Examining the work of boundary spanning leaders in community contexts

PETER MICHAEL MILLER

This qualitative study examined boundary spanning leadership in community-based contexts. The study focused on exceptional leaders of university–school–community partnerships in two urban regions of the USA. The findings indicate that boundary spanners are aided by contextual knowledge, interpersonal skills, trust and connectedness, but they also suggest that they are motivated by an underlying community loyalty and a fundamental, socially conscious impetus—one which invites active advocacy for the oppressed via strategic collaboration. Accordingly, boundary spanners were compared with community organizers and described as ‘institutional infiltrators organizing for community advancement’. Although leaders with the skill and pedigree of those examined here are hard to come by, it was encouragingly suggested that, once found, effective boundary spanners can help develop sustainable boundary spanning infrastructures within their communities.

Introduction and literature review

There is an expansive literature that describes the central role of leadership in school success (Leithwood 1992, Murphy 1994, Murphy and Seashore Louis 1994, Leithwood and Jantzi 1999, Leithwood et al. 1999, Hallinger 2003). These writings include analyses of successful leaders’ personal traits, postulations of theoretical leadership constructs and prescriptions for efficient leadership practice. Historically, the primary focus of this educational leadership research has remained within the school walls, investigating the work of principals and other school and district level administrators. In recent years, however, a burgeoning body of scholarship on ‘non-traditional educational leadership’—including various forms of urban, community-based leadership—has indicated that such efforts might be necessary to facilitate academic and social transformation (Clinton 2000, Maurrasse 2001, Sanders and Harvey 2002, Driscoll and Goldring 2005, Goldring and Sims 2005, Miller 2005a, 2006, 2007a). Periodically appearing in this work are notions of ‘boundary spanning’ leadership which, although diffusely described and theoretically uninterrogated, appear to have special potential for effectively engaging educational and social dilemmas that plague our cities (Merchant and Shoho 2006). The purpose of this qualitative study, then, was to learn more about boundary spanning leadership by examining
it in two urban contexts\textsuperscript{1} and analysing it among relevant conceptual discourses. The study was guided by the following research questions: (1) what are the core leadership characteristics of boundary spanning leaders; (2) how do boundary spanners practise leadership in collaborative contexts; (3) how is boundary spanning related to contemporary scholarship on leadership and community-based collaborative action?

**University–school–community partnerships**

Community-based educational initiatives—described here as university–school–community (USC) partnerships\textsuperscript{2}—are increasingly recognized as efficient vehicles for social and educational action that are often able to avoid the complex array of academic, social and political entanglements that can plague mainstream institutional actors and initiatives (Miller 2007a). Those who participate in USC partnerships are usually not as bogged down with the day-to-day minutiae and administrative bureaucracy that often occupy school-based leaders (Dantley 2005a). They have significant levels of freedom to develop creative, collaborative programmes that are tailored to individual student, family and/or community needs. Such efforts benefit from streamlined foci that target context-specific needs with context-appropriate actors and resources—a benefit that few schools, of their own accord, can claim. Dantley contrasted the types of work that leaders often accomplish in school and community contexts:

Much of the work of educational leaders is done on the run. Decisions are made in hallways, lunchrooms, and the school parking lot. Often these decisions are made from a utilitarian or strictly functionalist perspective rather than from a time of reflection and critical deliberation … Principals, teacher-leaders, students, and parents should join in the efforts of extraparliamentary groups in attempting to bring a greater degree of democracy to the lived realities of the people in the community. (Dantley 2005a: 664 and 667)

USC partnerships are a type of ‘extraparliamentary group’ (a term originally used by West 2005) in that they provide ‘a space for the engagement of other voices that have been somewhat dissonant to the traditional educational leadership discourse’ (Dantley 2005a: 501).

Cornel West (1993a,\textit{b}, 2005) has been a leading advocate of the role of such movements and, in fact, moved beyond perspectives claiming that USC partnerships are beneficial to claim that they are essential. He has emphatically asserted that educators and academicians have special responsibilities to move outside the school walls to engage their communities:

It is imperative for adults who have made the life of the mind their life’s calling to be engaged with the wider community and play a vital role in furthering the national discourse on important issues of the day by exercising the ways of truth telling that engage youth. (West 2005: 186)

West warned that even though the current ‘technocratic’ culture rewards grant writing and scholarly publications in university settings (and standardized test scores in K–12 settings) much more than community engagement, academic leaders must maintain their civic fervour if they are to make a meaningful impact. Describing his own commitment he wrote:
My vision of academic engagement embraces academic standards of excellence yet also revels in overcoming the huge distance between the elite world universities, the young people in the hood, and the democratic activists who fight for social change. As one who is deeply committed to the deep democratic tradition in America and to engaging youth culture, I have no intention in cutting back on my academic and outreach activities, because the effort to shatter the sleepwalking of youths who are shut out of the intellectual excitement and opportunity of the academy is such a vital one for our democracy. (West 2005: 199)

There is indeed a significant body of literature that supports West, claiming that alternative methods and venues must be explored to engage youth and support their urban communities (Shirley 1997a,b, 2006, Harkavy 1998, 2003, Firestone and Fisler 2002, Maurrasse 2001, Dantley 2005a,b,c, Miller 2005b, 2006, 2007b, Schutz 2006, Shirley et al. 2006).

Among the many examples of such partnerships between schools, universities, agencies and/or civically engaged individuals are literacy campaigns, service learning courses, after-school tutoring programmes, neighbourhood/social advocacy groups, mentoring programmes, community recreation programmes, health initiatives, neighbourhood renovation efforts and violence prevention programmes. Research suggests that, depending upon the specific forms they take, there are numerous indicators as to whether or not these USC collaborations will achieve the results they seek (whether they be incremental academic improvements or sweeping social changes). These indicators include mutually engaged institutional and neighbourhood participants (Zetlin and MacLeod 1995, Bryk and Rollow 1996, Schorr 1997, Holland and Gelmon 1998, Maurrasse 2001, 2002, Bringle and Hatcher 2002), supportive infrastructures (Carr 2000, Maurrasse 2001, 2002, Bringle and Hatcher 2002, Jacoby 2003), rigorous evaluation (Driscoll 1995, Gelmon 2000, Maurrasse 2002), university immersion in the community (Zacharakis-Jutz and Heaney 1991, Maurrasse 2001), assets-based collaborative philosophies (Schorr 1997, Perkins et al. 2001, Gonzalez et al. 2002) and, perhaps most resoundingly, supportive leadership (Boyer 1990, Astin and Astin 2000, Maurrasse 2001, Jacoby 2003, Miller 2005a, 2006, 2007a,b, Schutz 2006). In that leadership is recognized as an especially critical factor in collaborative effectiveness and that in these settings it is unavoidably called upon to engage multiple constituents from a variety of institutional and social backgrounds, USC partnerships present an appealing venue for the study of boundary spanning leadership.

