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Mentoring in Research-Practice Partnerships: Toward Democratizing Expertise

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Reconceiving relationships between universities, schools, and community organizations through research-practice partnerships, and building capacity for partnership work, necessarily entails rethinking the mentorship of graduate students. In this article, we describe our findings on what mentorship looks like in a now 9-year RPP focusing on educational equity through participatory approaches. The authors include the two project principal investigators and three doctoral students who participated at different stages of the project, one of whom is now a faculty member. In our analysis, we identify dimensions of a more horizontal form of mentorship, involving qualities and skills that extend beyond traditional practices of academic apprenticeship: universalizing who is an intellectual, cultivating community responsiveness, implementing collective structures and protocols, and constructing a shared vision. Our findings shift conceptions of mentorship from individual apprenticeship into a narrowly defined discipline to a collective undertaking that aims to democratize expertise and enact a new vision of the public scholar.

Keywords: *mentoring, research-practice partnerships, participatory methodologies, equity, immigrant students and families*

Research-practice partnerships (RPPs) call on forms of professional knowledge that may have traditionally been less visible or valued in the academy. Collaborative research teams are engaged in deeply relational intellectual and emotional labor: They have to develop methodological sensibilities and skills that are attentive to issues of power and have to negotiate social and institutional boundaries. Many times, they have to work beyond ascribed university roles in order to create new opportunities for cooperative knowledge production and action in schools and communities. RPPs also require a pragmatic problem solving and improvisational sensibility. This paradigm of community-engaged scholarship calls for thinking about graduate student mentorship differently and more expansively.

A moment from a recent academic conference crystalizes the dilemmas and promises of mentorship in RPPs. Our university-based research team was presenting on a panel titled, "Partnering With Immigrant Communities: Critical Inquiries Into Educational (In)Equities," sharing insights from our 9-year RPP on educational access. The youth in our partnership had been using the arts as a vehicle for research; when Dee joined the project as a new graduate student, his background as a filmmaker and cofounder of an educational nonprofit helped spark a new creative avenue for the collaboration. Dee was also able to connect with the youth on a personal level when he opened up to them about his own experiences as a transnational student from sub-Saharan Africa. To engage in community-based research (CBR) with young people and their families at our partnering organization, Dee drew on aspects of his professional and personal background. As he remarked to the conference audience, CBR partnerships necessitated that he bring *his whole self* into the work.

For the graduate students who have been involved in our RPP, drawing on one's "whole self" has meant not suppressing other aspects of one's identity—as an artist, activist, educator,

or cultural being—in order to conduct research intended to make an impact beyond the walls of the university, an orientation which challenges dominant approaches to academic socialization. We have found that RPPs bring to the fore the tensions and possibilities of becoming a community-engaged scholar, as graduate students grapple with the interplay between their knowledge and interests, the expectations of the academy, and the concerns and goals of research partners.

In this article, we describe findings on what mentorship looks like in an RPP focusing on educational equity. The authors include the two principal investigators and three doctoral students who participated at different stages of the project, one of whom is now a faculty member. We explore how graduate students draw on their identities and commitments as they simultaneously learn to navigate, and sometimes resist, practices and systems of graduate education. We argue for collective structures and forms of mentorship that redistribute intellectual authority to serve the goals of both research and practice.

Research-Practice Partnerships and Community-Based Research

RPPs across methodological approaches share a focus on collaboration to affect practice as related to the particular issues facing the partnering organization, and a commitment to "codesign" (Penuel, Coburn, & Gallagher, 2013; Santo, Ching, Peppler, & Hoadley, 2018) through building trusting relationships and the equitable sharing of ideas. Our partnership draws on traditions of practitioner research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) and CBR. These orientations see theory and practice as intertwined activities rather than as "discrete phenomena that must then later be translated into one another or sutured together" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 3). Within our context, the collaborative work entails members of the RPP together engaging in research *and* practice as they seek to better understand and take action on barriers to educational access. Table 1 further details this CBR lens.

A salient challenge of CBR partnerships has been the power differentials between (and within) research institutions and communities (Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 1998), which is often amplified when working with people, schools, and organizations whose knowledge has historically been devalued. One way in which CBR seeks to address this challenge is through democratizing the research process. As such, the focus for improving practice is not a specific educational program, curriculum, or area of emphasis developed a priori by university researchers but rather the opportunity to invite those most directly affected by educational inequities to collaborate on research: to investigate and generate knowledge about questions that matter to them and create educational arrangements more conducive to their academic flourishing. These characteristics align with goals that RPPs "conduct rigorous research to inform action" (Henrick, Cobb, Penuel, Jackson, & Clark, 2017, p. 24) and "develop identities that value engaging in sustained inquiry with one another" (Henrick et al., 2017, p. 25).

Partnership Overview

The RPP featured in this article is a now 9-year collaboration between university faculty and a Catholic parish, school, and nonprofit community center situated in a multiethnic neighborhood (Campano, Ghiso, & Welch, 2016). The RPP supports diverse families, including those of Indonesian, Vietnamese, Latinx, Cambodian, and African American descent, with educational access across the city, and has served as a unique opportunity to investigate problems faced by immigrant populations and families of color as they strive for greater educational opportunities. Jointly designed studies (Table 2) are the product of ongoing dialogue about what obstacles to educational access families are facing, and how we might attend to these issues together in ways that benefit the local community.

