December 2013

A Foot in Both Worlds

*Institutionalizing Progressive Community-Engaged
Research Centers within Universities*

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Executive Summary

The relationship between universities and the public varies in significant and important ways, depending on the university in question. Some universities enjoy long histories of collaboration with community groups and openly engage in public issues, while others have experienced periods of estrangement or isolation from groups and issues external to their campuses (Driscoll and Sandmann 2001). One of the hallmarks of "the modern engaged university," as described by Ernest Boyer (Boyer 1994), is the recognition and rewarding of community-based research done by university faculty.

Deconstructing the ivory tower is at the foundation of this study. However, more importantly and specifically we highlight how particular agents of change – research institutes within the university walls – are breaking the ivory tower mentality. We detail the successes and challenges of these centers to institutionalize themselves within the larger university structure and to illuminate the ways in which this institutionalization reciprocally impacts the university. Land-grant universities in the U.S. have a long history of addressing public needs through "hard science" research, but progressive community-engaged research centers (PCERCs) are a relatively new forum

through which community-engaged academic research is supported and conducted by universities. The progressive political orientation of PCERCs, including their work on policy change and community capacity building, sets them apart from more traditional university-based research centers.

Our criteria for these centers—that they are *both* progressive and community-engaged—highlight the originality of these types of institutions. Not only do they embody true progressive principles such as research focused on inequality and power structures, and how unequal power distribution exacerbates inequality; but the centers are also involved in local struggles for social and racial equality and often have direct partnerships with community-based organizations.

The recent proliferation of PCERCs on university campuses raises important questions regarding the sustainability of these centers. The challenges and strategies for founding, funding, and institutionalizing PCERCs teach us important lessons about the state of university-supported, community-engaged scholarship.

In this paper, we draw on a sample of interviews with 20 PCERC directors that focused on how

their centers came to be institutionalized at their universities. Their stories combined suggests a way in which PCERCs can and have overcome obstacles – namely, by embedding themselves within the university context and becoming more than temporary vehicles for individual faculty members' academic research. These success stories evince a commitment to the long-term struggle for social justice through the use of rigorous academic methods, university-based resources, and community collaboration. However, there are also tensions and threats that sometimes impede the institutionalization of PCERCs.

The paper is presented in seven sections. First, the founding of PCERCs on their respective campuses follow two general processes – centers were either conceived by university administrators or begun by individual scholars, each with their own implications for institutionalization. Those catalyzed by university administrators have a clearer connection to the university, bolstering its legitimacy and sustainability. Centers founded by an individual scholar faced an unsustainable long-term challenge: having an entire center's funding and ideological support based on one person's relationship. The way a center is founded determines much of its connection (or lack thereof) to the university, but it certainly does

not determine its long-term success or its impact on social change.

Second, the ways in which a center establishes its funding strategies correlates to how much autonomy it has. Centers that were able to run exclusively on "soft money" from sources external to the university enjoyed more freedom from their university-based administrative unit. Some center's financial reliance on departmental or college support severely limited their center's research agenda in both pragmatic and political ways. Either way, we found that funding levels and funding sources significantly influence a PCERC's institutionalization at a university.

Third, "theories of change"–or how PCERCs imagine and pursue community-engaged research—has a major effect on how a center is perceived and the way in which it decides to be a part of the change process. Two distinct forms of community engagement appear based on the sample: research focused on influencing policy, and research focused on building the capacity of community-based organizations. Both forms of praxis can be progressive and very much community engaged, as defined above. However, these two distinct research foci differ in important ways with regards to funding potential, incorporation of community input, and the desired end results of the research process.

Regardless of a center's approach to community engagement, the strengths of these two forms of praxis can be tapped to maximize the fundability of a center's research program and its benefits to extra-academic audiences.

Fourth, the ways that centers reach out and incorporate junior faculty increase institutionalization at its university. By having a diverse set of university-based affiliates and supporters—including administrators, faculty, and students— a center can leverage demands for space and support. The few centers in our study that reported success in affiliating other faculty members were explicitly interdisciplinary in their work. This creates a wide breadth of potential partners and projects for the center's work, and increases the departments from which to recruit faculty members on both an ad hoc and permanent basis.

Fifth, the ways that PCERCs engage with the university curriculum and how they may have a hand in changing it proves to be an important part of institutionalization. In addition, center involvement with university curriculum often extends well beyond in-class contributions. Graduate and undergraduate student employees can be found on the staff of many of the centers we spoke with.

To varying degrees, these students supplement the work of other full-time center staff, while getting valuable hands-on experience in their fields of study.

Sixth, the importance of center staffing structures is crucial to supporting PCERCs. Having the capacity of a large staff clearly increases center productivity and reach. However, the ways a university perceives this growth has its own set of challenges. For example, university administration may be averse to a center's growth or unwilling to dedicate space and other resources to research and other staff that are not faculty or graduate students. Yet it is undeniable that a center's growth is dependent on its staffing and given that more output leads ultimately to greater recognition, this can produce greater institutionalization.

Lastly, the role of center director is a key element to a PCERC's operation. This is especially noticeable when leadership transition takes place. For example, we spoke with a handful of directors who came to their center following a year or more of vacancy in their center's directorship. These directors felt like they had to "start from scratch" in building community partner relations, funding sources, and reestablishing credibility in the eyes of university

administration. The longer a center director remains at his or her center, the more stable the center's funding streams appear to be.

These seven sections cohere to tell a story of the ways that PCERCs have encountered and managed challenges to their institutionalization. What emerges are three ways that PCERCs can bolster their positions within university settings: 1) establish a national network of likeminded centers; 2) reach out and intentionally build "bench strength" by integrating junior faculty, and 3) develop a funding model that balances both university and external funding sources. At the same time, a fundamental shift needs to take place within the university that properly recognizes and rewards the kind of community-engaged scholarship that the PCERCs and their faculty are conducting.

As community members and advocacy groups continue pushing further towards justice, it is surely time for those in academia to recognize the power of partnerships and that a different type of academic is necessary; and a different type of university is possible.

Introduction

Starting from the relationship between universities and the public—and how the two interact with each other on furthering social/economic/racial progress—this paper explores a particular university-based structure that facilitates community-based research: progressive community-engaged research centers (PCERCs). The last 25 years have seen a marked rise in the number of university-based research centers that specialize in community-engaged research, as well as in the amount of funding that philanthropic organizations have dedicated to such centers(Stahler and Tash 1994). The impact of these centers, both internal and external to the university, has gone under-explored in existing literature on the community-university relationship.

Although there has been study on the role universities play in community building generally (Rubin 1998), specific research centers dedicated to this are a more recent formation. Community-engaged research centers have the potential to improve university-community relationships by providing spaces within the university where public concerns receive rigorous academic attention. PCERCs struggle to balance their externally focused work of relationship building and fundraising with the internal work of supporting university faculty conducting community-engaged research – most notably the challenge of helping junior faculty working towards tenure and promotion while also doing community-engaged research. Given the increasing expectation of peer reviewed publication and book writing among junior faculty, PCERCs might play an important role in getting community-engaged and policy-oriented academic work recognized and rewarded by universities.

Making use of a set of interviews with 20 center directors across the country, this paper highlights the processes through which PCERCs have come to be founded and sustained at their respective universities. We begin by articulating our definition of "progressive community-engaged research" and situate this definition relative to previous research on community-based academic research. Next, we describe how our data was collected and analyzed using interviews with directors from PCERCs.

