Chapter 3
Challenging Inequalities Through Community–University Partnerships

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3.1 Introduction to Cupp, Amaze and their Engagement

One of the great challenges for effective relationships operating between universities and communities is in identifying where the common interest for a partnership may lie. It is possible to explore that question in the abstract, and list how particular universities and excluded communities may be able to work together. But we have a concern with that approach, that it is deeply impersonal. If you are talking about relationships, then relationships are fundamentally among people. Those people may wish to accomplish strategic goals of institutions with which they are involved, and the wider strategic environment does shape the ways those relationships evolve. But we find a real risk in overly academic approaches to understanding community engagement which fails to adequately reflect the people behind the engagement. This chapter seeks to understand the delicate ecology of relationships looking at a 5-year community–university partnership focused on improving outcomes for disadvantaged children and their families.

The project focused upon one of a number of partnerships that have been established as part of the University of Brighton's wider Community–University Partnership Programme (Cupp). In addition to supporting partnership projects, Cupp also aims to act as a 'gateway' between the University of Brighton and local community and voluntary organisations, with a reach across the south-east coastal area, including Hastings. It has office space, a full time-equivalent staff of 6, runs a Helpdesk service, and through its academic links, can draw on the advice and expertise of 30 plus senior staff members. Through successfully bidding for funding, Cupp has been hosting two programmes alongside its core work, with an annual

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budget of £550 k, involving over 100 academics and community partners per year (approx. 40 academics, 60 community partners). It has strong participation from local community organisations and most Cupp staff members have been, and/or are still involved with running community groups (Hart et al. 2008).

This chapter is unique in the book—as was our presentation at the event from which this book emerged—as being written by a collaborative team active in community–university partnership, in the Cupp project. We argue that situating this has value for the book in making visible some of the realities of community–university partnership which we feel are sometimes lost in overly academic discussions having little relevance for engagement practices. We have to be explicit here that this chapter differs from others in this collection, both in its tone as well as its aims, reflecting our best attempt to capture and understand a lived experience in which we have engaged academic and community contexts (cf. Hart et al. 2007a). We want to tell, what is essentially a personal story, how we as people were motivated to work together and create a community of practice within which university and community were engaged. Our motivation in writing this chapter has been to try to provide ourselves with a certain distance from the activities themselves with which we are involved in running. Although we are actively involved, and would not want to make an artificial distinction between our academic and community sides, we want to present our analysis in a way that might convince the sceptic of the value of what we do.

In our roles as academics, we are continually confronted with the challenge of understanding the value of the hard work that is required in order to get even the most minor of community–university ventures underway. In this chapter, we want to link this more closely with a debate in the wider literature of the value of these partnerships. In particular, we pose the wider question of whether there really is added value for teaching and research around issues of inequality in working with the communities in the teaching and research activities. But the partnership is not just of academics: As community members, we are also continually confronted with the question of what is the added value to the community of these relationships. In particular, we believe it is important to further consider and establish whether these university–community relationships are more than just the provision of a service, and indeed whether they offer a useful route to tackling inequalities.

These are mighty questions to answer and have already been raised at various points in this book so far. We cannot really hope in the course of a short reflection on a single project to be able to really do much more than provide a few insights into these bigger questions, and we are wary of trying to answer these mighty questions with something we readily acknowledge is merely a set of small stories. But we believe nevertheless that these small stories have value: We are reporting what we believe to be a successful project, and we can on the basis of this, identify what we believe to be some of the conditions which have led the project to be successful, both to the university and to the community. But of course, these successes have been delivered at a price, and on that basis, in this chapter, we want to think through more systematically whether those outputs are really worth all the effort, and indeed

whether it is worth universities more generally taking this question of engagement with excluded communities more seriously.

In order to begin to address these questions, we use the following structure in the chapter:

The following section sets out the concept underlying our idea of community engagement, which is that of Communities of Practice (CoPs), in which people work together on a common problem to build shared resources which meet each of their needs.

The third section provides an overview of the partnership till date, and explains two things: the domain area (building the resilience of disadvantaged children), and how the partnership and relationships have functioned as a community of practice.

The fourth section considers how the resilience work has supported outcomes for the various stakeholders in the partnership process, teaching, research, students, staff and the community; whilst it is clear that university teaching and research have benefited, it is much more complex to be able to establish that staff, students and the community have benefited through our work.

Fifthly, we reflect critically on what has been achieved, and the possible existence of a gulf among the rhetoric, aspirations, expectations and the realities of what we have done together over the last five years.

Finally, this provides a framework for us to reflect upon the potential for community engagement in research and the curriculum for meeting the needs of researchers, universities and communities.

There is clearly a critical issue that what staff and institutions desire from engagement need not necessarily be convergent, and there must be a much greater specification of how consensus will be reached by all those involved about the kinds of activity necessary to ensure effective university engagement.

