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The Role of Race in Urban Community–University Relationships

Moving from Interest Convergence to Critical Literacy

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— Abstract —

Recent decades have seen an increased involvement of institutions of higher education in their communities. Previous scholarship on community engaged scholarship and anchor institutions often fails to consider race, racism, and racial power dynamics. We analyze interviews with the program director of a critical community engaged scholarship initiative as part of a multi-year community-led collaboration between an urban, historically White institution and its adjacent community using the critical race theory tenet of interest convergence and critical literacy. We find that the university's relationship with the local community is troubling to residents, especially frequent student projects and university-initiated neighborhood safety initiatives. We also find that the university became interested in partnership when there were clear financial incentives and maintained significant logistical hurdles that hindered an equitable partnership. These tensions between the community and university highlight the university's desires to conduct research and build prestige as self-interested acts, negatively impacting the community-university relationship and partnership. We conclude by emphasizing the importance of race in research on anchor institutions and community engaged scholarship. We offer critical literacy as a framework for universities to establish more equitable interactions, both in community–university relationships and in scholarly partnerships.

Keywords: Critical Literacy, Interest Convergence, Race and Higher Education, Critical University Studies

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Universities are embedded in their communities and engage their cities, states, and nations to teach and conduct research. This public engagement can enrich the university's teaching and student learning (Weerts, 2007). Since the 1990s, universities in the United States have more actively sought to improve relationships with their local communities and build partnerships (Boyle & Silver, 2005). We conceptualize community–university relationships as all the interactions between these entities and community–university partnerships as formalized associations driven by mutually shared goals. Commonly, partnerships use and/or create academic research to address the needs of communities. These research-based partnerships have many conceptualizations including action research (Stringer, 2013), community-based participatory research (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2011), service learning (Eyler & Giles, 1999), and community engaged scholarship ([CES]; Gordon da Cruz, 2018). However, many of these research partnerships and relationships are not equitable. Communities can feel taken advantage of by higher education institutions and not always experience benefits (Harris, 2019). These partnerships are complicated in part because universities serve as economic and social anchors within their communities (Goddard, Coombes, Kempton, & Vallance, 2014).

Critical CES is an emerging framework to engage in community-based scholarship that promotes social and racial justice (Gordon da Cruz, 2017). One focus of critical CES is on how partnerships between communities and universities can produce critically conscious knowledge that considers how racism influences people's lives to create a more just society (Gordon da Cruz, 2017). Racism includes individual actions, structures, and institutional norms that marginalize or harm minoritized persons and sustain White privilege (Bonilla-Silva, 2017; Harper, 2012; Jones, 2000). It is essential that critically conscious knowledge builds on the lived experiences and knowledge of minoritized community partners because they may have different epistemologies than the dominant worldview (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Their varied perspectives can provide a fuller understanding of social problems and possible solutions. Previous studies using critical CES as a framework often do not center the race of community members or racism (see, e.g., Conahan, Toth, & McKlveen, 2018; Morton et al., 2019), leaving race and racism under considered in this literature.

Our involvement in a multi-year community–university partnership informed this manuscript. This critical CES project supported an afterschool program in a predominantly Black neighborhood adjacent to a university. The neighborhood group expanded the program with logistical and financial assistance from the university. During our multi-year partnership, program staff experienced challenges living near and partnering with the historically White university. These experiences were the impetus for this study, which examines the importance of race and racism in community–university relationships and partnerships.

In this study, we use the critical race theory tenet of *interest convergence* (Bell, 1980) in combination with *disrupting the commonplace*, a component of critical literacy (Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002). This analytical framework informs our approach to our research question: How do commonplace actions of an urban university influence relationships and partnerships with a neighboring Black community? Principally using experiences of program staff, we find that the university frequently engaged in racist acts, commonly rooted in interest convergence, that harmed the community–university relationship and partnership. We recommend utilizing critical literacy to consider the power universities hold in their relationships and partnerships with Black communities (Anderson & Irvine, 1993; Shor, 1999). In addition, researchers should engage with issues of race and racism when examining these interactions.

Literature Review

Commonplace actions of universities influence community–university relationships and partnerships. The scholarship on these two types of associations is often separate, even though community–university relationships influence partnerships and vice versa. We first review the literature on community– university relationships and then community–university partnerships. In both domains, we find that discussions of race are frequently absent, thereby providing an incomplete understanding of community–university interactions.