Before launching any research initiatives, Gerald and María Paula spent over a year at the site, attending events, listening to leaders about their own goals, and supporting existing educational programing. Their intellectual and emotional investments in the project stem from their own backgrounds—María Paula immigrated from Argentina as a child and Gerald has one European immigrant parent and another who is a Filipino New Yorker with ancestral roots in Mindanao. They both were teachers of children with transnational backgrounds. When they first developed the partnership, they wanted to foster a context where members of the research team—faculty, graduate students, and community members alike—could be part of a shared experience while simultaneously having the opportunity to cultivate their own research interests.

Our RPP draws on theoretical frameworks that seek to disrupt hierarchies of knowledge. In particular, feminist epistemologies and realist theories of identity (Alcoff, 2006; Mohanty, 1997; Moya, 2002) underscore the importance of centering the perspectives and experiences of nondominant communities in projects of social transformation. Mohanty (2018) argues that identities are "claims about a system of social relations and about the world in which the relations among groups are shaped and defined" (p. 422). Through reflexive inquiry, members of minoritized groups have an epistemic privilege or advantage (Moya, 2002) in arriving at more accurate understandings of social inequities. Our partnership has sought to recognize and learn from the epistemic resources of community members and leaders, and to foreground shared decision making. This stance also includes valuing the perspectives of graduate students on the research team.

Henrick et al. (2017) have identified "building capacity . . . to engage in partnership work" as a key part of a framework for assessing the effectiveness of RPPs. As such, academic mentorship must be reconceptualized to foreground

TABLE 1
Intersection of Research-Practice Partnerships (RPPs) and Community-Based Research

Characteristics of RPPs (Coburn & Penuel, 2016, p. 48)	Manifestations in Community-Based Research
Long-term commitments with multiple projects rather than a single study	The length of a project is not determined by the cycle of research, but by the urgencies and social justice struggles faced by partners. Timetables for participation are also sensitive to the precarity of people's lives.
Focus on problems of practice rather than "gaps" in existing research	Disrupts research-practice binaries—not only do practitioners take on roles as researchers but researchers also have a "practice" which they systematically investigate alongside community partners.
Mutuality; work is jointly designed and there is shared authority	Pedagogy and research priorities are negotiated between participants. Because the roles of "researcher" and "practitioner" are intentionally blurred, codesign may entail not just researching an initiative or reform effort but also participating to design and implement alternatives.
Use of intentional strategies to foster partnership	Norms and structures of participation are viewed through the lens of power and are codesigned with partners. Thus, it is not solely university researchers who establish or monitor roles and routines.
Original data collection and analysis	Instruments themselves come under scrutiny and are not taken as "neutral"; multiperspectival data interpretation is foregrounded.

the sensitivities and skills needed for collaborative research. Graduate students involved in RPPs do not just spend time in classrooms and libraries, and they are not detached researchers evaluating the impact of particular pedagogies or carrying out predetermined research agendas. They must be actively engaged in working alongside partners to inquire into pressing concerns as identified in local contexts. This entails rethinking the research process, including how to generate research questions, codesign a study focus, interpret data through multiple perspectives, and interrogate what constitutes validity. Research on building and sustaining RPPs has hitherto focused on challenges, with little written on the effort required to forge successful partnerships on a daily and long-term basis. In this article, we take up the call for "studies of partnership dynamics" (Coburn & Penuel, 2016, p. 52) from the vantage point of the university, to better understand the types of mentoring experiences needed to prepare graduate students for RPPs.

Mentorship and Changing Research Paradigms

One of the most in-depth proposals on academic mentoring comes from The Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate (CID), a 5-year project sponsored by The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The CID sought to explore doctoral education in a number of disciplines, including education, and to distill recommendations for preparing "stewards of the discipline," persons who are "first and foremost scholars" who "can be entrusted with the vigor, quality, and integrity of the field" (Golde, Bueschel, Jones, & Walker, 2006, p. 2). The project was intended as one starting point for "continuing discussion and renewal, so that improving doctoral education becomes an ongoing mission" (Jackson, 2003, p. 568). In this spirit of discussion and renewal, it is worth looking back at the CID from a contemporary vantage point, with specific regard to how the education field has evolved and its implications for mentoring.

At the time of the CID, maintaining the integrity of the discipline was considered an endeavor largely internal to academic structures, thereby implicitly reinforcing the boundaries between the *inside* of the university and the *outside* of the broader community, including school districts and neighborhood organizations. The CID recommendations with respect to mentorship therefore reinforce long-standing university hierarchies. For example, the valuable recommendation to "reappropriate" apprenticeship through "apprenticeship pedagogy," still maintains the fixed status of the "mentors," the faculty members, and "mentees," the students. Similarly, recommendations around fostering intellectual community define the academic department as the community, which does not include those outside of the university, such as teachers, school leaders, youth and families, and others who live, for example, in the neighborhoods surrounding our own respective institutions, and are often the "subjects" of educational research. While many of the qualities of a robust intellectual community that the CID identifies are ones we endorse as well—an emphasis on inclusivity, respect, collegiality, transparency, and trust—it does presuppose institutions that genuinely support and value mentorship as part of the promotion and tenure process. In less than ideal conditions, mentorship may be still thought of as an ancillary to the "real" work of research and knowledge production.

