Provoking Change in Researchers' Roles: Using a Community-Based Research Approach to Address Research Needs in the Community

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Abstract

This article is based on a community-based research practicum conducted with a Headstart program in western Canada. The purpose of the text is to describe the progression of one researcher's roles from inception to completion of a year-long research project while working in collaboration with a community partner. Following a brief review of principles of community-based research, a case study is used to show how principles were adhered to in a practicum. A variation of traditional role theory is introduced as a useful framework to navigate burgeoning researcher roles and role multiplicity. These are: (a) researcher as researcher, (b) researcher as collaborator, (c) researcher as relationship builder, (d) researcher as teacher, and (e) researcher as learner. Considerations for ways to promote researchers—students and academics—to develop skills to correspond with changing researcher roles are presented, along with future directions to empirically examine researcher roles in CBR.

Across Canada, people who work with children and families in schools constantly seek information about best policies and practices for optimizing the well being of children and families in areas such as health, early childhood intervention, education, and community development. Community-based research (CBR) is becoming recognized as a useful research approach that offers researchers and community partners a way to collaboratively examine issues relevant to communities (Currie et al., 2005). Although conducting research in the community has been described as ambiguous, time-consuming, and challenging (Kelly et al., 2004), it can also be rewarding, inspirational, and can deliver applicable results (Weisz, 2009). The skills researchers utilize and the roles they navigate when conducting CBR, however, are not well understood. Indeed, presenting clean, straightforward descriptions of methods and results—without discussing study processes—may limit researchers' understanding of the complexity of community research (Harklau & Norwood, 2005). Sarason (1976) states that researchers who engage in community research enact many roles both similar to and different from traditional researchers as well as develop new skills. The paucity of literature concerning role multiplicity and researchers' skill development does a disservice to researchers who must be prepared to handle

obstacles and employ alternative strategies when undertaking community research.

The purpose of this piece is to explore multiple researcher roles when collaborating with community members—from the inception to completion of a research project. Drawing on a case study of research conducted as part of an educational psychology graduate student practicum, the diverse roles that may be adopted when using a CBR approach are delineated alongside relevant literature examining researcher roles in educational and community psychology research. Future directions to support as well as empirically examine researchers' multiple roles are discussed.

Review of the Literature

Community members often need assistance with pressing social problems. However, they are thought to be “poorly connected to universities and rarely influence university research agendas” (Greenwood & Levin, 2000, p. 90). Research conducted in academic institutions may be deemed irrelevant by community members unless they are consulted, or better yet, directly involved in the research process. As Berliner (2006) noted about research relevance, “We may sometimes appear irrelevant to educators needing to be successful in environments of greater complexity than the psychological laboratory” (p. 6). Even when data is collected in a community setting it may be used by researchers, but never returned to the community to inform their needs and issues (Chavis, Stucky, & Wandersman, 1983). In an examination of the relationships between universities and societies, Greenwood and Levin (2000) argued that many academic social scientists dialogue with other colleagues in their discipline, but do not devote energy into applying the results of their work beyond the university. As well, researchers and community members may have different views on what they deem to be “useful research.” To illustrate, educators have a good understanding of what would be feasible in their classroom when implementing new practices. Without this experiential understanding, researchers may overlook practical barriers when conducting research. As a result, research findings may not be effective within the classroom. To help address research concerns and apply findings to community issues, Berliner (2006) stressed that researchers should consider genuine problems that exist within communities (e.g., schools, neighbourhoods, community agencies).

Criticism that universities were removed from communities and did not prepare students to become active citizens led to the development of campus–community partnerships (Strand, 2003). In the early 1980s, Chavis et al. (1983) suggested that partnerships between researchers and community members have the potential to improve research quality and increase public support of research. These views are echoed by other researchers who perceive partnerships as transforming learning and knowledge discovery (Redman, 2003) and being essential for promoting community health and development (Currie et al., 2005; Minkler, Vásquez, Tajik, & Peterson, 2008). These innovative partnerships are now happening in numerous forms, including students' active engagement with the community through internships, service-learning, research service-learning, and research practicums (see Canadian Alliance for Community Service-

Learning, 2009; Cotter, Welleford, Vesley-Massey, & Thurston, 2003; Hart Leadership Program, 2009).

