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Follow the money: Resource allocation and academic supremacy among community and university partners in Food Dignity

FoodDignity

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Abstract

A guiding principle in participatory action research collaborations is to strive for equity in relations between community and academic project partners. One promising way of assessing equity and power sharing in such partnerships is to trace and analyze financial resource allocation within them. This paper reports and assesses how nearly US\$5 million in grant funding was allocated and spent between community and academic partners in a research, extension, and education project called Food Dignity in the United States. Findings from

this analysis of extensive financial project records include that 36% of the funding was subawarded to the five community-based organization (CBO) partners, 40% supported the work of two university partners, and the remaining 24% was invested in developing and supporting the collaboration of many diverse partners on a wide range of project goals. Staff salary and fringe composed the single largest spending arena, making up about two-thirds of spending for CBOs and collaboration, and half for universities. However, had faculty salaries been paid from the grant, rather than by the partnering universities, then this component would have been

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Blue Mountain Associates; Feeding Laramie Valley; Whole Community Project; East New York Farms!; Dig Deep Farms; University of Wyoming, Cornell University, U.S. Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

much higher. Indirect costs and support for graduate students were the next-biggest categories in academic budgets, while CBOs received and spent zero dollars in these arenas. Although this project has received a national award for community-campus partnerships, we find that, even within a narrow lens of an individual community-university partnership, our allocations underinvested in the research expertise, administrative costs, and capacity development needs of the CBOs. Using a wider lens that encompasses the systemic, institutionalized inequities between community-based and university-based partners, we find that we produced and reproduced inequities in our monetary resource allocations in at least four main ways: employment conditions, institutional support, capacity development, and autonomy, including control over funding. We call these systemic inequities *academic supremacy* and close with several institutional and individual recommendations for how to begin undoing them.

Keywords

Food Dignity; Participatory Research; Academic Supremacy

Introduction

A guiding principle in participatory action research is to strive for equity—both in research partnerships and also, usually, in the outcomes of such partnerships. As outlined in community-based participatory research (CBPR) principles, this means facilitating “a collaborative, equitable partnership in all phases of the research, involving an empowering and power-sharing process that attends to social inequalities” (Israel, Eng, Schulz, & Parker, 2005, pp. 7–8).

One promising way of assessing equity and power sharing in such partnerships is to trace financial resource allocation. The allocation and distribution of funding, and the decision-making regarding how that funding should be allocated, may offer an empirically quantifiable indicator of power (in the Foucaultian sense of power being pervasive, circulating, and normalizing (Foucault,

1972/1980; 1975/1995)). Another potential benefit of allocation and spending analysis is to illuminate project leaders’ hypotheses, or bets, regarding which investments will best help them reach project goals and how well those bets pay off. Finally, if comparable spending data were available across multiple projects, then cross-project analyses of spending and outcomes might help to identify effective grant-spending strategies, benchmark equitable budget allocations in such partnerships, assess associations between partnership equity and project effectiveness, and increase accountability and transparency in publicly funded research. However, to our knowledge, no funded action research collaboration to date has published detailed financial data and analyses about its partnerships, in either the grey or peer-reviewed literature. In this paper, we¹ offer such financial data and analysis about how we budgeted and spent nearly US\$5 million, mostly over five years, in an action research and education partnership called Food Dignity. We also examine the implications for equity in community-academic research partnerships. In addition, Food Dignity’s community-university liaison, who is also the founder of one of the five CBOs partnering in the project, provides commentary and insight on our work from the standpoint of a community partner in two essays published in this issue (Woodsum 2018a, 2018b). As she illustrates, CBOs and university partners often experience the process and outcomes of these allocations very differently.

Literature Review

We found four peer-reviewed papers that share some empirical data about financial allocation processes or results in community-academic research project collaborations. Each paper presents very different forms of data, each with different goals, as outlined below. We also searched the grey literature but did not find any further additions to this tiny body of work.

One CBPR collaboration team outlines how it successfully apportioned both tasks and money for a cancer-prevention project among five partner

organizational and individual Food Dignity collaborators who participated in allocating and spending this money.

¹ The “we” in this paper specifically consists of the co-authors of this paper and, more abstractly, the larger “we” of the many

organizations (Gehlert et al., 2014). The authors describe a four-stage process of outlining the tasks their project would require, assessing the cost of completing each task, deciding which partners would do which tasks, and then drafting the budgets for each organization accordingly. Their goal was “eliminating institutionalized inequalities” (Gehlert et al., 2014, p. 561). They received assistance from their university partner’s research office in assessing the costs and renegotiated budgets after tasks were assigned and before reaching a final agreement. The paper does not share financial allocation data but focuses instead on how the budgets were developed as a suggestion for how to allocate funding equitably.

Another paper derives eight lessons from decades of collaborations to improve Native American health, including two specifically regarding financial allocations (Burhansstipanov, Christopher, & Schumacher, 2005). One of the lessons is to allocate budgets comparably among partner organizations. The authors share one formula used in their partnership where, after first allocating about US\$40,000 for administrative and data analysis costs to the primary grant-receiving organization, the rest of the funding is allocated equally. (Indirect costs are not mentioned explicitly.) The other financial lesson was to provide salaries, not just stipends, to Tribal partners and staff. The authors chide academics for asking community-based people to volunteer while academic-based people receive salaries, noting “this is inappropriate” (Burhansstipanov et al., 2005, p. 74).

A third paper provides some detailed spending and cost data from a subset of a budget for a collaboration between a university and an Alaska Native community. The collaboration investigated how to disseminate results from genetic research studies (Hoeft et al., 2014). The goal of this academic-authored paper is to “inform budget discussions in community-academic partnerships” (Hoeft et al., 2014, p. 263) by accounting in detail for US\$115,461 in project expenses. This amount represents about 18% of the US\$632,828 award (including indirect costs) from the project funder, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) (author calculations from Table 1 in the paper and from

the project’s public funding record [Ethics of dissemination, 2010]). The largest spending category that the authors report, by far, is on food and travel expenses for project meetings. These totaled 73% of the reported expense amount, or US\$85,500 (author calculations from Hoeft, p. 226). Another US\$25,238 was paid to community partners as honorariums. The authors tabulate the cost of academic-based people’s time spent on between-meeting communications (email, phone, and mail) as US\$4,825. They do not provide cost estimates for the likely much more substantial investments of academic time in travel and in-person meetings. They also qualitatively list opportunity costs, borne by community and academic-based partners, of participating in the collaboration. The authors note the importance of investing in the time and travel costs for face-to-face meetings in such collaborations, while providing sufficient community compensation for opportunity costs. They also note the importance of striving to shift academic institutional policies to reduce academic opportunity costs by valuing CBPR more.

