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Doing What We Can With What We Have: Engaged Scholarship Among Community Psychology Doctoral Students

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Abstract

Graduate students newly embarking on community-engaged scholarship often find themselves in a unique context, wherein as students they may enjoy a wealth of opportunities but a dearth of other resources that contribute to quality community-engaged research. This reflective essay explores how three ecological–community psychology doctoral students used their student status to leverage opportunities for community-engaged research despite resource-limited/shifting resource situations. After positioning the essay within existing thought and research, each author provides an in-depth description of a community-engaged project. Each vignette includes an assessment of the level of community engagement during various phases of the project using Doberneck and Dann's (2019) abacus for collaboration. The authors then reflect on commonalities among their approaches and lessons learned and conclude with recommendations for graduate students and their mentors who may be operating in opportunity rich, resource poor contexts.

Keywords: community-engaged scholarship, graduate student education and training, ecological–community psychology

Community-engaged graduate training has received increased attention over the past three decades and is a cornerstone of quality, social-justice-oriented higher education (Doberneck, Bargerstock, et al., 2017; Doberneck & Dann, 2019; Morin et al., 2016). University systems have begun to place great value on community-engaged scholarship, such that many institutions now include faculty community engagement efforts throughout the tenure and staff review process (Doberneck, Bargerstock, et al., 2017; Doberneck, Glass, & Schweitzer, 2010, 2012). Though central to many graduate programs for both students and faculty mentors, engaged scholarship is not a streamlined or simple process. Specific to research-based programs, community engagement requires flexibility around resources such as time, space, data collection/analytical tools, and dissemination platforms. Such flexibility illustrates a departure from the traditional university methods, timelines, and tools, which is accompanied by shifting expectations and opportunities for evaluation by faculty advisors. This departure from traditional research, although not the focus of the current essay, has been detailed elsewhere and is important to consider when embarking on any community-engaged scholarly research project (Austin & McDaniels, 2006; Doberneck, Bargerstock, et al., 2017; Doberneck & Dann, 2019; Doberneck, Glass, & Schweitzer, 2010, 2012; Jaeger, Sandmann, & Kim, 2011; Jaeger, Tuchmayer, & Morin, 2014; O'Meara & Jaeger, 2006; Stanton, 2008; Warren et al., 2016)

Graduate school tends to present many opportunities to students; however, these opportunities yield varying access to resources. In our experience, graduate students tend to move along this resource spectrum within and across research opportunities, complicating the community-engaged research process further. How do we, as graduate students in an ecological–community psychology graduate program, navigate the unique pressures of the community-engaged research process while playing in these resource-limited/shifting resource settings? How can graduate student mentors support community-engaged capacity development among their students? How can graduate students and mentors codevelop within and across community-engaged research opportunities?

Ecological–Community Psychology and Community-Engaged Research

Ecological–community psychology focuses on working with communities and community members from a social justice position, while honoring individual and community context and lived realities (Kingry-Westergaard & Kelly, 1990; Trickett, 1996, 2009a, 2009b, 2011; Trickett et al., 1985). Many community psychologists utilize community-engaged methods landing on a spectrum that holds community-based participatory action research (CBPAR) in very high regard (Doberneck, Glass, & Schweitzer, 2010; Kral & Allen, 2015). CBPAR involves collaboration with community members such that they are coinvestigators (Kral & Allen, 2015), and refers to the "engagement of the people who are the community of concern as co-researchers in the research process. This act of engagement involves a sharing of power, a democratization of the research process, and an action component" (Kral & Allen, 2015, p. 253). On the other end of this spectrum are more simplified community-engagement methods that may not necessarily meet the gold standard of CBPAR but value community participation throughout the research process. These methods may include involving community voice in identifying research questions, or even tools to involve community partners in disseminating research. We do not claim that the graduate student projects shared within the vignettes below meet the gold standard of CBPAR projects; however, they do serve as strong examples of community-engaged research projects (Doberneck, Bargerstock, et al., 2017; Doberneck, Glass, & Schweitzer, 2010; Kral & Allen, 2015).

Doberneck, Glass, and Schweitzer (2010) developed a typology of publicly engaged scholarship, including research and creative activities, publicly engaged instruction, publicly engaged service, and publicly engaged commercialized activities. The vignettes below will showcase graduate student projects that fall within the publicly engaged, or community-engaged, research category, demonstrating processes such as the collaborative development of research questions, design, data gathering, and dissemination with community partners and/or community members (Doberneck, Glass, & Schweitzer, 2010; Stanton, 2008). At times, community partners (community organizations) and community members are simply referred to as "the community." We recognize that although community members can be represented within and among staff across community organizations, that is not always the case. "Community partners" and "community members" are not necessarily interchangeable terms, given the power differentials observed in many community organizations. Consequently, we have tried to specify who we are considering the community partner and the extent to which community members were also involved in the research process across each of the vignettes presented below.

Sharing Our Experiences: Community-Engaged Research Vignettes

The community-engaged research vignettes below aim to demonstrate that despite what graduate students and their mentors are up against, performing community-engaged research as a student is possible. These reflective pieces show how three ecological–community psychology doctoral students from a large Midwestern research university used their student status to leverage opportunities for community-engaged research despite resource-limited situations and, at times, inconsistent support. Their navigation through these projects as well as their progress through their graduate school milestones will be explored.

The community-engagement literature provided guidance on how to organize the vignettes presented. Three references were instrumental in the early stages of crafting and processing each vignette, including Stanton's (2008) structure of purpose, process, and product as core components of community-engaged scholarship; Doberneck and Dann's (2019) collaboration abacus, which will be the primary focus of the vignettes; and Doberneck, Glass, and Schweitzer's (2012) community-engagement rating scale. The overlap between Stanton's core components of community-engaged scholarship and Doberneck and Dann's collaboration abacus was integral to our methodology in each vignette. Figure 1 illustrates the community-engaged research abacus, organized by Stanton's purpose, process, and product (on the left).

Community-engaged research "must have an intentional *public purpose* and direct or indirect benefit to a community" (Stanton, 2008, p. 24). This departure from traditional research suggests the work is intended to create positive change, rather than solely contribute to knowledge. Stanton has developed a spectrum of engaged research purposes, ranging from public education to democratic practice. When looking at Doberneck and Dann's (2019) abacus, Stanton's *purpose* aligns well with the first two elements of identifying community issue(s) and assets and deciding on research questions. Though Stanton's question may be a bit more directed, establishing the issue and research question requires the community-engaged researcher to formulate ideas around the questions that define the foundation of the project purpose (Doberneck & Dann, 2019).

Process (Stanton, 2008) refers

> to the methods investigators use to pursue research with a public purpose. How "democratic" or collaborative is their approach? What level of collaboration is sufficient or appropriate at each stage of the research: determining the research questions and research design; data gathering and analysis; application of findings, etc.? (p. 25)

	Steps in Community-Engaged Research Process	**Voice & Responsibility** **Community** **University**
Purpose	Identify community issue(s) & assets	↔
	Decide on research question(s)	↔
Process	Select research design	↔
	Develop instrument/process	↔
	Collect data	↔
	Analyze data	↔
	Interpret data	↔
	Critically reflect, incl. limitations	↔
	Disseminate findings	↔
Product	Create academic products	↔
	Create public products	↔

Figure 1. Stanton's (2008) Purpose, Process, and Product Mapped Onto Doberneck and Dann's (2019) Community-Engaged Research Abacus

Although Stanton (2008) included the determination of the research question as part of the process, the graduate students preferred to map that onto the *purpose* stage. As can be seen above, selecting the research design, developing the instrument, collecting data, analyzing data, interpreting data, critically reflecting on the data, and disseminating findings were all elements of the abacus that aligned with this stage of the community-engaged research journey. And finally, as argued by Stanton (2008):

> advocates of engaged research point to the fact that when it is truly responsive to community information needs, as identified by community members, and collaborative in its approach, it yields knowledge that is field-tested and more likely to "work" than traditional research outcomes. (p. 27)

These community-engaged research steps (Doberneck & Dann, 2019) across purpose, process, and product (Stanton, 2008) are explored in each of the three vignettes below. Each student presents an overview of their community-engaged research project carried out during their graduate student tenure, emphasizing the resource-shifting landscape of graduate education. Each abacus, modeled after the one above, will be supplemented with the low, medium, or high rating derived from the guidance of Doberneck, Glass, and Schweitzer's (2012) scoring system for degree of community engagement.