3.2 Communities of Practice and Community–University Partnerships

We have already written about the way the Cupp project uses a communities of practice approach elsewhere, and so in this chapter we restrict ourselves to a very brief retelling of the key features of a CoP (Hart and Wolff 2006). The approach has emerged precisely within the parameters set out by Paul Benneworth in Chap 1 relating to community engagement. On one hand, Cupp clearly wanted to get beyond what he called 'detached benevolence', and we have elsewhere referred to as 'a patronising charity ethos'(Hart and Wolff 2006, p. 126). On the other hand, there are clear risks in allowing universities to have their commanding heights taken over by community interest organisations which might not necessarily have the best interests of the other important stakeholders of the university at heart. As we made clear, the Cupp community of practice model is of existing people and organisations coming together and working co-operatively to build up 'emergence' as a key characteristic of these communities—they exist because they do, and they do because they exist,

and it is difficult to empirically or conceptually divorce these two elements without misrepresenting what it is that these activities do.

Communities of practice are groups of people who share a passion for the same thing and we have used this approach coined by Wenger et al. (2002) to develop our conceptual thinking, and through its implementation, the activities. CoPs cut across traditional organisational barriers and hierarchies, to bring all perspectives to bear on an issue or field of interest. By avoiding giving more importance to professional knowledge over actual lived experience, CoPs raise exciting questions about what knowledge is and about whose knowledge we are talking. Smith (2003) defines CoPs as 'a community created over time by the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise' while Wenger says communities of practice are 'groups of people informally bounded together by shared expertise and passion for a joint enterprise' (Wenger and Snyder 2000, pp. 139–140). The emphasis here is on the voluntary origins of such practice. People in these communities want to do things together in a way that enables them to 'share their experiences and knowledge in free-flowing, creative ways that foster new approaches to problems' (Wenger et al. 2002, p. 5).

Whilst there is a great deal of self-direction involved here, at the same time it is important to acknowledge that CoPs often have leaders and champions, although in the context of the community of practice, these may not be the people that formally fulfil that role in the participating organisations. Understanding this paradox is made a little easier by returning to the simple explanation of communities of practice, "they are because they do, and they do because they are". The glue that holds communities of practice together is the activities that they undertake, because these provide the opportunities for shared social knowledge creation that in turn helps individual members to deal with their own problems. Leaders and champions within a community of practice can therefore be relatively junior members who nevertheless influence or shape the key activities, and whose own social behaviour shaped the opportunities others have to participate in the community of practice.

Another key element of the community of practice approach which we think is useful here for understanding the application of communities of practice models to universities is that of boundary spanners. Wenger (1998) talks about CoPs in relation to community–university partnerships representing a real challenge to conventional boundaries. While they have a very positive spin on the notion of 'boundary crossing' (Wenger 2002, p. 153) because of the potential for people to look afresh at their own assumptions and create new 'landscapes of practice', we know it can be difficult for the less convinced academic to take the risk or the community partner to find the extra time and resources to work in this way.

According to Wenger, there are a number of ways to effectively manage different perspectives and help folk to cross boundaries that might have traditionally kept them apart. One includes the creation of 'boundary objects' (Wenger 1998, p. 105)—in our case a shared resilience language and terminology, resilience building materials and resources—that help individuals from both the community and university connect with each other. The other is the notion of individuals who span both worlds so to speak—boundary spanners—who broker and translate different perspectives and facilitate the application of ways of seeing and doing things across different areas of

practice. This is particularly important given the well-documented difficulties that can arise with community–university partnership work. The term describes one of the roles in CoPs that help create connections among people from different organizations, cultures, sectors or localities.

The community of practice framework provides Cupp with two things. The first is that it has provided a rationale for a particular partnership approach, an ideal type of co-operative activity to use before the event. But of course, the community of practice model also provides a means for understanding the extent to which Cupp, and its various arenas, also termed 'communities of practice', has been successful in creating collective assets—socially produced knowledge—which benefit the various partners in the project.

It is hard for us to be able to objectively assess the extent to which we were able to realise the community of practice model in creating our arenas and projects. What it is however possible for us to do is to reflect on the extent to which one of the projects in which we have both been involved has created collective assets, and the extent to which they are valuable for the various factors involved in the project. In the next section, before we analyse how far it has been possible to achieve these collective assets of mutual value, we explain a little about the project as well as the people behind the project, including both members of the authorial team of this chapter.