The increased attention to RPPs is challenging the idea that gains are made simply as a result of researchers transmitting knowledge to be executed by practitioners with "fidelity." Instead, there is greater attention to how university-based researchers negotiate their own positions in relation to, and in dialogue with, the communities with

TABLE 2
Research-Practice Partnership (RPP) Subinquiries Around Educational Access

RPP Inquiry	Year(s)	Inquiry Focus
Research group meetings	1–9	Community-based research approaches, learning from community groups
Co-facilitation of community events	1–2	Learning about community priorities and dialoguing about next steps
Afterschool comics club for elementary students	2–4	Engaging youth in instruction that leveraged their out-of-school interests to provide access to the academic curriculum
ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) class with Latina mothers and young children	2–4	Collaboratively designed bilingual English-Spanish class where children and families helped each other learn language and literacy as informed by the systemic issues affecting families' participation in school
ESOL class with adults	5–6	Work of the ESOL class carried over to a cross-cultural model; coteaching dimension added with center volunteer
Action research with Indonesian parents	3	Immigrant families' investigation of the city's high school admissions process due to concerns with school choice and access
Youth research group	4–9	Participatory research on social justice issues in the community
Inquiry into college with children	4	Investigating college culture and facilitating access in local university
Inquiry into college with adolescents	7–9	Investigating issues of access in the college admission process; support on applications paired with equity-oriented research
Intergenerational inquiry into educational access with Indonesian and Latinx youth and families	6–9	Coinvestigating how families and youth navigate the educational system, the challenges they face in these efforts, and what actions can be taken to improve access

Note. Unless otherwise noted, inquiries were cross-cultural.

which they are engaged. These initiatives are indebted to long-standing, but often marginalized, scholarly traditions such as practitioner research (e.g., Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009), participatory research (e.g., Cahill, 2007; Mirra, García, & Morrell, 2015), as well as feminist of color (Collins, 1989; Delgado Bernal, 1998), decolonial, and indigenous (Beeman-Cadwallader, Quigley, & Yazzie-Mintz, 2012; Smith, 1999) intellectual legacies that seek to redistribute expertise and foster sustained partnerships that honor the dignity and knowledge of all individuals involved. This body of scholarship becomes all the more urgent as universities attempt to address and redress their own implication in histories of colonialism, slavery, and their modern-day manifestations in gentrification, exploitive research agendas, and toxic campus climates (e.g., Alcoff, 2017; Cantor & Lavine, 2016). While many universities, including our own, have long-standing initiatives to foster civic and community engagement, there are renewed efforts to understand this work through a critical lens (Kinloch, Nemeth, & Patterson, 2015). Increasingly, community organizations are also refusing or setting the terms of research partnerships (Rusoja, 2017), a rational response to the reality that, too often, researchers extract data and leave, to the benefit of academics but not the community itself.

Given these trends, it is becoming harder to conceptualize mentoring outside of its concrete material and political contexts, where issues of power come into sharper relief. While RPPs are not a panacea, their grounding in an ethos of mutuality may make them better positioned to attend to these systemic inequities. We argue that in our efforts to create more open dialogue between universities and communities, mentorship became central to research and to maintaining the integrity of the discipline. This is especially if we (re)define integrity to include the need to be more accountable to the real people we collaborate with and speak about, and who are now part of our broader intellectual community.

A broader intellectual community requires a more expansive conceptualization of mentorship. Traditionally, the term mentor has been applied to two-person relationships where one person is "expert" and the other "novice," with the novice growing under the guidance and support of their mentor (Crow, 2012). Our own understanding of mentorship, by contrast, resonates with Rogoff's (1994) idea of a community of learners, which is grounded in a theory of learning as participation in "structuring a shared endeavor" (p. 213). According to Rogoff, this type of learning environment changes from a "dyadic relationship between teachers . . . and students . . . to complex group relations among class members who learn to take responsibility for their contribution for their own learning and the group's functioning" (p. 214). Utilizing a community of learners framing with regard to academic mentorship challenges a unidirectional approach of acquiring research skills, as students are not just empty vessels to be apprenticed into the field. But it also does not deny expertise or the epistemic privilege that may derive from one's professional experiences or cultural identity.

Within our own institutional context, there is a tradition of students working within research teams that are oriented toward a shared activity—in our case, the RPP as a collaborative project directed toward educational change. Learning

how to become a researcher entails participation in communities of inquiry (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009), where a synergy between diverse forms of expertise and ongoing individual and collective learning fuel the research process. Adopting an inquiry stance into the process also means intentionally interrogating the larger sociopolitical contexts of education and research itself.

Methodology

Having identified that mentoring graduate students to engage in CBR was becoming a central aspect of our work, we sought to look more systematically across the partnership to investigate this empirically. We asked the following research questions:

1. **Research Question 1:** What approaches to mentoring graduate students have been present and/or developed over the span of the partnership?
2. **Research Question 2:** What are the characteristics of these mentoring approaches?
3. **Research Question 3:** What tensions arise?

