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## Beth S. Catlett, Amira Proweller, and Sonya Crabtree-Nelson

**Abstract**

University/community partnerships involve collaborative work with great potential and risk. This work can allow for productive exchanges that improve the quality of programs and enable broader dissemination of innovative ideas and practices grounded in feminist and social justice ideals. However, institutional demands and individual commitments introduce complications. This paper examines the complex power dynamics that emerge from cross-institutional partnering and program delivery in the context of a feminist education and youth-led participatory action research program for Jewish teen girls. Specifically, we examine the previously under-studied topic of university/community collaboration in which the participating institutions are similarly situated in structures of power. We explore how power dynamics and the partners' shared and differential strategic goals were negotiated within a context of distinct institutional mandates, with a focus on the pressures of time, funding, and developing youth participatory action research with relatively privileged youth. We discuss implications and strategies for navigating complex university/community engagements that enable balanced, long-term, and sustained partnerships in which mutual interests are served.

## Overview

Cross-institutional partnerships between universities and community organizations can allow for productive exchanges that improve the quality of programs and enable broader dissemination of innovative ideas and practices grounded in feminist perspectives and social justice ideals. However, institutional demands and individual commitments can complicate collaboration. This paper examines the complex dynamics that emerged from a cross-institutional collaboration that included program delivery in the context of a feminist education and youth participatory action research (YPAR) program for Jewish teen girls, originally developed by a community organization in New York City, and currently being facilitated in Chicago as a university/community partnership. In this paper, we build on the work of scholars who have begun to apply critical perspectives to community-engaged scholarship, highlighting that university/community partnerships are complex and shaped by relations of power (Amen, 2001; Kindred & Petrescu, 2015; Sandmann & Kliewer, 2012; Sandmann, Kliewer, Kim, & Omerikwa, 2010; Sandmann, Moore, & Quinn, 2012; White, 2010). We examine emergent tensions and complexities of developing and maintaining a reciprocal and mutual community-engaged collaborative project when each partner is similarly situated within systems of institutional power, and navigating different, sometimes competing, sets of institutional mandates (Sandmann & Kliewer, 2012; Sandmann et al., 2010; Sandy & Holland, 2006). We begin with a brief description of our feminist education and YPAR program, the Research Training Internship (RTI). We then review existing scholarship that focuses on the opportunities, challenges, and tensions that emerge when universities and communities partner within a context of complex power dynamics. We also provide a brief overview of relevant literature on participatory action research. Using RTI as a focal point, we then articulate our primary research goals and research methodology framing this paper's analysis. Finally, we explore two emergent themes and tension points negotiated throughout our university/community project: (1) how power dynamics and differential needs and strategic goals impact the negotiation of engagement in this university/community collaborative program, and (2) implications and strategies for navigating complex university/community engagements that enable balanced, long-term, and sustained partnerships.

## Research Training Internship Program

The university/community collaborative program RTI, from its inception, was guided by a commitment to critical, feminist inquiry and community-engaged action toward social justice. This project involves three primary groups: Ma'yan (a Jewish feminist educational organization based in New York City), the JUF (JUF), and three

DePaul University faculty members from different disciplines (Women's and Gender Studies, Social Work, and Education) working together as a team.

RTI originally was developed by Ma'yan. After this organization ran the RTI program successfully for several years, they became interested in facilitating its expansion to additional sites. In this context, Ma'yan reached out to university and community stakeholders in Chicago; as a result, RTI currently is being facilitated in Chicago as a university/community partnership. The program annually brings together a group of approximately 12–15 Jewish high-school-aged girls from the Chicagoland area to engage in collective critical reflection and inquiry on their immediate social context and broader societal injustices; to cultivate leadership capacities for critical dialogue and social action with other teens and adult allies inside and beyond the Jewish community; and to build strategic partnerships among feminist scholars, activists, and Jewish community members. In this program, we seek to engage youth from backgrounds of relative privilege to critically interrogate the ways in which they may be simultaneously impacted by systemic privilege and oppression, and in the process, reevaluate their beliefs about themselves, others, and the world (Berilla, 2015; Goodman, 2010). Grounded in a feminist theoretical and pedagogical legacy, our work directs attention to the root causes of social problems.