Community–University Relationships

One thread of community-focused research examines relationships between universities and cities. We focus our review on this complex relationship in urban areas. Specifically, we highlight the prominence of race in the higher education literature that examines community–university relationships.

In the first major study of U.S. college towns, Gumprecht (2008) found that when universities did not provide sufficient housing, landlords purchased owner-occupied homes for students, subsequently eliminating many single-family neighborhoods. Universities expanded in the 1960's, causing tension with long-time residents and a decreased tax base to serve universities and residents (Gumprecht, 2008). This detailed analysis does not examine urban institutions or how expansion may be racialized.

Research on urban community–university relationships is a growing area of scholarship. *Anchor institutions* are large universities committed to their physical locations and significant to their communities' economic and social development (Goddard et al., 2014). These large non-profit institutions have negative financial impacts on cities because they lower property values, decrease property tax bases, and increase expenditures for services (Baker-Minkel, Moody, & Kieser, 2004; Gumprecht, 2008). Anchor institutions can meaningfully influence local policies through their actions and the actions of their employees. Institutions recognize their ability to influence local policy, so they engage with their communities as acts of "enlightened self-interest" – appearing to be altruistic while benefiting themselves (Taylor & Luter, 2013, p. 13). Holley and Harris (2018) found, in their examination of an urban university and its city, that the university was motivated, in part, by self-interest and influenced almost everything within the city. Universities also downplay their role as anchor institutions by overstating costs while understating benefits when considering partnerships with their communities (Webber & Karlström, 2009).

Issues of race, class, and poverty have received little attention in scholarship on anchor institutions (Harris & Holley, 2016). For example, in a study that examined the research activities of an urban anchor institution, Harris (2019) interviewed stakeholders from the local government, community, businesses and the university. Harris' findings included that these different groups did not share a common idea about the role of the university in the community. However, Harris does not discuss the race of participants or the racial demographics of the city or the university's students, besides mentioning that the city had previously experienced White flight. The racial composition of the city and university may provide different perspectives on the role of the university, but without explicitly including race, it is not certain how race or racism influences these relationships.

Research on anchor institutions often uses a broad definition of community that includes the entire city, so we also reviewed research that examines relationships between universities and nearby communities. Community–university relationships are central to modern cities (Baldwin, 2015). These relationships can help foster neighborhood identity, offer employment, provide safety, and increase local sales (Webber & Karlström, 2009). These relationships can also have adverse consequences. For example, campus police forces have extended into communities and have killed Black community members (Lopez, 2015; Reaves, 2015). Land development practices

near anchor institutions can harm Communities of Color (Baldwin & Crane, 2020; Harris & Holley, 2016). Increased demand for land by universities leads to *studentification*—social, cultural, economic, and physical transformations that occur as the number of students in a neighborhood increases (Smith, 2005). Studentification predominantly displaces People of Color, creating tensions between urban universities and nearby communities (Baldwin & Crane, 2020). Yet, empirical studies on community–university relationships rarely consider race and racism.

Community–University Partnerships

Community–university relationships can include partnerships formed for shared goals. These community–university partnerships can work to improve local public schools (Cucchiara, 2010) or develop service-learning experiences (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Most common are research-based partnerships that center the experiences and knowledge of the community (Gordon da Cruz, 2018). However, like research on anchor institutions, race is frequently absent within scholarship on research-based partnerships.

Community–university partnerships have become common practices in modern universities and economic needs have partially driven these partnerships. The establishment of land grant colleges beginning with the Morrill Act of 1862 added service to the mission of universities including supporting local economies, which non-land grant institutions also incorporated into their own mission statements (Boyer, 1990; Labaree, 2017). Community–university partnership initiatives expanded again in the 1990s as the economy became more dependent on information and high-level skills because community partnerships reinforced a university's diminishing elite status and moral authority (Boyle & Silver, 2005). These historical perspectives indicate that local economic incentives have partially driven the expansion of community partnerships.

