**Shared Space, Liminal Space: Five Years into a Community-University Place-Based Experiment**

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**Abstract**

This article explores shared space at the University of Minnesota's Robert J. Jones Urban Research and Outreach Engagement Center (UROC), located four miles off campus in a community strong in assets, but facing inequality, disinvestment and racism. UROC's mission promotes university-community collaboration to solve critical urban challenges. We learned this requires more than just a physical space. Trust and connection requires tending to epistemological space – liminality between the university and community – to foster transformational scholarship.

**Keywords:**

Engagement, Anchor Institutions, Place-Based

**Introduction**

Public relevance is crucial to the future of institutions of higher learning (Holland, 2009). Academia has knowledge, skills and resources to help tackle societal grand challenges such as climate change, widening local and global wealth gap, wars and famine, health decline and disease, and gender-based violence among many other issues (Boyer, 1997; Harkavy, 2015). However, an emerging body of literature suggests the importance of engagement, including creative and collaborative approaches to knowledge production, rooted in the lives of people who experience these challenges first-hand (Stringer, 2014; Bradbury, 2015). Collaborations between the academy and communities often falter on issues of trust, accountability, transparency, and misunderstanding (Davidson-Hunt & O'Flaherty, 2007; Glover & Silka, 2013), particularly when those collaborations involve communities of color and low-income people due to histories of exploitation, colonialism and experimentation (Smith, 2012). Thus, collaboration is critical but fraught. The creation of shared spaces offers opportunity, and, of course, additional challenges.

This article describes the first five years of the University of Minnesota Robert J. Jones Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center (UROC). UROC is a place-based engagement center located in the Near North Community of Minneapolis (known as the "Northside") designed to be a shared space to promote collaboration. The selection of the Northside as the physical site for UROC was deliberate. The goal was to build on strong assets with community leaders while also funneling more university resources to confront significant structural racism, concentrated poverty, housing segregation, disinvestment, and wealth, health and educational disparities.

Trust-building, transparency and accountability have been critical to UROC's mission from the beginning. Lessons from our first five years suggest that attention to building a beautiful and accessible physical space is necessary but not sufficient for building strong community-university partnership. The conceptual and epistemological components of our shared space proved to be equally important. Here we share how UROC developed and cultivates a liminal space – between university and community – that is just safe enough for everyone to feel discomfort and challenge. We have found that being able to feel safe enough to be uncomfortable together is a critical aspect of shared space that leads to transformation and collaboration.

This article describes the sometimes-tumultuous history of UROC's iterative development to offer lessons and insights for others as they construct shared spaces in which to collaborate for the public good. We begin a discussion of the literature on anchor institutions, place-based engagement and liminal space. This is followed by a short history of UROC. Then we discuss in greater depth what we mean by UROC being "liminal" and why we believe it is critical for shared space and transformation. We provide examples to share lessons. We conclude by offering clear lessons and next steps from UROC's developmental trajectory.

**The Literature: Anchor Institutions, Place-Based Engagement and Liminal Space**

From Anchor to Engagement

Anchor institutions are frequently described as "place-based" institutions (Birch, Perry, & Taylor, 2013) that "bring together economic and financial assets, human resources, and physical structures" (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2013). Anchor institutions draw their identities to a large degree from their urban locations and their contributions to the economic stability of their surrounding communities (Dubb, McKinley, & Howard, 2013). Non-profit and for-profit institutions can all act as anchor institutions, providing employment opportunities, creating markets for goods and services, and partnering with other institutions and businesses to develop new partnerships and economic, and cultural, and educational opportunities within communities (Ehlenz, Birch, & Agness, 2014). Taylor and Luter (2013) further refine the definition of anchor institutions by suggesting that an authentic anchor institution should have a social justice mission that allows it to act as a "change agent" within its surrounding community.

Urban universities are uniquely positioned to act as authentic anchor institutions in their communities. Universities have traditionally played a role in urban development as the "eds" of "eds & meds"--institutes of higher education and medical centers that both provide a market for goods and services and generate jobs for area residents (Harkavy & Zuckerman, 1999). While job creation through hiring local residents is an instrumental contribution to local communities, universities are increasingly leveraging their geographic locations to cultivate partnerships and sustained relationships with their surrounding communities to achieve benefits that extend beyond employment. This can include service learning, class projects, and engaged research (Dubb et al., 2013).

A focus on more meaningful engagement with surrounding communities comes from a growing understanding that increased economic well-being does not necessarily perpetuate individual and social well-being, and that development *of* a community is different and more impactful than development *in* a community (Bridger & Alter, 2007). Deeper engagement can happen when universities embrace a 21st Century way of thinking that works *with* communities to collaboratively solve problems and build on strengths (Holland, 2009). This vision aligns with the burgeoning literature on community-engaged scholarship and a recognized need across the academy for deeper collaboration with communities (Fitzgerald, Bruns, Sonka, Furco, & Swanson, 2012).

