Co-Constructing a University-Community, Research-Practice Partnership: The Dialogic Nature of Collaboration

Dr. Carrie Symons, Dr. Peter De Costa, Christina Ponzio | Michigan State University
Erika Binion-Brown | Refugee Development Center

Link to Google Slides: https://tinyurl.com/esc-rdc-msu
Grassroots nonprofit
Support post resettlement
16 Staff; 300+ volunteers
2,500 refugees/immigrants
Bridge
Community Partner
**Erika Brown-Binion**, MA in Education

Who are we?
Who are we?

Carrie Symons - Assistant Professor in Teacher Education

Christina Ponzio - Doctoral Candidate in Teacher Education

Peter De Costa - Associate Professor in Teacher Education and Department of Linguistics & Germanic, Slavic, Asian, and African Languages

College of Education
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
refugee (n): “owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his (or her) nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself (or herself) of the protection of that country.”¹

¹ UNHCR 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees
Why have we pursued this partnership?

- **95,000**: Average annual resettlement over last 40 years \(^1\)
- **70.8 million**: people forcibly displaced globally \(^1\)
- **Over 50% CHILDREN\(^1\)**, many with NO formal education, have endured traumatic experiences and political, social, and personal unrest \(^2\)
- **Less than 1%** are ever resettled

\(^1\) UNHCR, 2018; \(^2\) Suárez-Orozco, 2000; Bigelow, 2010
2013-2017 Lansing Arrivals
2013-2017 = 2,500
2018-2019 = 300
How did we start our partnership?

- Exploratory conversation to create a Research Practice Partnership
  - Long term, mutualistic, shared commitment
  - Centered the people who the RDC serves
- Co-constructed shared culture of communication
  - How do we enter each other’s spaces in a way that cultivates trust?
  - How do we listen to develop a shared culture?

(1) Penuel & Gallagher, 2017
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Project Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2017</td>
<td>Developing Local Literacies with Middle and High School Refugee Youth: An Asset Inventory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2018</td>
<td>The Development of a Teaching Toolkit for Teachers of Newcomers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2018</td>
<td>A Summer Reading Lab: Investigating Linguistically Responsive Reading Comprehension Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2019</td>
<td>Stories of Perceptions, Connections, &amp; Transformations: Building Global Awareness through Intercultural Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hybridizing Pedagogies: Enacting SIOP through a Translanguaging Lens</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How have we sustained our partnership?

- Continuing to center people
  - Humanizing through common values: We see each other as people
  - Empathy for one another, including constraints and limitations
  - Fostering relationships and community beyond actual “work”
  - Consciously seeking to disrupt power dynamics
Example: Distributed Mentorship Model

(1) Khasnabis, Reischl, Stull, & Boerst, 2013
How have we sustained our partnership?

- Iterative cycles of reflection & goal setting
  - Revisit shared culture of communication (i.e., with new partners)
  - Emphasis on listening
  - Flexibility
  - Invite all voices
Implications

- Redefining the meaning of rigor in research
- The potential for 360° learning in PK-12 education-community organization-university partnerships
- Scholarship as activism
 Invitation to Act

● Presidential proposal FY20: **18,000** refugees; lowest in program history

● This would totally destroy the **bipartisan refugee** resettlement program that has transformed lives & made our communities vibrant and prosperous.

● The U.S. has been the leader in offering a safe haven for the world’s most vulnerable refugees.
Invitation to Act

► Share the facts
► Call your Representatives and Senators in support of the **Grace Act**—every call makes a difference, even if they already agree.
► Visit [International Rescue Commission Website](https://www.unhcr.org), UNHCR to learn more.

*The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."

  – Martin Luther King, Jr.
References

Contact Information

Erika Binion-Brown (ebrown@rdclansing.org)
Dr. Carrie Symons (csymons@msu.edu)
Dr. Peter De Costa (pdecosta@msu.edu)
Christina Ponzio (cponzio@msu.edu)
Link to Google Slides: https://tinyurl.com/esc-rdc-msu