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Resource Paper

Let's Get Along: Strengthening Academic-Nonprofit Partnerships in Research

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Abstract

There have been a growing number of partnerships between universities and nonprofits to conduct community-based research to understand important racial group disparities and develop community capacity. However, these relationships can be unbalanced and fraught with challenges. This resource paper offers a discussion of seven considerations that can assist university researchers in developing accountable and equitable partnerships. We also provide suggestions on how these steps may vary for Asian American and Pacific Islander groups and how to create mutually beneficial agreements that respect both parties and their goals.

Introduction

As applied social scientists, the authors have significant experience working with and for community organizations to produce research that influences policy and social change. These collaborations included research planning, program evaluation, data collection, and analysis. We also have experience developing different dissemination products such as policy and research briefs, executive summaries, press releases, reports, and academic journal articles. The resource paper identifies lessons and best practices in conducting research to support social change using this knowledge about and experiences when conducting applied community research.

Community-based research is also known as community-participatory research, participatory action research, and community-centered research (Stoecker 1999; Strand et al., 2003; see also Israel et al., 1998 for a review). Researchers engage in community-based research to create equitable partnerships with community members throughout the research process and to share different areas of expertise (Dong et al., 2011; Israel et al., 1998). Similarly, Ma et al. (2004) described community-based research as highlighting the role of community participants "in all phases of the research process" (p. 382, emphasis added). In doing so, university and nonprofit partners can learn from one another, increase civic agency beyond the university, and generate mutual reciprocity that is no longer unidirectional (Campbell and Lassiter, 2010).

Some scholars also define community partnerships as targeting marginalized groups—based on different aspects of identities (race, gender, sexual orientation, class)—to reduce and eventually address group disparities (Castelden et al., 2012; Vega, 1992). These partnerships can counter historical research that has been conducted by white scholars or using white participants as the point of reference (George et al., 2014; White and Tengan, 2001). In these cases, nonwhite groups were used for colonial agendas. For example, research on Blacks started during slavery and with the infamous Tuskegee experiment in 1932, epitomizing abusive practices in research; later, poor women of color were subjected to medical procedures testing for sickle cell anemia and/or sterilization of Black and Mexican women (Dennis and Neese, 2000). For Pacific Islanders, anthropological studies in the islands and universities have bound these diverse groups to fixed depictions of their culture as stuck in time and needing to be preserved through missionary lenses of non–Pacific Islander researchers (White and Tengan, 2001). de Leeuw et al. (2012) provide further analysis of the dilemmas and challenges for researchers to decolonize participatory research and to move away from research traditions that focus on "collection and display."

In these cases, researchers have "parachuted" into these neighborhoods or groups to gather community knowledge to build their own careers without helping the research subjects or providing compensation to the participants (Holkup et al., 2004). Furthermore, these previous projects justified harmful policies or inaccurate assumptions about other populations, using these groups for personal gain and maintaining the inequitable structures that reinforced disparities (Castelden et al., 2012; George et al., 2014). As a result, it is understandable that minoritized groups have developed a deep mistrust of researchers and universities (George et al., 2014). Nonprofits are important community institutions because they work more closely with target groups or neighborhoods than most researchers. These organizations may have staff who are also part of these groups or neighborhoods and can act as liaisons. Thus, this resource paper focuses on nonprofit-university partnerships to combat the harmful legacies of community research and instead promote collaboration with community experts throughout the production of research.

While community-based research may prescribe equitable partnerships as the ideal, these partnerships in practice often have unequal involvement. This imbalance is not necessarily problematic as the previously discussed examples. For example, community organizational staff members can burn out from these collaborations due to time and resource constraints. In these cases, the university researcher may need to increase their role or adjust the degree of partnership. There are fruitful ways for research and community to work together at different levels of engagement. Yet, problems can arise if the involved stakeholders, particularly university researchers, do not acknowledge important steps at the onset.

In this resource paper, we describe a spectrum of research, drawing a distinction between community-driven research and academic-driven research. In between these extremes, there is community-engaged research and community-based participatory research (Maury et al., 2011). Community-based participatory research skews toward community-driven research and heavily involves stakeholders or residents in each step of the research process (Israel et al., 1998). Community-engaged research aligns closer to university-driven projects, which include research projects in a community setting that incorporate community members and/or organizations in one or multiple forms of participation (Maury et al., 2011).

Much of the success of partnerships relates to the initial stages of developing the relationship. We outline seven considerations that scholars should consider with examples of community partnerships, particularly those involving Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) organizations or populations (see Table 1 for a summary). We end with implications for these partnerships and a sample of a Memorandum of Agreement or Collaboration (MOA/MOC) in the appendix, which researchers and nonprofits can use to ensure accountability and apply these considerations.