3.3 History of the Partnership

In this chapter, we tell the story of, and then reflect upon, the partnership between Amaze and Cupp, led by Kim Aumann and Angie Hart (more detail is available on the details of the project in Hart and Aumann 2007). Kim is the director of Amaze Research and Training, part of a parenting charity of which Kim was formally the founding director; Kim contributed in 2007 to a volume jointly edited by Angie Hart in which she likened the experience of a university–community-partnership as a tandem ride. Angie Hart is Professor of Child, Family and Community Health at the University of Brighton, within the School of Nursing and Midwifery. She is also the Academic Director of Cupp and has previously published on community–university partnership working (cf. Hart and Wolff 2006; Hart et al. 2007b, c).

Amaze is a charity that offers independent information, advice and support to parents of children with special needs and disabilities aged 0 to 19 years. It provides direct services for parents such as a helpline, handbooks and fact sheets, one-to-one help with education and benefits issues, workshops and parent support courses. A parent-led organization, Amaze believes the views of parents should be central to the decisions made about their child; so they aim to make sure parents' voices are heard, working to encourage good communication and partnership between individual parents and service providers. But they also try to influence how services operate for all disabled children and families, working alongside colleagues across the sectors towards the ideal of integrated, seamless services. Their philosophy is that the best changes come when users are involved in designing better futures. As a

result, user involvement is an integral part of their work. At the time of writing, Kim was responsible for managing the organization's training, research and consultancy service that links theory, research findings and the experience held by parent carers and practitioners, to promote best practice.

Amaze has had a mixed experience of collaborating with university partners and previously had been sceptical about whether or not previous collaborations had resulted in anything worthwhile for families. Detailed at more length in Hart and Aumann (2007), prior to the Cupp project being launched, Amaze had experienced the university's approaches as highly instrumental and fitting with the 'doing to' rather than 'doing with' approach to engagement.

> In both these cases, what was on offer was not about partnership. The [Cupp] seems to promise something different. (Hart and Aumann 2007)

The collaboration was kicked off by an approach to the University of Brighton where Amaze immediately saw the possibility for a meaningful collaboration. An eagerness in academics to link the theory and research to improving people's real lives and practically tackling disadvantage has always been what Amaze really looked for. Amaze suspects a social or moral commitment to improve the lot of disadvantaged groups might be the real glue for effective partnerships with voluntary sector organisations.

This partnership which emerged focused on resilience (see following section), suggesting that sharing an interest in the subject or the methodology provided a basic start. Personal and relational issues are also important to the mix. Quality partnerships require finding the right match. With this partnership all this was in place, and there was the necessary 'spark'. Amaze took the opportunity to get involved with Angie Hart's resilience research work. Whilst it has not been all plain sailing, the partnership has survived long enough for us to still be speaking to one another, and able to tell the tale.

At the time of writing, Angie Hart had a fairly unusual academic background, combining academic, personal and practice knowledge and experience. Her research and teaching interests have all been connected to inequalities issues, and for the previous 6 years, she had been focusing specifically on child and family resilience. Angie's own background lay in NHS practice in child and adolescent mental health; she was also a parent member of Amaze, herself having adopted three children from the care system many years ago.

3.4   Tackling Inequalities: the Development of Resilient Therapy

The essence of our partnership to work together was always about how we use resilience research and practice to find ways of helping children, young people and adults having particularly tough times. Our common starting point was the agreement that resilience is a source of very useful knowledge about how individuals overcome such times. In order to better understand the partnership and its dynamics, it is necessary to understand a little about resilience in order to understand why this was important for us both and together.

Resilience is the ability to achieve good outcomes against the odds. There are thousands of academic research studies on the concept of resilience, but only a small number relate to the marginalized children, families and adults in which we are interested, and very few tell us much about what to do to support and foster resilient mechanisms and processes. Our partnership wanted to address this gap and translate the messages from research and practice-based evidence for parents, practitioners and young people to use themselves (see Hart et al. 2007b, c, for a review).

With just three individuals involved in the beginning (Professor Angie Hart, Dr. Derek Blincow and Helen Thomas), a scholarly literature review of the resilience research base was completed. Inspired by what this revealed, Angie and her two colleagues in the NHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service brought the key findings from this review together with their own practice and parenting experience to create a novel approach entitled "Resilient Therapy" (RT). Kim Aumann 'joined' the partnership about a year later. She was keen to involve parents and together we agreed that trying the ideas out with families living with persistent adversity and tapping into their experience and expertise would help us in improving RT to make it more practical, accessible and useable. We set up the Resilience Parent Advisory Group to help us and we've been testing and refining the framework ever since.

What we discovered was that the glue that bound us together in that on-going development activity was and is a shared passion to explore research and practice that gets to the heart of how to build resilience in complex situations. Our work on different initiatives all in some way linked to wanting to bridge the divide between theory and practice. In the course of that work, we've written two books, published a series of articles and produced a short film to help explain RT. We have delivered conference presentations, information and training sessions and have been working directly with various groups of parents, young people and practitioners. We were continually seeking and pursuing new opportunities and successfully secured funding from a number of funding sources to develop the work further.

