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Challenging Contextual Factors in University-Community Partnerships

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Challenging Contextual Factors in University-Community Partnerships

Abstract

In this paper, we discuss a community-university partnership struck with the intention of carrying out data analysis for the purposes of service planning and policy implementation that led us to find ourselves in the middle of significant stakeholder conflict. The purpose of this paper is to reflect upon and illuminate the challenges affecting this partnership revealing the impactful contextual factors through a process of reflection and consultation with the research literature. The significant benefits to ensuring a participatory process for both the university faculty and community agency have been cited in the research literature; yet the very real challenges inherent in such a process are less well documented. This example of civic engagement is presented through a partnership between a university faculty member and a children’s mental health center. An analysis of the partnership within the project is presented to illuminate power and contextual factors that can influence partnership projects. As part of the contextual factors, we review the process of partnerships both through the literature and analysis of our project. Suarez-Balczar, Harper, and Lewis’ (2005) model for developing university community partnerships provides guidance while questions for considering the scope are recommended and suggestions for future partnerships including increasing stakeholder breadth are identified.

Civic Engagement

Civic engagement can be a tension for universities as they attempt to navigate their many roles (Fisher, Fabricant, & Simons, 2004) and address contextual factors, including partnership process and stakeholder groups, which influence the outcome of the partnership and require particular attention at the outset of the partnership.

Civic engagement is a process of learning, involving engagement between the University and the community agency. Contrary to Fish’s (2005) position that institutions of higher learning should not participate in service learning or civic engagement, many authors believe that university researchers can successfully collaborate with agencies in a relationship of mutual respect for strengths to support the application of evidence-based practice (Bellamy, Bledsoe, Mullen, Fang, & Manuel, 2008). We reflect on lessons learned from this civic engagement experience and look forward to future projects.

The Project

This university-community partnership developed from a mutual need with goals that were clear to the partners (Varcoe, 2006). The agency was in need of the expertise provided by the university and the university was in need of expanding its community partnerships. The agency collected consumer data through two provincially mandated evidence-based assessment tools (in addition to consumer demographic data) as a part of the agency’s regular practice. Analysis of the data was required to inform service delivery after being informed by the funder that funding increases were not forthcoming. Thus, the partnership in this paper began in response to government (funder) messaging to navigate scarce resources with creativity and independence.

A day treatment program (institutional setting) and a school-based program (community school setting) were offered by the center to elementary age children with comparable consumer demographic and clinical profiles.

The second author completed data analysis and reported findings that both programs were effective back to the agency. The agency used the results of the data analysis to inform program changes to reduce the number of children in the day treatment program and increase the number of children receiving service in the school-based program. The decision would effectively achieve the goal of the funder: no reduction in service, while maintaining the financial status quo. It also supported the agency’s mission and vision to provide the least intrusive services possible to children and families, allowing children to
maintain their ties to community schools. The agency met with the funder to discuss the data analysis outcome and proposed changes in service planning. The report was well received by the funder, who encouraged the agency to present the findings to the local children’s mental health community.

Jill Grant presented the findings to the agency’s closest partners. At this stage, there was reaction to the presentation of data analysis and proposed changes for service planning, both in favor and opposed. The oppositional views were spoken most loudly. The negative reaction from some partners was viewed by the university-community partnership as a normal reaction to proposed change. Given that the funder supported the proposed changes, little attention from the partnership was given to the negative reaction by some partners and this turned out to be a significant contextual factor. Suarez-Herrera (2009) suggests that resistance to intentional change can be mitigated through educating people about the research process. This would have needed to occur prior to our project beginning, which is challenging when the data collection is a normal part of an organization’s practice.

The next step was a presentation to the broader children’s mental health community. Unknown to the partnership, discussions had occurred between the members of the first and second group prior to this second presentation. The strength of the negative reaction to the presentation was completely unexpected by the partnership. With the passing of time and presentation of the experience at a national conference, we have begun to counter the reactions. As a first step, we consulted the literature.

**Review of the Literature**

The literature review begins with a discussion of some recent provincial policy papers in the field of children’s mental health through the lens of Canadian social welfare analysts’ prediction that government would use self-deception to address inadequate funding for agencies (Baines, 2004). The literature review concludes with a review of community and conflict assessment related to the partnership process.