The findings of our study encompass seven areas related to center institutionalization: how PCERCs are founded; center funding strategies; the different theories of change that inform the praxis of PCERCs; the ways that faculty members become affiliated; center involvement with the university

curriculum; how centers are staffed; and the difficulties of changes in center leadership. We finish with a set of recommendations for center directors, university administrators, philanthropic funding organizations, and individual faculty members who conduct community-engaged research without affiliation with a research center. We hope that our findings and analysis will facilitate the establishment and long-term institutionalization of PCERCs within the university context.

Project Overview

Defining Progressive Community-Engaged Research Centers (PCERCs)

Since the early 20th century, the mission statements of universities in the United States have centered around three commitments: the education of students, service to communities outside of the academy, and the production of rigorous academic research (Boyer 1990). Like the universities that house them, the research centers included in our study reflect a diversity of emphases across these three areas. Each area has been interpreted and shaped in unique ways depending on a university's institutional capacity, funding streams, political commitments, student population, community relationships, and religious affiliation. Nevertheless, the unifying characteristic among the centers in our sample is that their work, regardless of its shape and focus, is *both* "progressive" and "community-engaged." The criteria for our study and the focus on these unique centers are that they represent both of these components and merge them in the university realm. This section clarifies what we mean by these terms and how they relate to the work of the centers in our sample.

What is "Progressive Research"?

To assess the political quality of academic research, the historic moment in question and the expressed objectives of the research must be considered (Harvey 1990). A research agenda that seems radically leftist at one point in time might be shot through with oppressive ideologies in retrospect. Even research agendas from the same historical moment can be evaluated in divergent ways by different constituencies. We began this project with a uniform conceptualization of progressive research, based on previous theories of academic scholarship. After conducting and analyzing the 20 interviews with directors of PCERCs, it became clear that each center director had a unique definition of and praxis for progressive research. Our interviews underscored the difficulty in articulating an objective, universally agreed upon definition of *progressive research*. Despite the lack of consensus on the exact definition of "progressive" – a problem that will be familiar to anyone who has sat through a meeting of so-called "progressives" – we believe that progressive research maintains certain tenets that set it apart from other forms of academic engagement: 1) its presumptions about power distribution; 2) its approaches to research design and topic selection; and 3) its deliverable products.

First, progressive research is built on an understanding of an unequal distribution of power and limited opportunity for certain groups in society. Questioning this arrangement, exploring its impacts, and calling for change based on research findings, are fundamental elements of progressive research —and by extension, progressive research centers. This analysis of power is critical of oppressive and related forces such as racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, and capitalism. Progressive research's critical analysis is held in constant tension with the belief that institutions and social structure can be made better. Thus, a progressive research agenda critiques power and inequality, while recognizing partners and allies that might help change the status quo.

Second, stemming from its analysis of power and desire for change, progressive research involves a unique approach to research design and topic selection. Progressive research is less concerned with theoretical arguments and discipline-specific concepts than some traditional forms of academic research. The kinds of projects that progressive researchers undertake have the potential to inform time-sensitive policy at the local, regional, national, or sometimes international scale. This often involves simultaneous partnerships with community groups and political leaders, who may have

conflicting interests in the outcomes of the research project. Thus, progressive researchers have to work hard to maintain credibility in the eyes of multiple audiences and to balance their dual roles as rigorous knowledge producers and critics of inequality.

The third key element of progressive research involves the creation of research products that serve multiple purposes, which blends the research and service elements of the university mission. Progressive research, as produced by the centers in our study, blends traditional academic output – publication of book monographs or articles in elite academic journals – with research more broadly useful for advocates of desired social changes. The goal of both types of research, no matter the intended audience (academics, community residents, policy makers) is collaborative knowledge production that supports marginalized community's efforts to change the status quo and create a more

egalitarian future. Progressive researchers rarely openly lobby for political issues, but their research – whether published in an elite journal or summed up in a flashy policy report – can be used by organizations and groups to leverage egalitarian change.

What Makes "Community-Engaged Research" Different?

The idea of the "engaged university" is a relatively recent phenomenon (Boyer 1990). In the 1990's, universities began to reevaluate faculty roles and rewards to encourage scholarship that met both professional academic and public needs (Bridger and Alter 2006). As university representatives have developed working relationships with a host of community stakeholders, efforts have ranged from "mere" public relations strategies to community outreach programs to the kind of community-engaged research many PCERCs are now known for. While public relations efforts alone do not produce substantive community engagement, community outreach efforts have led to an explosion of service-learning programs, which have been integrated into the formal university curriculum at their respective institutions. These programs provide structured opportunities for student involvement in the provision of a variety of social services using student labor (Bringle and Hatcher 1996, 2000).

Service learning oriented research has some potential pitfalls from the perspective of community-engaged research ideals. It can serve to reinforce the hierarchy between academic and non-academic groups (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Raskoff 1994). It also creates barriers for community members to have a say in the provision of services (Greenwood, Whyte, and Harkavy 1993; Nyden 2003; Sandmann 2008). While not as plentiful as service learning programs, community engagement programs also exist at universities across the country. The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Labor Center, for example, began the Community Scholars Program in 1991, which brings together graduate students and local labor and community leaders. The program is a space in which community needs are defined, studied, and addressed in collaboration between university students and faculty and community members.

For these reasons we distinguish clearly between community outreach efforts like service learning programs and what we call "community-engaged research." This research, also sometimes called "capacity-building research," is predicated upon a more reciprocal and egalitarian model of relationships between collaborators (Maurrasse 2001). In addition to a different distribution of power among research partners, community-engaged research is focused on the production of long-term relationships and concrete benefits to community members, rather than a revolving door of transient student service provision. Further, such research is more geared towards collaboration with community members and groups to shape the general direction of research projects and the very research questions themselves. Community-engaged methodologies are predicated on practices that empower community organizations and community residents as equal partners in the endeavor.

Our project's definition of 'community-engaged research' draws from two bodies of literature: the history of land grant university research and participatory action research methodology. Higher education has long played an important role in meeting societal needs. The Morill Act of 1862 created the "land grant" university in the U.S., which was designed to provide practical education to the public, which would enhance the skills and productive capacity of farmers (Maurrasse 2001; Stahler and Tash 1994). Following World War II, many universities in major cities faced a growing gap between themselves and their local community, due to the flight of jobs and the middle-class to the suburbs. Student bodies grew more distinct from local residents, while university resources began to vastly outstrip local ones (Fasenfest and Grant 2005). In line with their initial mandate of public service, land grant universities expanded their service beyond education to include university-supported

research on urban inequality. However, direct attempts by universities to "help" their local communities often implicitly construct community members as victims who are in need of saving. This top-down approach to community-based research was eventually revised by individual academics.

Participatory action research (PAR) emerged in the academy in the 1960s as a strategy to address community problems. The "action" part of PAR expands the purpose of academic research beyond "just knowing" to a more applied focus aimed at social change. The "participation" aspect of PAR requires equal and collaborative participation of community members in the research process (Walter 2009). PAR involves the "community of interest" in the execution of the research project up to and including exploring research questions that emerge from the group itself (Walter 2009). PAR has been studied and theorized largely with the individual academic researcher as the unit of analysis. Our project adds to PAR literature by situating a version of it within the context of university-based research centers. As with our earlier definition of progressive research, PCERCs have varying degrees of subscription to the tenets of PAR. Multiple models for community engagement exist across our sample, which produce varying degrees of community involvement in the research process. That said, all PCERCs have some level of community advocacy, improvement, or empowerment as the goal of their research agenda, which justifies their classification as progressive, community-engaged centers. By including community members in the research and policy-making process, academic researchers can glean the most pressing issues and pragmatic solutions (Freudenberg, Pastor, and Israel 2011; Minkler et al. 2003).