To address these questions, we analyzed a subset of the qualitative data from the overall project that focused specifically on the workings and discussions of the university-based research team. Our data set consisted of the following sources: (1) Research team meeting notes (MN) compiled since the inception of the partnership, totaling 156 single-spaced pages. Meetings occurred for 2 hours approximately once per week during the academic year and every 2 to 3 weeks during the summer break, and were oriented to grappling with different aspects of conducting research, including data collection and analysis; (2) collaboratively constructed planning documents for facilitating CBR, as these artifacts were indicators of our ongoing considerations and questions regarding partnership work; (3) data from intentional mentorship events, such as group research retreats or preparations to make the work public (e.g., publications, conferences, community presentations). For each of these events, we compiled relevant artifacts, such as e-mail communications, readings/handouts, photographs, and chart paper notes from group discussions; (4) research team member perspectives on mentoring, elicited through one-on-one interviews as well as a collaborative discussion held at our partnership organization (see online Appendix A). The collaborative discussion included both university-based members of the research team as well as youth and families from the partnership; (5) finally, because the authors of this article are members of the research team, we also wrote memos capturing our own experiences in the RPP in relationship to the interview questions.

We relied on a grounded theory analytic approach (Strauss & Corbin, 2015), with a particular emphasis on constructivist and social justice iterations of this method (Butler-Kisber, 2018; Charmaz, 2018), which highlight self-reflexivity, situated interpretation, and power dynamics. We paired our inductive coding with theories that emphasize systems of oppression, as well as insights from the research literature about the informal, organic, and relational aspects of mentoring. We complemented our investigation with discourse analysis methods attentive to the interplay between macro-level meanings and micro-level interactions (Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto, & Shuart-Faris, 2005; Gee, 2014; Rogers, 2011). Our data analysis process is described in further detail in Appendix B.

Findings

We identified four mentoring priorities in our analysis: universalizing who is an intellectual; cultivating community responsiveness; implementing collective structures and protocols; and constructing a shared vision—all of which required attention to issues of power (see Table 3 for coding overview). Below, we describe each of these areas through illustrative examples from our data set, highlighting graduate students' perspectives on salient dimensions of mentorship as well examples from research meetings and activities that speak to how these approaches were enacted and negotiated interactively.

Universalizing Who Is an Intellectual

Our partnership and, by extension, our mentorship seek to disrupt notions of knowledge as solely generated in the academy and transmitted to sites of practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009)—a take-away noted by graduate students in their interviews and reflections, and a central discussion node in research team meetings. As one former student commented,

> It's really taking a stance that not one person knows everything. We have to position ourselves as experts in the things we know, and position community members as experts on the things they know, and also be open and vulnerable to the things we don't know, things we have a lot to learn about.

Another student described both the importance of this principle and the dissonances she felt with regard to other research paradigms:

> I'm thinking about the emphasis of epistemic privilege and this idea that everyone is a valid theorist and has experience. . . . In a lot of traditional paradigms of research or even in my qualitative methods course, it really locates the power of interpretation in one person, in the researcher, and in the researchers' toolkit, where the ethnographer goes out and makes observations and draws conclusions. But a lot of the material, activities, and discussions that we've tried to integrate, especially in the youth researchers group, have really been about creating the conditions where students can theorize about their own experience and having that be part of the methodology.

The epistemological and methodological shift in the locus of interpretation exists in tension with paradigms that view

TABLE 3
Description of Mentoring Approaches

Forms of Mentoring	Descriptions	Issues of Power
Universalizing who is an intellectual (UI)	Valuing community expertise, including theoretical, cultural, and activist legacies	Challenging hierarchies that locate the university as the center of knowledge production
Cultivating community responsiveness (CR) • Communication (CR-C) • Scheduling (CR-S) • Care (CR-Cr) • Requests (CR-R)	Attending to community realities and perspectives • Grappling with logistics of communication • Undertaking community-sensitive scheduling • Cultivating affective bonds, empathy, and support • Understanding and responding to broader context of community needs and priorities	Seeing research as imbricated in community concerns, which drive the research process; being self-reflexive about the methodological impositions of research and the power dynamics of partnering, such as systemic inequities that affect communities
Implementing collective structures and protocols (CSP)	Developing formal and informal mechanisms of support that foreground collaboration	Creating dialogic structures that support collective sense making throughout the research process
Constructing a shared vision (SV) • Individual expertise (SV-I) • Consensus building (SV-CB)	Negotiating collective research directions • Valuing the talents and interests of individuals • Foregrounding collectivity and compromise	Co-constructing research designs to prioritize community knowledge and concerns; negotiating individual research interests within collective vision

research as the purview of academic spaces. Outside the research team, graduate students were receiving messages that valued a more distant researcher with the power to interpret phenomena and draw conclusions through the application of research tools. Community-based RPPs instead entail creating the conditions for collaborative research, which pervades all methodological considerations. That means that not only is the research focus arrived at collectively but that community partners play a central role in collecting and analyzing data, and in representing the findings. As one former graduate student described, "I'm trying to do my best not to come in with an analytic grid and plop it down on top of [the context], and then leave." Part of mentorship in our RPP has involved creating opportunities for data analysis with youth and community members, which communicate the importance of going beyond "member checking" to develop methodological approaches that center collaborative sense making.

In our research team, the orientation of universalizing who has knowledge is threaded throughout our work in concrete ways, a topic we frequently return to when planning for inquiry sessions, debriefing, analyzing data, and grappling with dissonances that arise. Early on in our work, María Paula and Gerald wanted to get a sense of the activist landscape of our city and learn from those who had been fighting for immigrant rights for decades; thus, we invited different grassroots organizations to speak to our research team (Artifact, 3/30/11). This process was facilitated by one of the doctoral students who herself was a long-time Asian American activist in the city and was well connected to these advocacy networks. Meeting notes such as the excerpt below capture the dynamics of these conversations (MN, 3/29/12).