**Boundary spanning leadership**

Couched within the promising potential of community-based partnerships are a host of significant leadership possibilities and dilemmas. Challenges presented by boundaries within and between organizations and partners are especially of note. According to Goldring (1996: 284):

> Boundaries establish demarcation lines for the domains of tasks and people which an organization stakes out for itself. … Boundaries also serve as mechanisms to secure a certain amount of organizational independence from the environment. … It is important to note that organizations differ in the permeability of their boundaries. Permeability, in this regard, is defined as ‘the extent to which marginal outsiders participate in or influence organizational activities’ (Corwin and Wagenaar, 1976, p. 472).
Although they can skillfully lead in their own environments, principals, university presidents, agency directors and others who enact institutional leadership can easily be rendered ineffective when attempting to collaborate in organizational, professional and social contexts that are different from their own. The perceived ‘impermeability’ of their partners’ boundaries are often significantly attributable to leaders’ own paucities of knowledge of their external constituents (Miller 2007a).

It appears, therefore, that those who have in-depth experiences and knowledge of multiple university, school and community positions can be effective guides of USC partnerships that bring together highly diverse groups with the intention of achieving common goals. They are aided by unique, lived understandings and they can skillfully unite disparate groups that might otherwise flounder in discrepant conceptualizations of intra- and inter-group goals, responsibilities and capacities. Firestone and Fisler (2002: 481, 488) explained:

Partnerships are complex fields with multiple interest groups whose relations are structured by internal hierarchical relationships as well as organizational boundaries. … In schools and partnerships, influence is often broadly dispersed, diffused, and unfocused, and goals are not shared … (It is easy) for leadership that comes from many sources to become too broadly dispersed to be effective.

Broadly conceived, then, boundary spanning leadership of USC partnerships is that which, strategically permeating diverse organizational and cultural boundaries, transcends this ineffective, dispersed leadership to effectively guide joint action (Miller 2006).

To varying degrees all educational leaders are called to serve as boundary spanners. The extents to which they are boundary spanners are dependent upon a number of factors, including job descriptions, community contexts and personal skills (Miller 2007b). Drawing in part on James Thompson’s (1967) seminal work on organizational boundary spanning, past research has described the boundary spanning work of formal organizational actors such as superintendents (Wills and Peterson 1992), principals (Corwin and Wagenaar 1976, Licata and Hack 1980, Murphy 1994, Goldring 1996, Rallis and Goldring 2000) and other school employees, such as school psychologists, social workers and guidance counsellors (O’Callaghan 1993). These leaders are usually described as boundary spanners, however, only within the contexts of their formal school-based roles. Very little has been written about diversely experienced boundary spanners who, although often affiliated with a particular organization, are primarily charged with leading USC partnerships. Accordingly, the following themes describing boundary spanners are gleaned from both research that depicts traditional school actors as boundary spanners and that which depicts USC partnership leaders as boundary spanners.

Boundary spanners have a wide array of contacts. These personal and professional contacts, usually developed through years of community immersion, contribute to a critical accumulation of social capital and appear to greatly assist partnerships that seek to incorporate diverse perspectives into their planning, implementation and evaluation efforts (Driscoll 1995, Griffiths 2000, Driscoll and Goldring 2005).
**Boundary spanners are effective collectors and disseminators of information.** They have the knowledge and wherewithal to know where to collect pertinent information (school board meetings, neighbourhood centres, university classrooms, etc.), how to attain that information (speaking with parents, observing students, reading documents, etc.) and who needs to be made aware of the information (university, school or community constituents) in order to ensure that all individuals and organizations are ‘kept in the loop’ without being overwhelmed by too much minutiae (Hardin 1982, Murphy 1994, Rallis and Goldring 2000, Miller 2007a).

**Boundary spanners are trusted and respected by diverse university, school and community constituents.** This characteristic of boundary spanners has been described as especially important in collaborative endeavours that rely heavily upon mutual trust and understanding (Bauch 2001, Tschannen-Moran 2001) because participants desire credible leadership that knows how to effectively function in multiple organizational and community cultures (Gmelch 2002).

**Boundary spanners understand and appreciate the social and organizational complexities associated with USC collaboration.** These knowledge bases have been distinguished from those of many other leaders in that they usually consist of tacit understandings (Nestor-Baker and Hoy 2001, Nestor-Baker 2002) of their collaborative environments, recognition of and value for multiple kinds of knowledge and comprehensive understandings of how to ‘get things done’ in their local inter- and intra-organizational settings (Tschannen-Moran and Nestor-Baker 2004, Miller 2007b).

**Boundary spanners possess exceptional interpersonal skills.** More than just diverse organizational backgrounds, they are significantly aided by ‘a combination of cognitive and personal-social characteristics that not everyone possesses’ (Sarason and Lorentz 1998: 96). Effective boundary spanners appear to have innate capacities to be assertive with being overly directive, patient without being too passive and congenial while remaining efficient.

**Boundary spanners convene diverse, resourceful and often unfamiliar partners.** Such leadership is rooted in recognition of the rich benefits that result from the confluence of assorted university, school and community partner interests and assets. When bringing together individuals from university, school and community settings who are foreign to each other to collaborate on a common project, however, it is often necessary for leaders to help remove ‘myths and legends’ (O’Connor et al. 2005: 161) that they might believe about one another. Boundary spanning leaders acknowledge the fractious potential of intra-group misconceptions and employ strategic means to address them prior to the engagement of other partnership-related issues (Miller 2006, 2007a).

**Boundary spanning leaders unite seemingly disparate groups around a common cause.** This theme is closely related to the prior one. More than simply helping diverse participants ‘get along with each other’, it has been asserted that...
Boundary spanning leaders can engage in a coalition building process (Goldring 1996, Rallis and Goldring 2000) that develops purposeful, productive working relationships between all partners. They recognize the essential first step of convening crowds of ‘alternative’ educational actors, but, importantly, they facilitate the productive unification of discrepant perspectives on collaboration to address common needs.