Through this lens, we seek to deepen understanding of the ways in which personal identities, experiences, and structural positionalities relative to privilege are implicated in the systematic oppression of others (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1994; Okun, 2010; Richie, 2012) as part of a larger goal to cultivate a more active citizenry working to change current structures (Muzak, 2011; Stoudt, 2009; Stoudt, Fox, & Fine, 2012).

RTI is co-facilitated by a social work professional from the JUF, and a graduate student in Women's and Gender Studies from DePaul University. It is important to note that at this point in time, there is no university course associated with this community-based project. Rather, the Women's and Gender Studies graduate assistant works under the supervision of participating faculty members to co-facilitate the program and collaborate on research affiliated with this project. Moving into the future, however, we are in the planning stages for the development of a course in which university students and high-school-aged students would work together to develop and implement a participatory action research project.

In its pilot year (2014–2015), RTI ran as a 15-month program that consisted of twice monthly sessions. In its second and third years (2015–2016, 2016–2017), the program was revised to align with a 10-month academic calendar. In the context of the bi-monthly sessions, the high school students received instruction in feminist theoretical and social justice education, and the design and implementation of participatory action research, ultimately developing their own youth-led research project. For purposes of this analysis, youth-led participatory action research is defined as a philosophy and methodology that seeks to engage youth directly in collaborative critical inquiry, creating opportunities for them to investigate social issues that directly impact their lives, probe the systemic bases of these issues, and strategize actions to prompt social change (Bautista, Bertrand, Morrell, Scorza, & Matthews, 2013; Fals-Borda, 1991; Reason & Bradbury 2006; Torre & Fine, 2006).

## Collaborative Efforts Between Universities and Community Organizations

Two decades ago, the Kellogg Commission's landmark report called for increased engagement by universities in their communities (1999). Over these last two decades, partnering with local communities has become a strategic part of fulfilling the service mission of higher education (Begun, Berger, Otto-Salaj, & Rose, 2010; Tinkler, 2012). University/community partnerships often are framed from the perspective of universities serving as an intermediary (Fehren, 2010), or intervening on behalf of marginalized communities and organizations (Morrell, Sorensen, & Howarth, 2015), a model of asymmetrical power that positions the university as the large institution of power and the community partner as the organization that needs assistance and stands to benefit from the university's resources, support, and expertise (Morrell et al., 2015; White, 2010). As White (2010) observes, the university almost always is richer, has greater professional capacity, controls more resources, and is more politically connected than the community with which they are working, although the community can sometimes be the more powerful partner (Van de Ven, 2007). Indeed, the social and political contexts within which partnerships exist produce complex power relations and inform differentials

in need (Sandmann & Kliewer, 2012; Sandmann et al., 2012; White, 2010).

Scholars argue that community-engaged projects ideally should promote equitable partnerships characterized by mutuality and reciprocity (Boyer, 1990; Boyer, 1996; Sandmann & Kliewer, 2012). Mutuality is evident when partners are interdependent and all participate in the relationship and benefit equitably (Saltmarsh, Hartley, & Clayton, 2009; Still & Goode, 1992). Reciprocity, while dependent on specific community-engaged contexts (Dostilio, Brackman, Edwards, Harrison, Kliewer, & Claton, 2012), appears as an arrangement in which authority and responsibility for knowledge production are shared (Saltmarsh et al., 2009). Sandy and Holland (2006) describe a vision for ideal university/community partnerships in which the partners develop a mutually beneficial agenda, understand the capacity and resources of all partners, collaboratively participate in project planning, attend to the collaborative relationship on an ongoing basis, share design and control of project directions, and continually assess the partnership processes and outcomes. Working toward meeting such ideals, community-engaged scholars and community organizations must be mindful of, and attentive to, differentials in power that affect mutuality and reciprocity in the processes, purpose, and outcome (Stanton, 2007).

Nonetheless, there exist myriad documented challenges in developing and maintaining sustained collaborative university/community relationships (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Harkins, 2013). It is typical for each partner to define the collaboration around self and common interests and goals (Amen, 2001; Sandmann & Kliewer, 2012; White, 2010), often centering on the partners' motivations, organizational systems and culture, and time (Begun et al., 2010; Morrell et al., 2015; Sandmann & Kliewer, 2012, Wallace, 2000), with a very limited understanding as to what motivates and drives the other institution's decisions relative to the joint project (Langan & Morton, 2009). For example, it is often the case that university faculty are, at least to some extent, motivated by the institutional pressure to both bring in research funding and produce scholarly materials and publications. The community partner likely has different emphases, and may be motivated by such things as a responsibility to their community client base, funding, and service enhancement (Kindred & Petrescu, 2015; White, 2010).