Using a Community-based Research Approach

CBR is a “partnership of students, faculty, and community members who collaboratively engage in research with the purpose of solving a pressing community problem or effecting social change” (Strand, 2003, p. 3). Research questions are driven *by* the community and *for* the community (Minkler, 2004). Benefits of CBR include increasing knowledge, capacity, and ongoing input of community members (Flicker & Flynn, 2009); building relationships, generating inspiration, and witnessing a local impact of research (Weisz, 2009); and enriching and broadening researchers’ perspectives and expertise (Dugery & Knowles, 2003; Sopcak, Stack-Cutler, Hannok, & Nagpal, 2008).

Key principles of CBR distinguish it from other research approaches. Whereas traditional research includes the researcher selecting problems to study based on intellectual and professional agendas (Greenwood & Levin, 2000), CBR involves (a) supporting collaborative partnerships in all phases of research, (b) integrating knowledge and action for mutual benefit for all partners, (c) promoting empowerment for those experiencing social inequalities, and (d) disseminating findings in a respectful and accessible language (Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 1998; Strand, 2003). Chavis and colleagues (1983) note that “the observer and the observed are partners in the process of discovery and interpretation” (p. 425). This partnership should be equitable and fair (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002), supporting the needs, contributions, and expertise of both community members and researchers in many—if not all—stages of research. Appreciating the research process is an important aspect of change and growth for those involved (Harris, 2009; Strand, 2003).

Despite the continued calls for applicable community research, CBR is not a new approach. G. Stanley Hall, for example, used a naturalistic environment to conduct research in the late 1800s. He encouraged educators to become data collectors to examine their students’ knowledge (as cited in Berliner, 2006). Although his research may not have been as stringent as standards reflected in current-day research, it was one of the first empirical studies to include community members as researchers. Further, in the public health and community psychology disciplines, CBR is well-developed (see Harris, 2009 for a review of CBR studies), providing university and community researchers with insightful frameworks for making choices and working through decisions related to target populations and appropriate research designs (e.g., Hohmann, & Shear, 2002).

Although frameworks are available to provide guidance, transitioning from traditional ways of conducting research to using a community-based approach is not always an easy task (Sopcak et al., 2008). Indeed, the time needed for meetings, the differences in questions of interest between academics and community members, the fear of loss of control over the research, the skills required to apply research to practical problems (Chavis et al., 1983), and the new and varying roles that must be navigated are potential challenges for researchers. Apart from challenges that researchers must work through when entering into unfamiliar research territory, engaging community members in research projects can also be an obstacle to collaborative research. For example,

community members involved in prior research may not have understood its importance, how the results would be used, and how—or whether—the results would be disseminated in their community (Chavis et al., 1983; Redman, 2003), leading to resistance in partnering with academic researchers. As Kelly (2006) notes, “In the past, most preventative services have been largely dropped upon or applied to the community, rather than developed with the community” (p. 153).

CBR has promise to enhance the relevance, usefulness, and overall use of research data in educational psychology and corresponding disciplines by overcoming research distrust, joining together partners with diverse skills, aiming to improve the health and well-being of communities, and exploring new researcher roles and responsibilities. To more fully understand some of the challenges facing a traditional researcher turned community-based researcher, I briefly describe a variation of role theory to provide a framework for thinking about the multiple roles I experienced when using a CBR approach for the first time.

