Engaging in Community-Based Participatory Research: "Death of a Career" or a Research Approach in Need of Professional and Institutional Support?

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Abstract: Community-based participatory research (CBPR) is on the rise not only within public health and allied health professions, but also within social work. This may not be that surprising when we recognize the rich alignment between the underlying tenets of CBPR (e.g., strengths-based focus, empowerment, social justice) and social work values (e.g., dignity and worth of the individual, human relationships, social justice). Despite noted benefits related to capacity development, community self-governance, and social justice, CBPR is challenged by a seemingly antagonistic relationship with academic expectations regarding "scholarly productivity." To explore further this tension, the current work brings into conversation the reflections of three individuals: a doctoral student, a junior faculty member, and a newly tenured faculty member. We highlight our own challenges in navigating CBPR within academia and offer recommendations to encourage the development of a professional infrastructure supportive of this approach and, thereby, its related benefits.

Keywords: community-based participatory research, CBPR, social justice, macro social work, social work research and practice, professional development

Introduction

Over the past few decades, community-based participatory research (CBPR) has steadily ascended within the fields of public health, social work, and other allied professions (Wallerstein & Duran, 2006). Understood as a research *approach* rather than a *method* per se (Ferreira & Gendron, 2011), CBPR attempts to move research towards (socially just) action. It does so by employing a strengths-based perspective, acknowledging community as a unit of identity, supporting capacity building among all members, and involving partners throughout the effort—from identification of issue(s) to dissemination of findings and beyond (Israel et al., 1998; Minkler, 2010).

Such an approach has evidenced positive outcomes. With respect to process, it is lauded for its ability to (re)center community engagement and foster trust-building, power-sharing, empowerment, and capacity development (e.g., Baffour, 2011; Branom, 2012; Wallerstein & Duran, 2010). These elements are then thought to support more distal outcomes, with scholars repeatedly noting the development of culturally and contextually responsive programs, interventions, and data collection tools; enhanced science from, for example, participant recruitment to effective (and rapid) dissemination of findings; and enhanced health, well-being, and social justice (Balazs & Morello-Frosch, 2013; Salimi, et al., 2012; Wallerstein & Duran, 2010). And, within social work specifically, it is lauded as a promising means through which to enhance the profession's foundational values, such as social justice, service, and the dignity and worth of a person/community (Baffour, 2011; Barbera, 2008; Branom, 2012; Gehlert &

Coleman, 2010; Jacobson & Rugeley, 2007; Sohng, 1996).

Benefits notwithstanding, several researchers comment on the associated challenges of this approach. Replete within the literature are concerns regarding *time* investments (e.g., Baffour, 2011; Lowry & Ford-Paz, 2013; Salimi et al., 2012; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006). Time to (re)build trust. Time to build, maintain, and grow (authentically) collaborative partnerships. Time to navigate funding expectations. Time to negotiate and carry out a research agenda with community partners (e.g., identification of research questions, design, implementation, analysis, and dissemination). Common among these is the challenge associated with navigating CBPR timelines and the requirements associated with academic promotion and tenure (Ferrera et al., 2015; Lowry & Ford-Paz, 2013; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006). That is to say, CBPR partnerships (done well) often take *years* to develop. For an untenured or early-career faculty member, this may be time they cannot spare.

To explore further the seemingly antagonistic relationship between the value and impact of CBPR and its associated challenges within the academy, we offer personal reflections from a doctoral student ("Testing the Waters," Helen), a junior faculty member ("Diving into the Deep End," Rebecca), and a newly tenured faculty member ("Waiting for the Right Time to Jump In," Trina). We highlight why we are called to CBPR and the challenges and possibilities therein. We conclude with suggestions regarding the ways in which we—individually, institutionally, and professionally—might together build a more supportive CBPR culture.

Narrative Reflections

Although each of us possesses unique and intersecting identities, there is a uniting thread: We all come from working-class families and communities. We grew up with and felt viscerally the experiences of economic precarity—of families and communities that were looked down upon and marginalized (in various ways), despite their strength and resilience. It should come as no surprise, then, that we connected. Almost immediately, there was a felt sense of understanding, of shared experience and kinship.