CES provides a framework for partnership that focuses on individual projects that work to advance research for the public good (Beaulieu, Breton, & Brousselle, 2018; Gordon da Cruz, 2018). Partnerships with community groups near the university's campus may be issue-focused (e.g., education and gun violence) or location-focused (e.g., city and neighborhood). Successful partnerships can be mutually beneficial relationships with supportive infrastructures and leadership and that use asset-based approaches (Beaulieu et al., 2018; Miller & Hafner, 2008).

Community–university partnerships may not be equitable, which can lead to challenges. In their qualitative research of a university–neighborhood partnership, Miller and Hafner (2008) found that an unequal distribution of power, traditional meeting formats, and unaddressed community concerns limited the collaboration. These processes and power differentials made the partnership inequitable and centered the norms and perspectives of the university.

Gordon da Cruz (2017) applied critical race theory to CES, defining critical CES as scholarship that "aims to develop critically conscious knowledge, dismantle structural inequity, and make society more socially and racially just" (p. 375). This concept is nascent in the literature but community–university partnerships addressing the opioid crisis in Pennsylvania (Conahan et al., 2018) and violence against women in Canada (Morton et al., 2019) have used critical CES. However, neither study examines reasons for racial inequality, which is key to Gordon da Cruz's (2017) conceptualization of critical CES.

The continued rise of community engagement in U.S. universities indicates its growing importance. Scholars have developed and used race-conscious frameworks like critical CES to ground partnerships.. However, these previous partnerships utilizing critical CES have not thoroughly examined the role of race in partnerships, even though racial differences may amplify power differences.

In this study, we explore how race influences an urban anchor institution's relationship and critical

CES partnership with its neighbor. Studies of anchor institutions and critical CES have not often centered race or racism. Our paper considers how race is salient in understanding and improving a university's common practices in community–university relationships and partnerships.

Context and Case

In this manuscript, we examine one community–university relationship and a partnership within this relationship. We rely on perspectives of community members who were also program staff as our primary source of data for this case study. Since case studies are context dependent (Stake, 1995; Zainal, 2007), we first describe the city, community, and university. We then describe how the various roles of the program's administrator (our key interlocutor) in the community provide a unique vantage point to study this community–university relationship and partnership.

The mid-Atlantic city has a plurality of Black residents. Non-profit higher education and health care systems dominate its economy, so the city does not receive nearly $400 million annually in taxes. The city does not receive payments in lieu of taxes from universities. The university argues that the services it provides like jobs, engagement in schools, and accessible health care are sufficient alternatives. This lack of tax revenue creates tension between the university and the city's residents.

Members of the local public housing complex (Rosewood; pseudonym) are predominantly Black. Rosewood founded an afterschool program for neighborhood children in 2013 because the previous program was not culturally responsive to student needs. As Rosewood's program grew, the program was receptive to funding opportunities from local organizations and government agencies to increase its impact without charging families. Black residents from Rosewood, including the program administrator—Ms. Jackson (pseudonym), staffed the program.

Urban State University (USU; pseudonym) is a large, public historically White university in the city. USU was established in this location and predates Rosewood. Over time, USU encroached upon Rosewood. The campus and private student housing now surround parts of Rosewood, including two elementary schools attended by students that participate in Rosewood's afterschool program. USU students and employees frequently walk through Rosewood to access public transit. USU contacted Rosewood in 2014, as Rosewood sought a partner to further develop its afterschool program.

Rosewood partnered with USU to support the growth and formalization of the afterschool program. They received support from USU including logistical help, professional development, and data collection for grants. The formalization of the program included applying for and receiving a multi-year, multi-million-dollar grant, which was the primary source of funding for the program between 2015–2020.

Our research team acted as boundary spanners between Rosewood and USU, translating between each entity to navigate challenges in the partnership (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010). The program staff verified our role as boundary spanners by describing the research team as independent of USU, even though we were USU employees. This insider and outsider perspective is also present in our authorship. Jake is a White, male graduate student new to USU who was not involved in the community–university partnership. James is a Black man and a long-term faculty member at USU with a history of collaborative work in Rosewood. However, at the start of this work participants questioned James's class status and university affiliation. Our collaborative writing mirrors that of the research team's role as boundary spanners because we have insider and outsider perspectives, strengthening our position more than if either of us had written this manuscript independently.