Our definition of "community-engaged" research blends elements of participatory action research (PAR) and land grant university mandates. The PCERCs in our sample intentionally create spaces for community members and organizations to have their concerns addressed from within a university-supported context of academic rigor and expertise. As Burrell and Morgan (Burrell and Morgan 1979) note, change-oriented research seeks to empower underrepresented populations throughout the research process (see also Siraj-Blatchford 1995). To varying degrees, community-engaged scholars collaborate with and empower community members to shape the general direction of research projects and even the specific research questions. In contrast, traditional academic research often treats community partners paternalistically as objects of study, recruiters of research subjects, or as generally lacking the capacity to understand or address their community's problems (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Raskoff 1994).

Community-engaged research is designed to benefit the non-academic collaborators, in some way, during the course of the research process. Academic research is privileged in many ways, including having credibility in the eyes of funders and policy-makers. PCERCs often utilize this privilege on behalf of community groups and policy issues by designing, conducting, and disseminating research that is pertinent to non-academic publics. The centers in our sample frequently publish policy briefs and reports that make pragmatic recommendations that speak directly to the issues and concerns of extra-academic audiences. This dissemination system is faster and potentially more practical than traditional academic publication methods, but is still grounded in rigorous data collection and analysis. The dissemination of their research is an important part of how PCERCs attempt to produce tangible rewards for the communities that they collaborate with and do research within.

There is another component of community engagement that does not neatly fit into previous literature, but does seem to be characteristic of the centers we studied: because they are engaged, they are often more politically savvy. This is because in order to be effective, community-engaged researchers needs to be part of ongoing political discourse. Those university research centers that are more focused on, say, internal faculty development and discussion can tack much further to the left (and also much further in the direction of post-modern discourse, not exactly the stuff of popular communication). The seemingly pragmatic directions of many of the PCERCs we reviewed are not because they are any less progressive, but because they are seeking to project those progressive views into a public square in ways that move from oppositional critique to propositional change.

Understanding the Position of PCERCs in the University Setting

Why focus on research centers, rather than university administration, individual faculty, or academic departments? We see PCERCs as being located at the crossroads between the university administration, community groups/members, external funders, and individual faculty members pursuing progressive research agendas for several reasons. PCERCs are larger than one individual faculty member working alone on a single set of research questions. When interdisciplinary in nature, PCERCs bring the best thinking of multiple fields to bear upon a particular social problem or question. Finally, they can exist

relatively independently in a context of ever-shifting university winds. They are normally led by tenured senior faculty, they are usually responsible for procuring most, if not all, of their own funding, and their strong bonds with community partners further make them pillars that are not easy to uproot from the campus once institutionalized.

Figure 1 (see below) shows how our project conceptually situates PCERCs within the university structure, indicating both the multiple influences shaping PCERC activities and the multiple audiences PCERCs try to address. Each of the red arrows in Figure 1 represents a unique set of relationships and audiences that the center director, or her staff, must build to ensure their center's success. These kinds of activities are discussed in the findings section that follows. In this context, the directors of PCERCs are the ideal unit of analysis for our research project because of their unique perspective on the internal and external labor involved in institutionalizing PCERCs.

Figure 1. Situating PCERCs within a University
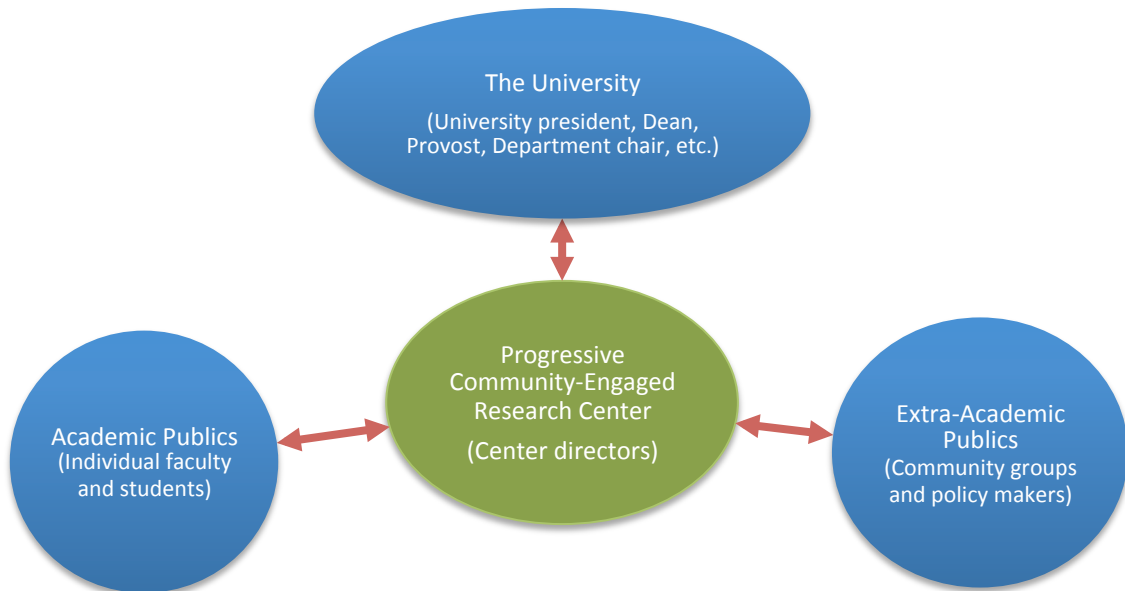
Methods

To create a sample of "progressive community-engaged research centers," we worked first from the personal and professional contacts among the faculty and staff at the University of Southern California's Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE), the institutional home for this project. (We should note that the faculty affiliated with PERE research projects come from USC, but also from UC Davis, UC Berkeley and Occidental College). Secondly, we worked from networks of such centers we found online and also contacted the staff of a few well-known PCERCs in different parts of the country to get their input on similar centers. The final list of prospective PCERCs included roughly 40 centers. We began contacting these centers by emailing the center director and the center's administrative staff with inquiries about their interest in and ability to be interviewed. Data for this project consists of transcribed and coded interview data from 20 research centers from across the country, hailing from both public and private institutions (see Appendix 1 for list of the centers included in the sample).

Findings: Navigating the Road to Institutionalization

Founding a PCERC

As explained above, a PCERC's power analysis, political ideology, and its rapport with community members are all constitutive components of a progressive community-engaged research agenda. But a research agenda requires personnel, financial support, space, and infrastructure if it is to materialize in impactful ways. Despite the importance of intangible elements, the physical existence of PCERCs on university campuses cannot be overlooked. A PCERC's initial location, and the level of university support it receives, can determine how successful a center will be on the long road toward institutionalization.

Each of the PCERCs in our study came to exist through a unique combination of resistance, negotiation, and cooperation from their home university. However, our analysis of the 20 unique founding stories revealed two general founding processes. In general, centers were conceived either by university administrators or were begun by individual scholars seeking a "home" for their particular research interests. Each general founding process has the potential to produce successful centers whose work is recognized and supported by their home university, while furthering progressive research either working on local community issues or impacting broader policy.

