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Abstract

In this manuscript we explore the use of Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) to build campus-community collaborations. While these collaborations may result in mutual benefit, the process may easily be derailed as a result of complications. We examine the strengths and weaknesses of the collaboration that produced the GirlPower Photovoice Project, a project that engaged middle school girls in an exploration of the factors that both improve and impede the health of their communities. Consistent with the Photovoice method, participants used photography to document their realities and then explored the resulting images in a group setting. We share the lessons learned from this collaboration from the perspective of both the academic and the community partners. In their own voices, both partners explore those factors that made the collaboration a success and those that hindered it. These include ensuring adequate time for relationship and trust development between the partners, advocating for a more fluid and organic process from the university institutional review board, and ensuring buy-in from all community agency staff—not just the executive director. In the end, we distill suggestions for others who wish to undertake a similarly risky yet significantly rewarding and important endeavor.

Campus-community collaborations are increasingly at the cutting edge of innovative and significant research. Universities across the nation are developing strategies and implementing programs to increase their connection with the location community. We will explore the benefits and challenges of campus-community collaboration and present a framework for creating successful and sustainable campus-community collaboration.

Campus-Community Collaboration

Campus-community collaboration is an interactive relationship between community groups or agencies and educational institutions where the academic partners and the community work together to confront common societal issues. Campus-community collaborations provide many benefits to both entities and it may seem like common sense to implement such partnerships wherever possible, but cooperative ventures of this sort have only begun to be utilized on a large scale in recent years. Vermont Campus Compact (2010) summarizes the three greatest perceived benefits of collaborations as follows: communities gain resources and aid in problem-solving from universities; universities gain greater public legitimacy and raison d'être; and students receive real-life experience, which aids both professional and personal development. Universities may develop collaborations with the community through a variety of practices including but not limited to: service-learning, student volunteerism, allowing the community to use campus space (e.g., computer labs), and research.

Being involved in the surrounding community is gaining traction as a desirable quality for a university, as evidenced by its inclusion as a new area of organization in the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching classification system. This addition was accompanied, naturally, by the development of an in-depth system for measuring the effectiveness of partnership programs and the means taken by universities to achieve success. The Carnegie Foundation (2013) defines community engagement as: "the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity." The Community-Campus Partnerships for Health (2006) provide a set of "Principles of Good Community-Campus Partnerships" for use by organizations desiring to effectively implement such relationships, and these guidelines capture many of the benefits as well as suggest the potential pitfalls of this work. The principles cover a variety of topics from organization around a common goal, mutual trust, balance of power, communication, and sharing the benefits of the accomplishments.

Kezar (2005) has established eight core values crucial to collaboration and divides these into three different phases of partnership development.

One value, however, is unique and can be seen influencing each step of the process: networks. Possessing the support of a network is such a vital element in partnerships that they cannot develop or grow without this quality. The first phase is entitled "Building Commitment" and this encompasses "values," "external pressure," and "learning." This is the step in which the necessity of collaboration is acknowledged and communicated between the two parties, building the impetus for establishing a significant partnership. Next is the stage of "Commitment" in which the values of "sense of priority" and "mission" are at play in the development of buy-in from authorities of both groups and leaders are identified in the process. The third and final step is "Sustaining" and includes "integrating structures" and "rewards," without both of which there is no incentive to continue and deepen the relationship (Kezar, 2005, p. 845).

Though the value of pursuing and developing campus-community collaborations has been established, there are many barriers preventing their effective implementation and it has been estimated that over half of all cooperative efforts within universities themselves and with external groups fail (Doz, 1996). These kinds of collaborations are thus relatively high risk. Many of these difficulties lie in the structure of university departments and administration as well as lack of community organization or support (Kezar, 2005).