**Regionalization**

The province of Ontario has recently experienced regionalization of health and mental health care services, the last province in Canada to move to regionalization. All other provinces in Canada made this shift in the 1980s and 1990s (Church & Barker, 1998; Simpson, 2011). Justification for regionalization includes better coordination, reduction in expenditures, and citizen participation in decision-making. Church and Barker (1998) identified a number of significant challenges to regionalization, including the integration and coordination of services, the difficulties gaining access to reliable epidemiological data, citizen participation in decision-making, and increased costs. A study by Weaver (2006) suggests that regionalization in British Columbia could not be described as an effective reform, with information gathering the only success. Baines (2004) predicted that smaller non-profit organizations would have to increase fundraising and conform to accreditation standards, eventually being taken over by larger organizations. She further predicted that the result of downsizing would be an increase in service provision by the private sector, an uncommon situation in the Canadian social welfare context.

**Ontario Children’s Mental Health**

In 2006, the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services presented its policy framework. Included as one of the five principles for the framework is that the mental health system for children should be evidence-based and accountable. The first goal identified in the policy report called for collaboration, integration, and shared responsibility (Ministry of Children and Youth Services, 2006). Children’s Mental Health Ontario (2011) also supports evidence-informed practices, promotion of effectiveness, and efficiency and promotion of accountability to all stakeholders. The recommendations are intended to improve service effectiveness for consumers.

Agencies trying to navigate the higher demands for service accountability with fewer resources have turned to evidence-based programs as they are perceived to be accepted by government funders and provide the tools to encourage confidence in accountability, for example, well-packaged materials, staff training, and technical assistance (Small, Cooney, & O’Connor, 2009).
Partnership Types

Fisher et al. (2004) describe four types of civic engagement: service learning, local economic development, community-based research, and social work initiatives. This project most closely resembles community-based research, although it is more accurately described as data analysis. The agency did not have the internal capacity to do a thorough program evaluation and wanted the results of data analysis of two programs: day treatment and school-based children’s intervention program. The partnership with the second author allowed for data analysis of the agency’s regularly collected data.

Partnership types can be dependent on the relationship between the researcher and community partner; here, a trusting and respectful relationship developed through transparency, communication, and respect for diversity and for the culture of the organization (Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2005). The partners were transparent about the purposes for the partnership: service and community connection (for Dr. Grant), and a means to inform service delivery decisions at a time of financial pressures (agency director).

Partnerships

Social capital, bonding and bridging are identified by Putnam (2000) as relevant factors in university-community partnerships. Social capital has both a private and a public face, meaning the relationships that are gained from partnerships can have benefits for both the person and the larger community. Bonding refers to how the partners will get by or how they need to work together to get things done, while bridging reflects a more future-oriented benefit of getting ahead.

The agency was seeking connections for their own benefit (bonding) to have their programs evaluated; yet they suspected and anticipated that the outcome would have benefits for the wider community of children’s services and children’s mental health. The university was aware of the partnership’s future potential in addition to the immediate connection. Capacity building occurs when systems such as a university and community agency come together in ways that can lead to community development through the coalescence of capacities (Homan, 2011). For example, social networks of each partner have value and that value is enhanced through the reciprocity and trustworthiness inherent in those networks.

Nelson, Prilleltensky, and MacGillivray (2001) envision university-community partnerships as value-based, striving to advance caring, compassion, community, health, self-determination, participation, power sharing, human diversity, and social justice for oppressed groups. Shared values between the university and the agency drove our process: We developed a collective vision of this partnership from the beginning. The community of children’s mental health and the community of children’s services are systems that also have values. For this university-community partnership truly to start with shared values, we now understand, a wider scope may have been required when considering the value-holders.

The value of relationship in partnerships cannot be overstated, and successful partnerships can take time to develop (Baum, 2000). Homan (2011) discusses the power of relationships that requires communication, trust, and mutual interest. The process of this project provided opportunity for dialogue between the agency and university regarding these issues and allowed relationships to take root as collaborative partners. In addition to what Homan (2011) notes as requirements of relationships, these partners brought with them a number of additional attributes that helped to facilitate mutual learning, including power addressed from a perspective of strengths (Grant & Cadell, 2009), an acceptance of difference, a belief in partnership and collaborations, and a willingness to risk.