The essay will end with an exploration of common elements, lessons learned, and recommendations for graduate students and graduate student mentors. The continued reflection and critical examination of examples such as these, in combination with the building and evolving of training opportunities available to graduate students (Doberneck, Bargerstock, et al., 2017), shows promise for bringing the field closer to a place of esteem and recognition within and beyond university systems.

The following vignettes are written in the respective researcher's voice and illustrate three unique community-based stories of engaged research. The first vignette takes place on an island in the Caribbean, and the other two take place in the Midwestern United States.

Vignette 1: Fulbright Scholarship Using Photovoice in the Caribbean

My student-led community-engaged research project was initiated by me. It was not a part of a larger, faculty-led project or university initiative. I saw this opportunity as a chance to explore a specific research area for my doctoral-level work. Throughout the course of the project, different partners (both community and university) initiated different elements; however, I remained the sole individual initiating the project from the start. As an ecological–community psychology graduate student, I was eligible and applied for a Fulbright award. I worked closely with my Fulbright campus advisor and enrolled in a grant-writing seminar that enabled me to focus solely on my Fulbright application. Access to the Fulbright advisor's resources, as well as the grant-writing seminar, greatly impacted my capacity to secure a Fulbright scholarship and pursue a community-engaged research project in the Caribbean. I was diligent about securing this award and accessing the resources to make this happen. However, I was also met with extreme restriction to resources (e.g., lost graduate student stipend, tuition support), given that a long-term project in another country meant that I would be straying from the traditional graduate student path. This student journey of simultaneous resource abundance and restriction is outlined below, demonstrating the purpose, process, and product as described by Stanton (2008).

Purpose

The Fulbright project was intended to partner with youth around program development related to civic mobilization and sexual health practices, while engaging youth and community leaders together in community conversation and change. To do so, a community-engaged research project utilizing the Photovoice methodology was developed (Wang, 1999; Wang & Burris, 1994, 1997). The network of engaged parties involved me, a local sexual health and youth empowerment community-based organization, an international U.S. agency, and the local secondary school system. In collaboration with these partners, youth participants shared their Photovoice work at the U.S. Embassy on World AIDS Day, where they presented their ideas around achieving an AIDS-free generation to the U.S. ambassador, policymakers, practitioners, activists, and educators. The strategic planning of this project aimed for the results to be used in several ways. Intended outcomes included the further enhancement of sexual health programming, the development of public knowledge around sexual health practices, and the engagement of youth and adults in advocacy efforts for policy change.

Process

The degree of collaboration is illustrated in the abacus in Figure 2. Throughout this vignette, the "community" refers to the local sexual health organization, the participating secondary school students, and the partnering international agency. The "university" refers to my contribution as a graduate student and Fulbright scholar. Using Doberneck, Glass, and Schweitzer's (2012) rating system, I would evaluate the overall degree of collaboration as medium. The local organization and partnering agency played major roles in the World AIDS Day Event, as well as the logistical side of the Photovoice project, while I took on the Photovoice implementation in partnership with the secondary school students. Although the community in this vignette consists of the aforementioned partners (community organization, partnering [local] international agency, and the secondary school participants), it is limited in the sense that it does not encompass youth or students across the entire secondary school system on the island. It could be argued that the abacus elements more heavily weighted toward the community side need further consideration based on this limitation, recognizing that a larger youth voice beyond the immediate program participants should have informed, for instance, the research questions. However, given the significant involvement of the community *partners*, this

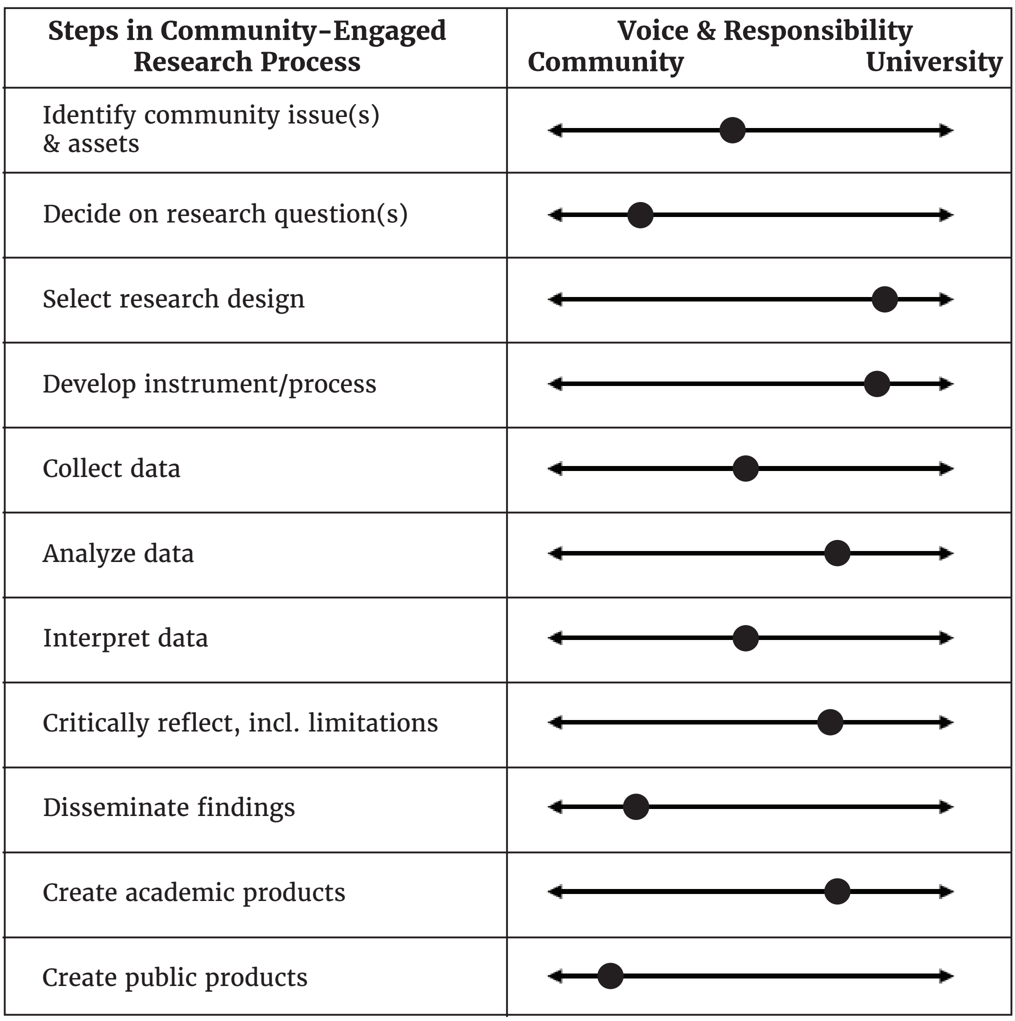

Figure 2. Community-Engaged Research Abacus (Doberneck & Dann, 2019) for Fulbright Project in the Caribbean

element was still weighted more toward the community side. The abacus components are described in more detail below.