> Organization leader: [The issues] extend beyond the immigration community; the failing education system fails all youth (that as a shared experience); there is oppression to communities (via closure of fire stations, school budget cuts; meanwhile, money is going toward prisons). Documented vs. undocumented labels create divisions; e.g. certain laws that benefit only certain groups or documented immigrants. These are labels given by government. There is pushback from national groups who are trying to go for the low hanging fruit—legislation that's divisive, rather than work across boundaries. Larger human rights issues . . . [our] organization isn't a relationship of convenience. Really fighting together for human rights.
>
> Alicia: How do you build those relationships?
>
> Organization leader: Meet each others' families, formal/informal activities, trips. Relationships shifted the frame of these issues in [our city]. DREAM Act advocates now realize that ~66% of immigrant youth wouldn't even qualify for the provisions under that act.
>
> Gerald: . . . I teach a course for district administrators, principals. What's important for teachers/educators/administrators to know? What should I convey to them?

As part of this conversation with the research team, community leaders shared the issues facing youth and families, especially the criminalization of immigrant populations and the ICE raids and deportations occurring across the city, and made links to broader social dynamics such as the erosion of public education ("failing education system," "school budget cuts"), the prison industrial complex ("money going toward prisons"), and

lack of awareness about the political contexts and imperial wars many immigrants were fleeing. The leaders were also critical of imposed "labels [that] create divisions" and instead strived to "work across boundaries" for "larger human rights issues." Theorizing human rights and coalitional work have been a central feature of our RPP (Campano, Ghiso, Rusoja, Player, & Schwab, 2016). These ideas were not introduced by us—rather, they were important intellectual discussions already occurring in the community.

Rather than a particular, narrowly defined area of study—for example, early childhood or adolescent literacy—graduate students learn to see the interconnected factors that inform educational opportunities in order to anchor the RPP on "key dilemmas and challenges" as experienced on the ground (Coburn & Penuel, 2016, p. 49). Explicitly inviting community members to teach us within the structure of research team meetings models our values of universalizing who is an intellectual. As one former doctoral student put it, this approach to research

> is not really about showing off how clever of how well-read the [individual] researcher is . . . it's participatory, it needs to make sense not just to the researchers . . . it needs to make sense to everyone. . . . It's unpretentious and unpretentiousness is going to cause tensions in the academy.

Cultivating Community Responsiveness

A requirement for successful partnerships is trust and a collective ethos. Mentorship for collaborative research thus involves foregrounding the importance of building reciprocal relationships that are responsive to community needs and circumstances, and making transparent specific practices for enacting participatory research methodologies. A former graduate student emphasizes that "in the past I did see research as less relational" and notes that

> so much about my relationship with [a community leader] as an elder, my relationship with [peers on the research team] as my contemporary sisters, and then with [youth in the RPP] as kind of a big sister role, that's been really important in the research.

The elder referenced above, mentioned across many interviews, is an African American woman who has been part of the RPP since its inception. She regularly opens up her home to university students and researchers, and describes her ethos of building connections: "Community is offering yourself, your home, your food, making people feel comfortable and just sitting down and having a conversation. . . . And that's something I found with our group." These care practices were more than just part of gaining access to a site but were foundational to mentorship about how to carry out community-engaged research. One graduate student recounted how the lunch gatherings helped illuminate community perspectives on the partnership:

> [I]t felt like it came out of nowhere, but now in retrospect I feel like she [community leader] was teaching me how to do research—she said, in the candid way she does, "Nobody cares how many degrees you have after your name, what they care about is that you're a nice person and that you're a person that they can trust." And that really stuck with me.

It was during these informal lunch conversations that issues of educational equity arose organically. Relationship building through informal gatherings and long-term connections was central to understanding how to carry out partnership research. Learning about and helping address the issues facing partners was not data accessed solely through researcher-driven surveys or interviews but information that unfolded over time as relationships deepened.

As reflected in our subcodes, mentorship that cultivated community responsiveness included (1) fostering communication, (2) negotiating scheduling, (3) viewing care as part of the research process, and (4) being attentive to community requests. These are interwoven in our research meeting discussions, as illustrated below (MN, 9/10/14):

> [Doctoral Student 1] will get in touch with [the principal] again this week to see what's up about the robotics project at the school. [Doctoral Student 2] suggests [Doctoral Student 1] goes to the school and talks with [him] for a few minutes instead of scheduling ahead of time (lesson she learned from past years coordinating with the school).

> [Doctoral Student 2] and [Masters Student 1] remind us that if gatherings take place in the evening, we need to have childcare. Emily suggests we can provide childcare ourselves, taking turns.

> Other issues to consider are: interpretation/translation, inclusive scheduling, perhaps having a repeat of some sessions so that if people miss one they could make it up at an additional time OR some other creative way in which not everyone has to make it to all sessions.