Table 1. Seven Considerations for Academic-Nonprofit Partnerships in Research

Factor	Considerations
1. Goals	What are the nonprofit goals for the project, and overall? What are the researcher's goals for the project, and overall? What are joint/mutual goals for the project (if applicable)? How do these goals change over time?
2. Time Length of Partnership	What is the timeline of the project? Does the nonprofit or academic have other deadlines to meet (grant applications, legislative hearing, promotion, and tenure)? Does the project require IRB? Does the project require additional time for trust building?
3. Level of Engagement and Roles	What is the nonprofit capacity for the project? Which staff member(s) will be involved? What is the academic researcher capacity for the project? Are students or other university affiliates involved with the project? What is the role of partners during each step of the project? How will roles change over the course of the project?
4. Selection of Partner(s)	What are the nonprofit organization's characteristics and structure? How do these characteristics or structure affect the project? What is the history of this partnership? What is the history of the nonprofit with other similar partnerships (if applicable)?
5. Budget/ Compensation	Will either party receive payment for the project? If so, what are the parameters and timeline for payment? What other forms of compensation are involved in the project?
6. Product/ Outcomes	What products/outcomes will help the nonprofit and its goals? What products/outcomes will benefit the researcher? What is the agreed use, storage, and dissemination of data? Is university/community IRB part of the project?
7. Sustainability	What are the goals for the project after? Are there additional resources or investment for the project? Are there other forms of a partnership that would best serve the goals for the parties?

Considerations for Community–University Partnerships

Goals

It is important for scholars to be honest in setting project goals. All university–nonprofit projects aim to increase knowledge of a phenomenon of community members or organizations. However, the project design will vary if there are additional goals. Nonprofits may aim to increase capacity (Ma et al., 2004), create and design a community-based intervention beyond the study (Maury et al., 2011; Stoecker, 1999), and/or obtain technical assistance (Mitchell et al., 2002). Scholars may also desire to increase the knowledge of a phenomenon within an underrepresented group or to inform theoretical understandings in their discipline. Faculty members may bridge courses to community research to cultivate student learning (Dewar and Isaac, 1998). The objectives will also inform what types of outcomes result from the project.

It may not always be possible for projects to incorporate a mutual goal-setting process if a partner is joining at a later point of project development. When possible, establishing goals early in the process will build ownership. Early engagement will be the most productive, particularly because it impacts how useful a project is for a community organization at the end of the project. For example, Maury et al. (2011) described how researchers in Nashville spent time to build a project that serves the interests of community members. However, their community partners did not formulate the agenda or research questions, and they felt little ownership over the project and that the project was not relevant to them. This disconnect led to subsequent challenges with different framing of interventions.

In contrast, starting a project with shared goals can increase the success of a project. A nonprofit focused on serving Cambodian young women in Southern California defined the research questions and agenda for the first survey on Cambodian American youth with their university partner, UCLA. This work was funded by the UCLA Center for Community Partnerships and included a tenure-track faculty member (now tenured) and a doctoral student (Sangalang et al., 2015). By including youth from the beginning of the project, youth participated throughout the project and the policy report reflected their interests. Both partners aimed to ensure that youth would be engaged in the research process and that the research would create policy and social change. Because of this commonality, the university researchers allowed the nonprofit to guide and lead decisions made in the process. This partnership allowed the nonprofit to build their capacity to conduct research and shape the research in a way that would be useful in the long term.

In the end, the researchers published the findings and make presentations using data from the research to increase awareness around issues concerning Cambodian youth around mental health and to develop new research measures (Sangalang et al., 2015). Similarly, the nonprofit published a report, which they released at the first-ever California State hearing about the status of Cambodian youth. In attendance with the youth and community members were key policy makers such as the California Legislative Asian & Pacific Islander Caucus and the White House Initiative on Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders (Little, 2014). It took several years for the nonprofit to see resulting policy change—in 2015, a teen health clinic was established to serve not only the nonprofit's youth members but also other local Cambodian youth (Zonkel, 2016).

Time Length of the Partnership and Flexibility

In developing a community-university partnership, stakeholders need to assess the length of involvement because the timeline for academic and nonprofit members may not align for several reasons. Academics may require more time to begin a project because they need to address questions of validity, reliability, and objectivity in tools and instruments (Israel et al., 1998). University Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) may require additional time to approve a project.[1] Negotiating and administering contracts and/or agreements increase project time, especially when funding is involved. However, nonprofits may have an immediate need for research findings for grant applications and/or to support existing programming. Missing a deadline could have consequences for an organization, such as losing funding or to give feedback on a legislative hearing (Stoecker, 1999).