This partnership is an example of critical CES. Gordon da Cruz's (2017) critical CES asks four key questions: (a) Are we collaboratively developing critically conscious knowledge? (b) Are we

authentically locating expertise? (c) Are we conducting race-conscious research and scholarship? (d) Is our work grounded in asset-based understandings of the community? Our partnership sought to develop knowledge about how a community-led afterschool program can support students in unique ways. Rosewood remained a key partner as a local expert, and we viewed its initial program as an asset to improve educational programs for neighborhood children. Finally, we viewed the partnership as an opportunity to advance racial equity by understanding how race may be important in afterschool program development, especially for the Black students this program served.

Methods

We explore the USU–Rosewood relationship and partnership as a case study to examine our research question: How do commonplace actions of an urban university influence relationships and partnerships with a neighboring Black community? The case study method allows for focus on a single, unique case that can highlight the complexities of this relationship, which other methods may not capture (Stake, 1995; Zainal, 2007). Focusing on one community–university partnership and relationship provides depth to our analysis (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Stake 1995).

Ms. Jackson is our key interlocutor because of her unique positions in the community and partnership. We developed a strong relationship with Ms. Jackson because of her role as the program administrator. This personal connection may have increased her willingness to share concerns about USU during our one-on-one interviews. Ms. Jackson was heavily involved in Rosewood as an elected community leader. This formal role in the community increased her awareness of USU's actions in the community beyond the partnership. These multiple roles presented Ms. Jackson with opportunities to meet with USU staff and provide unique insights into the community–university relationship and partnership.

We utilize three interviews with Ms. Jackson from spring 2016, 2017, and 2018 as our principal sources of data. We conducted these interviews as part of our larger partnership that documents the program's history and implementation. Ms. Jackson received transcripts of each interview to review as a form of member checking to increase validity and trustworthiness (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016).

We began our analysis by open coding instances where Ms. Jackson discussed Rosewood's relationship with USU in these interviews. These open codes were axial coded to identify common themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). We shared these preliminary themes with the entire research team to ensure they aligned with information not present in the interviews. We triangulated and supplemented these themes with data from the larger partnership including focus groups with staff members, reports, press releases, news articles, and field notes.

It is important to note that program staff did not explicitly mention race during our interviews or focus groups. This silence has value to researchers (Bhattacharya, 2009) and is commonly present in studies on the education of Black students. White people often dismiss ideas from Black people about how to educate Black students, so Black people move to silence (Delpit, 1988). Program staff may believe that using race neutral language may increase the likelihood that USU would address their concerns.

Analytic Framework

To understand how race permeates USU's interactions with Rosewood, we examined our data with components of critical race theory and critical literacy. Critical race theory originated in legal studies and Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) extended it to education to challenge dominant discourses on race and racism in education. Critical race theory's tenets include counter-storytelling, the permanence of racism, Whiteness as property, interest convergence, and the critique of liberalism (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

One of the tenets of critical race theory important in our analysis is that racism is permanent in the United States (Bell, 1992). Racism takes a variety of forms including individual actions, structures, and institutional norms that harm minoritized people and uphold White supremacy (Harper, 2012; Jones, 2000). Racism is deeply embedded in higher education in the United States (Patton, 2016; Wilder, 2013). Anti-Black racism is central to the histories and current practices of many historically White universities (Dancy, Edwards, & Davis, 2018). Thus, we accept racism as deeply embedded in community–university interactions.

Interest convergence, a tenet of critical race theory, describes how People of Color achieve racial equity when it is in the interest of White people (Bell, 1980). These interests can be based on the material, emotional, psychological, or moral interests of White people (Jackson, 2011), but do not lead to changes that disrupt the normal way of life for the majority (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). Interest convergence provides a framework to analyze how the common actions of USU are not altruistic and can have negative impacts on Rosewood.

The relationship between Rosewood and USU is complicated by the difference in power between these groups. To examine how this power differential influences the relationship, we use the concept of critical literacy, which focuses on becoming conscious of power relations and challenging the status quo (Anderson & Irvine, 1993; Shor, 1999). Critical literacy includes four key dimensions: disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints, focusing on sociopolitical issues, and promoting social justice (Lewison et al., 2002). In this paper, we rely on the critical literacy dimension of disrupting the commonplace. Disrupting the commonplace allows us to examine often unquestioned interactions between USU and Rosewood. Using the experiences of our community partner to interrogate commonplace routines allows us to interrogate assumptions in community–university interactions.

