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Critical Community-Engaged Scholarship: Communities and Universities Striving for Racial Justice

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The goal of this article is to clarify how current dominant understandings of community-engaged scholarship (CES) can be strengthened to incorporate lessons from critical theory and to focus on justice more explicitly. A prior analysis of how CES is defined across multiple disciplinary literatures revealed that scholars define CES as partnerships between universities and communities that collaboratively develop and apply knowledge to address public issues. Six components of CES were frequently recommended for practice within this scholarship as well. However, neither the goal of CES—to support the "public good"—nor the six recommended CES components consistently included an explicit focus on justice and critical theory. By explicitly naming and defining the goal of justice—as opposed to the "public good" —I aim to highlight the importance of conducting routine analyses in CES of whose interests motivate conceptions of the public good and how dominant cultural structures, values, and traditions negatively impact minoritized community members' lives. Thus, this article employs teachings from critical theory—such as race-conscious analyses, asset-based understandings of community, and privileging subaltern experiences—to envision how *critical CES* could support university and community partnerships in producing knowledge that more effectively dismantles systemic sources of racial and social injustice.

Many U.S. higher education institutions are reaffirming their democratic commitments: producing knowledge and utilizing university resources to support the public good. *Community-engaged scholarship* (CES)—partnerships between universities and communities[1] to collaboratively develop and apply knowledge to address public issues—is one way to support such democratic goals (Boyer, 1996; Campus Compact, 2011; Community–Campus Partnerships for Health, 2011; Gordon da Cruz, forthcoming; Sturm, Eatman, Saltmarsh, & Bush, 2011). Community-engaged scholarship is practiced across disciplines, such as ethnic studies, education, public health, and gender studies to address public issues[2] such as disparate access to quality public education, disproportionate use of police force, and inequitable access to health care. A prior analysis of how

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[1] For the purposes of this paper, I will use *community* broadly to refer to individuals and groups of people outside the university, often predominantly of racial/ethnic minority and lower SES backgrounds, while understanding that the meaning of "community" is both contested and contextual.

[2] The terms *public issues, social issues*, and *social problems* are used in much of the CES literature, thus I use these terms interchangeably.

engaged scholarship is defined across these literatures revealed that university and community partnerships should include six components, of which three prominent ones are studying real-life social problems, choosing these issues with community members, and developing knowledge to address these issues collaboratively with community members.[3] Further, the frequently mentioned goal of CES in the literature was working for the "public good" (see, e.g., Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2013; CIC Committee on Engagement, 2005; Silka & Saltmarsh, 2011). However, the descriptions of and recommendations for CES in dominant literature did not consistently include an explicit focus on justice or the incorporation of lessons from critical race theory (CRT). Since many people engaging in CES and related cross-disciplinary practices (e.g., community-based design research, equity-oriented collaborative community-based research, or publicly engaged scholarship) undertake their work with explicit commitments to justice and racial equity, the omission of justice and concepts from CRT in the prevailing definition of CES is troubling.

The goal of this article is to clarify how current dominant understandings of CES[4] can be strengthened to incorporate a more explicit focus on justice and lessons from CRT. As I elaborate further below, I use *justice* to refer to the societal conditions under which all people—in particular those from currently and historically marginalized backgrounds—have real and authentic capabilities to lead lives that they determine are valuable, can participate in and influence political decisions that impact their lives, and have opportunities to support the flourishing of others (Nussbaum, 2000; Sturm et al., 2011; Young, 1990). CRT is a field that focuses on issues of race and racism in pursuit of justice. Building on critical legal studies—a field that analyzes how the law perpetuates and legitimates societal power structures that maintain class inequity—early work in CRT added analyses of how legal doctrine creates and legitimates racial inequity in America (Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT instructs us to consider race and racism as central factors in explaining individuals' experiences of the law and education and challenges assertions of objectivity or race neutrality (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Thus, a focus on justice and the incorporation of lessons from CRT might spur community-engaged research questions that explicitly analyze racially disparate outcomes in policies designed to support the public good.

I argue that an explicitly stated goal of justice—and the use of CRT to inform CES processes more likely to result in this goal—are necessary elements of CES for two main reasons. First, lessons from CRT might help us more *effectively* address public issues by drawing attention to the structural causes that underpin these issues (as will be illustrated by the vignettes below). Second, by explicitly naming and defining the goal of justice—as opposed to "public good"—I argue for routine analyses in CES of *whose* interests motivate conceptions of the public good and how dominant cultural structures, values, and traditions negatively influence minoritized community members' lives.

An explicit focus on justice helps center these thorny yet crucial questions about competing claims for justice in enacting the public good. Such centering is necessary because justice

[3] For a full list, see Table 1 and discussion.

[4] For readability and to connect with prior scholarship, I use the term community-engaged scholarship (CES) in the remainder of this piece to refer to CES and related forms of community–university partnerships, while respecting the myriad of other terms diverse practitioners use.

for marginalized communities may not be obtained without it. For example, the director of one public university's community outreach institute pointed out the contradiction between the university's stated mission and their role in local politics. "The university understands its mission to be about the *public good*, public things, public space, and serving people who are excluded from the sort of dominant institutional structures of power and privilege" (Maurrasse, 2001, p. 67, italics added). Yet despite these commitments, there is nothing in the university mission statement that explicitly "challenges the university to engage in local politics or community revitalization" (p. 67). Further, while university faculty and students have a history of activism, the university administration is not known for their political challenges to the status quo (Maurausse, 2001). Therefore, a professed commitment to the "public good" might not be enough to forefront questions about how community–university research collaborations and knowledge production can influence actual policies, laws, and/or cultural practices that impact the lives of nondominant community members.

Such examinations—though not routine in all CES work—exist in the *cuentos* (stories) of Latina/o scholars sharing their autoethnographies of enacting the public good (González & Padilla, 2008). For example, Padilla (2008) argues for the importance of considering who is undermined in the promotion of the "public good." Likewise, González and Padilla (2008) call for analysis of how the structure and culture of higher education institutions act as barriers to realizing the public good, particularly for Latino/a scholars. These stories not only illustrate components of CES that were not highlighted in the dominant literature, but also show the importance of examining justice in CES processes and outcomes designed to support the public good.

