University-Community Civic Collaboration: Reaching for Social Justice in University Partnership

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this article is to describe a university-community partnership sponsored by a university office of civic engagement. University-community partnerships are common, but many collaborations are fraught with challenges because of power inequities or differing goals and ways of operating. Aware of the potential pitfalls, the university-community partnership described moved through these issues together, making differences explicit, yet still remaining committed to a larger project and their collaboration.

Keywords: higher education, community-based organizations, civic engagement, activism

INTRODUCTION

The goal of this article is to describe a university-community partnership sponsored by a university office of civic engagement. University-community partnerships are common, but many collaborations are fraught with challenges because of power inequities or differing goals and ways of operating (Glover & Silka, 2013). In particular, power inequities between universities and communities mean that decisions about who sets the agenda, who will own any products produced by the partnership, and who ultimately benefits from a university-community partnership can be made to favor the universities and can threaten the success of the partnership.

Aware of the potential pitfalls, the university-community partners described in this article developed their work together and had common goals, avoiding some of the conflicts to which other partnerships may succumb. Both the university's office of civic engagement and the community partner shared a desire to "develop a sense of involvement, investment, and responsibility" that would benefit both partners (Jacoby et al., 2009, p. 8). Drawing from Dewey's notion of civic engagement, the partnership sought to "engage students in the surrounding community, solve problems, and be collaborative in nature" (Dewey as cited in Lawry, 2006, p. 7). Driven by a common goal to mediate the negative impact of local schools closing in the neighboring city, university and community partners developed a participatory action research (PAR) project to engage the university students more broadly in urban education, as well as to engage the community at large in conversations about urban education, hoping to inspire activism in this area which resulted in a video screened on the university campus and in the community. PAR involves data collection and analysis, but "is a methodological stance rooted in the belief that valid knowledge is produced only in collaboration and in action. It recognizes that those studied harbor critical

social knowledge and must be repositioned as subjects and architects of research" (Torre & Fine, 2009).

While not perfect, the partnership was successful for three reasons: (1) The project focused on an issue that was important to both university and community members, (2) Each began with common understandings and decision-making power in the project, and (3) The product of the partnership was useful to both partners in different ways. To understand, in detail, how this happened, the partners engaged in reflective practice (Cochran-Smith & Donnell, 2006; Schön, 1987) and used narrative inquiry (Reissman, 2008) to analyze the story of how the partnership came to be, how it operated, and the resulting civic engagement project. By examining emails, texts, meeting agendas, and transcripts of semi-structured interviews, this article offers insight into how a successful partnership navigated power differences to meet a common goal.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Civic Engagement

Civic engagement is a broad term that can be defined as anything from voting, to arguing against unjust laws and policies, to generally taking an interest in improving community (Levine, 2015). As defined by Checkoway (2013), "Civic engagement is a process in which people join together and address issues of public concern" (p. 7). In school settings, many activities fall under the umbrella of civic engagement from service learning or community service to student government. Looking at civic engagement in higher education, Jacoby et al. (2009) defines civic engagement as "acting upon a heightened sense of responsibility to one's community including civic sensitivity, participation in building a civil society, and benefitting from the common good. Individuals are empowered as agents of positive social change for a more democratic world" (p. 9). Civic engagement grew on campuses in the 1990s, fueled by the work of Ernest Boyer, who broadened the definition of scholarship to include civic activities (Boyer, 1990). In the mid-1990s, the notion of the "engaged campus" saw a dramatic increase and many campuses launched a series of community partnerships, with support from professional organizations and foundations that also had an interest in improving civic engagement. Perhaps the most well-known efforts were produced by the Center for Community Learning at UCLA and DukeEngage, supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which provided full funding for faculty and students who wanted to take on issues outside of the university (Jacoby et al., 2009).

However, civic engagement remains a general and all-encompassing term that includes projects as disparate as the University of Miami's School of Architecture's Design/Build studio effort to design a mobile kitchen that would be donated to Earth Learning, a nonprofit organization that promotes ecological awareness and teaches farmers about permaculture, to Washington State University's effort to enlist students in serving meals to the homeless over their break from classes. In most cases, there is some benefit to the university and community partner, but the power relationship remains in place. The university maintains its role as the dominant partner, providing service to a community, and boosts its reputation as a good civic partner, while the community partner does not necessarily get an equivalent recognition for its reputation and/or funding. Moreover, efforts like the ones described above provide for a one-time need, but leave structural inequity in place.