Additional complexities and tensions can arise in university/community partnerships as a result of different cultural contexts between higher education and community-based organizations, in particular, the focus each institution brings to the knowledge production enterprise (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). In today's era of the commodification of knowledge (Sandmann & Kliewer, 2012), scholars are increasingly calling upon universities to bring critical attention to the politics of knowledge in their community-engaged work (Kane, 2012). This is not to suggest that universities' knowledge production expertise is not highly valued. Rather, as Amen (2001) advocates, universities should acknowledge that their relationship to the community is based on their expertise in the production and dissemination of knowledge, and communities should turn to the university for the knowledge it has to offer. That said, critical theoretical perspectives that emphasize the workings of power in the social construction of knowledge (Freire, 1970; Sandmann et al., 2010) suggest that to achieve an ideal of reciprocity, as well as to create knowledge that has real applied value for the challenges facing communities, equal power sharing in the process of conceptualizing and implementing knowledge production projects must be emphasized (Kane, 2012; Sandmann et al., 2010). Furthermore, in an effort to build authentically mutual relationships, some community-engaged scholars have called for universities to partner with community organizations around participatory action research, driven by shared goals of social change that serve to "mitigate [university] dominance" (Sandmann et al., 2010, p. 10). These community-engaged scholars also emphasize the utility of knowledge based in critical inquiry and analysis, linked to intentional action that challenges social injustice (Campbell & Lassiter, 2010; Morrell et al., 2015; Siemens; 2012; Tinkler, 2012).

Although a detailed review of YPAR is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to note briefly the utility of this kind of research in terms of balancing power as universities and communities come together to develop new knowledge. YPAR has traditionally been an inquiry framework, through which youth, most impacted by structural inequalities and violence, have found a voice through which to act as social critics and agents of change (Fine, 2018; Torre & Fine, 2006). In recent decades, it also has emerged as a meaningful approach for studying and involving privileged

youth in important social inquiry into how power and oppression operate, and the role that privilege plays in producing, sustaining, and normalizing social injustice (Stoudt, Fox, & Fine, 2012). Thus, while common tools for critical consciousness-raising and conducting YPAR projects rely on the lived knowledge of marginalized communities (Cammarota & Fine, 2008), the invisibility of privileged youth's structural advantage complicates this strategy in working with privileged populations (Stoudt, et. al., 2012.) As Reason and Bradbury (2006) argue, an exemplar for inquiry based on a pedagogy of the privileged is one that includes inquiry processes that engage those in positions of power in a critical interrogation of their structural advantages, as well as prompt an emerging commitment to collective responsibility and solidarity, rather than a pattern of retreat or passive compassion for disadvantaged others (Stoudt, et al., 2012).

Beyond the complexities that YPAR with privileged youth embodies, community-engaged scholars also most recently have focused critical theoretical attention on the university/community relationship as its own important unit of analysis. (Cruz & Giles, 2000; Sandmann et al., 2012; Sandy & Holland, 2006; White, 2010). Our research contributes to this growing body of literature, focusing attention on the relatively under-studied topic of university/community collaboration in which the participating institutions are similarly situated in structures of power. Sandmann and Kliewer (2012) have noted "how the structural organization of an institution can produce forms of power that undermine the viability of engaged partnerships" (p. 24). Our work builds upon and interrogates this idea, and in particular, takes up two questions: (1) how power dynamics, differential needs, and distinct strategic goals impact the negotiation of engagement in this collaborative program; and (2) implications and strategies for navigating complex university/community engagements to allow for the development of balanced, long-term, and sustained partnerships.

**Methodology and Analytic Overview**

Although the RTI partnership involves three groups, this analysis focuses primarily on the two Midwest-based partners for this project: DePaul University faculty members and the Jewish fund/ federation. It is important to note that our partners from Ma'yan are aware of, and fully supportive of, the development of this analysis without

their full participation. Furthermore, while the research component of the RTI project involved an Institutional Review Board approved research proposal to fully explore youth experiences and perspectives as a result of their participation in RTI, the current paper offers a different analytic lens, focusing on retrospective reflections (Curwood, Munger, Mitchell, Mackeigan, & Farrar, 2011) by members of the Midwest-based community partners on the first three years of this partnership.