The importance of working with communities was strongly articulated during the process of developing what was termed an "urban agenda" between the University of Minnesota Twin Cities' campus (UMTC) and the Northside community. Maruyama, Jones, and Finnegan (2009), writing about the UMTC's initial work to create an urban task force, stated that place-based work should "[F]ulfill the University's land grand and civic missions through addressing issues of urban communities *in collaboration* with those communities, in order to improve the quality of life for all Minnesotans" (Maruyama et al., 2009, p. 82). They further suggested that collaboration should be "[A]nchored where possible by a *physical presence* [emphasis added] in communities where the issues to be resolved are most prevalent" (p. 82). But, they further stated that the University's governing body "cautioned that the University cannot become a social or human service provider for all unmet needs or a landlord for urban renewal" (p. 81). Alignment with the UMTC's teaching, learning and research mission was part of the foundational fabric of UROC.

To this end, some urban universities are reaching out to their geographic communities, working with local neighborhood organizations to find ways to meet local needs. More importantly, universities are finding ways to co-produce knowledge with communities that lead to strategies for addressing pressing community concerns. For example, the Netter Center at the University of Pennsylvania focuses on developing mutually-beneficial partnerships with community organizations to address community concerns, resulting in the development of new courses for university students and new programs and initiatives for the surrounding geographic community of West Philadelphia (Netter Center for Community Partnerships, 2014). The Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center at the University of Nebraska at Omaha provides a discrete, dedicated, on-campus space for the university's outreach and engagement efforts. The on-campus building provides office space for community partner organizations, public meeting spaces, and a centralized location for students seeking volunteer opportunities. The TD Community Engagement Centre at York University is located off-campus in a shopping center in the Jane-Finch neighborhood of Toronto and offers a variety of academic and lifelong opportunities, both for York University students and local residents.

Defining Space: Liminality in Engagement

A key challenge in committing to sustained and collaborative place-based work is the need to share physical and epistemological space in mutually beneficial ways. Sharing requires working through many conflicting ways of doing and knowing, where all involved transform how they

work together. The notion of liminality as a metaphor illuminates one way that shared space can emerge. In Anthropology, liminal space is often defined as a space that is "betwixt and between;" a kind of suspended no-person's-land, mediating between two (or more) fixed states (Turner, 1964). Victor Turner, an early theorist of "liminality" defined a fixed state as "any type of stable or recurrent condition that is culturally recognized" (Turner, 1964, p. 234). Turner and other Anthropologists used the concept to explore and understand rituals, initiations, and rites of passage. Others, such as Mary Douglas, have explored the symbolic relation between liminal spaces/people and distinctions between the sacred and the profane (Douglas, 1966). The concept has also been used in post-colonial studies to shed light on cultural hybridity and movement between cultural spaces and is still a cogent concept in thinking about transformation (e.g. Horvath, Thomassen, & Wydra, 2015).

For our discussion here, liminal space is a compelling metaphor for two reasons. First, it provides language for thinking about transformation between fixed states. Certainly Turner's definition of a fixed state could apply to the institutional and cultural differences that often surface between universities and communities. Another key aspect of liminal space is that it suspends the rules (momentarily)—it is flux and transformation, uncertainty and discomfort. This moment of disruption can be a time to build trust. Old ways of knowing and doing become transformed. That trust can then extend outward. As described more in depth below, we believe the way UROC holds space creates small moments of something akin to liminal space; we are neither simply a community center nor an academic research center. We are both. We do not wish to over-stretch this metaphor, but we believe that close attention to cultivating a space that is safe enough for everyone to feel discomfort and challenge – such as in liminal space – is an important component of shared space.


**A Short History of UROC**

UROC and the UMTC

The UMTC was established in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul in 1851 and it received public support under the Morrill Land-Grant Act. The University of Minnesota system has four additional campuses across the State of Minnesota. The Twin Cities campus currently has 30,500 undergraduate students and 16,300 graduate and professional students, including 7,000 international students from 135 countries and 400,000 alumni. The UMTC has recognized the critical role of public engagement in meeting the University's mission for teaching, research and outreach. Thus, the system-wide Office for Public Engagement (OPE) reports directly to the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost. UROC is a UMTC-wide center that reports through OPE to the Provost and is therefore positioned as an academic research center to support engaged scholarship on issues relevant to urban communities.

The UROC building is a refurbished strip mall that is 22,700 square feet, with over 14,322 square feet of usable office and meeting room space. The building also houses an art gallery, hospitality station, reception area, a teaching kitchen, staff lounge, meditation/prayer room, storage, and other facilities. Windows across the front and back of the building represent the transparency promised to the community, and create a light-filled environment. The building has

high visibility and its common spaces are regularly reserved for. More than 2,050 visitors come into the building each month. In the 2015-16 academic year, UROC engaged faculty from more than thirty-five academic programs across the UMTC campus, supported sixty-five projects, and welcomed more than 25,000 visitors.

The mission, goals and structure that emerged for UROC were not always clear. Rather, they unfolded over a four year process of community engagement led by the UMTC's central administration with strong leadership from other units, faculty and community partners.