Identify Community Issues/Assets. The early stages of this project were focused on contextual exploration. As a community psychologist, I recognize this is a crucial part of our research process; it refers to the researcher embedding herself within the community settings with which she is working (Trickett et al., 1985). During this exploration phase, direct attention is paid to the overall setting: what resources are available, what communities and cultures are present, and what historical elements of the setting may impact research. This phase also enables a strong relationship between the researcher and leaders in the community system and provides a stronger opportunity for successful interventions that reflect the lived realities of community members (Trickett et al., 1985). To a community psychologist, you cannot achieve what Stanton (2008) refers to as "public purpose" (p. 24) without first performing contextual exploration.

In addition to assisting with the implementation of the regular programming by the local organization across secondary schools, I employed the Photovoice project to better understand the impact of the program as well as youth issues more generally. This phase involved setting up working sessions with the participating youth, as well as building relationships with school staff. Two major milestones of the project were completed at this stage: narrowing the focus of the project and selecting project space within the school buildings of the participating secondary school.

Decide on Research Questions, Select Research Design, Develop Instrument/ Process. I had arrived at the project with a research design and process (Photovoice) of interest (Wang & Burris, 1997). The Photovoice process involves several iterations of presenting questions to research participants, to which they respond by taking photos and writing narratives. A focus-group-style meeting follows. The process culminates into participatory analysis and public dissemination (Wang, 1999; Wang & Burris, 1994, 1997). Although my community partner had some influence over specifics once I arrived, I evaluated these two elements in the abacus as weighted on the university side. We collaborated with our partnering international agency to develop the first official Photovoice question posed to the secondary school research participants. Given the partner agency's mission, the question they drafted for the secondary school participants focused heavily on HIV/AIDS. Although this is a focus of the community partner's program, it is not the *only* focus of their curriculum. To uphold the participatory nature of the project, the secondary school students and I drafted additional Photovoice questions that they would explore after first prioritizing the question put forth by the partner agency. Given that sexual health *is* an important topic for and among youth, the participants began the Photovoice project by responding through photos and written narrative to this question: What does an AIDS free generation look like? Once the first round of Photovoice was complete and the World AIDS Day Event had passed, we continued the iterative Photovoice process for several months. The overall project included two research questions: (1) How are youth experiencing this school-based program? (2) What are the most pressing issues with which youth are faced? Subquestions for each were drafted and ultimately translated for/aligned with the Photovoice questions.

Collect, Analyze, and Interpret Data. The slider for data collection, analysis, and interpretation was placed in the middle, as this step was completed collaboratively with the participating youth and the community partner. I began to recruit students from one secondary school on the island in which we were already providing the community partner's program. Given their relationship with this school, we were able to assemble the necessary data collection resources with relative ease. However, the school's timelines did not align well with the ethics review board timelines at my home university, requiring that I ask for the school's patience in recruiting and starting the project until all approvals were granted. The data collection happened in response to the Photovoice questions, followed by the focus group meeting for each round. Some of the participants assisted in the data analysis and interpretation stages as well. Critical reflection was primarily on the university side, as I was hyperaware of my outsider status and spent a great deal of time dissecting and interpreting how this presence may have influenced the data.

Disseminate Findings. The dissemination of findings and creation of public products was easily weighted on the community side as the design and preparation of the Photovoice materials for the World AIDS Day event were spearheaded by the community partner through their partnership with the international agency. This collaboration was a big win since my Fulbright funding at the time did not cover the expense of the enlarged prints, and without financial support from my graduate program I was unable to cover these costs out of pocket. Participants presented their photos and narrative data, and their voices were heard by the U.S. ambassador, as well as program developers, advocates, policymakers, and community members. The event was televised, plans were made regarding the future of the project and data usage, and participating youth were involved in each step.

Product

The main product for this project was the set of Photovoice prints that were presented at the embassy on World AIDS Day. Although a few publications are in progress, the prints represent the most important product in terms of the data as well as capturing the community-engaged nature of this endeavor.

Create Academic and Public Products. Traditional academic journal articles will pale in comparison to the youth-led presentation at the embassy. Television coverage and a youth-focused radio show to further connect with the participating youth around policy issues and sexual health followed, and though the impact of these efforts was not measured, from my perspective and that of my community partner, this achievement was a step in the right direction.

My community partner has since focused on gaining legislative leverage to shift policies that prevent youth from accessing sexual health resources until the age of 18 (the legal age of consent for sexual activity is 16; L. Raphael, personal communication, March 15, 2014). Youth broached this topic through their photos and narratives presented at the U.S. Embassy, and advocacy efforts for this change have been taken on by the community partner's youth council ever since. The youth council still stands as a cornerstone to their programming, and extensive community partnerships have been formed over the years thanks to their efforts. Three publications are in progress, and the organization's directors will be involved as coauthors. Furthermore, the methods used during the Photovoice project were somewhat innovative in that video was incorporated. An academic paper focused on this integration is in progress to further disseminate this alteration to the Photovoice method.

I believe the community impact would be quite high for this project, specifically among the youth who participated. Although no community-level impact data were collected, I believe the World AIDS Day event may have paved the way for continued conversation around youth sexual health. The printed Photovoice materials continue to be used by my community partner in various capacities and have served as a sustainable conversation piece for subsequent events. In terms of academic impact, the three in-progress publications land this project near average.

Reflections and Lessons Learned

The development of community partnerships along the way was highly successful. I was lucky in that the community-engaged research project I presented to my community partner, even before applying for the Fulbright scholarship, was supported. I brought my own funding and intended to not be a burden on my community partner's operation. They work diligently across communities, and I most certainly did not want to be a hindrance to their efforts. Their presence in the country is vital and well respected, and I was able to benefit directly from that. Once the international agency heard about our project, the history of their relationship with my community partner facilitated the elevation of the Photovoice work to the World AIDS Day event. The success of the project dissemination was entirely due to their hard work and reputation.

Had I not been a graduate student, I would not have had access to the Fulbright application process, and therefore would not have had the opportunity to receive the award. With my Fulbright status came funding to solely focus on this community-engaged research project. I had a small amount of funds to use for the Photovoice meetings (purchased pizza for the participants, audio recorders, and printed materials), and I was also enrolled in online classes so I could continue the progress of my degree. These classes provided me with the opportunity to refine my community-engaged processes in real time. I was also connected to a network of community-engaged scholars through my affiliation with a graduate certificate program at my home university and had benefited from coursework and seminars prior to my departure that enabled me to develop the necessary skills to complete this community-engaged work.

Unfortunately, accepting the Fulbright scholarship led to a loss in graduate student funding from my home institution. For me as a first-generation college student, all forms of support are important, especially for community-based research. However, these resource restrictions did not outweigh the importance of eventually completing my degree. Support for first-generation college students looking to engage in community-based research is vital.