Finally, a fourth paper assesses budget allocations to academic vs. community partner organizations across 49 CBPR projects funded by the NIH from 2005 to 2012, based on budget justifications submitted with each project proposal (Cain, Theurer, & Sehgal, 2014). When the authors were not certain of an allocation, they erred on the side of naming budget lines as community rather than as academic. They found that of the US\$139 million in total awarded amount (including direct and indirect costs), 68% of funds went to academic organizations and 30% went to community partners, with the remaining 2% unclear. Half (24) of the projects analyzed included an award or subaward to a CBO partner. Community financial shares were higher, on average, (35%) in those projects than for CBOs partners without awards or subawards, who received 22% of their average total project awards. Within the average project, with US\$2.8 million in funding, the authors also summarized average budget line allocations (e.g., for personnel, travel, indirect costs) for academic and community partners. In the average project, personnel costs represented the largest single budget

category for both academic and community partners, with 49% and 65% allocated for these expenses, respectively. For academic partners, indirect costs represented the second-largest budget category, constituting 43% of the total average budget; however, indirect costs composed only 7% of community partners' total budget (author calculations from data in Table 2, Cain et al., 2014, p. 143).²

All four of these papers discuss the importance of allocating funding more equitably between community and university partners. All four describe projects in which academic partners, rather than community partners, held and managed the grants. Of this limited empirical literature on the budgeting of community-academic partnerships, the papers by Cain et al. (2014) and Burhansstipanov et al. (2005) provide empirical reference points for actual community vs. academic partner allocations. Even though indirect costs make up a major proportion of funding for university partner research, the paper by Cain et al. (2014) is the only one to discuss indirect costs. Their work especially, and to some extent the paper by Hoeft et al. (2014), also provides some insight into intraproject allocations between expense category lines. Gehlert et al. (2014) is the only paper in this group to suggest a process for matching the scope of work in a project to the appropriate amount of funding.

A larger body of work discusses principles for equitable partnerships between community and academic institutions and individuals, including direct or indirect references to resource allocation specifically (Israel et al., 2005, pp. 7–9; Israel et al., 2003, pp. 59–70). For example, the goal of

“democratizing science by valuing communities as equal contributors to the knowledge production process” (Wallerstein & Duran, 2010, p. S44) could include valuing these contributions in financially equitable terms. However, academic authors have rarely been explicit about their resource-sharing practices. In one rare example of a specific mention of monetary allocations in the literature, it is about stipends paid by academic partners to community-based partners:

The potential for success of CBPR efforts may be enhanced if sufficient funds are allocated to pay stipends for community members' time and to absorb costs associated with their participation, such as child care, transportation, and meal expenses. Some analysts have suggested that community members be compensated for their time at the level of graduate student researchers as a further demonstration of respect for their contributions. (Minkler, Blackwell, Thompson, & Tamir, 2003, p. 1212)

Since then, approaches that use stipends as a means to pay community-based collaborators have come under fire as inequitable, especially when academic-based collaborators are receiving salaries, as in the Burhansstipanov et al. (2005) paper discussed above.

The professional association Community-Campus Partnerships for Health (CCPH) mentions resource allocation explicitly in its Principles of Partnership list—namely, that a real partnership “balances power among partners and enables

² In addition to paying direct costs of a project, some funders also cover “indirect costs” that grantees incur for general operations (e.g., building maintenance or rent, research review board services, internet service, heat) but that are difficult to calculate precisely enough to charge proportionately to a funder as a direct cost. If a funder does agree to pay indirect costs to grantees, it usually does so as a percentage of direct costs awarded. Grant-making foundations commonly pay a 10% indirect cost rate to grantees, though some pay none. U.S. federal funding agencies, such as the USDA and NIH, pay much higher indirect cost rates to grantee organizations that have individually negotiated an indirect cost rate with the federal government. The average indirect cost rate paid to

NIH awardee organizations is reported to be 53% (Ledford, 2014). Using the numbers reported in Cain, Theurer, & Sehgal (2014) for the 49 NIH-funded CBPR projects, it appears that the average university received indirect cost rates of 74.4% (paid on top of their direct cost awards) vs. 7.5% indirect cost rates paid to community partners (author calculations from data in Table 2, p. 143). The federal agencies generally will negotiate rates only with organizations that hold major amounts (\$10 million or more) in federal funding awards. Recently, they have become more systematic about suggesting a 10% *de minimis* indirect cost rate for organizations without a negotiated rate. In addition, exceptions to these rates are published by each agency.

resources among partners to be shared” (CCPH, n.d.). A subgroup of CCPH’s community-based research partners—the Community Network for Research Equity & Impact (CNREI)—has issued even more explicit guidance about resource allocation and overall equity in the research enterprise. Its agenda envisions not only equitable research partnerships with academic-based researchers, but also “a shared, balanced, and equal ownership stake in the decision-making system for the research enterprise at the federal, state, local and academic levels” (CNREI, 2013, p. 3) and that “community leaders and community-based organizations will be compensated at the same rate of pay for their time and expertise as academic partners” (p. 4). Of all the practices and principles in the literature, this CNREI guide is the most explicit about not only undoing internal financial inequities within projects, but also the institutionalized inequities between community and academic partners in the research enterprise.

This paper makes a significant empirical contribution to this limited literature about financial resource allocations and their implications in community-university research partnerships by analyzing and assessing spending in a community-university collaboration called Food Dignity using an institutional (in)equity lens.

Background and Setting

One of the policy successes of the now-defunct Community Food Security Coalition was to secure a line of funding from U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) for Community Food Projects, which aim to build community food systems and improving food security. The first annual request for applications (RFA) was in 1996. NIFA appointed Elizabeth Tuckermanty as the program officer for this funding stream. Over her first decade of overseeing Community Food Projects, Tuckermanty began to wish that more of the extensive experience and wisdom accumulating among community project leaders could be codified and disseminated (personal verbal communication to Porter, 2011). With this in mind, when NIFA was redesigning its Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) competitive grants

programs, she successfully advocated for and developed an RFA for “Improved Sustainable Food Systems to Reduce Hunger and Food Insecurity Domestically and Globally” whose purpose was to “develop research, education, and extension sustainable programs on local and regional food systems that will increase food security in disadvantaged U.S. communities and create viability in local economies” (USDA NIFA, 2010, pp. 11–12). Proposals were invited for “integrated” projects—that is, projects that blend research, extension, and education. Such projects could be awarded up to US\$5 million over five years, with multiple partners. NIFA expected to fund up to five projects. So that these projects would leverage the expertise of community-based work in these arenas, the RFA noted that “there are many regional and local sustainable food system programs across the country addressing food insecurity by developing small food economies in diverse ways” and required that “applications must explore best practices in these projects” (USDA NIFA, 2010, pp. 12).

When NIFA issued that call in early 2010, Porter was finishing a community nutrition doctorate at Cornell University and had accepted an assistant professor position at the University of Wyoming (UW), to start in the fall. She began drafting a proposal by drawing upon her academic studies and the mentorship of an experienced community organizer in Ithaca, E. Jemila Sequeira. Porter then invited five CBOs to collaborate: Blue Mountain Associates (BMA) in Wind River Indian Reservation; Feeding Laramie Valley (FLV) in Laramie, Wyoming; Whole Community Project (WCP) in Ithaca, New York; East New York Farms! (ENYF) in Brooklyn, New York; and Dig Deep Farms (DDF) in the Bay area of California. These invitations were largely cold-call contacts except for WCP, which Sequeira directed. In issuing these invitations, Porter considered geography (for variation and for travel-related practicality) and diversity of historical and institutional contexts. As described in the series of essays that open this special issue (Daftary-Steel, 2018; Niedeffer, 2018; Porter, Woodsum, & Hargraves, 2018; Sequeira, 2018; Sutter, 2018; Woodsum, 2018a), leaders of each of the five CBOs decided to collaborate on

the Food Dignity project proposal.

Academic collaborators included professors, research staff, and graduate students at UW, which was the primary grant holder, and at Cornell University. Porter also recruited a “think and do” tank called the Center for Popular Research, Education and Policy (C-PREP) to work as a liaison and support between community and academic partners and to assist the CBOs with research.