University researchers should be transparent about how long they can commit to a project because community-based projects tend to require at least two years. This commitment can vary over the project and should be specified. For example, in 2015, one author started advising a Cambodian nonprofit in Long Beach about a community needs assessment. The university researcher made clear during several planning meetings about the role she could play and her availability over the next several months. At the end of data analysis, the researcher had been involved intermittently over a period of two years as the nonprofit continued to implement many parts of the research process. One of the delineations made about roles and commitment was around the IRB.

The university researcher made clear that she could advise on the IRB and could fill out some portions of the IRB application, but that the nonprofit should answer much of content questions. Based on the questions the nonprofit had and the university researcher's review, the nonprofit would make the necessary changes. The university researcher would then submit the application to the university IRB.

The university researcher could also engage with research design (interview questionnaires and focus groups), develop the survey instrument, train community members on data collection, and conduct the analysis. However, due to the researcher's time constraints and the nonprofits deadlines, the nonprofit brought in a second researcher to complete data analysis and run additional survey analyses. This project proved successful for the nonprofit and researchers because they were flexible in how they created and sustained the partnerships.

For longer-term projects, partnerships need significant time to build trust between participants and community members. In their meta-analysis of national health and medical trials, Brown and Moyer (2010) found that Asian Americans, Blacks, and Latinos had few positive perspectives of medical research relative to whites (see also George et al., 2014). To remedy this distrust, Ma et al. (2004) sought to address tobacco use in Asian American communities by spending significant amount of time to develop the partnership. They implemented steps before their intervention, including dialogue with community leaders, the creation of a separate coalition to bring together stakeholders, and regular meetings. They provided technical and monetary support for affiliated organizations in the coalition, which helped to demonstrate the value of research to participating stakeholders.

Level of Engagement and Roles

It is important to consider nonprofit capacity to determine the level of engagement and role. Nonprofits may not always have the capacity to engage with research collaborations, particularly if the organization does not have their own researchers and/or may not regularly conduct research. Based on the goals, timeline, and organizational structure, partnerships may involve varying levels of engagement. Defining what aspects each party will participate in a MOA/MOC will help ensure accountability and clarity as the project progresses.

Academics need to be mindful of their limitations and responsibilities within the academy. Given the limited capacity of many nonprofits in terms of staff and/or volunteers available to conduct and engage in research planning, academics may seek other scholars at their own or other institutions to help nonprofits accomplish the project goals. Academics also may have access to student employees or interns who can help with the project through service-learning courses, independent studies, and/or internships. However, supervising students requires time and training. Thus, academic researchers should look into their department, college, or university resources that can allocate time for such mentoring and/or teaching community-engagement courses. Some universities have created research centers that focus on strengthening university-community partnerships, and provide students with the opportunity to get training in an applied setting (Strand et al., 2003). It is important to also acknowledge that many faculty members are not fully compensated for time involved in community projects.

Nonprofit staff members are not always compensated for their time with these outside partnerships. Thus, university researchers should be mindful of staff members' other responsibilities. Simultaneously, university researchers need to ensure that nonprofit partners feel included and have a sense of ownership. There is a tension between community social change and placing too much of a burden on nonprofits to conduct research in addition to their job (Stoecker, 1999).

Community-based participatory research prescribes having partners engage in multiple if not all aspects of the project, including developing goals, designing the project, recruiting participants, collecting data, analyzing results, and/or dissemination to make the information accessible to the public (Campbell and Lassiter, 2010). Yet, it may not always be plausible for nonprofits to engage in every step. For example, Israel et al. (2005) describe how their community partners had limited engagement in the data analysis and interpretation step (see also Casteleden et al., 2012 and De Las Nueces et al., 2012). While these groups could provide additional meaning to study findings, they chose to be more involved in other aspects of the research process.

We will use the issue of feedback to illustrate another example. There are many stages that a nonprofit could provide feedback or input on written documents. Before the start of a project, some examples include survey questions, interview instruments, or recruitment materials. There may be several documents upon completion of data collection, such as a policy brief, report, or research article. While developing the project the process, the partners should decide the frequency and level of feedback the nonprofit staff members will provide. If nonprofit partners lack training in creating these documents, the researchers may also need to train the partners before obtaining their feedback (Stoecker, 1999). Additionally, if the partners do not have the time, resources, or interest, they may elect to review preliminary drafts after the researcher compiles the information. Other projects have involved this feedback process to ensure that community members or nonprofit partners have ownership over what knowledge or data is disseminated, particularly for information that may present negative perceptions of a group or may require cultural framing (Holkup et al., 2004). It may be easier for partners to provide feedback on written documents than other forms of data, such as audio interviews (Stoecker, 1999). If community partners provide feedback, partners should also include this factor into the timeline.