**Boundary spanners move freely and flexibly within and between organizations and communities.** They are limited neither physically (within school walls), organizationally (by narrow job descriptions) nor politically (by school boards or boards of trustees) as they engage wide-ranging constituents. Goldring and Sims (2005) wrote that boundary spanning leadership is effective in part because it ‘participates in a sophisticated dance between those in organizational power in each of the partner organizations and those who only had informal power within these same institutions’ (p. 234). Such flexibility and autonomy is usually not a characteristic of the traditionally defined organizational roles of superintendents, principals, presidents or agency directors (Keating and Clark 1988, Sanders and Harvey 2002).

These themes describing boundary spanners are largely decontextualized, generally incomprehensive and in need of further exploration. Indeed, despite having been described as ‘the fulcrum[s] on which all elements of the project[s] are leveraged’ (Clinton 2000: 25), Goldring and Simms (2005) claimed that the research on boundary spanners remains unclear. Therefore, although we have some basic ideas about who boundary spanners are in USC partnerships, we need to further develop our understandings of this work in situ. That is, there is utility in concretizing our knowledge of boundary spanners through an in-depth examination of leadership in two community-based initiatives. To this end, this qualitative case study seeks to ‘put a face’ on boundary spanning leadership and to contextualize it within the relevant research.

**Context**

This research project focused on two widely known, highly effective boundary spanning leaders: Ida Forest, the director of University-Community Partners (UCP), a USC partnership in Mountain City, located in the western region of the USA, and Monique Turner, the associate director of the Rogers Community Learning Center (RCLC), a USC partnership in Center City, located in the midwestern part of the USA. A brief description of Ida, Monique and their respective partnerships is provided next.

**Ida Forest and UCP**

UCP is a collaboration between Mountain University, the Mountain City School District and their nearby Westside neighbourhood that seeks to provide an increase in educational opportunities for under-served children in the local community. The partnership was initiated in 2001 by Mountain
University President Ron Kittle as an effort to strengthen the school’s previously minimal relationship with the Westside community and to mobilize the university’s significant financial and intellectual resources for the betterment of its community neighbours. To determine what specific strategies and programmes this partnership might develop, President Kittle selected Ida Forest, a Mountain University administrator, to become the lead planner and first director of UCP. Ida spent nearly a year conversing with Westside residents and members of the university community to gain an understanding of how people wanted the partnership to take shape and how it should achieve its goals. She then assembled a diverse group of about 35 students, parents, professors, university administrators, superintendents, principals, teachers and community activists (among others) to meet regularly throughout 2002 and 2003 to concretize future directions for this collaborative educational venture. This group, with insights from Ida’s many community conversations, ultimately decided on issues related to parent involvement, teacher training and access to college as UCP’s focal points. In the years following UCP has flourished into a highly successful, widely respected partnership that has benefited hundreds of Westside youth and countless university students, faculty and staff (Miller 2005b, 2006). Ida’s leadership has been universally recognized by UCP participants and Westside residents as a central reason for the success of UCP.

Ida, a quiet and petite white woman in her early seventies, is a long-time resident of and self-described social activist in the Mountain City area. Prior to 2001, when she assumed her job with UCP, she spent 10 highly effective years as the founding director of Mountain University’s nationally renowned Community Service Center. Ida’s university-based work was preceded by many years as an educational and social policy advocate for poor families in the Mountain City region. As the director of UCP Ida has broad discretion in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the partnership’s diverse, educationally focused programmes and initiatives. Ida’s colleagues describe her most noteworthy leadership attribute as her ability to effectively span the boundaries that demarcated the territory of the UCP’s diverse participants. They suggest that this boundary spanning ability is significantly rooted in her vast personal and professional experiences. Having lived in Mountain City for over 40 years and worked in community, school and university leadership contexts, Ida has a unique ability to ‘walk in multiple worlds’ as she leads UCP’s attempts to provide better educational opportunities for some of the most neglected students in the area.

Monique Turner and the RCLC

The RCLC is also a USC partnership that focuses mostly on issues related to youth and education in an urban area. This opportunity for Midwestern University and its adjacent Northeast Neighborhood residents to collaborate arose somewhat unexpectedly in 2000 when the closing of a popular Goodwill store in the area presented a unique physical venue for a much-needed community centre to develop. A cadre of enthusiastic neighbourhood and
university representatives, with the support of the school’s administration and several prominent neighbourhood agencies, forged a plan for the emergent partnership to move into the former Goodwill building and to offer wide ranging programming that included academic tutoring, recreation, violence prevention and entrepreneurship. Among those who were actively involved in the RCLC planning process from the outset was Monique Turner, a lifelong resident of the Northeast Neighborhood. Monique’s insights and perspectives regarding the partnership were so respected by her colleagues during these planning meetings throughout 2000 and 2001 that she was hired as the associate director of the RCLC. Similar to Ida, Monique has since been widely hailed as a prominent leader whose diverse background, skills and expertise allow her to effectively span social and institutional boundaries to serve diverse constituencies.

Before assuming her RCLC leadership position Monique, a tall and enthusiastic African-American woman in her mid sixties, had spent over 30 years working with community schools, agencies and governing boards. Additionally, she was (and continues to be) an extremely visible and vocal public advocate for the Northeast Neighborhood. She has been a long-time member—and is currently the president—of the Northeast Neighborhood Council and whenever news happens in the area, local newspapers and television stations seek her reactions. She is indeed revered as a community matriarch. Her responsibilities with RCLC include the management and oversight of several of the partnership’s education programmes as well as continued dialogue with the Northeast Neighborhood and university constituents about the current status of and future directions for RCLC.

Methods

Design and purpose

The methods employed by this study were dictated by the desire to gain a greater depth of understanding about the specific characteristics and influences of boundary spanning leadership in USC partnerships. By spending extensive time interviewing and observing leaders and participants, as well as analysing pertinent records and documents, a rich array of perspectives and insights contributed to and were included in the analysis of boundary spanning leadership.

This study did not seek to produce sweeping generalizations that would be universally applicable to all contexts. Rather, the aim was to contribute to the field of educational leadership and practice by delving deeply into and learning from two USC partnerships that were guided by apparently exceptional boundary spanning leaders. From this study’s findings and discussion it is asserted that researchers and practitioners can benefit from a significant transfer of knowledge, as alluded to by Russell and Flynn (2000: 5) when they claimed: ‘Seeing how colleagues in other institutions have approached collaborative initiatives offers ideas for one’s own department, school, or college’.
Data collection

Data was collected for this study through the use of interviews, observations and document analyses. For the interviews a purposeful sampling strategy was employed. Ida’s boundary spanning attributes were evident from my previous studies of UCP (Miller 2005b, 2006) and through the references of professional colleagues. Monique was also identified through prior research (Miller 2007a) as a leader who appeared to embody common boundary spanner characteristics. They were both asked to describe their personal and professional backgrounds, the factors that have influenced the way they work and common strategies that they employ as they lead their respective partnerships. Additionally, a total of 37 other USC partnership participants, all of whom had worked closely with either Ida or Monique, were interviewed.7 From their diverse perspectives these participants described the defining characteristics of the boundary spanning leaders with whom they worked and the amount of influence that Ida and Monique had on their collaborative efforts.