Using CBPR to Create Campus-Community Partnerships

How do we address the barriers and difficulties that are inherent in collaborative work? One strategy that may be useful to both the university and community partner is to engage in a Community-Based Participatory Action Research Project (CBPR). CBPR is emerging as an exciting alternative to traditional research methods and is a methodology that involves participants as active partners in research rather than mere passive subjects. CBPR's are defined as "an orientation to research that focuses on relationships between academic and community partners, with principles of colearning, mutual benefit, and long-term commitment and incorporates community theories, participation, and practices into the research efforts" (Wallerstein and Duran, 2006, p.1). Minkler, Blackwell, Thompson & Tamir (2003) state that

[CBPR] equitably involves all partners in the research process and recognizes

the unique strengths that each brings. CBPR begins with a research topic of importance to the community with the aim of combining knowledge and action for social change …" p. 4).

CBPR creates greater community commitment to achieving real change as well as increased validity in the eyes of lawmakers and those with the power to affect the reforms being sought. CBPR methods have significantly gained in popularity in the last ten years as various prestigious organizations have lauded their efficacy in reaching underserved populations. The National Institute of Health has developed a Scientific Interest Group to promote communication among federal agencies interested in CBPR and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has increased funding for CBPR (Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research, 2013).

Campus-community partnerships and CBPR projects reflect the unique contextual factors of the local community and therefore are all different. They hold some similar values of shared power and collaboration, but the application and implementation of this work varies widely between groups. For instance, the University of Illinois revamped how they did research with the East St. Louis community in 1990 when Dr. Ken Reardon began administering the program. They evolved from treating the community as a research lab, to working with the community members to solve the problems they wanted to address. The community led the work of developing small-scale short-term community improvement projects that were immensely successful (Rothman, Schaffer, & Anderson, 1998). Another example of a CBPR inspired campus-community partnership is the work of Macalester University in St. Paul, MN. They have re-envisioned the experience they want to give students and their role in the local community. Students participate in CBPR through their coursework or the Honors College. An Urban Geography class at Macalester has created a book highlighting the economic potential of the main business district of the East Side neighborhood in St. Paul, MN. The book is being used by the mayor to secure funding for the area from the state legislature (Interdisciplinary Action Research Program, 2013).

Photovoice

One exciting CBPR methodology that has been successfully initiated with a variety

of populations is Photovoice. Photovoice is a participatory method that allows participants to use photography to document various aspects of their lived experience (Wang, 1999). This method is particularly effective at capturing the perspectives of groups traditionally underrepresented in research. Photovoice additionally has a potentially powerful impact upon participants, developing their overall sense of empowerment as well as their readiness and capacity to engage in social change (Foster-Fishman, Nowell, Deacon, Nievar, & McCann, 2005).

The GirlPower Photovoice Project

The GirlPower Photovoice Project was the result of collaboration between a child abuse and neglect treatment and prevention agency and university faculty to explore the perceptions of adolescent girls regarding the health promoting and inhibiting aspects of their community. The project emerged from the vision of the agency director, though the specific project was developed collaboratively between the agency staff and academic partners. The research team included the agency director (Fitzgerald) and various staff members from the agency, assistant professor in social work (Miller), associate professor in human relations (Deacon), and two social work students. The agency staff participated in the project as an addition to their current job duties. Twelve middle school girls ranging in age from 12–14 were recruited to participate in the GirlPower Photovoice project. Participants were drawn from an after-school program sponsored by the agency. Three of the participants were African American, two were Hispanic, and 7 were Caucasian.

Study Design

Study recruitment began in April of 2011. Families were invited to attend an information meeting at their daughters' school to learn more about the project and ask questions regarding the project and the Institutional Review Board paperwork. The girls then participated in two Photovoice training sessions before beginning data collection and focus groups.

The focus groups involved two research team facilitators and a member of the agency staff along with all 12 participants. The Photovoice sessions followed the same format with the girls downloading their photos while eating snacks, selecting their favorite photos for group discussion, and then participating in an audio recorded focus group about their photos. The first half of the meetings

took place after school in the school cafeteria and the last half occurred at the agency because school had ended for the summer. The photo assignments given each week were: Describe your community: What is the healthiest and unhealthiest place in your community; what helps you be healthy; what keeps you from being healthy; take a picture of the contents of your fridge; take a picture of your favorite snack; take a picture of what you had for dinner.