Our collaboration with a range of community and academic partners has so far expanded every year and has been central to our work. The community of practice approach is one that we have found to be particularly helpful in achieving mutually beneficial and sustainable joint work. We subsequently turned to developing a new resilience learning programme and testing our resilience work with social enterprise activity to see if it might provide another model of funding for the sustainable development of our resilience partnership work: as of the time of writing, we're not sure how this will work out.

3.5 Developing Resilience-Focused Communities of Practice

Having explained a little about what we did in the course of our partnership, we want briefly to reflect upon what we learned in applying the idea of communities of practice in our collaboration. Our starting point was that the critical feature of communities of practice was that they were "communities that cut across traditional

organisational barriers and hierarchies, to bring all perspectives to bear on an issue or field of interest. By avoiding giving more importance to professional knowledge over actual lived experience, CoPs can raise exciting questions about what knowledge is and whose knowledge we are talking about" (see the previous section). In order to achieve this in our work around RT, we brought together groups of academics, practitioners, parents and carers to meet monthly, over one and two years, to generate new ways of thinking about and building resilience with children and young people having tough times.

The ultimate goal of our RT CoPs has been to shape resilience practice for the better. So we have been reliant on the partners involved in the communities being willing to share their ideas, reflect on their research and practice, and be open to new ways of thinking about and supporting children and young people. Taking a snap shot of our latest resilience work, there were at the time of writing 12 academics, 30 practitioners, 10 parents and 8 young people actively involved. Although the outcomes of the community were open and flexible, and sought to avoid the dominance of professional knowledge, the authors (Kim and Angie) played the roles of champions and animateurs in this Resilient Therapy community of practice.

The impetus for, and subsequent development of, our resilience work grew out of a synergy and constructive dynamic drawing together different policies, structures and day-to-day practices. The environment for the co-operation was set by external environmental factors, in this case primarily national policy decisions, which we were not able to influence, but which created conditions under which the collaboration could thrive. In particular, English public policy emphasizing user involvement, partnerships between statutory and voluntary sector providers in service to disadvantaged children and their families were key ingredients that set the scene for our work. Sustained commitment at a national level to tackle inequalities in health, with much attention to the consequences of these for disadvantaged children and their families was also in the picture. Finally, it is important to acknowledge that the emergence and development of the concept of resilience in academic literature and in practice accounts was a further contributing factor to our work.

A second set of environmental factors were the local decisions which influenced the conditions under which the co-operation could take place. In the local university context, the development of our Cupp programme also promised support to community–university partnerships that tackled inequalities and disadvantages, and as noted, was part of a wider cultural shift in the university that made genuinely equal or at least less asymmetrical partnerships possible. The University of Brighton commitment to community engagement was highly supportive: This can be seen firstly in the then Vice-Chancellor Sir David Watson's attraction of the original grant from Atlantic Philanthropies following a radio performance (Balloch et al. 2007). Secondly, national funding from HEFCE supporting a Centre for Knowledge Exchange (CKE) was made available to further this work: This was significant because CKEs were intended to be focused primarily on business engagement and using the resources to support community engagement represented a radical experiment. But, bringing various modest funds together within the university around Cupp created synergies which supported the project, particularly those aspects of it that involved

partnership working. Cupp also provided a structure within the university in which the project could gain momentum.

3.6 Impact on Teaching and Research

One of the critiques of community–university partnership as a form of corporate social responsibility by universities into communities is that the universities themselves do not benefit from that engagement. The RT collaboration demonstrates a clear example of how community engagement can create tangible benefits for the participating university—by providing access to useful lay knowledge—whilst also benefiting those communities. We argue that one of the hallmarks of the Cupp project's success is that the benefits which collaborations bring for teaching and research can be traced back into the University of Brighton. Although Hart et al. (2007b, c) include two detailed examples of how engagement benefits research and three of how it benefits teaching, we here want to argue that part of the Cupp synergy is creating benefits for teaching and research (as well as the community partners) simultaneously.

3.6.1 Impact on Teaching

It is worth pointing out that the development of Resilient Therapy has been carried forwards into the curriculum. The undergraduate nursing curriculum now has a generic session relating to resilient practitioner issues, and a number of specialist sessions, depending on the area of nursing students are graduating in. For example, nurses studying to become children's nurses have a specific session introducing them to Resilient Therapy and considering its application to case studies in a paediatric context. The social work curriculum has also benefited from expertise developed in this project. One of the CoP members, a family support worker, co-delivers a session with a social work lecturer. This session explicitly demonstrates how RT can be used alongside existing social work assessment techniques.

