AN INQUIRY INTO THE PROGRAM PLANNING ORIENTATIONS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ADMINISTRATORS IN COMMUNITY-ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS

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Abstract

Planning is a ubiquitous dimension of service-learning and community engagement (SLCE) partnership practice. How SLCE administrators conceptualize, inhabit, and negotiate their roles as planners remains empirically underexplored, as does when and why planners experience shifts in perspective that affect partnership quality and outcomes. Building on prior work devoted to program planning theory, we introduce the concept of planning orientations and report on a pilot study in which SLCE administrators reflected on their desired and practiced planning orientations as they planned and implemented a partnership reflection process. Key findings illustrate the value of planning orientations as a construct for investigating planner mindsets and practices, and the utility that structured reflection on planning orientations holds for enhancing reflexivity in community-academic partnership practice. Our findings encourage the field to give more explicit attention to reflection on planning orientations in SLCE professional development.

Service-learning and community engagement (SLCE) scholars and practitioners have devoted increased attention to improving the quality of partnerships (e.g., Dumlao & Janke, 2012; Kniffin et al., 2020, 2023; Larsen, 2016). This attention includes a subset focused on the role of community engagement professionals (CEPs) and other partnership practitioners that highlights core commitments derived from democratic community engagement (e.g., Cress et al., 2015; Dostilio, 2017; Saltmarsh et al., 2009; Tryon & Madden, 2019). Researchers have given limited attention to how practitioners understand and perform their planning roles in partnerships (Sandmann et al., 2009). Important questions remain: What can we learn from practitioners' reflections on their planning processes that might reveal the diverse resources they bring to their work (including various ways of knowing, political understanding, skills, and agency)? How could these insights strengthen professional development in service-learning and community engagement (SLCE) to foster greater integrity, accountability, and authenticity in community-academic partnerships?

Planning is a pervasive domain of action in social and organizational life, including SLCE. Program planning is conducted as part of partnership activities, ranging from small, short-term programs to large-scale initiatives spanning local and global contexts. In this article, we use "program" to refer to coordinated, goal-oriented activities that community and academic partners undertake in their joint work. Program planners may be engaged in this role only occasionally, as needed, as part of an enduring scope of work associated with their professional positions or because of other roles they hold. A range of actors may serve as program planners (e.g., students, faculty, campus administrators/staff, community organization staff, government representatives, community members, coalition leaders, funders, and NGO staff). We use the SOFAR Model (Bringle et al., 2009) as a heuristic device to make visible critical constituencies involved in SLCE activities—Students, community Organization representatives, Faculty, Administrators on campus, and community Residents—as designing for and negotiating their inclusion contributes to developing and sustaining partnership leadership structures that model full participation (Dostilio, 2014; Sturm et al., 2011). The planners highlighted in this study are SLCE Administrators (Faculty and staff).

Although the field of SLCE is attentive to social, political, and cultural factors affecting partnership processes, relationships, and outcomes (e.g., Bandy et al., 2018; Hartman et al., 2018), little is known about how SLCE practitioners conceptualize planning and the planning logics they wrestle with as they translate their perspectives about planning into action, negotiating power, and interests in the context of partnerships. How, for example, do they understand their agency and authority in planning situations? How do they respond when they encounter different configurations of power relations? When power dynamics shift, competing interests from partners and institutions can create ambiguity in the planning process. What conditions enable practitioners to respond rather than feel stuck? Examining practitioner assumptions about what constitutes responsible planning, using Program Planning Theory (PPT) (Cervero & Wilson, 1994; Cervero & Wilson, 2006), provides a fruitful avenue to answer these questions.

Our research investigates the relationship between program planning theories and practitioners' mindsets and behaviors, which we conceptualize as planning orientations. We illustrate how this construct can enhance professional development practices intended to strengthen community-academic partnerships. Our study responds to Sandmann et al.'s (2009) call for further research on SLCE program planning to "examine how [PPT] disrupts individual stakeholders' assumptions, perspectives, needs and interests, relations of power, cultural and institutional norms and expectations, and policies" (Sandmann et al., 2009, pp. 29–30). Building on Cervero and Wilson's (1994) foundational work, we examine four interconnected elements that define planners' experiences: power, interests, negotiation, and responsibility.

SLCE planners negotiate personal and organizational interests when they make individual or collaborative judgments about the audiences, content, modalities, and purposes of partnership activities. Through their decisions, planners enact their theories of what constitutes responsible planning. SLCE planners' actions can uniquely influence partnership norms, dynamics, and outcomes in ways that may enable or constrain participation, nurture or undermine trust, and concentrate or distribute decision-making, thereby reproducing or transforming power relationships. For example, reciprocity is one source upon which SLCE practitioners may ground their theories of responsible planning; while foundational, conceptualizations and applications of reciprocity

vary, are under theorized, and, in practice, too often unexamined (Dostilio et al., 2012). How reciprocity, for example, is conceived and enacted through the work of visioning, convening, decision-making, coordinating, brokering, acting, resourcing, and evaluating community-academic partnerships is also the terrain of planning. However, the tendency to view "planning" as practical labor and logistics results in many (co) planners' theories of responsible planning remaining tacit and unexamined, which can hamper individual and collective efforts to deepen or transform partnership practice. Developing an empirical understanding of SLCE planners' planning orientations can contribute to the field's change goals. The knowledge produced may be used to effect change within individual planners and encourage them to recognize, examine, and perhaps modify their internalized orientations to and understandings of program planning. Although planners do not bear the burden alone for the quality or outcomes of community-academic partnerships, they do exert a unique influence on shaping and reinforcing the norms of engagement. We assert that empirical work on planning may help to spark change across webs of partnership relationships, enhancing their quality and effectiveness.

This study is embedded within a larger project that explored whether and how using a structured reflection tool to collaboratively reflect on the quality of community-academic relationships might enhance partnership practice (Kniffin et al., 2020; Kniffin et al., 2023). Seven SLCE administrators, herein referred to as planners, performed explicit design, convening, and coordinating roles in addition to being participants in the study. The planners were involved as co-planners and co-inquirers alongside members of the research team; specifically, they had the authority to make decisions on why, how, who, where, and when the partnership reflection process took place within parameters established by the research team. This arrangement provided a unique opportunity to observe planners working through the social, technical, and ethical dimensions of their partnership planning in specific organizational and community contexts. This article reports on the qualitative analysis of pre- and post-interviews conducted with the planners.

This research contributes to understanding program planning in SLCE in three ways. First, we introduced the concept of planning orientation to aid in unpacking practitioner standpoints and decision-making in partnership planning contexts. Second, we explored how administrators conceptualized their roles as planners in relation to their other professional roles, including investigating their guiding values, goals and perceived accountabilities. For example, we examined how they balanced their understanding of power dynamics, as a force in their planning, against their stated commitments to a range of partner groups. We analyzed how they interpreted and mediated varying interests they encounter during planning processes (e.g., constraints, opportunities, relationships, structures), as revealed through their decision-making and actions.

Third, we examined the effects of engaging planners in reflection on their desired planning orientations as contrasted with their eventual actions, particularly whether and to what degree such reflection affected their intentions for future partnership planning. As established in the literature on experiential learning, going back as far as Dewey (1916/2004) and recently operationalized in research on partnership quality (Kniffin et al., 2020; Kniffin et al., 2023), reflecting on such dissonance—for example, between what is desired, anticipated, or assumed and what occurs—can be an important catalyst to learning and change. We contend that facilitating reflection by partnership planners and documenting their experiences of dissonance can enrich SLCE professional and partnership development.