Researcher Roles

On any given day an individual negotiates among many diverse functional roles in numerous life domains, such as work, school, and family. A social role is “a comprehensive pattern of behavior and attitudes, constituting a strategy for coping with a recurrent set of situations” (Turner, 1990, p. 87). Roles can be dependent on the culture of an organization (Shivers-Blackwell, 2004) or, specific to this paper, to a research approach. Traditional role theory views roles as inflexible, causing an individual attempting to simultaneously balance multiple roles to experience “role strain” or “role conflict.” In response to the role conflict assumed in this theory, Lynch (2007) argued that people often can successfully manage roles. Lynch used social cognitive theory to argue that role enactment is both a behavioural and a cognitive response—in contrast to traditional role theory which emphasizes the behavioural element of role multiplicity. Role change can occur by adding new roles to existing roles or by having roles dissolved (Turner). In partial or complete role overlap, a researcher can manage multiple roles by constantly stepping out of one and into another (Lynch).

Depending on the instruments implemented, for example, researchers may be observers (Fine, Weis, Weseen, & Wong, 2000), passionate participants, reflexivists, and activists (Berings, Doornbos, & Simons, 2006). Similarly, traditional researcher roles may involve gaining access to a research site and handling ethical issues (Creswell, 2003). Specific to CBR, Strand (2003) contrasted the role of “outside expert” as seen in traditional academic research to a number of roles, including collaborator, partner, and learner, in CBR. Put simply, “success in collaborating with community agencies requires that researchers be adaptable, deal with ambiguities, and develop creative solutions, even when such solutions seem outside the realm of what researchers ‘ought’ to do” (McCollum & Stith, 2002, p. 6).

Researchers interacting with participants and community members directly—especially over time—need to integrate familiar and unfamiliar roles, negotiating challenges and rewards that these multiple roles pose. Social work researchers, for example, experience dual roles of a social worker who cares for others and that of an ethical researcher (Landau, 2008). As program evaluators, Harklau and

Norwood (2005) found themselves acting as negotiators with stakeholders, advocates for children and families, colleagues with program staff, and on occasion, student teachers with students, all the while evaluating a program. Community psychologists engaged in a multi-year school intervention instigated change when they made the community more aware of available resources, mediated conflict between stakeholders, and advocated for students and families (Balcazar, Garate-Serafini, & Keys, 2004). Similarly, Minkler et al. (2008) examined the partnerships of CBR projects and found that although academic partners primarily focused on research aspects, they also experienced additional commitments: they met with community partners to discuss policy, secured additional funds to promote research sustainability, and negotiated with their own institutions to establish supports for their research work. In the remainder of the paper I provide a description of my CBR practicum as a case study to illustrate the way CBR principles were adhered to as well as the multiple researcher roles I experienced from the beginning to end of my study.

Course Description

Graduate students in educational psychology at a university in western Canada complete a full-year research practicum as part of their degree requirement. Students in this course spend time in class as well as one day per week over two consecutive semesters developing their own CBR project with an organization.

At the beginning of the semester, students spend 3 hours a week in class learning about community psychology in general, and CBR in educational psychology in particular. During seminars, students discuss course readings and engage in activities relevant to practicum work, such as developing sample research proposals and a memorandum of understanding. Class meetings are held every other week once students begin their practicums, providing them with an opportunity to discuss the challenges they face with their research or community agency as well as their overall research progress.

Prior to the beginning of the practicum, students submit a description of research experiences and current research interests. This information is used to match community agencies' needs with students' interests. Before starting practicums, students interview with two potential community placements. Students decide which placement best fits their research interests and course expectations after completing both interviews. Students meet with their community partner before the fall semester commences to discuss expectations—both the student's and the community partner's—and to develop a draft of research questions to be explored. The course components—time spent in class and time spent researching in the field—help students integrate CBR theory and practice.

Description of the CBR Project

During the research project I conducted during my CBR practicum, I came to the realization that the role of a researcher using CBR was different than I had assumed based on my past research experiences. Rather than solely contributing my research skills, it was also essential that I take on additional roles to ensure that the project progressed smoothly.

My CBR practicum took place in a Headstart program in seven schools in a rural school district in western Canada. The program provides specialized services to meet the learning needs of children 3.5–5 years of age. School and home/community components address the educational needs of students and families, providing students with speech and language therapy, behaviour and social skills training, and occupational therapy as well as home visits and programs to engage parents in hands-on activities.