Interest convergence, a tenant of critical race theory, and disrupting the commonplace, a dimension of critical literacy, complement each other by examining what has been, while envisioning a better future for community–university relationships. Interest convergence is rooted in understanding historical legacies of racism (Feldman, 2012) while critical literacy's call for disrupting the commonplace provides an approach for future practice. In this study, interest convergence allows us to examine possible motivations for why USU has historically operated in Rosewood and critical literacy provides a framework to critique commonplace actions between these actors who have immense power differences.

Findings

Ms. Jackson and her peers articulated their concerns with the community–university relationship and partnership between Rosewood and USU. Our analytic framework of interest convergence and disrupting the commonplace illustrates how USU's actions were unintentionally racist. These racist actions harmed both the community–university relationship and partnership.

Living in the University's Shadow: The Community–University Relationship

USU frequently conducts research in Rosewood and encroaches on Rosewood's physical space. These acts negatively impact the lives of residents. Together, these actions negatively impacted the community–university relationship, especially considering the racial power dynamics.

Research in the Community. One of Ms. Jackson's concerns about living next to USU centered on the frequent use of Rosewood as a site for student research. Students often conduct research in Rosewood, viewing it as a laboratory instead of a place people live:

> *The thing is, you send [students] over here and they come over here with their [cameras]...I'm*

> *like, "Did you get permission just to film our lives? You're just going sit here and film us? Are you serious?" You're supposed to get permission. Someone should sign off that you just sit and [film] kids in the playground.*

Ms. Jackson's experience critiques the current processes for reviewing research. Students, and possibly instructors, assume that individuals on the local playground can be filmed without explicit consent.

As researchers embedded in Rosewood, we noticed that USU's practices for reviewing research were occasionally insensitive. We saw recruitment flyers approved by USU's Institutional Review Board for research on abusive relationships posted in the community that attempted to recruit prospective participants that asked, "Do you have a beef? Be a part of our study." This flyer's language dehumanized prospective participants with colloquial language and did not fully consider the trauma associated with recounting experiences of domestic violence. This USU approved recruitment flyer failed to acknowledge how the flyer's language could be hurtful to victims of domestic violence or residents of Rosewood.

We view both these experiences with research conducted by the university as racist. Students from USU entering Rosewood to gain research experience from the lives of Black residents is based on racist institutional norms and practices that perpetuate forms of anti-Black violence (Wilderson, 2020). The approval of the insensitive recruitment flyer that the research team saw in the neighborhood is also racist. The institutional norms that govern what USU staff approved then perpetuated harm on minoritized residents who were victims of domestic violence. Interest convergence and the commonplace help explain these incidents.

USU has interests in conducting research to train students and advance the careers of faculty. Rosewood's nearby location makes it a convenient place for research and outreach on issues of interest to researchers. USU's mission statement calls for engaged scholarship in the city, so this research in the community advances USU's mission and aligns with its self-identity. The commonplace actions of USU involves no formal approval for student research for coursework in Black communities or consideration of how frequent study inflicts harm on Black residents. These acts were the commonplace routines of USU and harmed residents while USU advanced their own interests.

Neighborhood safety. The community–university relationship extends beyond the realm of research and includes neighborhood safety initiatives. Just after our partnership began, a car hit a White student near Rosewood's community center, adjacent to campus. Almost immediately, USU installed traffic cones in the pavement near the community center without consulting residents. Cars had also hit Black kids in the neighborhood previously, but USU did not leap to action. An outside grant partner spoke up, claiming that USU cared more about the safety of White college students than Black kids. City officials removed the partner from the project shortly after the partner spoke out. Ms. Jackson, who was present when this person spoke up, later reached out directly to USU, and then, USU removed the traffic cones. Ms. Jackson's comments to USU centered on the negative impacts of the traffic cones on Rosewood, not on the racial undertones the outside grant partner highlighted.

USU's quick actions that excluded the community from decision-making were racist because they marginalized Black residents. We can analyze these acts through interest convergence. Cars had hit Black youth previously in the neighborhood but only after a car hit a White student did USU rapidly implement safety initiatives. USU became interested in safety when its students were directly harmed, even though USU knew its students were at risk in the neighborhood since cars injured Black youth there before.