In this article, I employ teachings from CRT and build on the work of CES practitioners[5] already pursuing justice to reenvision *critical* CES and four crucial questions to ask in community–university research collaborations aiming to dismantle systemic sources of injustice. To situate readers new to the field and multidisciplinary practitioners of community-based research, I begin with an overview of CES and the six components that emerged from the literature in a previous review. Next, borrowing from African diaspora knowledges, which teach us that knowledge should be applied for the sake of enhancing human flourishing (King & Maiga, 2016), I use the strategy of vignettes. To illustrate how a reenvisioned understanding of CES can be applied to enhance knowledge for human flourishing, I present a vignette to illustrate the practical applications of CES (and later contrast this vignette with a story illustrating critical CES). Next, to demonstrate the possibilities of a justice-focused practice, I briefly review the history of CES and examples of people who are already engaging in CES with explicit aims of justice and racial equity. I then draw from CRT and other critical theorists to develop questions that CES practitioners should continually ask when developing research questions, processes, and analyses. The closing vignette of *critical CES* shows how the reenvisioned method can support community–university research collaborations in dismantling systemic sources of (racial) injustice.[6] I end with implications for practice, policy, and research.

[5] I use the term *practitioner* to refer to all people who "do" CES work (e.g., faculty members, community members, and students).

[6] Although critical CES could be used to tackle multiple forms of injustice (e.g., ethnocentrism, sexism, heterosexism, etc.), this paper focuses in particular on racial injustice.

TABLE 1
Six Core Components of Community-Engaged Scholarship

Component 1:	Real-life social problems in our democracy are defined with or by the community
Component 2:	These real-life social problems are investigated in scholarly ways
Component 3:	Community–university partnerships are collaborative and mutually beneficial
Component 4:	Knowledge to address public issues is collaboratively developed with community and university members
Component 5:	Institutional resources are utilized to address these real-life public issues
Component 6:	Community research or projects are integrated with faculty members' research and teaching

COMMUNITY-ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP: AN UNDERSTANDING OF PRACTICE FROM THE LITERATURE

In this article, CES refers to mutually beneficial partnerships between universities and communities designed with the intention to collaboratively develop and apply knowledge to address consequential social issues for the public good (Gordon da Cruz, forthcoming). This prevailing or dominant definition of CES is based on a synthesis of recommendations from 28 articles and university or professional organization websites[7] using search terms such as community-engaged scholarship, public scholarship, active and engaged scholarship, and community-based research.[8] Utilizing the methodology of content analysis to develop a definition and shared understanding of practice, six components of CES rose to the fore and are outlined in Table 1 (see Gordon da Cruz, forthcoming for further discussion). Although it is possible, and perhaps likely, that a commitment to justice, deconstructing systemic inequities, and lessons from CRT implicitly informed these recommendations, these ideas were not frequently explicitly named in the dominant literature.

The six interrelated CES components give a theoretical understanding of recommended practices for conducting scholarship in partnership with communities, but how do they look in practice? A comparison of two vignettes show how different CES scholarship can be with and without an explicit focus on justice. The first vignette is a fictitious example written to highlight an application of the prevailing definition and six CES components. This vignette of CES will later be contrasted with the second hypothetical vignette, which illustrates *critical* CES.

[7] Documents were chosen for analysis based on recommendations from two leading sources of information on community- and civic-engagement and campus–community partnerships: (a) Campus Compact, a national coalition of almost 1,200 college and university presidents and (b) Community–Campus Partnerships for Health (CCPH), a nonprofit organization of more than 2,000 individuals, community organizations, and academic institutions promoting health equity and social justice.

[8] I chose not to include definitions and recommendations focused on more specific types of community-engaged scholarship, such as participatory action research, because I was aiming to develop a broad-based understanding across the various types of engaged scholarship.

Vignette 1

Professor Jones has been teaching for 15 years in the criminal justice department of a public university in "Westcoast City." He has been following both mainstream and ethnic news and is disturbed by the deaths of Freddie Gray, Michael Brown, Tanisha Anderson, Sandra Bland, and Eric Garner: all five black, all five killed, all five deaths involving police officers. Jones identifies as a white aspiring antiracist activist. He wants to work collaboratively with people from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds to build peaceful communities and, in Jones's words, support the "public good." As he talks to black community members in a low-income area of Westcoast City, he learns of deeply held fears threaded throughout the community: fear of disproportionate use of police force against black and brown people, concerns for their safety—and even lives—at the hands of police officers, and a sad resignation that justice through the court system is highly unlikely. Professor Jones decides to design a new course on this public issue with a research project in which he wants to conduct interviews with community members to learn about their experiences with police officers and interviews with police officers to learn about what triggers them to use force. Jones brings this research idea back to some of the community members with whom he has previously spoken. He explains to the community members that he thinks it's very important to hear multiple perspectives when trying to identify causes and solutions to public issues—hence his plan to interview police and community members—and asks whether they think it would be a good research project. Jones notices several people seem reluctant—he thinks that they are likely just nervous about being interviewed—but he is relieved when many agree to participate. One community member even agrees to sit in on Jones' first several interviews and provide him with feedback on cultural competency, interview style, and whether his questions are getting to the heart of participants' experiences.

During the course, Professor Jones plans to work collaboratively with his students to collect interview data, code the data for themes that respond to their research questions, and then invite community members to presentations of preliminary findings to hear their critique and feedback. He plans to utilize university resources for these meetings: providing refreshments, free parking, and a tour of campus for the community members who participate. Community participants who are interested in the university's extension program will receive a voucher for reduced cost of one course. Also, if there is interest, Jones and his students will hold a tutorial in the community to assist people with the university's extension program application process. Professor Jones hopes the research project will not only inform his teaching, but he will also be able to use the data to apply for a grant to develop the findings for a manuscript in a peer-reviewed journal.

The preceding vignette is a fictitious example in which Jones strives to incorporate the six components recommended for carrying out CES. Although I will highlight how particular aspects of the vignette distinctly illustrate each CES component, in reality, the components can also be thought of as interrelated parts of a holistic practice. In this hypothetical example, Jones's course and research are centered on the real-life social issue of police violence and use of force in low-income communities of color. Further, although the research project was not chosen *by* the community, Jones did at least consult with multiple community members to select this issue (CES Component 1: Social issues selected with the community). Jones is designing a qualitative research project that he will conduct in partnership with his students to investigate the social issue (CES Component 2: Scholarly investigation of public issues). To develop new knowledge, Jones will utilize one community member's feedback on interview questions, and Jones and his students

will analyze interviewees' responses and solicit community members' feedback on preliminary findings (striving for CES Component 4: Collaborative knowledge production). The partnership is likely to benefit Jones's teaching and scholarship (CES Component 6: Integration with faculty scholarship) and Jones's students in their learning of course themes and research methods. The community members will hopefully benefit through research findings that inform better policing practices and increased access to the university's extension program (CES Component 3: Mutually beneficial partnerships). Finally, Jones is utilizing institutional resources for this project, such as his research expertise, funding for meeting refreshments, university qualitative data analysis software, and vouchers for the university extension program (CES Component 5: Institutional resources for the public good).