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format. This format was based on several global questions (that drew from and were rooted in extant literature on leadership and community-based collaboration), all of which were further examined with emergent ‘probing’ questions. The interviews—which averaged approximately 60 minutes in length—were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim and I kept fieldnotes and a reflective field journal.

In addition to interviews, observations of over 30 UCP and RCLC programmes and planning meetings provided a valuable source of data triangulation that added to the credibility and trustworthiness of this study. The observations provided a means for supporting or challenging both the interview data and the existent literature on boundary spanning leadership. When appropriate, notes were jotted down on paper and/or spoken into a tape recorder while observing.

According to Hodder (2000: 705) ‘Many areas of experience are hidden from language, particularly subordinate experience’. For this reason the inclusion of hundreds of pages of documents and records as sources of data also added to the rigour of this study. The examination and analysis of minutes from partnership meetings, promotional literature, newspaper articles, participant journals and planning notes certainly built upon and contributed to the coherence of some findings from the interviews and observations, and called into question other aspects of these findings. In the few instances when the interview data was not corroborated by documental data, member checks were conducted in order to clarify ideas that appeared to be in conflict with one another.

Analysis

To identify convergence in the data (Patton 1990) the transcripts of the interviews and notes from the observations and document analyses were coded. From this coding process common themes emerged. This theme
generation was evidence of the constructivist approach that was used in this study (Lincoln and Guba 2000). Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggested that coding helps to protect the researcher from accepting voices on their own terms ‘and to some extent forces the researcher’s own voice to be questioning, questioned, and provisional’ (p. 173). Therefore, although the reflexive nature of qualitative research ensures that my position as researcher influenced the themes that emerged, the thorough coding process allowed me to identify themes that were truly reflective of the participants’ responses.

After the data was coded and the emergent themes were inductively identified and described the findings were situated both in relationship to each other (axial coding) and within the broader literature on leadership and civic engagement.

**Findings**

The findings from the study indicated that Ida and Monique led their partnerships in distinctive ways. Because they had different personalities, worked in different partnership contexts, had different racial/ethnic backgrounds and had learned from different professional backgrounds, each leader demonstrated certain specific proficiencies that the other did not (to the same degree). For example, Ida particularly benefited from a more extensive background as a university administrator, whereas Monique’s identity as a long-time neighbourhood matriarch greatly assisted her work in her local community. However, both leaders were alike in that they embodied most of the characteristics attributed to boundary spanners in the literature. Additionally, their leadership found noteworthy intersections in that both of their primary loyalties were to their community-based constituents and they both possessed inherent desires to learn from and advocate for those who have traditionally been oppressed. Ultimately, the findings unfolded in two categories: themes describing personal characteristics of the leaders and themes describing their leadership practice. In that their personal characteristics were often inextricably related to their practice, these categories are somewhat blurred. With this understanding, the inductive themes of these interwoven categories are described next.

**Characteristics of the boundary spanning leaders**

*Community activists masquerading in academic environments.* Clearly resonating throughout the data were Ida’s and Monique’s ultimate loyalties to their respective communities. While maintaining respect for their affiliated institutions and the persons of just intent who worked within them, Ida and Monique repeatedly described and demonstrated foundational commitments to advocating for the wants and needs of neighbourhood residents. They suggested that this centring of community voices throughout the partnering efforts was a critical element of their work because without such explicit support their traditionally more powerful partners, Mountain University and Midwestern University, would (consciously or unconsciously) control the
collaborative processes. Ida, Monique and most of the other participants in
the study asserted that this prioritization of loyalty was largely attributed to
the leaders’ long-time personal and professional backgrounds as ‘community
people’, for, although they had attained impressive institutional roles (as
director and associate director of their respective partnerships), the historical
roots of Ida’s and Monique’s community roles (as parents, neighbours and
activists) were much deeper. Monique explained:

This is where I live. Where I was born. I have raised my children here and my grandchildren. ... You know, we had generations, my grandmother came to Center City in the late 1800s from (a
nearby city) on horse and buggy and we’ve been here a long time. We have a real investment in
this area and I actually love it. This is where my heart is.

Rooted in similar historically based experiences in the Mountain City area,
Ida compared her loyalties to the community and Mountain University:

I always felt that while I feel that while I’m working for the university, I’m kind of a community
activist masquerading in an academic environment. ... I have my strongest foot in the community.
And if I had to make a choice—and I don’t know how this would come about—but if I had to make
a choice between being faithful to the needs of this community and the faith that people in this
community have put in us and the university, I’d go with the community because I really feel that’s
what it’s all about. That’s why we’re there. Those needs are the primary reason I’m here. And I
can’t really imagine that happening, but um, that’s where I feel the loyalty.

Ironically, it was by the nature of their institutional roles that Ida and
Monique were able to most effectively lobby for their institutionally unaffil-
iated constituents’ best interests. Indeed, these leaders’ community loyalties,
in conjunction with their professional clout, were widely recognized (by
diverse university, school and community partners) as significant strategic
factors in their partnerships’ emergences as successful, mutually beneficial
collaborations. A vice-president of Midwestern University and key partici-
pant in RCLC, Lon Norton, described the influence of Monique’s loyalty
on the early phases of the partnership’s development:

Monique was really, really critical. Monique was either going to be your biggest adversary or your
biggest ally. Quite frankly she was very skeptical about what Midwestern University was doing
when we began. It was a test. If we could win her over, we could win the neighborhood over.
Because she had that kind of influence over others. We had lots of fights early on. She was also
somebody who had built a great deal of credibility with her neighbors and she wasn’t going to put
that on the line real quickly or readily or at first glance with Midwestern University, which could
easily turn its back on her and her neighborhood as has been done historically.

It was interesting to note that although both Ida’s and Monique’s
community loyalties were firmly embedded in their collaborative disposi-
tions, their leadership styles and manners of expressing these loyalties were
quite different. Whereas Ida displayed a natural predilection for quiet and
humble communication with her Mountain University partners, Monique
was vocal and unapologetic when interfacing with Midwestern University
representatives about neighbourhood matters. For example, Monique
recalled a particular partnership meeting with some high level administrators
at Midwestern University:

I went to that meeting and I was just bawling them out about something, I don’t remember what
it was. But they made me mad about something, and I was just fussing them out about it. And the
guy said, ‘But Monique, you work for me!’ and I said, ‘Yeah, and your point is?’ … I came to tell the truth as I see it. … I feel open, yes that’s right!