The discussion of the partners' perspectives will be presented as unique and distinct because of the value they individually contribute to the overall theme of this paper. In an effort to capture the distinct voice of each partner, we posed a series of questions to the agency director and staff who participated in the Photovoice project as well as our own personal reflections. The analysis of responses revealed six key themes addressing the question of how and to what extent the use of this CBPR advanced a strong or sustainable campus/community partnership. The six key themes are: Shared Process with Different Motivations, Impact on the Girls, Community Support and Recognition, Inflexibility of the System, Differing Approaches to Work with Youth, and Recommendations. Each of the themes was identified by at least two of the stakeholders groups. We present the information by theme and then provide the perspective of the various stakeholders in their own words.

Analysis of Key Terms

Shared process with different motivations. The theme of different motivations/same process refers to varying impetus of the stakeholder groups to participate in a collaborative project and how these different motivations can impact the relationships between group members even though they are all participating in the same process. This was the "building commitment" phase in which the stakeholders negotiated values, dealt with external pressure, and learned from one another.

Voice of the university. We had different primary goals than the agency for our work with the girls on the Photovoice project. Everyone working on the project wanted to create a worthwhile experience for the girls who participated, however as tenure track faculty, we were both primarily focused on learning something valuable about the health of adolescent girls and developing publishable materials from those findings. The agency was interested in learning something valuable for improving their programming and creating a special experience for the girls they serve. Though our primary goals were different, the process we used to reach those goals

was the same. We worked in concert with each other to implement a mutually beneficial Photovoice project that met the goals of both parties. However, we also want to point out that this difference in motivation or primary goal was also the root of some tensions between the two parties, particularly the agency staff and us. We thus approached our partnership with a different set of values.

We held our collaboration meetings during the lunch hour in an effort to be respectful of the agency staff time and create a relaxed atmosphere around the sharing of food. Early in those meetings, it became clear that there was perhaps not complete buy-in from the agency staff as they were not always open to discussion and at times very resistant to aspects of working with a university partner. At times tension developed into disagreements between the agency staff and academic partners related to the execution of various aspects of the project. In an attempt to bridge these differences, we took the agency staff to lunch and expressly did not discuss the project, but instead spent time getting acquainted with each other. It is, however, not clear that this overcame tensions. Our attempt to build relationship outside of the project, was probably too little too late. We were in the middle of project planning, experiencing the result of not spending an adequate time on engagement and relationship building. We believe the underlying tension was related to differing motivations for pursuing the project and those differing motivations were rooted in our varying job requirements and external pressures from those jobs. Our main interest was in research and publication because we were tenure track faculty in a research-intensive university. Our jobs require that we obtain external funding and publish articles. Our colleagues and tenure and promotion committees are less interested in the contributions we make to the local community. Our employment in a research institution also required we work through the sometimes burdensome bureaucratic channels of the university for which the agency staff had little interest. We had to submit a lengthy application to the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board and engage in a rigorous approval process. These external pressures resulted in our being less interested in creating an experience that was special and meaningful to the girl's participating and that was the primary motivation for the agency staff. In spite of some of the rocky aspects, the collaboration did set the stage for successful and potentially ongoing campus-community collaboration. The agency as well as the participants derived observable benefit from the collaboration. We were able to learn from one another.

Voice of agency director. I think the staff (on the ground) felt a little differently – at least felt like this was a lot more work than what they thought it would be. They also struggled more with embracing a community/campus partnership and seeing the win-win aspect of it. They often felt like this was just more work for them and – while they knew the girls had fun and enjoyed it – felt that the need for the documented research, assistance with focus groups, etc., was beyond what they felt was necessary for their purposes in working with youth. They really did see the benefit to the girls that were involved, but felt like it involved much more of their focus and attention than they had anticipated. In terms of actual hours worked – it probably did exceed what we budgeted but we did not track that. I believe in the value of the partnerships so I continued to motivate and encourage them and help them to see the eventual impact for girls, the community and our agency.

