

Learning from Difference: The Potentially Transforming Experience of Community-University Collaboration

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ABSTRACT

The University of Michigan's Detroit Community Outreach Partnership Center generates faculty-student teams who work on community development projects with Detroit's community organizations. Projects are designed to enrich students' experiential learning in community settings and to help build communities' organizational capacity. This relationship has exposed a culture clash between universities and community organizations in at least three major areas: the style of work, social justice understanding, and power relations. Further, although the COPC is committed to a community-driven planning model, the nature of the community-university relationship tends to push the work toward a consultant-driven model. Improving community-university collaboration will require restructuring of university pedagogy.

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The University of Michigan's part of the Detroit Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) was first envisioned as faculty-student teams providing technical assistance to community organizations on projects that community leaders identified. The range of experience in the COPC work in its first year-and-a-half led to a clearer articulation of the COPC purpose, exposure of a major clash of cultures in the university-community development partnership, and a search for ways to help the program better achieve its goals of building capacity in communities and enriching education in the university. These experiences have led to questioning fundamental pedagogical approaches in urban planning. Unexpectedly, the effect of COPC is, therefore, to create tensions that have the potential to transform parts of the university. This outcome contrasts sharply with the original vision, which was that COPC would patch faculty-student team projects into the curriculum without fundamental changes in the way the urban planning program or the university operates (Wayne State University et al. 1994).

The experience has led Detroit COPC participants to attempt to move beyond the provision of *technical assistance* (the term in HUD's call for proposals and close to the initial Detroit COPC idea) where one side provides expertise to the other. In contrast to the simplicity of the original conception, the Detroit COPC is now explicitly articulated as an institution for collaborative learning for students and faculty and for community leaders, their organizations, and their constituents. Both community and university partners expect to benefit from the interaction with the other group. Students expect to learn more about how to do planning, and leaders of community organizations expect to develop implementable strategies to help achieve their development goals. The faculty role is to mediate the mutual learning process, particularly to find ways to mesh the differing goals and perspectives of each group in a mutually satisfying way. Using Paulo Freire's words, hooks (1994) expresses the underlying philosophy of the Detroit COPC:

Authentic help means that all who are involved help each other mutually, growing together in the common effort to understand the reality which they seek to transform. Only through such praxis—in which those who help and those who are being helped help each other simultaneously—can the act of helping become free from the distortion in which the helper dominates the helped (54).

The refinement of the conception of COPC, observation of the correlates with successful projects, and efforts to resolve difficulties in less successful projects have shown that a COPC that achieves the goals articulated above should have a much more profound effect on the university than has apparently been considered

(Meetings 1995, 1996). In turn, the most successful COPC ultimately depends on major changes in the university.

This article is itself the outcome of experiential learning of faculty involved as mediators of community and student learning, bringing together reflection and action (Freire 1996, 68). In the next section, we provide background on the Detroit COPC. The two major sections of the article that follow look at the dilemmas, first, in achieving the goal of enriching students' education and, second, in practicing community-driven, community-based planning from within a university. Each major section poses recommendations for rethinking the pedagogy and practice of community-based planning from a university faculty perspective.

In this article, we examine the university experience and implications for the university in a COPC partnership. We do not analyze the community experience. Evaluation of what the COPC partnership accomplishes in communities is a rich subject that scholars are beginning to address, often in collaboration with community partners (for example, Lieber and Pinsker 1997).

■ THE DETROIT COPC

The Detroit Community Outreach Partnership Center is a joint effort of the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, and Wayne State University. Each university works with an alliance of neighborhood organizations. The University of Michigan's partner is the Detroit Eastside Community Collaborative (DECC), whose members are 17 community development corporations, comprehensive housing development organizations, and nonprofit housing corporations working on the city's Eastside, an area that includes about 40 percent of the city's land area and about 370,000 people (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1993). The DECC organizations work on housing development, land use, open-space reuse, and industrial and commercial development as well as on related topics that arise in connection with these issues, such as traffic circulation and environmental justice. DECC formed six years ago to facilitate the organizations' cooperation on issues of common concern and to build the capacity of member organizations. The leaders of many of the organizations felt their individual efforts to encourage economic development would be more effective if they took the perspective of the Eastside as a whole rather than the perspective of each neighborhood. When the Detroit COPC formed, DECC had bylaws and a statement of the organization's goals. Wayne County had paid for a consultant to prepare an industrial development plan for the Eastside for DECC, but the DECC members found the plan unsatisfactory. Among DECC's members, most had no paid staff or only one staff person.

Faculty-student teams work with community leaders and their constituents to carry out the COPC work. A community development coordinator works with faculty and with leaders of community organizations to identify needs, to match these with faculty-student teams anywhere in the university, to

facilitate the interaction, and to advance emerging opportunities for projects. Because of the direction of DECC and its members, the community organizations' needs call principally for work from law, architecture, urban planning, landscape architecture, natural resources planning, public policy, and business; participating students are usually enrolled in graduate programs. The teams take many forms—independent studies supervised by a single faculty member; project-focused, clinical courses; design studios; assignments within courses; internships monitored by faculty; and master's theses.

The leaders of community organizations communicate their needs to the community development coordinator and faculty either through meetings set up to solicit their views or through more informal interaction. The community development coordinator and faculty prepare a list of projects for the DECC board to discuss and approve. Each project has a designated community advisory committee. The community development coordinator and faculty members seek to assure that the committee and the community it represents are involved extensively throughout every project.

This structure promised to bring considerable university resources to bear on community-defined projects. Faculty and students could spend most of their time teaching and learning while integrating community projects into curricula across campus. The intention was for the Detroit COPC work to tap into existing teaching and learning activities and to build on the university's teaching mission without asking for additional work from faculty and staff, who are already frantically busy. Smaller scale efforts had convinced many faculty that this could be successful.

Many indicators point to the Detroit COPC's success. The COPC is integrated into the university's major educational function. Faculty-student teams have undertaken a large number of projects in a short time, and they have built on each others' work so that multiple aspects of an organization's needs are addressed. For instance, an urban planning course did inventory work, case study background investigation, and a preliminary site plan for a housing development in the Detroit Empowerment Zone; a graduate architecture studio followed up with designs for energy-efficient housing; law students are working with the community organization and developer to negotiate and draft agreements between the community organization and partners in the housing construction project; and urban planning students did a preliminary feasibility study for new commercial development to complement the housing and developed a plan for strengthening housing in an adjacent area to help that neighborhood benefit from the new development. Community organizations are implementing projects based on work of faculty-student teams; the collaborative style of the work assured that the results addressed important priorities of the community organizations. DECC itself is a stronger collaboration than it was, with four working committees, newly acquired nonprofit status, and a strategic planning process underway.