Vignette 2: Practicum in Mid-Michigan

A two-semester, community-based practicum was a critical component of my doctoral program first-year requirements. Consequently, my student-led community-engaged research project was initiated by me. My practicum's first semester consisted of a field portion in which students explored the local landscape related to their issues of interest. The second semester, students committed to a 4-month relationship with a community partner wherein the student provided technical skills (e.g., evaluation, research, intervention development). The "community" I focused on learning about within the practicum was recently arrived unaccompanied refugee minors, and the community partner in this vignette was senior staff from a resettlement organization that worked with this community. The classroom portion of the second semester consisted of troubleshooting, resource sharing, and group reflection. This arrangement allowed me to develop community-engaged scholarship skills in a safe environment where I could regularly receive guidance and support. As it was a classroom project, our community-engaged work was not supported by any funding.

Exploring my practicum site's goal of organizational development as a student and not a staff member encouraged staff to be open and explanatory in ways that I may not have been able to access without student status. Likewise, student status afforded me an open sense of curiosity that was not tied to evaluation or the conduct of the organization's daily work. It also made my technical, skilled labor particularly appealing, as it came at no cost to the organization.

Purpose

The goal of practicum for students is to gain experience collaborating with a community partner. Therefore, the end deliverable product is intentionally designed and executed with the main purpose of being useful to the community partner. In the spirit of developing a public purpose that includes direct benefits to the community, the research questions were mainly determined by the community partner (Stanton, 2008). The organization's goal was to create a new group living arrangement for unaccompanied refugee and immigrant minors. In this case example, the project was entirely designed to provide answers that the organization needed to move forward with their plans. Specifically, they wanted to reference any existing best practices, and supplement that with input from current staff who were most familiar with the needs of the youth who would be receiving those services. I had access to university library systems and a cursory knowledge of the relevant fields of institutional-style placements for minors and of the needs of immigrant youth. A review of literature underscored the novelty of what the organization was planning, and therefore we shifted our approach to one of gaining insight from current staff. The individual interviews and group analysis resulting from that process were intended to guide the way the new placement program and structure were designed.

Process

To follow the degree of collaboration during the collaborative process (Stanton, 2008), refer to Figure 3, based on Doberneck and Dann's (2019) abacus. In the abacus and throughout this vignette, the "community" refers to the organization's senior staff with which I was working on the practicum project. The "university" refers to my contribution as a student conducting technical research to meet their needs. I was supervised by a senior staff member of the organization, and most of the decision sharing described in this vignette was performed with that specific person, unless stated otherwise. Since my interest was in the types of services needed by and available to unaccompanied minors, and the organization's interest was in expanding their services, the senior staff was really the proxy for the "community" partner in my abacus application. Applying the abacus, I would rate the overall degree of project collaboration as medium. Early phases were driven almost entirely by the organization, data design and collection phases were driven almost entirely by me, and the analysis, reflection, and dissemination were moderately mutual. The abacus components are described in more detail below.

Identify Community Issues/Assets. First, the community partner established that older teen immigrants they served had specific challenges after arrival, due to the novel nature of the U.S. unaccompanied immigrant minor legal system. The current foster care system in place for them was not always a good fit. At the time this partnership was developing, the number of unaccompanied immigrant youth had skyrocketed, and the federal government was struggling to meet the demand with existing structures (UNHCR, 2015). Therefore, the organization intended to respond to a federal call for a new placement option for unaccompanied immigrant minors by creating a structure for older teenagers who might not be good fits for the refugee foster care system but needed more support than an independent living structure. The organization took on the full responsibility of identifying community assets for placement as well as identifying issues with creating a new placement option locally.

Decide on Research Questions, Select Research Design, Develop Instrument/Process. Originally, the community's research question sought best practices for a semi-independent living group home facility for unaccompanied immigrant minors. After I conducted a futile search for literature, the research question shifted from best practices to defining needs for that particular group, based on staff experiences help-

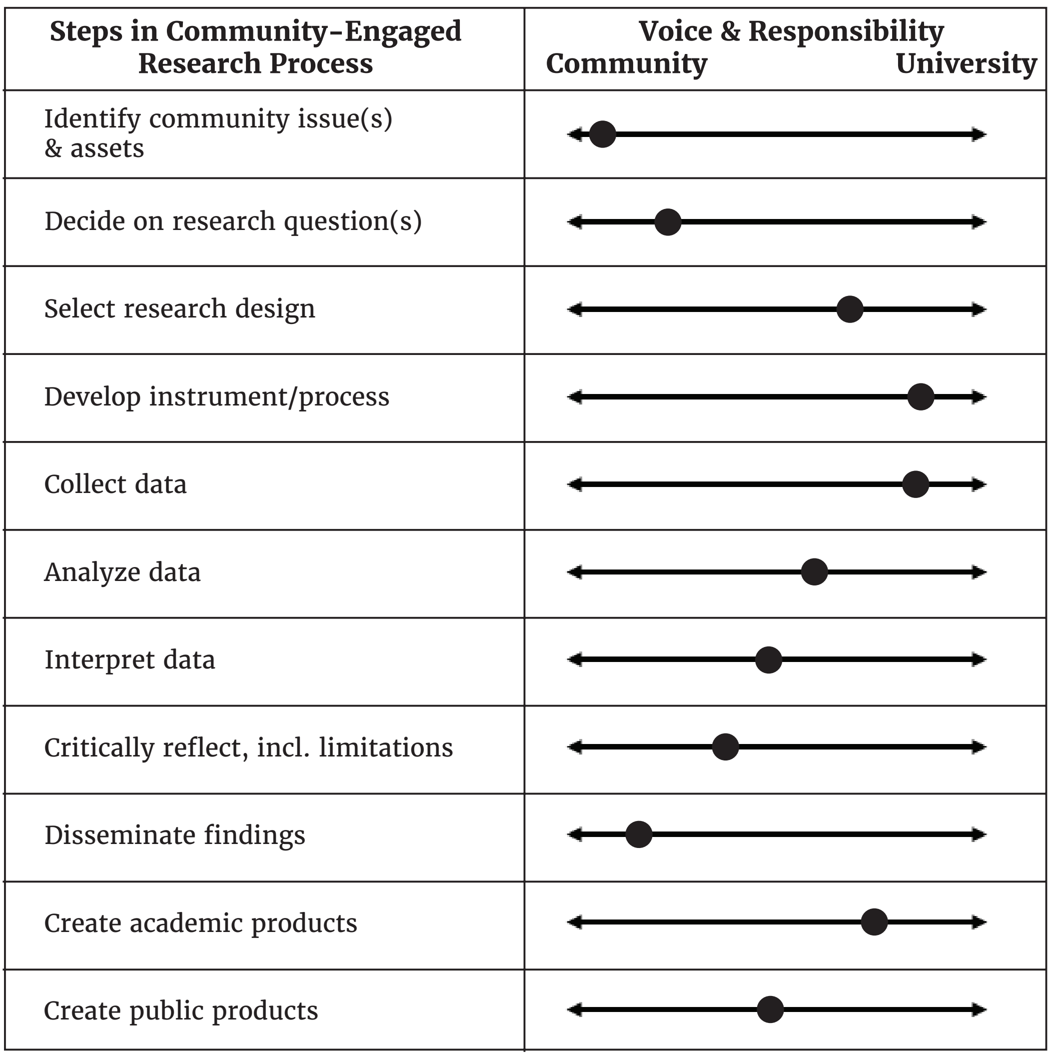

Figure 3. Community-Engaged Research Abacus (Doberneck & Dann, 2019) for Mid-Michigan Practicum Project

ing youth navigate independent living. We discussed the option of collecting our own data to inform the new project. The community partner drove the discussion about what was useful for them to know and developed the overarching research questions. I considered design options and suggested that individual interviews with youth and current staff in their organization were the best way to gather input because it allowed them to give in-depth responses without the social pressure of describing their challenges and recommendations in front of others. We agreed I would develop the interview protocols for youth and staff based on the research questions that the community partner had outlined. The partner had final decision-making power in approving the interview protocol. The overall project included the following questions: (1) What components of a group home setting would make the youth comfortable? (2) What kind of structure would make the group home setting successful? What services and skills did youth want from a group home setting, and how should staff implement those?