For example, I (Rebecca) still remember my first days as a new tenure track faculty member at a Research I University, designated so for its engagement in the highest level of research activity. I had that strong—and familiar—sense of being out of place, of not belonging. I sat in meeting after meeting, slowly beginning to immerse myself into a foreign, academic culture. I still remember the first time someone asked for a clarification of "Robert's Rules." All I could think was *who is Robert and why haven't I met this guy?* Thankfully, I started to notice Trina, a fellow junior faculty member. I deeply appreciated the ways in which Trina engaged fellow faculty with gracious humility. It signaled, at least to me, a lack of entitlement, which resonated with my class background. We came to discover many shared experiences. Our families were made up of hardworking farmers, truck drivers, and service workers. Neither of us had set foot on a college campus until later in life. And, we certainly never imagined that we could someday be professors.

Similarly, I (Helen) came back to college later in life. Based on various personal and

professional experiences, I was keen to develop my ability to engage in community-responsive health programming, so I applied and was accepted into a dual master's program (MSW/MPH). Awarded a research assistant position, I was assigned to a new, junior faculty member (Rebecca). Before our first meeting, I eagerly downloaded her CV to get a feel for who I'd be working with for the next two years. As I scanned her CV the word *community* kept jumping off the page. Although I didn't yet know the meaning of all this language—"community participatory research" and "CBPR"—something about her experience and scholarship spoke to me. These words seemed to ground her research, like it meant something more authentic and powerful for people and the issues they sought to alleviate. On the day of our first meeting, I entered Rebecca's office and proclaimed that it was my intention to help create health and social programs that actually helped people, that made their lives easier not harder, and that harnessed their potential and fostered empowerment. Her face lit up as she leaned towards me and asked, "Have you ever heard of community-based participatory research?" We spent hours that day, and many days since, talking about community practice, community engagement, and the ways in which our formative experiences shaped our interest in and commitment to methods that (re)center community voice and self-governance.

So it was, given a constellation of personal and professional factors, that we all came to find ourselves at the same institution at the very same moment in time. Although two of us have since moved on, we are deeply grateful for the opportunity to have found (and enriched) a CBPR-supportive community during our time together. We continue to collaborate and provide ongoing support and mentoring as we, as reflected in the personal narratives below, engage in CBPR.

Testing the Waters

I (Helen) was being primed very early to become a social justice-oriented researcher. Having to navigate almost every social service available to a teenage mother, I experienced being frustrated by the dignity-stripping and belaboring protocols of the various agencies necessary to ensure my young family's survival. It was as if no one at the welfare offices had a clue what it meant to be poor, African American, a woman, a mother, and a student—and how these intersecting identities shaped my experience in accessing and utilizing services.

As an undergraduate public health student, I would again witness the missteps of experts' good intentions and their profound impact on so-called "service consumers." After my last semester of coursework, I joined a research team in Guatemala to help evaluate the relevancy and accessibility of medical services provided by a large American-based NGO working in underserved communities. What we uncovered was that the health interventions and clinic services created by expert researchers and program developers—efforts intended to provide relief—were *instead* creating even more barriers to healthcare. This perpetuated the discrimination experienced by an already marginalized community and, in some cases, put clinic users—women in particular—at an even greater risk to experience violence.

I was on a mission—I thought, *how can I responsibly attend to health issues, in good faith, without causing more harm, knowing that they are only a small part of a whole host of social*

and political injustices that complicate the intimate lived experiences of communities? I decided the answer was to get master's degrees in both social work and public health and try to figure it out.

Working with Rebecca, I would pick up where a previous graduate student left off, conducting the initial research for a scoping literature review to explore the ways in which CBPR is utilized (or not) in social work research. It would require that I read and dissect over 100 articles describing CBPR efforts that ranged from qualitative research informing the development of culturally tailored depression care, centering African American women's experiences of racism, violence, and social context (Nicolaidis et al., 2010) to quantitative, cluster-randomized controlled trials assessing the impact of a parenting intervention on parents' heavy drinking for Mexican heritage youth (Williams et al., 2014). Rebecca also suggested I read Freire and feminist thought to understand CBPR's roots and CBPR pioneers and advocates like Israel and Minkler. Of course, I also had to do "the work" of CBPR—as she calls it—if I were to really learn CBPR.

So, I became the community-engagement research specialist for a local initiative seeking to assess youth development issues. I'd learned the academic basics of CBPR-oriented efforts from my research, and now it was time to put that into action. Anyone who has engaged in community work, and in particular CBPR, knows that the process of building trust takes time. I will never forget one of the community research partners reflecting this as we walked through a public housing development chatting with residents and families he had once supported: "No one cares how much you know, until they know how much you care, Helen." This process *takes time*—time to show up for various community events, have coffee or break bread with community leaders and residents, and, frankly, time to re-establish and/or heal wounds from the often-exploitative use of marginalized communities by universities and researchers.