Thus, though the vignette is imperfect in meeting every CES component, based on my experiences as a higher education professional and researcher of CES, it represents a realistic example of CES in practice. But will the culmination of the research bring our democracy closer to justice? Will the research findings help to dismantle institutional structures that perpetuate racially inequitable outcomes? These are open questions. Although the project is socially aware and many would argue that it contributes to the "public good," these questions of how to dismantle inequitable institutional structures and strive for justice in our democracy are not centrally addressed. A more explicit focus on justice and structural change could support CES projects more likely to lead to changes in wide-scale policies and practices that marginalize community members.

CRITICAL CES

Critical CES—or a form of community-engaged scholarship that is explicitly informed by CRT—interweaves strategies, processes, and worldviews with emancipatory aims into publicly engaged work (discussed in depth below). An explicitly critical perspective is important to CES for two main reasons. First, it could make the practice more effective; since CRT often illuminates structural causes of issues, and public issues often have a myriad of structural antecedents, critical CES is more likely to support research that uncovers effective solutions. Therefore, a prevailing CES definition that omits a focus on justice jeopardizes possibilities in the field for developing new knowledge and transformative practices. Indeed, many university and community members who engage in public scholarship have concerns that without an explicit focus on justice, equity, critical consciousness, activism, or understanding root causes of social issues, research risks reifying the dominant cultural power structures that led to inequitable resource distribution and created a "public issue" in the first place (Center for Collaborative Research for an Equitable California, 2016; Curry-Stevens, 2012; Speed, 2008; Warren, Oh, & Tieken, 2016).

Second, a more explicitly critical framing of CES could help mend the disconnect between mainstream literature and historical and current practices of justice-oriented CES. CES originated among activist scholars—often scholars of color—who have been engaging with communities for decades to deepen scholarship, make it more practically relevant, and impact change in marginalized communities (Avila-Linn, Rice, & Akin, 2012; Hale, 2008). Further, though mainstream literature tends to omit explicit references to justice, when current practitioners describe what motivates their CES, many people *do* in fact include a commitment to justice or to deconstructing structural inequities.

Justice-Oriented CES: Then and Now

An explicit commitment to justice in defining and carrying out CES is not new. Engaged scholarship traces back to the land grant movements of the 1860s, the practice of settlement houses in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and New Deal programs focusing on immigrant education and civil rights organizing (Avila-Linn et al., 2012). With goals such as liberation for underresourced communities, multiple academics have utilized the ideals of integrating scholarship and community engagement for many years (Hale, 2008; Sanchez, 2004; Stevens, 2003). Hale (2008) theorizes that it is usually scholars of color who lead universities in engaging with communities to produce activist scholarship because

> for people who feel directly and personally connected to broader experiences of oppression and to struggles for empowerment, claims of objectivity are more apt to sound like self-serving maneuvers to preserve hierarchy and privilege; and the idea of putting scholarship to the service of their own communities' empowerment and well-being is more apt to sound like a sensible, if not an inevitable, way to practice their profession. (p. 3)

Thus, there is a rich history of engaged scholars collaborating with communities of color to produce scholarship that supports empowerment, social action, and justice.

Sanchez (2002, 2004) writes about many such scholars who cross and blur the boundaries of academia and community by incorporating community expertise and including public engagement in their academic projects and research. For example, public artist Judith Francisca Baca started her career in the community, founding the first mural program in Los Angeles in 1974. Baca later joined the academy as a professor of art and Chicano studies. Public art can fuel historical scholarship that, in the words of art historian Erika Doss, "recognize[s] and critique[s] the deep inconsistencies and contradictions of American history" (Sanchez, 2002, p. 13). Thus, the work of Baca and Doss illustrates how lessons from critical theory—which supports critiques of dominant cultural narratives, such as how American history is traditionally taught—can deepen their publicly engaged work. This is just one example of the many ways in which scholars of color and scholars from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds in fields such as ethnic studies and gender studies have incorporated critical perspectives into community-engaged work.

Currently—though glossed over in the prevailing CES definition—some community-engaged and activist scholars also apply a focus on justice, equity, or critical theory to their work. For example, the Center for Collaborative Research for an Equitable California (CCREC), a multi-campus research initiative based at the University of California Santa Cruz, calls this type of scholarship "Equity-Oriented Collaborative Community-Based Research." CCREC prefers this term to CES or other terms, in part because of the explicitly named commitment to equity (Center for Collaborative Research for an Equitable California, 2016). The center supports multiple projects that use collaborative research to impact equity, such as a project that brings together three university research centers and more than 20 community organizations and aims to research and generate knowledge on opportunities and barriers to young adult civic engagement; enhance the capacities of four host community organizations; and generate knowledge about effective reentry strategies for formerly incarcerated young adults.

Further, one study at the University of California Berkeley illustrated that CES practitioners held similar commitments to equity and justice. In an investigation of how and why higher

education administrators and faculty practice CES, Gordon da Cruz (2016) found two themes cut across participants' responses: (a) a commitment to racial, ethnic, gender, socioeconomic, or sexuality justice and (b) a goal of developing critical knowledge to address systemic causes of injustice. For example, one faculty member was committed to working with community to develop knowledge to address the disproportionate incarceration rates of black and brown men and strategies for developing a more liberatory justice system. Another aimed to transform together with students and community the publicly accessible knowledge base on Muslims in America. This professor wanted to research and make accessible information that affirmed Muslims in the fabric of American society and to stand in contrast to the negative media attention swarming Muslims after 9/11. For these faculty members, the prevailing definition of CES was not a wholly accurate reflection of their practice. They explicitly described the critical perspectives and commitments to justice that motivated them in their work. Likewise, emerging scholars in a community organizing research project at the Harvard Graduate School of Education overtly expressed commitments to justice and equity that shaped their practice, as well as their sense of themselves as people (Warren et al., 2016).