Partnership Principles

Hudson and Hardy (2002) identify six principles in university-community partnerships: 1) acknowledgement of the need for partnership; 2) clarity and realism of purpose; 3) commitment and ownership; 4) development and maintenance of trust; 5) establishment of clear and robust partnership arrangements; and 6) monitoring, review, and organizational learning. In the initial meeting of our partnership, we established the first three principles. We acknowledged the mutual benefit in that the agency would realize data analysis for service planning while the university would provide a service-learning experience to a graduate student and would also have the use of the data. In addition to the service-learning experience of the graduate student, front-line social workers and managers were involved in the partnership through discussions at the planning stage and data entry. This illustrates both the
Partnership values of power sharing (Nelson et al., 2001) and the realities of scarce resources within not-for-profit organizations.

Partnership Principle 4, development and maintenance of trust, developed both from the process and from the values of the individuals involved in the process. The process was clearly delineated from the initial meeting, identifying responsibilities and accountabilities for each of the partners (Principle 5) and, as the project proceeded with each partner reliably completing their agreed upon tasks, trust in the partnership was maintained. We acknowledged the strengths of each partner, providing a perception of equal status within the partnership (Hudson & Hardy, 2002). There were a number of agency learnings starting with the outcome of the data analysis. Beyond that, the university-community partnership was further nurtured through the dissemination of the data at an international Children’s Mental Health conference (Grant, Kuhn, & Roper, 2010). Power was further shared in this example, when Dr. Grant encouraged the agency and research assistant to be the disseminators of knowledge at the conference, taking her out of the role of expert.

The role of the expert was shared in additional ways. The partners each possess personal and professional maturity and experience, and a belief in many ways of knowing and many kinds of knowledge. The role of expert can and did shift between the partners at various points in the partnership.

Defining the partners in this university-community partnership as the university and agency meant that our lens was narrow. Within that narrow view, our evaluation of the project is perceived as picture perfect, according to Hudson and Hardy’s (2002) partnership principles. Later, however, we reflected on the challenges inherent in the contextual factors that affected our project.

Partnership Process and Conflict

The literature on community assessment suggests that partnerships begin with a community needs assessment as a form of research (Beverly, 2005; Craig, 2011; Suarez-Herrera, 2009; Norris & Schwartz, 2009). Community needs assessments are perceived as a collaborative, dialectical process, engaging multiple stakeholders including funders, service providers, and service users. It is understood that these varied stakeholders may bring conflicting perspectives; yet there is a belief that the collaborative nature of this approach can increase cooperation through mutual interaction (Suarez-Herrera, 2009). Community needs assessments identify service needs and barriers and illuminate a community’s capacity to meet the needs of its citizens (Beverly, 2005; Norris & Schwartz, 2009). This networking opportunity provides numerous benefits for the community as a whole despite the additional costs and is one of the reasons Beverly (2005) promotes an inclusive stakeholder group.

Participatory evaluations or needs assessments present challenges. For example, when decision-making processes of an organization restrict participation of stakeholders, there may be increased resistance to intentional change by stakeholders (Suarez-Herrera, 2009). For this reason, Suarez-Herrera suggests a process called capacity building for evaluative research (CBER), a means of providing education about research-based evaluation. Weber (2007) identifies vertical (hierarchical) and horizontal (interdependent and collaborative) dimensions of relationships. He concludes that communities require a combination of vertical and horizontal capacity dimensions to develop and maintain relationships of trust toward the achievement of partnership goals.

Conflict may be inevitable in projects that bring together multiple stakeholders. Including stakeholders in collaborative, transparent planning processes is considered an important dimension in managing tensions (Lobosco & Kaufman, 1989; Reilly, 1994; Seghezzo, Volante, Paruelo, Somma, Bulubasich, Rodriguez, Gagnon, & Huftry, 2011). It is vital to recognize that government and other institutions may have a great impact when striking partnerships with the social service sector, either through funding or policy decisions (Bornstein, 2010), particularly in Canada, where three levels of government may be involved.

Bornstein (2010) recommends the use of a peace and conflict impact assessment to assist in identifying interventions that contribute to either peace-building or to conflict. Organizations will then have a better understanding of the impact of their proposed activities. At the same time, community building processes begin through the inclusive nature of this evaluation, particularly when used as part of a strategic planning process.

Partnership Analysis

Having reviewed the literature related
to partnerships, we analyze our partnership. Figure 1 demonstrates the three stages of the analysis. Stage 1 is the analysis of existing data and data management suggestions, when Dr. Grant understood the project as the university joining with the agency and therefore having responsibility to the agency. Without realizing it, Dr. Grant was caught in the middle of a process much larger than the original university-community partnership agreement.