However, the process through which a center comes to exist on a university campus has important implications for its institutionalization and the kinds of challenges and resources it might encounter. Centers that were catalyzed by university administration were most often located at smaller, private universities whose mission statements include commitments to community engagement and social justice. These kinds of centers often enjoy a direct line to a high-ranking university official like a Dean or a university president, which bolsters their demands for internal support and recognition of their work. As one director from a private college explained:

> "So [my college] gets to say that it stands on four pillars. And one of those pillars is social justice. And there's huge debate about, you know, about what that means. But, I can raise my hand and say, "That's what we do! We are allowing you to say that it's more than a slogan.

And you're not going to talk to me about what I mean by 'social justice.' So it holds some feet to the fire. And it's what you say *you do. This is what we* actually *do. So let me do it!"*

Public universities also benefited from this approach in a related way. The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at the Ohio State University is an example of a center founded in commemoration of a top-level administrator's commitment to diversity. In honor of then-retiring OSU president William "Brit" Kirwan's lifelong commitment to diversity, higher-level administrators were tremendously active on the institute's behalf, providing a strong hand in the center's initial development and financial support. The Kirwan Institute is an excellent model of a center established by a substantial initial investment of a university that grew in practice and reputation under the guidance of john a. powell, its inaugural director. Under powell's leadership the center was able to diversify its funding base and garner a substantial amount of external funding through good relationships with foundations. The hybrid origin of strong university investment and substantial foundation funding set the center up to successfully achieve university institutionalization and the autonomy to pursue a progressive research agenda as it saw fit. By leveraging its hybrid origin, the Kirwan Institute enjoys a great balance of university and national recognition.

> Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity
> University: Ohio State University
> Director: Sharon Davies
> Year founded: 2003
>
> *The Kirwan Institute was founded by administrators from three separate schools at Ohio State as a space strategically dedicated to the multidisciplinary study of race and ethnicity and a tool to recruit and retain faculty of color. After receiving the support of former university president Brit Kirwan and launching a national search for a director, the Institute has since grown to achieve high levels of research autonomy through significant external funding. The university continues to support the Institute via funding, providing development personnel, and directing its staff to potential projects with external partners.*

There are potential challenges for PCERCs that were launched with strong university support. PCERCs that continue to depend substantially on continued university funding are vulnerable to sudden shifts in administrative personnel, university priorities, budgets or politics. Any or all of these changes might jeopardize a center's long-term institutionalization. The Cesar Chavez Institute at San Francisco State University, for example, has seen its budget and accountability unit shift dramatically over the past five years. These shifts led to the Institute not having a full-time director for two years and to having its support staff significantly reduced. In spite of these challenges, the Institute has rebounded and is thriving in the College of Ethnic Studies.

The majority of the centers in our sample originated from university interest in recruitment or retention of prominent community-engaged research scholars. As such they are often amenable to providing initial financial or infrastructural support to found a PCERC that enhances the existing research agenda of a prominent individual faculty member. Centers founded by individual faculty members initially mix university support with external funding, but later run exclusively on "soft money" awarded to center directors by sources outside of the university. Center directors who founded their own research center reported feeling high levels of autonomy in setting their center's research agenda.

There are two important challenges for institutionalizing PCERCs that were founded around an individual scholar. We call the first challenge *charismatic director syndrome*. While fruitful for leveraging initial university resources, having an entire center's funding and ideological support based on one person's relationship is not sustainable in the long-term. One director voiced this concern:

> *"I worry* a lot *about leadership sustainability in [our center]. I worry that too much of it is dependent upon me. Too much of it is dependent upon whatever reputation, relationship I have and whether that can be transferred to anybody else is unfortunately highly problematic. And I try and figure that out and try and work around that. And try and create, what we call, 'bench strength' by trying to bring people in. I try and bring people to as many, so-called "high level" meetings as I can. I try and get them introduced. I try and transfer relationships every now and then when I think it's appropriate. You know, but it's tough because…they want to see* me *at the meeting. They don't want to see my associate director. They want* me *doing it."*

Building around a charismatic founder or director remains a key factor in center longevity and institutionalization, but it is also fraught with uncertainty. Prominent faculty members are routinely recruited by other institutions and could take their social capital—their research expertise, their funding connections, and even some staff —with them.

Most centers in our sample have not yet had to undergo the dramatic transition that Kirwan faced when john a. powell left to lead the Haas Diversity Research Center at UC Berkeley in 2012—a shift fraught with challenges given the likelihood of some funder interest moving with him. But the few centers who weathered this particular storm seemed to rely on their established work and connections, university support, equally powerful new leadership, and ongoing past director involvement in maintaining the center. A handful of centers have a board of directors that include past center directors and serve

as a repository of institutional memory for the center. What really seems to matter is how well-rooted the center is within the university structure, as was the case with Kirwan, and what type of ongoing support and leadership is carried on through other higher-level staff in the center, usually the impact of associate directors at the faculty or staff level who remain and continue to guide the center.

The second challenge to institutionalizing PCERCs founded around individual scholars might best be called *research myopia*. When PCERCs are founded to support a single scholar's research agenda, the breadth of potential collaboration with other centers and scholars is limited. Centers built around a single director can be bound by disciplinary boundaries or methodological preference while PCERCs with broad themes like "social justice" or "racial inequality" facilitates interdisciplinary collaboration, diversity of funding sources and similarly interested researchers. The tension here is that *research myopia* may also be associated with strong leadership and direction, but bringing a PCERC from the margins to the center of a university requires the work of a larger professional staff and affiliations with a diverse, yet like-minded faculty and students (which we lift up in more detail below). It seems clear that working alongside the expertise of others and bringing in new dollars draws in university attention and support, and diversifies and strengthens constituencies of support on the campus itself.

Center Funding and Autonomy

Regardless of a PCERC's genesis, each center initially has a university-based administrative unit that oversees, with varying degrees of scrutiny, the center's work. The relationships between a PCERC and its university-based administrative unit can either limit or enable the political direction of its research agenda. Several center directors from our sample felt that the amount of autonomy their center received was directly related to their level of reliance on university funding. In other words, the centers that were able to run exclusively on "soft money" from sources external to the university enjoyed more freedom from their university-based administrative unit.

A handful of directors in our sample saw their center's financial reliance on departmental or college support as severely limiting their center's research agenda in both pragmatic and political ways. Centers that are tied closely to departments or colleges often require center directors and staff to teach courses or perform other university-based service. Almost all of the directors we spoke with had a dual appointment as both center director and member of an academic department. The directors of "soft money" centers, however, were able to buy down their course loads with external money, thus allowing them to devote more attention to the work of the center. However, not all PCERCs in our study shied away from their involvement with departments or curricular responsibilities. Some center directors from smaller liberal arts colleges did not have the capacity or the desire to become "soft money" centers. Rather than autonomy through external funding, the directors of some of these centers had successfully institutionalized their centers through a close synergy of their center's work and the mission of their host university (as will be discussed in detail later).

