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Towards a Social Justice Model of Inclusion for University-Community Engagement

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Key words: community, university, social justice, inclusion, engagement, social work, knowledge, critical, equity

Abstract

University-community engagement often professes to center the shifting needs and issues that communities face but these are often pushed to the periphery in knowledge creation. The methods of engagement, research agenda, outcomes, as well as the measures of success are typically grounded in the academe and universities can almost always pinpoint immediate benefits for the co-creation of this knowledge. Universities are usually able to secure funding and gain prestige to undertake these engagements and projects are put forth as testaments of universities commitments to social change. Communities often struggle to do the same and many are often not equipped with the resources to translate the new knowledge into practice-based initiatives such as programming, funding applications for staffing, services and service delivery. While there are unquestionable merits in the longstanding histories of university-community engagements, more needs to be done for research to be mutually beneficial for both parties. This article outlines five key principles of social justice and inclusion as a preliminary stage of a conceptualized first step necessary to frame university-community engagement. It reiterates consultations with communities through research as a requirement to develop an actual model of university-community engagement to embody social justice and inclusion for true social change.

Introduction

Communities and universities have a long history of interaction and engagement through direct and indirect partnerships. Indeed, Trent University in Canada, from which this piece of scholarship initially emerged, cites a commitment to community engagement towards “inclusion, leadership, and social change” (Trent University, n.d., para. 4). Similarly, Wilfrid Laurier University, where this researcher is currently located also emphasizes a commitment towards creating “engaged and aware citizens” in a setting where “community is at the heart of who we are” (Wilfrid Laurier University, n.d., para. 2, 3). While these commitments are undeniably important, it is crucial to recognize that oftentimes interactions are more beneficial for

universities, in many cases at the expense of and at times to the detriment of communities (Gupton et al., 2014).

Many university programs, including social work, depend on opportunities in communities to provide meaningful learning opportunities and educate students in practical, community-based settings. Educators and scholars conduct research in communities and university members are able to receive funding and prestige for their articulated commitments to social change through community engagement. Accordingly, Khalaf (2017) notes that much of the existing literature that has been published on university-community engagements is focused on the academy – its methods of engagement, its agenda, its outcomes, and its measures of success. In this regard, community needs and issues as they shift and change, are often pushed to the periphery even as they are described as being at the centre.

As we think about how to engage with communities in genuine, collaborative, and community-grounded ways, these traditional uneven power dynamics cannot be subverted without intentional, purposeful and deliberate undertaking that prioritizes community needs, knowledge, and interests at all stages of engagements. These considerations are particularly important for learners, researchers, educators, and practitioners in social work as we engage with both our interdisciplinary students and colleagues, and members of the community through our work. Such an undertaking also offers the potential for other disciplines that engage with communities to cultivate the values of social justice beyond spaces dedicated to social work.

With these thoughts in mind, this article proposes a first step towards a conceptualized framework of social justice model of inclusion in university-community engagement (UCE). The conceptualized framework seeks to facilitate collaboration that values community's knowledge, contributions, and participation, in a manner that is mutually beneficial and with equal measures of success, inclusive of diverse community members and community-identified markers. The discussion draws from diverse social movements and critical thought, and particularly from existing literature on academic engagements with community, to provide a new integrative view towards UCE, using "well-known" inclusion principles. The conceptualization is predicated on principles of social justice and inclusion.

I put forth the key pillars that are anchored in, access and equity; adaptability, collaboration and reciprocity; strengths-based capacity building; and, embracing of multiplicities. I argue that each of these principles are necessary to frame university-community engagements that are truly committed to social justice and inclusion. In recognizing that working with communities cannot be done without community input, this discussion is intended to inform the preliminary stages of the proposed conceptualized first step. Future consultations through research and community-led initiatives are needed and will be undertaken to further refine and develop an actual model. Of key to note here is that reference to community throughout this article includes, collective or members and/or specific groups of individuals within communities.