The final proposed plan included UW issuing subaward contracts to each of these seven partner organizations (ENYF, WCP, BMA, FLV, DDF, Cornell, and C-PREP), who would receive and manage their own budgets and scopes of work. Our two overarching goals, as stated in the proposal, were:

1. Identifying, developing, and evaluating scalable strategies for organizing sustainable community food systems for food security, in collaboration with communities facing food insecurity.
2. Expanding the capacity to catalyze, support, and research sustainable community food systems for food security in cooperative extension, CBOs, citizens living in low-income communities, and universities.

In June 2010, Porter was in the midst of moving from Ithaca, New York, to Laramie, Wyoming, while the UW research office submitted the team’s Food Dignity proposal to NIFA. Then, on a Friday afternoon in mid-September, Tuckermanty called to let her know that Food Dignity, as the “top rated” proposal, would be funded. We were ultimately awarded US\$4,978,700. We started officially in April 2011 and, with two no-cost extensions, officially ended in March 2018.

Methods

The primary data used in this paper include, for each partner organization, numbers related to budgets as originally laid out in the grant proposal, budgets as actually subawarded to partners, and actual spending recorded via accounting. These data were meticulously maintained throughout the project for practical and technical reasons, which

made them readily available for this analysis.

We examined our overall budget allocations to the organizational partners in four main forms: the five-year budgets originally proposed to NIFA in 2010, the revised budgets included in our annual continuation award proposals required by NIFA, our budgets as actually subawarded to each organization, and the financial reports of actual spending provided to UW by each CBO. For results about CBOs, we used subawarded funds for analyses because they were the most thorough and consistent accounts, and the spending reports to UW from each CBO generally were consistent with subaward line items and did not add any further detailed data. At UW, we had highly granular access to the university’s spending data, with a spreadsheet line for every individual expenditure. We coded each line, which yielded the main expenditure categories reported here—of staff, students, indirect costs, and “other.” Similarly, the project coordinator at Cornell, Suzanne Gervais, also categorized and reported their institutional spending data, using the same broad categories as UW, for inclusion in this study.

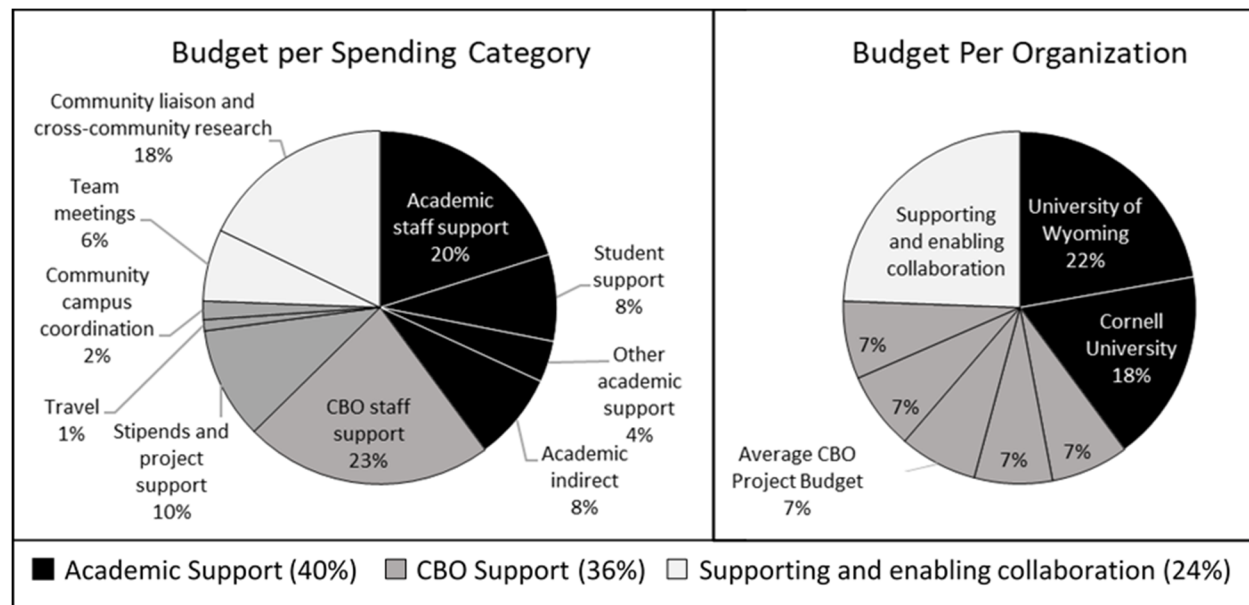
Finally, we consulted internal memos, emails, and field notes related to the Food Dignity project to help us confirm, contextualize, categorize, and explain budgeting and spending decisions as needed during analysis.

Results

We invested the nearly US\$5 million Food Dignity award in three main categories: about 36% to CBO support, 40% to academic support, and the remaining 24% to supporting and enabling collaboration among and between the organizations. Per capita, individual CBOs received *much* less of this pie, receiving 7.2% of the total amount each, while the universities received 18% to 22% each. Therefore, despite the fact that total allocations to academic support versus CBO support were similar (within 4%), numerous CBO partners reflected that the budget allocation did not feel equitable in part because the per-organization amounts were so much higher for academic organizations than CBOs (see Figure 1).

Allocations to the five CBOs were very similar, as were expenditures by each university. In all three

Figure 1: Food Dignity Spending of the US\$4,978,700 Budget, by Category, 2011–2018



main categories, staffing costs occupy the largest slices—about half for the universities and nearly two-thirds for the CBOs and for the collaboration category (via salary support for community liaison and cross-community research positions).

UW was the awardee and fiscal agent for the USDA NIFA funds. Each organizational partner then received subaward contracts from UW with associated budgets and scopes of work, which were all developed and agreed upon during the proposal development stage. Each sub-awardee organization had the authority to internally reallocate their funds as needed to most effectively meet that scope of work within federal allowable costs rules.

The sections below characterize the allocations awarded to the five CBO partners, the spending by the university partners, and the investments in collaboration among project partners.

CBO Budgets: US\$1.78 Million Total

Each CBO managed a budget of about US\$67,800 per year, on average, during the five-year Food Dignity project (Table 1). From the proposal stage onward, Porter called this the *community organizing support package*. These packages represented the bulk of our investments in the “extension” components of the project, which constituted supporting CBO action. Unusually, the RFA included

“implementation of community organizing” as an extension activity (USDA NIFA, 2010, p. 13). The CBO budgets also included lines for research support and a small amount for administration.

Porter proposed draft scopes and budgets to each CBO when preparing the proposal in 2010. Input from each led to some shifts in the plans and allocations ultimately submitted to USDA. For example, BMA wanted to redirect some of the support to founding a tribal farmers market; therefore, their “animator” line was specified for market management instead. ENYF suggested adding Photovoice to the overall research methods. The other CBOs agreed to this, and research materials and the community researcher lines were increased in the first and last years in each CBO budget to help account for that addition.

However, since the community organizing support package was flexible and would be shared as a subaward in the control of each CBO, the organizations mainly embraced the draft plan Porter floated with each, knowing that they could adjust it later as needed. Table 1 provides a summary of the average annual budget for each CBO’s community organizing support package.