Literature Review

Beyond the planning disciplines (Forester, 1989; Forester, 1999), adult and continuing education scholars have devoted the most explicit attention to PPT (e.g., Bracken, 2011; Caffarella, 2002; Caffarella & Daffron, 2013; Sork, 2000). Rather than comprehensively reviewing this literature, we summarize the theoretical dimensions of PPT that are most relevant to SLCE administrator planning orientations, including that from within SLCE scholarship.

Attention to planning grew out of a recognition that planning models "treated power and politics as noise that gets in the way of good planning" (Cervero & Wilson, 1994, p. 251). This assumed gap between power and politics, on the one hand, and good planning, on the other, creates an artificial distance between planners and the social structures within which they act. In this gap, planning models have proliferated that present planning as a linearly sequenced form of managerial work, requiring primarily technical knowledge and skill. Although these models do not prohibit acknowledging practical and ethical dilemmas in planning work, they tend to neglect planning's sociopolitical, relational, and ethical dimensions (Sork & Buskey, 1986; Sork & Käpplinger, 2019) and thereby generally fail to account for "what actually happens in practice" or "provide a guide to action" (Cervero & Wilson, 2010, p. 83).

In contrast, Cervero and Wilson (1994, 2006, 2010) defined program planning as a social process involving the negotiation of personal and organizational interests in the context of structured power relations. They contend that a central question all planners must ask themselves is how their program will affect and be affected by their broader context(s)—in other words, how to plan responsibly. To fully account for what constitutes being responsible—the planner's ethos—entails that planners have conceptual tools to navigate the messiness inherent across planning contexts. In addition to responsibility, Cervero and Wilson (1994) identified three other concepts that account for "the world that planners experience" (p. 253). These included: "the capacity to act (power) because of position and participation in relatively enduring social and organizational relationships, and specific sets of concerns and motivations (interests) that planners and others bring to the table about what should be done" (Cervero & Wilson, 2010, p. 83). The third dimension—and the principal activity of planners—is negotiation, "whereby they come to agreement, whether consensual, conflictual, or some combination thereof, about what to do depending upon who represents which interests and who has the power to act" (Cervero & Wilson, 2010, p. 83).

The concept of the "planning table," coined by Cervero and Wilson (2006), illustrates one-way planners' practices involve all four dimensions (responsibility, power, interests, and negotiation). As a hermeneutic device, the planning table focuses attention on who is and is not at the table, what individuals/organizations bring to the table, how issues are brought to the table, and who has authority to make decisions related to collaborative activities and direction setting. The work of negotiation is discernible through the decisions and actions that planners make in the context of partnership work. For example, in the face of varying pressures and opportunities, does the planner choose to concentrate authority for agenda setting in their own hands, send an email soliciting agenda items from partnership members, or hold time at the end of each meeting during

which all present can co-determine priorities for the next meeting? To what degree do they perceive they have autonomy and authority to influence these decisions and follow through on them? Each action expresses tradeoffs that planners make among varying values and interests, as well as sources and uses of power. However, a practitioner's explicit consciousness of the tradeoffs involved, the ways and degrees to which their efforts are or are not entangled with power relations and interests, or that their planning choices can affect relationships and results are not fixed. Planners' approaches vary not only because of individual differences in style, experience, and/or sense of commitment (responsibility) but also because of how they conceive power, their relative awareness and acknowledgment of which sources of power and whose interests are negotiable (political astuteness), and the skills and relationships they bring to negotiation (influence and political savvy).

Put another way, the effects of programs that result from planning decisions (i.e., outcomes) are not only educational, but they are also political (Cervero & Wilson, 2006, p. 76). SLCE practitioners negotiate power and interests on at least two conceptual levels during planning (Cervero & Wilson, 1994; see Figure 1). At the first level, planners *negotiate with* bringing their own interests and power strategies into institutional and community contexts. These influence strategies include networking, bargaining, reasoning, appealing, and directing (Yang & Cervero, 2001). Practitioners must be shrewd about when to employ specific tactics. For

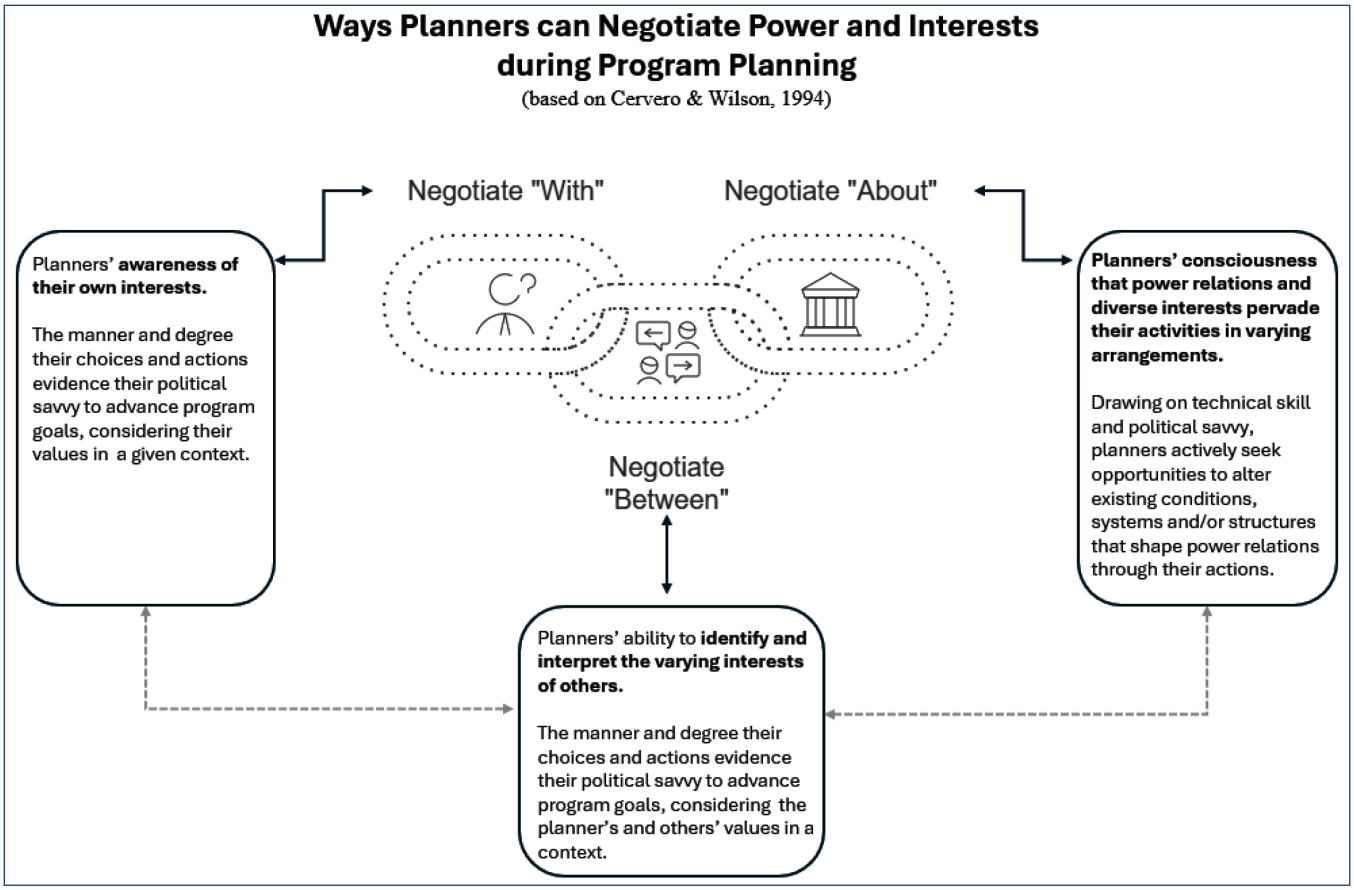

Figure 1 Visualization of Ways Planners can Negotiate Power and Interests during Program Planning based on Cervero & Wilson, 1994.

example, an SLCE planner might recruit faculty by emphasizing engaged research over engaged teaching at an R1 institution (appealing) or offer enhanced resources (student assistants or stipends) to humanities faculty to collaborate with STEM faculty on anchor partnerships focused on the Sustainable Development Goals (bargaining). Relatedly, practitioners must balance their own interests with those of other program actors (*negotiate between*) during the planning process (Figure 1). This balancing of power is evident in how planners handle transparency and communication. For example, SLCE practitioners influence decisions about which languages or jargon to use in meetings, how to record and distribute notes, how long to store records, and who can access them. They also establish (or may avoid establishing) processes for resolving conflicts between partners, including who has input into these decisions and when.