Selection of Partner(s)

Not all nonprofit partners are equal in size, capacity, and mission. These characteristics are important to assess when establishing project goals. First, nonprofit capacities vary by organizational structures. Some organizations have executive and/or advisory boards that are formal and must approve all partnerships. If nonprofits are a local branch of a national organization, these advisory boards may be more complex. Other organizations are smaller and have simpler staff structures that require few levels of approval. These different levels of structure may increase time to start a project and/or affect relationship building with staff members. For example, an author attempted to work with a Hmong nonprofit about a project on housing issues. The nonprofit had to obtain formal approval from the executive board, which included members across the United States. Eventually, the project did not come into fruition because the nonprofit required too many managerial levels of approval and the researcher did not have strong connections with other staff members at the organization.

Organizational structure also affects capacity and resources that the organization is willing and/or able to commit. Without an accurate assessment of the nonprofit capacity, nonprofit partners may feel overburdened and/or the partnership may dissipate. These resources may depend on the nonprofit's history of partnerships. Conduct some research on the organization and with whom or which universities it has worked with in the past. This additional research can help understand a nonprofit's reputation. This reputation can go either way, as other scholars from the university may have overburdened the nonprofit beforehand. For instance, Ardoin et al. (2014) found that community residents perceived Stanford University as distant and alienated from the broader community; they subsequently diminished the university's role in the project. If there were previous challenges or negative experiences, additional trust building may be required before starting the project or another nonprofit may be considered.

Alternatively, some groups have never worked with a university. Sullivan et al. (2001) describes how community members were distrustful of how a school was collecting data because it had never worked with these organizations before. Limited experience with researchers may result in the researcher spending more time explaining processes, ethics, and training of community members and / or organization staff to implement the project and conduct data analysis. The partnership would also be impacted by whether nonprofits initiated the project. For example, nonprofits may prescribe specific roles for the university researcher, which may exclude them from negotiating project goals or objectives (Maury et al., 2011).

Budget/Compensation

Nonprofit staff members may be compensated for their time in these partnerships. However, providing partners with funding can demonstrate that the researcher respects the invested resources. For instance, Nguyen et al. (2006) paid coalition members a stipend and offered subcontracts for organizations that offered their intervention program. Some projects build in potential employment into partnerships (Altman, 1995; Casteleden et al., 2012) or fund partner travel expenses (Israel et al., 2005).

When direct funding is not possible, there are other ways to support nonprofits. University researchers can identify funding to support the implementation of the project, particularly if the nonprofit is heavily involved. For example, some partners may be compensated with small grants for recruiting fifty participants in a study. Alternatively, substantial grants can pay for an additional staff person to manage complex partnerships. Other examples include helping the organization apply for grants, even if the grants are not directly associated with the university. By considering tangible or intangible ways to help support partner finances, university researchers can build trust and compensate partners for their involvement.

While the climate of funding for community-based partnerships is moderate at best, faculty members and community organizations can creatively generate the resources necessary to create quality research. Student participation is a major tool that the university can provide to the organization. Not only do students learn how to conduct research and work with community organizations but also such students can also fill important gaps in the research process such as data collection and analysis.

One way to compensate students is through course credit. For instance, an author had students from an Asian American Studies service-learning course work with a Japanese American organization to support their campaign for city council neighborhood designation. The instructor met with the nonprofit several months before the course began, and then brought organization members to class. Students visited the target neighborhood as a field trip and consulted with the organization during the quarter to connect with other residents. Students conducted interviews of other neighborhood efforts to support this campaign. The instructor also taught students on the ethics of working with vulnerable populations, particularly those who are not affiliated with a university and may not be knowledgeable of formal institutions. The organization vetted the students' reports before students presented at a community event in the neighborhood (Cha et al., 2015; Cho et al., 2015; Huang et al., 2015; Lau et al., 2015). However, this partnership occurred only for one year because the instructor was not consistently teaching the community research course and the organization's goals changed.