Collect, Analyze, and Interpret Data. I was primarily responsible for collecting data. The community partner created a list of all staff and some clients who could contribute, and I sampled from the list. The partner was responsible for letting potential staff and clients know that I would be contacting them to try to set up an interview. I attempted to get an equal mix of youth and staff, although more youth (N = 8) than staff (N = 4) participated. Most data were collected on site at the organization in private rooms.

Because of the time-limited nature of a practicum project, we used a rapid analysis technique. I decided to use a novel approach to data analysis and interpretation rooted in a participatory method. I first reviewed the interview notes and identified recurring themes across participants, keeping the staff and youth data separate. I used these notes to organize similar themes into paragraphs. I kept the themes loosely defined, knowing my perspective would be only the first step in interpreting the data.

After I had created general thematic groupings, I generated word clouds using the themed paragraphs. Word clouds are an abstract shape made up of words, in which larger words represent words appearing more frequently in the data, and smaller words represent words appearing less frequently in the data. I then turned the unnamed word clouds into an electronic visual presentation using Prezi. The word clouds were organized visually by matching the youth and staff clouds by theme. They were grouped as loosely addressing each of the main sections of the interview protocol. I presented the data to staff at the quarterly all-staff meeting—including those who participated and those who did not. Using word clouds preserved participant anonymity: Only individual words or phrases were included. The lack of context of individual sentences presented a broad picture of thoughts and feelings from the two different perspectives. These data organization and presentation formats were chosen because they were free and publicly accessible, but still somewhat novel and therefore engaging. My limited time and funding resources as a student prevented me from being able to create elaborate or visually sophisticated presentations. Moreover, the principles of community-engaged research dictated that my presentation be accessible by the community. This meant I would use resources that weren't only *currently* accessible by the community but would remain accessible if and when our partnership ended.

The community partner and I then facilitated a group discussion with the staff to interpret the word cloud data. The goal of this process was to have staff identify and name themes that emerged from the data. I facilitated a parallel data interpretation process with youth, although only two youth were available for follow-up participation in that process. In these analysis processes, the "community" partner in the abacus is broader than the senior staff and includes other program staff and interviewed youth clients. Conducting the same process in both groups allowed us to compare perspectives and generated credibility for the other group when similarities emerged. This method of presenting alternate perspectives was useful in bridging what the staff considered irreconcilable differences with their clients regarding needs. The staff then discussed how to convert the themes into suggestions for the new placement structure.

Critical reflection opportunities or prompts were built into the discussion with staff. Specifically, the interviews highlighted a tension based in conflict between staff and their clients, rooted in what staff perceived as incompatible goals. The researcher and program director encouraged staff to consider how the ways they were currently operating might work better, given the actual compatibility of word clouds revealed during analysis. In other words, what structures (policies, practices, etc.) can the organization take from their current work and *improve* for the new program? This step generated critical reflections about their current attitudes and how they impacted the effectiveness of their policies and practices, and how more effective ones could be implemented in the new program. Not all the youth participants were available for a data interpretation follow-up, which limited the diversity of interpretations and the overall impact of the process. One of the limitations of the process was that it was more directly useful for staff in their current positions and was perhaps less concretely applicable to building a new program that was still largely hypothetical to staff and young people.

Disseminate Findings. The results were created for the purpose of guiding the development of a new placement program for the organization's youth. The information gathered and recommendations made were therefore disseminated within the organization and presented to organizational leaders at the national level on a site visit. IRB permission was not sought to use the findings for publication outside the organizational context, so results were never shared via traditional academic channels such as journal publications. The bounded time of the practicum and my role as a student contributor discouraged me from seeking IRB approval at the time, and ultimately limited that opportunity, which could have contributed to future degree milestones or publications. In that sense, my student status both limited my time and shifted the utility of the data as a future resource. The products generated are detailed below.

Product

The goal of the collaboration was to produce a set of recommendations for the development of a new placement program for unaccompanied immigrant minors. Externally generated recommendations based on best practices proved impracticable due to a lack of published practices for this type of setting, which led to internally generated recommendations. The collaboration and resulting recommendations were so well-received by the local organization site that they requested a formal presentation of the process and product for their site visit by the national representative of the organization.

Create Academic and Public Products. An electronic tour of the process was created and presented by the researcher in front of local and national organization directors. This presentation was again organized in Prezi, for the reasons described above. This software choice, although straightforward, was received with delight by the national organization's representatives. Little technical expertise is required to use this software, so this presentation could be easily adopted by the organization in the future should they wish to present data to stakeholders using a novel yet engaging format. Despite the lack of academic products generated by the process and research, the partnership continued, and future research questions were generated and investigated with the organization. This further progress did result in academic products. The discussions that took place during the course of this practicum project led to a closer examination of the differential experience these youth were having in communities. Research produced from that collaboration resulted in a master's thesis and a journal article (Clements et al., 2019) coauthored by the community partner.

Reflections and Lessons Learned

The intentional integration of a collaborative process for the sake of learning how to conduct a researcher–community partnership was invaluable. There was explicit attention to identifying which partner was responsible for each stage of the project, and support and guidance from experienced university faculty throughout the project. This arrangement simplified troubleshooting moments that were hard to navigate and offered me a way to "pause" difficult parts of the process and consult faculty.

Among the reasons for taking a participatory approach to data interpretation was the negative connotations of some data; the participatory process helped staff to recognize and discuss those implications in their work, without putting an outsider in the position of casting staff in a negative light. However, this particular interpretation approach is not always feasible, and its success depends on the buy-in and engagement of the group. In all cases, potential negative findings should be anticipated and discussed before data collection, so that there is a plan in place for how they will be presented.

Furthermore, the resource constraints imposed at the time forced me to find creative ways to analyze data and present it to the community partner. In doing so, I introduced multiple publicly available resources that intrigued them and their stakeholders. Ultimately, that constraint may have served as an opportunity to develop their resources in ways they may not have considered. For me as a community-engaged student-scholar, it reified the value in presenting data outside the university setting in ways that are particularly relevant, useful, and engaging to communities.

Vignette 3: Survey on Domestic Violence Advocates' Practices Related to Reproductive and Sexual Health

My student-led community-engaged research project was initiated by my faculty mentor. She invited her four advisees to work together on a project to gain experience conducting research and publishing as a team. Without grant or other funding support for our labor, this endeavor was intended to be pro bono and as efficient as possible. She could provide mentorship and connections to community partners, two resources that are of critical concern to emerging community-engaged scholars. Given the multiple time pressures on graduate students' schedules, the four participating students undertook a negotiation to determine the time each would contribute to the effort. I was currently between milestone projects and had less pressure in my graduate assistantship role, so it was determined that I would lead this initiative. The team would follow my lead in selecting a topic that was aligned with my interests, and the other three students would provide support.