A conceptualized social justice framework of inclusion: Defining the base and scope

The foundation of this conceptualized framework is rooted in social justice and inclusion, which are two of the main commitments of the social work profession (Canadian Association of Social Workers [CASW], n.d., 2005; International Federation of Social Work [IFSW], 2014, 2018). Both principles are necessary to move away from UCEs that are inequitable [and exclusive], whether intentional or not, and in some cases create real or perceived barriers that preclude participation from community members (Tremblay & Hall, 2014). Grounding an approach in social justice requires ongoing examination of all levels of engagement and implementation, including looking at the ways in which "...the existing social structures and social institutions empower some people and oppress others" (Kam, 2014, p. 725). Both Kam (2014) and Yanicki and colleagues (2015) noted that a social justice approach intrinsically involves advocacy in response to witnessing and/or working with community members experiencing social injustice. This action-oriented, critically conscious focus is not only necessary, but also missing from many of the examples present in the literature and other accounts of UCEs.

Additionally, inclusion has been described as a matter of health, political, and social justice (Yanicki et al., 2015; WHO, 2008; Sen, 2000; Galabuzi & Labonte, 2002). Bun Ku and Dominelli (2018) identified inclusive community engagement as key to amplifying often marginalized voices and resisting their isolation. Inclusion as a concept, however, is not neutral; it has been adopted uncritically and weaponized through performative tokenistic gestures that do not actually work towards systemic changes rooted in social justice. Joseph et al., (2020) and Brunsma and colleagues (2012) both note that discourses of 'equity,' 'diversity,' and 'inclusion' in academia, obfuscate the continued existence of oppressive dynamics, preserving white comfort at the expense of non-white (used intentionally here) students, faculty, and staff. Situating inclusion in a social justice framework that requires genuine and critical engagement with injustice and oppression, will resist these sanitized forms of inclusion that harm communities in the process of 'trying to help'.

This conceptual framework is intentionally situated within a social justice and inclusion model as an attempt to resist common oversights in existing UCEs. It requires us to centre the principles and values of social justice and inclusion in our work with communities, be it in research, advocacy, partnerships and other forms of engagements. This means a focus on structural inequalities and the forces that have created, and benefited from them (Galabuzi & Lalonde, 2002); on intersectionalities and the ways that intersections nuance experiences (Davis, 2018; Hernández-Castillo, 2018); on inviting and embracing diverse positionalities and multiplicities, and on the complexities associated with these forces (Su, 2019). The framework also requires us to focus on self-reflexivity and understanding where we fit into these structures (Chin et al., 2022); on the right to self-determination and inherent capacity (Morris, 2002); on ensuring that communities that we serve have access to, at the very least, basic necessities of life (Lundy, 2011; Bannerjee, 2011); and on ensuring that all of these components are integrated into all levels of this approach (Bhuyan et al., 2017).

In attempting to concretize these thoughts about what social justice and inclusion might look like in engagement between community and university, it was necessary to scope out work already done to advance these ideas. To do so, review of relevant articles published in national and international journals focusing on education, scholarship, race, inclusion, and community engagement was conducted. Articles from social work journals were prioritized but the scope extended beyond social work, with the aim to inform the development of a more comprehensive framework. Much of the literature selected focused on concepts of inclusion and social justice as the overarching thread, directly or indirectly, though there was a dearth of literature on these practices within the context of UCEs. Search terms such as “university-community engagement,” “community-engaged scholarship,” and “community-based research,” modified by terms like “race,” “Canada,” “inclusion,” “social justice,” were used to narrow the focus on relevant literature streams that was then reviewed for their methods, overall approach, and outcomes. These were then applied to developing thoughts about the pillars put forth, many of which are referenced throughout this article. It is also key to acknowledge, however, that there likely is much work that has been done in community that has never made it to an academic journal or a published report. This review is therefore not intended to be a final or prescriptive conceptualization of a framework, but simply a first step at conceptualizing thoughts on how to work towards UCEs that is grounded in social justice and inclusion.

