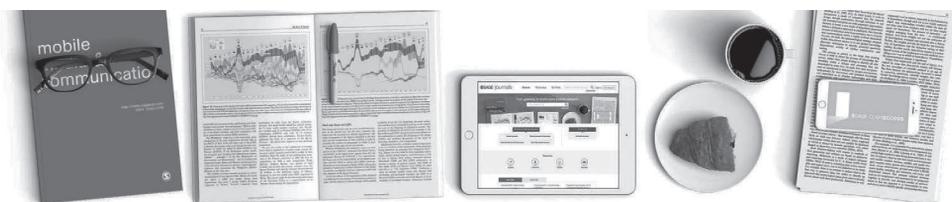
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