The partnership at the center of this study defined civic engagement as Ginwright and Cammarota (2007) do, which is to say as "critical civic praxis." Critical civic praxis is a practice in which people are "engaged with ideas, social networks, and experiences that build individual and collective capacity to struggle for social justice" (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007, p. 693). It is about young people (and people

in general) becoming active participants in making change to structural inequality. Critical civic praxis asks for critical analysis of the social, political, and economic structures maintaining inequality and to generate collective answers to reverse the effects of injustice. Once they identify structural inequity, youth may develop strategies that put pressure on elected officials to respond and undo the structures that continue inequality. These are not notions commonly associated with community partnerships between universities and communities. Universities are not usually engaged in the process of undoing structural inequality, but they can be if the right elements are in place.

University-Community Partnerships

Over time, the thinking around university-community partnership has evolved from thinking about university-driven service learning projects, but even in the 1990s, scholars were pondering the challenges around doing university-community partnership in ways that were mutual and respectful as well as realistic and doable (Baum, 2000; Gelmon & Holland, 1998). They wondered about how much funding was driving community partnership, rather than genuine need, how to make partnership meaningful to communities, and how genuine a partnership could be when institutional power far exceeds that of surrounding communities.

Today, scholars are grappling with many of the same questions. For instance, now there are debates over how to deal with the fraught power inequities and misaligned goals of university partnership. In most cases, the university is often the initiator in these partnerships (Glover & Silka, 2013). Community organizations are the groups that find it more difficult to start a relationship with a university. As Glover and Silka (2013) describe in their research, universities are not easy to access and do not have an obvious "front door." While some universities have addressed this issue by designating offices for university-community partnerships or offices of community or civic engagement, many universities do not have clear contact points, leaving community members without a clear pathway to initiate relationships (Sandmann & Kliewer, 2012).

Moreover, universities and community members frequently begin a partnership with different goals in mind, immediately affecting the future success of the partnership (Glover & Silka, 2013; Sandmann & Kliewer, 2012). For example, a community organization may desire a partnership to solve an immediate need and cannot afford to wait to solve the problem. However, universities are in session during semesters, limiting the availability of staff and students to work on a project. A professor may decide to design a college course around service learning and may use his or her students as important members that drive the community project, but when that semester ends, the student resources end as well (McDonald & Dominguez, 2015). Moreover, if a professor intends to use the partnership as an opportunity to publish research, then the project is immediately placed on specific timeline to collect data and develop the theories behind their work. These are all goals for the university that the community partner may or may not share (Sandmann & Kliewer, 2012).

Clifford and Petrescu (2012) suggest asking two key questions when facing this topic. First, "Are we giving our clients or partners something useful? Are we enhancing their capacity in some way?" (p. 83). This question is not only about the university providing knowledge to the community partner, but asks the university to evaluate if they are providing skills to their partner that will assist them in growing in the future with reduced assistance. Second, "Are we giving the faculty an opportunity to learn something? Do the faculty members further their research agendas in some way?" (p. 83). This question allows the university to ensure that they are benefiting from the relationship as well. It approaches the idea of mutuality in that the university and the

community partner gain from the partnership.

Yet Dostilio (2014) pushes this idea to a new level, suggesting that partnerships be democratic, allowing for a mutually beneficial experience where the university is not presented as sole expert with knowledge. Instead, each partner must be a "co-generator of knowledge" (Dostilio, 2014, p. 235). The partners should establish that they both have knowledge to bring to the partnership and that both parties should have the opportunity to model those skills, thus empowering the entire team (Dostilio, 2014). Partners should consider including these as goals and objectives as a part of the partnership contract established at the beginning of the relationship (Sandmann & Kliewer, 2012; Savage et al., 2011). This kind of approach undergirds engagement in critical civic praxis because it establishes the mutuality and equality in the relationship.

It is not a natural or easy task to get university faculty and community members on equal footing. After all, a university faculty consider themselves experts in their fields of study. However, it is in the decentering of expert that a truly collaborative civic engagement project can occur. To do this, faculty have to feel comfortable with their position (i.e., tenure is not in question), and they need to see the benefit of partnership beyond something that might add to their curriculum vitae.