Conceptualized framework of inclusion rooted in social justice: Five key principles to engage

Like other models of inclusion, this conceptualization contains key principles that are uncompromising pieces of any defined framework. Underscoring these principles are my experience as a scholar, researcher, and practitioner working with and within communities, as well as drawing from various critical social movements and thought, such as critical race, critical disability and decolonizing frameworks, feminist thought, human rights, and social justice. These principles are woven into this article and teased out within the social justice and inclusion conceptualization that this article describes. As previously mentioned, the key aspects that this conceptualized framework entails include, access and equity; adaptability, collaboration and reciprocity; strengths-based capacity building; and, embracing of multiplicities.

Access and **equity** are key pillars of this conceptualized framework, as they underscore a commitment to the reduction or elimination of barriers to participation for community members. By holding this as a key in working with communities, the intention is to address some of the common reasons that interested community members do not (or more aptly, cannot) participate in projects and engagements with universities. In particular, common barriers are expressed around language (especially for community members whose primary language is not English, which is the primary language used in North American academe and for those members who may not have access to the jargon of academia), finances (low income residents, those whose participation may be associated with extra cost to participate such as paying for childcare, transportation costs etc.), physicalities (for those who may have physical accessibility concerns), and emotionalities (for those who may experience feelings of anxiety or any other emotional

challenges and/or discomfort in a particular space or situation that hinders participation). Ensuring that everyone who desires to participate is able to do so is not just a matter of equity, but also one of human rights (McMurry, 2019). Numerous declarations from organizations around the world, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights articulated by the United Nations (UN, 1948), underscore free and equitable participation as necessary. Participation is crucial at all levels of engagement, so that members and communities that we serve can feel empowered to share their thoughts and become involved in decisions that affect them (Ife et al., 2022). Principles of disability justice, which prioritize “flexibility and creative nuance” while engaging with each other should go beyond that which is ‘normal’ or ‘typical’ of academic-based engagements with community (Berne et al. & Sins Invalid, 2018, p. 228). Understanding and addressing barriers faced by members of the community, is crucial to creating more accessible and equitable UCEs.

Pirie and Gute’s (2013) research on health information in immigrant communities, rested on ensuring that the community’s primary language was not ignored, dismissed, or overshadowed by the primacy of English. By engaging with community leaders who spoke the primary language that the community spoke, and who also became leaders in the research and acted as liaisons between community and university, member involvement in the research was increased with consideration made for different languages. Verjee (2012) notes that representation on faculty or research teams is not only a means to equity, but also a best practice in engagements between university and community. The author noted that this step positions individuals on the research team as potential “insiders” as well, which can increase participation. Voices that would not normally be captured in research can be more firmly represented as a result.

Similarly, in a university-community partnership with organizations serving pregnant and parenting youth, Tremblay and colleagues (2018) found that flexibility was instrumental to providing access for participants who had to contend with childcare needs and schooling among other considerations. They note that it was key to commit to meeting participants where they were both physically and in more abstract ways, allowing for levels of participation that would not have been possible otherwise. For Rusch (2009), who reviewed a community-organizing project to address their needs, employing respected community members who also had a connection to the university as “bridging mechanisms” was key to building trust and opening space for community members to engage with the project at their own pace (p. 496). By holding access and equity as integral to the approach, the goal is to reduce and, if possible, eliminate many of the common barriers expressed towards promoting access to a wider range of community members.

Price and colleagues (2013) guidelines put forth for UCE, highlighted the importance to include service providers in UCE with communities that are historically disenfranchised. While guidelines reflected “...social work’s commitment to social justice in practice, education and research,” (p. 45) and authors were representative of both community practitioners and different levels of the university (faculty, students and administration), input from community members themselves were not clear. Silverman et al., (2020) pointed to concerns raised by community

residents about institutional stakeholders forging messages that are presented to community members for buy-in more as formality rather than actual engagement in the process. Recognizing the importance of opportunities for access and engagement among and within communities, should be a priority in UCEs. Otherwise, the barriers that impede community participation and input in these processes of engagement, remain and the status quos stays intact.