To ground this interrogation, we use two sources of data. First, as we've mentioned previously, our perspectives have been informed by our ongoing observation and work with three cohorts of RTI, one from August 2014 to December 2015, a second cohort from August 2015 to June 2016, and a third cohort from August 2016 to June 2017. Over these three years, as well as during the planning phases in 2013 and early 2014, we met with our community partners to conceptualize the program, develop a mutual vision of project goals and objectives, develop an agreement about the roles and responsibilities of all RTI partners, participate in ongoing project planning, attend to challenges that arose over several years, and assess program processes, outcomes, challenges, and areas for future development and growth. At least one member of our research team has attended all program sessions to chronicle observations and to provide programmatic support. Second, over the last three years, we engaged in a series of ongoing structured conversations that included the DePaul University faculty members, graduate assistants, and our community partners from the Jewish fund/ foundation. These conversations have generated rich narratives informed by our individual roles and responsibilities in the program and our institutional homes, our academic backgrounds and disciplines, as well as our experiences in various forms of community-based and interdisciplinary work. Our analytic approach in this paper involves a structured reflective process that moves beyond simply reporting on these conversations to a more integrated treatment of the thematic content embedded within these narratives (Furman, Kelly, & Nelson, 2005).

In this context, our analysis foregrounds a thematic orientation that emerged for us as we considered the ways in which this university/community partnership involves an ongoing process of negotiation that gets balanced and re-balanced over time as the different partners seek to work together to develop a youth-focused

program and meet their distinct institutional roles and mandates. In this paper, we consider how power dynamics and the partners' shared and differential strategic goals were negotiated within a context of distinct institutional mandates and explore the implications of our analysis for creating balanced, long-term, and sustained community/university partnerships.

## Negotiation of Differential Needs and Strategic Goals

Central to current understandings of university/community partnerships are the social and political structures that contextualize these collaborations and shape power differentials and dynamics between partnering institutions (Sandmann & Kliewer, 2012). As discussed previously, the power relationship between the partnering institutions in RTI deviates from the conventional pattern in which structures of power and privilege favor the university (White, 2010). Indeed, the university partner in RTI can be described as an institution of power. DePaul University is the largest Catholic university in the country, is recognized as a leader in community-engaged scholarship, employs in excess of 925 full-time faculty members as well as 1,900 term or adjunct faculty, many of whom are recognized as national experts in their respective fields of study, and has strong financial and institutional supports that frame the service mission of the university. Furthermore, many of the community-engaged projects with which DePaul University faculty members participate involve bringing their expertise to relatively under-resourced urban communities. DePaul's community partner in the program is similarly situated as a large urban organization characterized by substantial institutional resources and social influence. The JUF is the central philanthropic institution supporting Chicago's Jewish community and one of the largest not-for-profit social welfare institutions in Chicago. In 2015, the organization raised approximately $2,000,000 that supported their network of partner agencies and raised additional funds through government and private foundations, corporate gifts, support foundations, and a variety of other sources. Of particular importance for this analysis, the organization has a strong commitment to engaging the community's youth through informal education and outreach experiences for young people designed to strengthen their Jewish identity and connections to community (Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, 2015).

RTI Chicago was initiated after our partner organization in New York City contacted the lead author of this paper about a potential partnership with DePaul University, and in particular with the community-based research initiative she directs. With an interest in piloting their successful RTI program in cities beyond their local area, in partnership with DePaul University faculty members, they began a process of reaching out to a variety of stakeholders in Chicago's Jewish community to search for a local community-based partner for this program that would serve Jewish female identified youth. At an initial community meeting involving a variety of Jewish social service agencies and stakeholders in Chicago's Jewish community, staff members from the JUF indicated a strong and impassioned interest in partnering with DePaul to deliver and study this program. Indeed, the organization already had identified a staff person who they thought would be an ideal fit for facilitating this program. The DePaul University partners agreed—we all had a strong initial sense of partnership and interpersonal fit at the beginning of this engagement. The fund/federation's lead staff person on this project has graduate degrees in Women's and Gender Studies and Social Work, and expressed a strong interest in, and foundation for, a program solidly grounded in feminist theoretical and pedagogical frameworks.