Many of the CBR principles previously discussed were incorporated into my research. Specifically, I remained open to community members' ideas and listened to their needs for the research project; actively observed each Headstart classroom to gain an understanding of the context for the research; and involved community members in developing a survey to help answer the research questions and aiding in data collection preparations. For the purpose of this study, when I mention "Headstart community members," I am referring to the individuals directly involved in the Headstart program—my community partner, Headstart teachers, Headstart parents, therapists, and family support workers.

Navigating Researcher Roles

To illustrate role multiplicity and skill development in the current study, I have divided roles and corresponding skills into sections based on my own experiences conducting CBR. It is important to note, however, that I am not suggesting that by examining the roles separately that they are mutually exclusive. As mentioned previously, people can successfully manage roles without experiencing conflict because roles often share overlapping characteristics or demands (Lynch, 2007). For example, both when acting as a collaborator and relationship builder I supported community members' skills and incorporated their input into the project.

Researcher as Researcher

Researchers involved in CBR and evaluation are often expected to behave as scientific researchers, contributing their knowledge of research design and methods to ensure sound research. As program evaluators for a summer program, Harklau and Norwood (2005) noted that program staff implied that evaluators should behave in a "scientific" way. Likewise, Minkler and colleagues (2008) noted that community partners expressed certain expectations of the research partners. Although academic researchers are equal partners with the community in CBR studies, they are often involved in most parts of the research, from developing the research questions, selecting research methods, collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data, as well as disseminating the results (Flicker, Savan, Kolenda, & Mildenerger, 2008); often service providers and community members are less involved in each step.

During my CBR practicum, I primarily took on the role of researcher—a role I was comfortable embodying because it was similar to my past research experiences. I applied my research knowledge to the project by brainstorming feasible research methods that would effectively address the needs and desired outcomes of the Headstart program. Before officially starting my practicum, I developed a memorandum of understanding, which outlined my responsibilities

as a researcher as well as the school district's responsibilities (i.e., to evaluate my progress once per semester and to help me gain access to participants in their Headstart community). A description of data ownership was also included: It was agreed that the data would belong to the school district for them to use as they saw fit. The memorandum of understanding enabled me and my community partner to establish a working relationship; to negotiate what we hoped to gain from the study and what we needed from each other to effectively proceed. In accordance with my responsibility as the research partner, I developed a research timeline to adequately reserve time for planning, collecting and analyzing data, writing a report, and collaboratively disseminating the findings with my community partner.

Researcher as Collaborator

Developing partnerships is a key component of CBR (Israel et al., 1998; Strand, 2003). To build trusting relationships and work closely with others, researchers must actively listen to community members and support their ideas (Harris, 2009; Postholm, 2008). Harris compared CBR researchers to counselors, suggesting they share similar skills sets: "listening skills, facilitating skills, teaching skills, flexibility and patience, and willingness and ability to learn" (p. 12). Other researchers (Cotter et al., 2003; McCollum & Stith, 2002) also have recognized that facilitators to successful collaborations include being flexible, making changes when needed, dividing tasks, and cooperating at all levels. Successful partnerships can "serve as a tool of education and service for both partners" (Cotter et al., p. 336).

Ongoing dialogue about the focus and direction of the current study occurred during each research phase. During our first research meeting, my community partner posed a general research question: How are Headstart program children doing 5 years after the program? Because early skill development has been found to predict later child outcomes (Gorey, 2001; Johnson, 2003; Ramey & Ramey, 1998), a greater understanding of students' later skill development was of interest to us. We divided this general question into smaller, more manageable ideas, operationally defining the questions collaboratively. We decided that having parents and teachers of these Headstart students—in Grade 3 and 4 at the time—rate students on key developmental program goals would help answer the main question. Additionally, I suggested we interview Headstart community members using focus groups to better understand what helped them when working with students and families to meet their needs as well as what made it difficult for them to work effectively in the Headstart environment in order to provide the program with tangible ideas for change.