Purpose

Given my academic focus on the intersections of domestic violence and reproductive and sexual health (RSH) and connections to other researchers in this area, our team undertook a study related to these topics. We set out to develop and implement a nationwide online survey of human service professionals that work with victims of domestic violence (hereafter referred to as DV advocates). The survey was intended to explore how DV advocates incorporate reproductive-coercion-responsive and HIV-responsive practices into their work with victims of domestic violence. Although initial training efforts on these topics had begun, little to no research existed on the current state of the field's response to RSH, barriers DV advocates may be encountering, or how to best facilitate a more robust response. We sought to develop a survey that would provide insight into very basic and more advanced facets of such practice. Survey items focused on advocates' comfort with and barriers to talking about these topics, their current practices, the extent of their training on the topics, and their related organizational practices and policies. We hoped the results of this survey would provide the field with important information on the current level of RSH-responsive practices, and guide future training and technical assistance in this area. With these dual goals in mind, we embarked on the process of developing and implementing the survey in our low-resource context.

Process

The degree of collaboration throughout the various phases of this research process (Stanton, 2008) is summarized in Figure 4, based on Doberneck and Dann's (2019) collaboration abacus. In the abacus and throughout this vignette, the "community" refers to domestic violence service professionals and those who support this work through training and technical assistance. This conceptualization of "community" was determined to be appropriate given the focus of the survey (the strengths and gaps in professionals' practices) and the intended use of the data (guiding future training and technical assistance for professionals). The specific roles that different community collaborators play in this group are detailed throughout each step in the process. The "university" anchor refers to the graduate students and faculty mentor that constituted our research team. Applying the abacus, I would rate the overall degree of project collaboration as low. Early phases were informed extensively by experts and advocates in the field, but later phases were driven almost entirely by the university research team. The abacus components are described in more detail below.

Identify Community Issues/Assets. Our research team took steps throughout the course of the project to involve experts on the incorporation of RSH in DV services to ensure the survey design, administra-

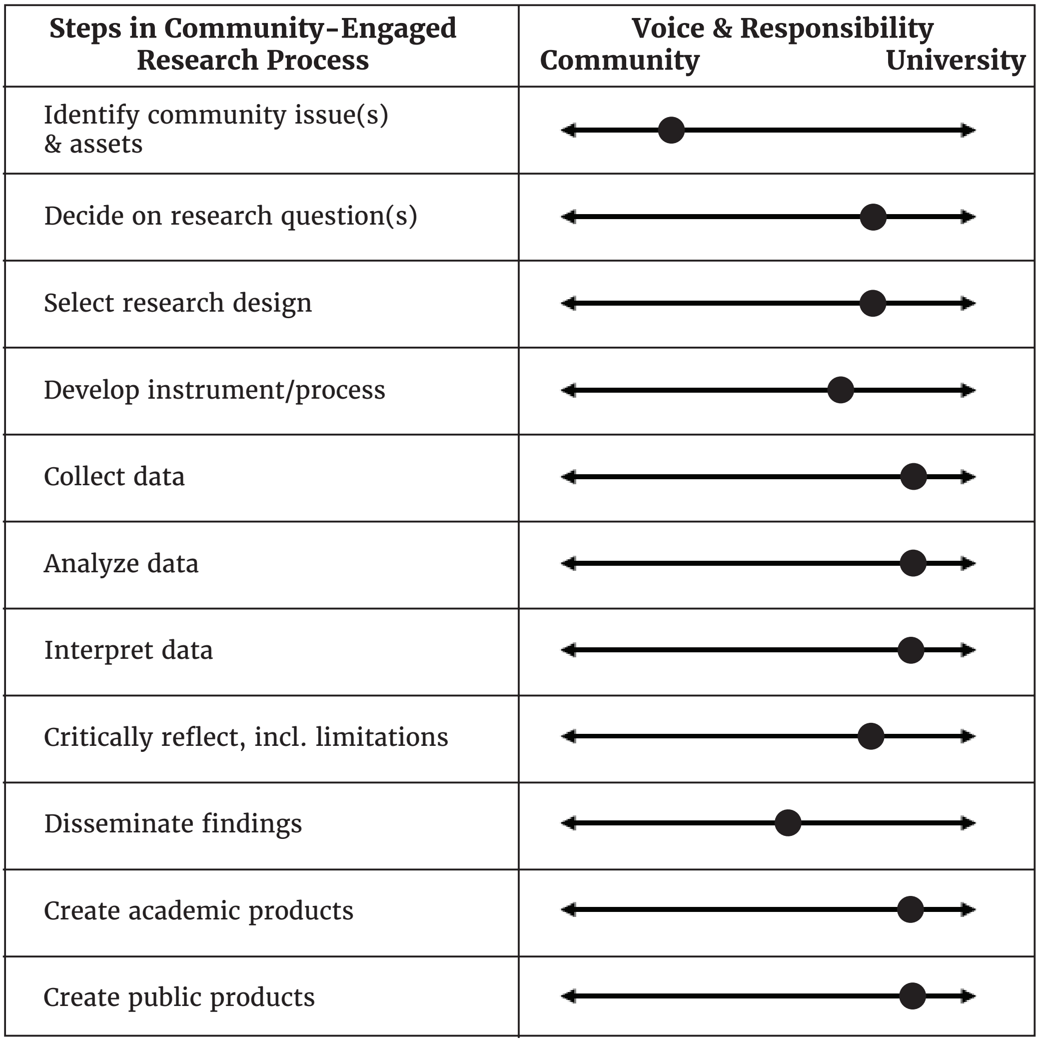

Figure 4. Community-Engaged Research Abacus (Doberneck & Dann, 2019) for Domestic Violence Advocates' Practices

tion, and reporting processes were well-aligned with the needs of the community. We wanted the survey to focus on the incorporation of RSH concerns into DV advocates' practice, and we needed to consult with experts doing this work in the field to ensure we were asking the right questions. To gain this perspective, I reached out to several of my faculty mentor's contacts for informational interviews. I was able to speak with eight experienced practitioners and trainers who were doing this work. These included representatives of national training and technical assistance organizations, state domestic violence coalition staff members, and local service programs. These organizations have led the field in incorporating RSH-responsive practices into domestic violence organizations through innovative approaches and/or providing related training and technical assistance. Representatives of these organizations provided insight into advocates' attitudes and practices in this arena and informed the researchers where additional work was needed to guide future intervention efforts.

Decide on Research Questions, Select Research Design, Develop Instrument/Process. Based on these conversations, the university research team formulated research questions that would contribute to the academic literature as well as inform practitioners' understanding of current practices and further intervention development. We decided to use a survey design to answer these questions for several reasons. First, an online survey was relatively inexpensive and quick to administer. As students, we had free access to a university license for an online survey software that allowed a great deal of flexibility in number and structure of questions and an unlimited number of participants. Such survey systems allowed for passive data collection, which was much less time intensive than interviews or other person-to-person data collection strategies. This economy was critical given our volunteer status and competing graduate school timelines. Second, a survey allowed us to collect quantitative information that practitioners gravely needed from a larger sample of the population. Leaders in this area already had an anecdotal sense of the state of the field through their conversations with trainees and technical assistance with advocates but expressed a need for additional quantitative information. They needed to better understand the extent to which those anecdotal reports of experiences and behavior patterns were shared by others in the field. Similarly, they also wanted to know if the increased confidence and knowledge they were hoping to cultivate through their efforts was indeed empirically linked with better practice outcomes.