A core research goal in Food Dignity was to analyze the CBOs’ use and assessment of this package as indicators of two things: One, their

Table 1. Average Annual Community Organizing Support Package Budget for 2011 to 2016, Subawarded to Five Community Organizations^a (all amounts in US\$)

Budget category	Average per CBO per year	Scope and purpose
Community organizer (salary and fringe)	\$26,600	For 50% of a full-time organizer to lead and manage the community organizing support package work and Food Dignity reporting and collaboration.
Community researchers (as salary and fringe or stipend)	\$12,900	For salary or stipends to compensate people working to answer community-driven research questions related to Food Dignity
Grant manager (salary and fringe)	\$5,800	When the proposed 10% for indirect costs was rejected by USDA, most CBOs chose to move that funding to this line as a direct cost.
Minigrants	\$6,000	CBOs designed and implemented how to award these, and to whom, to support citizen-led work to improve food security or sustainability in their communities.
Community animators (stipend)	\$2,800	For stipends to community leaders to assist with soliciting, supporting, and tracking minigrant-funded projects.
Steering committee (stipend)	\$3,000	Stipend and travel for community leaders, as convened by community organizer, to support and guide CBO work and to help design and implement the minigrant program.
Materials and supplies	\$3,500	For example, cameras for digital storytelling, laptops, refreshments for meetings, stationery.
Travel	\$2,000	Any travel related to the project, including for dissemination or capacity development (travel to annual project meetings was covered separately by UW's budget).
Leadership development funds	\$5,200	Piloted as a \$5,000 addition to the package in 2012 and then committed for 2013–2015 at \$7,000 per year per CBO.
Subtotal (not including community/campus coordination activities)	\$67,800	This is the average annual amount (excluding the two categories below) that each CBO partner managed, primarily via a subaward from UW, for Food Dignity work.
* Student internship programs (FLV and WCP only)	\$5,000	FLV is geographically close to UW, and WCP is close to Cornell and Ithaca College. Their scopes of work and budgets also included funding for supervising and/or paying student interns and for a small amount of time for a coordinator to participate in the development of university minors in sustainable food systems and to recruit, place, and support interns. Only FLV and WCP received these additional average amounts each year. Therefore, these numbers are averaged across only two organizations.
* Community/campus coordinator (FLV and WCP only)	\$3,400	
TOTAL	\$71,200	This is the average annual amount that each CBO partner managed, primarily via a subaward from UW for Food Dignity work with community-campus coordination activities averaged across all five organizations.

^a The five community-based organizations (CBOs) are Blue Mountain Association (BMA), Dig Deep Farm (DDF), East New York Farms! (ENYF), Feeding Laramie Valley (FLV), and Whole Community Project (WCP).

* Line items marked with an asterisk indicate community-campus coordination activities only awarded to CBOs working directly with participating universities, including Feeding Laramie Valley (University of Wyoming) and Whole Community Project (Cornell University). These budget items are not included in the annual average of US\$67,900 but are included in the US\$1.78 million total CBO budget amount.

investments likely signal new strategies that food justice leaders within each CBO wished to try, based on their expertise, priorities, and experience; and two, their spending (combined) and their assessment of the package likely provide insights into how funders and partner organizations can

best support the work of such CBOs. Thus, we conducted a separate, more detailed analysis of lessons from CBO budget and spending results

(see, e.g., Woodsum, 2018b).³ However, for the purposes of the research questions in this paper regarding our allocations within the larger action-research partnership, we report four findings here.

First, indirect costs, including support covering costs of facilities, are notably absent from this package. Though Porter had proposed a 10% indirect cost rate on the direct cost budgets for each of the five CBOs and for C-PREP, the supervising accountant at USDA chose not to allow the indirect costs for those organizations. In consultation with each organization, UW converted those funds to direct costs instead, in most cases as salary for staff who managed the subaward administration. The loss of the flexibility of unrestricted indirect funds was a blow for the CBOs. The inequity of it was magnified by the substantial indirect cost amounts awarded to the universities. The lack of unrestricted indirect costs created particular hardship for the smallest organizations. One leader illustrated this vividly by wondering if they were supposed to “work out of the trunk” of a personal car.

Second, although CBOs were allowed to move funding between lines in their subawards, their spending reports to UW tended to mirror or even replicate the budget allocations as originally laid out in the grant application. Though each CBO did spend its money in ways designed to maximize impact on its desired outcomes while meeting the Food Dignity scopes of work, many of the organizational leaders reported feeling constrained by the proposed allocations, feelings based on decades of experience with nonflexible funding and also because of the power UW held over this funding.

Third, most of the CBOs could not afford to front the costs of implementation for later reimbursement, which is the funding structure generally used by federal funding agencies. This meant that UW needed to modify typical funding procedures to provide advance payments for CBOs.

Fourth, both need and opportunity for food justice action and knowledge generation outstripped what this package supported, which we made

up for in only small part via transfers from university budgets to CBO ones over the course of the project. These last two budgeting issues and results are described in more detail below.

Advance payments to CBOs

Like most funders, federal funding agencies pay grantees in arrears for project-related costs. However, this reimbursement system only works for organizations that have enough credit and cash on hand to pay these costs and to safely carry them for at least six months before being paid back. As a doctoral candidate when putting together the Food Dignity proposal, Porter was ignorant of normal practice when applying for the funding and presumed that UW would pay subaward amounts to CBOs in advance.

When the proposal was awarded, the UW Research Office did, in fact, agree to do that. For the CBOs that requested them, UW provided quarterly advances and then later, to reduce paperwork burdens and increase CBO flexibility in spending decisions, six-month advances. This was essentially a loan from UW to each CBO, which the USDA then “repaid” about nine months later when UW expenditures were approved and reimbursed.

Reallocations to CBOs from Universities

In the original 2010 project proposal, the average CBO’s total budget allocation was US\$314,800, or about US\$63,000 a year. In practice, by the end of the project in 2016, the actual average allocation to each CBO was US\$356,200, or around US\$71,200 per year (including the community-campus coordination funds awarded to FLV and WCP only, as shown in Table 1).

This increase to CBO budgets decreased university budgets by US\$207,200 over five years. This represented about 10% of UW and Cornell’s direct cost funding out of the original allocations and added US\$8,200 a year to the average annual budget for each CBO.

WCP and FLV each received more of these

³ For example, a consensus among the CBOs was that this package had too many small pots of money, especially for stipends (including “animators,” minigrants, steering

committee members, and research assistants), without proportionate and sufficient amounts to pay CBO staff for recruiting, supporting, managing, and mentoring them.

reallocations than the other three CBOs. This was, in rough proportion, the additional research and, especially, education-related requests that Cornell and UW made of each because of their geographic proximity. In Laramie, we decided to move nearly all the US\$40,000 in student internship money that was originally in the UW budget to FLV and the remainder to BMA. In Ithaca, Cornell drew from part of the graduate student budget savings (see below) to increase the salary of the WCP community organizer. Cornell contributed the rest of these savings to adding a leadership-development component to the CBO packages.

During the first three years, Porter asked community-based researchers two or three times each year if they would like to travel to co-present joint work at national conferences, ultimately paying US\$12,200⁴ in community partner travel expenses. She agreed with CBO leaders that allocating money directly to their budgets would be better, practically and ethically, instead of Porter making these travel invitation decisions. In addition, by the third year of the collaboration, the CBOs had explicitly identified leadership development as one of their most important, but most underfunded, activities. Thus, after piloting a US\$5,000-per-CBO version of leadership-development support in the second year, mostly from Cornell contributions, UW committed US\$7,000 per organization per year for the final three years of Food Dignity for leadership-development work. This additional US\$26,000 per CBO was tied to a leadership-development plan for action and for briefly sharing outcomes and learning from that action. In other words, this reallocation to CBOs added at least as much workload as it did money to pay for it.

University Budgets: US\$1.99 Million Total

Over seven years (including the two no-cost extension years), UW spent US\$1,108,000 and Cornell spent US\$882,900. Central administration of each university took a total of about 20% of these amounts as indirect costs, leaving academic

partners with US\$1,590,900 to spend directly on Food Dignity work.