Early History of UROC (2006-08)

The concept for creating a space to be shared by the university and community at UROC's current location (near the corner of Plymouth and Penn Avenues in north Minneapolis) was formed in conversations between the UMTC president, the Minneapolis Mayor, and a community leader and CEO of a county health facility located near UROC. The first iteration of "shared space" was called the University Northside Partnership (UNP). This vision was led by Robert J. Jones, the Senior Vice President of Systems Administration and Academic Affairs who was a leader in the UMNTC central administration. The vision was big and bold. The Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder (an African-American run press) in the opening of an article dated May 26, 2006, described the plans as follows:

> University of Minnesota officials have big plans for the corner of Penn and Plymouth in North Minneapolis, where they envision a national model of university involvement in a community with multiple needs. Some community members and organizations support the proposal, while others, including black professionals, do not believe that a white institution like the U of M is best suited to lead such an effort. (Towns, 2006)

The possibility of a physical University presence in North Minneapolis led to UMTC recruiting a renowned child psychologist to found the University Child and Family Center in partnership with the county health facility. The center would focus, among other things, on the role of child development in reducing out-of-home placements to foster care.

From the beginning, the University vision for what a shared space might mean was not universally shared among the different communities in north Minneapolis. There was also a great deal of mistrust rooted in concerns that the University had ulterior and secret motives behind the UNP. The center was a proposed partnership with the City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County to build and run a $65 million dollar state of the art mental health facility and research center. However, by June 2006 the St. Paul Pioneer Press declared that "The University Northside Partnership is now tangled in issues of race, mistrust and control, and it has opened the dam to a flood of long-held grievances against the University" (Tosto, 2006, p. 1A). The article pointed to flyers in the community that asked, "Do you want our black families and babies to be tested on like black guinea pigs again?" (p. 1A).

These articles captured the tone and tenor of what was to come for the next five years of community conversation between UMTC officials, faculty and staff, and community members and leaders about research, race, knowledge production, ownership and intellectual property,

exploitation, experimentation on black children, and claims of past broken promises and lack of trust. Media coverage from the time focused particular attention on the proposed mental-health facility for children and the need for a formal community benefits agreement.

The distance on agreement between the community and the University as to the value and role of a university physical presence was considerable, culminating in a community vote conducted by the Northside Resident Redevelopment Council. Of a total of 439 interested community members who voted, 75 percent supported the UNP. However, that vote was an agreement on the possible value of a university building in the neighborhood—not necessarily a vote of trust for the work to be done there.

The UNP's plans for a research and mental health facility on the corner of Plymouth and Penn Avenues North collapsed in 2008. The University pulled out of the plan citing financial concerns, including the worsening economy and a higher than expected lease rate for the space. However, the university remained committed to the community and turned attention to renovating a failing shopping center (located near the same corner) as a base for university research and outreach (Brandt, 2008). The University's research and outreach centers and Extension's Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships stood as models from which an urban center would be built.

In shifting the focus but not the vision, the University took an indispensable first step toward creating a model of reciprocal, participatory engagement where the community and university collaboratively identify problems and create solutions (Cantor, Englot, & Higgins, 2013). As the planning and building progressed, the community worked side-by-side with the University in an effort to "move beyond the one-way flow of intellectual capital (and technology transfer) independently generated within the ivory tower and given to (or perhaps foisted upon) communities" (Cantor et al., 2013, p. 20).

UROC: Is it just a building? (2008-09)

The UNP moved forward at the University with continued support from senior members of central administration. Under the leadership of Senior Vice President Jones, key faculty members, and a newly hired executive director of UROC, work with community leaders and community residents participating in the UNP continued discussions of a university presence in the community. In February 2008, the UMTC purchased a bankrupt shopping center near the corner of Plymouth and Penn for $1.125 million dollars with a plan to invest another $2.1 million dollars in renovations. In the Minneapolis Star Tribune on February 16, 2008, Senior Vice President Jones stated that "The purchase of this strategic location on the North Side is the foundational piece of the university's vision to create new and support existing partnerships between the community and the university" (Walsh & Collins, 2008, p. 6B). The corner of Plymouth and Penn had been envisioned as the geographic space for this partnership that became "real" in the building of UROC. From there many questions remained. Was UROC just a building, a space to house partnerships; or was it more than that?

To answer this question, under the direction of the first UROC Executive Director and Associate Vice President, Irma McClaurin, the University conducted almost two years of community and university listening through focus groups, interviews, and informal conversations to learn from multiple community and university stakeholders what they would like to see as the vision for UROC and its work. This process engaged hundreds of people, culminating in a two-day conference which was held in February 2009, called "Coming Together to Create a Shared Future for North Minneapolis," or the Futures Conference for short. There were over 56 participants including faith leaders, economic development representatives, UMTC senior leadership, faculty and staff, nonprofit leaders, community residents (elders, formerly incarcerated individuals, and youth) and represented people from many racial and ethnic groups. Participants engaged in workshops, discussions, and break out groups. From that work emerged a new vision based on mutually beneficial partnership and valuing all forms of knowledge.