Within the university, stronger ties exist among graduate programs where faculty and students work on DECC projects, and the continued existence of COPC is guaranteed by the strong commitment to this work from faculty and from administrators who have taken note of the work, helped by the enthusiasm expressed by the mayor of Detroit and Empowerment Zone administrators as well as by the community leaders with whom COPC has worked.

What the COPC has revealed, however, is that, on the university side, this effort is more complicated than initially envisioned and involves transformations in the university's way of working. The straightforward interaction foreseen was not simple at all. COPC has raised fundamental new issues on the campus because of the depth and breadth of the relationship the HUD funding made possible with Detroit communities. Issues now confronted did not appear as important with the previous small-scale, ad hoc efforts (Vakil, Marans, and Feldt 1990).

Literature on the relationship between universities and the community falls generally within three main trends—conservative, liberal, and radical. Although it helps to place the COPC effort in perspective, this literature does not aid an understanding of what work through COPC entails. One view, the “conservative” one, sees the university as a resource to and beneficiary of corporate research and development goals. This view is a 1980s response to a rightward trend in national political ideology and to a more recent call for privatization, volunteerism, and market solutions to social problems (Teather 1982; Cresson 1983). The view promotes the university as a source of direct technology transfer to private industry and as a source of service to government agencies engaged in promoting economic development (Spilkins 1982). Planning educators have criticized the conservative model, particularly the ways the ideals of community service have played out in practice through vehicles like COPC (Allen and Palmer 1975).

Alternatively, a “liberal” view of community-university relationships presumes that governments and academic institutions share similar goals for social improvement. These goals include increasing citizen empowerment and informing policies that address social ills such as poverty, racism, and sexism (Rapkin 1969). The view also focuses on reducing the potential for social conflict by promoting empowered and participatory citizenship and by facilitating public discourse and consensus building (Wofford 1968). This view promotes bringing the university into the collective social project begun with the Great Society. Unlike the conservative view, the liberal model challenges the university to develop effective and engaged citizens.

A third, “radical,” approach sees the universities as agents of an oppressive society. Radical proponents of university-community collaboration seek to democratize society by democratizing one of its most powerful institutions, the university. Explicitly oppositional, this view arose at its earliest

in response to university involvement in military and defense-related research (Bennett 1986; OECD 1982). The radical position on community-university relationships also responds to the physical encroachment of universities into the often low-income communities that surround them (Price 1973).

This literature leaves unexamined, however, the problematic interactions of university people with leaders and residents of low-income communities and does not consider how the interaction might create tensions and bring change within universities, either by accident or by design. It does not consider the internal structures that shape university actors' behaviors toward community leaders and residents, and is therefore not especially helpful in understanding the difficulties and the opportunities present in COPC efforts.

Further, the literature on COPC-like endeavors did not prepare us for the issues we would confront. Much of the literature on learning through community service focuses on students' cognition, self fulfillment, and empowerment (Markus, Howard, and King 1993; Kupiec 1993). The function of community-based projects, however, is the development of students' ability to work, for instance, as a planner, lawyer, or landscape architect (Peattie 1969; Checkoway and Cahill 1981). The research tends also to neglect the importance of assessing how students' activities can be useful to community people (Kupiec 1993; Kolb 1984; Bies 1996; Kraft 1996). As a critic of this perspective states, “Overemphasis on the server and underemphasis on the remediation of the root causes of need...translate to a form of oppression” (Maybach 1996, 230). Other articles do demonstrate how useful student projects can be for communities, but the work tends to speak to an audience not yet convinced of this, ignoring the dilemmas that arise in community-based teaching or how these difficulties can be overcome (Reardon 1994; Graham 1996). As others involved in COPC-related projects at the University of Michigan and elsewhere have begun to articulate, the challenges in making COPC projects meet the needs of both students and community people are considerable (Grese 1995; Sutton 1993; Reardon 1993, 1996).²

This paper adds to the emerging body of thought about how COPC efforts can enrich both student education and community-based planning and development. Further, the paper suggests that work through COPC can begin to transform parts of the university in ways not foreseen by any of the three major views on the role of the university in relation to communities.

■ LEARNING THROUGH COMMUNITY SERVICE

Student learning through community service in the Detroit COPC has exposed a major clash of culture between the university way of operating and the way community organizations function. This clash occurs on at least three dimensions: the customary mode of work, commitment to social change, and socio-political positions defined by the

“multiplex” identities (Rosaldo 1993, 182) of each participant including student/working-adult relations, university-community relations, and relations of race, class, and gender.

Differences in Mode of Work

Students and faculty at the University of Michigan are acculturated to a merit system, power relations, and a set of priorities that bear no relation to community development work. Graduate students are admitted to the University of Michigan with strong academic records as reflected in undergraduate grade point averages and graduate record examinations and with cogent, well-argued statements of purpose. In many classes, students earn grades for their ability to learn from reading and writing and their ability to dissect an assignment and deliver work that is logically constructed, empirically based, and on time. Students tend to receive lower grades when they take the risk of redefining an assignment in a way they consider more suitable or when they choose a direction that leads to unforeseen problems and they cannot complete the work on time. Course evaluation forms designed by a central university office assess the extent to which the professor kept the course to a preset schedule, clearly defined the assignments, and specifically defined the grading criteria in advance. Students tend to give high ratings to courses that are structured with very clear definitions of the assignments and the grading criteria, conforming to the norms they have known since they were undergraduates.

Students and faculty operate under a “patriarchal contract,” an implicit agreement with “emphasis on a top-down, high-control orientation” (Block 1991, 22). Faculty assert authority and students willingly submit and are not responsible for taking their own initiative. The professor decides the content, style, and pace of the course and judges the merit of students’ work. Students learn that “right” and “wrong” answers exist and perceive how they should do the work by watching their professors’ reactions. Many students, conditioned by years under a reward system based on grades, continue to focus on grades and assiduously try to do what they perceive the professor wants. Work that is directly related to the determination of a grade becomes the highest priority. Less willing to conform, hooks (1994) notes her professors’ reactions to deviations from this relationship: “Nonconformity on our part was viewed...as...defiance aimed at masking inferiority or substandard work” (4).