Similarly, in Hale's (2008) edited volume on activist scholarship, there are multiple examples of scholars who collaborate with community to produce knowledge that supports dismantling racist structures in our democracy. For example, Speed (2008) wrote about her research collaboration supporting the legal struggles conducted by an indigenous community in Chiapas, Mexico. She described her research as "critically engaged activist research," by which she means research that includes both a critical cultural analysis of structures and discourses of inequality and an "overt commitment to an engagement with our research subjects that is directed toward some form of shared political goals" (Speed, 2008, p. 215).

In short, the historical origins of the practice and a sampling of current examples of justice-oriented CES suggest that, despite the prevailing definition, many community-engaged scholars are explicitly committed to social and racial justice and interrogating and dismantling political or cultural structures that maintain inequity. Therefore, reshaping understandings of CES in future contributions to the dominant literature to explicitly incorporate justice and critical theory may more accurately describe the practices of those who incorporate justice in their work and act as a resource for those wanting to engage in community–university research collaborations with justice aims.

A Fabric of Justice: Relevant Questions From Critical Race Theory

Interweaving philosophies from CRT leads us away from a concrete definition and list of components for CES and towards questions. These questions, grounded in CRT, can support CES practitioners in inquiring about whether their research practices, aims, and assumptions support justice (as described below). The questions are not intended to be asked once and then set aside. Rather, university and community practitioners should continually ask these questions to establish processes and aims that incorporate justice. Thus, I elaborate on the conception of justice introduced above and then interweave teachings from CRT and other critical theorists to propose questions that could support CES practitioners in realizing this elusive goal.

Justice

CES can make better strides toward justice when lessons from critical race, critical feminist, and welfare economic theorists help refine CES goals so that they are inherently justice-oriented, mirroring those of the aforementioned activist scholars. Critical and feminist theorists have advanced the capabilities approach to understanding justice. The capabilities approach "arises from substantive concerns with improving the quality of people's lives, advancing human dignity and a fairer and more democratic world" (Walker, 2010, p. 899). The capabilities approach is concerned with human beings having access to goods, opportunities, and resources so that they can choose lives they have reason to value (Sen, 1979). Nussbaum (2000) proposes a set of 10 capabilities to which all human beings should have access, such as life, bodily integrity, and practical reason (2000). The capabilities approach implies that questions of justice should consider the extent to which each human being has real and authentic opportunities to realize capabilities.

In addition, Young's (1990, 2006) theory of justice posits the importance of analyzing capabilities or opportunities and outcomes with explicit attention to social groups such as race, gender, and class. She explains that "where social group differences exist and some groups are privileged while others are oppressed, social justice requires explicitly acknowledging and attending to those group differences in order to undermine oppression" (Young, 1990, p. 3). Young argues that one way to facilitate such justice is to ensure the inclusion of each person in collective problem solving, paying explicit attention to the voices of vulnerable and nondominant members of society. Young's (1990) ideas of attending to group differences, acknowledging oppression, and involving all voices—particularly those who are marginalized—in group problem-solving is consistent with the concept of "full participation" (Sturm et al., 2011). The objective of full participation is to create the conditions in which all people, particularly those who have been or are continuing to be marginalized, can thrive—feel respected, valued, and supported—so they can utilize their strengths, not only to engage in the institutions of our democracy, but also to support the flourishing of others.

Thus, integrating the ideas of the aforementioned theorists, *justice* means having the societal conditions under which institutionalized practices—such as laws, policies, or cultural practices—do not impede the flourishing of any social groups and allow all people to have real and authentic capabilities to lead lives that they highly value. In other words, justice means having a society in which individuals can influence political decisions that impact their lives and have opportunities to support the flourishing of others and an equitable social order. A goal of justice facilitates CES practices that incorporate self-determination, deconstructing structural inequity, and valuing the voices of currently marginalized members of society in democratic institutions and processes.

This understanding of justice is not only the end goal of critical CES, but rather, it is what CES practitioners are striving to enact at each stage in a research/practice partnership. Lessons from CRT provide a plausible framework for integrating justice in the processes and aims of critical CES. CRT is often credited as springing from the work of Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman in response to critical legal studies by adding analyses of how legal doctrine sustains and legitimates not only class, but also racial inequality (Ladson-Billings, 1998). In education, CRT is used to analyze the roles of race and racism in educational practices and how practices subordinate nondominant racial and ethnic groups (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). LatCrit theorists have expanded

elements of CRT to include consideration of how legal ideology not only creates and legitimates America's inequitable race structure, but also legitimates inequitable ethnic structures (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). Central tenets of CRT and LatCrit (reviewed below) encourage CES practitioners to think through what critically conscious knowledge looks like, interrogate where expertise lies, conduct race-conscious analyses, and ground research questions, processes, and analyses in asset-based understandings of communities. Drawing on CRT and LatCrit and the aim of justice, four key questions for critical CES emerge.

Critical CES Question 1: Are We Collaboratively Developing Critically Conscious Knowledge?

Critically conscious knowledge development steers the focus of community–university research toward understanding and deconstructing structural barriers that marginalize community members in ways that the more generalized knowledge development called for in the dominant literature on CES does not. Critical race and LatCrit theorists outline the importance of acknowledging race and racism as centrally defining features of people's experiences and the importance of understanding how the intersection of racism with other forms of subordination such as ethnic or class discrimination influences people's lives (Ladson-Billings, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). Further, many critical race theorists or scholars who attend to the role of race in education posit the importance of analyzing inequitable societal power structures or dominant cultural assumptions that create and sustain structural racism (Banks, 1998; Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Harding, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2005; Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). The strategic racial equity framework (Garces & Gordon da Cruz, 2017/this issue) highlights that in analyses of inequitable societal structures, we must attend not only to policies and practices that explicitly racially discriminate, but also to cultural practices that advantage and privilege whites, such as whites giving preferential treatment in the hiring process to (white) people they know (DiTomaso, 2013).