The varied contributors in this brief passage point to how mentorship within the RPP was collectively generated. As graduate students and professors planned logistics for jointly designing and carrying out research, they shared information and ideas for aligning research with responsiveness to community collaborators. The image of graduate students thinking about day care, concerned about the schedules of community members who often work long or unpredictable hours, in general trying to be attentive to the social and political precarity experienced on the ground, are sensitivities are not typically considered integral to socialization into the academy. Such often-devalued relational labor (Collins, 1989) has been what has sustained a trusting partnership for nearly a decade. It also plays an important epistemic role in helping graduate students have a more immediate understanding of the lived experiences of families, a research orientation which informs the methodological practices of their own dissertations and the research relationships they develop after graduation.

Research does not occur in a vacuum, and institutional practices at both the university and the school/community context affect the collaboration. One tension that all members of the research team have had to negotiate has been the mismatch between the timetables for academic work and the slow scholarship of CBR, both concretely and also with regard to the wider implications about what it means to be a "researcher." In our RPP, collaboration happens primarily in the late evenings, weekends, and throughout the summer to ensure consistency and participation among all involved. As a research team, we spend time coordinating calendars and rotating responsibilities so that the partnership can thrive (e.g., Summer Calendar Artifact, 5/28/12; MNs, 4/12/16; 6/1/17).

Being immersed in the RPP from the beginning of their graduate school experience, students are directly involved in enacting research approaches that at times run counter to academic socialization into more positivist paradigms. A tension highlighted across our interviews is the disconnect between the relational skills required to conduct research in RPPs, and the practices and values regarding research that are prioritized in the university. One doctoral student shared the challenges of balancing research "guided by pragmatic concerns and very real community needs" with academic expectations for becoming "a scholar with a capital S." Another remarked how research paradigms not centered on joint work operate on more rapid timetables, which confer greater status.

> Other research teams are able to produce things more quickly—writing, findings, projects. University structures aren't built to support community work. So much labor is going into changing these structures that you're exhausted. Faculty are not rewarded for taking the time to shift structures. That's unpaid, invisible labor, and it's falling so much on people of color.

The exhaustion comes from efforts to make partnership research intelligible to university audiences, and from negotiating the perspectives, concerns, and realities of the various RPP stakeholders. The toll is felt by members of the research team as we work together to navigate institutional bureaucracies in order to be responsive to our partners. For example, the above student went on to describe "the obstacles of enrolling families in conferences" when wanting to honor them as research partners while being attentive to the prohibitively high cost of attendance, and the "obstacles with compensation" for individuals from mixed-status families. All members of the research team have played a hands-on role in helping resolve issues we encounter.

Implementing Collective Structures and Protocols

The sensibilities described in the previous sections are in part developed through participation in a number of collective structures and protocols. These touchstone experiences refashion the mentor-mentee dyad, often centered within the realm of the university, toward a collaborative practice that is in dialogic relationship with our partners.

An essential aspect of doctoral student socialization involves intergenerational mentoring. During the university's prospective student weekend, current doctoral students meet with applicants to discuss the work of the research team. Once a new doctoral student has been accepted to the program, they are assigned between 10 and 20 hours as part of their research assistantship to work on a research project, and in our RPP they spend significant time with an advanced doctoral student becoming immersed in the partnership community, attending events together, visiting community leaders, and supporting ongoing initiatives. Every summer, for example, we host a partnership picnic to celebrate our work together and provide opportunities for relationship building in a leisurely setting. This initial investment in relationships sets the conditions for collaborative inquiry. A former graduate student summarized her experience joining the research team as a new doctoral student and becoming immersed in the partnership:

> It was a really important model for me, in terms of thinking about how you are thoughtful and planful and have goals and at the same time, aren't entering the research with these assumptions about what the focus should be. It was an ongoing process with the youth, with the parents, with [3 advanced graduate students] . . . it was incredibly collaborative in multiple directions.

Part of the model of mentorship we have developed over the years is a community of inquiry guided by intergenerational learning. As graduate students and community members get to know one another, often a creative alchemy is developed between their respective talents and interests, which may eventually translate into more substantive research project.

Second-year doctoral students have the opportunity to allocate 5 hours a week of their research assistantship toward designing a pilot project intended as an initial exploration of their own emerging research questions and potential dissertation interests. It is also during their first or second year that they take a doctoral seminar, taught by Gerald, which invites them to explore epistemological, methodological, and ethical considerations in participatory research. During the seminar, as well as in other coursework, students on the research team often link their assignments to the ongoing work with our partnership organization.

If a doctoral student is interested in conducting their dissertation research within our RPP, they have to present their proposal to a panel composed of leaders from its various cultural and linguistic communities, what we have called the Education and Research Committee. The panel serves as a sort of community institutional review board, ensuring greater transparency and offering important feedback. In reflecting on his presentation to the committee, one doctoral student recounted,

> It felt like there was never one access point [to the research], there are always 8 ways in, and they ended up coalescing in my project. . . . Needing to demonstrate all these community connections wasn't just something I was doing for the project . . . it was really important to me to demonstrate that the work I wanted to do formally for my research was part of my ongoing community relationship.

These comments underscore the long-term and collective process of relationship building. The expectation that students write up and discuss the research proposal with community members (see Appendix C) is a mechanism for making visible the relationships they have cultivated over the years, and the ways that their research is attuned to community concerns and needs. By the time a student begins dissertation research, carving out their own work from the larger collaboration, they would have already spent about 3 years immersed at the site developing relationships and trust with families, conducting research alongside side them, and being part of a cross-institutional partnership composed of individuals from diverse backgrounds that is grappling with what it means to be engaged in community-based inquiry. When students defend their dissertations, there is an event to celebrate their learning alongside the community and bring proper closure to their many years at the site.