Professors encourage a style of student writing that is as lengthy as needed to deal satisfactorily with the subject, is direct but follows the rules of good writing, enhances subtleties, and requires a reader’s extended attention. Frequently, the students’ writing most rewarded is that closest to the style of writing for scholarly publication.

Students and faculty work in semester-long units of time.

During exam periods students tend to drop all other work. During breaks between semesters and during mid-semester vacations, many students behave as if no university-related obligations have a claim on their time.

Community development work does not resemble this university approach to work. Projects’ goals and content change frequently because community conditions and leadership change; relationships between the community organization and other organizations evolve; funds become available or disappear; and crises arise in other areas of the community organization’s functions. Furthermore, the trajectory through these complicated and changeable situations is impossible to prescribe at every step. These are real projects, and students’ experiences replicate conditions in professional practice where projects can be developed in a variety of ways. Neither faculty nor students can specifically define the work at the start of the semester and expect it to be stable until they complete the project.

The faculty member cannot define in detail the work required for the project, cannot say exactly what will constitute excellent work in advance, and cannot dictate the direction of the class even if he or she might like to do so (Checkoway and Cahill 1981). He or she can develop “scope of services” statements with the community leaders in advance, can provide students with examples of content and process that have constituted successful work in the past, can articulate the differences between this kind of course and the usual university course, and can draw on greater experience in community work to help in framing and re-framing the issues. The faculty member, however, is no longer the primary authority. The views of the community partners are more important than the professor’s, but different members of the community do not agree on the best approaches. No right answer exists any longer; many answers have more pros than cons, but no perfect solution is possible. Students have to accept leadership in working with the professor and community people to define and redefine their tasks and to produce work that is useful.

Many of the community partners or their constituents are not accustomed to learning most of what they know from reading, writing, and attending classes. They often learn more from talking with people, visiting a place, and seeing pictures than from reading and writing. A written report from a student group may be useful but not useful enough to preclude the students’ developing a video or a guided tour of projects in another city, for instance, as the product for the community organization. When community leaders, like any busy people, receive a written report, they want to get the main points in few minutes of reading; they do not want a “college paper.” Subtleties and details are rarely important. Bullet points are clearer than crafted sentences.

The timing of community organizations’ work has no relation to the university’s semesters. Community leaders’ most frequent complaint about working with students is

that the semester does not fit their needs. One community leader said that she felt as if the students had just gotten started when they left for the break between semesters. As Peattie (1969) stated, "At the end of the semester, the course may be over, but, more likely than not, the project is anything but over" (53).

The differences in style of work create tension for many students. When projects change, students often have trouble continuing to work or believing that their work will be useful. Uncomfortable in a situation where the professor is not the only authority, some students ask repeatedly whose opinion matters most. Some react by rejecting faculty opinion entirely and seeking to identify an individual community authority, an effort to return to the certainty of one judge. Others are angry at the professor for not telling them what to do. Students often have trouble hearing their community partners ask them for products in unfamiliar forms and have trouble believing they can deliver alternative kinds of products. When one community partner asked several times for detailed plans for bus tours of successful community-based housing redevelopment in other cities in the region, tours she could use as an organizing tool in her community, students concurred but could not even remember the assignment several months later. Many students do less work than they should for a variety of reasons. Some become immobilized in defining what they will do; the clearly defined tasks of another course may take priority; they state that anything they do is wasted as project needs change. Unable to adjust to their partners' needs, students may drop the project when exam period starts regardless of the community people's schedule, and following their accustomed work pattern, they hold important information and data until the end of the semester or the completion of a final report instead of delivering the needed information as quickly as possible.

A major role for the faculty member is to facilitate the students' adjustment to a different culture, one that resembles the world of work much more than the world of school, but this does not necessarily get accomplished in a single class. The result is that the semester can end with unsatisfactory projects for the community partners and with angry, alienated students. Furthermore, finding good ways of facilitating this adjustment is difficult for faculty because the course is unlike other courses that faculty teach. This calls for different types of techniques, learned through considerable practice over years in such courses. Some of these include skills in small group facilitation and skills in reflecting on and learning from implicit theories of action that underlie the behavior of students, faculty, and community partners (Schön 1987). Faculty assume the pedagogically unfamiliar role of resource person or "coach" (Schön 1987) during the work but then must assign a grade at the end of the course, a fact that hinders the faculty effort to move away from the usual university way of operating.

The Detroit COPC success stories are revealing. Frequently the students who become most committed to working with their community partners and who produce the most useful work are the students who have been less successful in other courses in the curriculum. They have been less acculturated to the university approach to work and less concerned about their grades; they are also able to adapt to a different style of work quickly. One student group began the COPC-related course with little idea of how to do the work, but they became outstanding community planners through a process of trying approaches and revising to find better ones. They did not expect to find "right" answers. At the same time, the students who had excelled in other classes communicated repeatedly (through written peer evaluation and verbally) that they felt their classmates had few insights to contribute; the university meritocracy interfered with their learning from others. This outcome suggests that other courses in the curriculum reinforce skills quite different from those needed for work as an effective planner, an issue discussed in more detail below.

Commitment to Social Change

Students enter educational programs with differing degrees of concern about social change. Many urban planning students at the University of Michigan, for instance, hope to find jobs with planning consulting firms, private developers, or suburban planning agencies. Fewer want jobs in an urban community organization or in a poor neighborhood anywhere. One-half of the students enrolled in the urban planning program in 1995-1996 had cited concerns about the poor and about big city neighborhoods in the statements of purpose they wrote for admission to the program. Their interests reflect those of the profession. In other programs, the proportion committed to community change was even smaller. In the business school, only about 5 percent of the students apply for jobs between their first and second years that involve community development work. In the law school, students in the clinical course in community development law are quick to say that they are taking the clinic because it will be so useful to them to have had the experience with such transactions when they seek jobs in corporations.