Another faculty member worked with his class to support a local Asian American civil rights organization; while teaching them about political participation, he had students gather exit poll surveys and input the data for the organization. This tenured faculty member also taught the underlying principles of conducting surveys, including the importance of randomness, individual privacy, and professionalism in fieldwork. University researchers can also offer independent studies courses, in which students can assist with various research tasks for credit. In addition, many universities have research programs that support undergraduate research by providing students with a stipend to work on faculty-sponsored work. At California State University, Long Beach (CSULB), the Undergraduate Research Opportunity offers students with tools and training to conduct research while the faculty member guides and advises the student. The Summer Student Research Assistant funds students during the summer to engage in collaborative research with a CSULB faculty.

Faculty may receive credit for working with students through their courses and/or mentoring, but most do not receive a financial benefit for this work. While they receive compensation for their teaching, additional compensation for independent studies courses is less common and often seen as part of mentoring and/or teaching. Service-learning courses require the faculty to work with a community organization often without separate or additional compensation. However, this start-up cost in time will diminish over time as the faculty improves their capacity. Faculty may also work in conjunction with organizations to pursue grants that would include compensation for themselves. Grant dollars can be used for course releases, a summer stipend, and research materials and supplies. Faculty may also integrate their work on such projects with fellowships they may receive. Community organizations may be able to compensate faculty for their expertise through their own funds and/or grants as well. In these cases, the faculty member may be a consultant or contractor to the community organization. Ideally, the faculty member and community organization work together to pursue funds that would benefit and provide compensation for both parties and the community.

Products/Outcomes

Nonprofits do not intrinsically derive benefits from peer-reviewed articles. Yet, scholars experience risks in their tenure or promotion because they are judged on the quality and quantity of traditional scholarship (Israel et al., 1998). University researchers can consider products or other types of outcomes that will give back to their partners. While university-nonprofit relationships may not always be equitable, community research has evolved to expect there to be some mutual benefits. As with budget or compensation, products and intangible outcomes are important.

University researchers can develop products to supplement nonprofit goals. For instance, a report or brief can summarize the findings without jargon. These shorter publications can garner support or grants from foundations. Sullivan et al. (2001) recommend presenting findings at community events, through ethnic media, and/or using other neighborhood publications. An organization serving Cambodian youth presents findings at what they call survey results parties. Because they work with primarily youth, these events include art activities and music to disseminate research findings to community members. At these parties, they provide handouts that are one-page fact sheets with infographics that report results.

One of the authors worked with a Korean American organization that seeks to address Korean and Latinx youth and parent concerns in the target neighborhood. The year-long project involved the development of a survey to assess youth drug and alcohol use and to support the development of parent programs for the nonprofit. The nonprofit collected the data because of their existing youth programs and connections to schools, while the researcher conducted the statistical analyses and summarized the data. At the start of the project, the partners agreed that the final product would be a brief report and executive summary, which would be used to apply for grants. The researcher helped to translate the press release into Korean, which was used in the nonprofit's press conference with Korean media news outlets. In this instance, there were no articles developed because of the limited project goals.

If the organizations have the staff or interest, the researchers can package the data for the nonprofit, which they can use in the future. Some community partnerships have suffered because researchers collected data without sharing it (Maury et al., 2011). Alternatively, some groups may have cultural knowledge that needs to be protected because it is a core part of their identity. This concern is particularly relevant if some disseminated information would negatively affect the group (Holkup et al., 2004). Thus, it is important to discuss ownership of data, who can obtain access, and resulting publications.

The partners should discuss if IRB approval can be a product. IRB is a useful process to identify potential risks and to protect the human subjects in the project.[2] If the project needs to undergo a more thorough empirical review, a university IRB is required. Some nonprofits insist on using a university IRB application as a deliverable because it demonstrates to potential funders that a peer-reviewed board has approved the project. However, not all community partnerships need to undergo IRB approval—rather, the type of products will determine whether it is necessary. Casteleden et al. (2012) also notes that sometimes there may be value differences between IRB and community groups. Some populations or groups may want to avoid anonymity if dispensing traditional forms of knowledge, which contradicts IRB's goals of protecting participant confidentiality.

If a goal is to expand the capacity of an organization, university researchers can work to give back in other ways to the organization. They may choose to help with events or other projects that support nonprofit programming or initiatives. The organization could ask the researcher to become a board member. While these outcomes may strengthen a university-nonprofit partnership, the researcher should consider how to balance time and resources if they will be reviewed for tenure and promotion.

Sustainability

The partners should have an open conversation about what happens after the project and several ethical issues. Nonprofits may have concerns with investing in university partnerships that are short term, particularly if they are exposing clients to the partnership. Yet, envisioning long-term goals can be a challenge because nonprofits may be unsure of where the partnership can lead to and/or may not see immediate effects of the collaboration (Dong et al., 2011), particularly if the research addresses systematic or indirect effects of an intervention (Maury et al., 2011).