Thus, *critically conscious knowledge* acknowledges and is critical of how race and racism and the intersection of racism with other forms of subordination influences people's experiences and opportunities for success. It is knowledge informed by analyses of how one's own social location could influence assumptions about how societal power structures or dominant cultural assumptions create and sustain structural inequity. In the example CES vignette above, the research question asking police officers what triggers the use of police force is unlikely, on its own, to produce critically conscious knowledge. The research question does not stem from an analysis of how race and racism impact people's lives, nor does it interrogate how police officers' social locations could influence their experiences and understandings of the world. A research question more likely to lead to critically conscious knowledge development would ask if and how police officers' implicit biases—biased unconscious associations made about people from diverse sociodemographic groups (Dasgupta, McGhee, Greenwald, & Banaji, 2000; powell & Godsil, 2011)—influence their use of force in their policing encounters. This question spurs analyses of how race and racism, specifically the effects of implicit biases associated with race, could influence police officers' actions and, depending on the results, provide evidence for policy interventions—like officer implicit bias, diversity, and inclusion trainings—that could make policing practices more racially equitable.

Critical CES Question 2: Are We Authentically Locating Expertise?

To develop critically consciousness knowledge community–university researchers will need to gather expertise on the causes and impacts of racialized and racist cultural practices. A tenet from CRT that could inform this endeavor is the importance of privileging the expertise of members of marginalized communities on their own lives (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). The work of Freire (1970) and Viola (2014) illustrates how and why the expertise of people who experience marginalization in society is so crucial to developing knowledge that supports justice. Freire (1970) describes how the development of a more critical consciousness can emerge when members of marginalized communities are able to work together to analyze the structural forces that privilege members of the dominant class and subjugate them. Indeed, as Viola (2014) writes in his analyses of how Melissa Roxas (a U.S.-born Filipino American human rights activist) became politicized, "critical engagement and genuine dialogue with historically subjugated groups enable[d] a deeper perception of the social and class forces that frame subaltern experiences" (p. 12). Thus, collaboration with community members is essential to the formation of critically conscious knowledge.

In the opening CES vignette, Professor Jones equally values the perspectives stemming from the predominantly white institution of policing and the predominantly subaltern racial and ethnic perspectives of community members. Although providing insight from multiple perspectives is important, critical CES analysis might give more weight to the expertise of community members. Their expertise is essential because community members, as well as university students in Professor Jones's class from nondominant backgrounds, have more expertise about the impacts of police violence and, as the objects of violence and racism, are in a better position to name and describe the racism that is fundamentally normalized and integrated in our society.

Critical CES Question 3: Are We Conducting Race-Conscious (Instead of Color-Blind) Research and Scholarship?

The current legal landscape, particularly in the field of education, due to Supreme Court cases such as *Parents Involved, Fisher*, and *Schuette*, necessitates that education policies attempting to rectify racial inequities utilize color-blind approaches. However, these practices only contribute to, instead of ameliorate racism. Incorporating race-conscious analyses in engaged scholarship can aid researchers in gathering data and generating knowledge that is more likely to rectify public issues that disproportionately oppress members of marginalized communities. The tenets of the strategic racial equity framework (Garces & Gordon da Cruz, 2017/this issue) provide a way to encourage race consciousness. The strategic racial equity framework builds on Bell's (1980, 1991) theories of interest convergence and racial realism to advance principles that recognize the complex and fluid nature of identities, address current manifestations of racism, and recognize the key role of building intentional relationships within and across historically marginalized communities in order to generate the power needed to advance transformative educational policies (Garces & Gordon da Cruz, 2017/this issue). In this framework, race consciousness is a tool to analyze connections between historical legacies of institutionalized racism, contemporary reasons for inequality, and action strategies that draw upon this realistic reading of context to forge a path toward equity.

Race-conscious analyses can assist CES practitioners in avoiding research that could exacerbate existing inequities. For example, a researcher who wants to improve schools for the "public good" might ask questions about how racially marginalized students in schools are contributing to their own lower achievement scores due to "oppositional cultures," fear of "acting white," (see, e.g., Fordham & Ogbu, 1986) or lack of "resilience or grit" (see, e.g., Duckworth, 2016).[9] In contrast, a collaboration among these same marginalized students and their families, teachers, and university faculty to conduct race-conscious analyses might investigate topics such as whether and how teachers and school administrators (often unconsciously) differentially apply discipline policies to black and brown students or how institutional resources (such as high-quality teachers or advanced placement courses) may be racially inequitably accessible within the same school (Lewis & Diamond, 2015).

A more explicit framing of the need for race-conscious analyses and research processes in recommendations for carrying out CES could support the collaborative development of knowledge that is more likely to address the root causes of social and racial injustice. Regarding the CES vignette above, a race-conscious analysis could alter CES practices in multiple ways, such as supporting Professor Jones in analyzing whether his research questions and understanding of "balanced" data-gathering could be influenced by his social location as a white man.

Critical CES Question 4: Is Our Work Grounded in Asset-Based Understandings of Community?

Grounding engaged scholarship in asset-based understandings of community (Garoutte & McCarthy-Gilmore, 2014) can help avoid research that marginalizes communities and justifies inequity (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Another key principle of CRT and LatCrit is challenging deficit-based explanations for educational inequity (Solorzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001). Building relationships across diverse marginalized communities to forward a shared interest offers a way to support research partnerships, processes, and questions grounded in asset-based understandings of communities (Garces & Gordon da Cruz, 2017/this issue). The wisdom of multiple and diverse marginalized communities about the strengths of their cultural practices could be employed to disrupt dominant discourses that sustain their marginalization. For example, if policymakers base strategies for educational change on the inaccurate notion that some communities of color do not value education, they may formulate policies with a goal of "educating" these communities about the value of education. Alternatively, if strategic alliances among marginalized communities to generate enough power to have influence over policymakers' decisions, gain a seat at the decision-making table, or change how decisions are made, perhaps the intersecting values of the long-standing struggle for education in Mexican American communities (Valencia, 2002) and the core value of education for liberation in African American communities (Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003) will inform more effective education policies that address the real causes of inequity.

Critical CES practitioners will ask whether research questions and processes are developed by community members with asset-based understandings of their own community and other marginalized communities. In the first CES vignette, I argue that Jones's idea to ask police

[9] For a critique of how these individualized explanations for lower academic achievement downplay the impact of structural obstacles and injustices, see Lewis and Diamond (2015).