It was clear, then, that the common community loyalties that were described and demonstrated (although in very different ways) by Ida and Monique had immeasurable impacts on their leadership of UCP and RCLC. These loyalties permeated and deeply affected each of the other central elements to their boundary spanning leadership and should not be underestimated.

**Well connected through lifetimes of relationships.** Ida and Monique were both extremely well connected socially and professionally in their communities. The wealth of relationships that they formed in their many years of work and residence in the Mountain City and Central City areas significantly altered the ways they worked with diverse partners and granted them knowledge of and access to substantial human and material resources. Especially in these collaborative contexts—ones which sought to infuse multiple voices into conversations about how to best meet traditionally under-served children’s educational needs—having already established vast networks of university, school and community relationships appeared to greatly facilitate Ida’s and Monique’s abilities to involve diverse partners in their work. For example, referring to the ‘community conversations’ that ultimately led to the opening of UCP, Ida recalled meeting with potential partners over the course of several months:

I started with people that I knew in these neighborhoods because of past involvement in the community … mostly non-profit directors and staff, and minority organization leaders, and school leaders … about 250 people. And then I talked to about 75 university people, including all of the academic deans and the vice-presidents.

Ida’s relationship network was critical to the development of UCP as a truly representative partnership, not only because of the impressive number of individual conversations that she had (325!), but also because of the diversity of people (racially/ethnically, socio-economically, professionally, etc.) with whom she spoke.

In fact, possibly more critical than her capacity to harness such a diverse and resourceful group was Ida’s ability to subtly and strategically unite their incongruent talents, opinions and motivations toward a focused social justice agenda. A few UCP participants commented on her skills in this regard. Mountain City School District Assistant Superintendent Jeff Garcia described how:

Ida has the ability to marshal a lot of resources. … She’s able to um, have people network together themselves, without necessarily being, um, I mean, she’s a broker. She’s able form all these relationships and facilitate the exchanges, even though at some point she withdraws from that um, and lets people take it to whatever level they want to take it.

Similarly, neighbourhood resident Vincent Polamalu recalled:

She just stepped back and gave control to the right people. I thought that was very impressive. … She knew how to make good relationships in the community and she knew how to keep them. She knew when to talk and when to step back.
After reiterating the comments made by Jeff and Vincent, Mountain University Assistant Professor Maria Villenas described Ida’s ability to coalesce disparate groups as being rooted in her selfless humility, as well as participants’ previous relationships with her (during her various stints as community activist, non-profit agency director and university administrator):

I’ve seen that people who may even have quibbles with one another can agree that Ida has been somebody whose genuine interest has moved the organization forward. But Ida’s hasn’t been a self-serving interest, one that’s made it her empire, you know?

The ‘well-connectedness’ of Ida and Monique was also of great benefit in the continued monitoring of partners’ thoughts, beliefs and attitudes as the collaborations unfolded. Their experientially rooted, tacit understandings of both the characteristics and peculiarities of individual participants, as well as the tendencies and cultures of collaborating organizations and agencies, allowed them to keep accurate impressions of how their initiatives were being viewed from multiple perspectives. RCLC administrator John Calipari explained:

Monique makes a tremendous contribution here because she kind of keeps both eyes open—an eye on the community and an eye on the university—and helps to interpret how people are feeling. … Certainly, she brings in a wealth of relationships and the track record that goes with that has really helped us to open the doors. … Monique’s just so well connected …. It’s a lifetime of her relationships.

Observations of Ida and Monique confirmed participants’ claims that their dense and far-reaching webs of community and institutional relationships played major roles in the emergence, development and maintenance of thoroughly informed, dynamically strategic collaborative endeavours. On multiple occasions these leaders were seen comfortably interacting with wide ranges of participants, including school district superintendents, university presidents, neighbourhood residents (both adults and children), schoolteachers, college professors, politicians and community activists. Because of their existing relationships with these partners, Ida and Monique were able to mitigate the power struggles that commonly plague collaborations between strangers (Maurrasse 2001, Miller 2005b), and instead fulfill Ida’s espoused desire to ‘sit down next to people and work together’. Such dispositions are consistent with theories of collaborative leadership and what Mountford (2004) and others have identified as ‘power with’ paradigms of educational leadership. In that they used their extensive relationships and consequent power to ‘initiate and facilitate collaborative decision-making processes’ (Pounder 1998, cited in Mountford 2004: 711) rather than to hold ‘power over’ their partnerships, Ida and Monique were strategic uniters and humble colleagues.

Real, true, loved and respected. In addition to their ultimate loyalties to their community-based constituents and their broad array of relationships with university, school and neighbourhood representatives, another central characteristic of these boundary spanners was the deeply entrenched trust that partnership participants placed in them. The trust was forged over their years of working in diverse institutional and community capacities and was
chiefly attributed to their (previously described) broad ranges of relationships. With this trust, Ida’s and Monique’s dependable leadership helped mend the troubled histories between Mountain University and its partnering Westside neighbourhood and Midwestern University and its partnering Northeast Neighborhood.

Largely characterized with terms such as ‘disconnect’ and ‘distrust’, many community residents had negative perceptions of their neighbouring universities before they became involved with UCP and RCLC. These perceptions were based on the long periods of little interaction between the universities and neighbourhoods and the few instances when half-hearted cooperative attempts between them had gone awry. For example, Center City resident Natasha Lanier explained her longstanding opinion of Midwestern University:

I’ve always seen Midwestern as, you know, kind of like separate from the Center City community. … It was always kind of, you know, they want their own little area and are not really a part of us. … It was always like they were higher, I don’t know the word I want to say … elite. Above all the rest.

Because, like Natasha, many Center City residents had little trust in the intentions of Midwestern University the institution, the university’s initial collaboration with its neighbours had to be carried out by selected individuals who were trusted by both the community and the university. As Jim Plunkett, a Midwestern University employee, explained: ‘It is easy to cast dispersions on institutions—but not so easy when it is an individual’. Accordingly, it was evident that the trust and credibility that Ida and Monique had earned from their multitudes of colleagues mollified previously existing feelings of disconnection and distrust, effectively setting the stages upon which collaborative action could be carried out. Referring to Monique, Midwestern University administrator Sharon Dampier claimed:

She plays a huge role because she is so real, she is so true … because she is so well loved and respected. … She has credibility in the neighborhood and in the Center because she lives there and knows what is going on.