At the postgraduate level, resilience concepts have fed into masters courses. For example, students studying child safeguarding are exposed to resilient approaches in relation to child sexual abuse. Contributions from our community–university engagement research have also been into the masters curriculum more broadly. The qualitative research module, open to all masters and Ph.D. students in the school, has a session on user involvement in research delivered by one of our group, and draws on our resilience work as a practical case study of community–university partnership working.

This has not purely been in an academic sense—the RT community of practice, which built up in the course of collaboration, has been actively drawn upon by lecturers at the University of Brighton.. Students are exposed in the course of their studies both to the work of researchers and the wider community of practice. In the

course of exposing students to the community of practice, there were some students who started to 'live' in that community, and there is also some evidence that the work of students fed back into the community of practice as well as contributing to developing understandings of RT.

Two Ph.D. students are working explicitly with resilient ideas and are active members of our community of practice. One of these is undertaking her own study which is exploring whether kinship carers find RT a useful support for the complex work involved in bringing up their own children's children. The other is applying ideas from the resilience field to adult mental health. As well as getting access to cutting edge resilience research developments in a university context, these students are themselves involved in developing community university engagement. The hope is that as academics of the future, they would thoroughly embed in community–university partnerships and would support others in developing these ways of working.

What has been interesting in building up this community of practice around RT in the School of Nursing & Midwifery at the University of Brighton has been the extent to which the ideas which began as very personalised, closely identified with the originating team of Angie, Helen, Derek and Kim, have become codified and abstracted into the curriculum more generally. This is a further indication of the success of the community of practice, creating a set of 'solutions' which others are able to use more easily without having to be active members of the community themselves. This can be illustrated by an anecdotal experience from Angie, who through a chance encounter with a social work lecturer in the staff room discovered that she was regularly delivering resilience sessions to her students, directly drawing on RT, without having been part of the community of practice which had developed and diffused the ideas themselves.

3.6.2   Impact on Research

RT was developed within the University of Brighton, where academics—and hence our community-engaged resilience research—are shaped by broad government agendas, research council priorities and internal university research strategies. However, a culture of relative academic freedom gives academics at the University of Brighton considerable autonomy over their research area and methodological approaches. A decade or so ago, when Angie first started to work in a participatory way, explicit community–university partnerships were rare in the UK, and other academic colleagues expressed open suspicion about these approaches. Disquiet was particularly expressed about the difficulties of obtaining funding for community-engaged research, the extra time engagement would take, as well as the concern that community partners would set the agenda and research with little academic value would be undertaken. General concerns about 'dumbing down' and the loss of academic status were also expressed, as was the well-debated issue of community–university engagement being a barrier to academic promotion. This was not a particular problem at the university, but rather is associated with the idea

that engagement is only something for people that cannot do 'real' research (cf. Wellcome 2002; Durodié 2003).

However, given the relative autonomy afforded within the University of Brighton, it was permissible if not directly encouraged to work as a community-engaged academic. We must be clear that in contrast to some of the stories we have anecdotally encountered of people succeeding despite rather than because of their institutional backing, this is no hero's tale of an academic toiling against the odds. But we do feel that it is legitimate to ask whether the concerns which academic colleagues have raised have in fact come true or whether there was a different tale to tell and that engagement did in fact lead to an enrichment of research.

In order to answer that question, it is necessary to determine the quality of the research activity undertaken within the RT partnership, and then to ask whether that research would have happened in the absence of the partnership activity. It is certainly possible to say that the community engagement element did not undermine the academic rigour of the work undertaken. The original book by Angie, Helen and Derek was published by Routledge, a serious academic publisher, and its academic reviewer prior to publication rated the book's scholarship as excellent.

This suggests that the charge can be refuted that the involvement of community partners in the research distracted activities away from serious academic work towards more consultancy or applied research activities. Further evidence of the quality of the research work can be seen in that Angie was promoted to a personal chair during our research period and her resilience research profile formed part of her submission for conferment. Angie and the Cupp team have also been working with the UK's national centre for public engagement in Bristol in reflecting upon the lessons of the Cupp programme and the community of practice approach in promoting effective engagement more generally in UK HEIs (Hart et al. 2008).

A second indicator of the quality of the research that has been undertaken are the levels of research funding which have been acquired to support the development of the programme. We received funding to further the impact of our research by way of the establishment of a learning programme, a website (Hart et al. 2010) and social enterprise activity from the UK Economic and Social Research Council. This council is seen as one of the most prestigious sources of research funding in the United Kingdom. Angie's Head of Department's policy for much of the time during our research collaboration was to permit her to reinvest any external income generated for her own salary replacements back into our resilience research. This enabled us to pay for Kim Aumann to be involved in the research whilst working for Amaze, and for a part-time research assistant, part of whose role was to support community partners to access relevant academic literature, facilitate the engagement of parents and carers and to organize a Resilience Research Forum with involvement from diverse participants.