The university and community partners started RTI with a fully articulated and shared commitment to feminist education focused on interrogation of the systemic and interconnected nature of systems of power, oppression, and privilege (i.e., gender, sexuality, race, culture, social class, and religion), as well as ideals of social justice, youth agency, Jewish identity, political solidarity, and collective responsibility. Bringle and Hatcher (2002) argue that as community-engaged projects are beginning, university and community partners are well advised to focus intentionally on their process of relationship initiation, which depends on effective communicating about the potential rewards and costs that might be expected as a result of the collaboration. We were intentional and structured in the initiation phase of this project, with over a year of planning and coordination, and each partner signing formal letters of agreement about our respective roles and responsibilities. Moreover, although community engagement scholars have discussed the problems that can arise as a result of relational tensions surrounding the particular institutional representatives assigned

to work on a community-engaged project (Amen, 2001; Begun et al., 2010), our partnership was initiated with strong interpersonal relationships that have helped us sustain the viability of the project in the face of emergent tensions that were not anticipated fully at the project's inception.

Initiating collaborative working relationships is merely a first step. Relationship maintenance, intentionally working to sustain viable partnerships, has been identified as the next necessary phase in building effective university/community partnerships (Begun et al., 2010; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, & Donohue, 2003). Positive interpersonal relationships may mitigate, or possibly postpone, tensions between universities and community partners, but they cannot eliminate them altogether (White, 2010). Thus, to effectively negotiate the tensions that are to be expected as part of a complex university/community partnership, focus and purpose are necessary to maintain institutional relationships. According to Bringle and Hatcher (2002), relationship maintenance processes should foreground the development of interdependent partnerships characterized by frequent interactions, shared governance, and ongoing assessment of project outcomes.

During the first year of the RTI program (2014–2015), the partnership envisioned by both the university faculty and community partner fell somewhat short in terms of putting forth the requisite time and effort necessary to maintain our relationship as a wholly joint enterprise. As Amen (2001) discusses, successful collaborative efforts require that partnering organizations purposefully adapt individual practices to the goals for which the partnerships were formed. Our analysis indicates that each partner in this joint enterprise seemed to initially encounter institutional impediments to full collaboration involving a substantial commitment of time. Such challenges reflect the analyses of other community-engaged scholars who contend that time can be a tremendous challenge for university/community partnerships (Morrell et al., 2015). For us, the time constraints felt pressing for both the university and community partners, sacrificing time, during the first year of programming, to debrief and assess the RTI program partnership, in favor of other institutional roles and mandates (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Sandmann & Kliewer, 2012). This time pressure not only impacted the time allocated for meeting as a leadership team, but also the way

time was structured in the RTI program meetings. For example, the primary facilitator articulated her feelings about the pressure of time at the end of the first cohort, observing:

> There's never enough time to talk about systematic racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, education, like there are a million 'isms'. There are a million systems. It's impossible to give a real social justice education.

At the end of the first year of the program, we recognized this limitation and openly discussed with our community partners how we might better balance our professional roles and mandates and meet the needs demanded of a shared, reciprocal partnership. As we reviewed the progress of the program over the first year, in preparation for the second year, we agreed to prioritize time for more regular communication, a trend that continued into the third year of the program, and now into the fourth. Paradoxically, this sense of time pressure was a point of convergence for the university and community partners and resulted in a measure of compromise to our joint enterprise. Indeed, this reflective analysis has helped us understand how time pressures created obstacles as we endeavored to shape a university/community collaboration in which each participating institution was able to adapt its institutional imperatives and mandates to foreground the shared goals of the collaborative project (Amen, 2001; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002).

To say a bit more, time pressures were experienced, and created obstacles, within two distinct domains. First, as reflected above by RTI's community partner facilitator, there never seemed to be enough time for full critical interrogation of the multiple systems of power, privilege, and oppression that shape the young people's lives, largely as a result of the scope of issues that needed to be addressed within a 10-month period as a foundation for the participating young people to develop, conduct, and present their culminating youth-led action research project. These programmatic time pressures thus limited our ability to fully develop the feminist and social justice elements of the program, based in a commitment to disrupting inequalities and providing opportunities for collective activism to realize a more just world (Ayers, Quinn, & Stovall, 2009; Hackman, 2005). Such a pedagogical approach was thus partially, but not fully, realized largely as a result of pressing time constraints.