Although the University of Michigan is a diverse institution with many people committed to social change, the overall corporate interests of the institution reinforce a lack of concern for social justice. Although this is not a universal or necessary condition, as other faculty state, "The University fosters competitive, professionally-oriented goals; social interest goals are not primary" (Barreto et al. 1995, 130; Sutton 1993).

Faculty who teach the courses associated with the Detroit COPC have a strong commitment to social change, and their departments and schools have backed their commitment to the extent that they provide such courses. In the

Urban and Regional Planning Program, an integrative field experience or a “capstone” fieldwork course is required. The faculty decided a decade ago that the major course for fulfilling the requirement would involve work with Detroit neighborhood organizations (Vakil, Marans, and Feldt 1990, 62). The COPC projects focus on low-income neighborhoods, and every project involves questions of social change and equity.

The result, however, is that many students come into the capstone urban planning course with no special interest in the projects required. In the fall of 1995, half had not expressed interest in city neighborhood problems. Many in all COPC-related classes are not predisposed to want to confront issues of social equity or inclusive planning practice.

“Multiplex” Identities and Confused Roles

Students enter projects that involve learning through community service with the principal self-identification as “students.” Many behave as if they are unaware that they have many other overlapping identities that affect the way they are perceived, the way they respond to community leaders and their constituents, and the ideas they can contribute. Students have little power in the university, but they are representatives, in community members’ eyes, of the university as an institution, which has considerably more power than small community organizations. Differences in identities between students and community members based on class, race, and gender further confuse the roles and positions of all members of the student-faculty-community team, and are expressed in complex and difficult power dynamics that can disrupt both the learning experience and the effectiveness of the work with the community organization.

Renato Rosaldo termed this situation “multiplex communities” with “a plurality of partially disjunctive, partially overlapping communities that crisscross between” groups interacting with each other (Rosaldo 1993, 182). Applied to community development planning, his views imply that an enlightened planner “as a positioned subject, grasps certain human phenomena better than others. He or she occupies a position or structural location and observes with a particular angle of vision.... The notion of position also refers to how life experiences both enable and inhibit particular kinds of insight.” Faculty and community leaders and their constituents “are also positioned subjects who have a distinctive mix of insight and blindness” (Rosaldo 1993, 19). Such role ambiguity means difficulties in relationships and requires self-conscious assessment of “subject position” in social power structures (Rosaldo 1993, 19ff, 187).

The ambiguous relationship between planners and their community clients is more difficult when the planners are students, as yet not aware themselves of the multiplex components of their identities as planners. Students

attempt, through their community work, to become professional planners, and this transitional status makes their identities confusing. Student conduct in community planning settings is conditioned by that ambiguity, and their past schooling has not necessarily prepared them well for this new role as community planner.

Race, class, and gender differences between the university and the community populations exacerbate these ambiguities. The University of Michigan continues to improve in reflecting the American population in race and gender, with a student population that is about 25 percent people of color and half women. In 1995-1996, 20 percent of the urban planning students were classified as minorities by the university’s definitions; only 6 percent were African American. The students come primarily from middle-class backgrounds. On the other hand, Detroit is about 75 percent African American, and poorer neighborhoods are often more than 90 percent African American. Almost 40 percent of residents over 25 years old do not have high school diplomas. Median household income in Detroit was \$18,740 in 1989, slightly more than half the median household income for the three-county metropolitan area. In Empowerment Zone neighborhoods where many of the Detroit COPC projects occur, median household income often was below \$10,000 in 1989 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1993).

The majority of students participating in the Detroit COPC projects are white. Most, although not all, have lived in homogeneous communities. Student teams, often without African Americans, work with community organizations that have predominantly African-American staffs and constituents. Every encounter between students and community leaders and their constituents is therefore imbued with the history of racism in the United States, made more salient by the class differences between students and many community residents.

Although students are usually aware of this history, they are not necessarily self-conscious about their own subject positions in relation to that history. They are often reluctant to discuss race, perhaps because they presume that their personal commitments against racism obviate such a discussion or because they project their benign experiences with issues of race as universal realities and do not see the issue as important.

The power relations implicit in their conduct are, therefore, often invisible to students. For example, when one group of students led a community meeting, their informal dress carried meanings that reflected historical disrespect of whites toward blacks. The norm in Detroit is for leaders of community meetings to dress formally. Students say that their informal dress projects friendliness and unpretentiousness, and they intend no disrespect. In another example, students in one group included information in their presentation that was already known to their community partner, communicating to the community the historical relationships in which whites patronize African Americans and dismiss local capacity for analysis and insight. Another student, who was working half-

time with the organization and therefore more aware of the context, attended the presentation and was horrified by what he perceived as condescension. The students' educational training led them to present everything they had learned about the subject, in an authoritative way, with no prior understanding that such a style in this setting would appear arrogant and dismissive. The students were also excited about what they learned, and perhaps naively thought that if they had just learned something, everyone else was just learning it also.

Even when students are sensitive to racial issues, they are not necessarily prepared for the relationships their behavior communicates and the fact that good will and effort do not protect them from attributed roles in a racist society. A student group that included half men and half women, of whom one man and one woman were Asian American and one man was African American, planned how to avoid accidentally communicating any race or gender superiority as they facilitated a working session with an entirely African-American group. When the leaders of the organization learned just before the meeting that the first student to speak would be the African-American man, they joked individually to the students and the faculty about the "front man," as if the talented African-American student had no other reason to speak. The students were shocked and disconcerted and had great trouble regaining their confidence in carrying the meeting forward; five months later the students still recalled this as a searing, painful experience.

Class and gender issues also arise frequently in student-faculty-community teams. For example, a student prepared a presentation to a community partner where she discussed the way a design would add to the "prestige" of a housing development, unaware of or insensitive to the insult implicit in such an assessment of the community's aspiration. Another student included pictures of Princeton, New Jersey, in a presentation illustrating principles of good commercial design for city neighborhoods, and one group ran out of time to take photographs of playlots in Detroit so decided to use pictures from Ann Arbor, a community with considerably more resources and a much more affluent population. In both of these cases, students were unaware of the class implications of their comparisons and fell into the trap of presuming universal applicability of their own experiences. The problem was not the comparative analysis of cross-class settings, but the lack of a class analysis in their assessment of the applicability of models in resource-rich environments to disinvested communities and in their decisions about how to communicate those models. Although the Ann Arbor playlot's layout could have been in Detroit, the backdrop of large, well-maintained houses undermined an argument that it was a useful example.