The research agendas of PCERCs at public universities are uniquely beholden to government officials and public interests, which occasionally gives rise to conflicts. Because tax dollars often support the research of public universities, these PCERCs occasionally have to justify their agendas to politicians who are politically opposed to the progressive nature of a center's research. A few directors from PCERCs at public universities described the challenge of defending a progressive political research agenda. In those cases, it was described that university administrations were sometimes hostile to the PCERC's work as it was seen to place the university in a negative light and was risking support from certain conservative and corporate interests. A PCERC at a public university defends the politics of its research agenda by circumventing internal support through external funding:

"The center runs on soft money—we are not university funded. We do have ongoing support from a university foundation source (offered as part of a retention package) that gives us significant support as long as we raise other money. This means that there is no state money in the center, but that we do have ongoing support. And that base of support allows us the ability to start new projects, innovate, and pursue interesting work that we care about."

PCERCs at public universities enjoy higher levels of financial support, relative to those at private universities, but their existence at a public university can bring increased visibility to extra-academic publics and politicians. Both funding levels and funding sources significantly influence a PCERC's institutionalization at a university. PCERCs receiving funding primarily from their home university, rather than external sources, typically have smaller budgets and can have their research curtailed by close supervision through university-based accountability practices. The centers in our sample with the largest annual budgets were from public universities and were run almost entirely on "soft money" from sources outside of the university. This funding model brings greater autonomy in setting a research agenda for a center, but does not appear to be related to long-term institutionalization at a university. The existence of "soft money" centers at a university is predicated on its continuous acquisition of external funding; no external funding, no center.

As the next section demonstrates, the available pools of external funding often influence the focus of a center. Because the research agendas of PCERCs share many similarities, there is often competition among centers for foundation funding, government contracts, and other external sources. This competition for soft money places extreme importance on the reputation and relationships of the center's director to ensure the financial stability of PCERCs.

Political Economy Research Institute (PERI)
University: University of Massachusetts, Amherst
Director: Gerald Epstein and Robert Pollin
Year founded: 1998

PERI was initially endowed through a seed grant and University of Massachusetts matching funds which together totaled totaling $3 million. Currently, PERI's economics research focused on human and ecological welfare (with a focus on macroeconomics, development, labor and environmental issues) is completely funded by external "soft money," including grants, contracts, and foundation funds. To make funding more diverse and sustainable, PERI also leases extra space in their building back to its home university.

Theories of Change and Praxis of Community Engagement among PCERCs

Our interviews with center directors revealed two distinct forms of community-engagement praxis among the PCERCs in our sample: research focused on influencing policy, and research focused on building the capacity of community-based organizations. Both forms of praxis are decidedly progressive and very much community-engaged, as defined above. However, these two distinct research foci differ in important ways with regards to funding potential, incorporation of community input, and the desired end results of the research process. A PCERC's research agenda can certainly encapsulate both forms of community engagement praxis; in fact, several of our most institutionalized centers did just that. These two approaches to community-engaged research can be thought of as two ends of a spectrum, upon which falls each PCERC in our sample.

> Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity
> University: University of Minnesota
> Director: Myron Orfield
> Year founded: 1993
>
> *Formerly known as the Institute on Race and Poverty, the Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity conducts research focused on how policy and legal frameworks affect measures of equity in U.S. metropolitan regions. Acting more as a policy center, the Institute worked with school districts on pro-integrative policies to reduce racial and income disparities, the Department of Housing and Urban Development on Fair Housing rules, and suburban governments on fiscal challenges previously thought to be limited to central cities. In New Jersey, it also helped author a school finance law and repeal the Regional Contribution Agreement, which allowed suburbs to buy-out half their affordable housing obligation. Not only does its work affect lawmakers, the Institute also builds relationships with policy-oriented community organizations typically focused on housing and transit.*

A center's specific approach to community engagement seemed to emerge from the research program of its director, which was informed by the director's professional experience, disciplinary affiliation, and relationships with funders. Center directors with backgrounds in law were much more likely to align their work with policy-oriented research. Other center directors that had experiences as community organizers or within non-profit organizations were more likely to take a capacity-building approach to their center's research. The experiences that center directors have prior to directing a PCERC informs how they think about their research, as well as the kinds of relationships and networks they can draw from in carrying out their center's research program. One of our respondents with a background running a non-profit organization described how this experience impacts his work as a center director:

> *"I was working [for] a non-profit organization throughout my graduate program that trains young people to do community action research, particularly low-income youth, immigrant youth, youth of color, and LGBT youth. And then when I finished my PhD, I actually ran that organization full-time for about 5 years before I then returned to the academic path. So I definitely was going back and forth across this line between research and social action. When I was running a non-profit, I was in the advocacy world but doing a lot of research and writing about it and training people to do research. And now that I'm in the academic world, I'm not really doing advocacy, but I'm trying to make all the work that we do, the work I do myself, and the work that [the Center] does, relevant for advocates and as participatory and cooperative as possible."*

This director went on to explain how s/he is constantly trying to make his/her center's work have "real impact" for community members and organizations.

The centers in our study that are explicitly focused on policy-oriented research appear to have larger annual budgets, wider geographic focus in their research, and larger staff sizes than centers focused on capacity building. The directors that explicitly identified their work as policy-focused claimed that this work was more attractive to funders such as philanthropic organizations because of its potential for more "concrete" impacts with a national scale. As one policy-focused director explained:

> *"I think a lot of people that are in a university setting are not very policy-oriented. You know, so if you're policy-oriented, people don't understand that. The policy world, the world of courts and legislatures, is really, really different than the academic life…That's the thing! If you can transcend that boundary, if you can have a foot in both worlds, you don't have any problems getting funding. Because you're so rare! People are coming to you all the time because there's nobody like you."*

This center director's belief about the fundability of policy-focused research was borne out by our sample; the five centers with the highest annual budgets were all focused on policy-relevant research.

Policy-focused centers and capacity-building centers diverged in more than just their levels of funding. Other differences include the kinds of groups and organizations that these two types of centers partner with, the ways that projects and issues are selected, and the end results produced by their research work. In our interviews, we asked each center director to describe their center's most successful project, or the project that best exemplifies the center's mission. The director of a center aimed at capacity building replied:

"It's hard to pick one, of course, but one that I was directing, and really has continued to throw off a lot of sparks, is this report that we put out on environmental justice. It's a great project, for a number of reasons. First, the collaboration with our community partners was really strong, starting from the fact that they invited us to do the work with them, as opposed to us saying, 'Hey we're doing some research and we want some community partners.' And then we were able to develop some very explicit principles of collaboration and actually formalized that into a Memorandum of Understanding, which connected us. It wasn't a contract per se, but it was something we signed and it said things like, we will disclose any funding, we will prioritize giving funding to the community, any information that we gather will be accessible to the community. Also that maps that the community develops themselves, as part of the project, are their property. The stuff we create as secondary data is our property. So the process stuff was good and then the work has taken off. I mean, it's gotten the attention of everyone from [other community groups and the government] to a whole range of funders. And then the groups themselves have been using it very actively in their own advocacy at the community scale, and with state and national type activities. So they've really taken this on, you know. They've owned it."

This excerpt exemplifies several aspects of capacity-building work at PCERCs. First, community partners had a good deal of opportunity to inform the research process. Second, the community partners had ownership over certain products that resulted from the research project. The center director suggests that the strength of this particular project is the fact that it impacted movement building, opened up future funding opportunities, and provided tangible resources for community groups to use in their ongoing work. Other similarly focused centers proudly described creating websites that allow community members to easily access data, hosting conferences that brought community groups and scholars together, and building networks of community groups to address local or regional concerns.