Reflections on that process provided important learning for Dr. Grant that now inform future projects and that help to continue to develop our understanding of university-community partnerships. In particular, asking “who else needs to be at the table?” even when just analyzing internal data for an agency, has been clarified as an essential step. Similarly, what starts as an internal project can very easily become influential or conflictual in a broader community context. This is obvious when one is conducting research, but when asked to analyze already collected data, it is similarly important. A community needs assessment may have flagged this conflict and provided a process for dialogue about the project.

Stage 2 involved the presentation of findings: to the agency staff, then the agency’s closest partners, and then the broader children’s mental health community. This stage reflects the nature of the vertical capacity dimension operating in our community whereby the agency responded to the hierarchical processes of the funder/agency relationship rather than relying on a more horizontal capacity dimension. Additionally, the inclusiveness of the stakeholder groups is limited.

Stage 3 includes the presentation to the agency of the report itself. This stage reflects what could have been the beginning of an ongoing collaborative partnership to assist the agency in program evaluation and research and planning. Instead, conflict within the community based on competition for resources made this very difficult. The use of a peace and conflict impact assessment could have illuminated the potential impact of conflict that resulted from our process (Figure 1).

Part of the process of understanding the reactions from the broader community relates to understanding the importance of timing when plans for change are announced. It is always complex to imagine the reactions of stakeholders to new information that one group has been working with for a long time. The reactions we experienced were a good reminder of the importance of carefully thinking through how and when to announce findings and changes. The agency was now requesting something more of the university-community partnership than was originally negotiated. The agency no longer just required the outcome of the project but also needed the support of the university in putting forward a new discourse. At this point, the university partner realized that the situation was much more complex than originally understood.

The definition of university-community partnerships and the identity of the community may help to inform the initial consultation process of partnerships. The development of trust and acquaintance with the setting and culture may well need to include outside stakeholders. The process of disseminating the outcome of the project to the stakeholders through local presentations and conferences did not allow for the stakeholders to be part of the decision-making process at the beginning stages of the project for a broader collaboration (Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2005). This may have been predicted had we considered the literature on conflict assessment and instead included peace-building strategies (Bornstein, 2010), ensuring the inclusiveness of a broad range of stakeholders (Lobosco & Kaufman, 1989; Reilly, 1994; Seghezzo et al., 2011). We also needed to consider a more sophisticated analysis of power.

**Power**

Some researchers support a position that power imbalances are inherent in university-community partnerships. For example, Bornstein (2010) argues that power imbalances can lead to conflict, especially when outside stakeholders are not involved in the decision-making process. In our case, the agency's need for research and evaluation was driven by the hierarchical processes of the funder/agency relationship, which limited the inclusiveness of the stakeholder groups.

**Figure 1. Partnership Analysis**

- **STAGE 1**: Analysis of existing data
- **STAGE 2**: Data management suggestions, Presentation to broader children’s mental health community
- **STAGE 3**: Report to Agency
community partnerships (Fisher, Fabricant, & Simmons, 2004). Others suggest that many partnerships maintain their power imbalances, never becoming transformative. This project provided a number of examples of shared power experiences (Nelson et al., 2001). Generally, the power dynamic between the university and community partners appears to vary depending on each partner’s sense of their own power and how the researcher is viewed (Carrick, Mitchell, & Lloyd, 2001). In our project, power was managed in the partnership through sharing and shifting. Power shifted depending on the particular stage of the project.

Michel Foucault analyzed power as a process contained within a relationship, as something that is exercised and not possessed in the traditional discourse of power (Foote, 1986). Foucault also viewed power as a positive and productive process in addition to the traditional view of power as negative and repressive. Foucault’s position about power from this point of view provided opportunity for change, control, and empowerment.

Power can be used to dominate, collaborate, or educate. It has the capacity to move people in a direction to accomplish a desired end (Homan, 2004) and by its nature can be gained or lost (Carrick, Mitchell, & Lloyd, 2001). In our project, the partners had the implicit intent to use power to collaborate and educate by joining together for the purposes of data analysis. The desired end in this situation included the completion of the data analysis, the possibility of future collaborations, introducing research practices, or the shifting of service provision to a less intrusive service for children and families.

Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz (cited in Lukes, 2005) discuss power from a dominant/subservient perspective, noting that there is an assumption that conflict must always be present with power. The argument they put forward is “the most effective and insidious use of power is to prevent such conflict from arising in the first place” (Lukes, 2005, pp. 26–27). This statement supports the hypothesis that power is value-based or value-dependent and, as a result, the use of power is predetermined by societal value.