Adaptability is a key pillar of this conceptualized framework as it centres the understanding that community needs will change over time, requiring different areas of focus, strategies and approaches, and understandings to become salient. Renewed primacy of these needs at different stages of the engagement relationship is also a requirement. Often, responsibilities as scholars and researchers are to our funders and university, and the key performance indicators (KPIs) written in proposals, or pre- and post-engagement surveys that show ‘objective’ positive outcomes, are geared towards the funding and university as well. Proposals, applications, and scholarship presume these processes to be linear and clean, down to a budget, and overall efficiency (Smith et al., 2018). However, when working with the community, this linearity does not necessarily align with the needs of the community. If approach is more amendable and adaptable, outcomes can become more beneficial for communities and university alike. Funders and funding opportunities will also require much more flexibility beyond current stringent and linear markers of success and completion. Therefore, the engagement of funders and different sources must become part of the adaptability pillar of UCEs.

Ehlenz (2021) noted that engagements between universities and community must undertake processes of reflexivity that necessitate recognition of the ways communities grow and shift, which allows for adaptation rooted in the resultant changing needs that emerge. Mohanty (2003), called attention to the ways that conceptualizations shift and change and underscores the importance of (re)visiting our understandings together and allowing for fundamental shifts. Asad and Le Dantec (2019) noted that although the tensions that may arise as a result can be challenging, *embracing* and working through them together not only produces more meaningful and impactful outcomes, but also strengthens relationships with those that we serve. Resisting dominant priorities in this work that often tie these ever-changing engagements to strict and rigid guidelines (often dictated by the various institutions that scholars and academics work within and to some extent funding) and rather focusing on relationship and process, will contribute to the fundamental shift in adaptability that this framework is proposing.

Rubin and colleagues (2012) found that working flexibility into their community-based research model allowed community members to feel like the university placed importance on and was responsive to their needs, which is a key facet of trust-building in UCEs. Hatala and colleagues (2017) agreed, noting that coming to community with a “fully cooked” idea that is entirely thought out and planned, privileges the voice of the university with its top-down or outsider approach to the issues facing communities. In the early stages of a youth participatory research project in a large midwestern university in the USA, the original documented plan to examine resource inequities in the region was overshadowed when it was announced that the secondary school that most youth attended would be closing at the end of the year (Vakil et al.,

2016). Rather than continuing with the original focus of the research, the project shifted to focus on understanding the impacts of the pending closure. The insight gathered as a result of the shift, was then shared on a policy level to influence further closure decisions. Doing so was meaningful to students who were provided an outlet to share their feelings and advocate for themselves and other students in similar situations.

Apostolidis (2013) draws attention to university-community partnership approach that created social change within and beyond community boundaries. For Latino communities in Washington D.C., who participated in a community-based project, the initial focus on labour opportunities was not enough, as these needs intersected with needs around healthcare and education, among other areas. The project not only pivoted to ensure these issues were centered but forged opportunities for students to participate in change work for the community, which was not an initial component. The project was not without many pitfalls and even drew the ire of university administration. However, the meaningful efforts that were made to adapt and adjust, ensured that the focus was on the needs of the affected community. By linking "...complex institutional dynamics to workers' bodily and emotional pain" a broader collective effort was established (Apostolidis, 2013, p. 205). Benefits for both university and community were achieved, and long-term relationships were ultimately forged.