Our faculty mentor's connections were also an incredible resource in developing our recruitment strategy. She connected us with her long-time collaborator, the director of a national DV training and technical assistance organization, who provided us with guidance on our survey methodology. This community partner made suggestions regarding sampling and recruitment strategies that were ultimately critical to the high response rate this survey garnered. Without existing measures in this area of research, the study scales were developed based on the input from community members and a review of relevant literature from social work, public health, and nursing. Access to a vast amount of such literature represented another strength of our status as students, as such library resources are not always readily available outside a university setting. Likewise, one of our research team members was able to use this scale development process as a final project for her psychometrics class that semester. By combining these efforts, she received extra support in and devoted more time to scale development than would have otherwise been possible given our time and funding constraints.

We developed four survey versions (two focused on reproductive coercion response and two focused on HIV response) with the intention that participants would be randomly selected into one of the four. The surveys were reviewed for clarity, appropriateness for local DV advocates, and usefulness to the field by five of the eight original community experts. After incorporating their feedback, the online survey was piloted by staff of two local domestic violence programs for clarity and functionality. The staff at the pilot sites provided detailed feedback regarding how to ask certain questions and how to frame the research. We used five research questions for the overall project: (1) To what extent are advocates knowledgeable about the facts of RSH topics? (2) What training have DV advocates received on RSH-relevant practices? (3) To what extent have DV advocates executed RSH-relevant practices with survivors? (4) What are DV advocates' attitudes toward RSH-relevant topics and practices? (5) What are DV organizations' practices and policies related to RSH?

Collect, Analyze, and Interpret Data. Once the survey was finalized, the invitation to participate was disseminated by the national training and technical assistance organization who advised our team on recruitment in the design phase. The organization's mailing list of state domestic violence coalitions received an email on our behalf, informing them of the purpose of the survey and inviting them to use various modes of online contact to recruit advocates in their states to participate. State coalition staff who opted to help recruit participants then sent out information about the survey to local DV-focused programs who were members of their coalition. After the survey had been available for 2 weeks, our faculty mentor and national community partner sent additional emails to coalition leaders in states where we had not seen any participation. The group and individual contacts facilitated by decades-long relationships were an incredible resource contributed by our faculty mentor and community partner that greatly increased survey participation. When state coalition leaders received a personalized email from someone they were familiar with and respected, they seemed somewhat more likely to make the effort to forward the information to their memberships. If we had simply reached out to these coalitions as students, we would likely have been much less effective in garnering their support and participation.

Once the survey was closed, the university research team jumped into the data cleaning, analysis, and interpretation processes. These efforts were carried out in a largely traditional, nonparticipatory manner because of limitations to team members' resources. Unfortunately, the pressure of comprehensive exams, a heavy course load, and increased assistantship pressure left me with less time for this project than I would have liked. The other graduate students were not able to take over leadership either, and my faculty mentor was still unable to provide other resources (assistantship funding, statistical support, editorial support) that would have alleviated these pressures. As a result, we did our best to devote our few available hours each week to work toward transmitting a portion of the large amount of the collected data to the academic and practitioner audiences. Such limited time does not lend itself well to participatory analysis or interpretation processes, so community members were not involved at this stage.

Disseminate Findings. The findings were intended to shed light on the extent of reproductive-coercion-responsive and HIV-responsive practices among DV advocates. More specifically, the results were used to better understand barriers to employing, training around, and organizational integration of these responsive practices, and were later shared with a range of audiences, including national leaders, scholars, and practitioners. The products generated are detailed below.

Product

The goal of this community-engaged research was twofold, in that we hoped the research would contribute to the generation of new knowledge regarding practitioner and DV advocate RSH-responsive practices, while also guiding future training and technical assistance in the field. These two goals aligned well with both academic products and practitioner resources. Both are detailed below.

Create Academic and Public Products. Given the waning time resources described above, the results of this survey were shared more slowly than we would have liked, and solely via written academic and practitioner-focused channels. Several academic publications were produced using the data from this survey. These works are in various stages of the publication process in journals that cater to both academic and practitioner audiences. In addition to simple descriptive papers intended to bring to light frequencies of key practices and barriers, our team produced more complex papers using advanced statistical techniques intended to model relationships among such factors and to validate the newly created scales. Two practitioner trainers involved with the initial interviews during survey development provided manuscript feedback before submission.

For audiences less likely to read academic journals, the results of the study were shared via technical reports and a series of infographics. The technical reports were designed to provide no-frills baseline information about frequencies and key relationships to inform intervention development and to provide empirical support for these initiatives that could be included in related grant applications. The technical reports were authored by our team, reviewed by our community partners, and final versions were disseminated by our national partners. The infographics were designed to capture the interest of the wider DV field regarding the topic, and to provide ideas for how to better incorporate RSH-responsive practices into their work at a local level. These pieces were designed by a volunteer undergraduate graphic design major recruited through graduate student contacts. This was especially valuable because we could not provide or afford this student's skillset outside our academic setting. These infographics were distributed at a national advocate conference and will be disseminated by our national partner to state coalitions, who can then share them with their partner agencies and participating advocates.

Reflections and Lessons Learned

Through this opportunity, I developed greater knowledge and skills in conducting community-engaged research as a graduate student. I learned that working with a faculty mentor who is well-connected to influential community partners in the movement, and generous in connecting us, brought our project a level of legitimacy we could never have achieved independently. I also came to appreciate the depth of resources that a university affiliation can bring to otherwise resource-limited settings. Conversely, I also learned the hard way that limited time and funding can negatively impact the success and level of community participation in a scholarship effort. Fluctuations of these resources over the course of the project often occurred in ways that were difficult to anticipate as a new researcher.

I also experienced the contrasting norms around academic timelines and practitioner timelines. Things move slowly in academia, due to bureaucratic considerations like IRB approvals, other projects competing for our attention, or our tendency to agonize over minute details in pursuit of the most rigorous examination possible with available resources. Whatever the cause, our practitioners sometimes became confused or frustrated with our laggard processes.

Another huge lesson learned was the necessity of engaging practitioners in the survey development process. Without the viewpoints of the experts we interviewed, we could only have guessed at the information that would forward their work. Expert input was particularly important for this project because the existing academic literature on the topic was so scarce. This expertise even extended into selecting language for survey items that matched advocates' language. If we had developed items using our overly clinical terminology, survey participants might not have known what we were talking about!

Finally, if I were to do this project over again, I would press harder for additional resources to develop and execute a more intentional process for including practitioners in the data interpretation and dissemination. Perhaps we could have explored departmental or university community-engaged scholarship funding resources to hire a statistical or writing consultant. Alternatively, we could have recruited other graduate or undergraduate students to help with these tasks. We could have attempted to leverage other ongoing projects with DV advocates by folding in interpretation and dissemination of this information with other findings. Lastly, we could have leaned on our community partners more for member checking or dissemination via existing channels.

Cross-Case Themes and Discussion

Cross-Case Themes

As young graduate students, we found that our community relationships were enabled or enhanced by our advisor or program referrals, connections, and reputations. The ability of each of us to make a meaningful connection with a community partner underscores the importance of understanding context, a foundational tenet in our field of community psychology (Kingry-Westergaard & Kelly, 1990; Trickett, 2011). The democratization of research as a CBPAR value was demonstrated in each of our vignettes by the inclusion of those most impacted by the research at various points of our projects. All of us were guided in the direction of the study design and measures by the needs and input of the community partner. This democratization neatly overlaps with the value placed on the collaborative process of community-engaged scholarship (Doberneck, Glass, & Schweitzer, 2010; Kral & Allen, 2015).

Each of us was mindful of the financial constraints of graduate-student-level research and developed low-cost data collection methods. The process of collaborating with the community partners to develop data processes that were accessible to both university and community partners further promoted democratization of the research and the capacity of graduate students to develop praxis (Allen & Moore, 2010; Doberneck, Bargerstock, et al., 2017; Franz, 2013).