At the start of the project, Porter had mischaracterized these community vs. university allocations in two key ways. One, she excluded indirect costs in her framing calculations regarding how equitable (or inequitable) the Food Dignity allocations were. However, the approximately US\$500,000 for facilities and administration obviously supplied substantial institutional support to the two universities, while the CBOs received none. Two, though she had explicitly called the CBO allocations the *community organizing support package*, Porter initially did not think to name the university financial support as a package as well. Failing to name and publicly quantify the university packages served to naturalize and normalize the substantial allocations to academic institutions, making them nearly invisible in our public discussions about Food Dignity. She realized this while preparing slides about the project budgets for a CCPH presentation about Food Dignity in 2014. From then on, she called the university funding the *university support package*.

The following sections characterize the direct-cost allocations and spending in the university support packages. Figure 2 summarizes overall spending at the two universities.

Academic staff

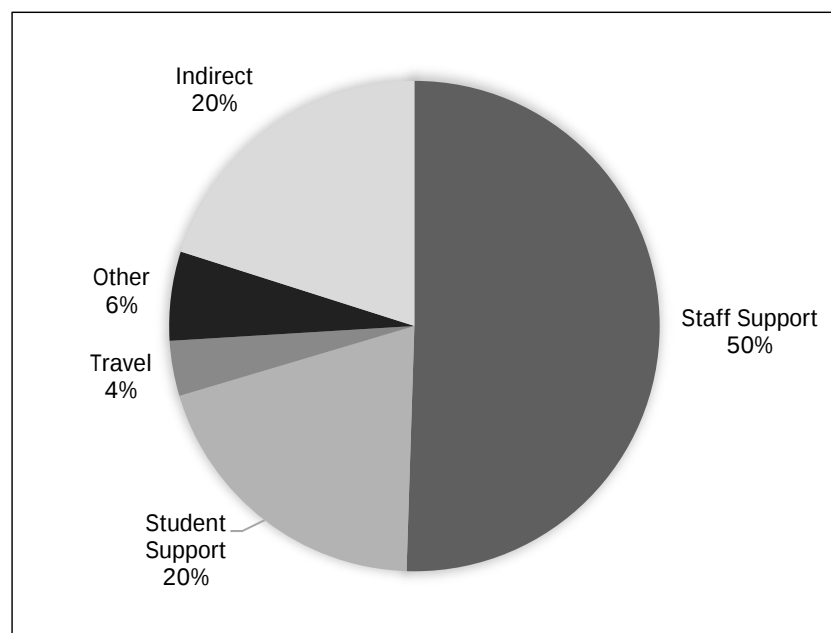
As with the CBOs, the universities' largest expenditure category was staff salaries plus fringe (which cost an additional 50–60% of salary to pay, for example, for health insurance and retirement contributions). At UW, this staffing was almost entirely for project coordination and research assistance. Starting in 2013, this role was filled by a full-time research scientist, Alyssa Wechsler. At Cornell, this staff budget supported fractions (10–25%) of the time for senior project coordinator Suzanne Gervais, agroecology lab technician Heather Scott, and for people who coordinated the development of a new community food system undergraduate minor. This also paid for 15–40% of Monica

not spent in university support nor was it under direct CBO control.

⁴ This amount is included in the “collaboration” spending results because convening at such events for our presentations also functioned as informal team meetings, and because it was

Figure 2. Spending of the Food Dignity Grant by Category by the University of Wyoming and Cornell University, 2011–2018

Although the University of Wyoming's overall spending was higher than Cornell University's (US\$1,108,000 versus US\$882,900), they had similar proportional spending by category, so their spending is combined here (total budget of US\$1,990,900).



Hargraves' time for her leadership on migrant-related research. Hargraves' scope later expanded to encompass WCP research support; conceiving and co-developing collaborative pathway models with each CBO (Hargraves & Denning, 2018, this issue); and becoming part of the overall project leadership team with Porter and Gayle Woodsum. A much smaller portion of the staff spending includes paying for some short-term, part-time, hourly work on Food Dignity research conducted by people who had previously been graduate students with the project.

Porter was the only faculty member on the project for whom Food Dignity paid any salary costs. As is common in universities, UW pays Porter a salary for nine months during the academic year. She is allowed to earn the remaining

third of a full-time, 12-month salary during summer months if she garners funding for it. Porter originally budgeted to pay 80% of her three-month summer salary and fringe with Food Dignity funds in each of the five planned project years. In practice, she paid herself for 39% of her time, on average, across the seven years, for her nearly full-time work in the summer months. Savings went toward increased allocations to CBO partners. That said, these savings were limited both by Porter receiving raises on her nine-month salary (which was US\$54,600 for 2011–2014 and went up to US\$74,500 in 2015) and by extending the project by two years. Also, of course, Porter could have elected to use all of these funds differently instead of paying herself.

Other than this summer pay for the principal investigator, the cost of tenured or tenure-track faculty time spent on Food Dignity work is nearly invisible in our budget analysis, as they were not paid by the project but instead supported by hard money salaries⁵ (plus costs of fringe benefits) as land-grant university employees during the academic year. At Cornell, none of the faculty co-investigators—including Scott Peters, Phil McMichael, and Laurie Drinkwater—received a salary from this grant. They each committed 5–10% of their time to its research and education goals as part of their academic jobs (both by advising graduate students and teaching), and any contributions during the summer were uncompensated. At UW, Porter spent at least half her academic-year time on this project during the first five years, including developing and teaching new

⁵ Employees whose salaries are paid from funds provided only for a specified time frame, such the five-year USDA grant for Food Dignity, and whose employment will end unless new money is secured, are said to be on “soft money.” Those who

are paid from funds expected to be stable, such as tuition money, state support, and indirect costs that UW receives, are said to be on “hard money.”

food system courses. The state of Wyoming, via UW, paid for nearly all⁶ of this time, with a price tag of about US\$197,300 (including fringe). This amount alone would have been equivalent to 21% of the total UW direct budget in the Food Dignity grant.

Graduate students

The second largest direct spending category at each university was funding graduate students. USDA funding for Food Dignity paid in full for the studies of five masters students with Porter at UW (Peggy McCrackin, Shannon Conk, Elisabeth “Livy” Lewis, Melvin Arthur, and Lacey Gaechter). The cost of each degree, over a two-year course of study, was about US\$43,000 (US\$216,000 total for the five students). At Cornell, annual graduate student support packages cost more than double UW’s, with higher tuition and, at that time, approximately US\$22,000 in academic-year stipends (vs. the US\$11,400 UW graduate students received in an academic year; additional summer funding was paid to students in some years at both institutions). The project supported about two-thirds of the costs for one doctoral student, John Armstrong, who worked with Peters. Armstrong spared Cornell’s Food Dignity budget about US\$80,000 by garnering other assistantships to pay the other third, intentionally freeing up some funds for transfer to CBO partners. The Cornell budget was also used to support small portions of the studies of two agroecology students who studied with Drinkwater. The total Food Dignity support for Ph.D. students at Cornell was about US\$180,100.

Roughly half of graduate students’ time went toward Food Dignity-related teaching and research. In this sense, some of the graduate student support could be considered a staffing cost.

Travel and other

The rest of university spending was on travel and on expenses categorized as “Other,” such as stipends to community-based research collaborators

and participants who were not receiving salaries from the CBOs as co-investigators (US\$25,000); interview transcriptions and general materials and supplies (US\$25,900); expenses (not including travel) related to information dissemination such as publication and printing (US\$20,100); expenses related to the Team GROW project at UW (US\$9,000); and honorariums to Food Dignity partners for contributions to final project outputs in the final years of no-cost extension (US\$37,000).