Second, time constraints felt pressing for both the university and community partners, and therefore, frequent interaction that involved ongoing debriefing and assessment of the complexities involved in our RTI program values and foci (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Sandmann & Kliewer, 2012) was too often sacrificed as we prioritized other institutional roles and mandates. This time pressure impacted the time we allocated for meeting as a leadership team. We often felt overly time pressed to prioritize regular team meetings during which we would have the opportunity to process programmatic questions and emergent tensions experienced by the participating individuals and institutions, and assess the ways in which the program was both meeting and falling short of articulated values and goals. As the RTI program developed within those first two years, we needed to stay in more consistent and direct communication about the complications and complexities that were arising. Certainly, if representatives from two institutions, embedded in very different cultural contexts, can be expected to navigate these complex power dynamics, focusing close attention on whose culture is dominating when making decisions (Kindred & Petrescu, 2015), substantial time must be allotted to open a space and process for challenging conversations and negotiations (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Sandmann & Kliewer, 2012; Strand et al., 2003). Too often the university faculty members would prioritize our need to fulfill our teaching, administrative, publishing, and service commitments to the university. Furthermore, our community partner who facilitated the program was an extremely capable leader. She took charge of curriculum planning and programming, and we were often quite happy to know that she could run the program largely without our substantial input and time investments. We now have come to understand the ways in which we prioritized time may have limited our ability to fully meet goals of full reciprocity and mutuality that framed this collaborative project.

A power imbalance thus emerged as the JUF responded to the program's initial success and the community praise they were receiving as a result of the outstanding leadership opportunity they were providing for Jewish teen girls. The young people were invited to speak at a variety of community events, prominent members of the community expressed their desire to financially support this innovative program, and at this point, RTI seemed

to move in the direction that Jewish communal leaders were envisioning for youth programming. For example, when reflecting on Jewish communal support for the program, the primary facilitator (from our community partner organization, the fund/federation observed that, "As long as it (the RTI program) was good for Jews and the Jewish community, the funders were happy." We began to see how the structural organization— with its apparent emphasis on Jewish identity, youth leadership, meeting the expectations of stakeholders and constituencies, and attracting funding from foundations and individual donors— produced forms of power that undermined the collective and mutually agreed upon feminist and social justice goals for this partnership (Kliewer, 2013; Sandmann & Kliewer; 2012). Specifically, at the program's inception, all project partners agreed on a set of common program emphases and goals grounded in a commitment to intersectional feminist approaches that highlight the workings of intersecting systems of power, privilege, and oppression in young people's lives. Moreover, we all agreed that RTI participants' interrogation of their own relative race and class privilege would be a central programmatic goal, in the hopes of cultivating a sense of collective responsibility toward social justice and transformation.

At this time (end of the first year of programming, and shaping the second year as well), we perceived a shift in priorities driven by the institutional mandates of the community partner in this project. For example, it advocated for a public presentation of the Jewish teens' research project in the context of a major Jewish festival, rather than holding the event on the university campus, as had been the case at the end of our first year. Holding this public presentation at the Jewish festival was not problematic in and of itself. Rather, our critical reflections make clear that this decision demonstrated a prioritizing of Jewish communal stakeholders' interests in celebrating Jewish youth achievement and programmatic success, all of which was strategic for creating opportunities for future funding. While this is understandable, it sits in tension with the collaborative program's feminist and social justice informed projects goals.

While the university partners understood the necessity for funding to sustain this program, we also became concerned that such mandates were being prioritized. Thus, during the second year of RTI, we came to a deeper understanding that financial resources create a base of power

to direct a project's strategic vision (Kindred & Petrescu, 2015), and these issues need to be taken into account and discussed intentionally and with full transparency in order to maintain shared project goals and visions, rather than prioritizing one of the institution's interests. Ultimately, these are ongoing tension points that have to be continuously negotiated as part of successful, long term, and sustained collaboration.

It is important to note here that we in no way attribute ill intentions on the part of the university's JUF partners. Rather, this analytic process has helped all of us develop a keen awareness of the substantial challenges both universities and communities can encounter when they work to transition from an emphasis on gains for one's own institution to a focus on mutual benefit, accommodation, and joint outcomes (Begun et al., 2010; Morrell et al., 2015). Moreover, the challenge of time constraints discussed previously has particular relevance here. Certainly, if representatives from two institutions, embedded in very different cultural contexts, can be expected to navigate these complex power dynamics, focusing close attention on whose institutional mandates take priority when decisions are being made (Kindred & Petrescu, 2015), substantial time must be allotted to open a space and process for conversations and negotiations (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Sandmann & Kliewer, 2012; Strand et al., 2003).