At the second level, planners *negotiate about* interests and power relationships themselves (Cervero & Wilson, 1994, p. 257; see Figure 1). Their actions are both shaped by existing power relations and capable of transforming these relationships. For instance, SLCE practitioners can create holding environments through community agreements and consensus-building decision models, which help redistribute power between community and academic partners (Davis et al., 2017; Garcia et al., 2024).

Cervero and Wilson (2010; Wilson & Cervero, 2010) distinguished among three traditions of PPT: conventional, deliberative, and critical. *Conventional* program planning emerges from within the techno-rational tradition. Planning involves a series of technical steps or procedures (i.e., identifying goals, setting objectives, and developing activities) that are replicable and transferable across contexts. Following logical steps is the primary task of planners. Those rooted in this tradition prioritize mastery of the technical dimensions of planning. Decision-making power (agency and authority) in conventional planning tends to be concentrated in the hands of the leader(s), and the presumption is that responsible planning is modular, efficient, and scalable. A well-designed program in one context should work well in any context. Within a conventional approach, social and political factors that might influence program quality are not considered; rather, they constitute background "noise." Hence, Cervero and Wilson do not address the role of negotiation in the conventional tradition.

Deliberative approaches to planning incorporate limited consideration of sociopolitical contexts. Planners acknowledge that power dynamics and competing interests can influence program quality, relationships, processes, and outcomes. These planners value reflective practice and create opportunities to negotiate with and between interests by convening periodic opportunities to gather input from stakeholders. They organize planning spaces in which the organizer(s) gather practical wisdom from collaborators and interest groups at key points, allowing for plan adjustments based on situational constraints. However, despite their heightened awareness of diverse interests beyond their own that may enable or hinder planning success, planners operating within the deliberative tradition retain centralized decision-making authority. In addition, the underlying logic of conventional planning continues to inform design considerations and outcomes. Deliberative planners' conception of responsible planning, shaped by their values, perceived agency, and understanding of power and positionality, privileges the individual planner's role as the ultimate arbiter in setting program direction and implementation. While this concentration of power can enhance practicability—moving projects from deliberation to concrete

action, especially amid complex dynamics among interest groups with varying interests—it simultaneously can impede efforts to transform planning relationships and disrupt traditional hierarchies *(*negotiating about the context). The deliberative approach facilitates tangible outcomes but effectively limits stakeholder influence to implementation refinements rather than fundamental power redistribution.

Critical planning theories view planning as a social process where individuals and groups *negotiate* power and interests *within* and *between* organizational settings to effect social change. In this tradition, planning is only as strong as the degree of trust stakeholders have in the individuals/organizations involved and in the process itself. Therefore, planning cannot be reduced to a linear set of steps or procedures. Although courses, projects, and partnerships have life cycles, each context and each planning space is unique—informed by distinctive values, interests, and differences in power and authority among contributors. Practitioners who draw on this tradition believe that social, political, and economic forces need to be explicitly accounted for in planning. They recognize that these forces influence the trust stakeholders have in the process—who participates, how they participate, and the adaptability of partners. Critical planners recognize that power is both an enabling and a constraining force. Although nested in structures, power is an emergent dimension of relationships as much as a capacity individuals can invoke. Planners in this tradition see planning activities and relationships as sites of negotiation to foster democratic participation, to mitigate inequities, to find common interests, to draw on the complementary assets of diverse stakeholders, and to facilitate distributed leadership of programs and associated processes, relationships, and outcomes. They develop planning processes and structures that support negotiating with and between interests and foster environments that transform the conditions of planning relationships (negotiate about). Dialogue, reflection, and deliberative decision-making are underlying principles that guide how decisions are made, exemplified by "nothing about us without us."

Sandmann et al.'s (2009) seminal article specifically tied PPT to SLCE. They noted a systematic lack of attention to planning in SLCE, specifically, the absence of theory informing it or being generated from it. They asserted PPT's value as a theoretical framework to strengthen practice and guide research "because contextual and relational factors are central to planning SL[CE]" (p. 18). Using a case study design with data from three graduate-level courses, the authors developed the Service-Learning Program Planning Model (SLPPM) to guide faculty SLCE course planning.

Since the publication of the SLPPM (Sandmann et al., 2009), few studies have explicitly engaged with PPT in SLCE. This is not to say that constructs salient to this topic are lacking in scholarship in the field. There are studies that have examined power (e.g., Sharpe & Dear, 2013), reciprocity (e.g., Dostilio et al., 2012), communication (e.g., Dumlao, 2018), and conflict (e.g., Janke & Dumlao, 2019; Prins, 2005) in partnership practice. Terms such as "co-create," "design," and "lead" are sometimes used to describe planning work but with a great deal of variation in meaning. "Planning" is rarely identified as a central construct, including in places one would expect it to be, such as in the recent competency frameworks developed to support professionalization in SLCE (e.g., Dostilio, 2017; Tryon & Madden, 2019; Weiss & Norris, 2019). In the field-wide competencies for CEPs, "Cultivating High Quality Partnerships" is listed among the six competency areas identified in the framework

(Dostilio et al., 2017, p. 51); however, planning is not listed among the knowledge, skills, abilities, dispositions, or critical commitments that define this competency area. Nor is it included in other competency dimensions in the framework where one might anticipate specific references to it to have relevance (e.g., Administering Community Engagement Programs, Leading Change within Higher Education, Facilitating Student Learning and Development, Facilitating Faculty Development and Support). Another study identified this gap in the CEP competencies. Atiles (2018), advocating for the integration of Cooperative Extension professional competencies into those for CEPs, noted that planning is commonly included in extension competency frameworks internationally. Although Atiles did not see program planning explicitly in the CEP framework, he noted it fit under the Facilitating Faculty Development and Support dimension.

The study reported here responds to the call from Sandmann et al. (2009) for the SLCE field to more explicitly engage with PPT. Although we did not draw on the SLPPM per se, we did pull from foundational scholarship that informed it, particularly Cervero and Wilson (1994; 2006; 2010). Our work centers on partnership planning contexts SLCE Administrators experience. The SLPPM was designed with faculty course planning specifically in mind, whereas the planning work of Administrators (as well as community Organizational staff and Students) may extend beyond individual courses to include more complex and numerous configurations of activities, collaborators, and partnerships. Administrators and Faculty occupy distinct social positions within institutional hierarchies. Administrators' interests, autonomy, and authority often diverge from those of Faculty (O'Meara & Niehaus, 2009; O'Meara et al., 2013), such as in negotiating shifting institutional values, priorities, and fiscal constraints.

From a planning perspective, such variations between Administrators and Faculty interests are important to understanding the forces that inform the practice of each. We used the three PPT traditions, as synthesized by Cervero and Wilson, to examine Administrators' perspectives and actions as they planned a partnership reflection activity.