These relationships within student-faculty-community teams are complex, and, as Rosaldo (1993, 186-189) notes, cannot be easily treated as dichotomous and unilateral power relationships. For example, a staff member of a community organization used his relative power as a man and as an

experienced working adult to dismiss the authority of the women students. He appeared to feel his expertise and his job were questioned by his supervisor's asking the students to work with him. In every encounter, he subtly communicated to the students that they were "girls" or "just students." The students responded with repeated crises of confidence, expressing concern that they did not know how their analysis would benefit the community organization when the staff already knew everything. The students also often returned to familiar gender roles (which they did not do in the university setting), such as giggling and discussing personal issues in community meetings. Neither the faculty, the supervisor, the staff member, nor the students were able to devise strategies to address the problem, seriously handicapping both the students' learning and the usefulness of their work for the community organization.

Many dimensions of the clash of university and community culture occur at the same time, making the tensions more difficult to resolve. The women students in the previous example were also having an especially difficult time moving out of the usual structure of university learning. Neither the gender issues nor the problem of working in a structure very different from a university classroom were fully resolved.

Again, a Detroit COPC success is revealing. An African-American and an African student navigated the differences in class and national culture between themselves and the almost entirely African-American community residents with the help of a strong community organizer, who kept them in frequent contact with community people and helped them to understand community process. The intense commitment of the residents to neighborhood improvement galvanized the students to do outstanding work on their project and to go beyond the assigned work to join the annual "Clean Sweep" day to haul away trash with the residents. Although class differences were important, the students' advantage in not also needing to work on differences of race may have helped them to bridge the differences between themselves and the community (see also, Thomas 1996, 179).

As these examples suggest, effective pedagogy in these settings requires processes and techniques for addressing complex relationships in an integrated way. Rosaldo states that one "should work from one position and try to imagine (or consult with others who occupy) the other" (Rosaldo 1993, 188f). The community-university partnership requires careful, and ongoing, examination of the ways that the complex subject positions of students, faculty, and community members are manifested in the conduct of the project.

Improving Education through Community Service

The encounter between two different cultures in the Detroit COPC requires innovative approaches to teaching. Several alternative approaches are possible to enable students and community to benefit more.

One alternative is to decide that this experience is not open to all students (Checkoway and Cahill 1981; Peattie 1969). A COPC director from elsewhere in the country said, "We control which students can do this kind of work. We don't let everyone participate." Another said, "We never, never have this kind of work in a required course" (Meetings 1995, 1996). If a major goal is education, however, as it needs to be if community work is to be an integral part of the university's mission, faculty responsibility should be to enable anyone who wishes to participate in such a project to do so with supervision and some rules to follow. In urban planning, the necessity of professional training to include a "workshop" or field experience makes screening out students inappropriate.

A second possible change is to bring more traditional academic structure into courses that focus on COPC projects. At the extreme, the faculty member defines and directs the work so closely that the project often becomes the professor's with assistance from students. In the Detroit COPC experience, these are the kinds of projects where the clash of cultures is least evident. However, only a few community projects can fit such a prescribed form, and in a field like urban planning, students need the experience of giving form to a project themselves, learning to tolerate the uncertainty and the changes, and beginning to understand the artistry of planning in an actual community setting (Schön 1987). Learning to deal with a different work culture, especially one that resembles many work situations in urban planning, is important.

A third way to reduce the harmful effects of the culture clash is to bring about change at the margin of the COPC project courses. One effort could be to introduce Detroit, its neighborhoods, and its planning context to students from the moment they enter a program so that by the time they work in the community setting on a project, the city and its neighborhoods are familiar. International students have asked for this kind of curriculum repeatedly; American citizens at the University of Michigan are often "foreigners" in big city neighborhoods, too. Faculty and staff are undertaking a campus-wide effort to provide this kind of background in the newly established Center for Learning through Community Service through training modules on entering a community, multicultural sensitivity, the history and context of Detroit, and other topics. This approach might help to reduce the amount students have to learn about the city context as project-oriented courses begin and may help to sensitize them about the importance of race in the metropolitan area.

Finally, and most importantly, because the clash of different approaches to work is such a barrier to students' learning and to the delivery of useful products, the COPC experience implies that different pedagogical styles need to be incorporated into other courses that students take earlier in the curriculum.³ In this pedagogy the professor is not

merely the person who conveys facts and ideas, nor is the professor the sole authority or gatekeeper of information in the classroom. The professor is the more experienced professional who can facilitate the students' learning how to bring many fragmented strands of understanding and skill, along with elements not yet learned, into a complex plan conceived in a complicated planning process. The students can draw on their experiences to discover their capacity to act as professionals.

Such a pedagogic change would eventually require commitment of many faculty. Courses would need to emphasize students' development of critical thinking skills rather than students' synthesis of other people's truths. Faculty and students would need to try to apply principles of learning from reflection about action and experience (Freire 1996) in the majority of classes. Even so, these courses remain embedded in a university culture that adheres to a different model, of professors as authorities who convey information and knowledge, often growing out of disciplinary approaches that ignore many aspects of complex community issues. This means that any courses that introduce such approaches will also confront a clash of cultures for professors and students. Professors who see the prospect of low enrollments and poor course evaluations are not interested in trying to introduce such a new model to their courses. As bell hooks stated, "I had to surrender my need for immediate affirmation of successful teaching ... and accept that students might not appreciate the value of a certain standpoint or process straightaway" (hooks 1994, 42).

This alternative of bringing new forms of pedagogy into many more courses is to move in the direction opposite that of restricting these kinds of courses to a few electives or allowing only some students to enroll. Indeed, faculty efforts in some classes to teach only a self-selected group of students or to provide a more traditionally structured class can undermine more generalized efforts to adopt an approach to learning from reflection on experience rather than through communication from an authority.

If the last alternative were adopted, many faculty would need to change the way they teach and would experience the hard work and the uncertainty that involves, and universities would have to respond with support and faculty development. Currently the discomfort and tension in a course working on community projects is focused only on the faculty who teach the course, and faculty burnout is common. As a faculty member from public policy stated, faculty participants need help in figuring out how to teach these kinds of courses so that students benefit more, the community organizations gain more, and the strain on faculty is not so great.