THE PROJECT: A NEW UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

Alarmed by the significant number of school closings nationally and their disproportionate impact on low-income communities of color, a researcher at her university wondered if there were similar patterns in Baltimore, where the university is located. Researching the issues, she found that all of the Baltimore schools slated for closure were not only in Black neighborhoods, but also in the poorest neighborhoods in the city. She shared this finding with her students in her urban education class who wondered whether this practice was intentional. Rather than write a critique of the school closure plan, she and her students decided to engage in a version of community-based research, and share the initial findings with the community to see if they would be useful to local education advocates. They attended several community meetings in Baltimore, identified via pre-existing relationships that the university professor had with education advocates, where people were discussing education issues in order to find out if this research would be useful to them.

One group that had been interested in school closings was the Baltimore Algebra Project (BAP). BAP is a democratic, student-run and organized program mainly focused on one-on-one tutoring in math at the middle and high school levels. The university researcher had a relationship with the advisor to BAP, a high school math teacher who she met in the course of her research around urban education.

Comprised of Black youth aged 16-24, BAP was particularly concerned about the closings for two reasons. The first was personal, as several of the young people had gone to the schools slated to close. The second was a concern that closing schools would have a negative impact on young Black people in the city, and that this decision would make it even harder for young people to graduate because the schools that they would be sent to would not necessarily be of better quality than the ones they had attended. However, when they raised the issue of the closing schools in the neighborhoods in which they worked, few people seemed to be as concerned as they were.

The university researcher, who was committed to community-engaged research, and her students met with the Algebra Project youth to discuss how, together, they might elevate the issue. BAP suggested that a video with the voices of the teachers, students, and families most affected might convey the issue more than a discussion about the policy itself. Together, they wrote a grant to

the university's office of civic engagement and received funds to create a video based on research they would do as a team to find out how the students, teachers, and families saw the school closings.

The grant allowed the team to pursue a community-engaged research project in which they would use the initial research that the university professor had done using a local database to mine for neighborhood data that provided a statistical picture of the places in which schools were closing across the city.

The second part of the research project, and the subject of this paper, involved the whole group: University students, Algebra Project activists, and the university professor. Together they generated interview questions and a plan to conduct videotaped interviews with teachers, parents, and students impacted by the closing schools throughout the city. When the interviews were complete, the team wove them into a short video that the group created and then screened around the city of Baltimore to interest people in organizing against the school closings. One of the goals of the screenings was to get students, parents, teachers, and community activists to join the Algebra Project in their organizing against school closings.

METHOD: DATA COLLECTION ANALYSIS

This article emerges out of an examination into what worked about the aforementioned university-community partnership research project, what the challenges were, and how it promoted civic engagement and social change. Taking a reflective stance (Cochran-Smith & Donnell, 2006; Schön, 1987), the author used narrative inquiry to describe the university-community partnership, the goal of which was to have the participants (see Table 1) tell the story of the partnership's successes and challenges.

Reissman (2008) explains narrative inquiry as the study of stories or accounts, usually of individuals, but also of groups, societies, and cultures. This study drew on narrative analysis after having the university and community partners tell their stories of how the university-community partnership began, how it evolved, and to what degree it succeeded. Once IRB approval was secured, data were collected through a variety of methods. Table 1 outlines the specific pieces and frequency of the data collected throughout the project, which included:

- Field notes from meetings set up to discuss the data collection process as well as the video-making,
- Emails coordinating logistics on which the university researcher was included,
- Reflective memos, and
- Five semi-structured interviews with university students and youth from the partnering community organization asking the following questions: (1) Why and how did they get involved with the project?, (2) What did they hope to accomplish through the project?, (3) To what extent were the goals achieved?, (4) How did they assess the collaboration between the university and community partner?

The five participants—three university students and two youth from community organizations—were chosen to get a balance in perspectives.

During and after the partnership project, the university researcher, and author of this article, kept field notes of the entire process and conducted the semi-structured interviews with all of the members of the university-community partnership. These were used to develop memos which were shared with the entire group, including faculty, students, and members of the community-based organization. The researcher compiled and provided each member pieces of data including email exchanges between university and community partners, internal documents, notes, and transcripts of audio-recorded phone conversations to review. A thematic analysis was conducted to look for emergent themes em-

anating from the data. Using a qualitative research software program, NVIVO, a graduate student uploaded the collected data. This enabled the data to be kept centrally and analyzed. NVIVO was also used for coding the data, which was conducted by the university researcher. Although the main part of the analysis was inductive, there was some deductive analysis, based on the premise from the research literature that there would likely be some power inequity in relationship between the university and community.