Methods

The current study reports findings from a subset of data collected as part of a broader IRB-approved study funded by the Community Engagement Alliance (formerly Indiana Campus Compact) (Price et al., 2021). Because the broader study context is relevant to understanding the findings in this paper, we summarize necessary information here and direct readers to the published report for more details (Kniffin et al., 2023). Participants in that study were members of twelve community-campus relationships at five institutions and included nine Faculty, seventeen Administrators, eight Students, eight staff at community Organizations, one community Resident, and four participants who did not self-identify. All participants completed the Transformational Relationship Evaluation Scale II (TRES II) Reflection Framework (Clayton et al., 2022), which includes three sections guided by the DEAL Model for Critical Reflection (Ash & Clayton, 2009) to describe, examine, and articulate learning regarding relationship quality. We also interviewed onsite planners

from each campus before and after the reflection activity to gather information on their planning decisions and other feedback on the Reflection Framework. Herein, we refer to the Reflection Framework as the reflection activity. Our team designed the reflection activity as a collaborative tool; however, some sections (such as the embedded 10-item scale) can also be completed individually prior to collaborative sessions. Our larger project goals included learning directly from practitioners who were interested in using reflection to improve the quality of their relationships with the community. Although the reflection activity included a workbook with specific steps and prompts to guide all participants, onsite planners had latitude in coordinating it. This included deciding:

- who had the authority to make planning decisions (e.g., an individual, a representative body, everyone involved),
- who determined the local goals for the activity,
- who was invited to participate in the activity,
- who facilitated each step of the process (e.g., research team members, planners, participants),
- the participation modality and location used in each step (in-person, virtual, hybrid, on/off-campus),
- the timeline (e.g., expectations for how concentrated/distributed in time completing each section would occur, on which days, times), and
- the approaches to completing sections of the reflection activity (fully collaborative, a combination of individual and collaborative reflection).

The current study used a collective case study design (Creswell & Poth, 2024) involving multiple bounded cases (people or sites) to illustrate orientations to program planning, document variations, and seek themes through cross-case analysis. Each of the five institutions associated with the broader study served as a case. This paper focuses on two interviews conducted with each of the onsite planners: an initial pre-interview at the beginning of the planning process and a post-interview held approximately one week after the completion of the reflection activity. Interviews were designed to elicit evidence of each planner's decision-making in coordinating and implementing the reflection activity.

Using purposeful sampling methods (Patton, 2015), researchers recruited planners through multiple channels: listserv announcements to the higher education SLCE community, direct invitations, and online webinars. The webinars served dual purposes: gathering feedback on a draft Reflection Framework and recruiting participants for the broader study. Seven participating planners were based at five institutions of higher education in the United States.

All the planners in this study identified themselves as Administrators, Faculty, or both (Table 1). Two sites each had two planners involved. Five of the seven planners were affiliated with centralized SLCE offices; another served as an academic department chair, and another was a faculty member with research interests in partnerships.

Table 1
Summary of Planner Program Planning Orientations.

Planner	SOFAR Group	Planning Orientation		SOFAR Participants		Reflection Activity Roles
		Desired	Practiced	Desired	Actual	
Laura	F, A	Deliberative/ Critical	Deliberative	S, F, A, and O representatives part of a long-term partnership in Laura's department and spanning other units on campus (n = 9)	S (3), F (4), Laura chose to complete as F; 0-Ss completed the full activity, 2-Fs dropped out	Planner Facilitator Scribe Participant
Carmen	A, F	Critical	Deliberative/ Critical	S, F, A, O Paired collaborators associated involving multiple longitudinal partnerships with a youth center (n = 6)	S (1), A (2) Carmen identified as A 2-S and 1 F didn't complete	Planner Participant
Felicia	A	Critical	Deliberative	Four pods, each with at least 3 participants (n = 12 total) representing a combination of S, O, F, A, R	Three pods Pod 1: A (1), O (1) Pod 2: A (1), O (1), F (1) Pod 3: A (1), O (1), S (1)	Co-Planner with Pods Participant
Paula	A	Critical	Conventional (with As)/ Deliberative (with Amber & Research team member)	A Paula, Amber + 2 other staff (n = 4)	Same as desired	Co-Planner Facilitator Participant
Amber	A	Deliberative	Deliberative			Same as Paula
Julia	A	Conventional/ Deliberative	Conventional	S, O, F, A, R representing broad range of partnerships across campus	S, O, F, A in two partnerships P1: S (1) and F (2)	Co-Planner Sponsor Observer
Piper	F	Critical	Conventional		P 2: O (1), A (1), F (1)	Co-planner Researcher

Note: The letters S, O, F, A, R refer to Students, community Organization representatives, Faculty, Administrators on campus, and community Residents.

The broader study employed a research design that called for close collaboration between researchers and planners. In one case, a planner was both a member of the research team and a co-planner at the site. Additionally, two research team members had established professional relationships with planners at three sites from previous work. These connections enhanced rapport among planners and researchers, blurring traditional insider-outsider boundaries. While this arrangement supported more collegial and frank conversations, it may have added to tensions some planners experienced during the project, such as needing to balance the project end date set by the research team to meet grant deadlines with their own priorities, local schedules, workloads, and the availability of participants they wished to involve in the reflection activity.

The research team employed a semi-structured interview protocol to ensure consistency while allowing flexibility for follow-up questions. Before each interview, researchers asked planners to describe their institutional context and role in partnership work, current concerns and goals related to partnerships, and desired outcomes from the reflection activity. The protocol also addressed selection criteria for participants and their intended roles, strategies for convening partners, and planners' own intended role(s) during the activity (e.g., participant, observer, facilitator, or scribe).

The post-interview process focused on comparing planners' anticipated plans for the reflection activity with their actual implementation and results. We used the concept of *planning orientation* to analyze patterns in how planners approached and made sense of PPT through their decisions and actions. Planning orientations encompass practitioners' internalized views about responsible planning, including their understandings of power dynamics and interests and how they read and respond to both.

During the post-interviews, researchers reviewed PPT traditions with participants both verbally and in writing. Planners were asked to identify their preferred planning approach within the PPT framework and provide their rationale for their selections. They then compared their ideal practices with their actual decisions in planning and implementing the reflection activity.

Two distinct aspects of planning orientation emerged from this analysis. *Desired planning orientation* referred to practitioners' ideal approach to responsible planning. This encompassed to whom planners saw themselves as accountable during planning, whether to their own interests, institutional priorities, personal relationships, the production of public goods, or how they internally prioritized and sought to reconcile these competing accountabilities. It also included their understanding of and inclination toward building and wielding power considering their value claims (e.g., reciprocity, justice, equity, effectiveness, trust). *Practiced planning orientation* captured how planners actually implemented the reflection activity. This involved comparing their ideals with actions, analyzing the strengths and limitations of each PPT tradition they referenced, and reflecting on how they would negotiate similar circumstances when planning partnership reflection activities in the future.

Researchers conducted synchronous online interviews via Zoom and analyzed both audio recordings and written transcripts. After assigning pseudonyms to each planner, the research team analyzed responses for patterns specific to each individual's interests and their positionality relative to partners involved. The analysis examined their power and influence strategies for organizing the reflection activity, as well as their awareness of and stances toward both institutional interests and those of their partners/participants. Researchers also focused on how planners made contextual decisions to negotiate power and interests *in situ*.

Descriptive and *in vivo* coding were used to organize the data categorically and then mapped to the three PPT traditions offered by Cervero and Wilson (2006; 2010). Contextual information for each case was coded to build profiles for each planner and to provide grounds for comparison. A subset of our team reviewed the transcripts to look for evidence of decisions made during the planning process and coded them into the four interrelated dimensions of planning practice per Cervero & Wilson (1994): responsibility, power, interests, and negotiation.