Over the next three years, Rebecca continued to provide mentorship, insisting that I take special care in building authentic relationships with community members and engaging in collaborative and mutually beneficial research activities. As I did, I quite organically began to re-balance power, seeing myself as part of (as opposed to "overseeing") this process, learning alongside community members and grassroots service providers—like longtime community resident "Ms. June Borrow," who contextualized the city's history from a perspective only she could provide, a perspective that deepened and illuminated the importance of our research. She provided insight into how the landscape of youth services had changed over the years and how those changes impacted the current state of youth resources and opportunities.

Or "Ms. Kayla Dawson," mother of two teenagers, who, in addition to having a full-time job, ran a grassroots community youth agency. She had been doing this work for over 10 years and had witnessed grand city-level programs and initiatives come and go without much notable improvement in youth outcomes. She reflected one day, "Instead of funding all these outside people, maybe the city government could fund the grassroots folks who been doin' this work for years and will do continue to do this work: grant... or no grant." Collaboration with community leaders like Ms. Borrow and Ms. Dawson led to specialized benefits for the community—for example, capacity development among grassroots service providers (e.g., free skill-building

workshops identified by the community and led by community leaders, such as Grant Writing and Reporting), and the development of a community-responsive and research-informed report that continues to support youth development efforts responsive to community vision (e.g., support for a Kids-Ride-Free program with the local bus line to address transportation barriers).

Bearing witness to the transformational possibilities of CBPR, I excitedly applied for and was accepted into a doctoral program at a Research I University. Though I was eager to do the work with faculty identified as CBPR scholar-practitioners, I slowly began to realize that CBPR is executed quite differently in spaces where expectations regarding research productivity are high. Building relationships with community members, inviting their input, and enabling their expertise to guide the research process is, as I was told, a luxury not afforded at such institutions. I was told in various direct and indirect ways that my vision of CBPR was idealistic; at best, a researcher had done their due diligence if they had held a community focus group or partnered with local service providers. While my new advisors acknowledged the benefits of community-engaged research for both the community and research outcomes, I was promptly encouraged to explore other less time-consuming means of community engagement—*if* I was to involve community at all.

Further, the first year of a doctoral program brings with it the shock of PhD-level coursework, exposure to teaching experiences, balancing the execution of newly acquired research skills, and the realization of what it means to actually do research. Those very idealistic and romanticized dreams of conducting elaborate dissertation research have started to become tempered into a plan that is more "manageable" and "doable" in a four-year time frame. Because, as recently suggested by one of my committee advisors: "A good dissertation is a done dissertation" ...and probably not one on CBPR time. *But*—I continue to struggle with this—if the dissertation serves to "craft" a research agenda that will "brand" me in the academy, shouldn't I impress upon it the (CBPR-informed) trajectory I intend to pursue? Indeed, the first year has left me feeling somewhat research homeless, questioning *should I have stuck to community practice?*

Even so, as a self-proclaimed social work practitioner-researcher, I am committed to learning how to conduct research that at once produces contributions to the field and (most importantly) acts as a mechanism of social justice and change. Of course, having access to a formal CBPR training program would not only prepare masters and doctoral students like myself to conduct research and develop programs infused with community expertise, but also help correct long-standing power and equity imbalances (e.g., universities exploiting surrounding communities for the sake of their research alone). It would also help the academy shift the ways in which it views and supports social work faculty who elect to pursue CBPR to guide their research.

Diving into the Deep End

"Oh, you don't want to do *that... that'll be the death of your career!*"

Comforting. Supporting. Encouraging—no? Just the words a newly minted PhD, poised to start their first year as a tenure-track professor at a Research I University, needs to hear.

What had I professed? That I (Rebecca) was going to train elephants to provide art therapy? No, I had uttered to a senior faculty member that I called upon CBPR to guide my research.

I know. I'll give you a minute.

Shocking, right?