The university also provided some internal resources enabling the establishment of the Resilience Research Forum. This Resilience Research Forum facilitated members of our research group undertaking research visits within the United Kingdom and abroad. In line with our ethos that community members of the research community of practice are active, the forum allocated conference attendance bursaries via a

competitive process to community members in our research group. One notable outcome of this was that a group of academics and community partners collectively attended an International Resilience Conference in Halifax, Nova Scotia and were able to present our research work (Aumann 2010; Cameron 2010; Hart and Blincow 2010; Hill 2010; Kirkwood 2010a, b).

Community members of the team were particularly good at asking 'So What?' questions at the conference, and our observation would be that their presence apparently sharpened the applied aspects of the debate across the conference. The level of community participation that our team brought to the conference was seen as unusual by some delegates. Some said that it inspired them to want to find ways of involving community partners more fully in the dissemination of their own work, but some seemed genuinely bewildered at precisely how to relate to the community members of our team or the value it added to the proceedings. In April 2011, an international conference on Resilience in relation to disadvantaged groups was organised at the University of Brighton to help cement the role of the research group as active in this field.

Other sources of funding have enabled us to set up and develop resilience-focused communities of practice, with academics, students, practitioners and parents experimenting with the application of RT to their own practice areas. Funding sources for this aspect of our work have come from both HEFCE as well as a local National Health and Social Services Group (Primary Care Trust). There have also been other creative ways in which we have managed to find funds to support the development of our research. Because of the applied nature of our work, we have been able to set up a donation fund within our University's charity arm. In tandem with a new social enterprise that had been set up shortly prior to the writing of this chapter, these various funding sources represent a diverse portfolio of research funding that arguably gives us more possibilities to generate research funding.

Taken together, this evidence suggests that research funding and academic promotion have not been adversely affected by undertaking community engaged research. Of course, a caveat to all this does apply, and that relates to the second of our criteria above, which is that this would not have happened without the community engagement. It's hard to say precisely if this is the case, as we have no way of knowing what would have happened to our resilience research had we taken it down a less community-involved route. Arguably, we might have been as or more successful with different research bids, and Angie may have still been promoted to a professorship, but that misses the point somewhat because Angie would still have had to find the resources to do her research from somewhere, and engaging with the community provided the key that unlocked those resources, and also has enhanced her research by making it more relevant to communities.

Regarding concerns about our research being dumbed down, some might say that this has occurred. It is hard to 'keep all balls in the air'. For example, alongside academic involvement, our monthly Resilience Research Forum attracts many participants from across the community, voluntary and statutory sector, with participation from service users and young people. Resilience research and practice

development is presented and debated, many people have said that this forum models a successfully inclusive research seminar and debate is indeed lively. However, the degree to which senior academics and academically informed practitioners feel that the debate is enhanced by the high degree of inclusion is a moot point. Some have mentioned anecdotally that they feel that the discussion is, on occasions, repetitive and unsophisticated, articulating questions without providing the thrust for further depth. However, thinking back to some of the academic conferences or seminars attended by Angie, the same criticism can be levied.

The issue of community partners running away with the research agenda could be said to have occurred. However, this has not occurred in the negative way that those who usually describe situations in that way envisage, where narrow interests divert general high-quality research into specific research that provides few broader lessons. The resilience research has a very different dynamic to the research in which Angie was previously involved. But that is not necessarily a negative feature. Undertaking research and practice development in close collaboration with different members of our community of practice has raised the standard for what is acceptable: The community of practice members continually challenge the researchers to be both theoretically robust but also useful to practitioners, parents and young people.

This chimes well with Pfeffer's point relating to inequalities research where 'the skills of getting things done are as important as figuring out what to do' (Pfeffer 1992, p. 12). Hence all of our resilience research till date has been concerned with developing aspects of the evidence base for practice application, and in evaluating whether or not these are helpful. Admittedly the challenge has been to ensure that this applied research remains engaged with academic dialogues and debates. The accent has been admittedly less on what are the theoretically interesting questions, and more on the questions and problems arising from the application of the theory.

It is impossible to answer the counterfactual of what would have happened to Angie's research had she not taken a route to engage with communities. But it is important to recognise that it is not the case that had this research route not been chosen then, the participants would have all been publishing papers in the 'top-rated' journals. The engaged research has fitted well with and built upon Angie's approach to scholarship and pedagogy. Without this community dimension, Angie probably would not be pursuing the work in the same way as she doesn't enjoy working alone or divorced from her community roots—all of which supply meaning and purpose to the work.