If the final alternative were adopted, what specific measures would facilitate the transition to a different pedagogy and a different kind of urban planning curriculum? The most effective approaches and the best specific measures would differ among different planning programs. One approach is to use student dissatisfaction with core

courses, usually present to some degree, to initiate student-faculty reform of the core and to connect the early core courses more directly to the fieldwork courses (Schön 1987). A second possible approach is for faculty who are committed to changing their courses to work together to support each other with ideas about how to implement such an effort (Saunders 1996). Because each faculty member teaches several courses, the curriculum impact can be major when even a few faculty change their courses and style of teaching. A third approach could be for faculty who teach courses where students work with community partners to form a seminar to reflect on ways to strengthen teaching and to help each other in implementing changes. Finally, faculty and students could form a “praxis” seminar where students working in a range of community settings have an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and learn more from them (Reardon et al. 1993; Reardon 1995).

■ COMMUNITY CAPACITY-BUILDING

The goal of the COPC program nationally is to facilitate university work with community-based organizations in providing useful assistance on projects those organizations need. The work of student-faculty-community teams is intended to strengthen community organizations’ capacity to bring about positive and autonomous development in their neighborhoods. The interaction should lead to problem solving on the community side and, ultimately, should facilitate positive organizational change and neighborhood development.

The capacity-building approach to development focuses on planner responses to requests by community organizations for assistance in developing their own ability to control their physical, economic, and social development. Although capacity-based planning recognizes problems such as poverty, crime, hopelessness, and inadequate housing and is motivated by a commitment to transform these, the *planning* effort is focused on identifying and building upon strengths already existing in the neighborhood, including organizational base, individual skills, social and kinship networks, and social supports (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993). Capacity-building approaches acknowledge that people who have borne the burden of cycles of economic disinvestment are well practiced in developing strategies to survive in the face of such changes (Córdova et al. forthcoming). The task of capacity building is to assist communities in drawing on their assets, generated as survival strategies, to develop ways that increase their power to develop their communities and improve their quality of life (Elson 1992).

The position of University of Michigan students and faculty in the Detroit COPC projects at first seems inconsistent with such aims and with the belief in local expertise. The purpose of the Detroit COPC is to empower Detroit’s community organizations to build their development capacity, yet the agents of that assistance are outsiders with

fundamentally different social interests and styles of work. As Rosaldo (1993) argues, social criticism (and, by extension, enlightened planning) can be undertaken from either an insider or outsider position, but the subject positions of both insiders and outsiders (and the power relationships between them) must be critically assessed for either approach to be legitimate and credible. The test of the success of the pedagogy recommended in the previous section is the extent to which student-faculty-community teams can produce effective community strategies to counter disinvestment and external control and build community capacity.

The Detroit COPC efforts are designed to achieve community capacity building. As described earlier, the majority of control over the development and implementation of projects is in the hands of DECC, the community partner. In addition, students are expected to conduct their work in a collaborative way with community organization staff, community members, the community advisory committee, faculty, and fellow students. Furthermore, student-faculty-community teams undertake projects that contribute to what Kretzmann and McKnight (1993, 345) state are necessary stages of the community capacity-building process, including asset inventories conducted in collaboration with community organization staff, plans that project alternative land uses and increase community access to open space, and economic development and transportation strategies to increase community-based multipliers and channel undesirable activities out of the community.

Statements of faculty and students articulate the view that many share. For instance, a professor involved in COPC projects from landscape architecture wrote, “Ideally, students...learn to see their role in working with a community group as one of facilitator or guide rather than one of being the ‘expert.’ The community members themselves are the experts” (Grese 1995, 77). A student involved in Detroit COPC projects wrote, “[There is a] myth that graduate students are technical assistance providers.... Nor should it be assumed that students know how to best apply their expertise for the benefit of an organization.... Limited staff capacity [in a community development corporation] can not be interpreted as a lack of technical know-how” (Sirefman 1996, 40).

Nevertheless, facilitating capacity building through student-faculty-community teams is a difficult challenge. Principles of community-based planning provide useful insights for understanding the difficulties. Progressive community-based planning can take two major approaches: a community-driven planning approach or a consultant-driven planning approach. Both development models begin with the presumption that the best outcome for a community planning process is to enhance community control over local development. Neither assumes that decision making about community development is the sole terrain of the professional planner, and both reject the approach to

community development in which planners sell community residents solutions that they have predetermined to be good for the community. Both models seek to build community capacity to make decisions. The distinction between the two is in the role of the professional planner (or, in COPC, the planning team) in achieving this.

The consultant-driven model relies on enlightened planners to facilitate the planning process toward an end of eventual community control. In contrast, the community-driven model relies on organizational and technical expertise within the community to guide and control the planning process toward the goal of community development. Each model has strengths and weaknesses.

In the consultant-driven approach, expert lawyers, planners, architects, business analysts, and others lend their skills to community leaders to assess their capacities and design strategies to increase their capacity to do development. This model allows communities to acquire planning services efficiently and quickly. The efficiency carries with it the danger, however, that community leaders and residents will become dependent on professional planning services and will not acquire local development skills. Moreover, the consultant-driven model provides no explicit checks on the planner's interpretation of local conditions nor on the philosophical blind spots engendered by his or her perspective due to his or her subject position. This approach can easily cultivate the "cult of expertise" (Isaac 1996) where the determination of what constitutes legitimate knowledge, insight, and method rests solely with consultants, who come to serve as gatekeepers for admitting information, alternatives, and solutions into the planning process. Furthermore, when the community leaders and residents are left with the plan at the end of the process, they may not have had enough investment in the project to make it a high priority for implementation.

In the community-driven model, community-based organizations call upon the planners—in this case, the university's faculty, and students—to complement their own planning and development efforts. This model may be more effective in facilitating a long-term planning process generated by a community's priorities. Planners in the community-driven process work within an existing, locally controlled community mobilization effort that focuses on transforming the situation of community residents. Planners work as participants but not as leaders in the collective community-based process of improving local conditions (Medoff and Sklar 1994; Young 1988). The problem with the community-driven approach is that it requires more time and effort from the community organization and presupposes the existence of a broadly representative, active community base.