Nonprofits and university researchers should think about long-term relationships as those between the two, not necessarily the institution. Ideally, institutions would be able to commit greater resources to such partnerships, but relationships between individuals are typically more enduring. These partnerships can last even when individuals move on to other entities without institutions. Even with academics and nonprofits with existing relationships, these connections can become difficult to sustain. For example, one nonprofit had a successful relationship with UCLA between 2007 and 2011 after receiving a grant to conduct focus groups and a survey on Cambodian youth in 2008. However, once the results were disseminated, the graduate student researcher and the faculty member moved onto other projects and/or phases of their career. While it was clear that the graduate researcher was committed to completing the project up to data analysis and spent a significant amount of time at the nonprofit's office over the course of three years, she was not involved in dissemination of the results in the community. However, she did continue to use the data for presentations and in publications beyond the life of the project.

In building sustainable relationships, it is also important for the partners to exercise flexibility in their joint work to accommodate competing work demands and priorities. Essentially, each partner understands, is patient about the process, and, if need be, can wait for the various parts of the process to be completed. In addition, they may negotiate which parts they need more immediately. Clear and honest communication and mutual respect allows for flexibility. Partners should be flexible in assessing how they will collaborate throughout the project. Flexibility can include thinking about the scope and size of projects as well as varying level of engagements. Longer-term collaborations will require additional financial or technical investment that may not have been available at the start of a project (Ma et al., 2004). Moreover, long-term relationships require upkeep through continued programming or funding. For example, in addition to continued conversations with stakeholders, Collier et al. (2012) described ongoing efforts to identify key Hmong personnel that they can work with as cultural brokers to support their work on mental health.

Other Considerations for University and AAPI-Serving Nonprofit Partnerships

University-nonprofit partnerships have proven to be useful for understanding underserved AAPI population needs. These partnerships help to gather the perspectives of overlooked groups by building trust with community stakeholders and shedding light on community needs, including Native Hawaiian youth drug use (Helm et al., 2008); Cambodian girls and sexual harassment (Cheatham-Rojas & Shen, 2008); Hmong mental health issues (Collier et al., 2012); and Vietnamese cervical cancer tests (Nguyen et al., 2006) in urban and rural contexts. Still, working with AAPI-serving nonprofits may present additional considerations. These factors may apply to non-AAPI groups and/or less acculturated segments of the AAPI population. These considerations affect the seven factors and should be similarly evaluated at the start of a project. These challenges will vary depending on the positionality or identity of the researcher. Researchers who are not AAPI may need to invest time to learn about group-specific protocols, ceremony, respect, or co-learning (Casteleden et al., 2012). Other nonresearch factors may be important to build trust in partnerships, such as availability of child care at meetings (George et al., 2014).

Group composition may require additional resources and time to ensure successful implementation of research. As Dong et al. (2011) explains, AAPI populations are not only culturally diverse but also have significant within group socioeconomic differences. In their case of Chinese elders, Dong et al. (2011) worked with a nonprofit to translate surveys into simplified and traditional Chinese, and meetings were conducted in English, Mandarin, and Cantonese. They found it important to have bilingual and bicultural research assistants.

However, it is important to not rely on the nonprofit for all translation needs. While these staff members may be bilingual and bicultural, they may not be trained as translators and/or researchers (Casteleden et al., 2012). For example, in working with a Laotian-serving nonprofit, an author was conducting focus groups with staff members acting as the translator to understand Laotian homeowner experiences during the Great Recession. There were two staff members who translated. One staff member did not fully translate focus group member responses and truncated translations to save time and/or because the staff member thought responses were redundant. By not translating responses in full, the researcher may miss important nuances. In comparison, the second staff member expanded on the translations to include more details in a second focus group. This latter translator received more education in the United States and thus may have more experience with American educational institutions, which resulted in the researcher capturing more nuances in participants' responses.

Some AAPI groups may also distrust writing down information that can tie back to the participation. For instance, the researcher had requested a waiver of signed consent from IRB in working with the Laotian nonprofit because focus group participants may be hesitant to participate if their information was collected. The project did not require personal information because the project focused on perceptions of housing issues. Participants also did not speak English fluently and had limited exposure to researchers. Thus, waiving a signed consent form decreased the burden to participate. In other cases, projects may require collecting personal information such as age, gender, or birth year—in these cases, additional time and resources would build trust with participants.