3.7 Lessons Learnt Along the Way

At the time of writing, it is clear that community–university engagement had become established as an important element of what the University of Brighton was offering in educational terms. Nevertheless, we have had a series of struggles along the way to establish and build up our activities, and these provide a useful lens to reflect on a number of important issues for community–university partnership. From our

experience, we strongly believe that we have something meaningful to say about how to follow the path of community engagement, and to reflect whether, on balance, all that additional effort really add value to researchers, institutions and communities. In this final concluding section, we want to make four points about what has mattered in successful engagement for these different groups, to better ground the academic debates in these books with our considered practical experiences:

- *Getting and keeping the wherewithal:* Our engagement activity has been extremely hard work, not always acknowledged by our academic and community colleagues, and every engagement brings a worry that all these efforts might ultimately be in vain.
- *Boundary spanners:* Our experience confirms the importance of 'boundary spanners' to good community of practice working, people who work between the 'worlds' of the different communities that meet; we have been comfortable operating in this in-between space, this comfort is an important pre-condition for good community–university partnership.
- *Relationships, relationships:* One of the pressures on these boundary spanners is that they have to build the relationships that hold the community of practice together: Managing these relationships can be extremely taxing. Even participating in the community of practice means managing different relationships; and this is not necessarily a widely held skill.
- *Appreciating different drivers:* Different partners have different motivations for participating in partnerships. These different motivations create tensions, and tensions cannot always be defused through rational debate; engagement seems to always involve arguing.

3.7.1 Getting and Keeping the Wherewithal

It's really time consuming to work in this way. Sometimes we can't figure out whether we just get tired and need some good individual working or thinking time to balance a stint of exertion supporting a specific community–university involvement activity, or whether in fact, this type of work is best sustained when delivered in periodic bursts. We suspect it's the latter.

Even though our experience of the co-delivery model is time consuming, it's also worth mentioning that we believe it has impacted positively on making our community–university relationships stronger. While some community members were initially worried about not having enough formal training or work experience and some academics were concerned that it might 'cramp their individual style', it has been an active way of breaking down hierarchies and levelling things somewhat, not to mention the training ground it has provided us for learning new ways to facilitate dissemination opportunities.

For example, much of our resilience dissemination work involves delivering information and training sessions to audiences interested in knowing more about resilience

theory, research and practice application. In an attempt to model our partnership work and our belief that the best can be achieved for children and young people, when parental experience combines with academic and practitioner skill and knowledge, we routinely co-deliver sessions with parent trainers or draw on academic, practitioner or service user duos to do so.

As is the case with any co-delivery combination, the benefits are numerous. Individual trainers can give each other support, provide continuity, offer different styles and strengths and share the preparation and delivery tasks. It also means that workers and parents can bring their own unique insights and skills to bear on the topic and potentially reduce the differences in theoretical and practice perspectives. But it does require the allocation of extra time to communicate clearly with each other before, during and after sessions.

In addition, choosing to work with parents, practitioners or young people as co-deliverers to share illustrations of certain issues or points, requires an awareness of why we seek personal stories, how it helps to achieve learning outcomes and what's involved if we are to do it well and sensitively. Planning, shared expectations and de-briefing can become really important features of co-delivery in this context given the potential for personal stories to open old wounds, feelings and reactions for the parent, practitioner or young person telling them. And that, in turn, places the obligation on the rest of us to manage the work carefully, so pacing the workload and making time for the support dimension are necessary to keep it going long term.

That isn't to say that at times, it hasn't worked. We have had our fair share of investing in co-delivery partnerships that just don't shape up and it's deflating when we have to call it a day. These are the moments when we wonder whether it might be easier to return to old ways and go it alone. And there are also the times when we find ourselves reassessing work schedules and seeking quieter opportunities to just work with the inanimate computer instead. The scales come out and we recalculate the nuances of this style of working.

In terms of lessons learnt, perhaps the most important is to be careful not to have too many expectations, and yet be prepared to put in a great deal of work doing things that other academics and colleagues might not notice or value. Taking a long term view also helps. There have been times when partnerships seemed to be going nowhere, and then suddenly something happened to move it to a new level. So, on balance, we think it's worth it and the benefits outweigh the hassle which is why we are actively involving parents, practitioners and academics in the design and delivery of our new resilience learning programme.

3.7.2 Boundary Spanners

We noted in our review of the literature on communities of practice that an important element of effective communities of practice was boundary spanners. Clearly, community–university partnership activities seek to bridge the gap in culture and understanding between parents, practitioners and academics: We believe that through

the work in the community of practice, we are able to identify where we have built these 'boundary spanners'.

In our partnership we've actively built up the possibility of spending much more time on each other's territory. Kim has a secondment to work part of the week on the university campus, and Angie works regularly with parent and young people's groups in community settings. We have even gone as far as to establish a new social enterprise organization ourselves—a boundary object taking us forward and drawing on elements of both our organizational affiliations, to create something new.