With similar comments about Ida, Assistant Superintendent of Mountain City School District Jeff Garcia explained:

The fact that she has a track record in the community means that she is trusted. She is trusted by a lot of people. And I think people wouldn’t necessarily trust other people to do the same kind of thing in the same kind of way and get the level of support she does.

More than just initial pacifiers of the previously broken relationships between the universities and their neighbouring schools and communities, the trusted boundary spanners continued to serve as ‘welcoming doors’ through which otherwise uninterested (or intimidated) individuals could enter to become constructively contributing collaborators. Both Ida and Monique described this welcoming function as one that was of great importance, especially as manifested in their conscious outreach to individuals who were reticent to join UCP or RCLC. Monique described how she is a ‘trusted welcomer’:
When you walk through that door, you’re the most important person in the world. And people get that sense that when they come that what they have to say is important and that they’re welcome to come in the building and that we treat them with respect. You notice where my office is located [just inside the front entrance to the building]. I never close my door ever, ever, ever. I want to let people come in … the door is always open, and it’s important. It’s important to me to be available and to reach out to folks and make them feel comfortable, try to give them what they’ve come for.

Therefore, as evident in UCP and RCLC participants’ descriptions, Ida’s and Monique’s roles as conscious welcomers and trusted integraters of diverse groups greatly facilitated their partnerships’ functional developments. However, the final and most vital point to be made about the element of trust in their boundary spanning leadership relates to who they welcomed and integrated into the collaborations, for, in addition to using their social and political clout to draw in local power-brokers (principals, professors, agency directors, etc.) who trusted them, Ida and Monique felt internally obligated to welcome members of the community who had traditionally been left out of pivotal conversations with the ‘movers and shakers’ in their local educational environments. Residents like Lucia Lopes and Margarita Luzille, both immigrants to the Mountain City area who had become familiar with Ida during her time working in the local community, explained how intimidated they felt about collaborating with well-established educators. Lucia said: ‘I feel like, not having been through the higher education process here in the United States, I feel a little intimidated when I go speak to professors and Ph.D.s, you know?’ Margarita expressed similar sentiments, stating that:

My English is not that good, you know? I don’t feel very comfortable to talk in many times. You know, my English is not good. I don’t feel very comfortable with them to explain what I feel or what I think.

These statements support Smrekar and Cohen-Vogel’s (2001) assertion that immigrants and those at lower socio-economic levels commonly exhibit a ‘persistent and powerful spirit of deference’ (p. 94) in collaborative contexts. Whereas traditional leadership styles in USC partnerships legitimate such conditions through ‘bureaucratic structures, policies, programs, and procedures’ (Smrekar and Cohen-Vogel 2001: 95), boundary spanners like Ida and Monique can extend communities’ social capital to those who have been marginalized (Bauch 2001, Griffith 2001). Indeed, despite their expressions of discomfort in collaborative settings, both Lucia and Margarita claimed that the trust they had in Ida’s leadership kept them coming to the meetings. Therefore, by parlaying their communities’ opinions of them as ‘real, true, loved, and respected’ into the maximization of diverse representation in their partnerships, Ida and Monique affirmed their commitments to centring the voices of those who had been traditionally silenced in their communities.

**Characteristics of their boundary spanning leadership practice**

*Championing the disadvantaged.* This welcoming of traditionally marginalized individuals and groups into partnership conversations was indeed an example of a key element of Ida’s and Monique’s boundary spanning leadership
practice: their inherent valuing of the oppressed. Finding much in common
with notions of moral and servant leadership, this emergent element was a
bit of a surprise, because it was not mentioned in the literature on boundary
spanning leadership practice. Although critics might claim Ida and Monique
are moral anomalies who happen to occupy boundary spanning roles, their
value for the oppressed members of their communities appeared to be
integrally related to their diverse social and professional backgrounds and,
therefore, like their previously described community loyalties, well connect-
edness and time-earned trust, much more than a tangential leadership quality
that was specific to their personalities. Their breadths of experiences allowed
them to learn up close about the plights of those who suffer the brunt of unjust
social and educational systems. Their resulting understanding of and empathy
for the poor, the homeless, the abused and the neglected affected the ways
they conceptualized leadership and collaborative action, as well as their devel-
opment as collaborative leaders who value building upon community assets.

Ida described her value for the oppressed as being consistently developed
in her years as an advocate for the poor and later as the director of a non-
profit social policy agency (prior to her administrative work at Mountain
University):

I began to learn about the issues in the community by meeting people who were poor, elderly
people, single moms who didn’t eat two meals a day because that was the only way she could feed
her kids, homeless people ... and um, meeting those people and hearing their stories directly really
is the big impact in my life that made me want to be involved with the community and um, make
changes in the community ... I think the people that have influenced me the most about the way
I work and the things I believe are people who are community folks who would never know they
had an impact on me, who would think I was doing something for them. The homeless man who
_gives me the real personification of what it’s like to be homeless. You know, the people who are
hungry—those are the people who have made the biggest impact on me. I interacted almost daily
with people who were without healthcare or without housing or without anything, and um, so I
had a long time to be educated by people in the community who knew firsthand about society’s
problems. ... I think it was very important that my background was in the community. Because I
think it is easy to invent things for a campus to do in the community that aren’t the real needs.
And I was too aware of the real needs to be able to do that.

Having lived and worked for many years in neighbourhoods that were
plagued by poverty and violence, Monique’s value for marginalized people
had a similar genesis. Consequently, Mountain City High School Principal
Ken Barlow’s comment that Ida is an unquestioned ‘champion for the disad-
vantaged’ (a label that was frequently echoed in similar words by RCLC
participants when speaking about Monique) appeared to be accurate.

These were more than just inconsequential dimensions to their individ-
ual moral compositions, as Ida and Monique claimed that their experientially
rooted respect for people who are most painfully affected by poverty,
violence, racism and other societal ills influenced the ways they led their part-
nerships. It spurred their desires to build upon neighbourhood assets (rather
than trying to ‘fix’ their apparent problems) when seeking to create more
equitable social and educational opportunities. Ida explained:

I have a high level of respect for people who are impacted by problems in our society and they
know way more than they think they know or many people think they know about the solutions.
And so I think that’s one thing that helps UCP be very much grounded in the views of parents and
Therefore, it is evident that Ida’s and Monique’s understandings of and valuing of the oppressed members of their communities had an impact on their conceptualizations of why collaboration should occur, as well as the ways that they practised leadership. In that their practice focused on the further development of extant community capacities, their styles of leadership were consistent with the leadership and community partnership literature that cites assets-based collaborative programmes as being most effective (Maurrasse 2001, Miller 2005a).