In her systematic review of articles focusing on overcoming barriers to participation in community health research among members of black community, Billigsley (2014) noted that several measures are required before community involvement in problem-solving can be engaged. Measures noted include establishing and building credible relationships and trust as important steps. In addition, the recognition that community members' level of participation may change depending on the week, day, or even hour, is key. Winkler (2013), in their work on development in communities in Cape Town, South Africa, found that transparency about these changes for both community and academics/researchers were key to maintaining trust, as well as to promote realistic expectations for both parties. By meeting community members where they are and accounting for more fluid processes, this approach can welcome involvement from more diverse community members at whatever level of participation makes sense for them.

A **collaborative** and **reciprocal** approach is a key pillar of this conceptualized framework as many of the existing relationships between universities and communities are largely unidirectional, in which the agenda of and benefits to the university take primacy (Netshandama, 2010). Further, Billigsley (2014) notes that traditional top-down approaches characterized by the message that "we [academia, researchers, social workers] know what is best for you" when working with black communities for example, ruptures already fragile relationships due to recurring breaches of trust steeped in marginalization, (p.124). The lack of power sharing and acknowledgement of existing community knowledge are antithesis to collaboration and reciprocity in current attempts to engage these communities. To resist these taken for granted approaches, the proposed framework is focused on mutual benefits for both parties as co-equals - agenda defined by both parties. Scholars like Mathebane and Sekudu (2017), who suggest a contrapuntal epistemological approach that puts academic knowledge in dialogue with community knowledge towards more valuable and relevant outcomes, are

important for this reason. More significantly the authors approach is based on non-hierarchical interaction and dialog and fostering the co-existence of different and related perspectives, which is crucial for collaborative and reciprocal engagements.

The concept of *Etuaptmumk*, or Mi'kmaw for "Two-Eyed Seeing" is a holistic approach which can benefit this framework as well. Elder Albert Marshall describes this approach as "learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing..." and through the other eye with the strength of other ways of knowing (Western, Eurocentric) to strike a balance that is value-added with benefits all around (Bartlett et al., 2012, p. 335). This approach can further promote the inclusion of multiple perspectives and enhance collaboration and reciprocity between university and community and among community and community as well. By valuing community knowledge and ensuring that any work done with community has community utility, is a first step in a new approach that resists typical unilateral UCEs. Through intentional dialogue to build and strengthen relationships and more meaningful engagements can be achieved with especially Indigenous and racialized communities.

In engaging with community members as part of a larger neighbourhood revitalization project in Boston (MA, USA), Silverman and colleagues (2020) pointed to the exclusion of residents input in project planning especially in marginalized communities. They noted that even though participation from the public was necessary for buying into neighbourhood revitalization plans, community and other grassroots stakeholders were excluded. Community members, though told that their perspectives were key in the project, were left feeling voiceless. This was even further compounded by dynamics of race, gender, socioeconomic status, class, and marginalizing dynamics steeped in power and privilege. For example, Langhout (2006) – a white, female researcher reflecting on her work as an undergraduate coordinating in a community garden project in a primarily black neighbourhood – found that her work reproduced patterns of whiteness, regardless of her intentions to do otherwise. Her agenda, focused on coordinating the project for a course which took primacy over fostering ownership and investment in community members or any of their identified needs. Hatala and colleagues (2017) note that part of resisting these dynamics is to cultivate a learning space that challenge the invalidation, marginalization, and subjugation of community-based knowledge as subjective, not rigorous, or inferior. Pirie and Gute (2013) note that developing collaborative relationships hinges on recognizing the inherent value in community knowledge and capacity of community members. Collaboration and reciprocity are based on similar points of awareness for more robust community involvement and benefits.