Travel budgets funded conference presentation expenses and visits to CBO partners. For example, at UW, conference travel cost US\$16,900 over the course of the project, paying in part or in full for Porter’s travel related to 32 Food Dignity presentations and posters. Her travel to visit with project partners cost an additional US\$11,500, funding 15 trips in total to WCP, ENYF, and DDF, plus 16 to BMA in Wind River Indian Reservation. (Porter is co-located with FLV, so visits with that organization did not incur travel costs.)

Supporting and Enabling Collaboration: US\$1.22 Million Total

We invested US\$1,218,400 in our team’s collaboration work primarily in two ways. Nearly three-quarters of the nearly US\$1.22 million went to support cross-community research and community-liaison services, including salary and travel for a liaison between community and academic partners. Duties for the community liaison role included advocating for CBO interests in the project; co-investigating research on the collaboration itself; and assisting CBOs with their research contributions. We began the project with Hank Herrera at C-PREP in the designated role of community liaison; he also was a manager at CBO partner DDF. About halfway through the project, most of that scope of work and associated funding was transferred to Action Resources International (ARI), led by Gayle Woodsum. ARI also houses the CBO partner FLV.

The rest of this collaboration budget—US\$328,700 over the five years—paid for our eight

⁶ The Food Dignity grant did also pay UW back for a small portion of Porter’s academic-year work; a US\$25,300 “buy-out” of her time went toward paying adjunct instructors to

teach two courses a year, in lieu of Porter. This amount is excluded from the state-funded contribution listed.

national team workshop meetings. This covered food, lodging, and transportation for the participating team members. The size of meetings ranged from 8 to 38 people, with an average of 28 and a median of 33 participants. This also includes retaining facilitation and training services of Lila Cabbil twice and also of Malik Yakini, Eric Holt-Giménez, and StoryCenter. For example, 18 of us met in Oakland for four days in January 2015, including three days with StoryCenter, to produce digital stories of our individual journeys fighting for food justice and Food Dignity, contribute to a minidocumentary about that process, and produce brief stories about others in our organizations or lives who have inspired us. That meeting cost about US\$58,100, including postproduction work by StoryCenter. These team meeting figures do not include the substantial staffing costs of organizing the meetings, provided mostly by the project coordinator at UW (Wechsler), but also by the community-campus liaison and, to a lesser extent, the leader at each partner organization.

Funding for team meetings was held within the UW budget, meaning that Porter ultimately controlled these dollars and that the institution received indirect costs on this sum.

Discussion

The results above outline our funding allocations and spending among the community and academic partners in the Food Dignity project. Of the nearly US\$5 million budget, 36% went to five CBOs, 40% to two universities, and the remaining 24% was invested in supporting and enabling our collaboration.

We believe this is the first paper to share and assess such complete data on action-research project allocations and spending. On their own, these figures provide some transparency in that they highlight the use of these public monies and provide some technical benchmarking for others who are budgeting for such large, multigoal, multi-stakeholder projects. In this discussion, we consider these decision-making power, allocation, and spending results as an empirical indicator of equity and power-sharing, or lack thereof, in our community-university partnership. As outlined below, we find that our allocations reflect and

reproduce systematically unbalanced power relations between academic and community partners. We call this systemic imbalance *academic supremacy*.

(In)equity and Our (Re)Production of Academic Supremacy

Our inequity problems begin with the overarching issue of one academic person—Porter, in this case—having the singular and sole power to allocate the Food Dignity budget (within both the confines of the scope agreed upon by USDA and collaborators and within funder and UW spending rules). By granting subawards to each CBO, she elected to devolve some of this power to the directors of each organization who, in turn, had authority over their budgets and spending. However, as indicated in the paper by Cain et al. (2014) about NIH-funded CBPR projects, only half of the academic grantees in their review issued funding to their community-based partners directly. This hierarchy of power institutionalizes inequity. Our inequity problem in Food Dignity, similarly, stems from who allocated the funding (i.e., Porter) and how she allocated it.

If the benchmark for assessing equity in our Food Dignity allocations were comparable with the limited data highlighting how other CBPR projects have spent their money, our allocations come out well. For example, if we used the approach of Cain et al. (2014) for categorizing spending in NIH-funded CBPR projects, both the CBO allocations and nearly all of the investment in our joint collaboration would have been counted as “community.” By this count, Food Dignity’s community vs. academic spending would be roughly 55% vs. 45%, respectively, as opposed to the 30% vs. 68% averages identified in that review.

However, the benchmark for equity is not *what is*, but *what should be*. By this measure, Food Dignity allocations and spending fare less well.

In our analysis of these (in)equities, we suggest the phrase *academic supremacy* to signal the systemically inequitable social relations between university partners (individually and institutionally) and community-based people and organizations, that

are pervasive and institutionalized in U.S. society.⁷ A scholar discussing nonprofit funding more generally describes this problem as “institutionalization of a relation of dominance” (Rodríguez, 2007, p. 39).

Because academia is not integrated across U.S. society to the extent to which, for example, race and gender are, this form of oppressive relations is not as ubiquitously experienced as, for example, racism and sexism. Also, as with all forms of social oppression, it is intertwined with, or “intersectional” with, these other forms of oppression. For example, in Food Dignity, many of the community partners are people of color, while nearly all the academic partners are white, including Porter (see Gaechter & Porter, 2018, this issue). Because the project was a community-university collaboration, concrete manifestations of academic supremacy impacted our everyday work and structural relations. These manifestations included producing and reproducing inequities in our monetary resource allocations in at least four main arenas: employment conditions, institutional support, capacity development, and autonomy and control of the funding.

1. *Employment conditions*

Employment conditions within academic institutions are generally more favorable than those in CBOs in terms of salary, and even more so in terms of benefits (in particular, employer contributions to retirement funds and health insurance premiums) and job security. On average, this was certainly the case in Food Dignity. To some extent, this was determined by Porter’s budgeting. This, in turn, was shaped by pay scales and policies within each partner organization.

These differences are systemic. For example, UW and Cornell required that grant funds pay fringe rates equivalent to 41% and 56%, respectively, on top of any salaries paid out of the award (with indirect costs charged on top of that). Of the

five CBOs, only ENYF submitted a budget with fringe on top of salaries, at a 32% rate. (In addition, the parent organizations housing DDF and WCP explicitly told Porter that their fringe costs would be covered by other sources.) Directly related to fringe rates on pay, all academic partners enjoyed health insurance benefits, whereas only some CBO-based partners could afford to offer those benefits.

Also, except for one director-level civil servant working with DDF, none of the community-based collaborators enjoy any job security. In universities, for tenure-track academics—as stressful as the six years of tenure-clock ticking are designed to be—the tenure process entails nearly certain job security for seven years with the additional promise of life-long job security if tenure is awarded. Even for the university-based collaborators paid by soft money from grant-funded work, including Food Dignity funds, salaries and benefits were relatively secure; everyone who was employed by the university partners before the project started remained employed when the project ended. By contrast, nearly everyone working with the CBO partners was paid out of soft money, which sometimes made simply making payroll challenging for some of the organizations. Jobs were frequently at imminent risk. Funding program continuity or growth was a challenge for all five CBOs. Overall, most of the individual collaborators based in academic organizations enjoyed better benefit packages, more job security, and better salaries than most of the community-based partners. The universities that employed them never had to worry about whether they could meet payroll and continue their teaching, research, and service work.