The university's commonplace practices aided Ms. Jackson's objective of removing the traffic cones. Ms. Jackson appealed to the idea that safety initiatives should involve the local community, without evoking race or racism in her criticism of USU. The grant partner who was removed from the project challenged the normative idea that neighborhood safety initiatives are not racialized, but this did not lead to change. Ms. Jackson's success shows that she understands power structures within USU and that navigating this power differential requires silencing racial concerns (Delpit, 1988). Redlining and segregation have tightly interwoven race and community in Rosewood. Yet to create change, Ms. Jackson relied on the USU's assumed preference for race-neutral concerns.

Living near USU means being subject to frequent study and losing autonomy for student safety. These interactions harmed the community–university relationship because USU's interests drove the relationship without disrupting commonplace practices.

Between David and Goliath: The Community-University Partnership

We frequently found ourselves between the large system of USU and Rosewood's nimble program. As boundary spanners, we came to understand how seemingly innocuous commonplace actions of USU were problematic for program staff. These actions included incentives that led to university participation and bureaucratic challenges after the establishment of the partnership.

Incentives, not altruism, initiated the partnership. USU entered the community–university partnership, in part, to benefit financially and receive public recognition. Our various data sources, analyzed through interest convergence and the commonplace, highlight how these foundational stories of the partnership had lasting repercussions.

Ms. Jackson and her colleagues spoke frequently about how they began as unpaid workers and later were supported with grants. An employee noted in a focus group that they "started out with [no grant money]. [Ms. Jackson] built it on her own. [We] volunteered, bringing our own stuff in." After the program put out a request for proposals for grant partners, USU reached out. Ms. Jackson and her team volunteered for years to establish the program before this first interaction.

USU's policies required that a portion of the grant cover overhead expenses, which frustrated Ms. Jackson. USU was not part of the program before the funding but still benefited from the earlier unpaid labor of Black staff members. Ms. Jackson described this saying, "Now, when it's up and running, now [USU] wants to take a million dollars that [the grantor] gave, and [they] want to use that and give [themselves] another program." The commonplace routine for grant management at USU required that part of the grant cover indirect costs for the university. Ms. Jackson perceived that USU used grant funds to start another program; however, these funds just contributed to USU's overall budget after paying for USU's grant responsibilities.

USU also had an incentive for positive public recognition by promoting the work to improve educational outcomes and provide jobs in Rosewood. USU's initial announcement about the partnership included a desire for public recognition. USU's first press release about the partnership said that USU would "hire an educational engagement coordinator" to create an "afterschool program." This initial press release did not mention the preexisting resident-led program that relied on Black volunteers. USU helped Rosewood receive a large grant that turned these volunteer positions into paid jobs for Black residents. These press releases and emphasis on job creation show USU's need for public recognition of its impact on Rosewood.

These incentive-driven actions were racist acts, especially the initial press release. This public record of the partnership erased community members from the narrative about the program's founding. This erasure marginalized the Black staff members who had

done years of work in their community to build the program to the point where outside funders would consider distributing large grants to the program.

Applying interest convergence and interrogating the commonplace illuminates how these actions are troubling. USU's commonplace grant management practices require money to cover overhead expenses. These acts maintain the status quo and decrease program funding. While universities do need to cover indirect costs, in this case, these practices harmed the Black community. If Rosewood had a local organization that could receive funding directly, more funds would have supported students. Exploring USU's desire for public recognition through interest convergence indicates how narratives about job creation are problematic. USU does not make payments in lieu of taxes to the city and uses job creation to defend against future payments. Promoting new jobs and community-based work provides positive press that may decrease pressure from the city's residents for future payments to the city.

Bureaucratic challenges to partnership. When working with university systems, Ms. Jackson and her colleagues felt mistreated. Staff members encountered frequent delays or changes in responsibility. These actions from USU unintentionally marginalized the program staff.

The program staff's responsibilities informed their concerns about USU. Most staff members worked directly with students and were concerned about receiving supplies USU ordered on time, since there were often long delays. In a focus group, one staff member recalled that "if we order stuff in the winter, we sometimes get it almost in the summer," causing them to "improvise all winter." This was a significant concern to one staff member who ordered frogs to dissect. She would "have to run over to [USU] and get my box before they die." These long delays presented meaningful challenges for program implementation that unintentionally harmed students.