By recognizing both the university and community as valid and important knowledge holders, a "reciprocal process of sharing" that requires learning, and open-mindedness from all members in the process can materialize (Hatala et al., 2017, p. 48). Winkler (2013) note that these processes require trust and transparency at their core, which must be consistently built and upheld through accountability between the university and community. Building collaborative relationships that are reciprocal in nature also require long term commitments that run beyond a single semester, academic year, or academic cohort as well as end dates for projects. Rather, intentional and relational partnerships must be maintained in ways that value community

members' time, knowledge, and needs (Lum & Jacobs, 2012). Mosavel and colleagues (2005), working on community research initially focused on cervical cancer screening project for young girls in Cape Town, found that the project needed to shift focus based on input provided from the community. The community felt that they were faced with “cervical health” issues rather than “cervical cancer” and so the suggestion from the community was adopted to reflect the multiple and complex challenges that poor women in South Africa face. This took the research beyond the initial and limited focus on “cervical cancer” alone. The distinction was not only valuable to the community but for research outcomes as well. The study was also able to incorporate community knowledge to ensure more meaningful outcomes that are useful for further [community] interventions.

A **strengths-based approach to capacity building** is key as much of academia is rooted in deficit-based understandings of communities, as well as the perceived superiority of academic knowledge. In reality however, important critical advocacy and service work has and continues to be done in communities. Many UCEs ignore this reality and end up replicating the work already being done (often not successfully). Chilisa (2012) draws attention to the ways that local, Indigenous, and other knowledge that are considered lacking a systematic and rigorous base – one derived from Euro-Western conceptions around valid knowledge – are pushed to the periphery in academic endeavours. Local, Indigenous, and community knowledges are therefore conceived as lacking strength and capacity in understanding and theorizing that which they experience. The approach proposed in this article, requires beginning with the work currently being done in communities and viewing its members as experts in their experience (Caiels et al., 2021).

Both the Department of Health and Social Care (UK) (2019) and Rubin and colleagues (2012) highlight the importance of relationship-building in evaluating and building on strengths in ways that are meaningful for communities. This is particularly true for communities who are (rightfully) wary of trusting academic, social, or health-based organizations because of “... repeated violations of trust...”, historical and ongoing, (Billingsley, 2014, p. 124). A relational and strengths-based approach resists extractive, deficit-based research and community work. Rather than prioritizing unilateral academic agendas and knowledge, this approach requires building from community knowledge, bolstering it with academic endeavours (including training community members in research, policy analysis and advocacy) and amplifying this work as needed. This also must include using our privilege and prestige as academics to disseminate this knowledge to the correct parties in order to bolster systemic change for communities.

In an Ontario-wide research project focused on transgender people and their experiences with health and service provision, Travers and colleagues (2013) note that their initial goal was to build capacity to ensure that tangible skills would remain in the community even after the engagement had ended. This goal became even more important as they found that some community members felt disempowered by highly technical survey research methods used. When community members felt that engagements were not building on their existing capacities and strengths or did not focus on building those capabilities needed for research and planning work, community participation and buy-in diminished. The research highlighted gains made

within the community in general where community control over research grew, however, power dynamics challenges remain when working with academic partners. This does not bode well for increased participation in future research from the community members feeling disempowered. Not only does a strengths-based approach bolster participation, it is also key to increasing positive outcomes and building stronger partnerships between the university, community and other stakeholders.

As noted by researchers in a post-earthquake community reconstruction in Sichuan Province, China, community knowledge, skills, and capacities were key to the relevant and sustainable success of their project (Bun Ku & Dominelli, 2018). In reviewing an engagement in Cameroon in 2013 that focused on how the university could better serve surrounding communities, Mbah (2019) echoes the need for universities to adopt sustainable development and societal engagement in its mission and as part of its knowledge creation with communities. The researcher uses an example of an exchange between students and a local tomato farmer in which they shared respective knowledge towards improving the planting processes. Not only is this an example of strengths-based, reciprocal knowledge sharing, but also illustrates the importance of understanding existing work in the community and working together to build capacities.