I felt that they (project planning meetings) went really well. I think we did what we needed to do in terms of discussing key issues, determining appropriate roles, working through training and human subject review considerations, etc. From an administrator's viewpoint, I was pleased and don't remember feeling like we were doing any more than our fair share. I think the staff struggled with their involvement in some of these discussions. I think they just wanted to be providing services for the kids and, again, struggled to embrace the research aspect of the project. I think if we did something like this again – we would need to help staff better see how this data helps their kids, community or CCFI. There were a few comments like "well, we are doing all this so some papers can be published," – not sure they ever really "got it" but also think that was as much CCFI's administrators responsibility to help them get it as it was the entire research team. In the future – I think we would have to pick more applied research to make it more relevant to direct service staff involved.

Inflexibility of university system. The theme of inflexibility of the university system describes the challenges each stakeholder faced trying to implement a collaborative project through the often stifling bureaucracy of Institutional Review Boards and Office's of Sponsored Programs. This theme is strongly connected to the different motivations/same process theme because of its linkage to the external pressures faced by each of the stakeholders.

Voice of the university. For example, frustration

resulted from a disconnect between the academic process and procedures and the needs of the agency. The university partners needed to consider IRB protocols and university requirements. These did not allow for the flexibility valued by the agency staff. This played out in agency staff regularly deciding to change data collection procedures without regard for the time involved in making modifications to the IRB protocol.

Voice of the agency director. At times the ways in which the agency operates services was in conflict with research requirements. A perfect example of this was invitations to participate in the Photovoice project. Research requirements associated with the University Institutional Review Board Human Subjects Committee review requires that the flyer or information be provided in a very professional and non-enticing manner (white paper, no graphics, etc.). In practice, when working with youth we know that we have to make events and projects enticing for them to get their initial interest. So – we had to alter our flyer and how we approach the girls in a way that was not what they were "used to" and this probably raised more concern among them than less. Just an interesting example of how these systems differ (community provider and research institution) in unanticipated ways.

I think that the research institution has to have policies in place that recognize that research is being done in a community context with partners that have evidence-based and well thought out ways in which services are provided and clients are engaged. I think the institution we worked with (in this case the university's IRB) was set up for basic research with human subjects and was not designed to accommodate this much more creative and reciprocal type of research collaborative.

Impact on the girls. The theme of impact on the girls refers to the perceptions of all the stakeholders regarding the impact of participating in the Girlpower Photovoice Project had on each of the girls.

Voice of the university. First, the girls who participated in the project not only enjoyed the experience, but also learned about themselves while developing photographic and other skills. The girls thus derived programmatic benefit from participating. We were able to contribute to the positive development of a group of young adolescent girls within the local community.

Voice of the agency director. The most successful part of the GP project was the obvious and documented impact it had on the girls that were involved. They expressed in writing and in their public speaking the importance and value that this experience had on them in terms of giving them a voice to talk about what matters to them, developing an understanding that others care about them, learning new skills (e.g., photography) that they may aspire to pursue further, etc. There are many elements that demonstrated a positive impact on the girls involved. We also noted that in terms of family involvement (which is a goal of our services) there were few parents involved on the front end of the project (few attended the parent orientation) but many more attended the community event where their daughter's work was featured and celebrated and where the girls were honored by the mayor of the city, etc. We saw a sense of pride and accomplishment in the girls and their families.

Voice of the agency staff. GirlPower Photovoice Project was extremely successful in bringing the life of "art" into middle school girls' hands by providing them with unrestricted use of a nice, brand new digital camera. I believe the opportunity for them to explore a creative expression of themselves and their lives will have lasting impacts. Having not worked directly with the girls, I can only answer this question in part. This project gave the girls a new experience that they otherwise would never have. I'm not sure that attendance incentives worked for the girls, however the community was behind the project in supporting with donations. I think the exhibit at the school was well done. Having the mayor recognize the girls will be something they never forget.