Ultimately, the collaboration between university and community partners encouraged wider dissemination than might otherwise have been expected. In community-engaged scholarship, it is expected that the findings will be shared with participants (Franz, 2013), but in all vignettes, findings were shared beyond participants at the local and national stakeholder levels.

Unique Positionality of Graduate Students

The vignettes presented here also emphasize the unique situations of graduate students entering the work of community-engaged scholarship. Three different research methods were implemented (Photovoice, interviews, and surveys) at three different phases of the graduate learning career. One of the unique aspects of the graduate experience is having the skills and knowledge to conduct research semi-independently while being supervised or advised by an experienced faculty mentor. Each of the vignettes presented here described situations in which the faculty advisor was minimally involved in the students' research. This level of independence encouraged students to develop foundational scholarship, and the level of community voice depicted in the abacuses led to the production of scholarly products for public audiences (Doberneck, Bargerstock, et al., 2017). Faculty researchers may be under more institutional pressure to produce scholarly products for academic audiences, so graduate students' career stage may offer them an advantage for producing public products.

Some differences across the vignettes may be worth exploring. In Figure 5 below, vignette highlights are presented to demonstrate areas for continued questioning around how the overall degree of community engagement (as rated by each vignette author based on the Doberneck, Glass, & Schweitzer, 2012 scoring system) is connected to specific abacus elements.

Perhaps it should be noted that Vignette 3 was described as being initiated by a faculty member, whereas Vignettes 1 and 2 were initiated by the graduate student. It arguably makes sense that Vignette 3 was self-rated as having low community engagement, with more abacus elements weighted on the university side, in comparison. This simple observation points out the importance of how encouraging, supporting, normalizing, and creating space for students to *initiate* milestone projects may yield further opportunities for community engagement across the research process. Of course, project initiation by faculty versus graduate students involves a delicate balance, given the lack of resources available to graduate students and the tendency to utilize faculty member existing projects, datasets, or research portfolios to accomplish their goals and milestones. Finding the right balance of utilizing advisor resources while also maintaining creative research independence and initiation would be beneficial. Navigating that balance needs more attention in graduate school training and curriculum building.

Limitations and Future Directions

One of the recommended competencies of community-engaged scholarship is an enduring relationship between the academic and community partners (Doberneck, Bargerstock, et al., 2017). Each of these vignette experiences was limited by an inability to remain engaged with our partners and follow the impact of our public or academic products. Ideally, we would be able to better understand how communities use research publications and how our partnership led to changes in operations of partner organizations. Another challenge in conceptualizing our reflections is that the abacus was not used prior to the vignette projects, and therefore our reflections are novel and post hoc.

Dominant scholarly frameworks do not clearly articulate how to measure collaboration around policy implications and considerations. This essay is one example

	Vignette 1	**Vignette 2**	**Vignette 3**
Self-rated degree of community engagement	Medium	Medium	Low
Community-anchored abacus dimensions	Decide on research question(s) Disseminate findings Create public products	Identify community issue(s) & assets Disseminate findings	Identify community issue(s) & assets
University-anchored abacus dimensions	Select research design Develop instrument/process	Develop instrument/process Collect data	Collect data Analyze data Interpret data Create academic products Create public products

Figure 5. Vignette Highlights and Community Engagement Ratings

of the application of the abacus framework (Doberneck & Dann, 2019); however, the framework can more widely serve to encourage collaboration around policy. Moreover, the abacus should be used in future collaborations to ensure all stakeholders and partners have the same understanding about how they are contributing to their projects. Below is a shortlist of recommendations for both graduate students and faculty mentors embarking on community-engaged scholarship.

Recommendations for graduate students:

1. Use degree of collaboration abacus as a guide for developing partnership roles together.
2. Stay current on technological resources available to the university and the public.
3. Consider how to sustain graduate scholarship postgraduation—milestones are often big projects (e.g., leverage smaller projects into larger projects).
4. Do not be afraid to ask supportive people for help—we should all be lifelong learners.
5. Seek formal or informal training on community-engaged scholarship via coursework, independent study, external workshops/conferences, or books.
6. Share your interest in conducting community-engaged scholarship widely around the university—projects or partners may be anywhere.
7. Seek student-specific funding for projects that value an engaged approach.
8. Pitch community-engaged projects to community groups you are otherwise involved with to gain skills and build your reputation.
9. Build community-engaged scholarship into your required course projects or milestone projects (thesis, dissertation, etc.).

Recommendations for faculty mentoring graduate students:

1. Introduce your community partners and other connections to your students, legitimize their skills and knowledge with your reputation, and provide opportunities for your students to shine in front of them to encourage future partnering.
2. Convene a research team to provide structure and accountability for student-led initiatives.
3. Provide a safe space for students to process their engaged research challenges; encourage experimentation and provide developmental support.
4. Give students concrete examples of tools or processes used in your own community-engaged scholarship.
5. Speak to students intentionally and regularly about the interpersonal/political dynamics inherent in collaborative work.
6. Consider sharing a small amount of start-up funding or other resources with students, to use as participation incentives or payment for collaborators.
7. Discuss alignment with faculty competencies (Doberneck, Bargerstock, et al., 2017) to prepare students for their work with other scholars.
8. Transfer budgeting skills that financially sustain research and develop research products.

Conclusions

The collaboration abacus created by Doberneck and Dann (2019) is an engaging and flexible tool that allows for a variety of uses throughout the community-engaged research journey. In the vignettes presented, the abacus was used post hoc by the graduate students to reflect on their use of community-engaged practices. However, the abacus can be used across various stages of the research process: for example, in early collaborative planning stages with involved parties, as a midpoint check in activity, or, similar to its use here, as a post hoc activity to assess the extent to which community-engaged practices were utilized to critically reflect on improvements moving forward. As described by Doberneck and Dann (2019), the abacus should also be considered as a

> storytelling tool, to explain who had voice and authority at different steps of the engagement process. Without taking the time to carefully think through and document who had the most influence on decision-making and when, much

> of the richness of this community-engaged research project would have been lost. (p. 98)

Although community-engaged research is highly regarded in many university systems, protocols for developing such capacities among graduate students remain relatively unrefined. A push in this direction can be seen most recently in *Publicly Engaged Scholars: Next-Generation Engagement and the Future of Higher Education* (Post et al., 2016), as well as across earlier publications that advocated for stronger research values and action as promoted by faculty mentors (Colbeck, 2008; Franz, 2013), resource and skill development regarding basic methods for community-engaged research (Allen & Moore, 2010; Franz, 2013), and training related to power and oppression and how they are translated both within and outside graduate school settings (Warren et al., 2016).

Perhaps the most influential piece of literature regarding the development of graduate student capacities for community engagement hails from a special issue of the *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* and documents the critical evaluation of a university-based certificate program (Doberneck, Bargerstock, et al., 2017). Its authors have cultivated a promising model for graduate student education and training that has effectively tested various iterations of a community-engaged scholarship curriculum and mapped their refined curriculum onto community-engagement faculty competencies. The codevelopment and evolution of curriculum dimensions and competencies provides a sustainable approach to the challenging process of graduate student community-engaged research. Such initiatives are moving the field closer to "a time and place where community engagement is sufficiently valued and rewarded within higher education" (Morin et al., 2016, p. 154). We hope that our perspectives as graduate students working in resource-limited community-engaged scholarship projects provide descriptive examples of creative solutions to the problems that arise from resource and institutional constraints.

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