Participants in the Futures Conference provided a clear vision demanding accountability, transparency, relevance, and commitment to multiple forms of knowledge, partnership and mutual benefit. They suggested that transformative, trusting relationships would be dynamic and take time to develop because so many harms from research have been done in the past. The conference also suggested a collaborative, transparent model would require a shift from thinking that higher education provides expert knowledge and solutions while the community only contains the problem. Instead, a vision of mutual benefit and recognition of community assets and knowledge was necessary for the vision to move forward. Most importantly, the community wanted to drive relevant, useful and action-ready research rather than serve as passive "subjects" of someone else's research agenda that would lead to publications, tenure and rewards for the researcher and for the anchor institution (for documents, see uroc.umn.edu).

These joint engagement efforts were bolstered by independent efforts within the University and from within the Northside community. Internal University activities, led by two senior faculty, focused on convening interested faculty to talk about doing engaged work. Faculty were identified through their participation in efforts led by the Office for Public engagement to understand how engagement could support the University's mission. External University activities were organized by the Northside Residents Redevelopment Council (NRRC) and included organizing the community vote, discussion of community benefits, and more. Both of these processes surfaced three community and faculty delineated priority areas of work: education and life-long learning, health and wellness, and community and economic development. The Futures Conference also identified art and artistic expression as a critical form of knowledge, connection and healing.

Living into the Mission: The UROC Model Development (2010-14)

When the building opened its doors in 2009, UROC had a building, mission and vision. The Futures Conference content and vision were distilled into UROC's current mission. Senior Vice President Jones invited early adopters of engaged and place-based research, often through discussions with collegiate deans, to locate projects at UROC. (Important to note is that early adopters were not charged for space; rather that cost remained in the Senior Vice President's office.) In addition, the Community Affairs Committee (from the UNP) was linked to UROC to continue a formal avenue for community input. Efforts were moving forward, but two large

questions remained: What is UROC? And how does UROC operate? In other words, it was still to be determined exactly what UROC would actually DO and who would really benefit from that work. Some thought UROC was an outreach outpost or a point of service delivery. Others believed it was a community center that offered classes. Still others believed that UROC was simply a building, a space just like any other office space on campus. These ideas did not match the University of Minnesota's strategic vision for urban partnership as outlined by the University's governing board to be "consistent with our core missions of research and teaching" (Maruyama et al., 2009, p. 81).

The founding executive director of UROC shepherded the early engagement processes and the building renovation and design. After a short transition, Heidi Barajas was hired by Senior Vice President Jones as executive director in 2010. Between 2010 and 2013, the UROC staff worked with community and University partners to operationalize and "live into" the UROC mission. First, UROC's work was aligned with the Office for Public Engagement's strategic plan on public engagement that supports the University's core strategic goals in the areas of research, teaching and service. UROC's reporting line was changed to its current configuration in 2011, when Senior Vice President Jones left the University and the System and Academic Affairs structure was re-organized. At that time, UROC's reporting line was shifted to the OPE within the Provost Office.

After UROC was secured in the academic reporting line of the UMTC, the executive director convened a UROC leadership team that reported directly to her. The UROC leadership team, comprised of the executive director, directors of research, facilities, outreach, and administration, along with the support of faculty and graduate students from UMTC's Minnesota Evaluation Studies Institute (MESI) developed a logic model (with activities, outputs, intermediate and long term goals). The logic model and accompanying strategic planning documents solidified our core operating principles and examined the modes of operation of projects at UROC that were long-term, sustainable and deemed impactful by participants and the broader community.

Through preliminary documentation strategies, we learned from our activities that were deemed successful by University and community partners how to best meet the UROC mission. Criteria for "success" were determined by each project, but we created a checklist to help surface key areas for measurement of success, including: processes of partnership (i.e. how involved were community in all phases, degree of working relationship, etc.); degree of methodological rigor to match the question; knowledge production, documentation and dissemination of that knowledge in multiple formats; and action (what was done as a result of the knowledge).

The end result of that work was UROC's operational model, shown in Figure 1. At the core of UROC's work is partnership through a cycle of research and outreach. All work conducted at UROC must be through a university-community partnership of some kind. Engaged research requires consistent and thoughtful community connections that are best developed and maintained through outreach. Thus, the UROC staffing structure has a Director of Outreach and a Director of Research. UROC promotes and supports engaged research and outreach through two mechanisms. First, UROC supports the efforts of other units on the UMTC campus to do work in mutually beneficial partnership with community. We do this through catalyzing engagement. UMTC projects can affiliate with UROC and use shared space in the community,

community connections, a collegial and supportive learning environment, professional development, and reputational capital. Prior to joining UROC, these projects go through an affiliation process where we agree on "fit" between the project or program and UROC's mission, vision and values.