Although community organizations may sometimes need and prefer a consultant-driven process (especially to meet short-term, emergency needs), the long-term interest in

building capacity seems best served with a community-driven approach. Furthermore, the community-driven model is often more appropriate when students are the assistants because the model acknowledges the importance of collaborative learning and problem solving and implicitly recognizes that students are not yet ready to take on the mantle of "expert," even if that role were appropriate to the community organization's agenda. Students and faculty learn as much from the partnership experience as community members. Furthermore, although the learning and problem solving is collaborative, the process belongs to the community organization and contributes to building community power.

The issue of building capacity then becomes how to ensure that the university effort practices community-driven planning as often as possible in COPC work. The next section suggests explanations for why both models have emerged under the Detroit COPC despite the aim to adhere to the community-driven approach. That discussion is followed by suggestions for ways to increase the frequency of using community-driven processes in COPC projects.

The Consultant Model

Despite the goal of using community-based planning processes, Detroit COPC projects tend to be pushed toward the consultant-driven model. Indeed, the student quoted above was protesting what he saw as too much of a consultant-driven approach in the Detroit COPC (Sirefman 1996). Characteristics of the community partner; the orientation of the faculty involved; the relationships among students, faculty, community leaders, and community residents; and the nature of the specific projects determine the character of the university-community interaction. Certain characteristics drive the relationship toward the consultant-driven model.

A community-driven model presumes strong community-based organizations with explicit and active community organization strategies. In the words of the chronicler of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, "To forge an effective partnership, the community must be organized well enough to be an equal partner at the table, not a junior partner" (Medoff and Sklar 1994, 276). Thus far, the experience of the Detroit COPC has shown that a community-driven process succeeds well within an existing activist community movement.

Many community organizations, however, lack a strong community base. A director may not be strongly oriented toward community organizing and refrain from seeking the active participation of residents. The organization's activities may be driven by the demands of funders and other external sources of support. A director may know that different interests in the community cannot agree on direction and that all the time and resources available for a project will be consumed in managing conflict if representatives of all interests are involved. A church-based organi-

zation that has grown out of a congregation with few members who live in the neighborhood (and therefore few community roots) does not necessarily have the staff and time for community organizing. An organization growing out of a church with strong patriarchal leadership is not necessarily inclined to undertake grassroots efforts (Thomas and Blake 1996). Even when a church-based group is committed to a community-based approach, the church leadership may have trouble gaining legitimacy. For example, one small church-based organization in Detroit focused major efforts on community organizing and also rehabilitated three neighborhood houses in a short time; however, residents challenged the church members as outsiders, and the organization decided not to proceed with a process of planning the reuse of vacant lots in the neighborhood until the organization built more local support and participation.

The Detroit COPC successes have shown that a community-driven process can result when at least one community organization staff person commits substantial time to working with students, faculty, and community residents to involve the community. However, the lack of paid staff or the presence of only one paid staff member, who is responsible for managing the most pressing and essential projects, precludes the allocation of time for community organizing. Even when organizations in DECC have originated in the community, have a broad community base, and have devoted considerable energy and time to building roots in the community, the connections are difficult to maintain when limited staff resources are turned to other issues.

When community organizations do not have a strong community base, faculty and students have difficulty locating a broad-based community constituency. If they are interested in promoting community-driven development, they often confront the fact that the lack of organization staff for community organizing in general also limits the capacity of community leaders to mobilize resident support and participation in COPC team projects.

Although students and faculty can gain permission from community leaders to solicit more community participation, they do not have the legitimacy to lead efforts to create a community base for their organizational partners. The individuals will not be in the community long, do not know the neighborhoods well, have no socially legitimate position to speak for the community, and have other tasks to accomplish. Community organizations rarely ask students and faculty to do organizing work on their own, although they do ask for student interns to assist organizers employed by their organizations.⁴

The nature of the project has an important effect on whether the process can be community-driven. The student-faculty-community interaction needs to be centered on the highest priority projects in the community organizations.

Every organization has many projects on back burners, projects they have not had time to undertake. The work of student-faculty teams on such projects is not likely to get sufficient staff or resident commitment to make the process community-driven. In these cases, students' work is likely to be shelved after the project is over.

The technical nature of some of the planning tasks that community organizations need also tends to push relationships among community leaders, faculty, and students toward a consultant model. For example, work on legal issues—drafting contracts between community development corporations and developers, applying for IRC Sec. 501(c)(3) status, and writing bylaws—requires specific skills, acquired by the student technical assistants through educational investment. Even so, the experience of the law school faculty member in community organizing and in Detroit politics meant that the law students' projects were always focused as much as possible on meeting community-articulated needs with an awareness of the extent of community involvement. Architectural design problems and financial feasibility work also move toward the consultant model, not because the skills are not transferable, but rather because the methods of completing such tasks involve considerable solitary work independent of community interaction and input. In one Detroit COPC case, distance between the community partner and the student-faculty team may have resulted in the generation of more ideas for the community people to consider (an outcome that delighted the community partners) than would have emerged if the students' imaginations had been constrained by regularly communicated community views.

Community-university relations also tend toward the consultant-driven model when projects are small and short-term. Community participation takes time to arrange, and the conflict between university semester schedules and community organization schedules becomes greatest when meetings must occur quickly. This tendency is not inevitable, however. In landscape architecture courses associated with COPC, projects that are completed in only one-third of a semester have been successful in including considerable community input and participation in a community-driven approach (Grese 1995).

The character of the student-faculty team can also move the project toward a consultant-driven process. Faculty members are not traditionally rewarded in the university for intensive and time-consuming interaction with community-based practice (Reardon 1996; Peattie 1969). Practice that is rewarded in the tenure and promotion structure tends to be in projects in more traditional consultant-client relationships that involve making an initial determination of client needs, working with students to complete the task, and presenting a final product that reflects the ideas and creativity of the faculty member. Even if faculty members wish to engage in more collaborative problem solving,

student commitments and the time constraints of community partners often prevent this. Faculty members also may decide that community partners need distance from participating students if the students are not particularly interested in working hard, are not committed to the strengthening of city neighborhoods, or have personal styles that exacerbate race, class, and gender conflicts. Although faculty decisions to preserve distance between students and the community partners should be made jointly between the faculty and the community constituents, faculty have sometimes felt that discussing such problems with partners can prejudice them toward students whose work might improve.