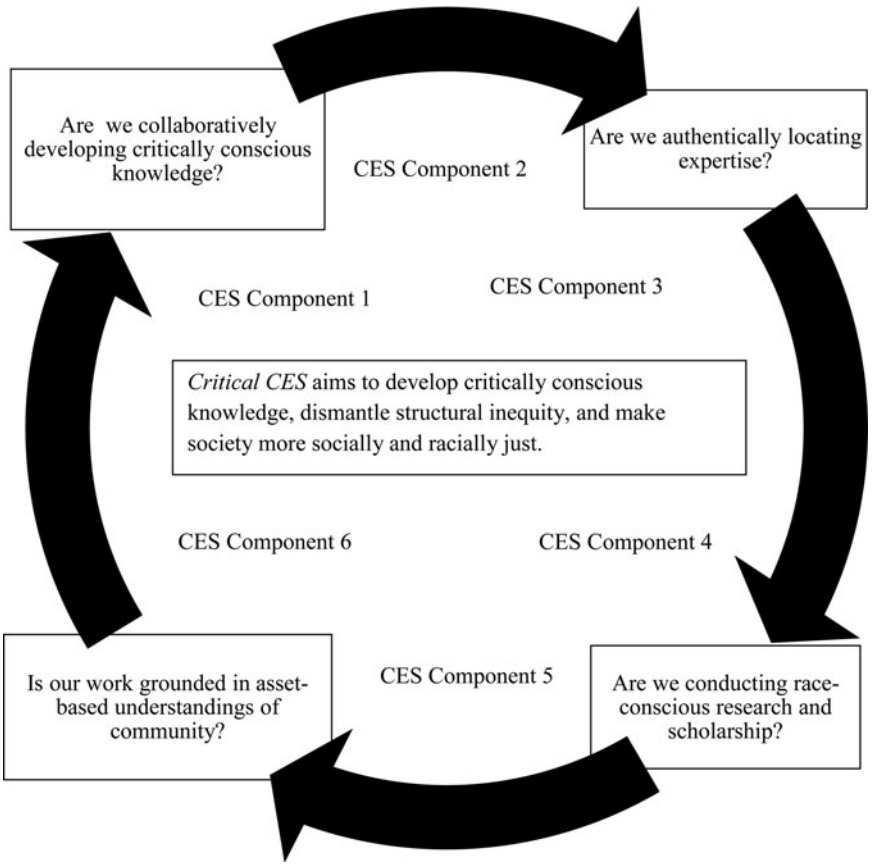

FIGURE 1 Critical community-engaged scholarship.

officers what triggers them to use force does not reflect an asset-based understanding of community because it implies that actions of community members are to blame for the use of police force. Similarly, Jones's assumption that community members may want to participate, *as students*, in the university extension program (as opposed to as teaching assistants or co-teachers) reflects a deficit orientation toward community because it does not recognize their expertise and unnecessarily relegates them to lower status positions of participation. Thus, Jones makes choices in the first vignette that could unintentionally perpetuate inequity.

In short, the aforementioned questions are designed to support practitioners in transforming their practice of CES to critical CES. As depicted in Figure 1, critical CES includes mutually beneficial, authentic, reciprocal partnerships between universities and communities. The aim of the partnerships is to collaboratively develop and apply critically conscious knowledge to consequential public issues in pursuit of social and racial justice. A strategy highlighted by critical CES for realizing justice is collaboratively enacting changes to policies, laws, or widespread cultural practices that improve the lives of marginalized people and communities. I believe critical CES

can lead to a more equitable distribution of power in society. The four questions encircling the practice are not designed to supplant the six core CES components, but rather add a critical framing to how they are enacted. In the next section, I present a vignette to illustrate how this understanding of justice and these CRT-questions could support a more critical approach to CES.

VIGNETTE 2: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

Professor Jones has been teaching criminal justice for 15 years at a public university in "Westcoast City." Jones identifies as a white aspiring antiracist activist—or at least he does now. Jones grimaces, and then chuckles, as he flashes back to an antiracist workshop he attended. It was in this workshop, led by a local community organizing group, that Jones experienced firsthand the "push" (Ishimaru, Gordon, & Cervantes, 2011) that community organizers often employ to support leadership development. Jones was pushed to reflect on how his white privilege is reflected in his research processes and questions. He learned, like many white scholars, that he has a tendency to avoid questioning the racial causes of inequity—instead preferring to discuss "inclusion" and "public good"—and is often unaware of the impacts of institutional or systemic inequities. These tendencies and assumptions can lead him to ask research questions that—according to dominant cultural narratives—sound "balanced," but in reality favor those currently in power. Though an uncomfortable experience, Jones recognizes the profound impact the organizers and workshop participants had on his identity and research. Following the workshop, he stayed in touch with a couple of the organizers and he is anxious to talk to them about how they (and others living in the predominantly black and lower-income area of Westcoast City) view the public issue of police violence and what research they believe could help uncover structural causes of the problem. During conversations with community members, one name, Yolanda Jackson, repeatedly arises. Jones is told that Mrs. Jackson is considered a community leader and often has culturally and historically informed ideas about how to address public inequities. Jackson agrees to meet with Jones and rattles off multiple questions, any of which could inform or become the basis for research studies.

"Well, if I had the backing of university resources, I would love to find out: how does disinvestment in low-income communities of color impact rates of police violence? For example, do we see a spike in police shootings of black men after policy changes that lower spending on education or affordable housing in low-income areas? Think about Proposition 13 in CA. In our neighborhood of Westcoast City, the impact of Prop 13 on the schools was debilitating. In the rich neighborhoods in the hills, PTAs just did fundraisers to make up the gaps. But in our schools funding for art, music, and guidance counselors plummeted; drop-out rates increased. I often saw many of our youth hanging out on front porches, with no school and no jobs in the neighborhood. To be clear, they weren't causing trouble, but they were more visible. That makes me wonder if police stepped up patrols and if there were spikes in police violence in neighborhoods like ours without the resources to privately fund quality public education. Or what about an increase in funding for police forces? Is that associated with increased or decreased police violence?" Jackson pauses and then continues, "And the minimum age requirement to be a police officer—in many states it's 18—we're putting guns into such young hands. Are there fewer incidents of police violence in states or counties that have more stringent entrance requirements? And what about antibias trainings on implicit associations (powell & Godsil, 2011) and providing tools to counter negative racial implicit associations, like the one in Madison, WI (Vetterkind, 2015)? Could we

talk to community members in Madison and find out what they think about the police and whether they see any change in policing practices?"