Finally, we coded for themes related to shifts between desired and practiced planning orientations, judgments about selected orientations, and reflections on the planning process. The planners' practiced orientation versus

desired orientation, as documented in the pre- and post-interviews, became the basis for within-case and cross-case comparisons. Analytically, desired and practiced planning orientations provided a mechanism to identify gaps between planners' desires, their practice, and their experienced sources of dissonance. Because the conceptual, political, and moral dimensions that underlie planning are so often tacit and unstated, we assumed that planners may vary in their awareness of the broader assumptions underlying their actions.

Results

We begin this section by introducing each of the planners through a profile that illustrates their roles, standpoints, campus context, and goals for engaging in the reflection activity as well as descriptions of their desired planning orientations. We then present some of the ways planners negotiated the complexities of planning as they organized and participated in the reflection activity. These decisions are described in the context of Cervero and Wilson's (1994) central concepts of planning practice. Finally, we examined the shifts between planners' desired and practiced planning orientations, as described through planners' reflections and the interpretations of the research team.

Planner Profiles

Planner profile descriptions lay the foundation for patterns regarding the tacit and explicit assumptions our sample of practitioners held about responsibility, power, interest, and negotiation in their planning work and the degrees to which they were able to manifest their desired planning orientations in practice.

Laura

Laura is a Faculty member and department chair (Administrator) at a large, public, comprehensive, urban-serving university. She indicated that community partnership is an institutional priority essential to how her department works, noting that "I typically really prioritize community partnerships just because that is what we do; as an institution it's one of our priorities, one of our core values is supporting the community around us."

Although Laura had a history of direct partnership work in her own service-learning courses and scholarship, since becoming chair, she had moved toward a liaising and brokering role. Laura's interest in the reflection activity was to expand her department's assessment practice to include partnerships to improve their responsiveness and effectiveness. Laura elected to serve as planner, convener, facilitator, scribe, and participant in the process. When thinking about how to plan and who to convene for the reflection activity, Laura decided to exclude community Residents. Most Residents who had been involved in the partnership she had chosen had left the area due to gentrification. Communication with community Organization representatives was complicated by the local housing authority. As the lead funder in the partnership, they directed that communication with the Organization go through the authority. Similarly, she extended the invitation to campus Administrators from the research office involved in the partnership, but none joined the reflection activity.

Laura described her desired planning orientation as most closely corresponding with the deliberative tradition. In her view, this approach acknowledged "the needs and considerations of everyone who's part of the process, while also taking into account [the] structures in place and systems in place...it's...like the soft skills and hard skills combined into one of the planning." In the post-interview, she deemed the conventional tradition to be too rigid, not allowing for the flexibility that would drive participation. Although she noted some degree of affinity with the critical tradition, she stated that it would have been inappropriate for this situation because the group (Faculty, Students, Administrators) "wouldn't have gotten it done in time when we needed to finish it by the [study] deadline."

Carmen

Carmen works at an SLCE center located at a private, midsize, research-intensive university in a large metropolitan district. The center includes eight full-time staff as well as graduate and undergraduate staff. Carmen holds a blended role, including a full-time appointment as an Administrator and a part-time role as Faculty. Carmen and her SLCE center colleagues came to the reflection activity interested in digging "deeper into the well" of partnership dynamics. Carmen reached out to the representatives at a local youth center (i.e., community Organization), who had longstanding ties to her center, but they indicated that they lacked the capacity to participate in the allotted time frame. Carmen questioned, along with her SLCE center colleagues, whether to continue in the project without them. Despite qualms about conducting the reflection activity without those partners, Carmen determined that value remained in proceeding, opting to engage three dyads connected to facets of the youth center partnership (Table 1). In addition to her planning role, Carmen intended to participate but not facilitate the reflection process. Representatives from multiple SOFAR groups had indicated lengthy commute times as a constraint given their metropolitan location; Carmen made efforts to tailor the process and alleviate the pressure to be in person by leveraging technology; despite her efforts, none of the Faculty and most of the Students did not attend. Only Carmen, her center colleague, and Carmen's graduate assistant completed the reflection activity.

When prompted in the post-interview, Carmen identified her desired planning orientation in the critical tradition; however, in the current situation, such a process was only possible under conditions in which the scheduling constraints, imposed by the project deadlines, were removed: "The shift I would choose would be around removing some of those contextual constraints." In considering the orientation she practiced, Carmen located herself in deliberative tradition, stating that it allowed her and her colleagues to "move forward and do it."

Felicia

Felicia works in a campus-based SLCE office within a small, private liberal arts institution. Felicia is an Administrator who directs the office team responsible for community relationships; she identified her role as primarily community-facing, noting that while all members of the staff have a hand in community-academic partnerships (e.g., co-curricular programs, courses), it is the community-facing team's role in particular to "show up and listen" and "have our ear to the ground with community partners."

To that end, she stated that they wanted to learn whether their stewardship was creating spaces for honest, generative conversation, ones in which they imagined and pursued new ways of being and working together: "Are we having the right check-ins with each other? Are the right folks from our organizations in conversation with each other?"

In the pre-interview, Felicia expressed her intention to engage four partnerships, which she called "pods," in the process, including Students, Faculty, center staff (Administrators), Residents and community Organization representatives (Table 1). Representation within pods varied, and Felicia noted that her expected recruitment across SOFAR categories, particularly Students and community Residents, would vary due to her center's programming model. In the post-interview, Felicia suggested that the critical tradition most closely described her planning orientation (both desired and practiced), particularly in how the pods ensured that representatives of community Organizations had existing structures that aided their participation as co-planners: "We were able to invite two of our organizations into that conversation, to help us with decision making...so we all try to get in a room together and do this process together."

Paula and Amber

Paula and Amber work in the campus SLCE center at a public research university. Paula serves as director while Amber is the associate director. Amber shared that "support[ing] community-driven social change" is a key facet of the center's mission. In their current roles, both develop and maintain community relationships, including through community board service; however, they noted that the time they spend in communities is diminished compared to their colleagues. Paula and Amber expressed concern that center staff were not working as a unified team in their coordination of partnerships. Both wanted a more systematic framework to guide their center's collective approach.

Unlike other planners profiled, Paula and Amber elected to limit participation in the activity to themselves and their two center colleagues (Table 1) and engaged in collective debriefing with the assistance of a research team member serving as facilitator. Paula identified with the critical tradition, including her concern with attending to differences in power among herself, Students, community Organization representatives, and community Residents and her inclination to involve them in planning. By contrast, Amber shared many of Paula's concerns for working toward transformational outcomes,[1] but she did not identify squarely with a single desired orientation, offering examples that spoke to both the deliberative and critical traditions:

> [We] share plenty...common goals and perspectives, but there were places [where]... I felt like there was enough disagreement...enough texture to get us to some of that deliberation. Like it fit the people that were in the room in terms of the power, relationships, and trust that was present.

1 The reflection activity includes assessing partnership quality with transformational as the highest level. For a discussion of partnership quality, see Clayton et al., 2010; Kniffin et al., 2023.

Julia and Piper

Julia and Piper work at a rural, midsize, public, regional comprehensive university. Julia is a senior Faculty member with a half-time buyout to direct SLCE work on campus as an Administrator. In the past, she reported to senior administrators in student affairs; however, recently her reporting line shifted to academic affairs with an expanded portfolio of duties, including facilitating, shepherding, and assessing partnerships directly or coordinating them on an institutional scale. Piper, a pre-tenure Faculty member, brings significant teaching and research expertise in community-academic partnerships from prior professional and educational experiences and has established relationships with organizations and community groups since coming to campus.