In these approaches and others (such as Ehlenz, 2021 and Zhang et al., 2020), the recruitment and employment of community leaders who were already known for their support and advocacy efforts were key not only to establish relationships, but also to provide an insight into what work was already being done in the community. Rubin and colleagues (2012) demonstrated approach in a community-organizing project to strengthen research skills in community-based organizations, show that by acknowledging community members who participated in the project as Fellows, their expertise in assessing community needs combined with their role in the research as co-partners, made a significant difference. In evaluating the impact of this decision, the Fellows shared that they felt “empowered” and “valued” (Rubin et al., 2012, p. 488). Identifying community’s strengths and community capacity building can help to further the goals of both the community and academia as these are not mutually exclusive outcomes.

Embracing of multiplicities is also a key pillar of this conceptualized framework, as even members of the same community will have different opinions, perspectives, and knowledge bases that they draw from and that shape their experiences. Recognizing differences in people and their different and sometimes overlapping experiences, are vital to our interactions and engagements but more so to stop feeding into the systems of oppression that foster inequities. The works of black feminists like Kimberlé Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins, among others, as well as many other black, Indigenous, and racialized scholars and activists are foundational to capturing the varying degrees of impact and lived experiences. Their works also help to illustrate the complex interplay of different forces of power and oppression on a person’s life and help to capture the nuances of experience for deeper insight and understanding (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016).

Along similar lines, Joseph's (2015) work on confluence is useful to refining this pillar. The concept includes tracing ways in which "more than one idea, system, factor, or influence run or merge together at a similar point or junction" in fluid and contextual ways, with attention to both history and present (Joseph, 2015, p. 17). Further, Joseph's (2015) approach expects and encourages disagreements, differences, and complications as important methodological pieces. Many scholars, such as Wong (2004) and Dullea (2017) have spoken about the need to embrace the mess that is social work-ing, rather than sequestering it into neat little boxes beyond the margins of what makes it onto our academic pages. In doing so, Friedman (2017, 2019) note that this mess (and even more so, acknowledging and working *with* it) also requires us to be profoundly reflexive and consider our own ways in and through the work with community.

To resist essentialism (or the reduction of individuals to their group status) and the "flattening out" of experiences that is common in UCES, an approach necessitating multiplicities, messes, and reflexivity is necessary. Rigid timelines defined by funding, institutional or professional requirements, or ethics proposals often do not allow for the fluidity of circumstances in the community, nor does it allow for building of rapport in genuine, time-honoured, relevant, and ongoing ways. The focus on the academic agenda – which privileges prestige, the appearance of progressiveness, and opportunities for future funding over mutual benefits and a focus on community utility of engagement outcomes – often flattens out complex and ever-changing needs and perspectives.

Blanchet and colleagues (2017) reviewed outcomes of a community-based study on child nutritional health in Ottawa, Ontario Canada and found that community members' levels of trust increased with their positionality. For example, families in the study who were immigrants were generally more wary about the research process and were more concerned about confidentiality. This reality necessitated building trust through different and creative approaches to ensure that participants who were immigrants, felt just as comfortable as other participants considered as "non-immigrants" and/or Canadians. In addition to embracing multiplicities in and between the community members, it is also key to understanding these dynamics between members of university and community, especially around power dynamics that could deepen existing inequities. In reflecting on two research-based youth partnerships, Vakil and colleagues (2016) note the importance of understanding power dynamics – especially around race – and how they impact relationships, research process, and outcomes. They point out that it was key not only to the ethics and aims of the research project itself, but also to building trust with community members in the engagement process.

Embracing these multiplicities are important not only as a measure of inclusion, but as an avenue to achieve more positive and diverse outcomes. For example, Guo-Brennan and Guo-Brennan (2019), in reviewing a multi-year research project focused on newcomers' experiences in Prince Edward Island, Canada and found that embracing diversity in urban planning was key to ensuring that *all* community members felt a sense of inclusion and belonging. As part of the actions proposed to ensure accountability in building inclusive communities, creating a shared vision and action plan and bringing together cross-sector stakeholders (including community members) were highlighted. These are indeed considerations that can inform UCEs. There are

many ways to demonstrate the embracing of multiplicities in UCEs beyond what is highlighted here. However, as part of the core pillar for a conceptualized framework, attention to these and other organic examples are crucial for more robust and genuine engagement.