Finally, the relationship between members of student-faculty-community planning teams is often conditioned by external forces outside the control of any participants. In the case of the Detroit COPC, which is funded primarily through HUD, federal mandates and exigencies have shaped the Detroit COPC relationship despite the intent of COPC program guidelines and staff. "Tell us what specific, concrete development has resulted from your COPC work," the HUD program officers say, because they need to show the HUD administration and Congress that COPC is an important program that should continue. Community-driven, capacity-building is a long-term process, however, and specific development projects are difficult to produce in a short time unless the organizational capacity already existed before the project began.

A Community-Driven Approach

Bringing projects closer to a community-driven model may increase the experiential learning on both the community and the university sides and lead to greater building of capacity in the community. The Detroit COPC experience suggests several approaches that university faculty and staff might take to move toward a more community-driven process.

One alternative is to work only with organizations that have characteristics that make community-driven projects possible. Such organizations are already well organized and experienced in working with outside planning assistance. The director and staff have developed sufficient organizational capacity and community base to serve as credible representatives of resident interests, and they are able to direct student work on a range of high-priority projects based on internally derived goals and objectives. The community leaders and their constituents have sufficient confidence and power to make effective use of students who come from a variety of backgrounds and who possess a variety of attitudes and work styles.

This approach is appealing because the likelihood is high of a successful learning experience for students and a capacity-building experience for the community organization. The likelihood of generating planning products that

are useful to the community is also high. The problem with this approach, however, is that it denies community planning assistance to organizations that are perhaps most in need of it. Working only with well-organized and well-funded groups can reinforce stratification and unequal power within communities and sends the wrong message to students about the priorities for community-based practice. Part of the purpose of COPC partnerships is for universities to contribute to the elimination of poverty and transformation of inequitable systems. This mandate requires the possibility of partnerships with organizations that are starting up, lack the budget for staff, or have not yet managed to build a community base.

A second possible direction is to develop more techniques to aid community organizations whose leaders want to increase community organizing around planning and development. This could be achieved by engaging students in the assets-inventory stage of capacity building, for instance. Although students do not do the actual community organizing, they contribute to the knowledge base on which such mobilization can rest. This work is necessarily preliminary and does not involve students in the formulation of plans; student analysis and data gathering become available to nascent community organizations. A major problem with this approach for urban planning education is that students need the experience of formulating plans, not just gathering background information.

Given the shortcomings of both of these approaches, the best solution may be to continue to work with a range of organizations that differ in their ability to lead community-driven planning processes. The emphasis on the university side should be to enable faculty to gain more skills in encouraging community-driven work and to promote pedagogical change that develops styles of learning and teaching between students and faculty that support community-driven approaches. Planning practice in a community-driven process relies on effective facilitation, communication, and consensus-building skills. These skills are best taught in situations that require them, either COPC-related courses or other applied work that extends experiential learning into more parts of the curriculum.

The provision of training workshops for faculty can help them bridge their own clash of cultures between community service and academic career interests. Not only would such workshops help faculty learn how to bring the most technical work to a level where community input and involvement is important and valued, but the official provision of such support for faculty development would create a constituency within the university to begin to reward such involvement. No matter what the professional ethos, virtually every subject is accessible if communicated well, every professional can learn better techniques for getting community participation, and every project can reflect community views and broaden community visions.

■ TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICE AND TRANSGRESSIVE TEACHING

The community-university relationships in the Detroit COPC point to both the dilemmas and the potential of bringing university students and faculty teams together with community leaders and residents to deal with community-defined problems. This paper has focused on the learning that has occurred at the University of Michigan through the Detroit COPC work. A similar inquiry could have examined how DECC and its member organizations have transformed themselves in the process of building a relationship with the university.

Although the Detroit COPC work remains confined to small parts of a very large university, the student-faculty-community work through the COPC has the potential to transform not only the structures of social injustice that produce poverty on Detroit's Eastside but also the traditional approaches to learning in the university. The tensions generated in the culture clash between the university and the community and the disappointments in seeing less capacity building in communities than would seem possible press faculty members to search for solutions. The status quo is too uncomfortable to leave alone. In university education, the COPC experience shows major gaps in planning education and reveals dysfunctional effects of the usual ways of teaching. The usual pedagogy reinforces power relationships and styles of work that interfere with students' learning as well as with community-based planning practice.

The implication is that the COPC work must bring about different kinds of teaching in more of the urban planning curriculum, or COPC will not survive as an integral part of the university mission and will instead become peripheral. "Teaching to transgress" (hooks 1994)—to cross the boundaries of inquiry usually imposed by the authority of the professor and to challenge the emphasis on synthesizing what other people think—implies a collaborative, case-based, experiential approach that is very different from the usual ways of teaching and learning in the university.

Such a pedagogy not only is consistent with community-driven, community-based planning, it reinforces processes where students, faculty, and community people learn together. It moves beyond hierarchies reinforced by the university toward a practice that sees the community people as experts and as partners. COPC work necessitates a self-consciousness about the "multiplex" identities that condition each individual's responses and perceptions.

The national COPC program was envisioned as a vehicle to make extensive university resources accessible for community-based development. However, if the experience of COPC's integration into the central teaching mission of the university creates the conditions to transform pedagogy,

the effects of COPC will be even more profound and long-lasting than anyone articulated in its founding. The incremental changes in planning pedagogy and practice can lead to large scale transformation in universities.

■ NOTES

1. The Detroit Community Outreach Partnership is a collaboration of Michigan State University, University of Michigan, and Wayne State University. Each university works with a different alliance of community-based organizations covering somewhat different geographic areas of the city. Each university has adopted a style of work most suited to its institutional setting and the needs of the community organization alliance. This paper looks only at the University of Michigan part of the Detroit COPC and focuses more heavily on the Urban and Regional Planning Program's part of the effort than on other parts. It also includes other community-based planning efforts, not explicitly part of the Detroit COPC.
2. For earlier analyses, see Peattie 1969; Checkoway and Cahill 1981.
3. For example, the core curriculum at the Community and Regional Planning Program at the University of New Mexico introduces case-based and community-project-oriented learning in all core courses, beginning with a case-based seminar in planning theory and process and a studio in planning communications techniques in the first semester of graduate study.
4. The experience of other COPCs has differed, and their efforts will yield lessons for others on how students and faculty can stimulate organizing efforts as outsiders (Reardon 1993; Meetings 1995, 1996).

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