> Center for Regional Change
> University: University of California, Davis
> Director: Jonathon London
> Year founded: 2006
>
> *As a capacity building institute, the Center for Regional Change approaches its regional equity work with community participatory research methods. Its report "Land of Risk/ Land of Opportunity" on environmental and health risks facing San Joaquin Valley residents grew out of an invitation from community partners to collaborate. Collaboration principles were codified into a Memorandum of Understanding, which stated that the Center would disclose all project funding and any information the community developed themselves such as maps would be their property. Creating an environment for mutual learning and respect between community, researchers, and lawmakers where residents speak for themselves was one of the "action principles" borne out of the report. Later, community groups used the report data in their own advocacy efforts at the state and national level.*

The policy-focused centers expressed an equal concern for the lives of community members and the struggles of community groups and organizations. However, some important differences exist between policy-focused centers and capacity-building centers, with regards to partnership formation and desired outcomes.

The director of a policy-focused center outlined a project s/he saw as especially successful:

> *"Well, we've been working a lot with racially diverse school districts and drawing attention there and we've been influencing them a lot and helping them draw more racially diverse plans. And I think that we've really connected strongly with racially diverse suburbs all around the country and are getting ready for them, potentially to have a big impact on racial policy… We've also had a good effect with HUD in terms of the Fair Housing rules. We've worked on the Disparate Impact Rule and the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Rule and we've interacted with local jurisdictions about fair housing cases and helped to settle them. And those are big things. We had really good press coverage on this last report. We were getting called in from all over the country to interact with racially diverse suburbs, both about state and local integration plans, and also trying to think about how to encourage more regional thinking about affordable housing. So…it's had a big effect."*

While capacity-building centers typically partnered with local or regional groups and non-profit organizations, policy-focused centers often partnered with governmental agencies, national policy networks, and regional school boards. Policy-focused centers were often approached by these partners to have research done, rather than having to seek out and instigate relationships with community partners. The center directors at policy-focused centers generally measured the success of their research projects by the tangible impacts it has had on policies and laws.

Institute on Assets and Social Policy
University: Brandeis University
Director: Thomas Shapiro
Year founded: 2006

As a hybrid of both policy orientation and capacity building, the Institute on Assets and Social Policy's research focuses on the economic mobility of low- and moderate-income families, specifically vulnerable populations: families of color, the elderly, and the disabled. The Institute demonstrates its "hybrid center" nature as it forms coalitions with grassroots organizations and writes policy recommendations for the "grass tops" simultaneously. After successfully advocating for the creation of the Massachusetts Asset Development Commission within state government, the Institute wrote reports for the Commission that informed legislation now in place and financial literacy toolkits for homeless populations officially used throughout the state. The Institute also works with an engaged approach with community groups by imbedding asset building programs into their service delivery or becoming an evaluation partner to provide groups real time feedback.

Both forms of community engagement praxis can and are undertaken successfully by PCERCs. Regardless of a center's approach to community engagement, the strengths of these two forms of praxis can be tapped to maximize the fundability of a center's research program and its benefits to extra-academic audiences. Community capacity-building centers can and should work to make their research policy-relevant and may augment their funding sources and broaden their audience in the process. PCERCs provide a unique opportunity for community improvement and empowerment, and it is important for community partners to recognize their stake in the research programs of these centers. Thus, policy-focused PCERCs need to consciously create space for community groups to access and apply the results of their research. Using funding to publish user-friendly policy reports and to host open conferences are two ways that policy-oriented centers bring in community groups and members into its research programs.

Center Involvement with Faculty Members

A PCERC becomes more solidly institutionalized at its university when it increases the number of stakeholders in its work. By having a diverse set of university-based affiliates and supporters, including administrators, faculty, and students, a center can leverage demands for space and support. After analyzing our interviews with center directors, one of the clearest opportunities for PCERCs to improve is in the quantity and quality of junior faculty affiliation with their center. Progressive, community-engaged scholarship is carried out by individual faculty on campuses across the country. The research agendas of these academics are sometimes perfectly aligned with the work of a PCERC on their campus or within their city, but the solitary nature of traditional academic work disrupts their collaboration and communication. Several center directors told stories of unintentionally "toe stepping" on the community-engaged research of individual faculty members not affiliated with their center. One center director described such an experience of unintentional overlap:

> *"It's actually funny, we had just done a studio – my fall studio was on the economic impacts of a second campus – and the city was really grateful for that studio and called me up and said, "We want to see how we can keep doing these things." And I said,* 'That's great, let's have lunch and why don't I invite my colleagues [Bob, José, and Loretta]?' *And they said,* "Oh my gosh, you know [Loretta and José and Bob]?!" *They had no idea that we knew each*

other! Actually another funny story that's connected to this is that [Bob] started working with a city manager on the Community Benefits agreement and how they kind of outlined the terms. And he, the city manager, kept using this report and kept referring to this report on community benefits and what they should be, and [Bob] had no idea until we told him that this was actually our studio report! And we're in the same building! So we were working on the same project, literally, without knowing we were doing it."

By not having formalized and intentional faculty affiliation programs, PCERCs fail to maximize the progressive potential among the junior professoriate. Unaffiliated faculty might have pre-existing relationships with community groups that would complement the extant research agendas of PCERCs. In a similar vein, as we discuss in more detail below, institutionalization is challenged by founding director syndrome when junior faculty are not given the chance to become the associate directors who are later critical to leadership transitions like what occurred with the Kirwan Institute.

Some of the centers in our sample have been used by university administration to recruit senior faculty members, but outreach to junior faculty was largely absent. The few centers in our study that reported success in affiliating other faculty members were explicitly interdisciplinary in their work. This creates a wide breadth of potential partners and projects for the center's work, and increases the departments from which to recruit faculty members on both ad hoc and permanent bases. One center director explained his/her center's role in recruiting and retaining faculty of color due to its interdisciplinary focus:

"Well, university support has evolved over time. But I would say that a part of it was a belief in the importance of multi-disciplinary perspectives focused on a particular thing like race or ethnicity. But, also there was a pragmatic part of it that sought to not only put the University in a better competitive position to attract prospective faculty of color, but to retain them. Because what many of the colleges at our University found was that we might succeed in bringing faculty of color onto campus for a while, but they were very quickly identified by other universities and stolen away. And so one of the things that we thought might be a selling point for us would be the creation of this Center that enabled cross-disciplinary work that was centered on race and ethnicity."

This particular PCERC had been used to recruit both junior and senior faculty in departments as diverse as Sociology, Ethnic Studies, Education, and the Medical School. The center's multidisciplinary research agenda increased the number of faculty projects that could find temporary or permanent homes at the center.

The biggest challenge for PCERCs in affiliating junior faculty is the lack of recognition and reward for community-based research in the tenure and promotion process. Because PCERCs often do not prioritize publication in peer-reviewed academic journals or prestigious academic presses, junior faculty are left without a necessary component of their pre-tenure work. PCERCs can overcome this obstacle in one of two ways. The first would be to explicitly assist junior faculty members in getting formal academic publications from their community-engaged work. The second way would be to work to expand the tenure and promotion process to include equal recognition of alternative end products of community-engaged research.

Another obstacle to faculty affiliation concerns the flexibility of the center's research agenda. Centers that were founded to support the work of individual senior scholars, rather than by a university initiative, can be narrow in their theoretical or methodological scope. Even when center directors are intellectually broad personally, execution of research projects with multiple faculty members can be more time consuming and more difficult for staff used to a single primary investigator. Both limitations shrink the spaces for other community-engaged scholars to contribute to a PCERC's work.