**Not just all talk.** Indicating the satisfaction she gets from collaborating with Ida, neighbourhood resident Lucia Lopes described, ‘I think she’s thinking that whatever she says, she’s going to do … she is a hard working person. It’s good to work with her … she’s not just all talk’. This commitment to ‘get things done’ emerged as a final thematic element that was central to the boundary spanning leadership practices of Ida and Monique. Their combinations of heartfelt personal investment in their communities, as well as their unique adeptness in navigating diverse organizational environments, contributed to their apparently exceptional capacities in this regard. Indeed, although they repeatedly claimed that their ‘hearts’ were in their respective communities, they critically demonstrated that their ‘heads’ were able to function with great distinction within institutional contexts. Ida’s and Monique’s abilities to efficiently construct tangible programmes, policies and opportunities from their collaborative efforts contributed to the hope that their fellow partnership participants (like Lucia) had that their investments of time and resources would be worthwhile—that their work would actually increase the equitability of educational opportunities for the children in their schools and neighbourhoods.

Ida’s and Monique’s propensities for making collaborative progress were unquestionably aided by their organizational astuteness, gained from years of university leadership. Ida described how her understanding of the practical workings of Mountain University developed gradually:

> I had to go through a long period of learning about the University and how it works and how decisions are made and who has power in order to try to help the University become the kind of organizational structure that can support work in the community.

This ‘long period of learning about the University’ contributed to Ida’s considerable skillfulness in working efficiently with all levels of organizational actors. Ultimately, her institutional affiliation allowed her to help mold the University into a more ‘community supportive’ entity and, in turn, enact community reform through the allotment of strategic personnel and material resources that were at her disposal.

**Tying it all together: leaders shaping practice**

To summarize, then, Ida and Monique were described as leaders who were community oriented, well-connected and highly respected. Their leadership
practice was action oriented and mobilized diverse constituencies to serve the most under-served members of their communities. It was clear that the natures of their personal leadership characteristics guided their respective formulations of leadership practice. In the next section I situate these findings within related conceptual and literature, focusing on both the characteristics of individual leaders, as well as the characteristics of organizational leadership practice.

Discussion and implications

Organizers and institutional infiltrators

In the light of the widespread and recurring scholarship indicating that there is a dearth of effective educational leadership in most urban neighbourhoods, boundary spanners like Ida and Monique appear to be rare and invaluable resources for their communities. Research indicates that inner city schools are faced with high rates of turnover among administrators and teachers who leave for a variety of reasons, including daunting accountability demands, opportunities for higher pay in the suburbs and jobs that are perceived as being more prestigious than those ‘in the city’ (Fusarelli 2004, 2007, Schutz 2006). Communities are commonly left with disjointed programming and organizational instability due to the ‘policy churn as each new administrator seeks to make his or her own stamp on the system’ (Schutz 2006: 700–701). Making matters even more troubling in urban contexts, most of these transient administrators and teachers (who comprise a significant percentage of any school’s staff) are not from the local neighbourhood and they commonly hold deeply ingrained negative perceptions of urban students and families of colour. Schutz (2006) explained:

Unlike rural schools where teachers often come from the same community as their students, urban schools populated by low income students of color largely employ middle-class Whites from the suburbs or the wealthier edges of the city in their professional positions. … Staff in high-poverty schools also tend to hold deficit-oriented views of their central-city students and communities. (p. 700)

It is not difficult, then, to see the value of boundary spanners like Ida and Monique in such environments. Very clearly, their exceptional utility as leaders here is tied to their skill, expertise and their perceived permanence in their communities. They are in and of their communities (Miller 2007b, emphasis added), consequently they know, respect and believe in the ‘rituals and cultures’ (McLaren 1986) of the people. But not only do they know, respect and believe in their neighbours, their neighbours know, respect and believe in them—and they trust that the boundary spanners will continue to work on their behalf. Communities do not fear that they will fall victim to ‘leadership flight’ when working with boundary spanners.

This ‘community permanence’, along with Ida’s and Monique’s assortments of other leadership skills (gathering diverse constituents to engage in ongoing work directed towards community-identified ends) places them in parallel with some scholars’ depictions of community organizers (Shirley
Although discussions of community organizing are more typically housed in the fields of sociology, urban and labour studies, several scholars have documented such efforts by community organizers in education contexts. Dennis Shirley’s (1997b) noteworthy descriptions of Ernie Cortez and the Industrial Areas Foundation in Texas described the merits of organizing interfaith initiatives, the Research for Action group in Philadelphia (Useem et al. 2006) has examined leadership models that build community capacity and improve schools as part of a broader social movement, David Stovall (2005b) theorized on the potential of community organizing in African-American neighbourhoods, and Nancy Taylor (2002/2003) explored the utility of transferring ‘lessons of community organizing’ to educational contexts in Latino communities. Themes from these and other writings about organizing provide an interesting lens through which to view the work of boundary spanners.

Although there is no universally accepted list of community organizer ‘traits and responsibilities’, Anyon’s (1998) description is generally reflective of the broader literature. She portrays organizers as fully invested community-based leaders who spend their time:

Helping low-income urban residents develop their abilities to change their own neighborhoods and local institutions. … Organizers teach community residents the social capital to resolve their grievances against the city and the school systems. These skills include how to speak in public, lead actions, take risks, and guide others; how to develop social and political relationships within which to challenge the indifference and apathy of corporate and government officials; how to negotiate with the holders of power, compromise, confront when necessary, and rebuild collaboration. (p. 978)

Schutz (2006) furthered the conceptualization of organizers by contrasting them with activists, whom he described as short-term contributors to a given cause. He explained:

It is important to distinguish between activism and organizing. … Organizers, like activists, often use mass action as a tool for contesting oppression, but organizers focus more on building organizations capable of sustaining power. Activists often ‘go home’ after winning a battle; organizers see each battle as one step in a long-term project. (pp. 716–717, original emphasis).

It is ironic, then, that Ida described herself as a ‘community activist masquerading in an academic environment’ (emphasis added). Based on her stated motivations for working in the Westside Mountain City community, her track record as a leader there, her colleagues’ descriptions of her work and the aforementioned literature on community organizing, it seems that she has more in common with organizers. Very similar can be said about Monique.