Another pivotal experience for many graduate students is when they have the opportunity to share research findings alongside community members at a conference, which has happened on average two to three times per year, including at venues such as the Ethnography in Education Forum and the American Educational Research Association (AERA). For example, during the 2018 AERA conference in New York city, over 30 parents and youth from our RPP—working closely with doctoral students—shared their research findings on issues related to educational equity and access to roughly 150 attendees. The assigned room was too small for such an audience, so the crowd decided to "occupy" the hallways of the AERA conference center. The successful and poignant event, a "constructive disruption" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 86) of academic culture, underscored for several doctoral students the urgency and value of CBR and the need to have a greater range of voices represented at professional conferences. We are also currently at the stage of doing collaborative writing for academic journals that involve graduate students as well as community partners.

Yet these experiences also raise tensions—for example, the challenges of bringing community partners to present with us at conferences; the dissonances of "speaking for others" (Alcoff, 1991) when their attendance is not possible; and the emotional and financial costs of participation. As one former student characterizes it, "I started to not go to conferences because it was so expensive. . . . That made me feel left out of academia, it felt pretty unfair. And also people who are going, they're making a huge sacrifice for themselves." In academia, conferences often become a way to network with others and showcase individual expertise, yet these practices present obstacles when viewed through the lens of power that is so central to CBR—who has access to these resources, whose knowledge is represented, and who these scholarly markers benefit. These struggles are amplified with community members who live under conditions of severe economic precarity.

As we increasingly go public with our scholarship through collaborative writing, new tensions arise. For example, Emily reflects, "My colleagues and I feel pressure to produce academic research in a way that can detract from meaningful partnership work that needs sustained investment over long periods of time." And a former student wonders "how many new professors feel that they don't have the option of developing community partnerships if they are receiving the message that says, 'publish, publish, publish.'" Even as there are no easy solutions, students are involved in thinking through and interrogating these tensions.

Constructing a Shared Vision

A goal of community-based RPPs is to create a shared project that responds to the issues and concerns raised by members of partnering organizations, which has involved valuing individual expertise as well as seeking consensus. Students learn directly from community partners about problems of practice, and grapple with how these needs and perspectives relate to academic norms and their own interests. Take the following excerpt, where Dee describes how he is thinking about his own dissertation research within the context of the RPP:

> For me, being there now for almost two years, one thing that I've been thinking about is how to originate my research interests . . . how do I negotiate the place where I can conduct research that I like, but that is also something that the community members would want. . . . You're doing the lit review, you find a gap. And then you suddenly go to the community to investigate it. But that may not be what they want to talk about, or what they want to do, even that they are unconcerned with this. . . . It's a kind of challenge, because the academy has certain demands. The community has certain demands, I can't just go force my ideas on them.

This vignette captures the ways that students are thinking through core questions about what it means to do research with and alongside others. Part of becoming a scholar is making an argument for a particular program of research, and one need only look at a sampling of qualitative research handbooks or dissertation guides to notice how framings of "the problem" a study seeks to address overwhelmingly originate in the existing literature and are then applied to research contexts. RPPs challenge the directionality of this research design, and necessitate thinking about the interplay between one's interests, the body of scholarship within a discipline, and the perspectives and goals of research partners. Community members may be attuned to issues of equity because of their day-to-day struggles that the academy is not

aware of, and therefore may anticipate cutting-edge and urgent areas of study. Within the collective mentoring structures of our research team, graduate students are constantly mediating between community perspectives and what they are learning about a specific discipline. As the above excerpt suggests, this entails a great deal of self-reflexivity about power and the potential imposition of research, as students take an inquiry stance into emerging research foci.

Over the years, we have also created structured opportunities to think together and with community partners about the direction of the RPP. One of these is the research team retreat, which we describe in further detail in online Appendix D. The retreat was established as a means for all members of the research team—faculty, graduate students, staff from our partnering organization, and community members—to critically reflect on our individual backgrounds, take stock of where we had been so far, and revisit and co-construct a shared understanding of the partnership. The idea of the retreat came from Alicia's prior experiences organizing around immigrant rights for 6+ years as part of a popular education organization. Alicia had become acquainted with critical pedagogy tools such as Augusto Boal's Theater of the Oppressed activities (Boal, 2005) and the National Network of Immigrant and Refugee Rights' (2004) popular education curriculum for facilitating conversations on race and immigration—approaches which germinated from legacies of struggle and organizing work in the United States and around the globe. As part of the ethos of the university-based research team, Alicia felt comfortable and empowered to draw on her experiences to propose a structure and direction for our group, and to take a lead role in making it happen. Academic mentoring typically privileges individual performance and feedback. The retreat exemplifies how research in RPPs is very much a collective endeavor where all members of a research team think alongside one another, pooling their individual expertise and learning from others to build shared visions.