To ensure trustworthiness of the research, the university researcher shared transcripts and memos with the team to engage in the process of member checking. Multiple sources of data were collected, enabling the researcher to triangulate findings. The university researcher also asked colleagues—other university researchers outside the team—to check the reliability of the analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). These researchers did not code the data, as is sometimes done in NVIVO data analysis. They reviewed the thematic analysis based on the data collected, which the university researcher provided to them.

FINDING

Three themes emerged showing the partnership's relative degree of success. These themes became very clear, as there was evidence of them throughout the data in all pieces collected: Interviews, meeting notes, emails, and phone calls. The first theme was power balance. Although in most cases power imbalance is an issue, this university and community partner managed to avoid some of those imbalances present in most of these collaborations by surfacing race, class, and gender issues, and the power differentials present in them, at the beginning of the project.

The second theme that came across was a dedication to critical civic praxis

Table 1.

Data collection

Participants	Number in group	Data collection method	Frequency
University students	3 (2 male, 1 female)	One semi-structured interview; Regular email exchanges, and phone conversations during the project	Email and phone exchanges were frequent during the project, sometimes daily to coordinate logistics and to field concerns.
Youth members of BAP	2 (2 male)	One semi-structured interview; Regular email exchanges between university and community partners, and phone conversations during the project	Email and phone exchanges were frequent during the project, sometimes daily to coordinate logistics and to field concerns.
University students, Faculty member, and BAP youth	8 participants at any one meeting	Meeting notes taken by assigned facilitator (rotated)	Monthly meetings during the 18-month period Spring 2013-Winter 2015
University faculty member	1	Memos generated based upon field notes	Four memos were created throughout the process

(Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007) as a form of civic engagement. All participants saw the critique of structural inequality while building a collective capacity for social change as essential to the project.

The third theme focused on the challenges. While the university and community partner members openly discussed issues of race and class, clashes surfaced as an inevitable part of the process. Often the community partner members felt that they were teaching the university students about what life was like without the race and class privilege. Moreover, sometimes the university students were not empathic enough, and could not understand the gravity of the issue of school closure and its impact on the residents of the city.

Power Balance

From the start, there was a conversation about power imbalance. The university researcher held a PhD, was a White woman, and had access to resources and educational leaders that the youth organizers did not. The university students were similarly privileged in terms of social class and race. They attended suburban schools that were not likely to close. On the other hand, the BAP youth were young Black that came from low-income families. Many were still in school and did not have many individual resources, even if they did have collective resources as part of their organization. The differences between the BAP youth and university youth posed challenges when deciding how to present problems and ultimately what to do with the video, the end product of the collaborative project.

Surfacing the group's differences was important. The group spent long meetings talking through their differences and the implications of privilege of oppression inherent in their social identities. They also discussed the ways decisions ought to be made, and determined that consensus was going to be the best, but that the university professor and students would need to trust BAP to guide how they went about conducting research in communities, and interviewing those who were most directly affected by the school closings. Following that discussion, the group set up regular check-in meetings, and shared the details of the work. After securing the grant, the monies would go to equipment and to pay youth and the participants in the video, not the university. Moreover, the university would not take the data yielded from interviews to use it for scholarly gain without the consent of BAP youth. The main purpose of the research was to use it for action, to organize people against the school closings. The university professor and students were there to help produce the video, but they would not be the owners of it, shifting power to the community organization.

> *"In a reflective memo, the university professor wrote the following:*
> *As a white woman, I am very conscious of the idea that I am working as a collaborator, and am helping to tell a story that is not my own, one that poor people of color experience as the reality of their daily lives. I can lend expertise in the field of education and urban education in particular, but I need to follow the lead of the community organization that has decided what is important in the story. The aim of the project is to: (1) Provide the students, teachers, families, and community members an outlet for expressing their vision for what they would like their schools to look like, (2) Provide a way to amplify the voices of city residents, teachers, students, and parents on a school policy change and to show other urban communities the impact of school closure, and (3) Provide a tool for further organizing for low-income communities to have a larger role in decision-making. They will use the video to advocate on their own behalf and I will step aside, lending support only if needed"* (Personal communication, January 14, 2013).