Julia and Piper's plan evolved significantly from pre- to post-interview. Initially, Julia envisioned a large campus event to establish a baseline for the current partnership activity between campus and community. She offered to pay for food and materials and also suggested hosting the event in the community to reduce barriers to participation by representatives from community Organizations. However, she looked to Piper to develop the idea. Given her research interests, partnership experience, and commitments, Piper invited Julia to consider the full range of SOFAR voices in the process. As the two worked together, reaching out to their contacts, both became concerned about scheduling and the amount of time involved. Ultimately, the pair significantly reduced the scale and scope of the reflection activity, focusing on two partnerships (Table 1). Julia asked Piper to take a lead role in organizing separate sessions for each partnership and allowing partners, in Julia's words, "to figure out what would work for them."

Compared to other planners, Piper and Julia differed the most in their desired planning orientations. Piper identified her preference for the critical tradition, a point evidenced by her periodically prompting Julia during the pre-interview, inviting her to consider a broader range of stakeholders to include at various points throughout the planning process. By contrast, Julia struggled to identify her desired planning orientation; at various times, she pointed to both the conventional and deliberative traditions. Throughout both interviews, Julia indicated an openness to sponsor, advocate, and communicate the broader value of SLCE; however, her statements regarding her planning role foregrounded a preference for providing technically sound, accessible materials that practitioners could use with little if any personal guidance. Both agreed that in this instance, their planning process reflected the conventional tradition with the planners doing "all of [the] initial groundwork" and then deciding "what to deliver to the partnerships."

Negotiating the Complexities of the Planning Process

The idealized world that planners envisioned at the beginning of the process collided with the realities of planning across their campus, community, and partnership contexts and the research timeline. As Sork and Käpplinger (2019) note, successful planners "must negotiate in flexible, creative, and imaginative ways within continuously changing contexts and often challenging asymmetrical power relations" (p. 40). The planners in this study made decisions and took action to fulfill their goals for the reflection activity, juggling competing interests, constraints,

and priorities. Their decisions resulted in tradeoffs, some explicit and others less so. Our analysis revealed how planners negotiated (Figure 1) multiple factors: institutional constraints and systems, competing community priorities, project requirements, personal values, positional and relational power dynamics, time constraints, developmental phases of partnerships, geographic distribution of stakeholders, tensions between practical and moral values, and their individual versus collective understanding of planning responsibility. Importantly, their negotiations were influenced by and expressed through the planners' conventional, deliberative, and critical orientations—each approach presenting distinct tensions in how power, participation, and purpose were conceptualized and enacted throughout the planning process.

Planners varied in how they conceptualized their sources of power and influence (negotiating with) while planning and implementing the reflection activity. Some focused on their positional power or agency to convene, direct, resource, and move the process forward, giving less conscious attention to relational power. For example, Laura, who identified more with the deliberative orientation (desired and practiced), chose to serve not only as a planner and convener for the reflection activity but also as a facilitator, scribe, and participant. This had the effect of further concentrating rather than distributing control over the direction and documentation of the activity. Her approach offered an interesting contrast to other planners' approaches (Table 1). While other Administrators focused particularly on how their facilitation might constrain the openness of some participants given their supervisory relationships (Students, department Faculty peers) or funding relationships (Organizational staff) (negotiating between and about) (Figure 1), Laura approached the exercise with a different focus. Her statements emphasize her chair responsibilities as a rationale for using her positional power (negotiating with) in directing planning decisions to create reflective space on a departmental scale, thereby broadening participation, at least among Faculty and Students.

Similarly, Julia referenced positional authority associated with her Administrative role, the budgetary resources at her disposal, and her senior Faculty status, which she used to sponsor the reflection activity. Julia was the most removed from day-to-day partnership relationships of all the planners but still viewed herself as responsible for continuing to "nurture and develop existing partnerships" institutionally. She acknowledged her lack of technical knowledge regarding partnership assessment and lamented her inability, at present, to coordinate and scale partnership monitoring due to limited infrastructure and resources, marker of a conventional orientation. Piper, a former faculty fellow, brought expertise in community engagement and a commitment to the project, serving as a deliberative partner in the planning process. Julia welcomed this relationship to stretch her thinking and was "excited about the way [they were] co-creating that experience," which helped advance her institutional charge.

Others wrestled with multiple dimensions and sources of power as they negotiated *with* and *between* their planning contexts. For instance, Carmen and Felicia talked about the significance of having a member of the research team facilitate the collaborative portions of the reflection activity. Both cited their own positionality as campus Administrators and managers as a factor shaping relationship dynamics. They anticipated its potential effect on participant frankness and vulnerability, believing that engaging an external facilitator would ease this tension while also enabling them to participate, reflect alongside others, and further their critical commitments to authentic relationships. As Carmen noted:

> It was helpful having an external facilitator...it positioned me as a participant, which I think is important even though [I] kind of have oversight over everybody who's there. Since I wasn't facilitating the conversation, I didn't feel like anybody was treating my responses as having any kind of priority over anybody else's responses.

Although not as overt, we saw glimmers of a similar pattern in Amber and Paula's case. On the surface, the duo employed their positional authority as senior center Administrators to plan all aspects of the reflection activity, including directing their subordinate colleagues' participation. Their approach fell short of Paula's desired critical orientation, which bothered her. Amber, whose desired and practiced orientations were deliberative, expressed less concern with their concentrated use of authority and its consequences but believed that by planning together, the two were able to ensure "an intentional process that fit within other goals and values that we were trying to cultivate." Their case captures a point in time in the evolution of their own relationship as center leaders, negotiating with and between their own interests and using their agency to sort through the contours of a shared understanding of planning and leadership with democratically engaged partnerships at the center.

Power sharing among all SOFAR stakeholders is fundamental to democratically engaged partnerships. All but one set of planners stated that engaging community-based partners in the reflection process was important; however, translating this commitment into practice created distinct dilemmas. Each planner faced decisions about balancing their values and interests within their specific opportunities and constraints. These dilemmas often emerged from tensions between practical values (such as efficiency) and moral values (such as co-creation and reciprocity).

Planners varied in how they perceived and weighted these challenges in both individual and joint planning decisions. Their reflections offered glimpses of the ways each tacked back and forth across dimensions of negotiation. Each planner negotiated with their own positionality, agency, and savvy while simultaneously negotiating between the interests, autonomy, and authority brought to bear by others (i.e., the participants, the research team, the developmental phase of the partnership, the strength of relationships, and the geographic distribution of partners). All of this occurred within existing norms, structures, and systems as they worked to complete the reflection activity. Occasionally, planners leveraged their own agency and/or the collective will of others to negotiate about the planning context, taking actions intended to spark transformation in the norms that govern existing relationships on site.

Laura reported that she tried to reach out to her community Organization partners and received no response. She did not feel conflicted about moving forward with the reflection process absent representatives from the community. For Laura, responsible planning meant focusing on practicability and flexibility, which, in this instance, superseded the value she placed on co-creation. These varying interests included her own (i.e., piloting a structured partnership reflection process so that her department could be more accountable to partners and students), those of Residents and Organizational staff (e.g., the outmigration of residents from the neighborhood due to gentrification; the bottleneck position of the Housing Authority in accessing other participating organizations), as well as those of the research team.

Laura, consistent with the deliberative tradition, construed her efforts to negotiate with and between interests in this instance as an individual responsibility, observable by her recurring use of "I" statements and references to her campus role. Her understanding of responsible planning shaped how she identified and accounted for various interests at stake. In this instance, being accountable to the research team to meet project deadlines and her own priorities as chair trumped other interests (e.g., expanding participation). Upon examination, she noted that adopting principles consistent with the critical planning tradition would have meant that the reflection activity would not have occurred at all, which she viewed as unacceptable. Hosting a partnership reflection activity and using an evidence-based framework was an iterative step forward to strengthen her department's commitment to partnerships in alignment with institutional priorities. When asked whether she had considered withdrawing from the project with the prospect of undertaking it later, Laura remarked, "No, because I knew we could do it. It just forced a certain type of planning…if I'm given a timeline, I'm going to meet the timeline… because that's how we work." She did, however, note that "if we had a little bit more time to plan, *I* [emphasis added] would have been a bit more involved with the entire group."