Second, UROC conducts its own signature projects through direct engagement. Our goals are to engage with our neighbors and other urban communities to develop and model ways of conducting engaged research and outreach. In both forms of engagement we promote scholarship in action, bringing the best of the academy and community wisdom to bear on our most pressing urban challenges such as the achievement gap, sex trading and trafficking, trauma and community violence, health disparities, and a pervasive wealth and jobs gap linked to race and geography.
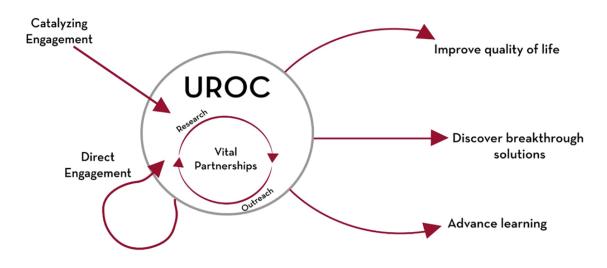


*Figure 1*. Operational Model

The core principles for UROC's direct engagement research and outreach are transparency, accountability, inclusivity, and mutual benefit. All projects conducted at UROC build on strengths in confronting urban challenges and are driven by local questions and concerns. Research at UROC involves those directly affected in ways that are appropriate, building on the motto from youth work, "nothing about us, without us."

There are many modes of community engaged research and outreach. These include approaches described as: engaged research, community based research (CBR), community based participatory research (CBPR), action research (AR), participatory action research (PAR), and youth participatory action research (YPAR). Each label has a slightly different pedigree, emphasis and approach. UROC does not promote or endorse specific approaches or research methodologies. Rather, we encourage a "right fit" between goals, methods and type of engagement along the engagement continuum developed by the UMTC's Office for Public Engagement. The continuum envisions a range of engagement from research "in" communities,

to research "for" communities, to research "with" communities. UROC does not conduct or directly support research "on" communities where there is no partnership.

**Liminal Space: Working together in New Ways**

Shared space is more than simply an accumulation of walls, doors and windows. It has a climate, an environment, an ethos, a "feel", and a presence. Shared conceptual and epistemological space, as liminal space suggests, is where we cultivate a space that is safe enough for everyone to feel discomfort and challenge. By definition, something is conceptual when it deals primarily with abstract or original thoughts. A conceptual plan for example, is one in an early stage--to make it work, the details need to be fleshed out. Epistemology relates to our theory of knowledge and what "counts" as knowledge and expertise. Both are beyond what we perceive with our senses and involve how we believe each other.

When we talk about conceptual and epistemological space at UROC, we mean the way the space "feels" to people who enter it. Do people feel respected, valued, and welcome? Does the space reflect multiple cultures, values, and communities? The physical space, staffing, and overall accessibility can foster or forestall these responses to UROC. Our staff is intentional about cultivating these more intangible aspects of UROC. For example, one senior leader from the UMTC referred to our common areas as follows: "This space feels powerful, the accumulation of many difficult conversations that happen in a respectful and trust-building way." A community leader reflected that UROC is "eye-pleasing." He felt that this quality raised the bar for people to feel a sense of importance and value within their community. The UROC art gallery encapsulates this duality of space. It is both physical and conceptual, providing representations of community beauty, strength and reflection. All of these elements are critical to how the space at UROC functions to bridge divides and provide space for difficult and complex relations that can lead to transformation through knowledge production and scholarship. Much of the programing and research conducted through UROC plays on these notions of shared space.

Below we provide a few in-depth examples about how the conceptual and epistemological space at UROC is cultivated in relation to engaged research and scholarship.

Action Research Cycle: Root Causes and Joint Action

Our first example highlights how UROC's space combined with deep community connections spurred engaged research on sex trading and trafficking that has helped shape prevention, intervention and statewide policy. UROC's director of research has been conducting community engaged and action research on sex trading since 2004 and she has firmly established that the harms of sex trading directly relate to individual and community health and vitality (Martin, Hearst, & Widome, 2010; Martin, 2013). In 2011 UROC hosted a Critical Conversation on sex trafficking at which hundreds of community members voiced their concern and pledged to take action to stop sex trafficking in Minnesota. The conversation—with survivors, police, Northside residents, activists, academics and more—was inherently difficult. It surfaced multiple perspectives and community wisdom about the harms of sex trading on individuals and the community and also strengths and resiliencies.

Building on our difficult conversation, UROC developed the Sex Trafficking and Community Well-being Initiative which seeks to deepen and sustain engagement by conducting a series of interconnected research projects, awareness-raising activities, prevention initiatives, and intervention activities directed at the issue of sex trading and trafficking and its impact on communities. The projects engage widely with community and use multiple research approaches as guided by each project. We use the action research cycle as both an approach and a metaphor (Stringer, 2014). Stringer (2014) states:

> Analysis of information emerging from responses to questions provides insights from which "interventions" – actions to remedy the situation – are formulated. Continuing research cycles enable evaluation, reformulation, and redevelopment of actions, leading to increasingly effective solutions to the problem at the heart of the research project (p. 102).