In this quote, the university professor shows how she gave up control of the project and "followed the lead" of the team. The goal of the project was to produce research that could be used by the community organization to convey the impact of school closings on the city's poorest communities. Decision-making happened by consensus, but in certain instances the team took the lead from BAP on how to approach communities and to connect with particular community members. This was important for building trust, as one BAP youth member said in a meeting, "We are products of the Baltimore City school system, so we have a personal stake in the project" (Field notes October, 22, 2014).

Because the project used participatory action research (PAR) principles to guide it, the collaboration was set up to surface those perspectives. The PAR process surfaces the "critical expertise which lies in those most oppressed" (Fine, 2009, p. 2) and allows those most impacted by injustice to become "architects of the research" (Ayala, 2009, p. 70). Because conventional research had not done much to excavate the perspectives of the people most impacted by school closings to date, the collaboration allowed the team to challenge those research approaches through the collaboration between a university researcher and youth from community-based organizations.

As a member of BAP explained in an interview, historically they have been excluded from the decision-making processes and from powerful institutions.

> *"Communities like ours are being kept in the dark about the decisions that are being made about schools. The city and the state are making decisions, but the people in the community, raising children in the community need to be at the table, and not only that, it needs to be their table that people are coming to discuss these issues"* (Personal communication, February 3, 2014).

By working on this project, BAP youth and the university partners would generate new knowledge, discuss it with the team, and use it for organizing purposes, the action piece of the research. Action was critical to give BAP and communities that they represent some agency to push for control of school decision-making. This was only possible when combined with reflection, which got the university partners taking the lead from community organizations and not usurping their agency in the process of the collaboration. Consequently, even though rocky patches occurred in the process, the partners were able to strike a power balance unlike many university-community partnerships. The partners shared the research and data and shared a decision-making process in which both partners were given equal power.

Critical Civic Praxis

To get at critical civic praxis, the team identified structural inequity as a common understanding. At the start of the project, a central part of our process was to have readings in common, which grounded the team's knowledge base about school closings. The most obvious was that everyone read all of the newspaper reports about the closing schools, but also the report that the State Department of Education produced that led to the closings in the first place. This report detailed the utilization of each building in the city and concluded that several school buildings were under capacity (The Jacobs Report, 2012). Additionally, the group read school closings research by Lipman (2013, 2014) and Kirshner (2010, 2015), the Chicago School Consortium, Philadelphia Notebook reports, and the work of a student-led organization, Philadelphia Student Union (De la Torre & Gwynne, 2009, 2013; Mazziotta, 2013; Philadelphia Student Union, 2013).

Through this reading, the group was able to develop some common understandings about the reasons for the school closings, the impact of school closings, and what organizations in other cities were do-

ing to resist school closings. Through discussions we had emerged a critique of structural inequality while building a collective capacity for social change as essential to the project. The BAP youth immediately saw the school closings as a way of further disenfranchising poor communities. The university students slowly began to understand this as well. Thus, the collaboration could begin to address the injustice done by the school closings by surfacing the perspectives of people most impacted and presenting a counter-narrative that could disrupt the public transcript that rationalized the closing of schools.

The reading helped everyone understand the core dimensions of the issue of school closing, which were happening in cities around the country. At one team meeting discussion, one of the university students said in response to what she had read:

> *"All neighborhoods need quality schools, but our society has struggled to deliver on this promise. In some of the studies, schools are closing because of test scores. Since test scores are so closely linked with income, we know that school closures will happen in the poorest communities…. We have no evidence that school closure is an effective strategy for improving schools, and it seems intuitive that closing a school would not improve it."* (Field notes, March 2, 2013)

The group agreed with this insight that school closings were not a helpful strategy to improving schools. One of the BAP youth added in that same meeting:

> *"Closing schools will get youth caught in the school to prison pipeline, there are no opportunities after that. It also takes away services including free meals, counseling, and extracurricular activities which help us succeed in school. I think that we need to remember the idea that all communities have the right to quality schools, and should be held accountable to the community that the school serves. Poor communities tend to be disenfranchised and decisions are made without their input. So, we have to demand the right to a quality education."* (Field notes, March 18, 2013)

Additionally, there was no denying the race and class implications of school closings. The team conducted research together to confirm suspicions about neighborhoods most affected by the school closings. They named racism and classism to explain why certain neighborhoods faced school closings and others did not. This analysis helped the team acknowledge "structural constraints" (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007).