As this example illustrates, collaboration between universities and community-based organizations may require that they adapt their goals and ways of doing business to the purpose for which they formed their initial partnership (Amen, 2001). Although this ideal was perhaps not fully realized in the first two years of our collaboration, the end of the second year presented us with an opportunity to openly address power dynamics as they emerged in our ongoing work together. To this end, we held a full team meeting/retreat in which all program partners and staff (i.e., university graduate assistants, the JUF participating staff, university faculty members) participated. To ground our dialogue during this meeting/retreat, we stepped back to reconsider the values and principles that guided the RTI as it was originally conceptualized. The original purpose, as we jointly re-articulated, was to center critical reflection on, and assessment of, Jewish teen girls' social context, as well as broader issues involving societal inequities and injustices. RTI was meant to involve young people in critical inquiry in a collective

fashion, and to take steps to address issues involving social change and social justice. More specifically, RTI is grounded in a commitment to develop the capacity for teen girls to engage critically with social issues that impact their lives through a feminist lens; cultivate leadership capacities that will enable these youth to engage in critical dialogue and social action with other teens and adult allies inside and beyond the Jewish community; and build strategic partnerships among feminist scholars, activists, and Jewish community members.

Centering on how the program can reflect these shared priorities and goals in a more balanced way, we talked at length at this meeting/retreat about ways to maintain a focus on intersectional feminist thought so that power, privilege, and oppression remained a key thread throughout the program. When asked to provide feedback, one university graduate assistant commented, "We just need to do a better job of constantly relating everything that we are learning back to intersectionality and systems of power and privilege and oppression." As a result of these transparent and sometimes challenging conversations, we were able to start a third RTI cohort on a different footing that reflected a shared understanding of the need to engage in ongoing renegotiation of power dynamics in our university/community partnership. Such ongoing navigations are integral to long-term and sustained partnerships that, according to Harkins (2013), remain elusive for many university/community collaborations. Thus, beginning in our third cohort, our entire team recommitted to a program focus on intersectional feminist learning. The university partners also gained a more nuanced understanding of the priorities of the JUF, and came to understand that feminist/social justice work can align with other goals such as youth achievement and leadership development. Indeed, all university and community partners took this opportunity to stress our initial emphasis on youth-led work, and thus came to realize through our feminist informed lens that our multiple program goals need not be in competition and conceptualized as either/or, but rather as both/and (Anzaldua, 1987; hooks, 2000).

**Conclusions and Implications for Future Work**

Our research on the workings of institutional power in community-engaged projects helps move the field forward to more thorough analysis and nuanced understandings. As an initial matter, our work focuses attention on the relatively under-studied topic of university/community

collaboration in which the participating institutions are similarly situated in structures of power. This study thus deepens understanding about the workings of institutional power in community-engaged projects, and highlights the need for future inquiry in this direction.

Our findings uncover particular institutional challenges to full and reciprocal collaboration in university/community partnership, and suggest strategies that all community-engaged scholars would be well advised to take up in their community-based work. First, each institution involved in a partnership brings specific knowledge, skills, and expertise to the relationship, and each needs to intentionally marshal their resources for the good of the joint enterprise. This very well may mean working counter to their individual institutional cultures and imperatives, and instead adopting an ethic of full cooperation based in a stance of epistemic humility.

Furthermore, the implications of research on collaborative work involving institutions that are similarly situated in terms of power extends far beyond this one dynamic. Indeed, the preponderance of university/community partnerships tends to follow the more typical pattern of power asymmetry in which the university is the large institution of power and the community partner is the organization that needs assistance and is positioned to benefit from the university's resources, support, and expertise (Morrell et al., 2015; White, 2010). Our work suggests that community-engaged scholars need to hold themselves accountable to the communities with which they work, such that they consistently attend to the workings of power, and its potential for exploitation. As well, we offer the field a sharpened mindfulness about institutional power that shapes all community-engaged work; scholars should work against co-opting community-based projects, and instead commit themselves over the long term to collaborative work that brings to life feminist and social justice values grounded in shared power, community accountability, and an ethic of connection and care (Catlett & Bunn, 2016).