During my practicum I learned that flexibility and open-mindedness were keys to a successful working relationship with my community partner. Unexpected meetings or cancellations, for example, resulted in needing to take a flexible approach with our research. Phone meetings or email exchanges often replaced face-to-face meetings to ensure that the project progressed on schedule. I also worked with community partners to develop research questions. Although the research project ended up looking different compared to what I first imagined, it was important for me to work as an equal partner, navigating the project's direction together with my community partner.

According to Strand (2003), CBR is the “systematic creation of knowledge that is done with and for the community for the purpose of addressing a community-identified need” (p. 8). Within my research I conducted focus groups with Headstart community members to develop a student outcomes survey and better understand what helped them effectively work with students and families. Following the focus groups, I compiled community members’ responses, then emailed them potential survey items asking that they provide comments or additional items they felt would be important to include in the survey.

Regarding dissemination of findings, many partnership project outcomes have involved university partners publishing in academic journals and presenting at conferences, but leave little formal product with the community (Stoecker, 2008). My community partner and I jointly presented at local conferences—with both community members and academics as participants—as well as to multiple stakeholders affiliated with the school division. In addition to collaborative local presentations, I presented research presentations at national conferences. I sometimes struggled to ensure that the project was mutually beneficial for me and my community partner. Because my perspective of benefits included presentations and publications, I often felt that I was acquiring more benefits than my partner. However, through this project my community partner gained a rich understanding of what was working in the program, what could be changed, and how the children were developing years after the program. By remaining focused on the purpose and goals of the project, we were both able to receive benefits and extend them out into the community.

Researcher as Relationship Builder

CBR allows researchers to develop trust and communicate with other professionals outside the university (Dugery & Knowles, 2003). Having in-depth knowledge of the community to help understand issues as well as community strengths and limitations is useful by having common ground to share (Sarason, 1976). Social competence and sensitivity toward community members are important characteristics for researchers’ when attempting to build and strengthen relationships (Postholm, 2008).

Although not an insider, I was able to develop relationships with Headstart community members. I spent time in the Headstart classrooms observing the program and becoming familiar with the staff and children. These classroom visits allowed the Headstart community members to become familiar with our research agenda and with myself as a research partner. Further, I attended several Headstart meetings in which my community partner and either the Headstart program teachers, family support workers, therapists, or Headstart parents, and on occasion all four groups, took part. During these meetings the research project was an agenda item, which gave me the opportunity to discuss ideas with the Headstart community members and report on the project’s progress. These meetings allowed me to interact face-to-face with those directly involved in the program and many times they offered their assistance. Attending meetings after the data were collected and analyzed allowed me to disseminate research findings to stakeholders, gaining feedback and new perspectives from the Headstart community members.

Sarason (1976) suggested that the importance of networks is often overlooked because of their invisibility. If one thinks about social networking through the structure of popular internet sites (e.g., facebook, twitter), it becomes visually apparent that webs of interconnected individuals are easily accessible. Accessing these networks is a useful way to mobilize like-minded individuals to work together for a common goal—in this case, our research work. My community partner suggested people willing to help with certain aspects of the project. Without funding to provide me with supports, community members who offered assistance were valuable contributors.

Appreciating others' expertise by identifying and building on the resources, strengths, and relationships that exist within the community is an important component of any university–community relationship (Israel et al., 1998; Leiderman, Furco, Zapf, & Goss, 2002; Minkler et al., 2008; Stein, 2007). By working with the skilled group of Headstart community members I was able to appreciate the practical experience and knowledge they had working with students and families with special learning needs. When designing the study, community members' concerns were heeded. For instance, I suggested mailing a consent form and survey out to parents, asking them complete and mail it back to the program. However, because the reading skill of many parents was expected to vary a great deal within communities, it was suggested that parent surveys be conducted over the telephone to aide in survey completion. Headstart community members aprovided assistance throughout the duration of the study. Family support workers organized parent focus groups by calling parents, booking rooms for meetings, and providing childcare while I interviewed parents. During data collection, family support workers contacted parents to inquire about participating in the study. Likewise, the program's administrative assistant contacted parents about the study and coordinated teacher–researcher meetings alongside my community partner. Appreciating and learning from the expertise of multiple stakeholders helped me to better learn how to share control of the research project with community members, a sometimes challenging, but necessary component of CBR (Chavis et al., 1983).