Following these kinds of discussions, the team developed ideas for addressing the problems they saw around them. It was done collectively, so that the solutions were agreed upon. This helped to "build a collective capacity to struggle for social justice" (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007, p. 693). Armed with information and a collective vision, the team could strategize and advocate for resources to support that vision.

Together, they conducted interviews with parents, teachers, and students most impacted by the school closings. They wove those interviews together into a video that presented a counter-narrative that showed how communities viewed school closings in their neighborhoods. Following that, they screened the video in closing schools across the city and at the university to raise awareness of the issue. BAP used this as an opportunity to find people who were upset enough about the school closings to join them in a campaign to stop them.

Through the partnership, the university and community partners had tools that they did not have prior to their work together for resisting policies that may reproduce inequality. They studied current research and policy analysis on the issue of school closings, learned new tools of research, and developed a strategy for showcasing the

product of their research as a tool for advocacy. In emails, the student participants explained the value of learning the history and context for the reform policies that get intuited in urban communities. Youth participants were most excited about the community-based research and video-making processes. Typically, university partnerships do not take on issues of structural change, but this partnership gave the university students, as well as community partner, the collective capacity to work against inequality.

Challenges

There was no way to avoid challenges. Inherently, the university-community partnership raises power imbalances, as well as problems of racism and privilege, which needed to be worked through in order for there to be authentic collaboration. Even when the team was very aware of these problematic approaches, there were traps that were almost unavoidable in the process.

Privilege checking. Going out on interviews together, university students were shocked to see some of the neighborhood conditions and school conditions that Baltimore City students lived with daily. This was certainly troubling, as one university student explained in an interview:

> *"I know we talked a lot about racism and the history of Baltimore, but nothing we talked about completely prepared me for the level of poverty I saw. It was devastating. It was like a war, like some third world country out there"* (Personal communication, April 12, 2013).

Reflecting upon this kind of comment from her students, the university professor wrote in her reflective memo, "We may not have done enough anti-racist work before entering into the project, although another possibility is that this was part of the development process for the white students." There is certainly a developmental process when people are embarking on the process of gaining cultural competence or developing their racial identity (Tatum, 1997). Consequently, the university students may have needed more time and experience to understand how their privilege impacted how they approached the project and the team.

BAP youth, on the other hand, were equally upset on occasion, and felt as if the university students could not escape their privilege to truly understand what they encountered every day. There was a point at which one young person said,

> *"You think you can come in here and in a semester understand what it's like to be black in Baltimore? This is not a school project for us. It's life. It's everyday. We can't go home and call our mom to tell her how crazy it was out there in the city…Y'all don't get it. Y'all need to go back to campus, go to some fraternity party, and leave us alone" (*Field notes, April 12, 2013).

Following this critical moment, we talked as university representatives and then as a whole group. The university students were upset and wanted to continue because they were learning from the experience. They did not understand why the BAP youth were upset, and where the weight of their feelings was coming from. After many emails back and forth to decide how to handle this situation, the group decided to have a meeting that resembled more of a mediation. The university professor and one of the BAP youth leaders facilitated a discussion about allies and how we university folks could be allies in the project. The university continued to provide research, advice on strategy, social media spaces, and physical meeting space to elevate the work of the community. While the conversation attempted to help the two groups understand one another's perspectives, it is uncertain, and there was no way to know within the scope of this project, whether they truly developed empathy for one another through this experience.

Representation. Another challenge was in representing the counter-narrative that the interviews presented. The

team edited the video together, but the differences in perspectives emerged and caused disagreements over what should make it into the video. University students wanted to showcase some of the worst conditions of the schools and neighborhoods. They wanted to showcase stories about the neighborhood residents' struggles, as well as the teachers' and students' struggles to deal with the challenges of inequities. However, BAP youth wanted to showcase community expertise, to show the resilience of the communities most impacted by school closings. In the end, the team agreed that BAP had the right idea. After all, the goal of the video was to use it as an organizing tool for their advocacy work on school closings. Consequently, the video contained interviews with people who were filled with neighborhood expertise and the capacity for resistance to being excluded from decision-making processes. Still, BAP youth were troubled that in the end the video did not reflect their desire for community control of schools. In a phone conversation, one of the youth said, "I like the video, but don't think it is strong enough on community control. Black people need to control their own communities, their own schools" (Personal communication, December 12, 2014). The university researcher understood the passion that the BAP youth was expressing, but explained that the nature of the project was to present research in the form of interviews with people in the community. She suggested that BAP could explain their position at some of the screenings so that piece would not be left out. Also, at that point the video was near completion and the team lacked the resources to do more.