However, there was one group within the academic setting that did not receive better pay rates: graduate students, who received between US\$11,400 and US\$27,400 a year in assistantship stipends (with the top end of that range including stipend increases over the five years and summer

⁷ The systemic, institutionalized nature of this power imbalance, which we call *academic supremacy*, confers privilege to individual academic partners over community-based researchers. However, it does not mean that we claim individual academics are *academic supremacists*. Similarly,

systemic racism in U.S. society yields white supremacy, which in turn generates white privilege for white people in the U.S. (even if many simultaneously endure other individual or systemic forms of suffering); however, very few white people are white supremacists.

pay at Cornell). The idea in Minkler et al. (2003) that community-based co-investigators be paid at student rates is remarkable, and not in a good way, as illustrated by two other essays in this issue—one by the FLV founder and Food Dignity community-university liaison (Woodsum, 2018b) and the other by graduate students in Food Dignity (Bradley, Gregory, Armstrong, Arthur, & Porter, 2018). Experienced community leaders and organizers often mentor graduate student researchers, as they did extensively in Food Dignity. For example, after a joint presentation about our work in late 2015 by Sequeira and Porter, an audience member asked Sequeira afterward if she had been Porter's Ph.D. committee chair. In addition, all students received tuition, health insurance, and ultimately degrees along with their stipends. Therefore, student pay rates would provide a highly disrespectful benchmark for community-based researcher pay rates. Other systemic inequity issues with capacity development investments are discussed below.

Especially in a project specifically about documenting and sharing the expertise of community-based partners, we should have met the CNREI standard of paying the same rates for academic and community-based time and expertise. However, we failed to meet these standards. In some of the CBOs, with flexible pay rates determined in-house, providing higher pay would have been an option. When that was not possible, then paying higher fringe rates to cover benefits and covering a greater portion of salaries would have helped to ameliorate, though not eliminate, these inequities.

2. Institutional support

Like all public academic institutions, UW and Cornell enjoy systemic financial support in two forms that CBOs do not: substantial indirect cost income and public investment.

Universities receive significant indirect cost income from external grant funding. For example, universities received US\$399,900 of indirect cost income during Food Dignity while CBOs received none. Even when funders do grant CBOs some indirect costs, the amounts are much smaller than the actual overhead. They also exclude a category of direct costs that are actually among the most resource-intensive for many CBOs to administer:

“participant support costs.” These are “direct costs for items such as stipends or subsistence allowances, travel allowances, and registration fees paid to or on behalf of participants or trainees (but not employees) in connection with conferences, or training projects” (Uniform Administrative Requirements, 2014, p. 90). We do not know why federal funders exclude these from indirect cost payment calculations; tuition costs for graduate students are also excluded, and perhaps the idea is that this kind of capacity development involves minimal administration and is part of the academic mission. For example, for universities, this category includes paying cash stipends to research participants and honorariums or per diem expenses to external advisers. However, for CBOs that extensively support “participants” as mentees and developing leaders with this funding line, excluding them compounds the hardship of having low or no indirect cost funding to cover basics such as book-keeping and accounting. Public universities also receive general-purpose support from state governments. For example, UW receives about a quarter of a billion dollars each year in general state funding (UW Office of Academic Affairs and Budget Office, 2013). In contrast, the two Wyoming-based CBOs in Food Dignity—FLV and BMA—receive US\$0 in such general funds. Though public funds for higher education have been decreasing, sometimes dramatically, over the last decade (Mitchell, Leachman, & Masterson, 2016), the funding provided is still substantial.

Overall, one of our major failures in Food Dignity was insufficient attention to supporting the five CBOs in building financial sustainability, particularly in the face of these systemic inequities. This should have included, for example, allocating much more funding for direct overhead costs, staff time, and capacity development for each organization.

Moreover, as the ones with the experiential expertise and practical wisdom about how to build equitable and sustainable community food systems, the CBOs led or co-led much of our research, and community-based partners served as co-investigators in all that work. In addition, leaders from FLV and WCP were heavily involved in formal education as guest instructors, internship coordinators,

and co-planners of new sustainable food system minors at UW and Cornell. Most of the graduate students involved with Food Dignity worked under CBO supervision and mentorship at some point. And yet universities are the organizations with core funding—before, during, and after any grant-funded project—for paying tenure-track academics to generate and document new knowledge and to provide formal education and student mentorship.

3. Capacity development

Food Dignity replicated trends of making much heavier investments in capacity development for academic-based partners, mainly in the form of graduate students, than in community-based partners.

Funding streams for research, in general, tend to value producing graduate students, without any comparable support for capacity development among community-based partners. In Food Dignity, we spent US\$396,000 to fully fund five people earning master's degrees and partially fund (in some cases paying only a small fraction of the costs) three doctoral students who earned Ph.D.s. Such degrees count as an output on their own for our funder. Also, these substantial investments benefited not only our project (via staffing our action research and increasing our number of peer-reviewed publications) but also the graduates themselves. On average, those with a master's degree earn about 20% more and are less likely to be unemployed than those with a bachelor's degrees; personal income gains are as much again for those with a Ph.D. over those with a master's degree (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017).

In addition, while well beyond the control of this project, the convention of faculty being able to take a paid sabbatical every seven years is another way in which this inequity manifests itself. (For example, Porter was on paid sabbatical when she wrote the bulk of her contributions to the manuscripts in this issue.)

Capacity development investments for CBO partners in Food Dignity comprised mainly minor travel funding for conference and workshop participation, totaling about US\$10,200 per CBO, or US\$50,800 for the overall project. The UW budget was also used to cover US\$13,100 in community

partner travel directly. This was later supplemented with the addition of leadership development funds totaling US\$26,000 per CBO, or US\$130,000 total for all five CBOs over five years.

However, even with this addition, the total CBO capacity investments, across dozens of people in five organizations, are only 49% of what Food Dignity spent on supporting eight graduate students. This is compounded by the risks of our university food system degree programs professionalizing, and therefore also likely weakening, food justice work (Boyte 2004). What if one of our graduates were hired over a grassroots community leader because they now have formal food system qualifications (Holt 2015)? As with the other three forms of academic supremacy discussed here, this differential perpetuates and widens inequities between academic and community partners.

4. Autonomy and control with funding

Federal research funders strongly favor large, and largely academic, organizations as primary grant holders via extensive grant administration requirements, payments made as reimbursements, and insufficient *de minimus* indirect cost rates. This means that a university is nearly always the primary grant-holder in community-university partnerships—as was the case with Food Dignity, the projects with papers about their budgeting reviewed above, and in 48 of the 49 NIH-funded projects reviewed by Cain et al. (2014). Particularly in the absence of funder guidelines regarding budget allocations, this means that academic organizations control resource allocation, including which organizations and partners are invited to participate and how much funding each receives. Individual and organizational partners can choose to negotiate, but most decision-making power resides in the hands of the awarded organization, which is almost always an academic one.

In addition, the high negotiated indirect cost rates universities receive provides them with extensive unrestricted funds that CBOs do not receive. For those who receive them, these funds not only support management of current grants but are often invested in securing future ones, such as via research “start-up” funding for new faculty members, internal pilot project grants, and grant-writing

support.

Providing subaward funding, controlled by each organizational partner in Food Dignity, slightly ameliorated, but far from resolved, these inequities. Flipping that common funding model, so that CBOs receive the funds and subaward them to academics, would be one step toward ending those inequities.

Limitations, Overlaps, and Margins of Error

For the purposes of this paper, the accuracy of our data does not present a limitation of our work. We believe the spending numbers reported here are accurate to at least the nearest thousand dollars. Some of this spending we could calculate to the dollar, although we rounded to the nearest hundred in this paper for ease of reading (and, in a few cases, this rounding means not all numbers add up precisely).