Age and/or generational status may also affect the partnership. Dong et al. (2011) relay how researchers had to learn how to facilitate a discussion among older Chinese adults without sounding authoritarian, helping elders "save face." If the researchers are younger or older than the participants, it can elicit discomfort around protocols. In their study of Hmong mental health issues, Collier et al. (2012) matched professional Hmong translators to focus groups based on gender and age to build rapport and trust. Collier et al. (2012) also used elders to recruit participants and build trust with participants. These translators were particularly important for their study because Hmong does not have a direct translation of mental health or negative connotations of related English terminology. In cases in which the age and generation do not match, it can affect research processes. In the previously described case of Laotian housing issues, the researcher had elected to not question the shorter translations during focus groups to show respect for his position among community members in large part because the first staff member was older in age than the researcher.

Some AAPI groups may use other forms of mutual respect. For example, a group may expect an exchange of gifts upon meeting (Casteleden et al., 2012). It will be important to ask an elder or knowledgeable cultural broker to accommodate these protocols. Eating and drinking together may be an important form of building trust. Dong et al. (2011) organized a dinner for seventy-eight participants to show their appreciation and help educate them on how they are advancing health sciences. Similarly, Casteleden et al. (2012) describes how a researcher spent the first year of a project drinking tea with potential participants/groups.

Tools to Ensure Accountability: Memorandum of Agreement or Collaboration

To ensure accountability and that the partnership represents both parties' expectations, a MOA/MOC can minimize conflicts, increase predictability, and clarify roles and responsibilities (Casteleden et al., 2012). This document can provide the opportunity for partners to discuss the considerations in a more formal process. While a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or contract maybe a typical document used when there is a transfer of funds and/or payment involved, not all projects and/or partnerships rise to the level of legally binding contract. The university process for implementing contracts can be lengthy and unnecessary for some projects and/or partnerships depending on project goals and whether funding is included.

The appendix provides a sample MOA/MOC that may be a suitable and more efficient to achieve equity and clarity in partnerships that do not require contracts. We created the sample MOA/MOC following an analysis and review of four different types of agreements between Asian American–serving nonprofits and universities including UCLA, California State University, Fullerton, and the University of California, Berkeley. While unnecessary, the process to develop this product assist both parties in carefully and clearly articulating their expectations. To achieve high accountability and effectiveness, specific and clear agreements are recommended to prevent open interpretation, which can hinder trust building and give the university the advantage (Casteleden et al., 2012). For less experienced university researchers, additional consultation with existing university research centers may help to clarify how the research process can be collaborative instead of competitive (Mendes et al., 2014).

Conclusion

There are certainly many considerations on the way to successful and sustainable academic nonprofit partnerships. In this resource paper we offer seven considerations in planning such efforts. While this list seems overwhelming, which might deter some from entering in such partnerships, our discussion is coupled with a sample MOA that can serve as a guide to implement and address these considerations. To prevent "parachute" researchers or the idea that community organizations should be used for their access and relationship to the community, our resource paper emphasizes what academics can and should do to help nonprofits reach their goals. At the same time, we do not wish to diminish the possible exploitation of some faculty.

Much more research is needed to better understand how to sustain partnerships, but this resource paper provides guidelines and points of reflection for individuals and organizations embarking or engaging in such work. To address the magnitude of data needs in the AAPI community along with the dwindling resources for community organizations to produce research, it becomes critical that such partnerships are promoted and continue to grow in capacity and number. Many of the examples relied on existing public health research. Other disciplines should think about how they might use this tool to benefit communities as well.

Endnotes

1 University IRBs also have an interest in avoiding any potential legal or financial risks to the university, and their perception of these risks are through a race/ethnicity, class, and gender lens (Malone et al., 2006).

2 There are also community IRBs, which can help nonprofits to address similar questions as a university IRB (see, e.g., https://www.ssgresearch.org/community_irb).

Appendix

Sample Memorandum of Agreement

Additional guidelines and considerations provided in italics

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT by and between [insert name of University] and [insert name of organization]

This Memorandum of Agreement ("MOA") is entered between the [insert University name] (hereinafter referred to as "[insert preferred abbreviation]"), and [insert organization name] (hereinafter referred to as "[insert preferred abbreviation]"). UNIVERSITY NAME and ORGANIZATION NAME shall collectively be referred to as "PARTIES." The research project contemplated by this Agreement is of mutual interest and benefit to all Parties. UNIVERSITY NAME and ORGANIZATION NAME hereby acknowledge and agree to the following terms and conditions.

Initial paragraphs should have the following information.