What appears to set Ida and Monique apart from the organizers in the literature, however, is their diverse professional backgrounds and affiliations. As Anyon (1998) wrote about organizers, these boundary spanners collaborate by helping to empower community residents to advocate for themselves and they are committed to remaining in their neighbourhoods for the long haul. However, their capacities to facilitate collaborative action are also significantly rooted in their fluencies in how to operate effectively within
diverse organizational structures and their positional clout that assists their actions. For example, Monique’s extensive background working at a Head Start Agency and at the university and serving local political offices allowed her to develop an emic perspective of how each organization/group operates. Importantly, her continued affiliation with two of these groups (the university and the neighbourhood council) granted her continued access to social and financial capital and the ability to leverage for the community. Unlike many community organizers who have been described in the literature, Ida and Monique were able work for social change from within the educational system (while maintaining their ‘ultimate loyalty’ to their long-time neighbours). It might be appropriate, then, to portray these boundary spanners as ‘institutional infiltrators organizing for community advancement’.

Issues of identification and sustainability

It is certainly a daunting task, however, to identify leaders who possess comparable experience, organizing capacities, dispositions, trust and respect to this study’s boundary spanners. The fact that every participant in the study described their partnership’s leader in extremely positive terms is a significant indicator that Ida and Monique were not typical educational leaders. In both their commitments to being ‘champions for the disadvantaged’ and their transformative capacities to ‘make things happen’ they appeared to be exceptional. In fact, some participants went so far as to indicate that Ida and Monique were uniquely able to guide UCP and RCLC, respectively. Because it is not altogether realistic to expect that other USC partnerships and initiatives will be able to find such perfect fits, boundary spanning leaders like Ida and Monique might be more appropriately depicted as ideals toward which partnerships should aspire, rather than exact models that they need to replicate.

When partnerships are indeed fortunate enough to identify boundary spanners who are oriented and skilled similarly to Ida and Monique they are still faced with the difficult challenge of sustaining these leaders’ success when they decide to leave their jobs. At first glance it would appear that their positions as ‘the fulcrum[s] on which all elements of the project[s] are leveraged’ (Clinton 2000: 25) might endanger the long-term viability of their partnerships. Considering that Ida and Monique were central to the very genesis and development of their partnerships’ major programmes and initiatives, it would seem that UCP and RCLC would take major steps backwards upon their inevitable departures. This concern of partnerships struggling after key individuals leave is not unique to these partnerships, as the literature indicates that sustained excellence is often linked too closely to individual leaders’ ongoing presences (Maurrasse 2001).

With further analysis, however, both Ida and Monique conceptualized USC leadership as a distributed practice—one that involves, respects and supports multiple actors from diverse places. They did not embrace leadership as a predescribed set of roles that accompanies certain organizationally affiliated positions. Nor did they view leadership as an innate characteristic that propels some individuals on to influence others. Rather, Ida and
Monique promoted leadership as a practice in which multiple, diversely positioned individuals are purposively engaged. Their special commitments and capacities to advocating for those who bear the disproportionate weight of urban dilemmas—deeply imbedded from years of working in alternative contexts—facilitated the development of diversely represented, inter-organizational leadership infrastructures that (although in unavoidably altered states) will continue in their communities for the foreseeable future. That is, as well-connected boundary spanners, Ida and Monique aided the development of lasting relationships between individuals and organizations that, without their leadership, might not have been developed, but as a result of their leadership will continue to thrive. They drew committed participants who otherwise would not have been involved in the partnerships. They tapped long-term financial and social resources that might not have been tapped. And they helped foster collaborative action that addressed longstanding community-identified needs that might not have been addressed. They established leadership infrastructures that will continue on beyond their cycles of partnership participation. So, in this light, not only are boundary spanners seen as permanent in their communities because of their long track records of positional leadership, but also because the fruits of their labours will endure beyond their leadership tenures. Issues of leadership transition and partnership sustainability within UCP and RCLC, then, do not seem to be as dependent upon finding clones of exceptional individuals as they are upon the continuance of the structures that have been established.

Consequently, the implications of this study for UCP, RCLC and other similar partnerships include both discussions about individual boundary spanners as well as ideas about organizational boundary spanning practice. Leadership, from this perspective, is viewed as a set of context-specific roles and responsibilities (that are dependent upon particular community needs) that are carried out strategically by actors who span the boundaries that traditionally dichotomize our communities. Boundary spanning in USC contexts expands contemporary notions of distributed educational leadership (Spillane et al. 2004, Spillane and Orlina 2005, Scribner et al. 2007) in that it enrols actors and resources from within and beyond the school walls to advocate for positive social and academic action. It provides a promising response to the calls by West (2005) and Dantley (2005a,b,c) to centre alternative voices in educational efforts—voices that are undergirded by critical dispositions and strategic capacities to engender productive collaboration.

**Conclusion**

This study has affirmed some of the existing depictions of boundary spanning leadership as being marked by contextual knowledge, interpersonal skills, trust and connectedness, but it also suggested an underlying community loyalty and a fundamental, socially conscious impetus—one which invites active advocacy for the oppressed via strategic collaboration. Accordingly, boundary spanners were compared with community organizers and described as ‘institutional infiltrators organizing for community advancement’. Although leaders with the skill and pedigree of Ida and Monique are
hard to come by, it was encouragingly suggested here that, once found, effective boundary spanners can help develop sustainable boundary spanning infrastructures within their communities.

Notes

1. ‘Urban contexts’ as constructed here refers to densely constituted areas in or adjacent to mid to large sized central cities.
2. USC partnerships as described here range widely from comprehensive, multi-institutional programmes to informal collaborations between a few individuals from university, school and/or community backgrounds. For a thorough review of this literature see Schutz (2006).
3. Pseudonyms are used for all proper names throughout this study.
4. ‘Westside’ for the purposes of this study refers to three specifically demarcated urban neighbourhoods that are participating in the partnership. These neighbourhoods are comprised of mostly Latino and Pacific Islander residents, many of whom came from low socio-economic backgrounds in comparison with the wider Mountain City area and very few of whom had attended college. For further information on this community see Buendia et al. (2004).
5. The ‘Northeast Neighborhood’ in the RCLC context refers to an approximately six square block urban area adjacent to the university campus. It is comprised of predominantly African-American residents. In comparison with most other areas of the city it has lower rates of income, home ownership and high school graduation.
6. Both Ida and Monique are widely known public figures in their respective communities who had been honoured numerous times for their exceptional community-based leadership practice.
7. Interviews took place between 2004 and 2006. Many participants were interviewed multiple times.
8. For a thorough review and analysis of the UCP and RCLC programmes see Miller (2006, 2007a,b).

References