The effect of this is that we have a set of skills that allow us to operate far more comfortably in each other's worlds, as well as in new 'worlds' that we would not necessarily have anticipated. For example, Angie has begun to work more actively and inclusively with young people themselves in the development of RT. Kim has become comfortable and adept at speaking at academic conferences. We notice that neither of us is particularly wedded to a fixed identity, nor would we want to be. So, most of the time at least, we are comfortable with being on the edges.

This isn't the case for everyone of course. In terms of lessons learned, we think it worthwhile to actively think about who could—and is happy to—work effectively across the boundaries. If you are somebody who cherishes a singular identity, for example Professor of Sociology, then you might find it hard to work as a boundary spanner, representing other perspectives. If this is the case, the engagement is, for better or for worse, unlikely to be for you, and we could not recommend it to you. But this may not matter, or in some partnerships it might even make for more effective working. The main lesson is to be aware of where you stand and to articulate what you can and can't do, and what you do and do not want to do.

3.7.3   Relationships, Relationships

A third important point that we see in reflecting back on our partnership, is that it's really clear that paying attention to building relationships and sustaining them is fundamental. We urge readers to really use their imagination to think about some of the minutiae involved in negotiating the complex relational issues these partnerships raise. Take Angie, supporting young people with mental health experiences to write a resilience guide (Experience in Mind, Taylor and Hart 2011) for parents. Academics typically use a dense academic writing style, maintain a distance from research subjects and consider themselves to be experts with respect to lay communities. These are precisely the skills which are not needed, alienating young people with jargon, failing to develop a therapeutic rapport with them and not listening to the feedback which these young people will provide. At the same time, overlain on that is the need to manage the partnership as a project, sustaining interest in and championing the activity internally and externally, whilst producing academic outputs.

Angie found herself in the tricky position of negotiating between young people, the youth worker and her own interests in delivering the project. At the time of writing she has supported the production of a guide that, as an activity within itself seems to

have been of therapeutic benefit to the young people involved. It has also provided useful material for parents struggling to cope with their child's mental ill-health. However, this work ended up being so time-consuming that Angie has not yet been able to produce any outputs that would seriously count in academic terms.

Community partners sitting on academic forums face a dual challenge: They need to deal with these clever-sounding academics who speak their own language and might silence or intimidate them, and get something of use out of these forums. Kim's very thick skinned, so she's not bothered about the apparent academic hierarchy. But she does struggle with some aspects of working alongside more experienced, knowledgeable university researchers who share a 'researchspeak' that she can't immediately understand or keep up with, something slightly exacerbated by Kim's hearing impairment. Asking questions whilst not putting academics off working with community partners is something she struggles with. Kim sometimes worries that academics get bored with her—but don't worry, she doesn't lose sleep over it.

Given these sorts of tensions, from our perspective, a lesson learned would be to spend time thinking about relationships. Helping others in your team to find better ways of working and supporting communities of practice members is a useful focus. For us, many have developed skills in resilience working, but some of us haven't. And whilst some seem better able to draw on the unique skills and perspectives of others in our communities of practice, others clearly haven't found this networking capacity so useful. For yet others still, it may be a matter of time (and it may be a long time) before the value of collaboration becomes active.

We suggest that perhaps a supervision model for people involved in community–university partnerships might help to address these issues. This could help them think through the relational aspect of community–university partnerships and reflect on their own capacities and dilemmas in considering whether to develop this kind of portfolio.

3.7.4 Appreciating Different Drivers

The final point is that different participants have different reasons and objectives for participating in the community of practice. This may seem obvious, but our experience is it does get a lot of people into trouble. Community partners and academics often have very different priorities. Kim has learnt that many academics won't get out of bed unless their name is first on a paper that is written for supposedly prestigious journals that only 10 people will read. Angie has learnt that even though she might get excited about 'writing something up', Kim falls asleep on the sofa at the very mention. In our partnership, we've bickered endlessly about the supposed value of writing theoretical articles or presenting conference sessions that profile more of the same. But those activities are necessary for Angie as an academic to be able to tick her research excellence framework box and she does actually like thinking about theory anyway.

On the other hand, Angie can get fed up with having meetings in dusty church halls, where community members sometimes assume she has elevated knowledge and expertise and yet complain about academic elitism. Kim works in an environment that is not only interested in outputs, but is actually very focused on outcomes. She has to be able to demonstrate the way in which the partnership adds value to the organization's primary mission and chart the positive impact of it with children and families. Ultimately we have learned to at least recognize and understand these different emphases, although without having to let them go—we still argue frequently. Because of balance, the positive energy we have been able to generate to get work done, expand our thinking and meet both our sector's needs, seems much larger than if either of us had done it alone. We have demonstrated the capacity with which we all have to work together co-operatively and collaboratively, despite our differences.

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