Jackson goes on to share that she would be nervous if Jones chose research projects just based on his one conversation with her. She suggests that Jones employ two community members as Teaching Fellows (TFs) in the course to ensure not just that multiple perspectives are heard, but that people with in-depth understandings of the impacts of structural inequity are central in figuring out ways to address the issue. "I'd offer to co-teach with you, but I'm working on a number of projects right now," Jackson explains. She hopes that two community TFs will also support the involvement of nontraditional or marginalized students in the class. Jones mostly listens, taking notes to clarify ideas and starting to jot down questions of his own—what he would need to find out in order to develop these questions into manageable course research projects.

After the meeting, Jones follows Jackson's advice and applies for an internal university grant to get funding to employ two TFs in the course, but, not surprisingly, runs into a roadblock. TFs at his university are required to have master's degrees. He develops a work-around, which he has found is often necessary in CES. He rewrites the grant, asking for a series of honoraria for guest speakers, all of which he will use to pay the two TFs. Together, Jackson and Jones conduct interviews in a local church and select two fellows. The TFs have already come to him with suggestions for a course project—many community members, personally impacted by police violence, want a chance to sit face-to-face with the officers they believe are responsible for the violence. They want Jones to include readings on Restorative Justice (Zehr, 2002) on the syllabus and for students to organize a restorative justice circle with community members and police officers for one course project. Jones is uncomfortable about this project, nervous if he will be able to get police officers to participate. But, both TFs are adamant that this is a critical part of addressing the issues. Jones reflects on the TFs' suggestion, consults the literature on restorative justice, and acknowledges his reluctance is largely due to his own positionality as a white man. Jones realizes a healing circle could indeed set the stage for successful community–police collaborations. In addition to the circles, key aspects of the course will include working collaboratively with all members of the course to develop Jackson's and other community members' ideas into research proposals. At the culmination of the semester, Jones plans to utilize university resources to hold community meetings and invite Jackson and others to listen to the proposals and come to consensus about the most pressing projects to pursue.

In subsequent semesters of the course, Jones will use the community-selected proposals to inform external grant applications so that he can pursue the research projects in collaboration with community members. Part of the grant will be continued funding for members of the community who are impacted by police violence to be TFs or co-professors in each session of the course. As ideas for impacting structural change emerge from initial research, Jones plans to continually work in tandem with community members and police officers to implement ideas and reformulate research questions. Ideally, he would find a community organization, designed and owned by community members themselves—sometimes called "culturally specific services" (Curry-Stevens, 2012)—with whom to partner. Thus, the course will include traditional research tasks, such as literature reviews, interviews, and field observations. Additionally, students' course projects may range from holding public forums to present emerging findings, receive feedback, and revise the research; to developing policy briefs for city councilors and state senators on the findings; to the projects recommended by TFs and community members, such as facilitating dialogues, restorative justice circles, and public accountability sessions with police and community

members. Further, as Jones, community members, and students collect and analyze research data, he plans to write single and multiauthored manuscripts (with students and community members) for publication in peer-reviewed publicly accessible online journals.

Jones hopes the multi-semester partnership will directly benefit local communities. For example, if Jackson, Jones, and other community members decide that researching the anti-bias training is the most pressing research project, perhaps they can not only research the program in Madison, but also secure funding to bring such a program to Westcoast City and research the impact. In short, Jones aims to structure the project in such a way that research is informed by its practical applications, the project continually simultaneously benefits community and university members, and these individuals collaboratively generate knowledge to address structural causes of police violence in low-income communities of color.

This second hypothetical vignette illustrates one example of CES that is more informed by critical theory than the first. In this vignette, while Professor Jones is similarly focused on the real-life social issue of police violence and use of force in low-income communities of color, at each step in the process, the role of Jones, the roles of community members, and assumptions about the location of expertise and processes for developing knowledge are more critically engaged.

For example, in the first CES vignette, Jones consults with multiple community members to select the public issue and research questions to investigate it (CES Component 1: Social issues selected with the community and CES Component 2: Scholarly investigation of public issues). However, Jones does so without conducting a race-conscious analysis of contributing factors and location of expertise. This lack of critically conscious analyses may have caused Jones to overlook unequal power dynamics in the university–community partnership (Avila-Linn et al., 2012; Curry-Stevens, 2012; Speed, 2008) and misinterpret why community members were hesitant to agree to participate in his proposed research project. Contrastingly, in the critical CES vignette, Jones is more reflective of his own researcher biases. At the individual level, he has an incomplete understanding of the structural causes and impacts of inequity and a tendency to avoid race-based analyses. Institutionally, he represents the university, along with its history of power asymmetries and problematic relations with the surrounding communities. Thus, in critical CES, the expertise of community members is recognized and Yolanda Jackson, community organizers, and other community members play central roles in defining the social issue and effective research questions for scholarly investigation.

Further, in the first CES vignette, Jones's research plans support the collaborative production of knowledge (CES Component 4) in some ways, such as through seeking community feedback on research findings; however, critical CES provides principles that more effectively draw on community members' expertise and assets to develop critically conscious knowledge. For example, as people who frequently experience racial and socioeconomic marginalization, community members have greater expertise in naming the myriad causes and impacts of inequities, such as police officers' use of force (Barajas-López & Ishimaru, 2016). Further, long-time community members, such as Yolanda Jackson, can draw on their expertise of how various policies that have disinvested in their communities—such as the reduction of property taxes that fund schools—to consider larger structural mechanisms that could impact policing practices.

Utilizing critical CES principles can do more than simply change the end goal of the community–university research project. In the first vignette, community members are consulted at the beginning and toward the end of the research project, whereas the second vignette they are integral to the development of research questions and the ways in which these questions will be

investigated. As opposed to magically translating research into change strategies at the end of a research project, the research itself brings about change, through an implicit bias workshop for police officers, restorative justice circles, and accountability forms. Thus, the unidirectionality of research to practice is brought into question. In the second vignette, unlike the first, scholarly investigation and knowledge production are allowed to be iterative and are mutually informed by both research and practice. This bidirectional flow of research and practice reflects the ideas that practice informs what research cannot and a deep understanding of practice can lead to more salient and actionable research questions (Gutiérrez & Penuel, 2014).