Towards next steps: Moving from conceptualization to developing a social justice model of inclusion

A social justice model of inclusion for UCEs can, will, arguably *should* look different depending on the unique context of both the university and community involved in the partnership and/or engagement. The conceptualized framework proposed here, however, is a first step towards a model that centres access and equity, adaptability, collaboration and reciprocity, strengths-based approach to capacity building, and embracing of multiplicities. This writing is not intended to propose recommendations or best practices, because, frankly, it would be premature and assumption-driven to propose such a model without community input. Doing so would simply replicate the very unbalanced dynamics that this approach seeks to challenge. This is also a prominent issue in existing UCEs, wherein academia attempts to replicate work already done in community by community, often in disconnected and disjointed ways that centre the academe. In light of these considerations, the thoughts on UCEs that have been put forth here must be piloted with both members of the university and members of the community to build out this proposed model in ways that foster utility for both partners (Gudmundsdottir & Brock-Utne, 2010; Kim, 2010; Edwards et al., 2018). Piloting has been used in UCEs before but are often limited in their scope due to barriers for community participation. Addressing presenting barriers will be key to beneficial and reciprocal partnerships including the undertaking of a pilot project.

In thinking about how to do this piloting, there are numerous possibilities: surveys, focus groups, listening circles, community forums or any number of other important ways to connect and share ideas. Perhaps even in thinking about how best to pilot this approach is an opportunity to engage with the communities we seek to work with, should be required to ask what method is the most meaningful and effective for them. Indeed, if the intention is to facilitate a true social justice and inclusive engagement between the university and community, ensuring input from both parties are necessary from the start. In addition to sharing these thoughts – both those which have been written here as well as that which live in discussions with colleagues and community, meetings, and experiences – this approach must be brought to members of the community, for open conversations about what UCEs might look like from their perspectives. What meaningful engagement could look like with the community's needs and how this model might shift to better encompass those identified needs should also be sought.

As a social worker by profession, researching for and discussing this conceptualized framework was enlightening. In literature on UCEs, social work rarely makes an appearance in both theory and practice. In the social work literature as well, there is little on university-community engagements. The limited amount of overlapping literature often focus on research projects and service-learning partnerships. However, the aim of this approach is to forge an anchor for UCEs in social work that resists these often time-limited and extractive frames.

Rather, it promotes symbiotic engagements with communities not just within reach of universities or based on the research interests of universities, but for the greater good of communities of marginalized peoples. Social work is a strong base from which to build this approach, as the principles articulated here – including social justice, inclusion, capacity-building, among others – are already in social work’s wheelhouse. Importantly, however, it is key that the profession (and indeed, we as social workers ourselves) have more learning to do around what these principles mean and should look like in practice with communities.

Though the principles discussed in this paper incorporate and hold centre these understandings, they have also been left intentionally broad so that they can be reconceptualized according to the specific space, time, and community within which these principles are being engaged as part of any model. This approach is a first step in the conceptualization process and is *not* set in stone. More research that is exploratory in nature is also required to scope out more inclusive, diverse, integrative and mutually beneficial aspects of inclusion and community engagement. This is simply the conceptualizing of a framework which presents the possibility for something more concrete in a model. By initiating this discussion, the hope is to engage more critical conversations and ideas about how we approach UCEs that are genuine, reciprocal, collaborative and grounded within both communities and university’s interests. Despite the “well-known” principles mentioned in this discussion, UCEs remain one-sided in many of their endeavours with communities. In reality, engaging these pillars will require intentional, purposeful and deliberate actions in order to achieve a social justice model of inclusion for UCE. To underscore a previous point mentioned earlier, an actual model must be developed in consultation and with input from communities. Otherwise, universities will continue to do harm to communities in these engagements, despite their intentions to do otherwise.

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