Staff at UROC co-design projects with community and do the projects together. This always leads to new and deeper questions. With each project, we delve deeper and deeper into root causes. The projects focus on experience and meaning-making around marginalized, hidden, and obfuscated experiences that tend to be elided by our broader social narratives and discourses. Each individual project within the initiative has its own source of funding, including government, foundations, and internal UMTC sources. However, the initiative allows us to develop insights across projects to dig deep into challenging, hidden, and difficult issues in urban communities. For example, we examine the relation between sex trading/trafficking and race and poverty, even though we do not have separate funding for a specific project on this topic. Likewise, we seek to understand the intersections between sex trading and sexual violence.

UROC's research is embedded in statewide anti-trafficking efforts. Our connections shape the questions we ask and we use rigorous research methods to surface data, often in partnership with communities. Minnesota was the twelfth state to pass Safe Harbor laws, which decriminalize youth victimized in sex trafficking and is the only state to provide statewide funding for prevention and intervention efforts, known as the No Wrong Door model. Many of these gains were accomplished using empirical research, conducted by UROC and others, to make the case to legislators and other stakeholders. For example, based on a previous collaboration, the Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center (MIWRC), commissioned UROC's director of research to conduct a benefit-cost analysis on the fiscal impact of a sex trafficking prevention program for youth. In conducting this study, we re-worked typical University contracts to support joint ownership of the report. This study was instrumental in securing funding for No Wrong Door mentioned above. Additional research on the overall market for sex trafficking in Minneapolis and Minnesota has shaped statewide law enforcement efforts, service provision and prevention of youth victimization in trafficking.

UROC's work on sex trading and trafficking builds on several different connotations of shared space as liminal. For example, the initiative was launched by a Critical Conversation on sex trafficking. The Critical Conversation series at UROC serves to elevate university and community knowledge as equals – bringing the university into the community and the community into the university. We were able to convene multiple, often incongruent,

stakeholders (former victims of sex trafficking, advocates, police, legislators, academics, and more) together to build common language and a platform for action. It was a hard conversation, but individuals who participated felt welcome at UROC because of our staffing, the "feel" of the space, and because of its geographic location.

UROC's research on sex trading seeks to build on the strength of multiple stakeholders including youth, service providers, police, research, and more. UROC's reputation as a good partner and neighbor serves to engage strong and deeply rooted community partners to help design projects, make meaning and seed action.

Facilitating a Multi-Jurisdictional Team with Empirical Research

Urban-located and land-grant institutions include in their mission serving the public good. UMTC, holding both of these identities, also offers the resources of a research institution. This last identity has created tension between universities and communities. The role that scholarly activity plays, in this case empirical research, may be of great benefit to communities as well as universities. As Glover and Silka (2013) suggest, the issue may fundamentally be who initiates and leads partnerships and how scholarship stimulates conversation that expands what is possible. UROC supports and engages with several projects that are led by multi-jurisdictional teams. One such project is a community-initiated, UROC-facilitated multi-jurisdictional team of stakeholders focused on economic development.

Economic development is a key aspect of anchor institutions and the communities of which they are a part. Universities have interest in the economic development of their neighborhoods, are invested in the development of other anchor institutions in their geographic proximity, and have other significance in a wide range of related areas such as employing large numbers of local people (Coalition of Urban Serving Universities, 2010). A primary concern of community residents in North Minneapolis is employment. To address this concern, and to support current economic development efforts offered by non-profits and government agencies, UROC focused on job creation by building a multi-jurisdictional team supported through research.

In 2011, Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton held a job summit at the request of religious leaders on the Northside. The summit, held at UROC, initiated a conversation between community and University leaders who agreed that separately, the community, local government, and the University could not assuage the long history of benign neglect that resulted in the current lack of jobs for north Minneapolis. The Northside faces a number of historical and contemporary structural issues related to employment and jobs. Recent research revealed that for African Americans (roughly half of the population in north Minneapolis) only 32.8 percent own a home, 42 percent live below the poverty line, and less than 4 in 5 African American students graduate high school. By 2012, the Northside unemployment rate was 21.1 percent compared to the overall Minneapolis unemployment of 9.5 percent. Given this alarming evidence, we developed a collaborative model named the Northside Job Creation Team (NJCT).

The NJCT is a collaborative space initiated to hold major stakeholders in north Minneapolis, the city, the state, and the UMTC. It is facilitated through UROC. The mission of the team is to reverse the clear deficit of living-wage jobs and large employment disparity in the Northside through research that identifies potential businesses that could attract public/private investments

to create sustainable living wage jobs in or near north Minneapolis. To achieve parity with the rest of the city, north Minneapolis would needs to employ 5,000 residents more residents. Although a challenge, the NJCT set a goal to create 1000 jobs in five years.