Power, then, can be positive, productive, and mobilizing, or negative and repressive. In our project, the process had aspects of power that were both. The fact that the partnership ignored the broader community in our project may represent a dominant/subservient position of power. Another view of this might be that the larger children’s mental health community partners dominated the smaller children’s mental health agency when the changes were not in line with their values and plans for the future. These differences might be supported by the predetermined societal values, placing some community partners at a power advantage over the other (Lukes, 2005).

The intended use of power by the partnership in this project fits better with Foucault’s description in that each partner used power as a way to make change and empower, to produce something more than either partner could produce alone. Power was silent, not as a means of creating barriers, but rather to mobilize or to help the agency move forward.

There were many contextual factors that influenced power in this project, extending outside the partnership and local community to include political, structural, and cultural factors. Some of these include the messaging from policy papers, the inadequate funding capacities, competition resulting from regionalization, and the unknown values on a community level regarding power sharing.

Homan (2011) reminds us that the base of power of the actor must be larger than the issue the actor is working on. In this example, the desired end was not discussed with the community as a whole and some partners had differing ideas about what the end should be. The relationship between the university and agency was solid but less solid were the relationships within the practice community. Interestingly enough, the relationship between some community partners strengthened significantly while rallying against this university-community partnership in an attempt to block the proposed changes. This latent use of power as described by Shermer and Schmid (2007) may result in influencing others even if it may mean a conflict with their own interest.

Within our partnership, the agency was seeking to move forward in challenging fiscal times and we made the assumption that others shared our vision. A community of agencies that share a horizontal capacity dimension may share a common vision and provide opportunity to mobilize communities (Norris & Schwatz, 2009). We considered only a micro analysis of the agency, ignoring the macro analysis and attention to “local capacity and will” (Lobosco & Kaufman, 1989, p. 6).
142), again relying on our assumptions noted above.

**Model for Developing University-Community Partnerships**

The model developed by Suarez-Balcazar et al. (2005) can be used to understand our university-community partnership experience when considering the two central partners (Figure 2). Using the language of the university-community partnership model, our partnership developed trust and mutual respect as discussed in the partnership principles (Hudson & Hardy, 2002). The model also demonstrated respect for human diversity and, through our planning and implementation, established adequate communication. We were in the process of developing a culture of learning through our project work, as discussed in the section on partnership principles put forward by Hudson and Hardy (2002) and developing an action agenda based on the outcome of the data analysis when we became aware of the challenges inherent in excluding the community partners in our initial planning. Our assumption about a pre-existing shared vision in line with the funder’s strategic plan was just that: an assumption.

Our experience calls into question the meaning of university-community partnerships. Diamond (2004) states that power differences will remain within and between organizations. If this is true, we require further consideration of managing power within the broader community, and particularly within multi-agency partnerships. How then, is power shared and collaboration achieved through university-community partnerships, when there are competing conceptions of need within communities, differing professional discourses, varying decision-making abilities and capacities to control information flow (Diamond, 2004)? The literature on community assessment suggests community engagement and community planning is required beyond individual agencies, starting with a needs assessments (Craig, 2011; Norris & Schwartz, 2009; Suarez-Herrera, 2009) to help mobilize communities and gain social capital (Weber, 2007). It could be a parallel process to that which we experienced in our project but on a much broader scale increasing complexity and requiring attention to a common vision. After this experience, the assumption that an entire community of multiple stakeholders and multiple agencies could have a common vision challenges us.

**Lessons Learned**

As we reflect upon this civic engagement experience, we have come to appreciate the many learnings from our partnership. One of the learnings for both the agency and Dr. Grant was that the relationships beyond the dyad were not explored, (as Putnam, 2000, calls bridging) to more fully understand the complexities of the contextual factors. In retrospect, it is clearer that the partnership would have benefited from broader consultation with the partner agencies. Neglect of the community’s contextual factors played a significant role in the outcome of this project. The peripheral partners’ values turned out to be a significant oversight, and our experience taught us the value of questioning who the partners are in a university-community partnership. Implementation of a process similar to that suggested by Bornstein (2010) may have enabled us to more clearly

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**Figure 2. University-Community Partnership**

| (a) Developing trust and mutual respect |
| (b) Respecting human diversity |
| (c) Establishing adequate communication |
| (d) Establishing a culture of learning |
| (e) Respecting the culture of the setting and the community |
| (f) Developing an action agenda |
see the potential for conflict.