Social Justice Institute
University: Case Western Reserve University
Director: Rhonda Y. Williams
Year founded: 2010

The Social Justice Institute (SJI) at Case Western Reserve was created in the context of university-wide strategic planning that resulted in social justice becoming one of four priority academic areas. The story of SJI's is one of faculty vision from the beginning. Founder and Director Rhonda Y. Williams, an African American history professor, at the time, was the chair of the President's Council on Minorities. She played a critical role not only advocating for diversity as both a core value and university strategic priority, but also suggested the university consider social justice as an academic priority area. Williams sought to build faculty support across the university – from law, humanities, social sciences, and medicine – to start the Institute. A team of faculty, including some from public health, engineering, and management, was later assembled by the Institute to develop a social justice minor program. Along with a curriculum team, a "social justice leadership team" with representation from across the university, provides guidance on projects. SJI is a relatively small center and relies on primarily volunteer support from faculty, as well as staff interested in the work at the University.

The Instructional Involvement of PCERCs

Nearly all of the center directors in our sample had to balance the heavy workload of directing their center with dual appointments in departments that required them to teach undergraduate or graduate courses. For directors of "soft money" PCERCs, the money that they receive for teaching is the only form of financial support that they receive from their university. Some PCERCs have bolstered their positions within their respective universities via the creation of academic majors or minors. In 2001, for example, the UCLA Labor Center successfully implemented a Labor Studies minor, which director Kent Wong and other Labor Center staff oversee. Similarly, the Urban Environment Policy Institute at Occidental College played a pivotal role in the establishment of the school's Urban and Environmental Policy major. Being attached to degree-awarding programs can create a long-term connection between the university and a PCERC, which further institutionalizes the center.

> Urban and Environmental Policy Institute
> University: Occidental College
> Director: Robert Gottlieb
> Year founded: 1999
>
> *The Urban & Environmental Policy Institute (UEPI) is directly connected to the Urban and Environmental Policy (UEP) major at Occidental College. UEPI provides opportunities for students to participate in applied research and community-engaged activities as the "research and advocacy program arm" of the major. UEPI also has an academic function, offering or participating in courses in community organizing, food justice, and transportation justice. The major, in addition, provides opportunities for students to take course credit for "campaign semester" during which students participate in campaigns in battleground states in election years. With its connection to college curriculum, both the UEP major and the UEPI can support and continually shape Occidental's mission of community engagement.*

An example of this comes from the Institute on Assets and Social Policy (IASP), in which the center director Thomas Shapiro and others implemented a social justice oriented PhD concentration in the strategic plan of the center and its involvement with the University. Given the expertise of the center director, the concentration took on the form of the PCERC's mission of focusing on assets and inequalities. The PhD students admitted to the University within this concentration also automatically receive paid work with the center, further creating a direct connection between university, student, and center. This relationship bolsters the connection of university curriculum to the center while simultaneously creating stakeholders (the graduate students) who rely on both entities. However, the PhD students are only paid by external funding obtained by the center, so it is somewhat reliant on the financial stability of the institute. But even without the funding, the concentration is in place and it has an explicit research home in the center.

Center involvement with the university curriculum often extends well beyond in-class contributions, as well. Graduate and undergraduate student employees can be found on the staff of many of the centers we spoke with. To varying degrees, these students supplement the work of other full-time center staff, while getting valuable hands-on experience in their fields of study. Center directors spoke of the importance of using the center as a place for students to gain training as community-based researchers and data analysts focusing on policy-relevant topics. By employing graduate and undergraduate students, as well as by overseeing studios and class projects from the university curriculum, PCERCs encompass all three pillars of the modern university: service, research and education.

Staffing a PCERC

Our sample includes PCERCs with as few as two staff members and as many as thirty-three. The organizational structure of the center imposes different types of demands on the center director's time. For example, larger centers with several support staff require the director to fill more of a managerial role, in addition to their work as a researcher. Center directors of smaller PCERCs do not need to manage large staff, but are required to actively attend to a wider range of work such as fundraising, community partner outreach, and overseeing all of the center's research projects. One of the directors of a small center described it as a "one-person show:"

> "I do all of our grant writing. . . I also manage all of the finances for our regular budgets, and also all of our grant budgets. I don't have a grant-person in house that manages that because we're too small. And because we're not a part of a department, we do not get those departmental services . . . and so that's a huge challenge for me to have to manage all of that. All personnel, any time somebody has to be hired, anytime someone has to be appointed, and in particular, managing who's getting paid how much off of which grant every month because we're piecing together multiple grants to pay soft money staff, it's very complicated. I also take care of the IRB work. And then, you know, I'm part of the dean's team of chairs and directors and we have to do all the interfacing with the dean for the center, and have to go to dean and directors meetings and then all of these things we have to go to for the university like program review. And all the compliance stuff. I do all of it."

The director of a center with a large staff described a similarly diverse set of demands, but with a greater emphasis on managing his/her employees. S/he explained the importance of knowing all facets of the center and overseeing the people that perform those tasks:

> *"You know I've had this job for so long that my role has changed quite dramatically over time. Changed both because the program of the Center has changed and because my own work has changed. One set of jobs I do which are largely managerial. I know the budget and funders of the Center and I make sure money comes in and budgets get approved and grants get expended, etc. There are also a set of issues around personnel, of course that the University generates, probably like most universities do. Whether it's how to move a raise or how to post a job. Again, we have an administrative person that really does that, but I'm the one who remembers the reasons we do things certain ways over time or helps develop a strategy on how to get something to happen. This is really oversight of organizational management and a little bit of University relations and some helping other projects with strategic and planning issues. Then I have a set of programs that are really my content area and more standard project management and planning and research in those areas."*

The above quote underscores another huge role of the center director: serving as the institutional memory for the center.

The need for dedicated grant writing and fundraising staff was expressed by several center directors, especially those of smaller PCERCs relying heavily on university funding. This work was typically done by center directors because external philanthropic funding is often research project-specific and cannot be effectively used to build center infrastructure or capacity. Having the capacity of a large staff very clearly increases center productivity and reach, however, how the University perceives this growth has its own set of challenges. For example, university administration may be averse to a center's growth, or of dedicating space and other resources, even if externally funded, to research and other staff that are not faculty or graduate students.

Yet it is undeniable that a center's growth is dependent on its staffing – and since more output leads ultimately to greater recognition, this can produce greater institutionalization. At the same time, there may be a size which is too big and "right-sizing" based on the mission and the institution is a challenge.