In two additional cases, planners decided to continue with the reflection activity even when community Organizations and Residents were unable to join. Carmen's partners "just didn't feel like they had the space for it right now" but did not "hate the idea" of having a joint reflection process. Carmen's team considered whether it was worth holding the session if the partners could not be there:

> We decided that it would be, if nothing else, for the [Students, Faculty, and Administrators] to have a good understanding of what this process is [in order] to feel more comfortable approaching the [community Residents] and the [representatives of community Organizations] to join us next time.

Carmen decided to convene pairs of Faculty, Administrators, and Students who worked with specific community partners. Carmen thought they ended up with "a really cool design" and concluded that "the value is in the conversation both in terms of building a process, building relationships."

Felicia's team prioritized the involvement of non-campus partners through a structured approach. They first identified participating pairs of campus Administrators and their corresponding community-based Organization representatives based on pod membership. These pods were organized around locally salient issues that crosscut partnership relationships and programs, providing a distributed leadership structure to which she could appeal. Among all planners, Felicia alone successfully engaged this group in planning the activity as originally intended. Her team first ensured that "those two people were participating," then "built the other pieces around that" and "[extended] additional invitations" to other stakeholders within the same partnerships. Felicia's account illustrates how planners' actions can extend beyond negotiating with and between to negotiating about context (Figure 1), demonstrating the capacity to transform the conditions and structures that shape norms and expectations.

Shifting Perspectives on Planning Orientations

All the planners expressed concern that they conducted SLCE with integrity and that they "walked the talk" of SLCE as they conceived it. Planners expressed concerns for integrity through the anxieties, tensions, and hopes they expressed as they identified their desired planning orientations and juxtaposed their ideals with the realities of their actions. This juxtaposition often created dissonance that appeared through questions they posed and insights they gleaned when discussing and examining the gaps between their desired and practiced planning orientations.

Four planners experienced a shift about planning, coming to see it as a vital dimension of reflexive partnership practice. Carmen was most direct in expressing this insight: "It's just good to have...another reminder that the planning process is part of *the process* and should be done with intentionality and some reflection." She went on to recognize the habituated nature of common planning decisions, such as determining meeting modalities: "In...thinking about the planning of this, I'm not sure that I was overly conscious about the fact that I was making some decisions. Even the decision to be on Zoom, that wasn't even really a conscious decision. I just did it."

Similarly, Felicia called attention to the space created by this study to be more intentional and reflexive in her partnership planning beyond instrumental conversations. Felicia named the pressure to get things done but also asserted the priority to "just pause." "So often," she said, "we ask questions, but it leads right into the practical planning" rather than into "planning that includes reflection for the good of the relationship." For both Carmen and Felicia, the planning and implementation process was an avenue that helped them and their collaborators step further into a space of relational and project accountability. This point is illustrated by Carmen: "[In] the center, we talk about reflection all the time...It [this study] was an opportunity for us to really walk our talk...We say reflection is important, let's do it, you know!"

Both Carmen and Felicia indicated that reflecting on their planning helped them to clarify their commitments to their non-negotiable values, including co-creation, and to claim their agency as planners to not only negotiate with and between interests in context (as expressed by their concerns over facilitation roles) but also to open or further opportunities to alter the conditions underlying planning roles and decision-making authority *(*negotiate about). Carmen, for instance, wrestled with the decision to proceed without community partner participation because it conflicted with her sense of responsibility. In the post-interview, she stated that in the future she would not proceed with such activities if community partners did not participate as co-planners and participants, demonstrating her strengthened resolve to prioritize co-creation and full participation explicitly in her partnership planning. The shift here was not a change from one planning orientation to another; instead, it represented a deepened commitment to take actions, such as declining opportunities that conflicted with her critical commitments.

Paula's shift was more subtle than Amber's. Paula commented that, despite opportunities to have a greater impact through transformational partnerships, "thinking about it in my own mind has not led to figuring it

out," but that this process of planning and completing the partnership reflection activity had helped to illuminate how she, Amber, and their colleagues could advance their transformational goals. Paula, as with Carmen and Felicia, was predisposed to the critical planning orientation. However, Amber, whose desired orientation straddled both deliberative and critical traditions, had an epiphany, stating in the post-interview that "the planning process itself is something I want to be more transformational [looking ahead] ...*the planning process itself is part of the transformation* [emphasis added]."

Although other planners did not state that they experienced a shift regarding their concept of planning, evidence indicated that some strengthened their recognition, resolve, and/or accountability as planners within their desired orientations, further clarifying their concepts of responsible planning. Laura's insights manifested as an increased appreciation for holding space for generative stakeholder conversations, which aligned with her own personal learning goals, couched within her role as department chair:

> I think one of the things that we want to learn is how to be a really good partner, how to be a partner that other external agencies want to work with, how to best listen to our agencies that we work with, and how to ensure that it is not self-serving when we are working with.

Analysis of Laura's interview responses conveyed enthusiasm for holding space for generative conversations with community Organization representatives and Residents. When examining her statements about planning decisions, her focus centered on implementing a deliberative approach rather than redistributing power and authority. Through her responses, Laura articulated connections to both deliberative and critical PPT traditions, with her statements primarily reflecting deliberative orientation principles. She expressed interest in deepening this deliberative approach with partners in future work.

Julia's statements regarding her interests and sense of responsibility may speak to both her social and administrative distance from partnership work as much as her orientation to planning. In her role as a senior Faculty member with a partial administrative buy-out to lead civic engagement work at the campus level, her comments described her aspiration to be more efficient and effective in her role. This included being able to communicate to campus and community leaders not only the number of current community-academic partnerships, which numbered in the hundreds, but also that these collaborations "were more impactful in ways that would really strengthen everyone's [on-campus] relationships with those community partners. And...I think, serve the partners better too." Although Julia valued the intimacy and dialogue offered by the reflection activity, she focused on developing a modular and scalable online process that would operate with minimal direct office involvement. This approach reflected her strategic thinking about implementing partnership assessment processes at scale and with limited resources. When discussing planning traditions, Julia initially found it challenging to identify her desired orientation, seeing connections with both conventional and deliberative approaches. As the interview progressed, her responses demonstrated a stronger affinity with conventional orientation principles.

Discussion and Implications

A key takeaway from these findings is the added value of structured reflection on planning orientations to surface dissonance related to partnership practice and ideals. This dissonance highlights the tensions between how practitioners envisioned responsible planning of their reflection activity, the constraints they faced, and the tradeoffs they made during actual implementation. An empirical focus on planning orientations concretizes how the everyday actions and seemingly mundane logistical tasks planners enact may contribute to either reproducing or transforming partnership relationship dynamics. Digging into the minutiae of specific planning contexts helps reveal to participants a fundamental relationship: that planning *is* partnering, the embodiment of an ethos. Our study showed that understanding this relationship became clearer through detailed contextual analysis, even for those actively committed to and engaged in the broader partnership reflection project.

Our findings, while illustrative, have context-dependent limitations that may restrict their generalizability. The study drew participants from a broader research project, meaning recruited planners had both the capacity and interest to engage in a multi-part critical reflection process with stakeholders, characteristics that may not reflect typical community engagement offices or CEPs. Additionally, while pre- and post-interviews included questions essential to the broader study (Kniffin et al., 2023), not all these data directly informed the present analysis. Each planner's profile represents a partial snapshot of the factors shaping their interests and planning context, potentially influencing our interpretations. We acknowledge that our interpretations may not fully capture the complexity or nuance of the planners' experiences or views. Finally, the grant's performance period imposed implementation timelines. However, these constraints closely resembled the academic year schedules that typically govern campus-based planners' work.