I mean, *how* could I? *Why would I?*

The truth is, it chose me—a long time ago. Growing up in a rural, economically (and otherwise) depressed New England abandoned mill town, I learned very early on the power of the collective. Of people coming together to make ends meet, often in spaces where the state had relinquished responsibility or didn't care from the get-go. We bartered for all sorts of things: food, firewood, plumbing repairs, and haircuts. We shared stories of frustration and hope. *And, we accomplished more together than we could have ever done alone.*

That left a mark, a deep one. A mark that guided me as an enlisted soldier in the military. As a secretary at a property management company by day, community college student by night. As a student of psychology, then public health, then social welfare. In all these spaces, I questioned, for better and for worse. I questioned why nearly all of my enlisted brothers and sisters came from economically marginalized families/communities and felt *this*—possibly risking their lives—was their *best* option. *Really?* I questioned why some families could live in multi-million-dollar gated communities, while "Billy" panhandled outside our office for enough money to stay a night at the motel. "The fancy ones that had showers and everything," he used to say. And, I questioned why so often in academic spaces we toss about words like *justice* and *solidarity*, yet often call upon methods that further alienate and pathologize individuals rather than systems.

That didn't sit well. So you see, CBPR chose me.

My first exposure came while pursuing my MPH degree. Frustrated by the individual-level focus of an undergraduate degree in psychology, I was eager to explore community work and participatory models in support of collective health and wellbeing. Only later would I come to realize how *incredibly* lucky I was to learn with and from a highly esteemed CBPR-scholar and practitioner: "Georgia." Based on personal and professional experiences, Georgia understood the power of community—the power of individuals coming together to identify strengths and challenges and collectively determine a path forward. Through course readings and a year-long, community-engaged assessment project, Georgia encouraged my classmates and me to explore the ways in which CBPR presented an alternative way of moving beyond platitudes and engaging in the *work* of justice (or at least striving—with intentionality—to get closer). Work that fundamentally saw the power, potential, wisdom, and vision of *all* people. Not only those with access to various forms of privilege. Despite this being my only academic exposure to CBPR, it was nonetheless powerful. It demonstrated that it *could* be done.

So, I jumped in headfirst, right into the deep end. Was I outraged, upset, and rattled by the whole

"career death" thing? *Without a doubt.* But I had already jumped, so my only option was to learn to swim in these waters.

I spent the summer prior to starting my tenure-track position working to make connections in the local community (*not* working on publications off the dissertation—we'll get to this later). My Dean at the time, a lifelong champion of justice, provided a warm introduction with an executive director of a local community development corporation. We held weekly two-hour meetings (always at the organization) for months discussing the community, our partnership, and ideas regarding the assessment and its progress. We collectively decided that our primary goal was to *listen*. We wanted to hear from the community. We wanted the university to support the process, not *overtake* it. So, we collaborated with community leaders to convene and facilitate listening sessions and a visioning process. Therein, community-determined priorities naturally emerged, as well as bi-directional learning opportunities among community members, researchers, and 12 MSW students who supported the effort. Later, while attending a community festival, a community member said to me, "You know, I want you to know that the most powerful thing you all did was *listen*. You didn't come in with your ideas; you listened to ours. And that made all the difference."

For the past two years, I've been engaged in a community health worker (*promotora*) program that has prioritized leadership development and access to health and social services within the local Latinx community. Given limited fluency in Spanish, I am quiet—nearly silent—during all of our *promotora* trainings. As a person that relies on words to engage, to connect, to build relationships, this has been hard. Really hard. I want to jump in and contribute, to offer my thoughts and insights, but I can't. As hard as I try to translate in my mind, it's never quick enough. So, I sit and listen. From this place of quiet, of letting go of "control," I have witnessed our bilingual/bicultural graduate research assistants assume leadership positions, develop culturally and contextually responsive trainings, and flourish as community-engaged scholars. I have likewise witnessed once-reserved *promotoras* coordinate training opportunities, support service providers to develop culturally responsive practices, and emerge as vocal leaders and advocates for their community.

So, nearly all of my research efforts as a junior faculty member have involved CBPR. Has it been challenging and exhausting in countless ways? *Yes and yes.* Have I grown and been humbled and been a part of efforts that have resulted in real, palpable, positive change along the way? *Yes, yes, and yes.* So, you see, the challenge (at least in my experience) has really been the effect of trying to balance the time demands of community engagement, trust (re)building, and relationship development *with* also having to identify *other* research opportunities that translate more quickly into publications and other "countable products."