Researcher as Teacher

CBR projects provide opportunities to share skills with others (Dugery & Knowles, 2003). As a researcher working with the community it is important to acknowledge that community members may not have advanced research skills. Specific to the current study, community members were most involved in developing the direction and research questions, organizing participants for data collection, and interpreting and disseminating findings. Community members need to understand how to pose research questions in order to be able to answer these questions from the study. Involving community members in data collection allows them to understand how research data is collected, as well as making the participants feel more open to answering questions. Involving community members in research dissemination makes the research more meaningful to the community partners and to the community at large. Encouraging the community to use research findings to make changes in the community is another role that researchers must partake in when conducting CBR. Thus, researchers must “have

competence in teaching and learning and must be willing to share this competence” (Postholm, 2008, p. 583).

As previously mentioned, in CBR the researcher aims to exit the study with community members able to understand and use findings to improve their program or continue with additional research. It was important for me as a researcher learning and working with a CBR approach to honour the notion that after I withdrew myself from the program I would be removing my influence of disseminating findings. Knowing that the research project was coming to a close, my community partner made changes to the program based on our findings. For example, she scheduled more time for Headstart community members to interact and share resources with one another—a challenge expressed during focus groups.

Researcher as Learner

Researchers must support and guide community members involved in research, as well as remain open to opportunities that arise throughout the project (Postholm, 2008). Dugery and Knowles (2003), for example, noted that CBR projects provide both an opportunity to share skills with others and to learn new skills. Researchers can acquire new knowledge and understanding about research findings based on the feedback from those that use the products from a study (Currie et al., 2005).

My first experience as a Researcher–Learner was to understand what I did not know about the Headstart program. To put some context to my research before beginning to solidify the specific questions and methods to be used, I visited the seven schools with Headstart programs during the first month of my CBR practicum. I documented classroom observations to provide research context: I recorded descriptions of the classrooms’ physical setting, accounts of activities, and reflective notes during each classroom visit. As I became familiar with the routines, goals, and strategies used in the classrooms I was better able to use this knowledge when designing the specifics of the study.

A lesson learned at the beginning of the project and that remained with me until its completion—my final practicum report writing was extended for the course of one full year—was that working with the community takes time. As researchers know, the phases of any research project, from its initial conception to designing the study to collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data to writing reports and disseminating findings, takes a great deal of time. Adding additional components, such as collaborating on design and data collection ideas, negotiating time lines to correspond to partners’ schedules, and disseminating findings to both academic and community members, extends the life of the project.

Considerations for an Engaged Future

The purpose of this article was to better understand the new skill sets and researcher roles that may arise when engaging in community research. Because this was the first time I used a CBR approach, I was not fully prepared for the new roles that I needed to undertake to successfully complete my research practicum. Although I was equipped with research skills to design and execute a

research project, I was a novice in applying CBR principles to my work to ensure that the research was in fact community-based. With further training and experience I will be able to adhere to CBR principles to a greater extent than in the current study. Likewise, I lacked experience in motivating community members to take interest in research in a way that they could best utilize their expertise and make the project their own. These unexplored grounds encouraged me to step out of my regular boundaries as a researcher and take on new roles to provide the community with useful and understandable findings.