How we allocated dollars to each of the three main categories (CBOs, universities, and collaboration) was a little rougher, especially in two cases. One case is that Katherine “Katie” Bradley was a paid team member from the start of the project, at first as an employee of C-PREP. At that time, she was also finishing a master’s degree, without Food Dignity support, and starting a Ph.D. program at the University of California, Davis (UC Davis) and already collaborating with DDF. When we ended the project’s relationship with C-PREP, Porter retained Bradley first as a Ph.D. candidate and then as a post-doctoral scholar via a three-year, US\$94,400 subaward to UC Davis. Her role of working closely with DDF in particular did not change. For simplicity, and because UC Davis was not a collaborator in the Food Dignity project beyond Bradley individually, we counted these numbers as cross-community research and included them in the “collaboration” totals. The other case is that UW paid salary and benefits totaling US\$43,100 to an employee and former Food Dignity master’s student, Peggy McCrackin, who in practice worked directly for FLV during that time. This amount is included in the UW university budget section above. Net, this means we may have overstated the collaboration budget and understated the university budget by just over US\$51,000. Yet some other expenses appearing in

the university budgets were spent on collaboration with one or more of the CBOs, such as food for community-university meetings, stipends to non-salaried community research partners, and honorariums for higher education work by community leaders. In addition to those two cases, it is worth noting that Ithaca College was also a partner organization in Food Dignity but had a very small (US\$2,000 annually) education-related budget managed via the WCP subaward and a travel budget for dissemination administered by UW.

In the end, any overlaps or allocation questions about these dollar amounts, within or between categories, are small enough that they do not affect any of the implications or conclusions that can be derived from these results.

Future Research

Our real limitations lie in what implications and conclusions can be derived from these results. For example, because this is the first paper we know of to analyze project spending in a community-university action research collaboration, we have little context for making comparisons and contrasts. Also, because systemic forms of power and privilege are embedded and naturalized (such as failing to name and quantify university support packages the way we named and quantified community packages), we have likely missed many ways that academic supremacy manifested itself in our allocations and spending during the Food Dignity project. What we *do* see has largely been shown to us by the community-based partners in the project, especially Woodsum, who has reviewed and commented on this manuscript and provided original analysis in related essays in this issue (2018a, 2018b).

Having comparable spending data available across multiple community-university action research collaborations would enable a more thorough investigation of what grant-spending strategies are most effective for reaching project goals. This would allow an assessment of whether the steps for equity proposed below truly work; it would also allow an assessment of the associations between partnership equity and project effectiveness. Based on our experience in Food Dignity, we hypothesize that this is causal. We also claim that,

regardless, seeking equity is an ethical imperative.

Conclusions

The allocation of funding among and between community and university partners in Food Dignity illustrates our project's production and reproduction of systemic inequities in community-university collaboration relations, even as we strived to establish equitable research relations. In Food Dignity, this systemic dominance manifested in better employment conditions, greater institutional support, higher capacity development investments, and more financial autonomy and control for academic partners than for community ones. More

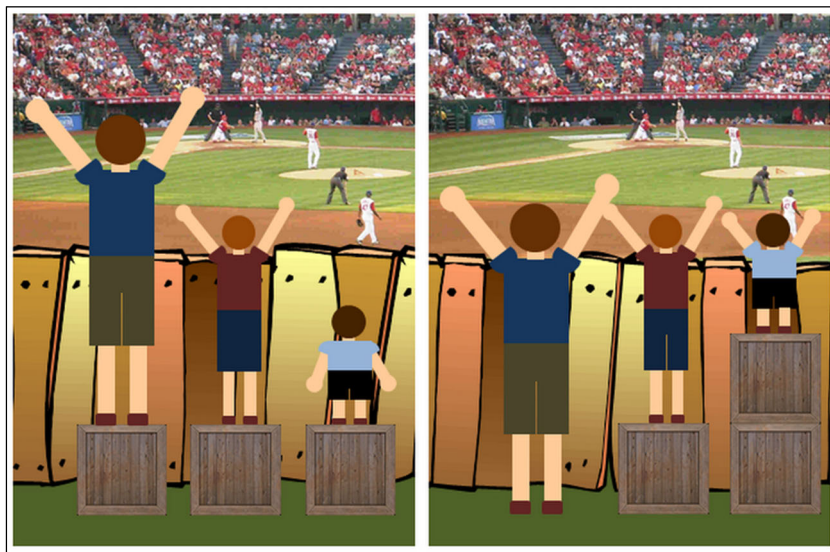
generally, we have named these systemic and structural inequities as academic supremacy.

Early systemic steps towards assessing and undoing these inequities could include the following: (1) increasing *de minimus* indirect cost rates and standardizing negotiated ones; (2) including budget-equity assessments in evaluation of community-campus action research funding proposals and annual funding reviews, thus fostering financial transparency in allocations and spending in federally funded research; and (3) creating sabbatical systems to support CBO leaders in codifying their expertise. In addition, mechanisms for granting awards directly to CBOs and joint awards to community and academic grantees would increase CBO control. Means for at least partially prepaying for grant expenses are also needed for small organizations. The budget equity evaluations and granting awards to CBOs directly in particular would both help create a driving motivation for universities and individual academics to build equitable research partnerships.

Individual academics forming such collaborative partnerships can help bring these changes into

Figure 3. The "Equality vs. Equity" Meme

First posted by Craig Froehle in 2012, this was later adapted by others to illustrate equality vs. equity and, in some versions, "liberation" with the removal of the fence or "reality" with boxes stacked to favor the tallest person.



Source: Froehle, C. (2012). Equality to a conservative and to a liberal (Image). Retrieved from <https://plus.google.com/+CraigFroehle/posts/AdKcNKesXwa>

action through internal advocacy in our institutions and with funding agencies and with individual practices in forming community-academic partnerships. These practices include, for example, adhering to the CNREI's guidelines outlined in the introduction for co-designing budgets and maximizing equity in pay rates; minimizing stipend-based work; co-designing and selecting project staffing; investing in financial sustainability and capacity development with community partners; negotiating with our universities to prepay subawards as needed; budgeting for direct administrative costs to help bridge inequitable indirect cost rates; and providing face-to-face meetings and other collaboration, capacity, and relationship development. No individual academic or university can create the systemic changes needed alone. However, these actions help point the way while slightly ameliorating inequities in the meantime.

Consider an analogy with the meme image adapted to illustrate equality vs. equity with three people of varying heights trying to watch a baseball game over a fence (Figure 3).

The *equality* image shows the three people

standing on boxes of the same size, which means the shortest of them cannot see over the fence. The *equity* image shows the boxes reallocated so the shortest person reaches the same height as the tallest, so she can see over the fence as well. Some versions of this meme include a third image of *reality*, with the tallest person on extra boxes and/or the shortest person standing in a hole. Distributing funding equally in a CBO-university collaboration, in proportion to scopes of work, will leave a partnership closer to this “reality” scenario than to an “equity” one because CBOs are systemically less resourced than are universities.

Undoing the systems of academic supremacy, including the forms outlined here, is a transformational project. No single project action can eliminate these institutional inequalities any more

than, for example, feminist efforts of individuals and groups can end patriarchy. However, we must name these inequities and intentionally design our actions to reduce them, or we will end up reproducing them. Perhaps we can find seats in the grandstand for all three of the spectators who are trying to watch the game over the fence, or maybe we could be playing a different game all together.



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