Following the creation of the video, questions came up among team members about who would present the video to audiences. The video and the map that were created are open source and anyone was able to access them, but who would be the face of the work? After a phone conversation with a BAP youth leader, the team decided when the video was presented in Baltimore as an organizing tool, BAP youth would present the project and the university partners would be invited, but would not speak. In more academic settings, the university faculty would present. However, the team has tried to blur those lines more, so the youth can be invited to and present more in academic settings. BAP youth came to the university campus to present in the spring of 2015, and were also invited to talk at a national conference in 2016.

DISCUSSION

University-community partnerships can be exciting but are fraught with difficulties. It is important for the partnership to be mutually beneficial and for partners to have common understandings. Yet, even in the best-case scenarios, there are pitfalls around power imbalances and privilege, as well as questions about who owns the product that comes out of the partnership. This particular example was successful, in large measure, because it focused on an issue that was important to both university and community members: school closings. Both university and community partners shared decision-making. There were disagreements, but there was a commitment to sharing power. Everyone had equal say in deciding how the research would be conducted and what the result would be. Lastly, the product of the partnership was useful to the partners in different ways. The video that was produced was clearly useful to the community partner as an organizing tool. It was useful to the university partner as well to showcase the outcome of a positive partnership, and all of the team members learned new skills of video-making and presentation.

In the end, many lessons learned from his project can inform and improve university-community partnerships going forward. The first is that university offices of civic engagement and community outreach need to think of their work as building mutually beneficial projects, ones that create opportunities for reciprocal collaboration, and that acknowledge the intersec-

tions of race and socioeconomic status and work to disentangle the role of each in university-community partnerships.

Very specifically, one-time or short-term collaborations do not lend themselves well to these relationships. Universities need to move away from the phenomenon of the White, middle class, university students entering largely poor communities of color. This has created an encounter that some have described as "poverty tourism," where privileged people enter an oppressed community and gaze upon the residents as if they were in a zoo (Sellinger & Outterson, 2009). They visit and then leave, voyeurs feeling as if they have had an "authentic experience," but this only contributes to a lack of trust that low-income communities of color have for university researchers and students.

Rather, universities can foster long-term projects with communities by having space inside the communities in which they would like to work. This can include community centers, school partnerships, community gardens, and/or art spaces. Students and faculty working in those spaces become a presence in the neighborhoods outside of the university and can develop relationships with the community members that use them. Regardless of the type of work they do, the projects need to develop capacity in the community such that the scales are not tipped in favor of the university.

Additionally, a second lesson is that a better and more systematic way is needed to help privileged university students understand, and to move further along in their understanding and empathy for communities of color. In addition to coursework, White students need to spend time in communities of color working side-by-side with residents. They need to see the full humanity of people in their neighborhoods and communities before engaging in any partnership projects.

However, university faculty and staff need to also help their students process what they are experiencing, to provide history and context so they do not come away with reinforced stereotypes of communities of color and low-income communities. Anyone going from a university into a community needs to be self-aware, and acknowledge the power differences between the two groups so as not to simply reproduce the inequality of university as powerful/expert and community as recipient of knowledge/resources.

Lastly, much of the project reported about in this article hinged on a particular relationship that the university faculty member had with the community partner. She made outreach to community partners a part of her work that she did in addition to her role as a faculty member. Universities need to encourage and support the civic engagement of their faculty. Faculty are not only at a university to teach courses in a particular subject area, but they are members of a larger community, as are universities. Often, faculty do not feel like they are rewarded for such efforts, or that civic engagement takes time away from more valuable endeavors. There is no more important endeavor for university faculty than to use the skills and knowledge they have for the engagement and improvement of the communities surrounding them. Universities that want to commit to partnership with communities need to create a culture that supports it on their campuses, so projects like these are more commonplace.

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