Expanding Skills Sets

Encouraging students to become engaged in their learning and lead their own community research helps to bridge classroom theory with practice, facilitates skills development, and initiates partnerships in the community (Hollander & Burack, 2009). CBR projects allow students to obtain a richer understanding of research methods as well as an opportunity to collaborate with community agencies to achieve findings that can be applied to tangible issues (Chapdelaine & Chapman, 1999; Currie et al., 2005).

As part of students' research training, multiple skill sets must be acquired. Designing research projects and using numerous research methods are necessary to conduct quality research. In addition to having a firm grasp on research design and methods, knowing how to communicate and negotiate with others are skills necessary for carrying out community research. Further, speaking in public about oneself as a researcher as well as knowing how to effectively ask questions invites dialogue from others (Dugery & Knowles, 2003; Sarason, 1976). Achieving a balance between having expertise and being open to new ideas and approaches is essential when working with community partners to help direct a research project, while at the same time being flexible if changing the direction will benefit the outcomes. Further, Fine et al. (2000) stress the importance of educating students toward analyzing, writing, and publishing using multiple methods and approaches as well as writing in accessible ways for the community.

Creating working partnerships with an interdisciplinary team of researchers from other disciplines, service providers, community members, and policy makers is an essential skill to have as a researcher. Mayer (2001) maintains that disciplines need to work together to continue to advance theory and inform practice. He argues that psychology, highly situated in theory, and education, highly situated in practice, complement one another and that researcher skill sets can be extended by being open to new concepts and ways of conducting research across disciplines. To establish working relationships with community members, researchers must have the desire to partner as well as receive support from their academic institutions (MacDonald, 2009; Pugach, Post, & Thurman, 2006).

Supporting Partnerships for Change

CBR can be used to enrich researchers' studies as well as community service agencies' resources for meeting the needs of communities. Because of the multiple roles that are an essential part of some research approaches in conjunction with the multiple roles required outside of research (Kelly et al., 2004), such as teaching, adhering to paper deadlines, and family responsibilities,

alterations should be considered to account for the extended time that is needed to develop strong CBR partnerships and carry out research projects. Adjusting tenure-track expectations and products to fit faculty committed to community-based scholarship would encourage engagement in community research (Dugery & Knowles, 2003; Fine et al., 2000). Currie et al. (2005) developed the Impact Model to examine the impact of community–university research partnerships. This model incorporates a variety of mediums to share knowledge, ranging from peer-reviewed publications to artwork and dramatic performances (Currie et al.). Other examples of product expectations, in addition to peer reviewed articles, include applied products (i.e., transferring knowledge into application) and community dissemination products, such as newspaper articles, presentations in the community, and websites (Calleson, Jordan, & Seifer, 2005; Sandmann, Foster-Fishman, Lloyd, Rauhe, & Rosaen, 2000). Further, opportunities to work across disciplines are likely to encourage researchers to explore new methodologies and incorporate multiple perspectives into their own work (McCroskey, 2003).

Future Research Directions

Research specific to using a CBR approach is needed to more fully understand the nature of researcher roles. Case studies and reflections of CBR researchers' work can inform researchers of the challenges and rewards that accompany researcher roles. Surveys can provide an overview of the few or many roles that researchers may enact when engaging in community research. In-depth interviews would be useful to probe many questions about multiple researcher roles: What is involved in each role? and How do multiple roles benefit research processes and outcomes? Shivers-Blackwell (2004) proposed that roles can differ depending on an organization's culture—whether it encourages employees' mutual interests and long-term commitment or whether individual duties and short-term goals are rewarded. Thus, further questions about the necessity to undertake multiple roles could be explored. For example, are certain roles unique depending on the context of a community or are they common across CBR projects and reflective of the approach itself?

Using my year-long CBR practicum experience as a case study, I have described the diverse—but not exhaustive—roles adopted when using a CBR approach were discussed. The extant literature on community researcher roles indicates that researchers experience roles outside traditional researcher expectations. However, further research specific to using a CBR approach would make both university and community partners better aware of the processes and multiple roles involved in engaging with the community to effectively conduct research that addresses community needs and informs practices for optimizing children and families' well being.

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