- Project goal(s) and Outcomes. *This is where partners would agree what the overall goal and purpose of the project is and expected project outcomes.*

- Deliverables. *Identify any deliverables that are expected from either party. Any research deliverables (e.g., research brief, technical report) and related project outcomes desired (i.e., capacity building among staff)*

The body of the MOA should include the following:

- *An outline of the period of the agreement and the process for renewing an agreement.*

- Roles and responsibilities of each partner. *Indicate which phases of the project will be expected to engage in and/or responsible for. Be as specific as possible here including all phases of research including planning (e.g., defining outcomes, goals of research, defining measurements, method, IRB), data collection, data analysis, dissemination, and evaluation.*

UNIVERSITY is responsible for the following tasks and activities:
Examples may include:
- *Identify any relevant literature to the project*
- *Analyze data collected*
- *Complete IRB approval process*
- *Writing methods, results of the project*

ORGANIZATION is responsible for the following tasks and activities:
Examples may include:

- *Training of volunteers to collect data*
- *Printing of report*
- *Dissemination of report*
- *Press conference to announce report*

- Scope of Work. Each partner shall be responsible for work/tasks as described below, and shall use reasonable efforts to perform the tasks substantially in accordance with the terms and conditions of this MOA.

A preferred way to identify the responsibility for tasks and activities is to create a work plan/scope of worktable that outlines specifically who within each organization would be the lead and/or work on specific tasks and activities with corresponding deadlines. This document can be included as an attached document (i.e., Exhibit A) that the MOA references and not in the body of the MOA.

Outcomes	Deliverables	Tasks & Activities	Lead Agency	Lead Staff/ Contact	Individuals Responsible	Deadline

- Financial Arrangements. *If there is to be any exchange of funds for service to University there should an MOU and/or contract (opposed to MOA) that is legally binding with this section dedicated to payment including who will provide the funds, the amount, to whom the funds should be paid/transferred, and the way in which the funds will be transferred (i.e., mail). Additionally, parties may want to specify any other conditions under which payment should be made (e.g., monthly, bimonthly, task based). There should be specifics about how much the total payment should be and for what deliverables. If a grant was received to conduct the work, it should be clear who gets what portion of the grant and/or for which tasks. It may also be necessary if any equipment or supplies were purchased to specify who retains ownership once the project concludes.*

- Authorship for Product and Publications Development and Presentations. *A decision should be outlined about whose name will appear on any products and/or publications. In addition, there should be a decision about the order of authorship, which would be important for academics, especially those earlier in the career, to consider. Academics may also want to consider what kinds of publications will be pursued such as those in academic journals and/or popular media.*

- Data Ownership/ Data Rights. *This is another section that a university researcher may wish to utilize an MOU or contact that is legally binding. It is a good idea to include a statement about who has the right to publish copyright, disclose, disseminate use in whole or part any data information developed. Academics should consider a period for which they may want to secure rights to the data prior to sharing data (with other researchers) for purposes of publishing research in an academic peer-reviewed journal.*

- Term and Termination. This MOA is effective for the performance period beginning ________through _______. This MOA may be subject to extension by mutual written agreement. Either party may terminate this MOA upon 30-days advance written notice to the other party.

    • Review of Papers, Products, and Press Releases. *Identify the period for such items as well as turnaround time for comments. Due to time constraints and competing demands for both parties, it would be advised to provide minimum turnaround time for comments and the way in which comments may be provided. Finally, it is necessary to discuss how decisions will be made around how comments will be incorporated and how decisions will be made regarding which comments to include. While it is difficult to assess this at the beginning stages of a project, it is helpful to have in mind who will have the final say as to what goes in which research deliverables. For instance, for journal articles perhaps the academic researcher should have the final say, while other outputs such as policy briefs should be guided by the community organization.*

    • Communication. *It may be necessary to require a certain number of face-to-face meetings. For instance, the planning stage and initial findings are advised to be done in person. If such face-to-face meetings are not able to happen in person due to financial constraints and distance, an option may be to use videoconferencing. Identify a main or preferred mode of communication such as e-mail or phone and for which aspects of the project.*

    • Publicity. *In this section, the parties shall outline the conditions around which names will be included on and in any products, promotion, advertising, press release or publicity. It should be explicit how such information will be decided and whether written permission will be required to include organization emblems, symbols, etc.*

- Principal Points of Contact

University
Name:
Title:
Address:
Telephone:
Email:

Community Organization
Name:
Title:
Address:
Telephone:
Email:

For University:

Name: ______________________________

Title: ______________________________

Date: ______________________________

For Community Organization:

Name: ______________________________

Title: ______________________________

Date: ______________________________

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