Key to the success and sustained work of the NJCT is the role of the project consultant—a retired community leader with a strong and diverse business background. Contracting with a consultant allowed the University to support the process, but allowed for the consultant to speak as a member of the business and larger community. For UROC, the community consultant role cultivates a space that is safe enough for everyone to feel discomfort and challenge. Funding for the community consultant and to conduct research with faculty and students from the UMTC's Carlson School of Management has been provided by UROC, city economic development offices, and two philanthropic organizations.

By 2015, the NJCT included 32 team members representing a broad array of organizations including the City of Minneapolis, the Governor's Urban Initiative Board, the Black Chamber of Commerce, Minneapolis Public Schools, a Twin Cities regional economic development partnership, several local philanthropic and non-profit organizations, key job education organizations including local community colleges, and successful minority-owned businesses. Originally, two faculty from the UMTC business school provided oversight for the research and eventually became NJCT members. The faculty worked with graduate students on research that provided detailed feasibility studies and business plan analysis that were the most viable and sustainable business opportunities for north Minneapolis. In all, nine research projects have been completed.

In 2015, the NJCT made significant progress including signed letters of intent from four businesses committed to relocating or expanding into north Minneapolis. Crucial barriers, discovered through research, were identified for each of these opportunities and are currently being addressed through the multi-jurisdictional team. To date, 905 living-wage jobs have been created. We project that if all goes well with the companies mentioned above, we will add 630 jobs in the next two years for a total of 1535 living-wage jobs. Although the NJCT is pleased to have been successful to this degree, the number of jobs needed to reach parity with the rest of the city is 5,000.

Creating Distinct Spaces for Faculty Participation

UROC supports and engages in a number of projects related to education. The Generation Next UROC Faculty Fellows initiative explores the benefits of creating spaces for university faculty to engage in scholarship as part of a cohort.

UROC as a place-based organization requires long-term participation of faculty. A number of individual faculty partner with UROC on project-driven work. However, building the field also requires time and space for faculty to connect with other faculty who do engaged research. This facilitates growth of new ideas, and provides the space to create new and possibly interdisciplinary partnerships. Providing a space for faculty cohorts to thrive may also address common barriers for engaged scholars. Jordan et al. (2012) suggests that legitimizing partnership work as part of the scholarship process, raising the profile of engaged work to meet larger university goals, and providing spaces in which scholars can better understand the principles

underlying community engaged scholarship across disciplines are key to building the field and sustaining faculty participation.

UROC has had successes and struggles in building sustainable spaces for faculty cohorts to jointly engage in scholarship on critical urban challenges. Here we describe a unique epistemological space between a powerful non-profit promoting educational attainment and a group of interdisciplinary faculty.

Nationally, there is a large gap in standardized test scores between students of color and White students. Locally, Minnesota is among the states with the highest achievement gaps between Black, Latino, Native American, and many Southeast Asian students and their White counterparts (Yuen & Williams, 2016). In response, leaders in Minnesota came together to form Generation Next, a Twin Cities organization dedicated to closing the achievement gap. Generation Next is co-chaired by the UMTC president, the president of the General Mills Foundation, and headed by a former mayor of Minneapolis. Based on the National Strive Together Network, Generation Next brings education, community, government, and business leaders together to identify and adopt programs that focus on 6 traditional measures of school success. In 2014, Generation Next leadership articulated to UROC the need for more connection to community. UROC suggested bringing together multi-disciplinary faculty and community partners to engage around distinct points of view about the roots of the achievement gap beyond individual educational benchmarks.

As a starting place, Generation Next asked faculty to respond to the following two questions consistently posed to the organization: Why is there an achievement gap in the context of Minneapolis-St Paul? What action should we take to address the gap?

Five faculty groups, each headed by a lead faculty fellow and comprised of both faculty and community partners were established. Faculty selected as leads had a strong, demonstrated record of community-based scholarship in the areas of education, health, gender studies, communications, and the arts. The Generation Next UROC Faculty Fellows initiative operates in alignment with the Office for Public Engagement, as well as with the Office of the President and the Office of the Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost, with the goal of contributing to, but not replicating, efforts by other individual UMTC faculty related to the achievement gap.

Each faculty group met monthly and the group leads also met several times to share the work from their individual groups, and to build the overall cohort. Through this process, there have been interesting and unexpected connections across the work and direction of the five individual groups addressing both the "why" and the "now what" questions posed by Generation Next.

Surprisingly, each of the groups was opposed to entering into discussions to answer the "why" question. They expressed frustration with continued focus on the reasons there is a "gap" and identified an overabundance of research that addresses this very question (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Milner, 2013; Minnesota Minority Education Partnership, 2012). The fellows also asserted that educational inequity is upheld through continuing to use a faulty narrative, which echoed other academic research in this area (Cabrera, Milem, Jaquette, & Marx, 2014; Barajas & Ronnkvist,

2007; Cammerota, 2007; Ramirez & Carpenter, 2005). These new insights contributed to the existing narrative and work of Generation Next. Each group shared with the other groups as well as the Generation Next leadership projects/actions related to ending educational disparities. What excited the Generation Next leadership the most was how a space that included different, complex approaches to addressing a faulty narrative created a different lens, with multiple possible outcomes and outputs for understanding how to improve the education of diverse kids.