Community support & recognition. The theme of community support and recognition highlights how the GirlPower Photovoice project brought about community support for the project, the agency, and the university and also provided recognition to the girls who participated in the project.

Voice of the university. Similarly, the agency derived benefit from the collaboration. Data collection ended in an exhibit held at the university. Multiple prominent members of the community were invited to attend, and the agency obtained significant publicity with coverage of the exhibit appearing on the front page of the local paper twice. Similarly, the girls' photos were displayed at other community art events. However, perhaps most significantly, the agency was able to utilize the photographs and the girls' experiences as part of their major annual fundraising event. Finally, KF approached CM to help organize a candlelight vigil on the university campus in remembrance of

the child abuse cases at Penn State and to make a statement that our community and university will stand up against child abuse. Following the vigil a panel discussion on child abuse was held at the social work building. Members of the panel included university lawyers, directors of child abuse treatment centers, and the police. Shortly after that event and certainly in response to negative publicity of the Penn State child abuse scandal, the university provost issued a policy regarding protection of minors on the university campus. The progression of these events illustrates the reciprocal nature of the relationship between the agency and university and the mutual benefit and visibility they receive as a result of the collaboration.

Voice of the agency director. We also felt that the GP project helped to add an interesting and new component to our services. It allowed our agency to further engage the community – which is an on-going goal of our agency; we want to impress upon the community the critical importance of youth voice and engagement. We were challenged by the process of publicizing the Photovoice Exhibit and we attribute that to the lack of institutional support to raise this as an example of something important or of value to the university. Had the university marketing machine gotten behind this, it would have tremendously impacted the notoriety and importance of this work both locally and perhaps regionally. This is another example of professors being "out there" on their own trying to advance a concept of university-based engaged research without the institution itself behind them in any way. If there was a place within the university's agenda or structure to highlight and support community-based engaged research, there would have been much greater attention paid to this and greater opportunity for potential replication.

Voice of the agency staff. I think having the Photovoice exhibit in conjunction with the school of social work opening was a coup! It brought publicity to the exhibit. I think we had high expectations for this project to rotate throughout the community. A lack of response during the town's Friday Art Walk fizzled future viewings. Great efforts were made to publicize the project and exhibit through the local town paper and the large city paper.

Differing approach to working with youth. The theme of differing approaches illustrates how the agency and the university had different philosophies or practices about working with youth. The agency had a deeply rooted and strong mentorship model that permeated their work

with youth. This approach was incompatible with the approach of the university partners who were engaging with the youth in a very time-limited project. We approached the work much like a school teacher would approach her class or a therapeutic group facilitator would approach working with a group. We established rules and boundaries, separated disruptive participants, and sought to create an environment that fostered productivity.

Voice of the university. Another source of complication developed between the agency's model for their after-school program and the model for implementing a Photovoice project. The agency's after school program is a very open system that participants are free to join whenever they please. In addition to the openness of the after-school program, it is also based on a mentorship model. Several adults participate in the after-school groups and develop meaningful relationships with the students over a long period time. Discipline issues are not a major problem because of the positive and healthy relationships that have developed between the students and staff. These key differences led to two areas of tension. The first challenge to overcome was related to the openness of the agency's after-school program. The Photovoice project was designed with the intent that participants attend each session and complete their photography assignments in-between sessions. We had to use multiple methods (phone calls, texts, and notes) to ensure the participants attended each session and this was not the normal practice of the agency when inviting students to agency-sponsored activities. The second challenge came from disconnect between the agency's mentorship model and our time-limited project-based interaction with the girls. We needed the girls to treat this experience more like school and pay attention, talk one at a time, and complete their photo assignments. We quickly realized that to create this environment we would need to split the girls into two small groups and the agency wanted to keep close friends together in the same group. When we shared our concern that the close friends would not pay attention when together, the agency's response was that "these aren't college students" implying that we did not know how to interact with youth. The agency did not recognize that because of our limited time to work with the girls and lack of mentor/mentee relationship, we needed to use different tactics (ie setting rules and norms, separating disruptive students, and requiring regular attendance and participation) to have a meaningful Photovoice project.