I think (at least for now) we've got to jump in and learn to swim as we go. We've got to figure out how to publish and present on the processes *and* outcomes of these efforts, as doing so keeps our collective head (okay, maybe just by a nostril, but *still*) above water with respect to "productivity" and (importantly) begins to shift the discourse regarding what is (and isn't) considered "research." We need mentoring by people who have actually done this. We need to train the next generation of social workers to engage effectively in CBPR. We need professional

and institutional support in the form of adjusted promotion and tenure criteria reflective of the inputs and outputs of CBPR, as well as external funding mechanisms, conferences, and publishing venues that are interested in and supportive of this approach. We need *time* to do this right.

Waiting for the "Right" Time to Jump In

I (Trina) initially became interested in CBPR as a doctoral student. I decided to pursue a PhD program after learning about the wide racial disparities in infant mortality in my adopted hometown of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Because of the color of their skin, my white daughters were two to three times more likely to *survive* within their first year of life than African American babies. I felt this disparity was completely unacceptable, especially considering all the technological advances available to us here in the United States. As I researched this topic more, I discovered these disparities had existed for *decades* in Milwaukee, and over this same timeframe I found news story after news story announcing new initiatives, steering committees, and research projects focused on this issue. But none of them were successful in significantly reducing the racial disparities. As I looked more, it seemed that most of these initiatives were missing a critical component—the voices of residents who had experienced these disparities firsthand.

I saw CBPR as a way to engage community members in determining the complicated underlying causes of these disparities and proposing new and creative solutions. I also realized that CBPR was not a commonly appreciated approach in academia. Early on in my PhD program, I was invited to attend a meeting to discuss yet another initiative aimed at achieving healthy birth outcomes so that I could provide administrative support for writing the grant application. Surrounded by an impressive group of well-published researchers from multiple fields, I tentatively asked, "Shouldn't we get community members' input on this idea?" One of my colleagues responded, "*We're* the experts!" In that exchange, I realized it can be difficult for academics (who are expected to become experts in our topic of research) to privilege the "lived experience" and knowledge of community members who are experiencing and observing this topic on a daily basis.

My academic preparation related to CBPR included taking one public health elective in my doctoral program that introduced CBPR as a social justice approach. The course required students to develop and propose a project to a community partner and seek their feedback on our idea. At the time I was terrified at the thought of talking to a community agency, but when my partner and I proposed our idea, our community partner was so excited that they talked us into completing the project with very limited funding—all while we balanced full-time jobs and doctoral coursework. The experience of negotiating with a community partner, as well as gaining their feedback on our approach and insight into what we thought we were finding, was a rich learning experience and cinched for me the benefit of involving community partners in all aspects of research.

That being said, I also experienced the CBPR challenges noted in the literature: the considerable amount of *time* required to collaborate with community partners and the importance of

relationships and *communication* therein. Under the mentorship of a CBPR scholar, our team later explored these tensions in an article (Salm Ward et al., 2017). We (the students) spoke of our "learning-on-the-fly" about CBPR, and our community partner reflected on their experience training future academics in what *should* matter in research (e.g., the courage to call out structural racism when they see it). This experience was at once deeply rewarding and utterly exhausting, leaving me quite reticent to pursue CBPR for my dissertation. I decided to heed the warning of a senior faculty member—*"the best dissertation is a done dissertation"*—and chose to analyze an existing data set.

Fast-forward to my first tenure-track faculty job at a Research I university in a new state, where I worked to launch my program of research with new partners while also balancing an administrative program coordination role. I knew that truly engaged CBPR work would require a considerable amount of time to build trusting and meaningful relationships with new community partners. But I also realized that I had very *limited time* with my administrative appointment and the looming expectations of promotion and tenure. I was told that in order to be promoted, I needed an "h index of at least 12" and NIH funding. With that type of pressure, I felt that my main priorities were to publish as quickly and as much as I could while writing grant proposals. This didn't allow much time for building relationships with community partners. Instead, my strategy was to publish quantitative, population-level work while also trying to launch a smaller qualitative project—hopefully, my publication record and work in the community would catch a community partner's attention. So, unlike Rebecca, I spent the first part of my tenure-track position mostly in my office working on publishing my dissertation papers, *not* out in the community making connections.

During the first few years of my tenure-track career, I decided to strive for "community-engaged" research versus CBPR. I felt that I could at least try to call upon *some* of the principles of CBPR, even though I didn't have the bandwidth to engage in a truly CBPR approach. This translated into working with community partners to do community outreach and education in my area of expertise and serving as a program evaluator on a poorly-funded—but community partner-led—program. My justification to my Department Chair for doing the project (despite the time commitment and minimal funding) was that I could "get a paper out of it," which would count towards my goal of promotion and tenure. As I talked with potential community partners during that time, I transparently told them that the things I needed were either publications or funding, or preferably both, because those were the "products" that counted in academia.