Each planner engaged with their own agency and interests, working to *negotiate* both *with* and *between* contexts. This engagement was evident in the approaches of conventionally and deliberatively oriented planners like Julia and Laura. Both demonstrated awareness of power dynamics, though their recognition of power sources and interests in planning the reflection activity emphasized individual and institutional dimensions (such as role, authority, influence, and agency) and resources within their direct purview (including budget, materials, and people).

Julia emphasized her positional power and institutional authority in convening, directing, resourcing, and advancing the planning process. Her primary focus was on these formal structures, while giving less conscious attention to relational or network power, though she did leverage her collaborative relationship with Piper. Laura's approach to planning the reflection activity drew upon her evolving read of community, campus, and departmental conditions, motivations, and dynamics. Her prior experiences in the partnership, both as a faculty member (active partner) and as department chair (sponsor/intermediary), informed her reading of interests and grounded her rationale for selecting a more directive approach to plan the reflection activity. Her decisions reflected her weighting of priorities—balancing her individual leadership style with her sense of accountability to diverse stakeholders—while envisioning this pilot activity as an adaptive model for integrating collective partnership reflection into departmental culture.

Laura's decision-making is consistent with the deliberative tradition, while Julia's choices contrast with Wilson and Cervero's (2010) contention that conventional planners discount social context dimensions, including power, as background noise. The findings from this sample challenge this view. Wilson and Cervero's contention does not account for internal dialogues that individual planners may have regarding their own sources of power and influence [and how to deploy them] or their conceptions of values like reciprocity (cf. Dostilio et al., 2012), dialogues that intentionally designed professional development can support SLCE planners to become more aware of and modify. Julia's case invites further inquiry into how planner agency and negotiation function across planning traditions, partnership scales, and organizational leadership roles (e.g., O'Meara et al., 2013).

Inviting reflection on their desired and practiced orientations using the three PPT traditions prompted each planner to make visible sources of dissonance, to identify gaps, and to question the degree of integrity they observed between their partnership claims and planning actions. During the interviews, several planners tacked back and forth to situate their beliefs about their practice within a specific orientation versus their actual practice. Prompting planners to name an orientation was itself a disorienting experience. Some, like Amber, were able to reconcile their disorientation and clarify their stance and planning style. For those drawn to a critical planning orientation (i.e., Carmen, Felicia, Paula), reflection surfaced their ongoing struggles to enact democratic engagement principles given existing systems, structures, and constraints and how these are embedded in planning decisions and routines. It raised their awareness of specific instances in which disjunctures in their planning assumptions inhibited living their principles regardless of other factors. Furthermore, this type of examination may not happen spontaneously, which demonstrates the power of our intervention with CEPs to open avenues to alternative responses.

Determining how collaborative to be in a community-academic planning process presents an ongoing ethical dilemma. For example, all the planners cited scheduling concerns frequently as a practical consideration. Applying a planning orientation lens to examine their responses to scheduling issues helped planners see the ethical tensions inside very practical tasks like scheduling meetings, deciding how to administer surveys, and deciding where to hold meetings, including connecting these tasks to moral value claims like co-creation. Adams et al. (2024, p. 15–16) examine the "instinct to limit or temper invitations" out of concern "that merely extending an invitation to collaborate might put undue pressure on the recipient to sacrifice limited resources"; they conclude that "however well intentioned, it is fundamentally disempowering ... [and] denies the individual the ability to make the decision for themselves." Ethical complexities represent dialectical tensions that are structural and pervasive in community-campus relationships (Dumlao & Janke, 2012). SLCE planners regularly confront these complexities. One benefit of this exercise is strengthening commitment to act, as when Carmen decided to say "no, not now" to future opportunities.

Practitioner-scholars have given increased attention to strengthening professional development to support practitioners, particularly students, staff, and faculty, by attending to issues of reciprocity, mutual benefit, and power sharing in their partnership practices. One place this is clearly evidenced is in the work to develop field-wide CEP competencies (Dostilio et al., 2017; Dostilio & Perry, 2017). Dostilio and Welch (2019) discussed

the importance of CEPs coming to understand themselves as cultural beings in order to "effectively navigate, appreciate, and honor the cultural crossings of partnership work [that] requires being aware of [their] cultural contexts, personal and professional, and their inherent orientations, pressures, and goals" (p. 182). In our view, practitioner engagement with planning orientations is key to the work Dostilio and Welch describe and warrants further attention in CEP professional development to cultivate high-quality partnerships.

SLCE practitioners vary in their interpretations of the call to higher education's public purposes (Butin, 2014; Hernandez, 2017). Although hierarchical systems and structures (e.g., technocratic, post-colonial) pervade community-academic partnerships, not all practitioners identify as activists or social justice change agents (Morton, 1995); stated in PPT terms, not all SLCE planners locate themselves within a critical orientation, as evidenced in our study sample. Some practitioners may gravitate to "it depends," remaining open and responsive to the specifics of the activity being planned, the relationships involved, and the context. "It depends" functions as both a practical stance and a political-moral position on planning accountability. Recognizing this dual nature can prompt new questions and reveal specific routines where practitioners can implement incremental changes to enhance partnership quality.

Although transformational partnerships may not always be the desired goal (Bringle et al., 2009), how might the field use desired and practiced planning orientations to support planners toward greater integrity and agency in their practice—meeting them where they are while fostering political astuteness and technical capacity for authentic partnerships? In support of this goal, and to elevate the value of planning orientations in SLCE work, our team is developing a planners' and facilitators' guide to accompany the TRES II Reflection Framework. The planning section acknowledges the value of planning as part of the reflection process, introduces each PPT tradition, and invites individuals to engage with the ideological underpinnings of planning. Through explicit engagement, we expect that practitioners will become more conscious of their orientations and better able to take strategic actions that better align their desired and practiced planning orientations with their commitments to authentic partnerships in the face of competing interests.

Conclusion

Sork and Käpplinger (2019) note that all planners oscillate between "conservative continuity and progressive change" in their practice and that attempting to achieve "a balance is more difficult than some might assume" (p. 43). The findings from this study illustrate the value that attention to planning orientations may hold for aiding practitioners to cultivate this balance in their daily work. This study reinforces prior calls (e.g., Sandmann et al., 2009) for additional research using PPT to analyze planning practices, including the mindsets, interests, and contexts of everyone involved, not only SLCE administrators (i.e., community organization staff, community residents, students, and faculty). We encourage further exploration and inquiry with structured reflection tools and related professional development interventions that attend to the conceptual elements of planning, inclusive of the full range of PPT traditions, as well as further inquiry devoted to planners and their planning orientations to encompass the full range of SOFAR partners as planners.

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Author Note

The data for this article were part of a larger project to develop and study the TRES II Reflection Framework. This project was supported by a Research *With* and *About* Community Engagement Grant from Indiana Campus Compact (now Community Engagement Alliance) in 2021–22. We are grateful for their support of this research. We also want to thank each of the site liaisons who were the planners at the heart of this study. All are deeply committed community engagement professionals seeking, each in their own way, to advance the public purposes of higher education. We are indebted to them for their contributions of time, talent, and wisdom, particularly at a time when higher education institutions and communities were emerging out of the heart of the pandemic shutdown. Their willingness to convene and pilot the TRES II Reflection Framework with their SOFAR partners [i.e., the participants] has been indispensable in helping us refine the Reflection Framework and supporting materials. We extend our gratitude to Abby Kennemer, Alyssa Pier, and Lauren O'Hair for their contributions to transcribing the planner interviews and a special thanks to Alyssa for providing project coordination support for this phase of the TRES II research project. Additionally, we recognize the Indiana University Indianapolis Institute for Engaged Learning, which provided graduate funding for Alyssa as well as offered in-kind systems support.

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