Voice of the agency staff. One particular challenge was the "free flowing" aspect of the mentor group that meets monthly to have set meeting times and place during the school week was challenging but attendance is normally voluntary so for them to have required attendance to certain meetings or outings was challenging because they do have other conflicting activities going on or it may not work with the family schedule. Also having outside or new faces involved each week that are not normally part of our mentor group was tough for the girls to build relationships and follow direction from community outsiders when the interactions were brief and only for a short term.

Discussion and Recommendations

The GirlPower Photovoice project was ultimately a success, however, we did encounter a number of obstacles along the way. While the project did benefit the university researchers, the agency, and the young participants, the process was not tension and trouble free. This is not unique to collaborative processes. We were able to distill multiple lessons from our collaborative work. These lessons can inform future collaborative work.

The first lessons learned regarding campus-community collaborations is the importance of time. Allowing time to interact and build relationship between stakeholders is essential before the work of project development and implementation can be undertaken. This time allows for the true relationships to develop naturally and lays the foundation for mutual understanding. Unfortunately, the reality is that time is a luxury that most of us cannot always afford in these kinds of situations. However, when at all possible, it should be prioritized. Given how hard it is to find the time upfront, a promising strategy to mitigate an absence of time at the front end of collaborative work is to be creative and prioritize certain relationships. For example including grass-roots members in discussions with university members at various points in the collaboration may result in a more efficient use of everyone's time and still promote the inclusion and voice of key stakeholders.

This time up front can allow for an investigation of the differing contexts (academic versus community) and allows for the identification of potential areas of conflict. It also allows for the development of a relationship that can then weather emergent challenges. Finally, this time can allow for mutual education around shared and not shared interests in order to ensure that mutual needs are met. Time up front and before the real work starts builds the relationships that allow unavoidable challenges to be weathered better.

It is additionally important to understand that if university members collaborate with an organization or any community, it is essential that these individuals understand that who you are talking to may not represent everyone. An organization leader may not represent the organizational staff in the same way that purported community leaders may not speak for all of the community. There may be a disconnect between leadership and the rest of the organization. This is a real issue if who you are working with is the "rest". Getting leadership buy-in may be easier than staff (or community members in some cases). Working on obtaining buy-in from all members is essential. Including these members in early discussions and finding out what it is that they value in order to find areas of overlap in goals and mission in order to get their commitment and buy-in.

However, it is also important to maintain contact with and awareness of any other groups that will be involved in the collaborative process. In our case, our participants were pre-teen and teenaged girls from the community. The collaboration faced challenges related to the complete and appropriate inclusion of these girls. Many of these challenges stemmed from the demands of research participation. Then, in addition to presenting a challenge to data collection, the issues became a focal point of tension between the university and the community partner. Prior attention to questions of participant inclusion and organizational culture may have prevented or minimized these concerns.

Universities also need to give more recognition to community-based work. Given the growing emphasis placed upon community-based work, universities are lagging behind in terms of their IRB and tenure/promotion processes. Universities claim to value collaboration, but do not support it or reward it. Related processes need to be altered in order to render these more collaboration friendly in terms of respecting community processes and not giving primacy to the university process. More flexibility, more inclusion of community members on IRB review board, etc. are essential.

Finally, it is essential that university members work with staff/community members in order to identify appropriate collaborative processes. This may be especially important in situations where youth are involved. If staff/community members have strong ideas about how things should work, it may be complicated if the research staff do not understand ways in which the disparate processes

can be melded (the researchers' needs and that of the community). Youth present a sensitive problem. However, it may be better, in general, to collaborate with the grassroots members of the community in order to understand their process and to fit the research process around this. The burden usually lies with the researcher in these kinds of situations — by virtue of our position and the benefit we derive. However, these challenges are not insurmountable, and with proper planning and implementation campus-community collaborations can be rendered more enduring and successful.

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Participants in the middle school GirlPower Photovoice Project.