Despite these pressures, I remained committed to community engagement. I found ways to balance academic expectations by working with community partners to publish preliminary results and contract for small amounts of money (i.e., what my community partners could afford, versus large grants that my university would prefer). Although not valued as highly as other efforts, these smaller, community-engaged projects—in many ways—resulted in greater impact via direct and immediate translation of research into practice. For example, in one of our projects, we were able to make the case to public health leadership that the project was worthwhile to continue, then directly translated our study results into improving and updating parent training materials on safe sleep.

In the latter part of my early tenure-seeking process, I received a small grant to pilot-test an intervention study based on the preliminary research I had done in my area of expertise. At the same time, I also returned to my hometown of Milwaukee to a tenure-track position and was able to transition the grant to my new institution. As I worked to implement my project, I spent the first year of the grant re-connecting with community partners, re-introducing myself, and sheepishly telling them, "...So, this is what I have funding to do." Luckily for me, my community colleagues have been very supportive and excited to assist me with carrying out what I proposed, including support with recruitment. However, I can't help but feel that I'm doing this all backward. Instead of proposing my own intervention (with my limited understanding of the issue), I would *like* to be talking with community partners about what they are doing, exploring what seems to be working well, and identifying ways for me to support *their* efforts.

This past summer, I was granted promotion and tenure, and I now have the benefit of reflecting on the first part of my career. On the one hand, I am glad I prioritized publications and funding because they helped me achieve the milestone of promotion and tenure. But on the other hand, my program of research up to this point has not truly benefited from the rich insight and expertise of community partners as active members of a research team (versus just serving as recruitment sources). With tenure behind me, and a little more space to breathe, I plan to reorient my research approach to more closely embody the principles of CBPR by finding ways to join ongoing efforts with my community partners instead of designing my own. By incorporating CBPR principles into my work, I believe my research will truly benefit from the rich insight and expertise of community partners, and we'll all be more successful in addressing this issue.

Conclusion

Individually and collectively, our experiences reflect those found in the literature. Social work scholars and practitioners highlight the ways in which CBPR can foster trust-building (e.g., Nicolaidis et al., 2013); capacity development among all partners, including community partners, academic researchers, and students (e.g., Sangalang et al., 2015; Wahab et al., 2014); the identification of issues that are of direct importance and relevance to community members (vs. externally defined "needs" e.g., Scharlach & Sanchez, 2011); culturally and contextually responsive interventions (e.g., Austin & Craig, 2015; Mellins et al., 2014); health and well-being (e.g., Spencer et al., 2011); and alignment with social work values (Baffour, 2011; Barbera, 2008; Branom, 2012; Gehlert & Coleman, 2010; Jacobson & Rugeley, 2007; Sohng, 1996). Several scholars likewise note challenges associated with incredible time investments (e.g., Spencer, 2015; Wright et al., 2017), promotion and tenure expectations (e.g., Aisenberg et al., 2012; Ferrera et al., 2015; Lowry & Ford-Paz, 2013), and a lack of mentoring, educational, and training opportunities (e.g., Lowry & Ford-Paz, 2013; Scharlach & Sanchez, 2011).

This approach asked of us to let go of some things while richly gaining in others. A lack of formal and/or ongoing educational training (e.g., beyond one class or one week's readings) meant we all had to embrace "learning this on the fly," as Trina suggested. Some of us had to let go of being able to produce a plethora of articles and academically "recognizable" products, thereby impacting yearly reviews (and related "merit" raises). Some of us had to let go of the approach altogether to complete doctoral training and move towards tenure in a timely manner.

Despite these challenges, however, we each remain committed to this approach precisely because of all that is gained. We have been humbled in our work to (re)balance power, bearing witness to its empowering effects among students and community partners. We have witnessed the reception and impact of culturally and contextually responsive programs reflective of community vision. And, in many ways, we have yet to see the ways in which these seeds will continue to bear fruit.