Ms. Jackson interacted directly with USU staff outside the research team. This informed her concerns that she shared about the partnership with USU during our one-on-one interviews. With time, the research team was able to collaborate with Ms. Jackson to address her concerns with USU's commonplace procedures.

In meetings with university staff, USU told Ms. Jackson how the program should be run. She recalled that:

> *I get to a meeting and they say, "[Ms. Jackson], we thought this would work best." I'm feeling disrespected, degraded. A grown woman, and you tell me what you think I could do with my life…It's irritating because they look at us like fools, idiots, jackasses.*

Planning without Ms. Jackson's presence excluded an expert on the program and negatively impacted the community–university partnership. Ms. Jackson's concerns were most prominent when budgeting for the next academic year. Ms. Jackson shared that at one point, USU shifted the responsibility to plan trips from USU to her without her approval. In an interview, she reflected on this: "I was like why? As if I don't have enough to do…Like y'all trying to kill me…I am like please don't let that be so." Ms. Jackson did not receive additional help or pay to ensure that her new responsibilities were completed. These surprise changes were frustrating for Ms. Jackson to navigate since they reduced her autonomy as the program administrator.

The research team began collaboratively budgeting with Ms. Jackson to address her concerns. We shared preliminary budgets with her and discussed the allocation of money and responsibilities to Rosewood and USU. Exploring what could be shifted between organizations and the possible implications of changes created a more equitable relationship that valued Ms. Jackson as a program administrator. Ms. Jackson was more willing to make concessions, like reducing purchasing expenses and personnel costs, to meet budgetary restrictions during this collaborative

process.

These bureaucratic challenges of late deliveries and shifting responsibilities were problematic for the partnership. These institutional norms of strict ordering procedures and excluding Ms. Jackson from decisions were racist because they marginalized Black students and staff. USU's commonplace actions solidified its power over Rosewood. USU required the program staff to conform to the bureaucratic systems, even when they were ill-suited for an afterschool program. USU's continued use of its commonplace practices indicates it did not consider the power difference between itself and the program's staff. This is most apparent when USU presented Ms. Jackson with predetermined plans and budgets where its own interest dominated the process.

Our practice of collaborative budgeting with Ms. Jackson presents an alternative approach that challenges the commonplace operations of USU. This process benefited the partnership because it led to a mutual understanding of everyone's responsibilities. We became more aware of the challenges associated with changing Ms. Jackson's responsibilities. We could advocate to USU about why some changes were harder to implement and propose alternative solutions. Our approach disrupted the commonplace budgeting practices, improving the partnership.

Institutional norms created challenges with USU's bureaucratic systems. These practices led to long delays and unexpected changes in Ms. Jackson's responsibilities. USU's commonplace actions unintentionally marginalized Black community members and, thus, were racist acts. Interest convergence and examining the commonplace help illuminate that USU's typical operating procedures harmed the partnership. These systems, in addition to the financial and public relations incentives, discouraged a truly equitable partnership between USU and Rosewood.

Discussion

In our multi-year partnership with Rosewood, community members shared their concerns about living near and partnering with USU. Analyzing the experiences of the program administrator of our critical CES partnership with Bell's (1980) interest convergence and Lewison et al.'s (2002) disrupting the commonplace highlighted how the commonplace actions of an urban university negatively impacted its relationship with the community. Previous scholarship has found one focus of universities is self-interest (Dancy et al., 2018; Holley & Harris, 2018; Taylor & Luter, 2013), and our findings reaffirm this notion.

Accepting the permanence of racism helps fully understand these interactions between USU and Rosewood (Bell, 1992). Program staff did not explicitly discuss racial concerns in our data. Instead, Ms. Jackson centered the community in discussions with USU, which is more palatable for USU to accommodate. Ms. Jackson's silence about race and racism in meetings and her advocacy indicate her ability to navigate racist institutions to create positive change. Research on the education of Black youth has also found this silence (Delpit, 1988). Data from our partnership show that Black community members may be publicly silent on racial issues in community–university relationships and partnerships and find other ways to advocate for change.