The Challenge of Leadership Transitions

Center directors that have been at their center for several years can provide stability through staff transitions, fluctuations in funding, and changing university demands. Conversely, new center directors reported struggling during the first year or two at their center. We spoke with a handful of directors who came to their center following a year or more of vacancy in their center's directorship. These directors felt like they had to "start from scratch" in building community partner relations, funding sources, and reestablishing credibility in the eyes of university administration. The director of a medium-sized center described the difficulties in reestablishing relationships with community partners:

> *"I basically had to start over because the previous Director was [from a different discipline], and worked on issues that were completely different from the kinds of things that I worked on. She worked on [similar issues as well] so some of her relationships I was able to pick right up on, but others of them, you know, I had to do a lot more of that work myself… But, yeah that was a very time consuming thing for me. For the first two years, I just spent so much time meeting people in the community and building that trust, but it was good."*

Another difficult task for new directors is establishing funding sources. Relationships with funders such as philanthropic organizations and government agencies are made and maintained throughout a center director's career. Thus, when a director departs a center, new funding sources and research agendas need to be developed by the incoming director. One director described how s/he managed this difficult transition:

> "So I needed to spend probably the first, oh maybe year or so, concentrating on sort of re-establishing some trust and confidence [with funders] because the departure was painful with funders and the University. There [was] a lot of disagreement around what needed to be done with funding and what shouldn't be done with funding and those kinds of messy issues when somebody leaves...After that period of time, the Institute now is the equivalent of about 9 FTE's, all of which, with the exception of about one-third of my time, are resourced or funded through grants and contracts that we've competitively won, if you will. Grant writing is pretty high stakes here because people's jobs are on the line."

The reputation and professional network of the center director is crucial for developing credibility with funders. For younger or less experienced center directors, navigating the ongoing pursuit of external funding can prove difficult. The longer a center director remains at his or her center, the more stable the center's funding streams appear to be. Several of our senior respondents reported rarely having difficulty in acquiring funding for their research projects, due to their personal history with certain funders and professional reputation in a particular field.

Conclusions:

The Future of University-Based Progressive Research Centers

This paper has tried to highlight the experience of what we think is a relatively new phenomenon: university-based but community-engaged progressive research centers (PCERCs). While university-community engagement is not new (there is the long experience of land-grant universities and a solid tradition of service-based learning) we think that PCERCs are unique in combining engagement with a focus on shifting power and policy through the use of rigorous research that makes its way into the public square. This is non-traditional research, particularly in its involvement of community members and a commitment to change—and the institutionalization of such centers is not a foregone conclusion.

This paper has reviewed a number of challenges to such institutionalization, including questions of funding, mission, and personnel. We have noted that a reliance on university funding can create stability but it also leads to less independence than when the center relies on external "soft" funds; on the other hand, "soft" is just what it sounds like and the constant scramble for resources can be especially taxing for smaller centers. On the mission side, some PCERCs focus on capacity building while others focus on policy change; either mission is valid but each requires different audiences, communications strategies, and measures of success. On the personnel side, centers can benefit from a strong, charismatic leader, but face the constant challenge of how to move beyond the research focus of a single individual, and create the mechanisms that can facilitate survival through leadership transitions. Of course, to paraphrase Marx, our purpose is not just to understand the world of PCERCs but, in fact, to change it.

In this case, change means institutionalization and we see a number of useful directions that PCERCs might take in coming years. The first is simply to come together as a community, recognizing similar structures and dilemmas and creating communication networks between PCERCs that go beyond the individual person-to-person relationships of center directors. One interesting effort in this direction is the Urban Research-Based Action Network (URBAN), a project launched by MIT's Community Innovators Lab (CoLab). This is meant to be a multi-disciplinary network of scholars and practitioners committed to the use of community-based research; it seems to involve more institutions than those that fit the PCERC category but it represents exactly the sort of direction needed. Similarly, the Haas Institute is

currently forming a national network that would engage PCERCs, key community-based organizations, and national advocacy groups.

We do not pretend to know which of these efforts will result in the best fit, but some form of ongoing communication would be beneficial. In particular, a network could be especially useful as a way for larger and more established centers to provide support and advice for smaller up-and-coming centers.

In addition, the larger centers could also act together to more clearly establish the "field" in the following ways: working together to represent themselves to the philanthropic and university worlds; creating conferences devoted to the work of these centers; and perhaps creating a new journal (which might highlight this sort of work, and also constitute a rigorous peer-reviewed setting in which junior researchers could gain credit and legitimacy for efforts that fit under this umbrella).

As for the centers themselves, we see the need to intentionally build "bench strength" in non-director faculty and institutional memory among both these faculty and center staff. The development of junior faculty is key for numerous reasons, among which is that the mark of a successful research center in campus terms generally involves the cultivation of such faculty. It is also crucial for leadership transitions, mostly because it is faculty and not research staff that can sustain a center over time.

At the same time, we have found that ongoing research staff can play a key role as a vital source of institutional memory, as a way to run the day-to-day operations, and as a way to maintain consistent training for graduate students. Many of these research centers operate more like labs in the natural sciences than the typical "lone wolf" research model typical in the social sciences and humanities, and this is a key contribution to their success and sustainability.

As for funding, centers should seek to negotiate a funds-matching program between donors and their university in order to raise institutional support even as they maintain independence. This will involve a combination of foundation and individual donor dollars. Philanthropic organizations would do well to fund specific occupational capacities (e.g. communications, grant writing, etc.), rather than just research projects to allow PCERCs to have stable and predictable funding streams to build upon. Several centers reported having to drastically and unexpectedly dismiss staff at the conclusion

of projects tied to philanthropic funding. We also think that a well-developed communications strategy could generate the interest of private donors (we noted that the Haas Institute, for example, has such support and that has allowed it to quickly take a leadership position in the field).

Finally, PCERCs gain strength and legitimacy by being situated in the university, but they will always be relatively weak in that setting unless there is a fundamental shift in the way universities recognize and reward community-engaged scholarship. Making change in the valuation of research will include ways to recruit, support, and retain junior faculty as well as the devotion of some organizational capital to reforming the tenure and promotion process, perhaps with the help of like-minded centers or allies on campus.

While achieving such a significant shift in university priorities and policies may seem like a steep climb, it is useful to consider the problems of inequality in power and voice that have motivated these research centers to come into being. Those issues are so important and so pressing that community-based organizations have devoted themselves to their own steep climb on the arc toward justice. They are suggesting that another future is necessary and another world is possible; surely, we who are often comfortably situated in secure employment with the time to contemplate big issues and run large datasets can recognize that another sort of academics is necessary and work to ensure that another sort of university is possible.

Appendix 1

List of Centers Included in the Sample

Name	University	Center Name
Timothy Bray	University of Texas – Dallas	Institute for Urban Policy Research
Marilyn Byrne	UC Berkeley	Warren Institute on Race, Ethnicity and Diversity
Karen Chapple	UC Berkeley	Center for Community Innovation
Sharon Davies	Ohio State University	The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity
Laura Dresser	University of Wisconsin – Madison	Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS)
Chris Edley	UC Berkeley	Warren Institute on Race, Ethnicity and Diversity
Gerald Epstein	UMass, Amherst	Political Economy Research Institute
Bob Gottlieb	Occidental College	Urban and Environmental Policy Institute
Janet Jakobsen	Columbia University	Barnard Center for Research on Women
Jonathan London	UC Davis	Center for Regional Change
Samuel Myers, Jr.	University of Minnesota	The Roy Wilkins Center for Human Relations and Social Justice
Myron Orfield	University of Minnesota	Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity
john powell	UC Berkeley	The Haas Diversity Research Center
Jason Reece	Ohio State University	The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity
Belinda Reyes	San Francisco State University	SFSU Cesar E. Chavez Institute
Lynda Sagrestano	University of Memphis	The Center on Research for Women
Thomas Shapiro	Brandeis University	Institute on Assets and Social Policy
Howard Wial	University of Illinois at Chicago	Center for Urban Economic Development
Rhonda Williams	Case Western Reserve University	Case Western Reserve University Social Justice Institute
Kent Wong	UCLA	The UCLA Center for Labor Research and Education

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