We are, thus, not alone in acknowledging the simultaneous benefits and challenges that emerge, not only as a result of the approach per se, but also by virtue of being implemented in spaces that have *not yet made appropriate accommodations*. That is, if we're able to flip the script and see the noted challenges not as inherent to the approach but instead largely a result of external factors, our point of departure is quite different. Instead of bemoaning or dismissing the approach altogether, we *could* start to think through how we might adjust our own orientation and those of professional and organizational structures to be more affirming and supportive of this approach (given the tremendous associated benefits—many of which align with values foundational to social work).

This is going to require a shift, *possibly* a seismic one. One that truly sees the merit in opening space for CBPR. One that respects and supports research efforts that involve long-term (often *multi-year*) collaborative research partnerships with community, that prioritize power-sharing, capacity development, and social justice. An appreciation—that is quantified in some tangible way—for the time spent (re)building trust with communities, challenging power imbalances, and (re)centering justice as a guiding framework. Towards those ends, we offer several preliminary recommendations at the personal, institutional, and professional levels.

At the personal level, we encourage individuals to seek out opportunities to further develop their skills and capacities to engage effectively in CBPR (ensuring fidelity to the approach), to include these: targeted coursework (if it doesn't yet exist, *ask for it*), doctoral and professional pre-conference workshops, post-doc training opportunities, professional special interest groups, and conference proceedings. Seek out colleagues, practitioners, *and* mentors engaged (or interested) in CBPR (Lowry & Ford-Paz, 2013). With respect to mentors, one would benefit greatly from the insights of both senior (i.e., one who has successfully navigated promotion and tenure with a CBPR-informed research agenda, possibly obtained funding in this regard, and can help to identify potential reviewers for your promotion and tenure materials) and junior (i.e., those that might share creative, real-time solutions) faculty colleagues. Likewise, it would be of benefit to seek out mentors within (to assist in navigating your own institutional environment) as well as outside your university (to provide a broader perspective).

At the institutional level, universities are encouraged to consider the ways in which CBPR can enhance the university's ability to achieve its community engagement mission (*particularly* among land- and sea-grant universities). Enhanced training for and with institutional review boards will likewise encourage greater familiarity with, for example, emergent research designs and the logistics surrounding the active involvement of community research partners (Lowry & Ford-Paz, 2013; Shore, 2007). Universities, schools, and departments are strongly encouraged to review promotion and tenure guidelines to identify opportunities to amend review criteria and

language; this is both to be more responsive to the process and outcomes/products of CBPR-informed scholarship (Lowry & Ford-Paz, 2013; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006) and to recognize a broader array of scholarly impact beyond peer-reviewed publications and extramural funding. This should include, for example, research dissemination at the community level, engaged service-learning opportunities for students, and social action resulting from CBPR-engaged research.

Finally, at the professional level, we recommend the continued development of undergraduate- and graduate-level CBPR-informed curricula, postdoctoral training programs, and ongoing professional development opportunities to further enhance awareness, skill development, and chances for social workers to engage with and contribute to CBPR. Other allied health professions have, for example, outlined CBPR as a proposed core educational competency (Institute of Medicine, 2003). Several social work scholars have long called for such curricular developments (e.g., Anderson, 2002; Baffour, 2011; Berge et al., 2009; Branom, 2012; Dulmus & Cristalli, 2012; Heckel & Moore, 2009; Hyde & Meyer, 2004; Scharlach & Sanchez, 2011). We likewise encourage professional social work journals and organizations to invite CBPR-informed scholarship by ensuring 1) the scope, aims, and calls for papers of journals and 2) conference themes, tracks, and professional awards are inclusive of CBPR-informed research and practice.

Final Thoughts

In exploring the seemingly antagonistic relationship between CBPR and academia, we come to see many of the noted challenges as stemming from a lack of multi-systemic support—a casualty, if you will, of an academic culture that values (and, in many ways, incentivizes) particular research approaches and methodologies while discrediting and marginalizing others (directly or indirectly, the effect is still the same). While other research approaches (e.g., implementation research) demonstrate positive outcomes (e.g., dissemination of evidence-based research intended to address the lengthy gap between research and implementation), prior scholarship and our own experiences suggest that CBPR is particularly well-positioned to foster unique processes *and* outcomes, to include (as noted above) (re)building trust between community partners and academics/universities, community capacity development, and social action.

As such, we humbly offer these reflections as an invitation to dialogue: an invitation for social work and allied professions to come together to creatively (re)imagine multi-systemic supports that recognize the benefits of CBPR and allow all those engaged—community, students, academics, practitioners—opportunities to flourish.

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