Reimagining Mentoring and the Engaged Academic

> My equity-oriented work felt very abstract to me [when coming to graduate school]. . . . There was a need for me to feel like part of a community and that my work as a doctoral student had immediate ramifications. . . . There was definitely this sense of self as a teacher, sense of self as a community activist . . . I was feeling like I also needed some expertise and knowledge on how do you participate in research and research teams, and I did want to be successful on the job market, so it definitely also met that criteria for me. There were two pieces, both of which I was looking for and I was just lucky that they came in the same package. So it wasn't like I had to forsake one for the other, it was more that they were deeply connected. (Interview excerpt)

Like most doctoral students, the ones involved in our RPP are in the process of becoming socialized into the academy and learning about what it means to be a scholar as measured by the profession's standards and forms of distinction. They are in a sense constantly "reading the world" (Freire, 1970) of academy and navigating its processes and milestones, which include successfully completing dissertations and learning how to go public with their research through conferences, publications, and job talks. Since we are housed in academia, being involved in RPPs does not change these realities or the importance of mentoring which prepares them to be "stewards of the discipline" in ways articulated by the CID.

At the same time, most of María Paula's and Gerald's mentees over the years have expressed some degree of ambivalence about academia. In addition to the typical stresses and self-doubts that come with the demands of a doctoral program, they are concerned about having to compromise or repress aspects of their own identities as teachers, activists, artists, and gendered, classed, and racialized cultural beings in order to assimilate into the profession. They desire to bring their "whole selves" into the research. During their 4 to 5 often formative years in the program, the students, alongside members of the research team, are also deepening their understandings of oppression on campus and beyond. Many of the graduate students, as well as the principal investigators, have minoritized identities and are heirs to colonial educational histories that have devalued nondominant and indigenous knowledges. In the process of being mentored into academia, the students are concurrently sustaining an abiding commitment to their own communities, and/or wanting to continue to work in solidarity with others around issues of educational equity, access, and epistemic (in)justice. The community-based RPP has afforded an opportunity for students to grapple with and potentially work through how they can enter into academia on their own terms, and in a manner consonant with their politics and most deeply held values.

While the graduate students gain disciplinary expertise in our program areas, they are also cultivating, collectively, intellectual engagements that spill outside of academic programs and disciplines narrowly conceived. In contrast to many academic programs, where scholarly socialization involves shedding one's previous professional identity, or downplaying an aspect of one's social identity to assimilate into academia, we have found that the most successful graduate students in our RPP draw on and continue to cultivate their interests and political commitments. One student commented on how the collective work of the university-research team helped create an intellectual community that makes more porous social boundaries, such as between research, activism, and practice:

> One thing that has been helpful for me along this process has been having people who come from spaces like mine also be in this space. Being able to talk to Alicia, who's existed in the organizing world I've existed in, and also in the academic world I've existed in . . . when you're in spaces and you're the only person there who comes from a certain background or form of thought, it can be very easy to

> have doubts, and to cast them aside and just say, this doesn't actually matter here.

Graduate students and mentees are not simply adapting to academia, but they are potentially transforming it as well. This happens collectively, as expertise from other arenas pertinent to educational research are not "cast aside" but legitimated, and leveraged to question and reimagine academic practices in ways that, in the words of another graduate student, "enables you to see other ways of being in the academy."

Conclusion

What, then, is the vision of the academic to which we are mentoring? One paradox is that Gerald and María Paula find themselves mentoring doctoral students to become experts in helping democratize expertise. All members of RPPs need to feel as if they can contribute to the project, and graduate students play a key role in creating the conditions for collective knowledge generation. Through the social cooperation involved, everyone has the potential to broaden their expertise and epistemic horizons by working alongside others.

Similar to the CID, students gain disciplinary expertise—in our own case in the interdisciplinary field of literacy. But through community-based research, they continue to cultivate a pedagogical and creative relationship to the discipline, imagining how this expertise can become realized in concrete contexts beyond the program, in places such as our partnership organization, and in relationship to the community members' own interests and literate practices and resources. In addition to being able to negotiate a range of cultural, linguistic, institutional, and class boundaries, academics seeking to engage in RPPs need to gain ever-deepening understandings of the social and political complexities of research and develop a conceptual vocabulary to make an argument about addressing these through participatory methodologies. An openness to learning from others, including from peers on the university research team, requires epistemic humility: ongoing self-reflexivity about the limits of one's own knowledge and assumptions while embracing the importance of multiple perspectives, especially from those who are most directly affected by inequities. It is also the humility to slow the research process (Mountz et al., 2015), to listen carefully to our partners, and not give into the professional pressures to constantly produce and be efficient. There have been many instances in our research team where, in our capacities as academics, teachers, and organizers, we have been individually and collectively too certain in our views and have had to reassess our own understandings in light of new evidence and what we have learned from community members.

Finally, the vision of mentorship may require all members of the research team to be disposed to working within and against academic hierarchies. While we are grateful for the support from colleagues and administrators at our respective institutions, we often have to navigate the logics of elite and increasingly corporate universities. The type of in-depth mentoring involvement—from both faculty and students—described in this article still remains largely invisible intellectual and emotional labor. While there are also many sincere and substantial efforts on our campus to promote RPPs and reimagine the role of the university's engagement with the public, it is very much an open question whether or not RPPs—particularly of the critical participatory variety—will find a comfortable home in academia. But the discomfort is perhaps generative as CBR is in many ways an undercommons (Harney & Moten, 2013), involving constructive disruptions of hierarchical academic culture and creating possibilities to learn from more horizontal relationships and nondominant intellectual traditions in the service of educational equity. We will continue to engage in this work, irrespective of its challenges, as we mentor each other into a new vision of the public scholar, not one who speaks to the public but one who strives to research alongside and in solidarity with the public.

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