The critical CES vignette also highlights how CES can be structured so communities can authentically benefit from the partnership. More specifically, the second vignette illustrates how to carry out CES components 3 and 5 (mutually beneficial partnerships and institutional resources for the public good). In the first vignette, Jones considers (or guesses) how community members could benefit from the research partnership. In the second, community members tell Jones what he can do that will benefit their community (e.g., research officer implicit bias trainings or regularly incorporate funding into grants for community members to be TFs). Many of these ideas from community members require Jones to utilize his access to university resources for the benefit of community. Further, while Jones is still researching, grant writing, and developing manuscripts in the critical CES vignette, the type and quality of these research projects are transformed. The second vignette brings with it different kinds of research products, such as policy briefs and multiauthored manuscripts with community members, that broaden traditional notions of scholarship. Additionally, as opposed to giving equal balance to police officers' and community members' ideas for solutions, Jones is valuing the expertise and clarity of vision that often comes with being personally impacted by structural inequities (Barajas-López & Ishimaru, 2016). Consequently, the quality of the research (CES Component 6)—measured by the likelihood of investigating actionable research questions or producing knowledge that accurately addresses structural inequity—is likely to be enhanced. Overall, these hypothetical vignettes illustrate promising possibilities for how community–university research partnerships can effectively produce knowledge with a greater likelihood of deconstructing systemic sources of inequity.

IMPLICATIONS

As higher education institutions seek ways to partner with communities in order to produce knowledge in support of a more just democracy, it becomes increasingly important to develop effective practices for CES. A previous review of dominant literature on CES revealed that an overt focus on justice and the explicit integration of concepts from CRT was largely missing. This is concerning because the prevailing purpose of CES—addressing public issues—can be bolstered with lessons from critical theory because multiple public issues arise from a myriad of structural causes, and critical theory sheds light on structural antecedents to issues. Further, color-blind framings risk leaving out analyses of the institutional or structural racism that led to the existence of the public issue in the first place. Thus, the purpose of this article was to analyze and illustrate how lessons from CRT and other critical theorists could transform CES into critical CES. Critical CES engages mutually beneficial, authentic, reciprocal partnerships between universities and communities with the aim of collaboratively developing and applying critically conscious knowledge to consequential public issues to make society more racially and socially

just. University and community practitioners of critical CES can ask whether their research aims and practices: (a) collaboratively develop critically conscious knowledge, (b) authentically locate expertise, (c) incorporate race-conscious analysis and scholarship, and (d) ground practices in asset-based understandings of community. As opposed to engaging in CES for the "public good," these questions are designed to support critical CES for justice: the societal conditions in which all social groups flourish, people value their lives, and individuals, in particular those from marginalized backgrounds, can influence political decisions that impact their lives and support the flourishing of others.

This understanding of critical CES has multiple implications for postsecondary practice, policy, and research. In terms of practice, bringing critical CES to fruition in university settings is likely to be challenging. The second vignette illustrates one *hypothetical* example of what critical CES could look like; in real life, it is never that easy. University–community partnerships in which there are authentic emphases on deconstructing structural inequities, honestly navigating differential access to power, and developing critical knowledge to address public issues are often both complicated (and uncomfortable) and run into numerous obstacles (Curry-Stevens, 2012; Ishimaru, Lott, & the Equitable Parent–School Collaboration Research Project, 2014; Nelson, London, & Strobel, 2015). For example, universities, as described in the vignette above, often require traditional degrees (Ph.D., Ed.D., etc.) as credentials for teaching and do not allow alternative ways to illustrate competence and proficiency. Or, community members who offer their expertise and time to work on collaborative research projects may not have the documentation to be paid in the United States, and therefore, may be unable to be compensated through university human resources departments. Further, developing authentic relationships with historically marginalized and indigenous communities to engage in research often takes significant time, as trust must be earned in communities in which "research" has historically been used to justify further marginalization (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012).

In terms of external funding and internal recognition, further challenges may arise for university faculty. For example, when applying for grants, while there are line items for various university personnel who will be working on the research, there is rarely a line item for community members to be compensated for sharing their expertise. Moreover, grantors and university assessment protocols often look for tangible outcomes—such as grants, publications, and policy changes. They often ignore or do not allow for alternative outcomes, such as capacity-building in community members' research and leadership skills—frequent goals of community organizing (Warren & Mapp, 2011) and community-based design research (Bang & Vossoughi, 2016). Finally, although some universities are heeding recommendations for expanding the notion of scholarship for tenure processes, such as those produced by Ellison and Eatman (2008), more expansive conceptualizations of scholarship are still needed. For example, while a co-authored paper may be the more legitimate and accurate way to publish the results of critical CES, in most tenure processes, single-authored papers are favored. Further, institutional challenges to the legitimacy and rigor of community-based research can reinforce institutionalized racism for faculty of color, who often face additional obstacles and challenges to the quality of their scholarship when pursuing these research approaches (see, e.g., González & Padilla, 2008). Thus, with regard to practice, faculty members must be prepared to navigate institutional obstacles such as credential requirements, human resources processes, and tenure reward structures.

It is important to note that each of the aforementioned "challenges" that faculty members may encounter also illustrate possible sites in need of postsecondary policy changes. The challenges

are met when existing societal or university power structures are constructed in ways that benefit people from majority backgrounds, such as people with documented citizenship or access to good public and private education to obtain traditional degree credentials more easily or those who are the current beneficiaries of widely accepted grant and publication practices. Thus, when practicing critical CES, faculty members should not strive to avoid challenges or tensions, but rather, be open to how these tensions—often pointed out by community co-researchers—highlight institutionalized structures that contribute to inequity and thus, are places for policy change.

Finally, with regard to research, critical CES is a strategy for producing more effective knowledge to address public issues. Universities can partner with marginalized communities to come up with public issues of importance—such as racially inequitable school disciplinary practices or inequitable enrollment and retention of students of color in higher education—and then collectively hone in on research questions to develop knowledge for improving these social justice issues and collaborate with community to identify individuals with expertise on these topics. The results of these efforts are far more likely to interrupt deficit-based discourses, address structural causes of inequities, and utilize communities' assets to bring about transformational change.

In short, critical CES provides principles for establishing university–community coalitions that work to dismantle structural inequities in our democracy. Critical CES moves us away from framing problems or public issues as existing *within* communities and toward a more justice-oriented and accurate framing. Public issues are often the result of systematic inequitable resource distribution in our democracy, the impacts of which disproportionately fall on low-income communities of color. Critical CES moves us toward understanding how resources and expertise from communities and universities can be utilized to develop critically conscious knowledge that supports deconstructing these inequitable structures so that we can live in a more just democracy.

AUTHOR BIO

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