From this experience emerged an understanding of the importance of exploring fully the range of stakeholders and their potential reactions. Again, this is common practice in community-based research; yet this experience highlights the importance of this step even when one is simply analyzing data for a community partner. The most important learning was an increased awareness of the need to take time to discuss the other stakeholders who will be affected by potential outcomes of university-community partnerships.

A final learning from this experience is that, because the partnership did not consider the potential impact on the broader community at the initial stage of the project, the synergy of potential between the university and community agency in this project could not be realized. This experience has taught us that there needs to be at least knowledge, through consultation, with other community partners.

Our work has highlighted that a whole new set and level of negotiations may need to occur between the university and community, depending on how wide the lens extends with the following questions in mind:

- What does the culture of community mean when you include a broad community?
- Who does the community include? How do you know and who decides?
- To what extent can you know if you have included all of the potential partners?
- Considering that each community partner will have their own independent set of partners, is it possible to manage such a large, seemingly endless system?

Our questions lead us to consider the university-community partnership process going forward. An exploration with agencies having the intention of identifying key stakeholders will provide a basis for understanding the scope of the project from the agency’s perspective. At a minimum, the dialogue will allow the agency to reflect on potential outcomes of not including a large stakeholder group. Inclusion of a broad range of stakeholders, such as funders, service providers, and citizens may help to capture a more reasonable community reality and improve stakeholder relationships through understanding and dialogue. The same university-community partnership model (Figure 2) used to describe this project can be applied to projects with larger stakeholder scope: developing trust and mutual respect, respecting human diversity, establishing adequate communication, establishing a culture of learning, respecting the culture of the setting and the community, and developing an action agenda. A number of ideas from the community assessment and conflict assessment literature can assist in this process.

Bornstein (2010) highlights the significance of ensuring consistency between policy and practice. Stakeholder groups, then, need to begin with the decision-makers at each level, or example, policy makers and funders, agency managers, front-line staff and service users. Trust and mutual respect can be achieved when collaborative processes are transparent. The capacity building for evaluative research process put forward by Suarez-Herrera (2009) is intended to establish a culture of learning and can be used to educate the stakeholders at the beginning of the project. This capacity-building process provides stakeholders opportunity “to question agency goals, strategies and assumptions” (p. 334) and gain a better understanding of and commitment to the inter-relatedness of the service system because inherent in this research is an understanding that all participants are evaluators through a critical and reflective process.

The peace and conflict impact assessment (Bornstein, 2010) can be utilized at the beginning stage to highlight potential conflicts to the process and illuminate peace-building strategies. A collaborative process of identifying community needs through a community needs assessment can begin to illuminate the varying stakeholder values and agendas, respecting diversity of stakeholder groups. Bringing together stakeholders at various levels to address the disparities in policy and practice can be part of the community needs assessment. Addressing the challenge of impoverished resources can become a shared responsibility. Through this collaborative process, the stages of Suarez-Balcazar’s (2009) model can be identified by the university partner and tracked throughout the partnership to consider, for example, how trust and mutual respect are being honored. The outcome of this empowering community process can lead to a more effective action plan, one in which stakeholders have a vested interest in the success for each individual agency as part of a larger community plan.

Conclusion
University civic engagement provides opportunity for sharing of resources between a community agency and university while also creating potential challenges inherent in this sort of collaboration.

Our project highlighted the complexity of the process involved in university-community partnerships. Considering partnership types, partnerships, partnership principles, and the partnership project, this paper illuminates the need to consider partnerships from a broadened perspective, including the process of the partnership. It became clear to the community and agency partners through this project that there remains a need to engage community partners in dialogue about service visions and funding challenges.

This suggested approach to university-community partnerships requires clarity of partners and process on a much wider scale than is typically used in a small agency-specific data analysis project. The challenge is for communities to agree on a common vision or perhaps to work across differences when considering a set of values for working with the university and the management of power relations and resources (Ostrander, 2004). The university will need to consider the amount of time and energy that will be required to generate the partnerships they seek. The exercise of mining for common values may involve a larger group and require extended time to ensure all community voices are heard. The model by Suarez-Balcazar et al. (2005) for developing university community partnerships requires clarity of partners and process on a much wider scale than is typically used in a small agency-specific data analysis project.

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About the Authors

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