Research on community–university relationships often examines a university's role as an anchor institution in their local community (Goddard et al., 2014). However, little scholarship has considered the role of race or racism in the study of anchor institutions (Harris & Holley, 2016). In this case, racial power dynamics influence the community–university relationship through student research involving Rosewood residents and USU's expansion into the Black community. Future research on community–university relationships should utilize frameworks that center race and racism to further investigate experiences like Rosewood's. Centering race and racism is especially important in studies of land development practices, since gentrification

caused by anchor institutions often displaces Communities of Color (Baldwin & Crane, 2020; Smith, 2005). In our case, USU's quick installation of traffic cones physically altered the neighborhood to benefit students without including Black community members. Finally, understanding community–university relationships through a racial lens is important during the current uprisings for Black lives because campus police forces extend into local communities and even kill community members (Lopez, 2015; Reaves, 2015). A better understanding of how race and racism informs these community–university relationships is important for researchers and Black lives.

Our findings also extend the research on community–university partnerships. Critical CES advances a framework that centers racial justice as a goal for partnerships (Gordon da Cruz, 2017). However, previous scholarship using this nascent framework has not thoroughly examined race or racism (see, e.g., Conahan et al., 2018; Morton et al., 2019). Our partnership with Rosewood shows that university incentives and bureaucratic challenges to partnerships may be racialized and hinder equitable partnerships. Our shift towards collaborative budgeting developed a more equal power structure centered on an asset-based approach and decreased the power differential between USU and Rosewood, which previous scholarship has found improves partnerships (Beaulieu et al., 2018; Miller & Hafner, 2008). Further exploration of how race and racism shape these power imbalances would advance the ability to create equitable critical CES partnerships.

Self-interest partially drove USU's actions involving community–university relationships and partnerships. The university has built a reputation for providing access to postsecondary education, health services, and employment opportunities because of its urban setting. Seeking public recognition for this partnership was a way to seek moral authority and build on the university's prestige (Boyle & Silver, 2005). USU may not have worked in Rosewood as extensively if its self-interests of prestige and knowledge generation were not advanced by addressing the actual needs of the neighborhood.

As with any study, there are limitations. First, our primary source of data comes from interviews and focus groups where community–university relationships and race were not the research topic. Second, this study is based on one urban institution. Even though diving deep into one case is a strength of case study research (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Stake, 1995), our findings may not hold true for other urban historically White universities. Future research could address these limitations by conducting research in other urban locations and explicitly focusing on racial relations between a community and university.

Implications for Community Relations and Research

In our study, USU's interactions with the community did not center equity and racial justice. The ongoing uprisings as part of the Black Lives Matter movement illuminate how this is particularly problematic. Universities, like Urban State, can play a key role in enacting a more equitable future of community–university interactions if partnerships intentionally center equity and marginalized community members. Community–university partnerships grounded in racial justice with frameworks like critical CES (Gordon da Cruz, 2017) designed with the principles of critical literacy (Lewison et al., 2000) can elevate voices of marginalized community members and lead to meaningful change. Universities can uplift communities, tap into their expertise, and develop equitable community– university relationships and partnerships with intentional thought and frameworks like these. While USU's actions examined in this study were often problematic, carefully crafted partnerships grounded in critical literacy may advance social and racial justice goals of local communities, including those that stem from the Black Lives Matter movement, more effectively than partnerships not grounded in critical frameworks.

Since studies on anchor institutions and critical CES fail to adequately capture issues of race and racism, future research on these topics should explicitly examine race and racism (Gordon da Cruz, 2017; Harris & Holley, 2016). In our findings, race and racism were predominantly found through silence, so future scholarship that directly addresses race in community–university relationships and partnerships may further illuminate the role of racism and its manifestations, including silent dialogue, in community–university interactions. Understanding how racism and the dynamics of race inform community–university relationships and partnerships is of growing importance, especially as Black student activists speak out about racism on campus and community leaders press for more race-conscious interactions with higher education institutions (Jones, 2020; Ndemanu, 2017). Critical CES and critical literacy provide possible frameworks scholars can implement to examine how race and racism are present in community–university interactions (Gordon da Cruz, 2017; Lewison et al., 2000).

Community–university relationships and partnerships should grapple with how their relationships with nearby communities are racialized, especially in Black communities. Scholars of higher education should strive to understand how race influences community–university relationships by engaging communities in long-term, meaningful partnerships grounded in critical literacy that address social inequalities.

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