In the first year of the initiative, faculty were invited to participate without financial incentive. When the faculty leads were invited to create the initiative, UROC was transparent that funding was not yet in place. A small food budget and some logistical support for scheduling meetings, arranging meeting places, and note taking during meetings was offered to all groups. Some took advantage of the support and others did not. Although the primary work of the initiative focused on creating a connection with Generation Next, a second goal for UROC was to document and understand how to support faculty in engaged work.

Several intentional efforts contributed to creating a space that invites strong participation by faculty. To begin, intentionally asking Generation Next to name this group of faculty as Generation Next UROC fellows was important in terms of validating the work across the university and in individual departments and programs. Providing logistical support to set meetings and find space was important support. As with any partnership, listening and adapting to the environment created as the initiative developed has been key to keeping faculty engaged. For example, one of the faculty leads proposed submitting a proposal to the University strategic plan. As a group, the leads produced a collaborative proposal.

This year UROC was able to secure internal funding from the University Metropolitan Consortium to provide $10,000 to each group to seed a project/action. All five groups are doing a project with community partners that demonstrate ways to support student educational success. In February of 2016, a second meeting with the Generation Next leadership shared information about the projects ranging from youth participatory action research projects (YPARs) designed as part of the language arts curriculum for all students in a middle school, to a participatory project with high school teachers, to a project focused on how school discipline policies impact caregivers.

Faculty leads, participating in a focus group shared why they were drawn to the work and continue to participate in the cohort. The leads expressed a strong desire to contribute to the narrative on educational achievement and the gap. All of the faculty leads wanted their work and perspectives to be heard by the kind of audiences to which Generation Next had access. The leads also appreciated a formalized space where they were given the opportunity to work together as engaged scholars. They expressed some frustration in the level of connection to Generation Next as an organization and wanted UROC to support strengthening that connection. The next step for the cohort is to share the outcomes and impacts of the projects to date with each other, and then Generation Next, and to create a funding strategy across all of the projects to sustain the work.

**Conclusion**

In UROC's first five years we have learned much about shared space; including what it really means to "share" and how to use a place-based facility to foster mutually-beneficial partnerships that lead to action in the world as well as critical scholarship. To navigate our first five years, UROC needed to confront two overarching tensions that emerged from both University and community collaborators. First, is UROC simply a building, a shell to house special projects? Second, how would the space itself be used and occupied? In other words, how would it be shared? And who would have access?

Answers to these questions shaped how we define, use, and share space at UROC. First, sharing space is not easy or straightforward. It requires iterative development as well as adaptive leadership that learns, grows, and changes with each iteration and challenge. Second, universities and communities each have their own rules, cultures, and ways of doing that often operate on seemingly conflictual logics. Further, the societal power differential between academic and other ways of knowing is a real source of strain and potential conflict. Early contentions around race, power and trust have continued to be central to the work of UROC.

As the narrative of our first five years shows, in many different ways, we chose to lean into the discomfort of structural inequality, race, knowledge production, and power. This includes acknowledging that universities, research leaders, and academic knowledge are not yet fully reflective of all communities. In particular, in the academy, communities of color and people experiencing poverty are not yet seen as full and equal partners in creating knowledge. Acknowledgement is a first step. The shared space at UROC seeks to transform the unequal access to knowledge/power experienced by communities of color in urban areas. That work starts from the foundation of how we cultivate our shared and place-based space of UROC.

These challenges are not unique to UROC, and much has been written about the challenges of university-community partnership building (Sandy & Holland, 2006). But we believe our place-based approach offers unique lessons, strengths and challenges. The metaphor of liminality – or a space in-between – sheds light on how UROC fostered its notion of shared space. All who participate in UROC's space, University staff and community partners, must challenge their assumptions, change their standard ways of doing and expand beyond their comfortable ways of knowing to accept multiple ways of doing and knowing. The lessons of UROC's formation and its first five years suggest that the University and community need to transform and benefit together.

The efforts described represent examples of how UROC is living into our mission as well as different approaches to sharing space with our urban communities, and with students, faculty, and staff at UMTC. The original vision for UROC was to transform how the University works with community. This vision was timely because of the difficulties UMTC had at the beginning involving community in decision-making. But, for the work of engagement to transform and for the community to benefit, the University and community need to transform and benefit together.


Sharing space, rather than giving space, requires UROC to hold spaces (physical, conceptual and methodological) that invite and welcome both university and community. Often, university staff

working with community try and separate themselves from the anchor institution in order to be seen as one of "the good guys." In the short term, such an approach may feel good or allow university researchers initial access to community spaces. However, as a university place-based center we ask university and community members and partners to enter liminal spaces together. We all need to experience discomfort and challenge in order to grow and change. Living in shared space is a risk, but one that could support our transformational intentions.

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