Our analysis also has illuminated that successful and sustained university/community partnerships must directly and transparently navigate complex power dynamics in the interest of promoting equitable partnerships characterized by mutuality and reciprocity (Boyer, 1990, 1996; Sandman & Kliewer, 2012; Stanton, 2007). We have come to understand that cultivating and maintaining relationship between university and community must be intentional and must incorporate substantial time to continually assess and navigate complex dynamics. This necessary, but time-consuming, process is not linear, but rather uneven and needs ongoing and consistent attention and critical reflection. Indeed, we witnessed the benefits of a long-term commitment to shared leadership and mutuality, principles that our entire team had to work hard to achieve over a period of several years. Moreover, as we engaged in our reflective processes, we came to more fully understand the benefits of relying on the strengths and assets of youth participants to lead the way.

Returning to the issue of time, effective work with youth—in particular, work focused on feminist and critical YPAR—requires deep interrogation of the multiple systems of power, privilege, and oppression that shape young people's lives. As we've discussed in this analysis, such interrogation is complex, multi-layered, and, thus, takes time. In the context of our work with relatively privileged youth, our findings are consistent with existing scholarship that has highlighted that for those in positions of relative privilege, recognizing the systemic nature of one's privilege can be overwhelming. The intense feelings that often emerge require that youth grapple with new and potentially uncomfortable awakenings (Catlett & Proweller, 2015; Nagda & Gurin, 2007; Okun, 2010; Tatum, 1992), a process that can be expected to take substantial time. Community-engaged scholars should expect and plan for this time commitment when undertaking this kind of work.

The third year of RTI provides an exemplar for this type of feminist critical engagement with youth, and culminated in a particularly rich and unique participatory action research project that met multiple program goals previously discussed. The participating youth in 2016–2017 conducted a project designed to interrogate and disrupt rape culture and created strategies for disseminating the results of their scholarship into the community in a creative and accessible fashion. In particular, the RTIs found that rape culture is not talked about enough in the Jewish community and decided to create a feminist Passover Seder on rape culture, with the intention that Jewish community members can find meaning and connection in the intersection of rape culture and religious rituals. The RTI participants centered their action within intersectional feminist thought, creating opportunities for shared reflection on issues

of power, privilege, and structural inequities including violence, of relevance to their lives as well as the communities in which they live.

As the field of community-engaged scholarship increasingly takes up integration of YPAR, our work provides lessons about the unique challenges that scholars can expect when using participatory action research as a method of knowledge production, as well as a teaching tool, with largely privileged youth, and within the context of privileged institutions. The contributions of our work build on the work of scholars who previously have applied feminist and critical social justice perspectives to their YPAR work with privileged youth (e.g., Stoudt, 2009; Stoudt, et al., 2012), facilitating a learning context in which young people can develop critical consciousness of how power operates in their lives, how it can adversely affect others, and how to work in solidarity with marginalized groups. We recognize that privileged youth often struggle with barriers to examining their privileged identities (Goodman, 2010), and therefore have strengthened our belief in the pedagogical utility of bringing differently situated groups of youth together. Bringing diverse groups of young people into partnership to conduct participatory action research holds great potential in particular in terms of "bringing together distinct forms of wisdom and experience to study theoretically, empirically, and politically, the structures and dynamics of injustice" (Stoudt, et al., 2012, p. 181).

Finally, the community partner in the case of our project secured the majority of funding for our work. As a variety of scholars have noted (Kindred & Petrescu, 2015; White, 2010), more power is generally held with the organization that is responsible for funding the project. Our research findings point to the need for transparent communication and negotiations involved with creating and sustaining funding for collaborative projects. In so doing, the partner who generates the greatest resources will not end up driving the partnership and therein instantiating a power imbalance that has the potential to compromise the values of collaborative feminist and social justice oriented work. As argued in *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded* (2007), social justice initiatives are not well served when the mandates and imperatives of funders take center stage in shaping community-based projects. Drawing on this idea, a central conclusion and contribution of our work is that funding should not be the lever that drives

collaborative partnerships and the directions that they take. Future inquiry is well advised to further mine this complex relation of power at the center of university/community engagement.

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